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Fishing hub: establishing a sustainable fishing infrastructure as a catalyst for socio-economic development on Lake Malawi

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Abstract

Overfishing, habitat degradation, climate change and poor fish preservation infrastructure are the main factors that are leading to the depletion of fish species in Lake Malawi. Lake Malawi is of great significance because it is a World Heritage Site due its biodiversity, notably its various fish species. According to The Guardian Development Network (2018) “fish stocks in the Lake Malawi have dwindled by 90% over the past 20 years.” This is alarming because fishing is one of the main ways of sustaining human existence across Lake Malawi and extending into the inland settlements where fishing is a source of food, income, and recreation

It is the author’s observation that the Department of Fisheries in Malawi together with various other institutions are struggling to resolve fish depletion and its negative impacts on impoverished lakeshore settlers’ livelihoods because of lack of adequate fishing infrastructure suitable for such sensitive regions that promote sustainable fishing practices around fishing villages. The absence of such facilities further threatens the extinction of the popular Chambo fish (Tilapia) which accounts for 1% of fish consumed from Lake Malawi (Malawi Government Economic Report, 2017).

This research investigates and proposes a Fishing Hub which is a fish conservation facility centered on Chambo fish, which also addresses social, economic and ecological aspects that are at the core of fish depletion. It further explores the notion of regional and nature inspired design by interrogating the natural environment and existing built fabric along and around the lakeshore to produce a hybrid architectural language of balance; that is suitable to Lake Malawi as a response to building in sensitive ecosystems.

The Fishing Hub is a sustainable ecosystem of water and land synergy that allows for fish reproduction and consumption whilst achieving socio-economic development on the lakeshore, at Nguwo fish landing site. The intervention formalizes the existing unregulated fish markets without taking away the agency of the locals, improve post-harvest infrastructure, aids to control water pollution, and most of promotes sustainable industrial fishing that also integrates collective small scale business networks of the community. This transformed space becomes a beacon of educative sustainable fishing practices that also gives an opportunity for tourists to experience the lakeshore culture. Inevitably this will become a harmonized ecosystem and a catalyst for socio-economic development on Lake Malawi.

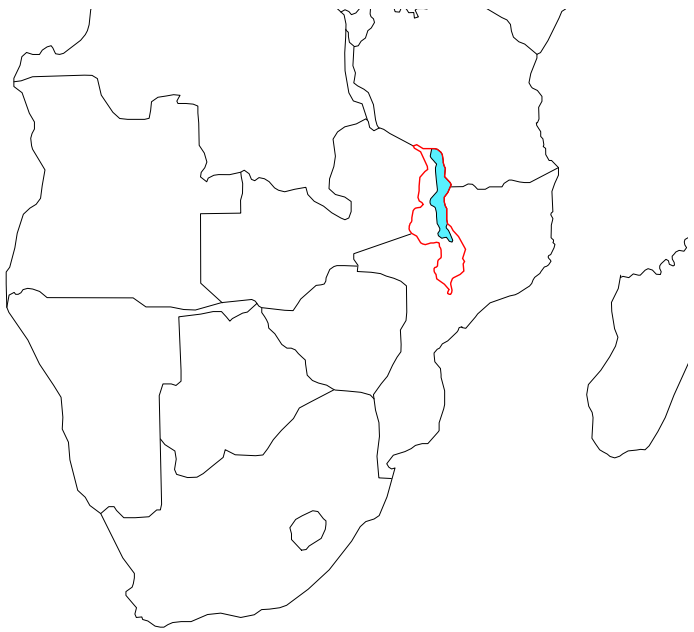


Figure 1:0 Location of Lake Malawi in Southern Africa (Preserving the Future for Lake Malawi, 1997)