

(13) ECOVILLAGE

All the previous patterns were meant to define the context within which the pattern ECOVILLAGE (13) could naturally, gracefully manifest itself. If all the previous patterns were implemented or adhered to, then a setting would be provided for the creation of ecologically-integrated, truly sustainable human settlements. Accordingly, the ecovillage is being conceived as the *archetypal sustainable settlement pattern*.

In order to understand fully the scope, intent, and implications of this particular pattern – the fundamental pattern around which this entire pattern language is being constructed – one must become familiar with the term ‘ekistics.’ First coined in 1968 by the Greek architect and planner Constantinos Doxiadis, the discipline of Ekistics was formulated and devised to be the *scientific, multi-disciplinary* approach to the study of human settlements. Doxiadis believed that such an approach was needed to guide the planning professions away from generic, patented, mechanistic formulas and schematics and towards holistic-systemic – one might say *organismic* – design scenarios. In subsequent years, the planning professions have only marginally instituted an ekistic (scientific, multi-disciplinary) approach – for the mechanistic paradigm and mindset still prevail. Such an approach, however, is explicitly inherent in this “A Pattern Language for Ecovillages.”

In that sense, ECOVILLAGE (13) is intended to be the sustainable ‘unit’ of human settlement in a theoretical ekistics for the 21st century. In order to provide a basis or standard from which to begin theorizing, the seminal, germinal definition of ‘ecovillage’ first promulgated by Robert Gilman of Context Institute in 1991 is used as a starting point. In those early (and still not so distant) days, Gilman defined the ecovillage as a:

- 1) Human scale
- 2) Full-featured settlement
- 3) In which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world
- 4) In a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and
- 5) Can be continued into the indefinite future

If these five points are used as criteria, then it can be argued that there does not yet exist anywhere in the world a genuine ‘ecovillage,’ though many proto-models have come into being as *ecovillages-in-process*.

This statement is true pertaining to those ecovillage proto-models in the so-called “First World” because none is yet truly sustainable – that is, none “can be continued into the indefinite future” (Gilman Point 5) in their present form. What this means is that none of these ecovillages-in-process are yet self-reliant, especially in food and energy production, so a disruption in the global economic system will seriously challenge the ability of these pioneer

models to sustain themselves. The global energy subsidy is still distorting primary production processes.

At the other pole, there may still be many (remnants of) traditional villages that could withstand a global economic meltdown relatively intact, but these models in the so-called 'Two-thirds World' could not be considered "full-featured settlements" (Gilman Point 2), so the full flowering of human potential may be impaired.

With all of the above in mind, the archetypal pattern ECOVILLAGE (13) becomes an ideal to aspire to, and it is the purpose of this pattern language to outline a comprehensive usable framework upon which the details of an ideal ecovillage may be conceptualized as design criteria.