

FAQ's

1. Define Ekistics.

Ekistics concerns the science of human settlements, including regional, city, community planning and dwelling design. The study involves every kind of human settlement, with particular attention to geography, ecology, human psychology, anthropology, culture, politics, and occasionally aesthetics.

As a scientific mode of study, ekistics currently relies on statistics and description, organized in five **ekistic elements or principles**: nature, anthropos, society, shells, and networks. It is generally a more scientific field than urban planning, and has considerable overlap with some of the less restrained fields of architectural theory.

2. Discuss the extent of human settlements.

We are not aware of the great importance of the five principles unless this is pointed out to us, and we make great mistakes in our theories about human settlements.

This is because we live in a transitional era and become confused about our subject, even about the nature and extent of human settlements, confusing them with their physical structure ("the built-up area is the city") or their institutional frame ("the municipality is the city").

Human settlements have always been created by man's moving in space and defining the boundaries of his territorial interest and therefore of his settlements, for which he later created a physical and institutional structure. Throughout this evolution there is only one factor which defines the extent of human settlements: the distance man wants to go or can go in the course of his daily life. The shortest of the two distances defines the extent of the real human settlement, through definition of a "daily urban system"

This leads to the conception of a circular city, and of a city growing in concentric circles. When the machine – for example, the motor vehicle – enters the picture we are gradually led toward a two-speed system. Then toward interconnected settlements; then the road toward larger systems the universal city of Ecumenopolis is inevitable. The idea that the small, romantic city of earlier times is appropriate to the era of contemporary man who developed science and technology is therefore a mistaken one. New, dynamic types of settlements interconnecting more and more smaller settlements are the types appropriate to this era.

3. What are the components of a human settlement?

- Nature
- Man
- Society
- Shells
- networks

4. What are the basic principles of Ekistics?

The first principle is maximization of man's potential contacts with the elements of nature (such as water and trees), with other people, and with the works of man (such as buildings and roads). It is because of this principle that man considers himself imprisoned, even if given the best type of environment, if he is surrounded by a wall without doors.

The second principle is minimization of the effort required for the achievement of man's actual and potential contacts. He always gives his structures the shape, or selects the route, that requires the minimum effort, no matter whether he is dealing with the floor of a room, which he tends to make horizontal, or with the creation of a highway.

The third principle is optimization of man's protective space, which means the selection of such a distance from other persons, animals, or objects that he can

keep his contacts with them (first principle) without any kind of sensory or psychological discomfort.

The fourth principle is optimization of the quality of man's relationship with his environment, which consists of nature, society, shells (buildings and houses of all sorts), and networks (ranging from roads to telecommunications). This is the principle that leads to order, physiological and aesthetic, and that influences architecture and, in many respects, art.

This is the fifth principle, man organizes his settlements in an attempt to achieve an optimum synthesis of the other four principles, and this optimization is dependent on time and space, on actual conditions, and on man's ability to create a synthesis. When he has achieved this by creating a system of floors, walls, roofs, doors, and windows which allows him to maximize his potential contacts (first principle) while minimizing the energy expended (second principle) and at the same time makes possible his separation from others (third principle) and the desirable relationship with his environment (fourth principle), we speak of "successful human settlements". What we mean is settlements that have achieved a balance between man and his man-made environment, by complying with all five principles.

5. Discuss the relationship between human beings and settlements.

The human-centred approach emphasises that a central purpose of planning is to ensure that the developmental needs and activities of people living in settlements are catered for and, in particular, that opportunities for people to achieve their full potential through their own efforts are maximised. This approach, rather than being purely cost – or technologically-driven, is people-driven and democratic.

The nature-centred approach recognises that natural systems interact in highly synergistic ways, which must be respected if breakdowns in them are to be

prevented. Human actions on the landscape, such as settlement-making, must thus be sensitive to ecological processes. Therefore, rather than imposing settlement development on the environment, this approach emphasises design with nature, thereby creating synergy between man-made and ecological systems.

In terms of the human-made environment, quality of place recognises that there are points where elements of settlement structure, particularly the movement system, come together to create places of high accessibility and special significance. These are the meeting places of the settlement. Business and commercial activities, schools, clinics, libraries, community halls and other facilities and activities requiring exposure to large numbers of people are associated with these places.

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