

Lilongwe: Another new capital for Africa

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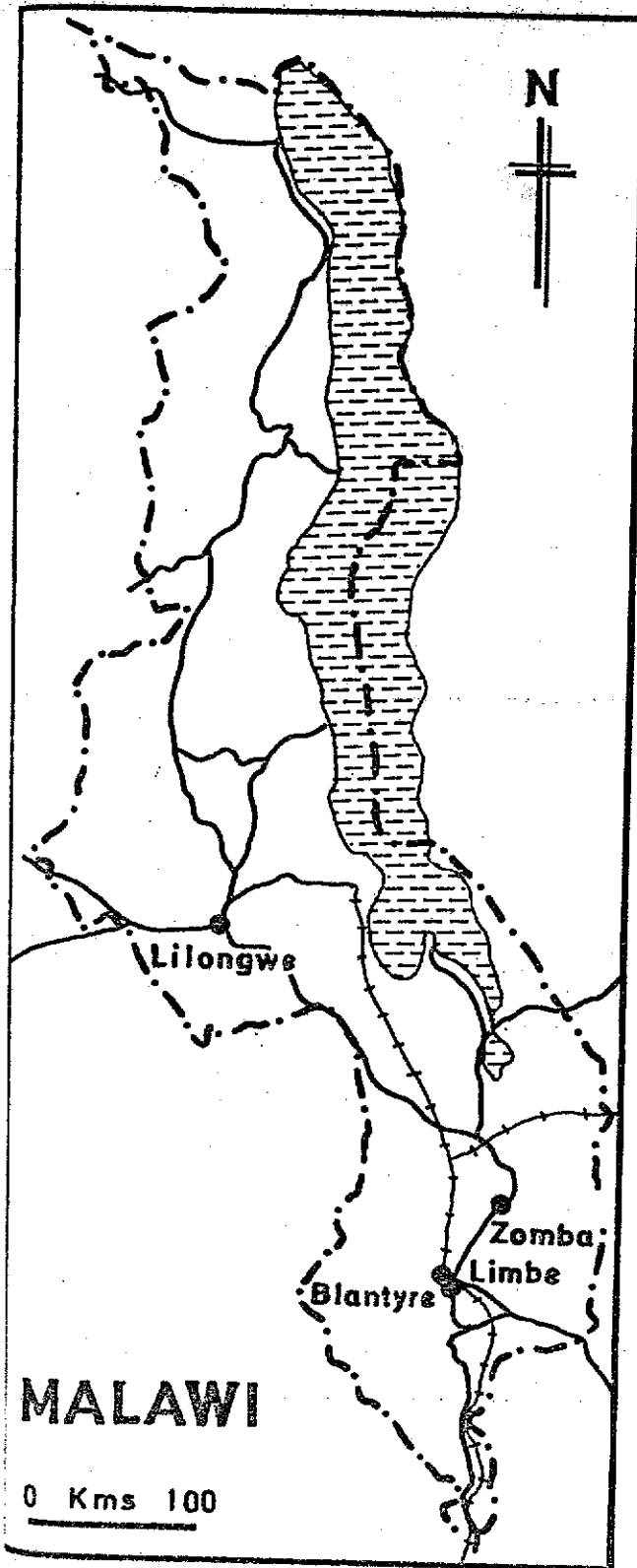


FIGURE 1

Work began in July 1970 on Lilongwe, the new capital city of Malawi, and, after Nouakchott in Mauritania and Gaborone in Botswana, the third new post-independence capital in Africa. The Malawi Housing Corporation has begun to build houses and the first Ministry building, for the Ministry of Works and Supplies, should be completed by the end of 1971, whilst the Ministries of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Education should be established there by early 1972. The first capital in Nyasaland was sited at Zomba before the end of the 19th century, where the administration could live at a respectable distance from the missionaries in Blantyre, and where the scenery was slightly more beautiful, but it gradually became apparent that the forty mile distance between Zomba and Blantyre, where the majority of settlers and business interests were centred and which was nearest to the most important airport at Chileka, made administration difficult. In 1946, after a cyclone damaged Zomba, a commission was set up to advise on a move of the capital from Zomba, but any decision was shelved when Federation was imposed, and it was not until 1964, after Independence, that the proposal to move the capital was again raised, this time to Lilongwe. The President, Dr. H.K. Banda, proposed in Parliament in October 1964 that a new capital be built at Lilongwe. Consultants reported, loans were sought, and in 1968 the Capital City Development Corporation was established.

The official reason for the decision not to continue at Zomba was that it had two major shortcomings, in the limitations of its terrain and in the fact that it was not suitably placed in relation to a future international airport. Thus a decision was taken to restart on a new site. Dr. Banda considered that Lilongwe would make an ideal site because of its central position in Malawi, and would therefore assist in bringing development north from the Southern Region to spread economic development more generally throughout the country, although the Northern Region is by far the poorest of the three. (The President comes from nearby Kasungu in the Chewa speaking area, where most of his supporters live). The reasons are not entirely convincing since, firstly, although most of the Ministry buildings are now on the steep slope above Zomba, there is sufficient flat land available for any foreseeable expansion of government ministries; secondly, Lilongwe is at a much greater distance from the only international airport at Chileka, and the new international airport site, 12 miles north of Lilongwe, is no better than possible sites in the Zomba area. Moreover, the country does not need two international airports, so that the resulting diversion of Chileka services to Lilongwe would create problems for the only large urban area, Blantyre-Limbe. However, Lilongwe is better suited for international flights from South Africa to Kenya, and makes a convenient staging post for South African airlines, whilst Dar es Salaam airport is closed to them. Benefits for Malawi's own airline will be less obvious.

In 1966, the population of Lilongwe was 19,425, the third city in Malawi after Zomba (19,666) and Blantyre-Limbe (109,461) and it is now little more than 25,000. Plan estimates are that the capital will grow to 80,000 in 1980 and 260,000 at the

end of the century, and of growth rate and million living in area of 38,000 acres developed; six small can be used for the

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end of the century. Only Brazil's new capital of Brasilia has achieved this kind of growth rate and, in Malawi's case, with at present only 5% of the present 4.7 million living in urban areas of over 1,000 population, this seems unrealistic. An area of 38,000 acres has been designated for the new capital and is now being developed; six small villages have been resettled from this area so that their land can be used for the new city.

The form of the new city is determined by the spatial relationships between a new city core, containing the government administrative area and shopping and commercial centres, a recreation zone, industrial zones, residential sections and a 'processional way' connecting these new elements with the old town. The undulating site meant that the few relatively level areas are reserved for industrial and commercial uses, whilst the residential zones are on the more steeply sloping parts. The site of the Government area is on Capital Hill, some three miles north of the old town centre. The resulting pattern is of a modified linear city with the main spine running north-south between old and new Lilongwe. (Gerke and Viljoen, 1968). Initially, the city was to have two centres only, 'old Lilongwe' and the new 'Capital Hill' area, but after a brief visit in 1969, the President decided that there should be two more centres, Kanengo and Ncheri Hill. So far, most of the development is at Capital Hill, where the first ministries will go. The Master Plan proposes three different residential densities, from plots of one acre to plots of an eighth of an acre in the large areas reserved for traditional housing. (The Plan itself was prepared by a South African consultancy, whilst a loan of R 8 million - £4.7 million -, towards what is expected to be a £25-30 million project before 1980, finances construction after the U.K. rejected the scheme as unnecessary. Several South African firms are involved in the project and South African companies will be amongst the first new industries).

In association with the construction of the city itself, parallel services are being provided. A tarmac road will at last be completed between Lilongwe and Blantyre by the end of 1971, and a 'corridor' has been left in the city plan for possible extension of the Malawi railway from Salima, linking the capital to the Mozambique port of Nacala, which was opened in July 1970. (Perry, 1971). It is still far from clear what industries are expected to be attracted to Lilongwe. Industrial and commercial development is almost non-existent in Malawi (Pollock, 1967) and in 1970, industry employed only 40,000 workers, almost all in the Blantyre-Limbe area, thus the diversion of industrial activity to the Central Region seems unnecessary. Furthermore, the new Shire H.E.P. scheme south of Blantyre will further encourage industry to remain there, whilst Malawi's only major natural resource, bauxite, is located at Mlanje, south east of Blantyre. In Lilongwe itself in 1968 only 6% of the population aged over 10 were employed in industry; of these 4% were in agricultural processing and 2% in transport products. However, of 22 new industrial licences granted in 1970, 8 were for the Lilongwe district. The only new industries that seem certain to go to Lilongwe are South African cement and

fertiliser firms, the latter having been recently granted a five-year monopoly in Malawi. The major industrial development is expected to be related to agricultural processing and machinery production in partial association with the Lilongwe Land Development Project, but production is unlikely to meet more than a regional, or at best national, market. Even the Master Plan admits that the development of new export industries in Malawi is 'unpromising'.

The Lilongwe Plateau area is the major area of undeveloped agricultural potential in Malawi; the World Bank financed Land Development Project is designed to improve agricultural practice and raise production in an area of 500,000 acres west of Lilongwe. The twelve year project, which started in 1967, is aimed at increasing production especially of maize (using new hybrid maize from Kenya), groundnuts and tobacco. During this period, the local population should increase from 190,000 to 270,000 to create a demand on the new capital for the provision of services and secondly to provide a surplus, estimated at 120,000 tons of maize, 16,000 tons of groundnuts and 5,000 tons of tobacco (Hupkes, 1968). However, it is only for maize that this represents a greater than 50% increase on current surplus, hence the processing significance of this increase is likely to be relatively slight, whilst the spin-off effect in neighbouring agricultural areas is unlikely to be great in the near future. Lilongwe will only play an important servicing and marketing role, but this could be more important if relations with Zambia continue to improve, since this would result in large maize exports and despite Zambia's commitment to the Tan Zam Railway (Connell, 1971), it is possible that Malawi's railway could be extended through Lilongwe to Zambia.

On balance, however, it seems that, unlike the other new Southern African capital, Gaborone (Best, 1970), Lilongwe has much less social or economic rationale and probably much less chance of success. The scale of development is extremely optimistic and it is unlikely that industrial and commercial expansion will justify the Government's faith. The next decade will indicate to what extent the new capital will become a rather expensive white elephant for a poor country or whether it becomes a massive vindication of the growing links between South Africa and Malawi.

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Pollock, N.C., Industrial Development in Malawi, pp.316-319.

Muguga is situated north-west of Nairobi in the Volcanic Highlands and is an eastward flowing river but large areas of agricultural land have been afforested. The importance, including the fact that many species have suffered as a result of the spread of this forest. Some of the work was done in a training programme.

The first study in geography was carried out on both occasions the main axis was east-north-east and at the station (E.A.S.T.) between 13 and 14 degrees south. A meteorological station was set up at the station.

Observations

Observations of the sites in 1970. On the patterns observed in the of these sites is given governed by the distribution of topography. As seen on the eastern side of the area extreme east and west observations were made at a height of 2 metres. It seemed to occur initially.

Perry, P.J., Malawi's Outlet to the Sea, Geography, 56 (2), April 1971, pp.138-140.

Pollock, N.C., Industrial Development in Malawi, Geography, 52 (3), July 1967, pp.316-319.

Topography and surface winds at Muguga

John Tyrrell

Muguga is situated in the Kenya Highlands, some 15 kilometres to the north-west of Nairobi. It is located on the slopes of the Tertiary-Recent Volcanic Highlands and Plateaus¹ which have been considerably dissected by eastward flowing rivers. The surrounding area is fairly densely populated, but large areas of agricultural smallholdings are broken by areas of afforestation. The latter are composed of several hardwoods of economic importance, including pinus patula and pinus radiata. In recent years these species have suffered from the attacks of pineus spp.² It was in relation to the spread of this aphid that the study outlined below was conducted. Some of the work was also carried out as part of the undergraduate field training programme.

The first study of the relationship between wind direction and topography was carried out in December 1969 and repeated in November 1970. On both occasions the main regional airflow was between the north-east and east-north-east and air temperatures reached their maximum about 1600 hrs. (E.A.S.T.) between 13.44°C and 13.61°C on each occasion at the E.A.A.F.R.O., meteorological station.³

Observations

Observations of wind direction were made at 8 sites in 1969 and 12 sites in 1970. On the latter occasion the sites were chosen to test the wind patterns observed in 1969 and to extend the area of observation. The location of these sites is given on the map in Fig. 1. The choice of sites was partly governed by the distribution of infected trees and partly by the nature of the topography. As seen in Fig. 1 a narrow north-south valley dominates the eastern side of the area, while the west is more open. In the centre and extreme east and west the ground rises above 6,800 ft. (1873 metres). The observations were made simultaneously at each site at 15 minute intervals at a height of 2 metres. This height was selected since pineus infestations seemed to occur initially in the lower branches of the windward sides of