


Constantinos Doxiadis' Concept of 'Ecumenopolis' vis-à-vis Eurafrica: Revisiting the Masterplan for Festac Town and the Role of Transport Infrastructure

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Constantinos Doxiadis' Concept of 'Ecumenopolis' vis-à-vis Eurafrica: Revisiting the Masterplan for Festac Town and the Role of Transport Infrastructure

Festac '77, also known as the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture was a major international festival held in Lagos, Nigeria, from 15 January 1977 to 12 February 1977. This paper focuses on Doxiadis Associates' masterplan for Festac Town, a federal housing estate located along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway in Lagos State, Nigeria, paying special attention to the infrastructure along the Lagos-Badagry Highway (fig. 1). This project, which exemplifies the late modernist concerns for urban development in the Global South and should be understood within the context of modernisation that followed Nigeria's independence, concerned the design of a town aiming at hosting the visitors of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos in 1977 (fig. 2). It was assigned in 1974 by the Federal Republic of Nigeria to Doxiadis Associates and was conceptualized as "a model residential community with all the necessary functions and facilities to serve a permanent population" after the end of the aforementioned festival. This masterplan was based on the theory of ekistics developed by Greek city planner Constantinos A. Doxiadis, and included the construction of significant infrastructure installations. The scope of the paper is twofold: to investigate the connections between Doxiadis's understanding of the role of infrastructure in this project and his conception of 'Ecumenopolis', and to relate Doxiadis's vision for 'Ecumenopolis' to the idea of Eurafrica, referring to the political project that emerged in the 1920s based on the idea that Europe's future survival was bound up with Europe's successful merger with Africa.

Doxiadis's concept of 'Ecumenopolis' departed from the hypothesis that the urbanization, the growth of population, and the development of means of transport and human networks would lead to a fusion of the urban areas and megalopolises forming a single continuous planetwide city (fig. 3). Doxiadis's "Towards Ecumenopolis" (1961), a confidential report that focused on how to devise a "different approach" to the City of the Future, treated infrastructure as a skeleton of a body covering the entire globe and resulting from the balance between settlements, production and nature. In his second report on 'Ecumenopolis', Doxiadis claimed that Africa was the largest and most suitable area to welcome inbound capitals and investments. The Africa Transport Plan was intended to provide the basic layout of his 'Ecumenopolis'. The paper examines a set of maps displaying settlements, routes, airways and human corridors that Doxiadis Associates produced to explore the potentials of the concept of 'Ecumenopolis', relating the latter to Eurafrica.

One can read in the issue of May 1977 of *Ebony*: "For 29 days, black people from everywhere - from Africa, Europe, African-America, South America, Canada, and the islands of the seas - testified to the haunting presence of blackness in the world". My objective is to examine closely the cultural-historic complexity of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, the so-called FESTAC '77, during which thousands of artists, writers, musicians, activists and scholars from Africa and the Black diaspora assembled in Lagos. As Denis Ekpo remarks, in "Culture and Modernity Since FESTAC 77", in 1977, thanks to FESTAC, "Lagos had become the Mecca of African collective cultural and artistic self-retrieval and self-accreditation". The methodological approach on which the paper is based draws upon theoretical tools aims to go beyond "progress" or "influence", while the historiographical method on which the paper intends to challenge the schism between globalisation and regionalism.

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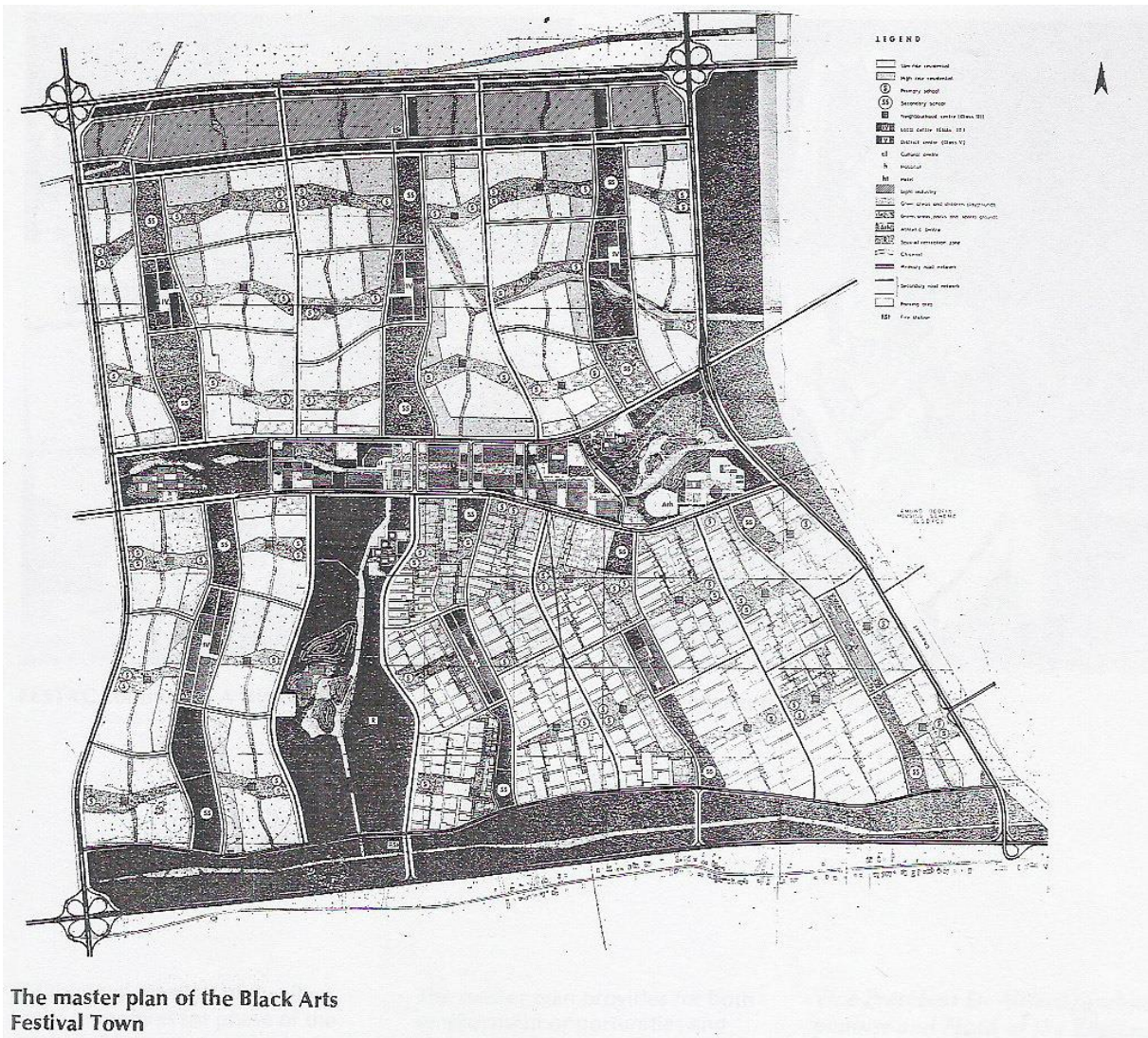
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The master plan of the Black Arts Festival Town

Figure 1. Doxiadis Associates, The masterplan for Festac Town © Constantinos and Emma Doxiadis Foundation

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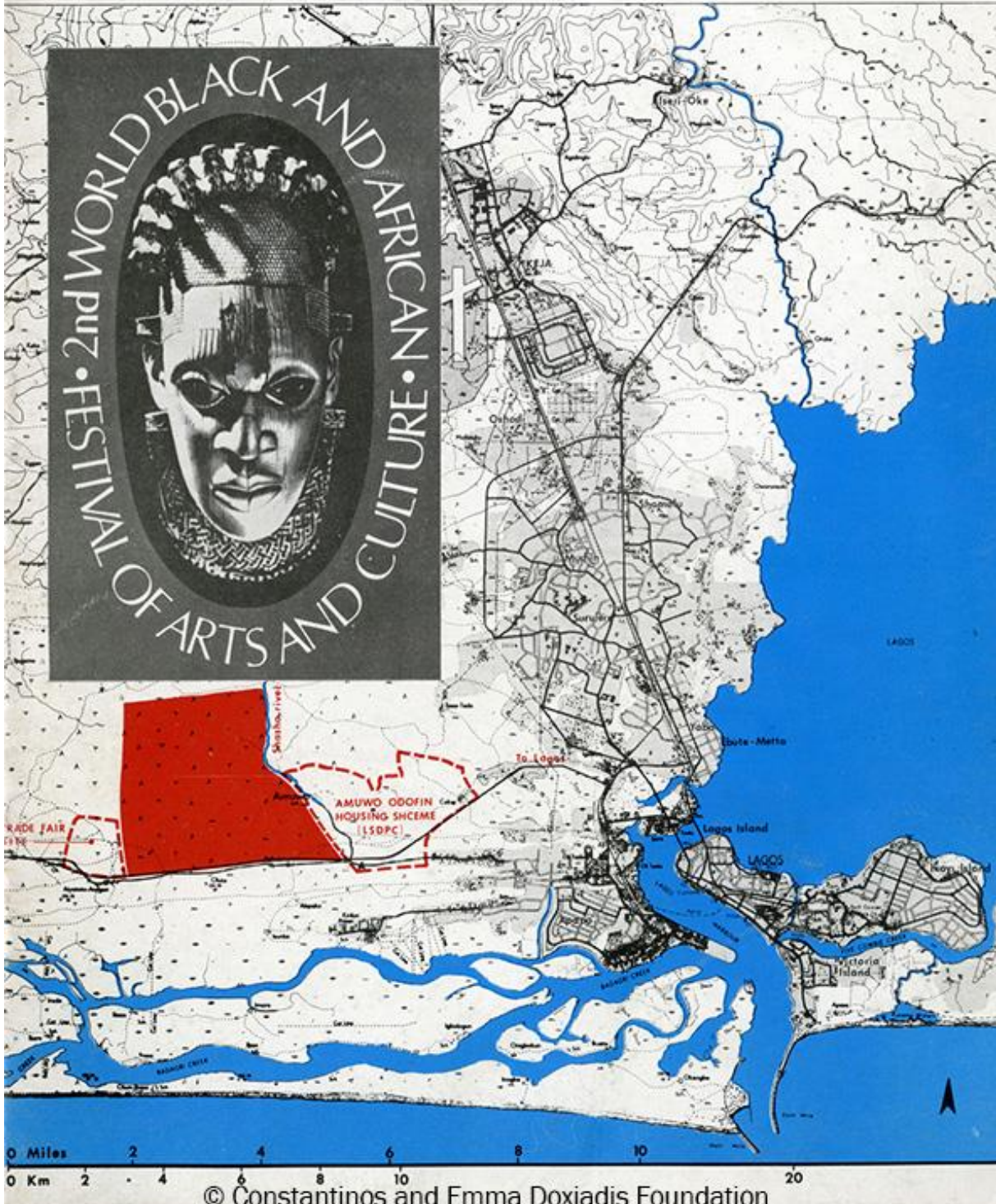


Figure 2. Front cover of *D.A. Review* Vol 13, no. 100 (1977). © Constantinos and Emma Doxiadis Foundation

ECUMENOPOLIS 2060

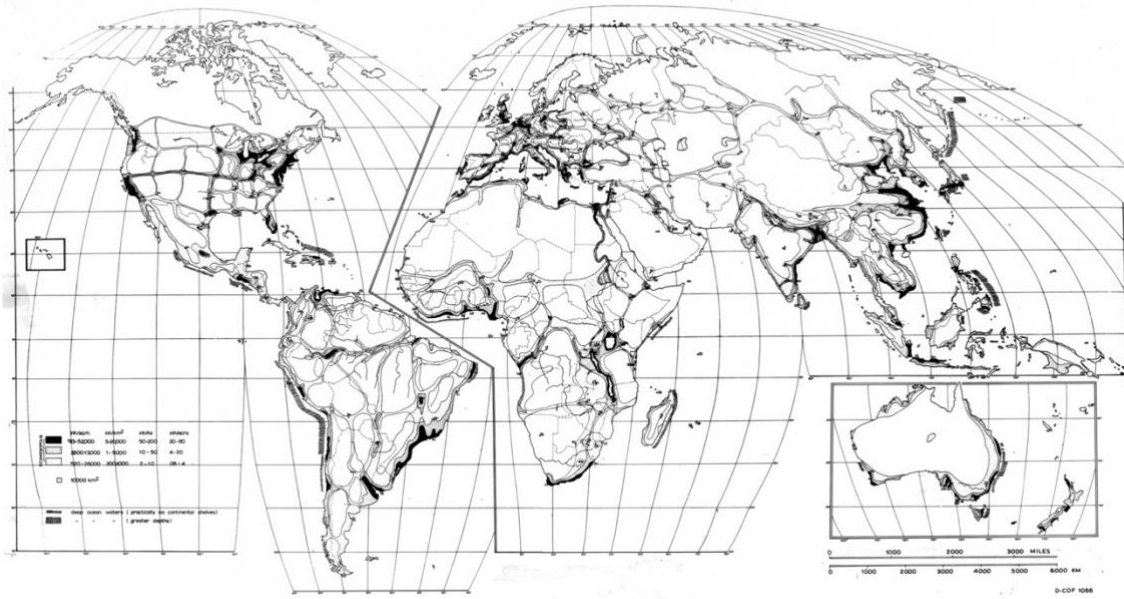


Figure 3. Doxiadis Associates, 'Ecumenopolis' 2060 © Constantinos and Emma Doxiadis Foundation

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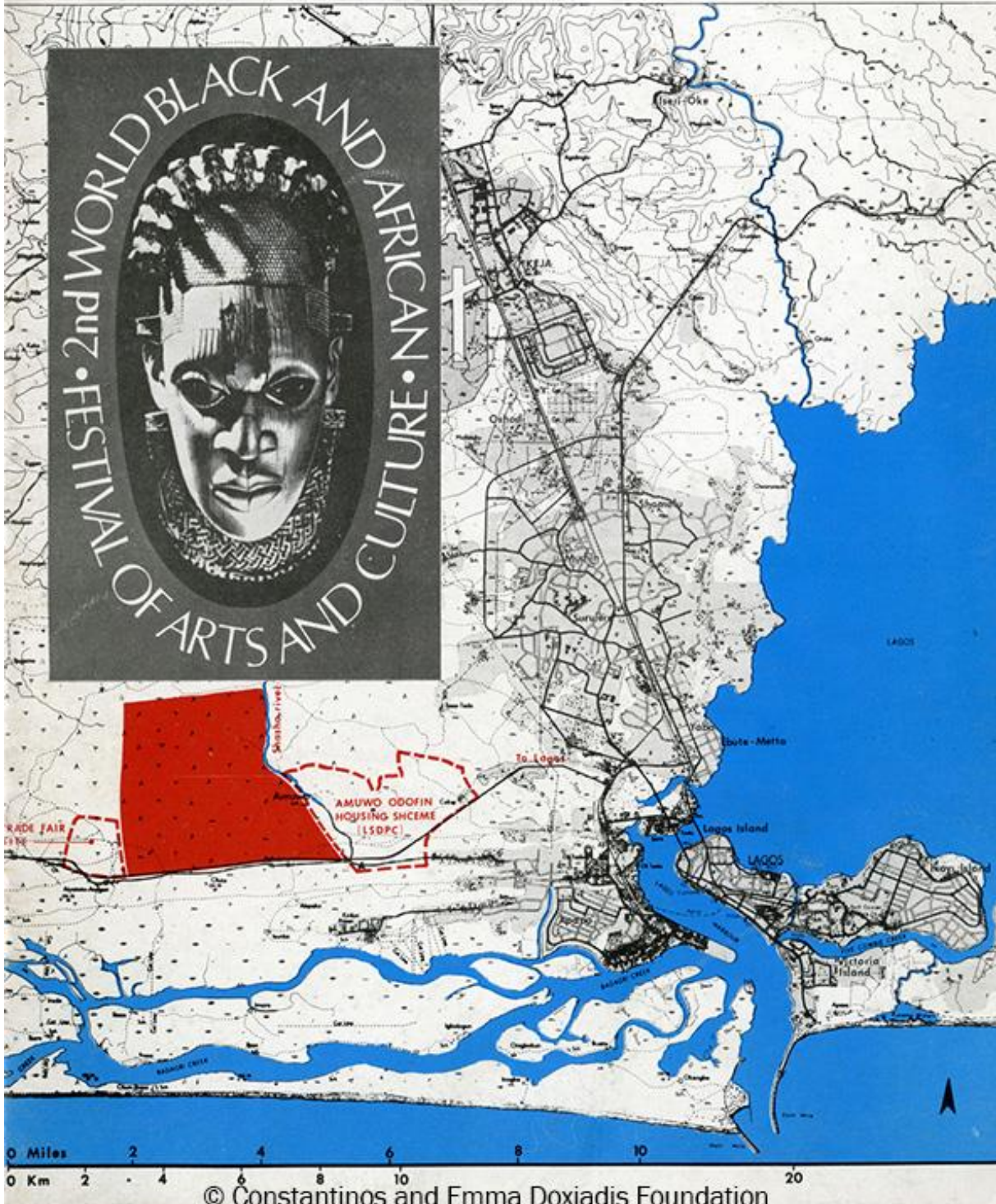


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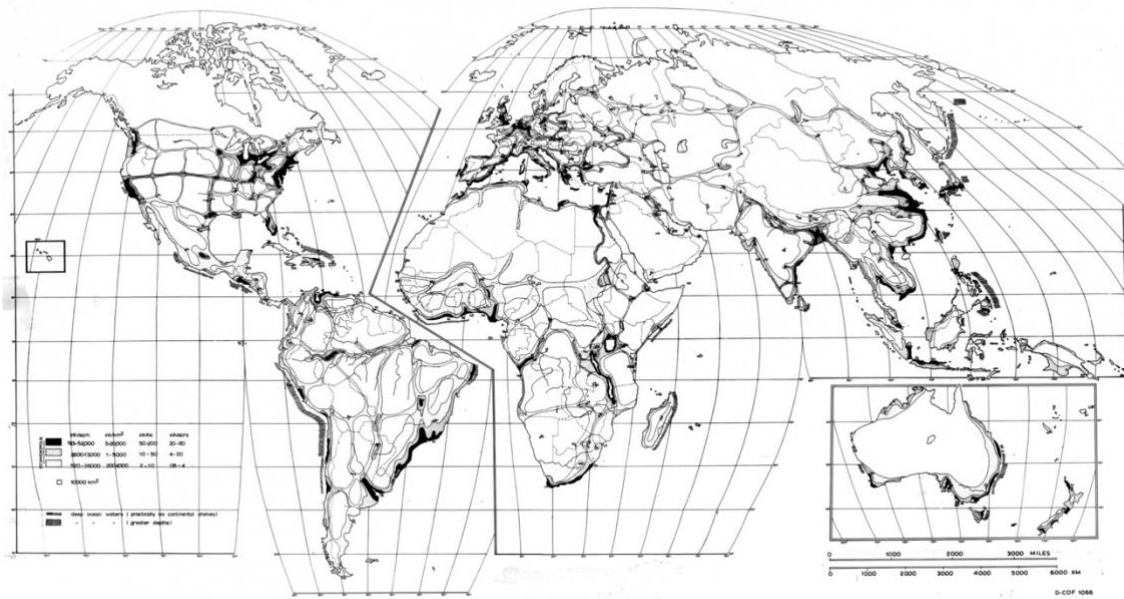


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