
EDITOR'S DESK

Immediate Concerns

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Welcome to the ninth special issue of *Ekistics and the New Habitat: The problems and science of human settlements*. On behalf of the Executive Board, I would like to briefly introduce the present special issue: Ekistics-Related Research in Greece (Part 3 of 3): Planning Strategies / Policies and Politics.

For this issue, our guest editor, a researcher and architect based in the Ministry of Education and Sports in Athens, Myrto Exacoustou has gathered contributions from contemporary scholars, governmental experts and industry practitioners working in Greece and transnationally. This issue reflects her dedication to the memory of her Godfather, Panayis Psomopoulos (1926-2017) and the current form of the journal. Addressing the immediate concerns in the fields of planning, architecture, and urban design, the contributors identify, examine, and propose solutions to a range of problems relating to human settlements.

Alexios R. Antypas turns our attention towards the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), arguing that more suitable forums for negotiating and arrangements for governing climate change mitigation should be found. He discusses the value of such forums as the G20 and the Major Economies Forum, as well as alternative approaches like the building blocks strategy for reaching incremental solutions to complex "sticky" problems. Renowned transport planner, Vassilis Evmolpidis then provides an overview of the funding and organizational structures influencing the creation of transport networks in the six countries in the western Balkans region which are not yet EU members. His analysis of the population and urbanization patterns of this region reveals the vital role being played by high-speed rail lines that will link cities within a new megalopolis being formed in south-eastern Europe.

Moving the reader's focus from formal to informal transport networks, Heracles Moskoff and Vasileios Fragkos' contribution is a call to action. Their analysis identifies the ways that child refugees and unaccompanied child migrants are at risk in Greece and throughout Europe. Their analysis highlights the systems and procedures which have been implemented to direct support to these children, and to ensure their ability to access support services at entry points. The article sheds light on a very serious issue of immediate concern in Europe. Moskoff and Fragkos sound the alarm by exposing both the complexity and the urgency of this issue.

In "Participatory urban planning for an inclusive school: Models and mechanisms," Panagiotis Passas, Georgia Karageorgou, and Nikos Michos introduce detailed case studies to advocate for a more de-centralized school system in Greece; one based on greater emphasis on local authorities, especially in managing budgets, introducing local curricula, and fostering inclusion. They argue that such a shift will help Greece to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals, while improving governance through increased local participation. A strength of this contribution is the acknowledgment of the complexity and challenges facing those responsible for providing quality education to ever more diverse populations with changing needs.

In contrast to the approach proposed by Passas, Karageorgou, and Michos, Gonda Van Steen details the centralized approach to planning developed in Postwar Greece. She does so through an historical study of the respective careers of Constantinos Doxiadis and his brother Spyros. Van Steen's analysis reveals the ideologies informing centralized planning policies relating to adoption that amounted to the proactive management of unwed mothers' lives and those of their children. The implication of this analysis is that ekistics is linked to a shared ideological ground

which aimed to not only materially rebuild Greece but also socially engineer its population. Van Steen thus recontextualizes our understanding of terms like holistic, exhaustive, and systemic that are often benignly applied to ekistics. Van Steen forces readers to reassess the ideological context in which ekistics developed, and to reflect on the immediate concerns addressed by the other contributors to this issue; many of which deal with similar questions regarding the shaping of society, controlling access to regions via formal and informal networks, and the provision of governance and education to rapidly changing populations.

Finally, the issue closes with Panos Dragonas' book review of *Builders, Housewives, and the Construction of Modern Athens* (3rd Revised Edition, 2022) by Ioanna Theocharopoulou. The review highlights the importance of Theocharopoulou's research into the role that informal construction (developed within formal regulations) has played a role in shaping modern Athens and its people. The review and the book highlight how contemporary problems should be informed by more nuanced understandings of our past, as the dominant narratives about immediate concerns are often rooted in oversimplification or misreading of the past.

Once again, I must express my deepest gratitude to our guest editor who solicited these contributions, to our contributors and reviewers, and to our editorial team who helped produce the issue. This third and final part of the *Special Issue: Ekistics-Related Research in Greece* is truly of great value to those interested in the problems of human settlements in their historical, theoretical and practical aspects.

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