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# News from the Modern Front: Constantinos A. Doxiadis' *Ekistics*, the United Nations, and the Postwar Discourse on Housing, Building and Planning

*The Monthly Bulletin of Tropical Housing & Planning* was founded by Constantinos A. Doxiadis and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt in October 1955. Originally meant to collect professionally useful informations on the so-called developing countries, the publication soon changed its name and scope, becoming an internationally distributed, widely read and highly influential journal dedicated to Ekistics and human settlements. Using previously unpublished archival material, the paper investigates the origin and early years of *Ekistics: The Problems and Science of Human Settlements* highlighting the strategic role of the journal for Doxiadis' global agenda. Second, it is used as a case study to follow the evolution of the discourse on housing, building and planning during the Development decades and until the organization in 1976 of UN Habitat, the first international conference entirely dedicated to human settlements. Finally, this paper contributes in advancing knowledge on the role that experts and international cooperation missions have played in the dissemination of modern housing models and building standards and on Doxiadis's legacy in this field.

**Keywords:** Constantinos A. Doxiadis; Jaqueline Tyrwhitt; *Monthly Bulletin of Tropical Housing & Planning*; *Ekistics: the problems and science of human settlements*; UN Development decades; technical assistance; UN Habitat; human settlements; housing, building and planning

## Introduction

The aim of the journal...is to act as a key which can open doors into rooms where greater knowledge lies stored: a method by which he who seeks can find.<sup>1</sup>

The origin of the journal known today as *Ekistics: The Problems and Science of Human Settlements* can be traced back to February 1954, and specifically to the meeting between Constantinos A. Doxiadis (1913-1975) and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt (1905-1983). At that time, the two were in New Delhi because of some activities dedicated to housing and living that had been organized there by bodies that were crucial to the fate of the post-World War II disciplinary debate: these included, on the one

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<sup>1</sup> Doxiadis, "Editorial", 5.

hand, the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning,<sup>2</sup> and on the other the United Nations Technical Assistance Board.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Doxiadis was “attending the United Nations Housing Seminars in Delhi as a United Nations expert”.<sup>4</sup> The “experts”, as Doxiadis or Tyrwhitt were called, were mainly Western or Western-educated professionals whose tasks in that period varied from starting a national housing agency to designing transcontinental infrastructure. The meetings in the Indian capital were also attended by other experts, representatives of the contemporary institutional and professional world such as, for example, the American housing expert Charles Abrams, the Israeli modernist architect Arie Sharon, or the British expert on tropical architecture G. Anthony Atkinson. [Fig. 1]

The presentations, exhibitions and workshops organised in New Delhi were intended as part of a growing number of actions to promote ideals contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, namely higher standards of living, social progress and economic development.<sup>5</sup> A major impetus for action in these areas came from the Point Four Programme, which in 1949 led to the intensification of technical assistance and international cooperation. As Doxiadis himself admitted, the latter were a “very recent phenomenon”, and therefore

the past experience in this field is not very great. We are all still at the experimental stage of this new endeavor towards a better understanding of peoples and the creation of a better world. We cannot claim to have the technical experience necessary for all the problems of development, still less experience of cooperation between so many different nations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> International Federation for Housing and Town Planning, *South East Asia Regional Conference (working papers)*.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *United Nations Regional Seminar on Housing & Community Improvement (working papers)*.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Jacob L. Crane to Honorable Muin-ud-Din, February 1954, in *Correspondence between C.A. Doxiadis and J. L. Crane*, The Constantinos A. Doxiadis Archive in Athens, hereafter CADA, no. 19255, 2.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

<sup>6</sup> C.A. Doxiadis, “Types and densities of housing accommodation”.

The scarcity of information about developing countries and the role of “experts” in their modernisation continued to be an issue for the Greek designer, who on these matters turned again to Tyrwhitt in August 1955.<sup>7</sup> At a meeting in London, the two defined a strategy for tackling the problem and a way of working together that led to the first issue of the *Monthly Bulletin of Tropical Housing & Planning*<sup>8</sup> in October of that year.

The *Bulletin*, at that time conceived exclusively “for private circulation”, was prepared by Tyrwhitt at Harvard and then sent to Doxiadis in the Athens offices. In this first phase, it consisted only of a series of typewritten sheets, offering up-to-date information on so-called “developing” countries. The reason for the focus was that Doxiadis had been working in these areas for several years. As one can read in the CV sent to Nicolas Nabokov at the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris, in the mid-1950s the Greek designer had already developed a six-year housing programme for Syria on behalf of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; he had initiated projects for Pakistan and Jordan, while also acting as a consultant to the Indian and Indonesian governments.<sup>9</sup> [Fig. 2] Furthermore, in May 1955 Doxiadis was entrusted with the drafting of the Iraq Housing Programme, enthusiastically described by the British press as “the biggest ever Mideast housing scheme”.<sup>10</sup> It was clear to Doxiadis that the Western housing proposals, which originated in the “well tempered environments”,<sup>11</sup> could not meet the needs of the people living in these areas and that new, different solutions had to be developed. With the aim of facilitating this process, the *Bulletin* brought together what little contemporary literature offered on housing in tropical areas, using, through Tyrwhitt, the resources of Harvard and documents produced by the United Nations.

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<sup>7</sup> Shoshkes, *Jaqueline Tyrwhitt: A Transnational Life in Urban Planning and Design*.

<sup>8</sup> *Tropical Housing & Planning. Monthly Bulletin. For C.A. Doxiadis*, no. 1 (31 October 1955), no. 35818, CADA: 1.

<sup>9</sup> Kyrtis, *Constantinos A. Doxiadis: Texts, Design Drawings, Settlements*, 359-403.

<sup>10</sup> “Press Telenews London”, 39. See also Pyla, “Back to the Future: Doxiadis’ Plans for Baghdad”, 3-19.

<sup>11</sup> Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment*.

The latter, however, were not at all easy to come by. Doxiadis often complained about this, for example writing in 1956: “It is a pity that they cannot give us copies of their papers. Sometimes I wonder why they are produced. Nobody ever hears anything about them”.<sup>12</sup> Given the scarcity of information, the material collected was of extraordinary value and not only to Doxiadis. The Greek designer soon realised its potential and began to make changes to the publication, gradually establishing himself as one of the most important voices on the contemporary international scene. The article “News from the Modern Front” explores the life of the *Monthly Bulletin of Tropical Housing & Planning* by placing the publication and its transformations in their specific historical, political and economic context. To this end, several sources were used, primarily the publication itself. Indeed, the latter was regarded as a valuable witness to an era characterized more than any other by an extraordinary focus on development, technical assistance and international cooperation. At the same time, the documentation kept at the Constantinos A. Doxiadis Archive in Athens was reviewed: Doxiadis's letters, notes and reports paint a complex picture, dominated by a personal and professional interest in the home and living that were repeatedly addressed in publications, books and exhibitions. Thanks in part to Doxiadis' rich theoretical production, much attention has been devoted in recent years to the Greek designer and his many achievements. Yet at present there seems to be a lack of specific studies on what is his most pervasive activity, communication, which is considered here. Initially conceived as a tool for keeping professionals up to date, the *Bulletin* quickly became a magazine read by a diverse international audience and a global megaphone. Furthermore, other publishing ventures were added over time, such as the *DA Monthly Bulletin* and the *DA Newsletter*, whose theoretical framework was coordinated by the Athens Center of Ekistics and supported by the Delos Symposia. Each of these initiatives, in its own way, can be understood as a piece of a large communication system whose ultimate goal was to avoid “human error”.<sup>13</sup> In this

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from C.A. Doxiadis to J. Tyrwhitt, 6 November 1956, in *General correspondence (1956-1957)*, CADA, no. 19248, 59.

<sup>13</sup> Doxiadis, “The human error”, I.

articulated and multiform system, launched in the mid-1950s with the *Monthly Bulletin*, the topic of the house and *housing* gradually gave way to *settlements*: a term with a broader and more complex meaning that was insistently combined with the word *human* to reveal a contemporary need to humanize urban life as a whole.<sup>14</sup> His commitment to human settlements over the years and the numerous activities undertaken in their favour, including professional initiatives, led in 1976 to Doxiadis being identified as the “father of human settlements” during Habitat: the first major international conference organized with the ambitious objective “to improve the living places of people throughout the world”.<sup>15</sup> An event that, as will be seen, Doxiadis had strongly desired but was unable to attend in person as he had died in Athens just one year earlier.

### ***From Monthly Bulletin to Ekistics***

This is one of the best publications on the international aspects of housing and community planning. We consider it invaluable.<sup>16</sup>

The first volume of the *Monthly Bulletin*, held at the Constantinos A. Doxiadis Archive in Athens, is organized into three sections. The first of these is dedicated to "current literature" and is divided into the chapters "General", "Hot dry areas" (with discussions on Kuwait, Israel, Algeria, Iran, Mexico, India, and in particular the new city of Chandigarh) and "Hot humid areas" (with focuses on Sri Lanka, then still Ceylon, and Brazil). A second section, which is particularly relevant because it is based on UN documents not otherwise easily available, is devoted to “Field reports”, while the third section contains “Special articles”. In this first issue, a special article is dedicated to the relationship between landscape development and natural ventilation, a topic of great interest to all those designers

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<sup>14</sup> Tyrwhitt, Sert, Rogers, *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanization of Urban Life*.

<sup>15</sup> “The father of human settlements”, 115.

<sup>16</sup> A reader answering a questionnaire about Ekistics quoted in Tyrwhitt, “The journal of Ekistics 1955-1965: analysis of its contents”, 44

who like Doxiadis found themselves working in settings that were often technologically underdeveloped, and at the same time characterised by challenging climatic conditions.<sup>17</sup> On the copy kept in the Athens archives some sentences are underlined in red, as they seem to have struck the reader: “high productivity alone does not necessarily mean better living standards”, or “the interrelation and inseparable nature of physical and economic planning”.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, whole paragraphs are often accompanied by comments in English or Greek: “why this disorder?” or “wrong! impossible percentage”.<sup>19</sup> [Fig. 3, 4] Although not certain, it is highly probable that these notes are attributable to Doxiadis himself, and that as such they are as significant a paratext as the material collected by Tyrwhitt. In fact, while the articles offer a glimpse of the contemporary situation in the areas under examination, the notes reveal the point of view of the designer for whom those articles were collected.

The organisation of the *Monthly Bulletin* changed for the first time as early as September 1956, adopting a new information classification system. The new sections, now called "Problems", "Policies", "Programs", "Houses" and "Regions", show an attempt to organise the accumulating data in a more efficient, practical way. The new structure was evidently liked by Doxiadis, who in a letter dated 6 November 1956 wrote to Tyrwhitt that “I certainly do find the new format of the bulletin very satisfactory”.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, the focus of the publication seemed to be gradually shifting away from purely geographical and/or climatic criteria towards an international profile. The matter was also discussed with Jacob L. Crane, who in February 1956 committed himself "to talk with some more people here

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<sup>17</sup> White, “Landscape development and natural ventilation. Effect of moving air in buildings and adjacent areas”, 72-81.

<sup>18</sup> “Current literature”, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Monthly Bulletin of Tropical Housing & Planning*, no. 1 (October 1955):4 and no. 3 (December 1955), 15.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from C.A. Doxiadis to J. Tyrwhitt, 6 November 1956. *General correspondence (1956-1957)*, CADA, no. 19248, 59.

in Washington, and also in New York, about whether and how it is possible to get world-wide references, abstracts and bibliographies; and I'll write to you further".<sup>21</sup> The goal of the focus on the structure was to make the document suitable for the specific needs of "all our collaborators and clients", but, Doxiadis continued, "I must confess that I was afraid to allow Jaqueline to print more copies because she had a tendency to start distributing them widely and I do not believe this would be the right thing as this is a bulletin prepared only for a very specific purpose".<sup>22</sup>

The growing familiarity between Doxiadis and Tyrwhitt influenced the selection of articles that increasingly coincided with Doxiadis's interests. For example, in reporting the publication of Joseph Grelier's article entitled "Notas geo-etnograficas sobre los indios piaroas" in the journal *A, hombre y expresión*, Tyrwhitt notes – as if to justify the inclusion of that essay in the review – that "the housing here described is primitive housing of the Piaroas Indian Tribe in Venezuela and therefore I presume it is of limited interest to Mr Doxiadis. There are, however, some very interesting photographs of thatched huts and a page of construction drawings of these huts, photostats of which attached".<sup>23</sup>

So, while in its first phase the journal was certainly to be understood as a mirror of Doxiadis's interests and as a formidable working tool for his entire team, as early as 1 July 1957 the *Monthly Bulletin* definitively ceased to deal only with the so-called developing countries and extended its sphere of interest to the whole world.<sup>24</sup> [Fig. 5] With the expansion of the coverage, the structure of the publication was again reorganized. The first of the three new sections was now dedicated to "Housing", the very heart of Doxiadis's interests, the second to "Planning" and the third to general topics. "To some extent", wrote Tyrwhitt, "we shall continue to be most concerned with the problems of housing

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<sup>21</sup> Letter from Jacob L. Crane to C.A. Doxiadis, 4 February 1956, in *Correspondence between C.A. Doxiadis and J. L. Crane*, CADA, no. 19255, 111.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from C.A. Doxiadis to Jacob L. Crane, 2 October 1956, in *Correspondence between C.A. Doxiadis and J. L. Crane*, CADA, no. 19255, 206.

<sup>23</sup> *Tropical Housing & Planning. Monthly Bulletin*, no. 4 (31 January 1956), no. 35818, CADA, 91.

<sup>24</sup> "Cooperation with Miss Jaqueline Tyrwhitt," 21.

and planning in the warmer climates partly because we think the biggest jobs are yet to be done in such areas".<sup>25</sup> The focus on developing countries never waned for a number of reasons:

readers in more developed countries have little ready access to information about what is happening in the rest of the world - their own journals are too full of matters of local interest. Readers in the developing countries are directly interested to know what is happening in other areas with similar conditions to their own, and the publications in which this information is contained are usually difficult for them to obtain. It is also mainly for these readers that abstracts are included of selected 'western' developments already fully reported in the western technical press. We know well that most of our readers in the developing countries are prevented by currency restrictions from any ready access to the normal run of technical and professional publications.<sup>26</sup>

A broader focus was complemented by innovations in the circulation of the magazine, which at this time ceased to be read only in the Athens offices and began to be distributed more systematically "through our consultant and the collaborator Miss Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, Assistant Professor of the Harvard University".<sup>27</sup> In fact, Doxiadis decided that the circulation "should be increased on an exchange basis to include such university departments, research institutes or other similar bodies as are able and willing to send from time to time either publications or unpublished material (perhaps a copy of an interesting student thesis)".<sup>28</sup> This material was to be sent to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where it

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<sup>25</sup> "Editorial", iii.

<sup>26</sup> Doxiadis, "Editorial", 4.

<sup>27</sup> Letter to Norman J. Hart from Constantinos A. Doxiadis, 8 January 1958, in *General Correspondence (1957-1958)*, CADA, no. 19252, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Doxiadis, "Editorial", 4.

would be processed and from where it would later be sent to Athens. Here, “Dr Doxiadis [was] building up a considerable technical library for the use of students and others”.<sup>29</sup> The Library would become an integral part of the Athens Technological Organization, an institution founded in 1958 with the aim of promoting educational programmes and carrying out research.

In October 1957 the journal also changed its name to *Ekistics, housing and planning abstracts*. The title explicitly referred to Ekistics, the name given by Doxiadis to the science he had founded, which dealt with the study of human settlements. The term was not new in the lexicon of the designer, who had previously used it during the reconstruction of Greek cities destroyed in the war and who now, through the journal, extended his range of action to embrace the whole world. This theory, which aimed to develop a holistic approach to design, was presented to the international public in 1954, during the seminar organized by the United Nations in New Delhi:

We certainly need to create a science which does not exist: the science of human settlements. This science would consist of analysis, synthesis and policy. Let us call it “oecistics” from the Greek word “oikos” which means home, and is also the root name of another science, economics.<sup>30</sup>

A more articulate definition was regularly printed on the back cover of each issue of the journal, thanks to which the “science of human settlements” was disseminated and promoted internationally. Unlike other disciplines, whose scope was “limited to parts, categories or types of settlement”, what distinguished Ekistics was its range of action. In fact, it aimed to “examine the human settlement from every possible point of view in order to develop skills for the solution of problems involved”. For this reason, Ekistics “had to use a much wider range of space and time, it had to start by studying

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> Doxiadis, *Types and densities of housing accommodation*, 12. On the origin of the term “ekistics”, see Pappoannou, *C.A. Doxiadis early career and the birth of ekistics*, 313-319.

human settlements from the most primitive stage to be able to understand the type of settlements to come. Furthermore, Ekistics had also to study settlements of several areas. It had to cover the whole earth in order to find all types of settlements, in all types of surroundings, in all types of cultures and civilization, and in all periods". The ambition to tame the world through ekistics required global and multidisciplinary coordination "for many generations to come".<sup>31</sup> [Fig. 6]

With the new name and its increasing popularity, there was a need to free the publication from the personalization it had been subject to in the past. In fact, Doxiadis had often found himself specifying that, while it was

owned and sponsored by Doxiadis Associates, no attempt is made by the firm to influence the selection of material for the journal. The fact that its title *Ekistics: the science of human settlements* reflects the principles of approach adopted by Doxiadis Associates in their professional work results in a relationship between contents of the journal and the general policy of the firm; but the selection or not of work of Doxiadis Associates for inclusion in *Ekistics* is the responsibility of the Editor.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, and to emphasize the growing importance of the network of international relations he was weaving, a correspondence section was added to the journal. According to Doxiadis himself, the aim of this was to "give readers the opportunity to comment upon the general notion of *Ekistics: the science of human settlements* as well as upon the general contents of the journal".<sup>33</sup> In practice, it was an attempt to use the tool as a platform for the discussion of contemporary design strategies, while at the same time bringing them all back to a comparison with Doxiadis. Despite the apparent desire to distance themselves from it, in other words, in this period the theory that the Greek's work

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<sup>31</sup> "Ekistics: housing and planning abstracts", no. 25, October 1957, n. 35818, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Doxiadis, "Editorial", 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

was based on, the journal that promoted it and the founder of both seem to have become a whole, which with increasing force was imposing itself on the global scene.

In April 1962, readers of the *DA Newsletter* were informed that

the general concept which is expressed by the term 'ekistics' - a contribution of this Office to the present-day semantics of planning - is becoming, along with the theory it supports, a current expression around professional circles. This is greatly due to the contribution, in the field of scientific research, of the magazine *Ekistics*, the theoretical organ of our Office. We can, therefore, be legitimately proud of the wide acceptance of both our theory and our terminology.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, the *Newsletter* took the opportunity to inform readers that the magazine had set a new record, now being distributed in 73 countries. The publication was read by "Government Officials, U.N. Experts, professionals, scholars and researchers, as well as students in places thousands of miles apart, from Afghanistan and Nepal to new Zealand and Hawaii, Norway and Canada".<sup>35</sup> The following year, 29% of the readers were "planners and ekisticians" and 27% "architects and engineers". "Social scientists numbered 8% and economists 5%". Of these, 20% held "administrative positions", 7% were "geographers and 4% were in other fields, such as anthropology biology, psychology and history". 40% of the readers were from North America, 24% from Western Europe and the remaining 36% from other countries.<sup>36</sup> To further strengthen his influence, in 1963 Doxiadis founded the Athens Center of Ekistics (ACE) with the aim of promoting coordinated programmes of research, education, documentation and international cooperation related to human settlement devel-

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<sup>34</sup> "Dear Reader," 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> J. Tyrwhitt, "The journal of Ekistics 1955-1965: analysis of its contents", in *Ekistics. Review on the problems and science of human settlements*, vol. 19, no. 110, January 1965, p. 39-44:39.

opment. The same year the Delos Symposia were inaugurated, soon becoming one of the most significant events of the contemporary era dedicated to the city. The increasingly widespread dissemination of Doxiadis's theories was accompanied by new changes in the journal's name, which however confirmed that the focus was no longer on a geographical area but on Ekistics: in May 1959 the publication became *Ekistics: Abstracts of the problems and science of the human settlements*, and in January 1961 another small change was introduced with the adoption of *Ekistics: Reviews on the problems and science of human settlements*. Finally, in January 1975, just a few months before Doxiadis's death, the publication changed its name one last time and became *Ekistics: the problems and Science of human settlements*. By then it had become a solid international reference, capable of directing the contemporary debate on cities and shaping their uncertain future at least until the early years of the new millennium, when in 2017 the last issue dedicated to its founder and his work came out.<sup>37</sup>

### **From *Ekistics* to the United Nations**

Ekistics is very happy to know that it has now become a vehicle for communication between people of many professions in the 94 countries in which it circulates.<sup>38</sup>

A very important moment in the process that led to housing and living becoming a global design topic was undoubtedly the elaboration of the so-called “Eisenhower Doctrine”, presented to the US Congress in January 1957.<sup>39</sup> The opportunities that the new policy opened up internationally were outlined by Doxiadis in a letter to Jacob L. Crane, a UN consultant who was also a paid employee of Doxiadis Associates at the time. On that occasion, the Greek said he was sure that “in spite of some local opposition in Egypt and temporary opposition in Syria”, the new policy “is going to be accepted

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<sup>37</sup> C.A. Doxiadis and His Work.

<sup>38</sup> Doxiadis, “A new phase of Ekistics”, 2

<sup>39</sup> Lefteris, *Victory over Chaos? Constantinos A. Doxiadis and Ekistics 1945-1975*, 108-116.

gradually in different ways by all other countries.... This is the moment for housing...”.<sup>40</sup> Some countries such as Lebanon or Jordan, Doxiadis continued, had already shown interest in developing projects, so the project developer felt the need to identify contacts in those countries who could keep him up to date with developments on the issue. Doxiadis understood perfectly the mechanisms governing communication and also its importance. Indeed, the transformations that *Ekistics* underwent can only be understood as a continuous search for the most suitable form to convey extremely valuable and useful information. With the change of pace introduced by the “Eisenhower doctrine”, Doxiadis immediately realized that the journal had to be transformed from a collection organ into a channel for disseminating information, with a slant that favoured the objectives of its founder. The most significant change in the journal, the adoption of the title *Ekistics: housing and planning abstracts* in October 1957, is probably due to this conviction.

“Everybody foresees a long period, 5 to 10 years, of American Aid for development. It is the moment to start with housing and planning for our expansion”, Doxiadis wrote in March 1957. And so, in parallel with the restructuring of the journal and its objectives, the Greek began to envisage setting up a "School for Ekistics" that would train personnel "from top planners down to draughtsmen", thus meeting the need for qualified personnel "in many countries. The scarcity of technical people is colossal throughout the world but we will discuss this educational project when I will be in the States”.<sup>41</sup> The discussions with Jacob L. Crane were evidently very fruitful since the following year the Athens Technological Organization (ATO) was opened, from which would later emerge the Athens Technical Institute (ATI), a school founded with the aim of training professionals in urban design, and the Athens Center of Ekistics (ACE), an international centre for research, dissemination and training. The last of the bodies founded by Doxiadis would be the World Society of Ekistics (WSE) in 1965, the

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from C. A. Doxiadis to Jacob L. Crane, 19 March 1957, in *General Correspondence (1956-1957)*, CADA, no. 19248, 263.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from C. A. Doxiadis to Jacob L. Crane, 19 March 1957, in *General Correspondence (1956-1957)*, CADA, no. 19248, 263.

name well explaining the founder's ambitions underpinned by what Ray Bromley called “intellectual entrepreneurship”.<sup>42</sup>

At the beginning of the 1960s, the need for housing "in Africa, Asia and Latin America" was quantified as ranging "from 19 to 24 million dwellings" to be built annually throughout the decade in order to "eliminate existing shortages in 30 years, to house and increase in population and to meet current obsolescences".<sup>43</sup> Doxiadis Associates was more than ready to take on the task, with about 400 employees by then, "half of whom are engaged on various projects in a dozen of countries, the remaining half being attached to the central office".<sup>44</sup> An increasingly important role was assigned to communication, which, in addition to *Ekistics*, was reinforced by the *DA Monthly Bulletin* established in June 1959 and the *DA Newsletter* in July 1960. In subsequent years, the publications acted in a coordinated manner, exerting a centripetal action aimed at reinforcing the visibility of Doxiadis and his "Ekistic projects" in the contemporary design scene.<sup>45</sup> While the *DA Monthly Bulletin* had a purely project-based focus, the *Newsletter* was specifically designed "to communicate official and general information as well as to include all facets of DA personnel activities such as travel, speeches, public appearances, publicity and guests".<sup>46</sup> Among the latter, it is particularly interesting to note the increased presence of representatives of the United Nations, organizations like the Ford and the Rockefeller foundations, international institutions such as the UIA, as well as politicians of various levels and importance from all over the world. In March 1962, for example, David Owen, executive chairman of the UN TAB, Meyer Cohen of the UN Special Fund, together with technical assistance officers from Burma, Europe, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, USSR and Yugoslavia met in Doxiadis's offices.<sup>47</sup> In short, by the turn of the 1960s the DA headquarters, opened in September 1958 at

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<sup>42</sup> Bromley, "Towards Global Human Settlements: Constantinos Doxiadis as Entrepreneur, Coalition-BUILDER and Visionary," 324.

<sup>43</sup> "Target for housing and urban development in the decade 1960-1970", 33.

<sup>44</sup> "Doxiadis Associates Athens Head Office", 4.

<sup>45</sup> "Doxiadis Associates Consulting Engineers", 186.

<sup>46</sup> "Introduction", 1.

<sup>47</sup> "Visitors", 23.

the foot of Lycabettus Hill, had already become an indispensable point of reference for the housing, building and planning sectors as well as for the economic operations associated with them. Moreover, the words “home” and “economy” were at the heart of ekistics itself, the science that Doxiadis was so keen to promote.

At the same time, the United Nations had embarked on a process to establish an agency to deal with housing issues. The topic was not new, but was dealt with by several offices until the Housing, Building and Planning Council was established in 1962.<sup>48</sup> [Fig. 7] Through technical assistance and targeted investments, both carried out in international cooperation, the new body aimed to improve the quality of life of people in less developed countries. The premise of these missions seemed to be the belief that there was some kind of universal housing standard against which aid could be calibrated. Doxiadis was often skeptical about this issue and even warned against the "dangerous idea that there are international standards of any kind of housing". In fact, he explained that one could certainly talk about international standards with regard to machinery or industry, but national settlement policies were not – and in his view could not be – standardized. In addition to standard housing, the Greek continued, other typically modern myths had to be dismantled, such as for example "optimum city size, the standard size of a community, the ideal design etc."<sup>49</sup> According to Doxiadis, each of these had to be demolished and the only way to do this was through the "collaboration of people with different backgrounds, a collaboration which will help to rise above conventional attitudes, above the requirements of a usually narrow educational background and to face the real issues in a more realistic way".<sup>50</sup> In other words, only an Ekistic approach to design could have resulted in settlements capable

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<sup>48</sup>“ Senate Concurrent Resolution 38 by Senator John Sparkman: Expression of sense of congress as to creation of a housing and urban development unit as a specialized agency of the United Nations,” series 445, box 30, file S0-140 GEN, United Nations-ARMS. On the role of the Housing, Building and Planning Branch, see Davidson, "Report on organizational arrangements in the field of Housing, Building and Planning", 214-18. "First meeting of the United Nations Committee on Housing, Building and Planning". 251-322.

<sup>49</sup> Doxiadis Associates, *Housing in Iraq. Problems, Policies, Programmes. Report prepared in July 1956 for the Development Board & Ministry of Development of the Government of Iraq*, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Doxiadis, “Editorial. The problem of human settlements”, 1.

of guaranteeing "human happiness", i.e. "the main purpose of a human settlement".<sup>51</sup> Using this rhetoric, Doxiadis began to promote his science at the United Nations, insisting that it and its methods be adopted in the series of interventions planned during the Development Decade promoted by the international organization.<sup>52</sup> And it is no coincidence that from September 1962 the *DA Newsletter*'s header began to refer to the DA Development Division. Furthermore, from December 1963, the DA began to define itself as the group of consultants on development and Ekistics, thus further emphasizing the link between the two terms. [Fig. 8]

Between 21 January and 2 February 1963, as a representative of Greece, Doxiadis attended the first meeting of the UN Committee on Housing, Building and Planning, held in New York. And it was there and on that occasion that the event took place from which we can deduce the extent of the Greek's ambitions. In fact, there "he asked that the name be changed to a committee on Ekistics". This request, recalled by Charles Archer in a letter to Doxiadis in 1974, "produced flurries of cablegrams to foreign offices asking for instructions. Despite two weeks of your pressing, the committee did not change its name to Ekistics".<sup>53</sup> After the New York conference, Doxiadis headed to Geneva where the UN Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less-developed Areas was to be held on 4 February. In the *DA Newsletter* published the following month, Doxiadis took stock of the meeting in Switzerland during which he again invited the UN to benefit from the ekistic approach while promoting global coordination on development:

All the countries agreed on a few basic principles: these are human problems and they concern humanity as a whole. They are not limited to one place, one city, one village nor are they limited; they are not technical problems, but they concern man as a whole. If we want to deal with these problems properly, we should make use

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<sup>51</sup> "Target for housing and urban development in the decade 1960-1970", 33.

<sup>52</sup> See the press review in *DA Newsletter* 3, no. 1 (January 1964): 4-10.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Charles S. Archer to Constantinos Doxiadis, 30 December 1974, in C.A. Correspondence (1974-1975), CADA, no. 34770, 1.

of all sciences relating to these problems, and synthesize them into a single science.... The whole effort should be directed by one responsible authority that will consider the problem as one entity.<sup>54</sup>

Doxiadis was aware that the establishment of the new bodies at the UN and the meetings they gave rise to represented an extremely and significant occasion, being the first “important international gathering[s] in the field of housing and human settlements held at a governmental level”. However, there was no cause for celebration, he continued, as it was “no more than a first step, which, however important, did not result in any spectacular achievement or blueprints for action.... What can we do?... We should – all of us – be all the more concerned with the problems of creating better human settlements and we should consider this our task and our obligation to man”.<sup>55</sup> Building on the ideals that inspired the United Nations, and, above all, with the aim of maintaining a leading position in the international debate, Doxiadis organized the first Delos Symposium as early as July 1963. At this point the event had a twofold objective. On the one hand, the presence of UN officials such as David Owen, executive chairman of the Technical Assistance Board, or Otto E. Fischnich, assistant director of the FAO, undoubtedly aimed at associating the international body with ekistics, its founder and its many initiatives. Thus, between 6 and 13 July 1963, “34 world authorities in ekistics spent a week together on a cruise on the Aegean Sea discussing the critical problems posed by the increasingly dangerous growth of the world’s urbanization”.<sup>56</sup> Among the participants are some of the most interesting figures of the post-World War II period, such as Marshall McLuhan or Buckminster Fuller, but also Doxiadis's old friends, such as Jacob L. Crane and, of course, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt. [Fig. 9]

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<sup>54</sup> Doxiadis, “Notes”, 3. See also De Dominicis, *Il progetto del mondo. Doxiadis, città e futuro, 1955-65*, 74 and following.

<sup>55</sup> Doxiadis, “Editorial”, *DA Newsletter* 3, no. 1 (January 1963): 1

<sup>56</sup> Doxiadis Associates, “The Delos Symposium”.

The decision to organise the meeting on a cruise ship, as well as Sigfried Giedion's participation, were clear references to the mythical CIAM congress of 1933, organised on the *Patris II*. In this regard Mark Wigley wrote that

Sigfried Giedion, the longtime secretary general of CIAM, was symbolically invited to the Delos event and was asked to give the last speech at the signing ceremony affirming the fundamental “continuity” between the Athens Charter and the Delos Declaration. He noted that the collegial atmosphere of the two meetings was very similar, insisting that “Greece has done it again!” Ekistics had officially picked up the legacy of CIAM.<sup>57</sup>

The pretentious Declaration, reported in the magazine along with a detailed account of the event, was signed by the light of countless torches in the amphitheater of Delos and concluded with the words: “...we are not divided in what we wish most strongly to affirm - that we are citizens of a worldwide city, threatened by its own torrential expansion and that at this level our concern and commitment is for man himself”.<sup>58</sup> Years later, recalling the event, Tyrwhitt pointed out a fundamental difference between the 1933 and 1963 cruises: “instead of youthful, idealistic and militant architects and artists, [Delians] were mature leaders of 15 professions from 14 countries...”.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps it was precisely because of this difference that Doxiadis had succeeded in “doing what CIAM had never succeeded in

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<sup>57</sup> Wigley, “Network fever”, 90.

<sup>58</sup> “The Declaration of Delos”. It is enough to read the titles of the most important books published in this period to understand the growing sense of despondency with which the urban question was addressed in the late 1950s and early 1960s: White, *The Exploding Metropolis*; Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*; Doxiadis, *The Death of Our Cities*; Gutkind, *The Twilight of Cities*; Mitchell, *Sick Cities*; Gruen, *The Heart of Our Cities: The Urban Crisis, Diagnosis and Cure* to name just a few.

<sup>59</sup> Jaqueline Tyrwhitt interviewed by Miloš Petrović in Bernik, *Pogovori z delosovci/Dialogues with the delians*, 129-130.

doing: taking the debate on the city outside the artistic-architectural precincts and making it the subject of an articulate, disciplinary debate".<sup>60</sup> The culmination of this process, initiated in the previous decade, would only be reached in 1976 when the United Nations finally managed to organise Habitat, the first international conference on human settlements.

### **Conclusions: UN Habitat and “the father of human settlements”**

The improvement of the quality of life of human beings is the first and the most important objective of every human settlement policy.<sup>61</sup>

Back in 1954, speaking in New Delhi, Doxiadis stated that “the major problems arise between those locally responsible for development problems in any country on the one hand, and the foreign advisors, on the other, who usually come from a more highly developed part of the world”. On this subject, the designer felt he had to relate his personal experience as a public official in a country that had received assistance in the form of “advice and capital” after the Second World War.<sup>62</sup> During the reconstruction, numerous experts arrived in Greece.

Some of them were outstanding people, with many ideas that could be applied to Greece, others capable experts who tried to handle the Greek problem as though it was a Western European or an African one, some were perhaps not of the level required by their important mission. But in every case, by discussing our problems with them we learned more and reached more conclusions than we could have done in any other way. It was through these conflicts of ideas and personalities that we realized our faults and strengthened our convictions as to the rightness of some our ideas.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Biraghi and Ferlenga, *Architettura del Novecento. Teorie, scuole, eventi*, 159-160.

<sup>61</sup> Tyrwhitt, *Habitat: The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, Canada, 1976*, 87.

<sup>62</sup> Doxiadis, *Types and densities of housing accommodation*, 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

Once European reconstruction was over, either directly or through supranational bodies such as the United Nations and its agencies, governments, bodies and international organizations began to apply the same assistance mechanism to developing countries. The increasingly instrumental relationship between politics and the planning sphere became evident after 20 January 1949, when United States President Harry S. Truman announced the famous Point Four Program. As is well known, the Fourth Point of President Truman's speech outlined a program of technical assistance to underdeveloped countries which, where practical, was to be operated through the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Shortly afterwards, indeed, the United Nations established the Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance and the Technical Assistance Board, which inaugurated a season of international missions. These culminated in the establishment of the UN Housing, Building and Planning Council and the work done by the Council during the so-called Development decades. In these missions, such as those led by Doxiadis, planners performed the delicate task of "international development experts".<sup>64</sup> Their role varied from starting a national housing agency to designing transcontinental infrastructure. While considered "experts", it must be noted that these officers were called to deal with areas and populations about which little was known. It is no coincidence that after 17 years in the field of Technical Assistance, Doxiadis still stressed that in order to be successful "any technical assistance scheme should devote a part of its forces to research as even the best group of experts cannot be aware of the local conditions, it has to understand them as well as possible and has to become able to translate its own experience, for which it has been invited, with the local conditions which require the best solution".<sup>65</sup>

During those years, also thanks to the exchanges made possible within the missions, the idea of a better life came to coincide more and more directly with a western model of living, while the more traditional and local aspects became representative of backward existential conditions. In this regard Jane Drew recounted her work in Chandigarh:

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<sup>64</sup> Avermaete and Casciato, *Casablanca Chandigarh: A Report on Modernization*, 330-341.

<sup>65</sup> Doxiadis, "The challenge of technical assistance", 2.

...the last thing you should do is to try to follow or copy what was done by [people's] parents and grandparents before them. There are several things which we have innovated in Chandigarh – the high level *chulas* (cooking stoves) and so on but which we did not put in the poorest quarters because we were afraid of altering their tradition. We have since been castigated for this. They have said: “Why have you given these comfortable things to clerk’s wives and not to us? Why do we still have to sit on the floor?” And they were quite right: we have been too timid to think of their real needs and way of living.<sup>66</sup>

In the wake of their engagement in India, Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry published what can be considered the first handbook for architects working in “tropical zones”.<sup>67</sup> Tyrwhitt gave Doxiadis notice of the publication in the *Monthly Bulletin*, indicating that the second chapter, on the house, was particularly relevant, in which “authors consider in detail the effect of climate on design”.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the climate was one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of modernity and sometimes forced international designers to study local traditions. The *Monthly Bulletin* was born from this need for knowledge, the periodical primarily being a working tool for Doxiadis, as already mentioned. Second, it clearly places the home at the centre of increasingly global political and economic interests.<sup>69</sup> [Fig. 10] In fact, Western modernity did not present developing countries in the form of palaces or monuments, but as dwellings, or rather, as human settlements: “it is in human settlements

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<sup>66</sup> Jane Drew quoted in *Tropical Housing & Planning. Monthly Bulletin for D.A. Doxiades* [sic], no. 6 (31 March 1956), no. 35818, CADA, 20.

<sup>67</sup> It seems that the first idea of the two was to draw up two volumes, the first dedicated to areas with a humid climate, the second to those with an arid climate. However, the lack of success of the first volume, published in 1956, led the authors to abandon the idea and to opt instead for the expansion of the already drafted work to include areas with an arid climate. Galli, “A cosmopolitan manual in decolonizing Africa - Fry&Drew’s tropical architecture”, 193-216.

<sup>68</sup> *Tropical Housing & Planning. Monthly Bulletin for Dr. C.A. Doxiades* [sic], no. 2 (30 September 1956), no. 35818, CADA, 3.

<sup>69</sup> Kwak, *A World of Homeowners*.

that we are born, that we spend the major part of our lives, and wherein we die. It is here that humanity lives, works and creates. It is here that civilization is born and develops".<sup>70</sup> Indeed, as Andrew King pointed out, it is difficult to imagine that other developments could have had the same impact on daily habits and local lifestyles as housing and settlements.<sup>71</sup> In short, the home was the real front line of modernization, which was advancing with little resistance, fuelled as it was by Western economic aid and humanitarian intervention. As Ernesto Nathan Rogers said in an important editorial in *Casabella-Continuità* in 1960,

western technical culture is now a fatality from which no nation in the world can escape and...all, in order to evolve, are forced to appropriate it to a certain extent. Indeed, it can be said that the United States represents the leadership of that culture, and every nation that wants to progress is forced to Americanize itself to some extent. This is the case for Peru, for China, and even for England, despite the different traditions of these countries and the dialectical opposition they represent, each in its own way, out of respect for America itself.<sup>72</sup>

After being *Tropical Housing & Planning Monthly Bulletin*, the journal *Ekistics* was shaped and moulded these processes, acting at the same time as a means of scientific legitimization for its founder and as a networking tool that allowed him to weave a truly remarkable network of international relations. Among the many encounters that the magazine made possible, the one with Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, the "founding mother of modern urban design", deserves to be mentioned once again.<sup>73</sup> Her relationship with Doxiadis became so strong that soon after the first Delos Symposium,

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<sup>70</sup> Doxiadis, "A new role for the architect", 143.

<sup>71</sup> King, "Urbanism, colonialism and the world economy: cultural and spacial foundations of the world urban system", 525-526.

<sup>72</sup> Rogers, "Architettura per il Medio Oriente", 1.

<sup>73</sup> Shoshkes, "Jaqueline Tyrwhitt: a founding mother of modern urban design", 179-197.

Tyrwhitt wrote to José Louis Sert to inform him that she intended to leave Harvard to move to Athens and become a permanent part of Doxiadis's team.

The Symposium we had on the boat with a climax at the theatre at Delos was more successful than I had expected. I will send you with this letter a copy of the declaration, which at least says something. Of course it is only a beginning but – as you know – I have always been interested in international action at a professional (not a political) level, and Doxiadis has offered me a prominent position in working with this group. I acted as the “secretary general” to the Symposium. In addition the standard of students entering the Graduate School of Ekistics is now pretty high. It is a small Urban Design group – and I am interested in the idea of training people from the Eastern and African countries in an environment that is not so completely out of touch with their reality as Western Europe and the USA.<sup>74</sup>

In 1976, a year after Doxiadis's death, the United Nations organized the first Habitat Conference in Vancouver. [Fig. 11] The World Society of Ekistics, founded in 1965 and then chaired by Buckminster Fuller, took an active part in the preparations for the event, dedicating Delos Eleven (1974) and Delos Twelve (1975) to the event: “The resulting Declarations...were circulated to all the Governments known to be participating in the conference”.<sup>75</sup> Like Fuller, Tyrwhitt was convinced that “without the Delos Symposia, it is doubtful that the United Nations would have got world support for its conferences on the environment and human settlements”.<sup>76</sup> To mark the occasion, the four

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<sup>74</sup> Between 1955 and 1969 Tyrwhitt was co-editor of the journal, and from 1969 to 1972 she became full-time editor. Between 1972 and 1983 she was a part-time consultant editor while working as an Instructor in planning at the Graduate School of Ekistics between 1963 and 1972. Nagashima, *M.J. Tyrwhitt: annotated curriculum vitae*, 406.

<sup>75</sup> “Draft report to WSE members of activities at Vancouver conference, June 1976”, 182.

<sup>76</sup> J. Tyrwhitt interviewed by M.Petrović in Bernik, *Dialogues with the Delians*, 131; Fuller, “Transcript of Bucky Fuller at Habitat”, 81-83.

“red books”<sup>77</sup> were published, the theoretical testament of the founder of ekistics, the aim of which was to

to influence decisions at the United Nations Vancouver Conference. They were Doxiadis’s contribution to the discussions in lieu of his actual presence there. ...the betterment of human settlements...must rest on four pillars: a realization of the overriding importance of Anthropos – the individual human being and the human scale; the inevitability of Ecumenopolis – the organization of a urbanized world; the acceptance of a set of goals – Entopia or the attainable ideal; the formulation of a universally applicable methodology, outlined in *Action for human settlements*.<sup>78</sup>

Ekistics and Doxiadis's many ideas were not implemented systematically, and many of them dispersed into a series of more or less fruitful streams. Despite attempts to keep it alive, the journal ceased publication in 2017 after having contributed greatly to building an initial bridge between the needs of local populations and the aspirations of international institutions, and viceversa. Undoubtedly, the Greek's exuberant personality had contributed greatly to the success of all the initiatives he was involved in. Economist Raymond Vernon, who was sent to write a report on the Graduate School of Ekistics on behalf of the Ford Foundation, noted in this regard:

The personality of Doxiadis himself naturally dominates the company and the school. This personality is sensitive and creative, with a constant striving for large hypotheses and integrated concepts; and it is extraordinarily practical, with a demonstrated capacity for production and performance. The concepts of Doxiadis, therefore, are the school’s by-words – ekistics, the human community, dynapolis, ecumenopolis, the strangling city, and

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<sup>77</sup> Transcript of Bucky Fuller at Habitat”. Doxiadis and Papaioannou, *Ecumenopolis: the inevitable city of the future*; Doxiadis, *Anthropopolis: the city for human development*; Doxiadis, *Building Entopia*; Doxiadis, *Action for human settlements*.

<sup>78</sup> Tyrwhitt, “Introduction: C.A. Doxiadis, pursuit of an attainable ideal”, 310.

all the rest. Some of these concepts are consistent with the evidence; but some, as certain aspects of “the human community”, “dynapolis” and the “strangling city” are flatly at variance with the facts, at least as they apply to western cities; while others, such as “ecumenopolis”, are little more than rather vague fancy at this stage.<sup>79</sup>

Despite some vagueness noted by Vernon, Doxiadis could not be accused of impracticality. In fact, in about 20 years of activity, his Doxiadis Associates International had drawn up settlements in 18 different countries spread over five continents, thus bringing the front line of modernity to a global scale and forever transforming the discourse on housing, building and planning. Of this process, so important for understanding the complexities of the post-World War II period and the rise of Doxiadis to "father of human settlements",<sup>80</sup> the journal *Ekistics* remains an eloquent witness.

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<sup>79</sup>“ The graduate school of Ekistics and its related activities”, 6.

<sup>80</sup>“ The father of human settlements”, 115.

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