

Leading Planner Describes Ideal City— and Calls for Reform of Land Ownership

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Dr. Constantine Doxiadis, renowned Greek town planner, has proposed a revolutionary reappraisal of the laws and concepts of land ownership as part of a plan to build better cities for the future.

He was addressing the 10th annual meeting on Ekistics, a study he developed to deal with the problems of man in the environmental context. The audience included leading experts in related disciplines from many foreign countries — Arnold Toynbee (historian), Buckminster Fuller (engineer-philosopher), Margaret Mead (anthropologist), Lady Jackson (economist), Lord Llewelyn-Davies (architect), and others.

“Our aim, stated simply, is to save nature, man, and the values he has created,” said Dr. Doxiadis. There has been a lot of wailing over the problem of building the cities we need, but no action. “Everybody has failed,” he added, “from China, where peasants moving into the city without a permit are ousted, to America, where urbanization is unrestrained.”

Dr. Doxiadis told the meeting he had worked out a six-point plan to help build better cities — but reform of land ownership laws is an essential prerequisite.

The first principle of the Doxiadis plan is to guide urbanization rather than ban it or leave it uncontrolled. The second is to determine in advance how land is to be used: “Generally we can leave half of the earth’s land surface in its natural state, without any human interference. Another 45% we can utilize for cultivation, from crops to forests. This leaves us 5% for human settlements, and this is five times what we use today. It should be ample to help us revolve our problems.”

The third point is to create common channels for all transportation, communication, information, and power networks. Fourth, human communities should be created wherein the pedestrian’s endurance is the yardstick of overall dimensions — as in the ancient Greek cities. Fifth, “abolish the towers and let us live in human houses.”

Finally, urban administration systems should be revised downwards to the level of manageable communities.

According to Dr. Doxiadis, there are two main difficulties in applying the plan:

the owners of land, and “our own minds.” His research in 38 countries on all continents revealed that half of the obstacles to proper urbanization come from the owners of land, “whom we neither understand nor control.” The second difficulty is our inability to grasp the whole problem and confront it in a scientific manner.

Ekistics

The Athens Center of Ekistics was founded by C.A. Doxiadis to study and report on the problems of human settlements. In addition to sponsoring research and graduate studies, the Center publishes a journal of *Ekistics*, which concerns itself with housing policies and plans, transportation, the environment, and historical aspects of urbanization. The following was written by Dr. Doxiadis to describe Ekistics. Those interested in *Ekistics* should write to the Athens Center of Ekistics, Box 471, Athens, Greece, or the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213.

“EKISTICS is the science of human settlements. Ekistics demonstrates the existence of an overall science of human settlements conditioned by man and influenced by economics, social, political, administrative and technical sciences and the disciplines related to art.

“Contrasted to architecture which is confined to the design of buildings, or to town planning which, by its own definition, is confined to towns (that is, one category of human settlements), or to geography, which describes only phenomena of terrestrial space or to several other disciplines whose scale is limited to parts, categories, or types of settlements, Ekistics is a science whose task is to examine all human settlements from every possible point of view in order to develop skills for the solution of the problems involved.

“As such, Ekistics studies the field of human settlements with three different ideas in mind: the geographic dimensions, where we move from the single room to the house, the plot, the block, the neighborhood, the community, the small town, large city, metropolis, etc.; the nature of related disciplines, that is the economic and social aspects of the settlements, etc.; the sequence of procedure from analysis to

the formulation of policies, to subsequent synthesis, programs, and plans.

“In order to study human settlements, the science of Ekistics has had to use a wide range of space and time. It has to start by studying human settlements from their most primitive stage to understand the evolution which has led to forming towns, and is now leading to the metropolis and megapolis; and to understand the type of settlements to come. Furthermore, Ekistics also has to study settlements of several sizes. It has to cover the whole earth and to study all types of settlements in all types of surroundings, in all types of cultures and civilizations, and in all periods.”

Letter-Writing Boom (cont'd.)

that the income tax should substitute entirely for the property tax.

Statements like this — and stories like this — are apt to make the blood of a Georgist boil, not to mention others well-versed in the facts of the property tax. Presumably, many are inspired to write letters to the editor. But they are seldom published, and in this case, no letter was published to refute the premise of the story or its conclusions.

Why?

In a few words, the answer is because the letters tend to be overlong, badly written, and not to the point. *People and Taxes* recently published a primer on how to get your letter accepted for print, and a few tips here are surely in order.

First, editors seem to assume that the readers of their letters column are not interested in treatises on classical theory, however relevant it may seem to the writer. In response to a story on alternatives to the present property tax, a letter-writer ought not to discuss natural law, the labor theory of value, or interest rates, but an alternative to the present property tax, namely, land value taxation.

A letter on land value taxation needn't mention Adam Smith, market forces, or world economic history; the story deals with revenues and local control, and the letter should deal with revenues and local control. The first point is, therefore, to address yourself to the point of the story, however misguided its analysis may seem.

Secondly, a letter to the editor should be no more than one typed page, or two at the most. And it must be typed, unless your name is very famous indeed. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation should be as standard as possible: newspaper editors have a hard enough time editing their own