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Matemático formado pela universidade de Birmingham e piloto oficial da Royal Air Force britânica até 1953. Em 1954 passa a trabalhar como crítico de arquitetura na *Architectural Review*, que publica a edição especial *Outrage* em junho de 1955.

* Os textos em inglês *Subtopia*, *Agent* e *Manifest*, bem como as imagens, foram publicados pela primeira vez em junho de 1955 na *Architectural Review* que gentilmente nos autorizou a veiculá-los nessa edição da *Risco*.

¹ *Subtopia*: making an ideal of suburbia. Visually speaking, the universalization and idealization of our town fringes. Philosophically, the idealization of the Little Man who lives there (from *Suburb+Utopia*).

This issue is less of a warning than a prophecy of doom; the prophecy that if what is called development is allowed to multiply at the present rate, then by the end of the century Great Britain will consist of isolated oases of preserved monuments in a desert of wire, concrete roads, cosy plots and bungalows. There will be no real distinction between town and country. Both will consist of a limbo of shacks, bogus rusticities, wire and aerodromes, set in some fir-poled fields: Graham Green's England, expanded since he wrote in the 'thirties from the arterial roads over the whole land surface. Upon this new Britain the REVIEW bestows a name in the hope that it will stick-SUBTOPIA.¹ Its symptom will be (which one can prophesy without even leaving London) that the end of Southampton will look like the beginning of Carlisle; the parts in between will look like the end of Carlisle or the beginning of Southampton.

How has this come upon us? Britain is an industrial country. Britain has a population of 50,000,000 crammed into an island which could take 25,000,000 decently. Britain is top-heavy. Industrialization has created an 80 per cent urban majority. Popular misunderstandings of one sort and another-misunderstandings of the meaning of democracy-vulgarization of the concept of liberty- have led the man-in-the-street to kick against the principle of land planning.

False tolerance, likewise, has led him to tolerate every kind of abuse in the name of free competition or public expediency. There's a lot of unspoilt country, the feeling runs and sooner or later the population graph will level out and even take a dive and then urban spread will cease. A fallacy. Spread is dependent no longer on population increase but on the services a power-equipped society can think up for itself.

With radio and supersonic speeds you get the capacity for infinite spread, the limiting factors of time and place having ceased to operate. The city is to-day not so much a growing as a spreading thing, fanning out over the land surface in the shape of suburban sprawl. However, something even more sinister is at work; applied science is rendering meaningless the old distinction between urban and rural life; the villager is becoming as much a commuter as the citizen; the old centres of gravity have been deprived of their pull at both ends and in the middle; no longer geographically tied, industries which once muscled in on the urban set-up are getting out of the mess they did so much to make, and making a new mess outside. The arterial road has developed a way of life of its own with its own ribbon-type development - villa, "caff", garage, motel, caravan camp -carried into the heart of a countryside which is under sentence to machine agriculture. The thing of terror, which will get you up sweating at night when you begin to realize its true proportions, we have called, as we say, Subtopia. It consists in the universal suburbanization not merely of the country, or of the town, but of town-and-country-the whole land surface. Suburbia becomes Utopia, Utopia becomes Suburbia.

This is not to say suburbia has no place in the scheme of things.

The REVIEW has from time to time regaled its readers, to the dismay indeed of some, with the charms of the suburban ethos. What is not to be borne is that ethos should drift like a gaseous pink marshmallow over the whole social scene, over the mind of man, over the land surface, over the philosophy, ideals

and objectives of the human race; for this is what it is doing.

And it is doing it not only as a psychological but as a physical, a geophysical phenomenon. Not in England merely, in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas. Before the eyes of Frank Lloyd Wright in his hide-out in the Arizona Desert now runs a complicated pylon network.

In the Pampas, once synonymous with the vast liberty of nature, areas the size of Britain are cut up by rectangular wire fences not unlike those that have completed the downfall of the once open downs of our own country. The same fate is overtaking the Highlands of Scotland. Australia boasts a wire fence a thousand miles long. Holland is already a suburb, Switzerland a hydro. Bagdad has trams. The Alps feed Italy with power that comes in endless chains of pylons over every mountain pass; the Dolomites are a vast hydro-electric scheme. Even in darkest Africa the warpaint and the toms-toms are no longer much more than an act put on for film companies and V.I.P.s.

Look where one may, in the East or the West, every background, no matter how sublime, has now to be seen against a universal foreground imposed by modern man, of posters, wire, disused petrol pumps, car parks, conifers, institutions for the insane, cement works, sanitation plants, generator stations, the wreckage of wars and War Departments. Right down to what the REVIEW in this issue calls Things in Fields. All this adds up to a way of life for the people who live with these objects which is neither agricultural nor urban, but Subtopian.

Well, why now? Is there something wrong with the Subtopian way of life? The REVIEW'S function in life is not philosophical but visual; its job is not to attack Municipal Rustic via the spiritual frustrations of a Black Country mayor, not the grid wires by exposing the unrewarding life of an Electricity Board Commissioner. For the purpose of this issue outrages are classified in terms rather of the eye than of psychological disorder. Still, to meet the accusation that this method of approach is attacking from the surface inwards-which it is- it might be wise to say a word on the deeper issue.

Let us remember then that Nature is not to be denied. There is a nemesis prepared for those who ignore this simple fact. The roots of humanity lie in something more basic than a kosikot; the absurdities of good-earth cultists should not blind even rational men to the limitations of reason. It isn't merely that human nature can't live for ever on bricks and mortar. Nor it is merely that – whatever the charms of herd life and mass psychology- latent within every human breast is the craving escape, if only for a season, from thee eternal friction with other minds. It is more than that. The fate of the human race is to be of the universe but isolated from it-out on a limb of the tree of life by reason of its specialization of self-consciousness. The need to re-integrate the self conscious identity with the unconscious universe, the need to return down the limb to the immortal trunk, to re-identify the human with the non-human, including the animal, world, in the shape of what Stapledon calls "the simplicity", the severity, the silence and the beauty of nature', is the prime condition of personal re-creation.

Of this distinction between the self-conscious world of men and the un-self-conscious universe of nature, *town* and *country* ate the equivalents in colloquial speech; the one man-made down to the last marmalade top, the other, man-modified or not, still carrying a bias weighted in favour of the unconscious part of "creation".

If this is so, the corollary, clear enough already to the sociologist and planner, should not remain hidden from the man-in-the-street. His duty to his background (far more than a duty in a crowded island, an elementary precaution) is twofold: on the one hand, to bring to the highest pitch of effective life his man-made environment-the "city"- on the other, to put such limits to it as enable him to keep contact with the wild – the "country".

You can, of course, say this can't be done when the pressure of population grows as great as ours, but that is to ignore the landscape moral of the eighteenth century where every city did that very thing with a pocket handkerchief of a park.

What the eighteenth century did individually the twentieth century can and must do collectively. Here lies the real challenge to modern planning, and

there isn't much question what that challenge is. Everywhere where the borough engineer cracks the town wide open with road-widening and the local council obliterates the market place with a useless flower-garden, and everywhere outside where one department or another dumps a camp, a housing estate, or a sewage disposal plant into the indifferent wild-everywhere we are levelling down two ideal extremes (both necessary to our felicity) to a uniform mean: a mean which is a thread not simply to our felicity but to our continued development as more than an order of termites.

Why we are creating this mean of two extremes is equally clear. The environment is an extension of the ego, and twentieth-century man is likewise busy metamorphosing himself into a mean - a meany - neither human nor divine. And the thing he is doing to himself and to his background is the measure of his own mediocrity. Insensible to the meaning of civilization on the one side and, on the other, ignorant of the well-spring of his own being, he is removing the sharp edge from his own life, exchanging individual feeling for mass experience in a voluntary enslavement far more restrictive and permanent than the feudal system. This heritage to which he is heir, a great heritage, product of centuries not in fee with mass psychology, the meany is busy breaking down. The pages that follow are the record of his success to date, masquerading as Improvement, Progress or Amenities.

To say it again, it is man enslaved dragging down his environment to his own level.

And planning machinery is being used to speed Subtopia, not check it. The planning offensive was started in a mood of idealism, which assumed two things: that rules would be used flexibly and intelligently, and that England was of unlimited size. This last, single, radical miscalculation gave rise to the whole philosophy of dispersal - expanded towns, New Towns and every house with a garden, which is now the mainstay of official planning policy: an admirable idea *in vacuo*, and implemented in perfect good faith, but condemned before it started by our coast-to-coast dimensions. Now the tail is wagging the dog, the Brave New World has been twisted to become the decanting of overspills evenly throughout the country-Subtopia.

Any hope of intelligent interpretation was lost when planning was tied down step by step with local government, and made into another unrewarding office job. This chained it to the very points where democracy is most likely to give the lowest common denominator, not the highest common multiple: corporate Subtopia with all the planning rules as its armoury, perverted to make every square mile indistinguishable.

In 1950 the REVIEW traced this rake's progress, both planned and unplanned, in some of its manifestations in the US, a piece of research which drew from some of its American readers subdued applause but raised the blood pressure alarmingly in others.

Unnecessarily, since the fact that we are all in this thing together, first as the victims and then, in varying degrees, as the offenders, is the first thing we have to know about it.

Here the REVIEW (as it promised then) turns the searchlight upon this country. We have tried to play fair. To pick and choose special areas of blight like Corby would be too easy and would lay the argument open to the accusation of special pleading. To avoid that accusation we have put a ruler across the map of England and Scotland and drawn a line as straight as main roads permit from the bottom to the top- from Southampton in the south to Carlisle on the border to the Highlands. The line from Southampton to Carlisle we have followed in strides of 25 miles to a page in an effort to present a typical cross-section of the country - of the countryside, one might say, for the aim has been to choose a line, which avoids the great conurbations. A line, which, in fact, avoids the worst.

It shows, roughly speaking, two stages in the progress of the disease. First, main-road England, the limbo of shacks, bogus beautifications, wire and radar stations, set in unhappy pastoral scenery. In the second part the Highlands themselves show the blight less advanced, much more thinly spread - and all the more noticeable since the outrages are isolated sores upon an awe-inspiring background rather than a rash of pimples amongst mildly complaining water meadows. With this is linked the thesis that here at least modern man has not

yet trampled on the previous balance between man and nature; there is thus still time to make the highlands a pointer to a saner visual world and a lung for the island's fifty million – a very different thing from the mixture of piecemeal industry, hydros, motels and charas, that some would like to impose on the Highlands.

Nevertheless, how widespread, how universal, is the feckless couldn't-care-less attitude of our whole society is seen as clearly in the far north as the far south; no remote Scottish loch but is ringed with a scum of sawn-off tins and shredded gumboots, lying where they were thrown to rot by the proud Gael. As we have said, we are all in this together. Look north, look south, you see either the services or the excreta of Subtopia.

The moral is not the Simple Life. A return to more primitive conditions is wanted by few of us: the ultimate objective of all industrial civilization right

down to canned beans and mod.con. is not to make Simple Lifers of us but to simplify our lives.

But because all the sustained scientific planning that goes into every industrial process or commercial undertaking stops short at the land surface, the colossal advantages that should be available are dispersed. The more complicated or industrial system, and the greater our population, the *bigger* and *greener* should be our countryside, the *more* compact and neater should be our towns. For if our urban sprawl and unplanned technology has squared since 1900, our potential, in ingenuity and techniques, for dealing with it has cubed. Too complex a problem? Not a bit of it – aircraft engineers are solving worse problems every day, and often producing visually wholesome results as a by-product. Surely we can manage to produce a little order by exerting all our powers? The alternative, quite clearly presaged in the sixty pages following, is the abyss.