

Inheritance Tax

Germany is considering changing inheritance tax in such a way that it would affect family-owned businesses. This would mean that, when the owner dies, his children would need to pay tax on company assets (factories, machines, etc.).

This reminds me of the discussion in the UK about inheritance tax on farmers.

The point to remember here is that people die but corporations don't. Which means that, businesses "owned by humans" have to pay a significant (potentially crippling) sum to the tax man (every 30-40 years) ... while corporations don't.

On top of this, corporations often have their HQ offshore (e.g. in Luxembourg) and engage in other tricks (e.g. "transfer pricing") in order to avoid all kinds of other taxes.

This tells me that, very soon, all significant businesses will be owned by corporations ... rather than people!

Inter-generational

WDR5 Radio (Politikum, 26 Nov 25) had an interesting interview with a researcher who specialises in "generational issues" and the conflict which seems to be brewing between Gen-Z and The Boomers. His point was that, yes, older generations have created problems for new generations but, also significant here, is that The Boomers had embraced consumerism and that, although youth has not consumed as much in total, The Boomers had "a memory of less" and so could potentially scale back ... whereas younger people only know all-out gratification. As taught to them by their elders!

Stupid Sanctions

A WDR journalist spoke on WDR5 about a "scoop" that he had made. He had exposed the fact that the Afghan embassy in Germany was side-stepping "financial sanctions" by sending income (from normal admin such as issuing visas) to other embassies rather than directly to Afghanistan. Both the journalist seemed to be very satisfied with himself.

My heart sank on hearing this: OK, yes, the Taliban might be fundamentalist muslims but, since The West scampered out of Afghanistan with tails between their legs, what other government does Afghanistan have? And the German government is attempting to start talks (with the Taliban!) about sending Afghans "home".

So, if the Afghan embassy in Germany is prevented from doing its day-to-day work (because of "sanctions"), what chance is there for a thawing of the frosty relations.

Sugar-Tax

On WDR (Politikum) they mentioned that the EU is observing with interest the UK's "sugar tax" as this tax has indeed had an impact and is reducing sugar consumption there.

Excellent: That sounds good! And, indeed, it was very similar with smoking where taxation and regulation (e.g. bans on advertising) dramatically reduced consumption.

So the question I ask myself is why don't we do this with climate-change emissions? Simply tax and regulate "the bad stuff" so that people adjust their behaviour (e.g. buy smaller cars, fly less and source their needs more locally). But no, we refuse to do this and, instead, we insist in using "smoke and mirrors" such as "carbon-trading" to lull people into the feeling that something is being done. When it really isn't!

Packets Galore

Over the last few years, delivery companies have set up agencies absolutely everywhere: In kiosks, dry-cleaners, convenience-stores, etc.. Their vans clog up the streets and people bustle backwards and forwards to these agencies picking up packages and bringing their returns. All this while local retailers suffer hardship and go out of business.

This was brought home to me just before Christmas when I went to our local post-office (a furniture-shop) to buy a stamp: People were queuing right out of the shop and behind the counter packages were piled up to the ceiling on several ranks of shelves.

What madness: All that transportation and packaging! And also waste as people return things that don't fit or are the wrong colour. While our neighbours and fellow citizens who run shops go bankrupt because we are not using their services!

Crumbling Bridges

On WDR5 (Mittagsgespräch, 22nd Dec. 25) there was discussion about the re-opening of the Ramadetal-motorway-bridge which had been closed for re-building for four years. The presenters were celebrating that traffic could flow once again.

Indeed, yes, certainly good news but the syrupy imagery of people once again being able to visit

friends, get to the doctor and do their commute rather made my stomach turn: This piece of infrastructure is not there (primarily) so that little old ladies can potter over for coffee but rather so that 40-tonne lorries can charge backwards and forwards transporting mostly unnecessary tat for our convenience.

Then one caller mentioned that bridges all over Germany are in a bad state because the traffic-load (especially freight) is far higher than was anticipated when these bridges were built. The “expert” on the show quickly dispelled this assertion saying that it is “market forces” and our freedom to purchase which dictates how things should be. What madness.

Fekky

I read a very inspiring piece in, of all places, the *Red Bull Magazine*: It was about “Fekky” a rapper from Lewisham who, after having made it big and then suffering trauma had, during Covid, withdrawn to plot of land in Cambridgeshire that he had bought to farm.

He learned both on-the-job and by visiting other farms and now both supplies food-banks and has people visit from deprived areas. And, most important of all, his farming experience has “grounded him” and given him great fulfillment. All good.

So potentially, if we had many small to medium sized farms with enthusiasts supplying our needs, countries could not only be more self-sufficient but also this would provide challenges and fulfillment to a significant section of the population: New (and existing) farmers.

But no, instead, we demand ultra-cheap, processed foods, almost half of which we throw away, making the only way to supply us being to have mono-cropping, chemical-intensive production which is run more and more by investors rather than real farmers.

Satellite Danger

Tagesschau ran a piece (by Frank Bäumer, BR, 13th Jan 26) on the amount of space junk circling the earth. Most dangerous, they assert, are Starlink satellites of which there are about 12’900 in orbit. This number is due to rise to 42’000.

Once these satellites have reached the end of their lives they burn up in the high atmosphere with about 10’000 tonnes of old satellites set to take that path. This means that toxic materials (e.g. aluminum) is vapourised in the high atmosphere with us not knowing what could develop. One consequence could be problems with new holes in the ozone layer.

Here no one wants to reduce the number of satellites but instead simply hope that one day (when?) a solution (e.g. repairs in space) will “appear”.

Inaction by governments on this and on other topics (e.g. antibiotic resistance) irritates me enormously because, as I see it, politicians concentrate on their own pet policies (right-wing: migration; neo-con: free-trade; liberals: personal pronouns / gendering; Greens: E-bikes and rubbish separation) while neglecting the really critical issues.

Starlink

And, on the topic of Starlink, I had a very interesting experience when I visited family in Kenya recently.

Our relatives, and a considerable number of European and American ex-pats, have all moved from Nairobi out to the coast (north of Mombasa). Most of them are engaged in “remote working” (e.g. for companies in their home countries) so what was the clue as to why this “exodus to the coast” had happened ...

Nairobi is full important international organisations so has excellent internet. While the rest of the country doesn’t. But now, with Starlink, that has changed and so these people can live wherever they want to.

With poor people languishing outside the residential compounds, I ask myself whether this is in fact “modern colonialism”?

Public Transport

Recently, in Cologne, public transport ticket-prices went up to 3.80 € for the “city-zone” (which isn’t that big). So, a return trip sets you back 7.60 €. That’s massively expensive.

If that wasn’t bad enough, the frequency of services has been reduced and trams, buses and local trains now regularly get canceled (See photo: “Entfällt”). A few years ago that was something which happened other countries but never (or very rarely) in Germany.

One guy I chatted to at a station suggested I get the “Deutschland-Ticket” and then travel on all/any local transport for 63 Euros per month.

All well and good if that “flat-rate-deal” fits your needs ... but I cycle a lot so it doesn’t work for me.

Here the bigger question is how much do we really value the climate? If we spend billions on roads, bridges, infrastructure and subsidies for E-vehicles ... but public transport is prohibitively expensive and doesn’t work, then something is seriously wrong.