Fairhaven College Course Proposal
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Sustainable Settlements: An Ekistic Approach

The world is in a state of accelerated transformation. Western industrial civilization has proven inimical to the long-term health of the natural and social capital that supports it. A broad diversity of new possibilities and solution are being forwarded under the encompassing philosophical banner of "sustainability." If humanity is to thrive, then it must find a way to harmoniously, symbiotically integrate its presence within the larger Life of which it is a part. The emerging global effort at theorizing, conceptualizing, designing and implementing truly sustainable settlements is a direct response and promising solution to these profound and pertinent issues.

"Ekistics" is a term coined by Greek architect Constantinos Doxiadis in the late '70s to define a *scientific, multi-disciplinary* approach to the study of human settlements. Ekistics was "conceived as a comprehensive advisory, analytic, and design tool to fit and harmonize the uniquely complex, technicized, human constructed environment within the larger natural biosphere." From his mechanistic, Eurocentric perspective, Doxiadis envisioned an extended city-scape, an "ecumenopolis," spanning entire continents. Is this vision sustainable? Does it encourage and nurture that vital set of relationships called community? What would be the result of an ekistic analysis undertaken from an *eco*centric or *bio*centric perspective?

Through this course, we will be objectively considering these kinds of questions and setting out to collect and organize our own data to formulate a collective vision of truly Sustainable Community for the 21st century. This is a vast subject: Of necessity our inquiry will be drawing upon the revelations of such wide and diverse disciplines as Biology, Ecology, Human Ecology, Human Geography, Economics, Cultural Anthropology, Psychology, Urban Planning, and Systems Thinking. We will be exploring prior (and in many cases still existing) settlement patterns that were efficacious in their time, as well as exploring the upsurge of contemporary design alternatives, including: ecovillages, ecocities, ecohamlets, cohousing, intentional communities, and the illusion of "independence on 5 acres." We will analyze, evaluate, synthesize and synergize all this information into a coherent and useful body of knowledge applicable specifically to envisioning the most optimal *scale* and *pattern* for truly sustainable human settlements.

The course is intended above all to serve as an epistemological foundation for the subsequent informed *designing* of sustainable settlements. Long-term sustainability is the goal; Ekistics is the tool; settlement design is the context; love is the motivation.

Required reading: Because of the essential multi- and inter-disciplinary nature of the subject matter, reading material will draw from many diverse sources and will be compiled into an extensive reader, including original works by the facilitator.