



Constantinos Doxiadis: Ekistics, 1968

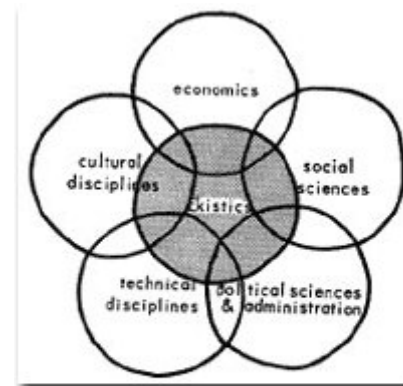
By Nina Brown

Background

Doxiadis, Constantinos A. (1913–1975)

Born in Greece, Constantinos A. Doxiadis, was trained as an architect. He graduated from the Athens Technical University and later obtained a doctorate at Charlottenburg University, Berlin. Doxiadis began his career as Chief Town Planning Officer for the Greater Athens Area and later became Head of the Department of Regional and Town Planning in the Ministry of Public Works. After W.W.II he founded Doxiadis Associates, a private consulting firm that undertook architectural and engineering projects throughout the world.

The firm specialized in implementing the principles of *ekistics* that Doxiadis developed in numerous publications. The group lead the design of Islamabad, the planned capital of Pakistan, and also contributed significantly to national master plans in Ghana, Iran, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Greece.



Ekistics and the sciences directly contributing to it.

From: C.A. Doxiadis, *Ekistics*, 1968, p. 55.

Innovation

"Human settlements are no longer satisfactory for their inhabitants," Doxiadis wrote in the introduction to *Ekistics: An Introduction to the Science of Human Settlements* (1968: 5). The problem, he concluded, was that the elements of contemporary cities, such as transportation, zoning and communication, were no longer in balance. As a result, people suffered in cities that were too large, crowded and noisy, and that exacted too much damage on the surrounding natural environment. To solve these problems, Doxiadis proposed a new field of inquiry, the science of ekistics. Doxiadis envisioned ekistics, a name that derives from the ancient Greek term *oikizo* meaning "creating a settlement," as an

interdisciplinary effort to "arrive at a proper conception and implementation of the facts, concepts, and ideas related to human settlement" (1968: 15).

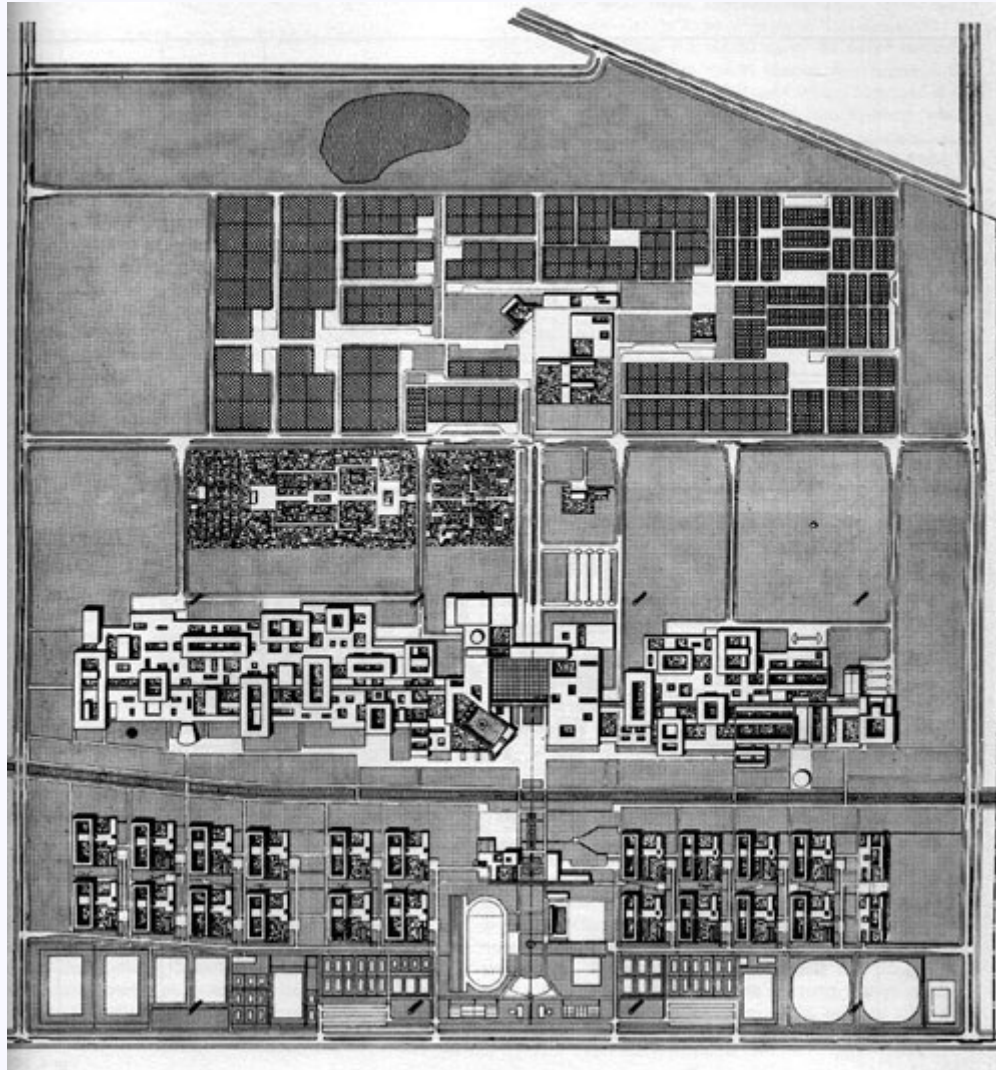
According to Doxiadis, the greatest problem facing cities worldwide was the problem of managing growth. Far too often, he argued, city planners made inadequate provisions for urban growth and as a result cities would grow like cancers, the inner core eating into surrounding neighborhoods and the outer edges gobbling up the natural landscape. He proposed several solutions for rapidly growing cities, one of which was for city planners to leave room for expansion of the city core along a predetermined axis so that most urban expansion would be channeled in a single direction. This innovation would, he suggested, release the population pressure on the urban core while leading to a more orderly development of the outlying area. In cases where multiple metropolitan areas were growing together as a megalopolis Doxiadis suggested that new self-contained urban centers be created within the urban sprawl with improved communication and transportation links between them.

In later books, Doxiadis became increasingly interested in the philosophical underpinnings of urban development. In *Anthropopolis: City for Human Development* (1974) and *Action for Human Settlements* (1976), he suggested that planners must concentrate above all on making humane cities. Since the existence of big cities was inevitable, as was the proliferation of space-expanding technologies like automobiles and skyscrapers, Doxiadis concluded that planners must find ways to restore human scale to large cities. Some of his proposals included

- Limiting all buildings to three levels or less, with permission to build higher bestowed by national authorities.
- Separating automobile and pedestrian traffic completely, with automobiles consigned to underground conduits if possible.
- Constructing cities as a "beehive" of cells each no bigger than 2 by 2 kilometers, the maximum comfortable distance for pedestrians.

Ultimately, Doxiadis was optimistic that with proper planning the cities of the world would eventually mature into a stable and pleasant form he called the *ecumenopolis*. Doxiadis worked for more than a decade to establish an interdisciplinary community of scholars who would complete research on cities and the best ways to manage them. *Ekistics*, the journal Doxiadis founded, continues to publish articles on a wide range of urban topics. Although his work is rarely explicitly referenced in urban planning literature, many of his ideas have been integrated into mainstream academic and popular thought. The New Urbanism movement of the 1980s and 1990s, which suggested that small

pedestrian friendly villages should replace typical suburban developments, echoed many of Doxiadis' suggestions (Calthorpe 1993, Leccese and McCormick 2000)



The University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan (1959)

Doxiadis was involved in the design of this new campus in Pakistan and used ekistic principles to

create a campus he believed was built for true "human scale." Doxiadis limited the number of roads on campus, banning them from the classroom areas. All the educational buildings are interconnected to permit people to walk from one to the other. Courtyards provide a place for meetings between people.

From: *Ekistics: An Introduction to the Science of Human Settlements*. By C.A. Doxiadis. New York: Oxford University Press, page 445.

Publications

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Ecumenopolis: The Inevitable City of the Future. With J.G. Papaioannou. Athens: Athens Center of Ekistics, 1974.

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Related Works

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Huffman, Donald W. *Urban Planning and Ethics: A Selected Bibliography with Special Focus on Constantinos A. Doxiadis and H. Richard Niebuhr*. Monticello, Ill: Council of Planning Librarians, 1974.

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Links <http://www.doxiadis.org/>

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