

Projects

Doxiadis Office Building



Doxiadis Associates employed some 400 persons, half of whom were engaged on various projects in a dozen countries whilst the remaining half were attached to the central office. Until September 1958, the Athens based staff were scattered over four different buildings, as it proved impossible to find a suitable and large enough place to embody them all. This led Doxiadis Associates to construct a building of their own for their central office.

The site chosen --an area of some 950 square meters at the foot of pine-covered Lycabettus Hill was considered ideal for the purpose, combining as it does quietness, a clear atmosphere and parking possibilities with proximity to the center of the city.



Study of the project and excavation of the building area began simultaneously in March 1957. The foundations were laid three months later, and it took another six months to complete the load-bearing structure. Doxiadis Associates were able to move into their new premises in September 1958. By December of the same year, the building was complete in every respect.

Four architects, eight civil engineers, two mechanical and electrical engineers and a large number of the firm's technical staff worked on the project.



The basic idea in the conception of the building was to create large spaces free of interior walls and supporting columns as required for drawing offices and other working areas. These areas, however, should allow conversion into smaller compartments if necessary through the adoption of standardized movable partitions which could be used in many different layouts. The 15000 cubic meters of building volume have been deployed in three wings of different heights (photo 1), so as to leave a large interior courtyard (photo 2), thus doubling the facade surfaces and giving all spaces direct natural lighting and ventilation. The rear wing of the building (photo 4) was designed to house the Doxiadis Associates Office, the front wing was designed as a reserve space for future expansion and accommodated the Athens Technological Institute. The connecting wing intended for several functions and services (Assembly Hall, sickroom, etc.) common to the building as a whole.



Functional, structural, and aesthetic reasons led to the design of the building on a square grid, this grid being chosen with a modulus of 75 cm. The modulus was defined by the minimum working space taken up by one person, i.e., the width of a desk or drawing board and the chair he sits on.



Consequently, every working area has been designed so that the dimensions of its floor plan are integral multiples of this modulus with a minimum of $4 \times 0.75 = 3$ m. Auxiliary spaces (antechambers, corridors, etc.) follow the same modulus, with a width of $2 \times 0.75 = 1.50$ m. or $3 \times 0.75 = 2.25$ m., depending on their use.

In the vertical dimensions of the building, the requirements of the Building Code had to be followed. Its facades clearly show the modulus with continuous 3m. - wide windows intended to bring light right up to the center of the large working areas (photo 4). All these areas have two facades and therefore enjoy good sunlight and ventilation at all times of the day.

They also command two views. On one side, there is Lycabettus Hill with its rocks and trees -- the nature on which we build. On the other side, there is the city with its good and bad points. And in the background rises the Acropolis, symbol of a great architecture. Between these three elements the designer can get inspiration as to the road he wishes to follow.

Construction of the building was adapted to local possibilities, both as regards methods and materials.

In view of the steep incline of the building area, some 4,400 cubic meters of rock had to be removed.

The only supporting elements of the building are the outer walls of its NW and SE sides, the staircase walls and six columns, all made of reinforced concrete. The main beams are of prestressed concrete. The large slabs (9×11.25 m.) have been built with ribs, the average rib-slab thickness being 15 cm.

Exterior casements are of wood faced in aluminum and the blinds are of aluminum with adjustable slats. Interior partitions are wooden and have double linings of sound-absorbent material. The same material was used for lining the walls and ceilings of working areas, while the concrete walls and ceilings of the common rooms are painted without being plastered. Central heating was installed, and provision made for an air-conditioning system operational during summer and winter.

Artificial lighting provides 100 LUX in auxiliary spaces, 200 LUX in working areas and 500 LUX in drawing offices. The building is also fitted with two telephone systems, one external and one internal.

The cost of the building, despite its large spans, movable partitions, large glass surfaces and numerous mechanical installations, has not exceeded the average unit cost of other similar buildings in Athens. Construction was completed within 18 months.