

The planning of the new capital of Tanzania: Dodoma, an unfulfilled dream

Aloysius C. Moshia

University of Botswana, Botswana

The government of Tanzania, like so many other Third World countries took a decision in 1973 to build a new capital city for its country, the main reason being to bring the government closer to the people by choosing a central location. It was argued that then capital, Dar es Salaam was peripherally located and not accessible to the bulk of the people of the country.

In 1976 a master plan was prepared by a Canadian firm of planners (PPAL) and was later revised in 1988 due to the deteriorating economic fortunes of the country.

The planning of the new capital adopted novel, modern and appropriate concepts to shape the city, starting with the garden city form of the 1976 master plan to the 'cities' concept of 1988.

The plan and the concepts proposed drew heavily on overseas models and experiences but there were attempts to integrate Tanzanian political and cultural aspirations into the detailed design of urban areas. The plan adopted an urban concept based on hierarchies of the provision of all types of services; it introduced a man-centred transportation system (linking communities) that is segregated and caters for the use of buses, bicycles and walking as modes of transport; it adopted the concept of mixed densities and social mix in its housing design mirroring Tanzania's socialist philosophy; and a meeting point was reached in incorporating man and nature principles in the planning of the new capital. These are experiences that can be emulated by planners elsewhere.

The Master Plan assumed that resources would be available to build the capital and that the transfer of ministries would take place as expected. However, many of its assumptions were not well founded and up to now implementation has been extremely slow due to budget constraints. To-date the government is still run from both Dar es Salaam and Dodoma,- a very costly exercise indeed.

Given more political will, one day the city will see the light of day, but the bottom line is that more resources and implementation capacity has to be greatly increased.

Introduction

Dodoma was first established as a colonial settlement under German rule in 1890. The railway line reached the town in 1910 and in 1912 it became an administrative district. Under British trusteeship, the town expanded north and south of the railway line in a grid fashion, reaching a population of 45,000 by 1975. Although the Tanzanian government announced that it would move its seat of government to Dodoma in 1973, most people still think that the capital of Tanzania is Dar es Salaam, because most government offices, commerce and industry are located there.

Background to the movement of the capital

As early as 1915, moving the Tanzanian capital from the coast to an interior location where it would better service the needs of the country was contemplated. It was not until independence in 1961, when a new spirit of identity and symbolism was sought, that moving the capital was seriously considered.

The relocation started with an announcement by President Julius Nyerere in October 1973 (CDA, 1977a; CDA, 1977b). The then ruling party, TANU, unanimously decided to transfer the capital from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma. This was a historic decision; Tanzanians had decided to build their own capital city, a city that would reflect their own political aspirations. Dar es Salaam was chosen by the colonial powers to facilitate commerce. The development of the hinterland did not matter to the Europeans while they had Dar es Salaam as their capital and chief harbour. However, to Tanzanians, the development of the whole country was their basic objective and the decision to transfer the capital was yet another demonstration of that firm commitment.

There were several reasons for selecting Dodoma as the new national capital. Dodoma is central to the country and the crossroads of the Great North Road between Arusha and Mbeya and the east-west road from Dar es Salaam to Mwanza/Rwanda. The region has a comfortable climate and impressive landscapes, which would be comparable to other national capitals. The region was lagging behind in development and the new capital was seen as an impetus for regional growth and a stimulator for investment. Another important reason for selecting Dodoma was the established town, which acted as a catalyst for the development of the new capital.

By 1973, Dar es Salaam had almost reached the limit of expansion unless large sums were to be spent on reorganising and restructuring the city. There had been substantial industrial growth and a surge in the population. The original commercial life of Dar es Salaam had continued and the city had also become a focus for tourism, the scene of international conferences, and an academic centre as well. To all this must be added Dar es Salaam's role as the seat of government. In short, Dar es Salaam was a dominant focus of development, and growing at a pace, which, if not checked, would damage the city as a human habitat. The city had two other disadvantages: its position at the periphery of the country and a climate that does not encourage productivity. The transfer of the capital would benefit Dodoma and Dar es Salaam; to the one because it needed growth, to the other because it did not.

The arguments against the move centred on one thing only: cost. This was the major consideration. All else was agreed. This, of course, depended upon a continuously favourable economic climate. And if circumstances had remained normal the country would by now have witnessed a significant transfer of the party and government businesses from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma.

The main concepts of the 1976 plan included:

- (a) A hierarchy of service centres with shopping, places of worship and recreation.
- (b) Public transport based on buses, cycleways and pedestrian paths.
- (c) Mixed income residential communities, conforming to Tanzania's policy of socialism and self-reliance.
- (d) Low rise buildings.
- (e) A garden city – each community of 25,000 was to be circled by a green belt to serve as boundaries between communities also to be used for small scale farming by residents of the area. The capital city was to be surrounded by an afforestation belt of 22,000 hectares.
- (f) Regional Development - the principal towns of the adjacent districts were to be expanded and developed as growth centres.
- (g) Urban renewal of the old town.

The strengths of the 1976 master plan included a logical framework [see Illustration 2), clear objectives, attention to detail, concern for regional and intra-regional aspects and design and siting recommendations. The plan drew heavily on overseas models and experiences but there were attempts to integrate Tanzanian political and cultural aspirations into the detailed design of urban areas. Its modest government buildings and focus on the needs of the residents reflected the political philosophy of the governing party (Vale, 1993).

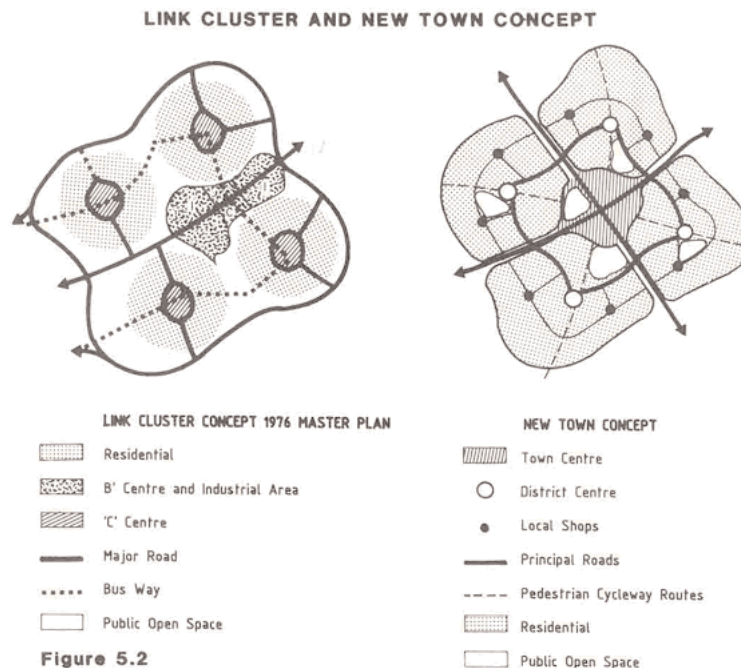


Illustration 2: Dodoma Master Plan 1976 Urban Concept

However, the 1976 plan had many weaknesses. It spelled out what was required; but did not describe how to achieve or finance it. Similarly, on the resource side, the plan indicated that the estimated cost for the first year's building programme was T.Shs 370 million (1975-76). This

was reduced by decision of government to approximately T.Shs 100 million. There was no mechanism within the plan to make adjustments for substantial cuts in funds and resources.

The plan's other weaknesses included:

Consumption of land and resources.

Failure to adequately address water supply.

High-tech solutions to low-tech problems, especially for utilities.

Impact of city growth on regional ecology.

Ignoring traditional urban forms.

Unrealistic staging proposals.

Weak implementation agencies, which are addressed below.

Inflexible physical design in the neighbourhood units and hierarchy of activity centres.

Insufficient attention to informal housing and urban fringe lands.

The plan had an unrealistic transfer program for government departments. The government proposed to transfer seven ministries between 1975 and 1980. The programme paid little cognisance to the lead-time for the construction of facilities and infrastructure. Other national capitals found that it takes 15-20 years to transfer all departments –sometimes longer- and enormous infrastructure investment is required to precede the move of the first ministries. That investment was not forthcoming in Dodoma and the transfer programme should have been adjusted.

The 1976 master plan report was most successful in its presentation of a vision for the capital as it might be in the future. The plan presented a confident picture of staged growth for Dodoma from the 1975 population of 45,000 up to 350,000 at the year 2000. Beyond that time, the plan made provision for further growth towards a population of 1 million. In fact, the population grew to 45,800 in 1978; 83,200 in 1988 and an estimated population of 320,540 people in 2003 (Ngirwa and Kagenzi, 2003; The World Gazetteer, 2003). So Dodoma's population increased without adequate infrastructure or the planned transfer of the government.

Urban Design, the National Capital Centre and Parliament

The 1976 plan placed great stress on the need to achieve a memorable image for the capital. There was, however, no attention given to the question of how such an image could be created early in the development programme so that, from the outset, the country could identify with the capital. It will take several decades to achieve the physical city form and proposed urban image. Dodoma still lacks a capital city image and identity.

The relationship between people, land and landscape was strongly emphasised in the urban design for the capital, perhaps influenced by Hancock's background as a landscape architect. This important element of symbolism was stressed and reflected in the design of neighbourhoods, the emphasis of the village in the city, the need for gardens, the protection of valuable land for the purposes of agriculture, and water storage or recharge. Although this is laudable, it was hardly achievable or understood by most people who live in African urban areas. Urbanisation is a ruthless process and a heavy consumer of land, energy and resources. The plan assumed that a rural way of life could be imported into the city. Urban needs are different from rural needs and the land takes on a different meaning. The master plan should have aimed to reinforce positive elements of urbanism and creating urban form, spaces and places which best meet people's need for urban living.

The master plan established urban design guidelines for the development of the capital. These guidelines related to urban form, landscaping, the appearance of the city, orientation aids and the provision of facilities to help people enjoy city life. However, many of these were not achieved on the ground – the city roads are still not well landscaped, the city looks drab and envisioned public facilities such as seating, benches, shady trees have not appeared.

The 1976 master plan also proposed a National Capital Centre (NCC) that had a mixed-use central business district containing commercial, cultural and residential units. The New York urban design firm Conklin and Rossant took over the design in 1979. They emphasised mixed uses, but drew the ministries' buildings from outside locations and placed them in the centre. The Conklin and Rossant plan created a series of building terraces stepping up Iseni Hill, each terrace 3.5 metres higher than that preceding. These were to form the platforms for the various buildings comprising the centre [see Illustration 3]. The terraces followed the natural contours to minimise height gain and maximise sun control. The design attempted to locate ministries in the centre in a symbolic way. The centrepiece of the design was a central pedestrian mall (Rossant, 1996).

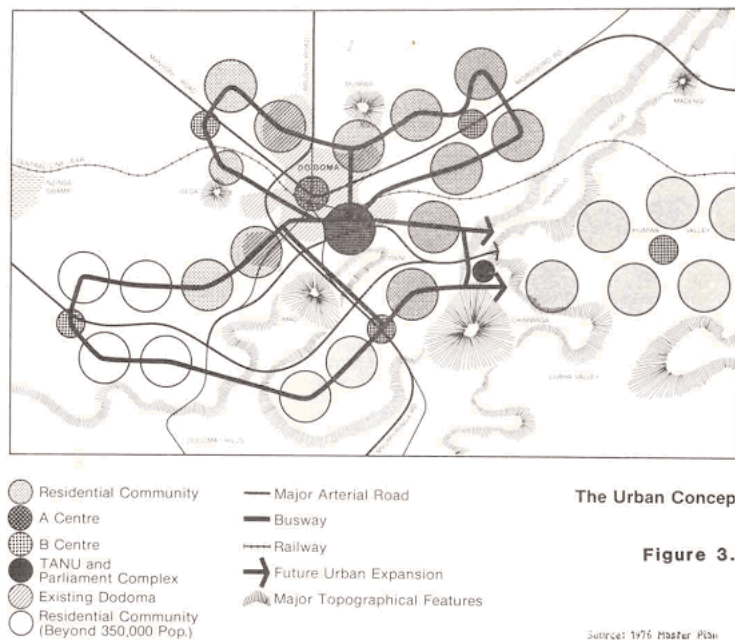


Illustration 3: Dodoma: NCC Concept - Rossant

An evaluation of this plan shows that the approved urban design generally meets the aims of the objectives set out in the planning brief for the NCC. There are, however, several aspects of the plan and design features, which have not been fully achieved. For example, there has not been a satisfactory relationship between the new centre and the old Dodoma centre; building design of ministries leaves much to be desired and building costs have been sacrificed or not thought about clearly.

The master plan provided for diplomatic areas. While the plan recognised that embassies would require a range of sites, the initial areas were inadequate, requiring a site in Medele to be planned for diplomatic use. However, no embassies had relocated to Dodoma by 2003.

The 1976 master plan located the parliamentary complex and the headquarters of the ruling party, *Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM)*, on a site near Chimwaga some 4.2 km from the NCC. The temporary parliament building has been completed and is in use. The building designs for the CCM and the high court have also been completed. Little else has been implemented.

Economic Conditions, 1973-1988

The time between the 1973 announcement of the capital and approval of the 1976 plan was a period of some excitement in Tanzania at the prospect of developing a new capital. In 1976, Tanzania was reeling from the 1973/74-oil price shock, the balance of payments position was healthy and the country was experiencing a strong build-up in reserves. There was, therefore, much optimism that the first significant advances would be made in development of the capital.

The economic recovery which began in 1976 could not be sustained. Following measures to liberalise imports and meet the expenses of the Ugandan war, the budget registered an unexpected deficit and at the end of 1978 depleted reserves. This left the economy vulnerable to the second wave of oil price shocks, global recession, the collapse of commodity prices, droughts and the effects of the break-up of the East African Community. During the mid-1980's Tanzania experienced its worst economic crisis since 1961. In this environment resources were just not available to meet the expectations of the mid-1970s for the development of the capital.

The 1988 Structure Plan

Poor progress in implementing the 1976 Master plan led to a review and revised plan, which took into account the new economic realities in Tanzania (CDA, 1983). The 1988 plan prepared by Cameron McNamara of Brisbane, Australia, used the strengths of the 1976 plan and learnt from its weaknesses to produce a better plan.

The 1988 review proposed an alternative urban concept, which could fit better with culture, the economics of development and the physical terrain surrounding Dodoma. This was the creation of *new towns* of between 90,000 to 120,000 people [see Illustration 4] instead of the organic growth concept of the 1976 plan (CDA, 1988). The new town concept has the advantages of:

- Reducing infrastructure and development costs.

- A much larger population that can support a more diversified and larger employment, commercial and services base.

- A major centre which forms a central place.

- Creating a choice of settlement areas in Dodoma.

- Avoiding a monotonous linear expansion of communities.

- Recognised a high proportion of people that can only afford to walk or cycle to work.



Illustration 4: Dodoma: Structure Plan 1976-1988

Each new town would be finished before the next one was developed. The 1988 plan proposed that each new town constructed in the outlying valleys, would help to establish a physical identity for each new town, similar to the strategy for expanding Canberra. The plan provides for a future population of 500,000 to 600,000 people, but there would be further land available for the development of additional new towns should the need arise in the future.

The plan also adjusted the service centres and road network, and deleted the busways. It added low cost housing programmes with sites and services projects. The plan suggested that CDA prepare a five-year programme of national capital urban design projects to improve the capital image.

The government scaled back the number of ministries to be transferred until the mid 1990s, leaving most in Dar es Salaam. This transfer programme was to be co-ordinated with the construction of offices, houses, energy supply, water, and telecommunications.

Management and Organisation

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) was established in 1973. It was required to plan and develop the capital, to assist in the transfer of various government and other authorities and to acquire and hold land and other immovable property. The CDA had numerous conflicts with the Ministry of Capital Development, which was abolished in 1980. A Minister of State and Presidential Capital Transfer Commission (1984) also had little effect.

The management capability of CDA was severely weakened by the dismissal of almost all of its senior executives on two occasions due to inefficiency and alleged corruption. This loss in human resources, expertise, knowledge and leadership, which was built up through numerous programmes of assistance and overseas training, was not easily replaced. Secondly, the CDA ran the programme on a shoestring budget, with inadequate professional skills, equipment, data and services.

Funding the New Capital Project

The development of the new national capital started with full-fledged construction. The total cost was estimated to be T.Shs. 3.7 billion in 1973 and the government had planned to set aside T.Shs. 370 million annually for ten years of the proposed time of construction. The funding of the development of Dodoma has come from diverse sources. These include:

Government grants which are provided annually by Parliament.

Funds are negotiated by the government with other foreign governments, with work carried out by others.

Government ministries and parastatals obtain direct government grants or negotiate their own funds to carry out their responsibilities.

Loans provided directly by financial institutions, such as the Tanzania Housing Bank to individuals to build houses.

Funds generated by the private sector for commercial and residential development in the city.

The CDA was expected to perform a coordinating role, to ensure an efficient and economical programme.

The CDA was criticized for lack of progress in development of the capital, but the accounts show that it has not been granted the financial resources necessary to carry out the task. Government grants for the *thirteen* years from 1973 to 1986 provided only 39% of the sum required for implementing its first *five* years of the plan (URT/CDA). From 1987 to 2002, the amount of money that the government has granted for the capital development project is a paltry T.Shs. 5.3 billion, far too little to handle the envisaged projects.

The municipality of Dodoma also raised revenue to build the city, but this is a pittance because the Council depends on central government for most of its recurrent and capital projects. While funds other than government grants have been made available from donors, loan funds and self-generated funds, the level of these does not close the wide gap between the financial needs of the programme and actual funds provided.

The funds set aside by the government were used for infrastructure and projects that no single developer would undertake, such as industrial units. However, these services required a substantial sum of foreign exchange. So, the first financial priority in the fundraising exercise was to raise foreign funds for the building materials industries and infrastructure services.

The funding for Dodoma's development is not likely to improve in the short-term because:

Tanzania is a poor country – with difficulties in raising its own capital and inflation running high, it is unlikely that the government will be able to make more money available for the development of the capital and it may have to reduce it further.

Extent of debt servicing – An increasing proportion of CDA's annual government grant will be utilised in future years in servicing loans. Unless CDA can sell some major assets and reduce these loans, there will be a smaller proportion of funds available for new projects.

Increased maintenance costs as buildings age.

The government decision that parastatals invest 25% of their annual investment in Dodoma, may not work when many of these are privatised.

Private investment may not be any higher in the near future.

Foreign funding – loans and aid may be reduced further in the future and the World Bank has objected to investments in Dodoma in the past.

According to Kibayasi Seif, Public Relations Manager of Capital Development Authority (CDA), Dodoma, only 23 percent of the estimated budget has been used for construction with the budget slowly. The government allocation of funds was scrapped in the financial year 1990/91 as CDA had to pay both its local and international debts.

Dodoma today: Implementation of the 1988 Structure Plan

The implementation of the 1988 Structure Plan has progressed slowly because it has been dogged by a shortage of funds and little political will from the government or the commercial and industrial sectors. Little infrastructure, housing, industrial or commercial development has occurred. Since the decision to move the capital, the transfer has been slow with some ministries on record as having shifted to Dodoma only to return to Dar later. By 2003, only three ministries had moved to Dodoma: Co-operatives and Marketing, Water and Livestock Development and President’s Office (Regional Administration and Local Government).

However, the shift of these ministries is superficial. With the exception of the Ministry of Water and Livestock Development, all major work of other shifted ministries is still conducted from large office blocks in Dar es Salaam. The Prime Minister himself can more often be found in Dar than Dodoma. All ministries, their deputies and principal secretaries have permanent offices and residences in both Dar and Dodoma. This is an expensive luxury, and a waste of money and resources (Daily News, 2001).

No diplomatic missions moved to Dodoma by 2003 and embassies have recently built newer and better buildings in Dar es Salaam. Several diplomats visited Dodoma during the 1980s to take a look at their allocated areas but when the transfer of ministries slowed down, they reduced the pace too. The reduced pace could also be due to the region lacking facilities such a proper airport, quality hotels, proper housing and paved local roads. Although the region is connected by a tarmac road from Dar es Salaam, the connection with the northern zone is poor.

As a result, most people, both locally and internationally, are confused, thinking that Dar es Salaam, and not Dodoma, is the capital of Tanzania. The notion has strengthened with most administrative offices and ministries still operating from Dar es Salaam, migrating to Dodoma for the parliament sessions only.

Prime Minister Frederick Sumaye, when addressing the National Assembly during the 2001 annual review, reiterated that the government’s decision to shift its capital to Dodoma had not changed. He however did not make any commitment over how swiftly the project will be completed [see Illustration 5].

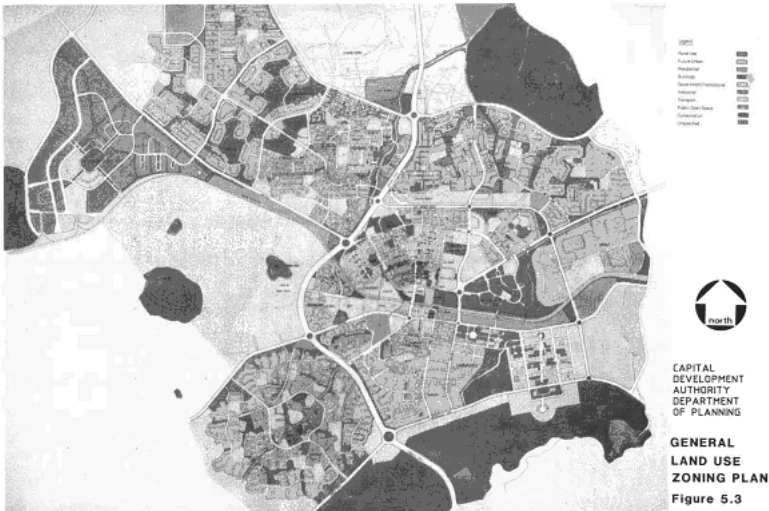


Illustration 5: Dodoma in the Late 20th Century

Conclusion

Moving the capital has been a pipe dream almost from the start mainly because of lack of resources, funding and globalisation of world economies. Both the 1976 and 1988 plans would place heavy demands on government if they were to be implemented as intended. Regrettably, the establishment of the CDA, with its important powers and responsibilities, was not matched by corresponding guarantees relating to the resources needed to enable it to carry out its job. Likewise, the various construction and financing agencies were not properly mobilised or coordinated.

The political will could also be questioned because it seems that there is some reluctance on the part of politicians and the civil service to move to the new capital.

On the planning side however, it can be said that some relevant, novel, modern and appropriate concepts have been adopted to shape the capital city, starting with the garden city form of the 1976 master plan to the 'cities' concept of 1988. Some of the relevant planning ideas include:

An urban concept based on hierarchies of all types of services.

A people-centred transportation system that is segregated and caters for buses, bicycles and walking. This addresses the poverty of the people who cannot afford cars for travel. For the third world, this is the ideal plan.

'Mixed densities' and residential social mix in conformance to Tanzania's socialist philosophy.

Open spaces, landscapes and horticultural projects planned with environmental principles.

Urban agriculture has been encouraged, with many projects in and around the city.

A city-region plan to develop the hinterland region of the capital was implemented to some extent.

Planners have a lot to learn from the plan, though implementation has been slow.

Given more political will, one day the city will see the light of day, but the bottom line is that implementation capacity must be greatly boosted. Tanzania needs to pick a leaf from the experience of other countries that have created new capital cities and use this knowledge to resurrect its grand idea. It will be a pity to see all these brilliant physical planning ideas evaporate into thin air with nothing on the ground.

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