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Building Cities of Semi Sovereigns: Boundaries of Citizens Co-Creation in Emerging Cities in Uganda

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Abstract

There is a growing enthusiasm for several emerging cities in Uganda. This urbanization impetus is both an auto-response to on-going economic growth and development but also a move toward realization of the National Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goal eleven (SDG11). This theoretical paper, which draws from secondary sources, reviews the aims and approaches to rapid cities' creation in Uganda. There is a recognition that the present nature of cities has increasingly become assemblages of the sites, actors, relationships, and networks within the fast-emerging technologies and changing environment, which dictate the departure from traditional ways of city planning and governance to incorporate methods of increased citizen engagement. Citizens should not only be limited in the running city structure as political leaders or service beneficiaries (passive actors) but also be actively involved in the co-creation and administration of the new cities. There is also a need for proper legislation to guide the development and management of the new cities and to minimize infrastructure and resource constraints resulting from inadequate city top-down planning processes.

Keywords

Cities, Semi Sovereigns, Citizens, Co-Creation, Urbanization, Sustainable Development, Uganda

1. Introduction

Urbanisation is a growing concern across the globe with a dramatic increasing trend over the past decades as a result of mass population migration from rural to urban areas. Presently, it is projected that more than half of the population live in cities and that by 2050, seven (7) out of ten (10) people will likely live in

urban areas (UN, 2022). Cities as drivers of economic growth that contribute more than 80 percent of global GDP have a great potential for increasing prosperity for the urban masses with a possible spillover to rural communities. Relationship between sustainable development and urbanisation as well as specific needs and challenges related to this process has been underscored in several studies (Bolay, 2012; Klopp & Petretta, 2017; Bolay et al., 2019).

Whereas urban development presents sustainable development opportunities for economic growth, job creation for better livelihoods, and contributes greatly to achieving SDG11 for ending extreme poverty, errors in urban planning may result in irreversible outcomes arising out of land-use systems, infrastructure developments, unaffordable and insufficient housing, limited open spaces, unsafe levels of pollution, and increases risks relating to climate and immense disasters.

Cities are known as central to development owing to the nature and benefits accruing from planned urbanization. Indeed many cities that fall short of effective planning experience great impacts of climate change, inadequate infrastructure, social exclusion, inequality in access to basic services as well as limited opportunities for youth and marginalized groups (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Understanding urban development, urbanisation rates, population distribution and density and the growth of cities matters is in order to make appropriate planning for the space, resources and services for the urban population. Concerns about urban growth relate to many facts, one being the ever-increasing population trends. Presently concerns about urban growth and management processes are partly a response to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal eleven (SDG11) which aims at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (UN, 2015). This development goal neatly ties in with the New Urban Agenda (NUA) that focuses on three transformative commitments of social, economic, and environmental nature. These commitments include sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty; sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; and environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development (UN-Habitat, 2020).

This paper recognizes the importance of SDG target 11.3, which seeks to improve sustainable urbanization and integrated human settlement planning by 2030. We understand that achieving this goal requires working together and listening to the voices of all members of society. The closely related indicator 11.3.2 recognizes the significance of civil society's direct participation in urban planning and management that operates democratically. By embracing this approach, we can create more inclusive and sustainable cities that meet the needs of all people.

Numerous studies have been conducted on urbanization, which clearly explain the meaning, importance, and implications of the massive shift of population from rural to urban areas, as well as ways in which societies adapt to this change (McGranahan & Satterthwaite, 2014; UN-Habitat, 2016; Kuddus et al.,

2020). The criteria for classifying urban areas vary among different countries. Many tend to use population size and density, while others consider occupational structure (agricultural/non-agricultural) and administrative setup as basic parameters for drawing boundaries of the urban-rural distinctions. In some places, urban areas denote definable settlements based on size, services available, and functions rendered. These criteria give rise to a range of urban categories, which include towns, cities, million cities, conurbations, and megalopolis (Potts, 2017, 2018).

It is important to note that different urban areas have unique characteristics that require a specific study. Unless a comparative study is being conducted, the focus should be on a particular urban case category to provide exhaustive findings of the context-specific urban area. This study focuses on cities and their conception, creation, and management in Uganda. The study begins with a brief exploration of the theoretical foundation of the term "city" from literature and our contextual interpretation to explain how cities are built in Uganda. Subsequently, this paper explains the purpose of cities before exploring Uganda's local governance, urban councils' frameworks and criteria followed in the creation of cities. Further, the paper discusses the implications of the growing city terrains, the role played by citizens in co-creating and administering cities, and the citizens' boundaries in the co-creation of New Cities in Uganda. The paper concludes proposing an increase of citizen engagement not only in the running of city structures as political leaders or service beneficiaries but in initiating and developing new cities

2. The City Notion

The definition and interpretation of a city and its associated phenomena vary across time, space, and countries. As urbanization and city creation have been in place for centuries, the concept's evolution and its application in practice also vary. Different disciplines contribute to this differentiation, although some scholars look for convergence across disciplines. The definitions may be classified according to approaches that use a single criterion such as population threshold or by a mixed criterion that combines population size, density, administrative scope, economic determination, and other dimensions. The city conception differs among economists, political scientists, social scientists, or a combination of pragmatic writers who combine various elements from other disciplines (Eurostat, 2021). To understand the different urban attributes and why cities have those attributes, it is important to know the city development and the relative importance of individual choices to live in these cities (Glaeser, 2008).

Due to the multiplicity of views about a city, it becomes complex to comprehend its real meaning in a consensual manner. An effort is made to comparatively look into the different perspectives so as to explain why cities are created in Uganda. According to economists, the term city refers to functional charac-

teristics related to industry and market. In urban economics, cities have to do with increasing productivity and lowering transaction costs, taking into account the area's comparative advantage, returns to scale of production and exchange. The central feature of urban economics relates to considering space and spatial proximity (Henderson, 1985; Rossi-Hansberg & Wright, 2007; Roberts, 2014). Modern urban economics conceives a city as any area where the value of the land may be governed by its distance to something (O'Sullivan, 2007). Economic perspectives tend to explain people's motives and choices of living in cities compared to suburban areas.

A city, politically is a settlement of a large and permanent population with defined boundaries, where people primarily work in non-agricultural jobs. It includes extensive systems for housing, transportation, sanitation, utilities, production of goods, and communication. From a political perspective, a city's characteristics are evaluated on patterns of political participation, civic engagement, social justice, equality, liberty, citizenship, agency, democracy, and urban autonomy in governance and development. It also extends to regional and global politics as cities function as hubs of regionalized or globalized economic networks (Vaughn 1994; Kuper & Kuper, 1996; Caves, 2004).

The field of social science provides a commonly known definition of a city as a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals. A city, as defined by a boundary, is identified by businesses, population, and a unique cultural landscape, and extends to other non-rural areas like the surrounding city suburbs. According to sociologists, a city is the outcome of human activity and population interaction with the environment. Theories of ecological determinism and the natural conditions of existence determine the characteristics of a city. The ecological theory explains a city as a spatial unit limited by natural frontiers within which one finds a homogeneous population with a system of specific values. It also considers a spatial unit inhabited by a population structured by internal symbolic relations (Mathotaarachchi & Thilakarathna, 2021).

Wirth (1938) perceived a city as a peculiar form of human association and a distinctive mode of human group life characterized by industrial, commercial, financial, and administrative facilities together with facilities and activities of transportation, recreation, communication, learning, culture, and welfare. Max Weber's sociological model of the city considers it as an independent territorial unit based on the inclusive loyalty of all its inhabitants. Weber identifies several attributes of an urban community that characterizes a city, which includes a fortification, a market, a law code and court system of its own, as well as the association of urban citizenry that creates a sense of municipal corporateness and the sufficient political autonomy for urban citizens to choose the city's governors (Weber, 1958). Harris and Ullman (1945) multiple nuclear model demonstrates the way cities grow and develop around multiple centers, or "nuclei". The assumption of this theory is that cities are not homocentric, but rather have many

mini centers that gradually develop into a city, which may explain the complexity of the city's structure.

According to Mitchell (2003), some scholars view a city as more than just a collection of institutions and administrative structures. Rather, it is a product of human social construction, shaped by customs, traditions, attitudes, and sentiments that are passed down over time. In this sense, a city is defined as a large inhabited area with a significant population and purpose, which changes over time due to population dynamics and economic growth. This makes it a natural phenomenon that evolves both in terms of space and time.

Pragmatic scholars, like Colin McFarlane (2011), see a city as more than just a dwelling or a place to reside in. They view it as an assemblage that involves sites, actors, relationships, and networks that shape the past, present, and future trajectories of urban life. Brian Roberts (2014, 2019) examines various factors that are responsible for the typology of secondary city development. These factors significantly vary and are shaped by historical, infrastructure, economic, social, political, and environmental factors. New cities are mostly determined by population, size, function, and economic status.

Within the pragmatic school of thought, we find UN agencies and international development organizations that define a city scientifically through a standardized method of measurement of city data. They use an evidence-based scientific approach by using concepts and undertaking global consultations with diverse groups of experts. UN-Habitat and other partners come up with two city definitions: one is a definition based on a scientific establishment of urban extent explaining a city as a built-up and urbanized space. The urban context involves the use of satellite imagery analysis techniques to extract information on human settlement and density of built-up structures. This information is then used to define an operational city boundary as a base for determining the urban, sub-urban, and rural built-up spaces and urbanized open spaces. The second UN-Habitat scientific view defines a city based on the degree of urbanization (DEGURBA). This view focuses on the character of the area in relation to the share of the local population living in units. Three sub-category settlements out of this criterion include densely populated areas (cities), intermediary densely populated (towns and suburbs), and thinly populated urban settlements (the rural areas). To the pragmatist, defining a city depends on the worldview of the individuals and entities involved in making meaning out of the population and their localities. The pragmatists blend economic, political, and social science views and adopt scientific methods or cultural-cognitive premises to interpret and define the nature of the urban locality they interact with.

The various perspectives on defining cities highlight the underlying aspects of power relations, rationality, and intelligibility among different actors. This suggests that powerful groups' agendas, structures, and hierarchies play a crucial role in city formation and administration (Kyohairwe, 2020). These definitions of cities help us to better understand urbanization and the urban communities

within and beyond the city limits. They provide a foundation for evaluating the development and management of cities in Uganda.

3. Purpose of Cities

Cities are crucial for economic growth due to their population size, which leads to an increase in productivity through labor distribution, education, entrepreneurship, and the spread of ideas. With 4.4 billion people, or 56% of the world's population, living in cities, their potential to drive economies is significant (Carlino, 2001; Katz, 2016; World Bank, 2022). City governors, through formal organizations and social networks like the C40 networks and the Association for Urban Authorities in Uganda, can play a significant role in promoting the economic role of the city. They can exchange ideas on addressing key urban challenges, especially those related to Sustainable Development Goals, regional protocols, and national development programs and strategies.

Cities play a crucial role in ensuring that public space is fairly distributed and accessible to all members of society. This helps to create a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. Public spaces serve essential physical and social functions, which can help to alleviate some of the societal pressures that arise from rapid population growth, such as tensions between individuals and groups, crime, pollution, and disease. Achieving this goal requires promoting mixed land use, developing integrated land use and mobility plans, and embracing new technologies that make services more accessible. Effective urban planning is also vital to ensure that services such as healthcare and mobility are coordinated, and that public infrastructure, housing, and social policy are adapted to meet the changing needs of the population (Katz, 1994; Voith, 1998; UN-Habitat, 2014).

Cities have numerous advantages, one of which is their critical role in fostering technology and innovation. They serve as centers for technological advancements, which is partly because of the greater density of people that increases opportunities for diverse individuals to interact with each other and expose themselves to different ideas. Cities are also enablers of various technological innovations because they offer a conducive environment for industrial innovations. Workers, producers, customers, and professional experts can interact within or near urban environments, leading to the creation of new technologies, products, and services, as well as the improvement of existing products, processes, and methods. Modern city infrastructure, such as railways, roads, and technical systems, including networking equipment and cabling, play a significant role in supporting business operations. They provide a range of stimuli for extended urban growth and development, leading to more significant cities that tend to be more creative and innovative. Government investments in sustainable and resilient urban infrastructure can motivate new economic activities, create local jobs, and improve social outcomes in areas like health and education, which can spur long-term development. With their unique blend of people, ideas, and infrastructure, cities provide opportunities for technological advancements that can

benefit society in numerous ways (Therrien, 2005; Pratt, 2008; Aqasi et al., 2021).

Besides fostering technology and innovation, current trends in city development is the concept of "smart cities". In this approach, cities partner with private technology companies to obtain pre-made or customized solutions (both hardware and software) that help collect data and extract insights on various urban issues. This urban data is analyzed to aid in urban management and decision-making (Burby, 2003; Bibri & Krogstie, 2017). This approach has the potential to improve the responsiveness and efficiency of cities. However, there are limitations due to the size of the city, budget constraints, data sharing dynamics, standards, and cybersecurity issues. Additionally, emerging technologies like automated vehicles, artificial intelligence, and face-recognition software may require further legislation that may vary across governance boundaries and require substantial investments.

Fourth, cities are crucial for increasing citizen engagement and governance. City councils can engage residents by providing them with a platform to voice their opinions, share their grievances and offer advice. Citizen engagement can help governments achieve improved public service delivery, public financial management, governance, social inclusion, and empowerment. It can enhance public, social and financial accountability, and increase levels of responsiveness. Urban citizen engagement may also provide psychosocial benefits by improving citizen satisfaction, promoting their well-being, and encouraging further urban growth and development (Stratigea et al., 2018; Mitlin, 2021). In city governance, citizen participation is a means of achieving more democracy by enabling citizens to choose their leaders and make decisions affecting their own communities. Citizen engagement helps in identifying appropriate people's needs and demands and designing policies and programs to meet them. To achieve greater benefits, cities, like many local governments, tend to focus on designing co-creation processes and looking for ways to support and enhance this new form of citizen engagement.

Lastly, Cities serve general functions that include providing security to protect people and their properties, and conducting government administration by maintaining law and order. They are hubs of manufacturing centers that provide jobs and goods, and have service centers to provide services. Additionally, they are trade centers for local and international businesses. Many cities also serve as religious centers with temples and pilgrimage sites. Cities are also known to provide efficient infrastructure and services through density and concentration in transportation, communications, power, human interactions, water, and sanitation services (UN-Habitat, 2011; Roberts, 2019).

4. Uganda's Local Governance, Urban Councils Frameworks and the City Creation

The current local government system in Uganda can be traced back to various administrative frameworks including the Urban Authorities Act (1964), the Lo-

cal Administrations Act (1967), the Resistance Councils and Committees Statute of 1987, the Resistance Council Statute (the decentralisation statute) of 1993, the 1995 Constitution, and the Local Governments Act of 1997. These frameworks have effectively implemented decentralization policy in political, economic, and administrative dimensions over the last three decades.

The economic and administrative decentralization is technical in nature and enables the transfer of powers to mobilize funds, plan, budget, and execute decentralized activities, programs, and projects. On the other hand, political decentralization differs in approach and outlook. It enables citizens to gain powers to elect their local leaders, whom they delegate these powers to take decisions affecting their localities following democratic principles. The elected leaders are assumed to serve as agents to act on behalf of the citizens and take care of the interest and needs of the communities they represent. The politically elected representatives (councillors) are part of the communities they represent, signifying their residual trustees' role in the true interest of the citizens that vote them into power.

Local government units are often created with the presumption that local leaders are capable of responsibly managing government assets using their own values of cooperation, collaboration, trust, and pro-organizational tendencies (Stewart, 1990; Kemp, 1998). Decentralization is meant to bring more services to people with the anticipation of accessible, efficient, and effective service delivery. It presumes increased accountability and responsiveness from subordinate units of local governments to the lowest possible community level (Baldwin, 2014; Smoke, 2015). Based on the principle of subsidiarity (Schoburgh, 2010; Ryan & Woods, 2015), decentralization led to the creation of rural and urban councils at different levels in Uganda ranging from Local Council I to Local Council V. Within rural and urban councils, there are Higher Local Governments (HLG) and Lower Local Government (LLGs) councils, as well as Administrative Unit (AU) councils. The HLGs councils consist of districts and city councils, while LLGs consist of various units, including city division councils, municipal councils, town councils, and subcounty councils. In this local government system, the rural area local governments include districts and sub-counties, while in the urban area, the structures include cities and city divisions, municipalities, municipal divisions, town councils, wards, and villages/cells. According to the Local Governments Act 1997 (Section 3, 4 & 5), the city is equivalent to the district council.

Uganda is going through an urbanization process, following global trends and deliberate actions (NPA, 2020; World Bank, 2024a). Currently, the country has 580 town councils, 31 municipalities, and 10 cities, including the capital city. There are also 25 city divisions and 89 municipal divisions (MOLG, 2023). While the towns and municipalities have grown over time, the formation of cities is a recent event. The colonial government established Kampala City in 1891, which became the capital city at the time of Uganda's independence in 1962. The remaining 14 cities were established in the last three years, with ten currently

operational, and the remaining five expected to be inaugurated within the next two to three years. As of June 2023, the operational cities include Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Lira, Gulu, Arua, Fortportal, Hoima, Mbarara, and Masaka. The remaining five cities are Soroti, Kabale, Nakasongola, Moroto, and Entebbe.

According to Section 7(2a) of the Local Governments Act, the Minister, with approval from Parliament, can declare an urban area a City in accordance with Paragraph 32 of the Third Schedule to the Act. This process aligns with Section 3 of the Physical Planning Act, 2010 which declares the whole country as a planning area. Furthermore, the creation of new cities is in accordance with National Vision 2040, which aims to establish both regional and strategic cities.

Articles 177 and 179 of the Constitution of Uganda 1995, along with section 7(2) of the Local Government Act 1997 mandate the parliament to create new districts or change the boundaries of existing districts. Section 4(a) of the Local Governments Act 1997 considers a city to be a district and equates the functions and powers of the city with those of the district council, and cities are created under the same provision of the law. According to Article 179(2) of the constitution, any measure to alter the boundary of a district or to create a new district must be supported by a majority of all the members of Parliament. Article 179(3) mandates the parliament to empower district councils to alter the boundaries of lower local government units and create new local government units within their districts. Article 179(4) provides conditions for alteration of the boundaries of or creation of districts or administrative units. It stipulates that these changes shall be based on the necessity for effective administration and the need to bring services closer to the people, and may take into account the means of communication, geographical features, density of population, economic viability, and the wishes of the people concerned.

The Constitution of Uganda 1995, along with the Local Government Act, mandates the parliament to create new districts or alter boundaries of the existing district. According to the Local Governments Act 1997, a city is equated to a district and has the same functions and powers as a district council. Any measure to alter the boundary of a district or to create a new district must be supported by a majority of all the members of Parliament. The parliament is also required to empower district councils to alter the boundaries of lower local government units and to create new local government units within their districts. Any alteration of the boundaries of or creation of districts or administrative units must be based on the necessity for effective administration and the need to bring services closer to the people. It may also take into account the means of communication, geographical features, density of population, economic viability and the wishes of the people concerned.

According to the current Uganda National Development Plan (NDPIII), urbanization and emerging cities are seen as opportunities to drive development. This strategy is aligned with Uganda's Vision 2040 goal of increasing urbanization from 13% to 60%. These key development strategies are consistent with the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11), the Uganda Constitution of 1995, the Local Governments Act of 1997, the Uganda National Urbanization Policy (2017), and other related policy frameworks and legal frameworks documented in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the Uganda National Urbanization Policy. Uganda has one of the highest urban growth rates in the world at 5.6% per year, with approximately 17% of the nation being urbanized (World Bank, 2024a; World Bank, 2024b). This presents the potential for a consistent trajectory towards increasing cities in the years to come.

The Uganda National Urban Policy (GOU, 2017) categorizes urban areas into four levels: metropolitan city area, city, municipality, and towns, based on population density, area, and level of service. According to the Annex1 of Uganda Urban Policy (GOU, 2017), a city is equivalent to a district, and must meet the following criteria:

1) A population of at least 300,000 residents within a minimum area of 50 square kilometers.

2) Minimum density of 6,000 persons per square kilometer and a maximum density of 20,000 persons per square kilometer, in an area not exceeding 100 square kilometers.

3) An Integrated City Development Plan in accordance with National Urban Policy.

4) Capacity to generate sufficient revenue to sustain its operations.

5) Capacity to effectively and efficiently deliver essential services to its residents as provided for in the Urban Development law.

6) Institutionalized active participation by its residents in the management of its affairs.

7) Infrastructural facilities, including roads, street lighting, markets, fire stations, and an adequate capacity for disaster management.

8) Capacity for functional and effective waste management system.

The creation of new cities in Uganda follows a phased-in implementation plan, starting with the inauguration of four cities in July 2020. The decision to create new cities is based on two key justifications: regional and strategic reasons. For regional arguments, cities like Arua and Gulu are being created due to their unique advantages for business, air travel, and tourism, as well as their potential for petroleum exploration and hydroelectric power generation, which will lead to socio-economic benefits. Other cities like Mbarara and Mbale are being created due to their accessibility and connectivity to other African countries and beyond, their proximity to the main trans-national road network, and their commercial and industrial importance to neighbouring countries. Some cities like Gulu, Lira, Fort Portal, and Hoima are being created for strategic reasons such as industrial development, thanks to their existing physical and social infrastructure, including universities and other institutions of learning, regional referral hospitals, airfields, stadiums, hospitality facilities, hydro power stations, cultural centers, and well-planned green belts. Upcoming cities such as Soroti,

Kabale, Nakasongola, Moroto, and Entebbe share similar locational and strategic characteristics as the rest of the newly created and inaugurated cities.

5. Implications of the Growing City Terrain

The creation of new cities in Uganda has various implications. Firstly, it requires the development of new guidelines and staff structures that align with the existing laws to guide the city operations. Changing a municipality structure to a city necessitates structural adjustments and the creation of new administrative units. A city comes along with the establishment of several gazetted city divisions (equivalent to municipalities), wards, and cells/villages. Creating administrative units may be justified following the legal frameworks of creating cities, but it's also based on the conventional argument of increasing efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and responsiveness of service delivery in the decentralized subnational units. However, a challenge arises when creating more subnational administrative units without necessary resources, as experienced in the new cities created in Uganda.

When new cities are created, it requires more staff, better office space, additional equipment, furniture, stationary, and other administrative costs. However, the government sometimes fails to prepare for these requirements. Instead, they transfer funds meant for municipalities to the new cities, resulting in upward adjustments to meet the increased size and wider functions of the city. For the newly created administration structures to be viable and sustainable, the national budget should provide specific budget lines for these structures. This is required by Section 13 (10) (f) of the Public Financial Act 2015, and proven by a certificate of compliance of the previous year's annual budget issued by the National Planning Authority. The annual budget should indicate grants to the local governments and any subventions for the financial year. Uganda has faced challenges in establishing new cities due to the lack of insight into these requirements For instance, the cities planned to start in FY 2020/21 were not included in the approved budget for that year, resulting in delays, operational deficiencies and reliance on supplementary budgets. These challenges suggest that new cities may subsequently face challenges of viability and sustainability.

In addition to the financial crises and inefficiencies faced by cities, the creation of cities can result in the displacement of districts and the relocation of district headquarters to new areas. This has been observed in the cases of Gulu, Jinja, Mbarara, Kabarole, Mbale, and Masaka districts. The local governments of these districts are required to move to new locations and construct new office infrastructure, which requires a significant amount of resources. This situation seems paradoxical, particularly in developing and less developed economies with financially-stressed local government systems, such as Uganda. The creation of new cities also has significant political implications. The increased autonomy in making political decisions, the independence of city elections for constituency representatives, active participation in campaigns and electoral processes, and

council deliberations at the city halls and division council meetings are all presumed political benefits of cities. In other words, citizens feel a sense of self-rule or self-determination, where they become in charge of their own affairs regarding administrative, economic, social or political matters, which becomes more real and gratifying.

Regarding national political benefits, unlike a municipality, which is one electoral constituency for a national member of parliament, a city, being equivalent to a district, has city divisions, each of which serves as an electoral area for a member of National Parliament, with an additional one woman representative for the entire city. An area that had a single political representative at the national level acquires multiple representatives equivalent to the number of city divisions, which results in an extended economic burden to accommodate and remunerate the many city constituency political representatives.

Finally, the extension of municipalities into cities has positive social implications. This includes the possibility of cities becoming hubs for intense economic activity, creating more employment opportunities and providing better social services and amenities. Cities also offer urban housing with access to basic utilities such as power and water, lucrative trade and investment opportunities, easy access to technology for communication, entertainment, and improved work methods both at formal workplaces and at home. Other infrastructural facilities like transport, power, and water are enablers for growth and developmental activities. However, there are several negative implications associated with these developments, including population congestion, social conflicts, land disputes, poor sanitation, pollution, and epidemics.

6. Citizens in the City Co-Creation and Administration

Citizens play a crucial role in co-creating and administering cities. At the grassroots level, citizens often become significant through citizen-led projects, engagement initiatives, and participation, which offer new and alternative ways of doing things regularly. Citizen engagement is a "two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector that gives citizens a stake in decision-making, with the objective of improving development outcomes." In cities, citizens can participate in civic engagement, which covers a wide range of formal and informal activities such as voting, volunteering, group activities, and community service. They can help with new municipal initiatives at various levels of governance, take part in neighbourhood charity events, and contribute to city cleanup. They participate in fundraising events such as runs, walks, and bike rides to support charitable causes or local projects, and they can make decisions that affect the community as a whole.

Citizens play a crucial role in creating and maintaining vibrant public services, markets, public spaces, technologies, and digitization. They are actively involved in planning for their cities, where various stakeholders' roles and relationships are in a state of constant change (Kallus, 2016; Leino & Puumala, 2021; Ansell &

Torfing, 2021). With the guidance of city planners and administrators, citizens use their local knowledge and experiences to identify urban issues, conduct participatory data analysis, and engage in participatory reporting using traditional and modern technologies. This bottom-up strategy is especially prevalent in decentralized city divisions, councils, lower-level administrative wards, and village council structures in Uganda. Through this approach, citizens are able to create participatory plans and budgets for their respective areas.

It has been noted that citizens play a crucial role in shaping the future of urban areas. They are active in creating, negotiating, and testing new ideas, as well as seeking feasible solutions to urban challenges (Sassen, 2010). Additionally, citizens are frequently involved in participatory planning through community-driven development approaches, which helps them design and govern liveable cities with new technologies. With the emergence of new technological advancements, citizens are also instrumental in the development of smart cities, and can help in the transformation of these cities and surrounding communities (Enyedi, 2004; Colenbrander, 2016; Becker et al., 2023). It is becoming increasingly clear that citizens have valuable knowledge, resources, and ideas that can be mobilized to address society's complex problems and challenges. Since citizens are at the point of service provision, they can help governments identify gaps in service delivery. Cities should thus strategize to benefit from the citizens' role in management and governance processes. They are often aware of their community's problems and are able to evaluate them and suggest feasible actions to solve them.

The adoption of co-creation approach in cities has numerous democratic benefits. Engaging citizens in the decision-making process not only allows them to influence city choices but also promotes citizen participation in the political process. This is an ethical and fair act in contemporary democratic societies. The inclusion of citizens in municipal or city governments and administrative choices gradually legitimizes the decision-making process. In addition, the co-creation approach fosters civic skills and virtues as citizens participate in politics and decision-making spaces and processes. Through experiential deliberation, consultations, and information gathering, rational choices are generated as civic involvement improves civic skills. As a result, the quantity of deliberative outputs such as laws and policies, as well as the quality of debates, increases. Furthermore, citizens' participation enriches city governance by bringing together diverse players with different skills, abilities, knowledge, interests, and personalities in city representation and deliberative processes. Citizens elect city representatives such as mayors and councillors through regular elections, which empowers citizens to demand accountability and responsiveness of the representatives to community needs and structures.

7. Boundaries of Citizens in Uganda's New Cities Co-Creation

The preceding sections of this paper have discussed the conceptual understand-

ing of cities, arguments for their formation, and descriptions of urban communities. This background helps us to understand the nature of the city's population and their role in city creation.

The recent creation of 15 new Ugandan cities is justified based on strategic reasons and regional location. This departure from the citizen co-creation theory as a driver of city development raises the question of citizen participation and their role in city administration, given their marginal involvement in its creation. In the case of Uganda, the first question that arises is "Whose city is it?" The follow-up question would then delve into the role of citizens in the creation and administration of the city.

The two questions arise from the legal and policy framework that forms the foundation for city development in Uganda—the Uganda National Urban Policy (2017). This policy includes provisions for dealing with increasing population density, the need for integrated planning, revenue generation from urban economic activity, and the ability to deliver essential services efficiently. This includes key infrastructure facilities and urban basic services such as waste management. However, the creation of new cities is primarily driven by geographical and political reasons and, to some extent, economic reasons. These reasons may or may not be a subset of the Uganda urban policy provisions and do not necessarily reflect the citizens' primary role in the emerging cities.

Cities are created in different regions for geographical needs, such as connectivity to other regions and countries through air, water, transnational roads, and railway networks. They also help in the dispersion or reconcentration of economic activities from the central capital city of Kampala to other regions like Mbarara in the west, Arua in the West Nile region, and Mbale in the eastern region. The creation of these cities is largely due to their accessibility and connectivity to other countries in the African region and beyond, their proximity to the main transnational road network, and their commercial and industrial importance to neighboring countries.

Some argue that this is a way to share the national cake, which benefits high urbanization city governments and their vocal local area stakeholders. The creation of these regional cities also creates opportunities for electoral positions, employment, and trade that benefit local and adjacent communities as spillovers. Additionally, regionalization of cities can help achieve SDG 11's objective of equitable distribution and use of public space that is safe, accessible, and all-inclusive to each segment of the population within different localities. By creating regional cities, there is a likelihood of reducing the pressure on the capital city caused by the ever-growing population and related high population ills like conflicts, crime, pollution, and disease.

The newly created cities have a strategic role that primarily focuses on economic benefits, such as industrialization, tourism, trade, hydro power generation, investment in housing estates or social amenities like sports grounds and centers, and the discovery of minerals, oil, and gas. Cities like Lira, Fort Portal,

and Hoima fall under this category. These strategic cities also contribute to realizing SDG 11 by making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. It increases access to housing, promotes safeguards for cultural and natural heritage, and provides opportunities for vulnerable groups like women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities. It focuses on sustainable economic development and aims for overall economic growth.

While there may be benefits of citizen co-creation for governance in many city contexts, a closer investigation into Uganda suggests a top-down schema where the determination of the city recreation and location is bureaucratic in nature driven largely by national interests. In the whole range of factors determining Uganda's city creation, there is minimal indication of intent to involve citizens at the city initiation level. It may emerge that citizens experience direct or indirect participation within the city activities during different stages of city development and public service delivery. However, the impact of citizens in such processes largely depends on the attitude and willingness of technocrats and top-level politicians like city mayors and councillors to adapt and integrate proposals from citizens into the city plans, ordinances, or other legal and policy frameworks. Rather, the citizens' role in these cases is more felt and seen in legitimizing the city democratization process, standing for political offices, voting, and virtually fulfilling the "politics of presence" as councillors and urban community actors. Critics of urban democracy also condemn the vice of voter bribery that further impairs the citizens' objective participation in city politics.

The involvement of citizens in co-creating their cities can be limited by the policies, laws, and administrative channels that are in place to implement such frameworks (Castan & Alves, 2018; Røiseland, 2021). Traditional government bureaucrats may intentionally keep citizens in the dark about city plans and development, using their privileged positions of information and technical control to maintain bureaucratic control over the city's processes, including determining which resources to use, how much to use, and when to use them. This approach is often meant to maintain bureaucratic supremacy and control, while creating inactive citizen participation in city-making, which shields bureaucrats from critical inquiries related to public accountability. In any case, bureaucrats take advantage of weak civil society organizations that lack strong groups and associations to hold technocrats accountable and responsive to the needs and interests of urban communities.

Designing and implementing co-creative processes that fully realize their participatory potential is a difficult and context-dependent task (Leino & Puumala, 2021). This becomes even more complex when co-creation occurs in challenging and unprecedented situations such as during the COVID-19 pandemic or other catastrophic events like fire outbreaks and epidemics. Additionally, the process of actualizing citizen diversity and its benefits in participatory governance in cities may be hindered by prejudice from "superior" or privileged groups, mostly city dwellers who are numerically few. Acts of intimidation, intolerance, and

mistreatment of individuals with different social, political, or religious orientations may be experienced, leading to some citizens' marginalization in the city development processes. To achieve balanced outcomes, it's necessary to carefully manage the differences in resource endowment, social background, and individual traits of the actors and beneficiaries (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013; Torfing et al., 2016; Galuszka, 2019).

Many people living in cities, especially in developing countries, do not have the necessary skills and resources to fully participate in modern smart city projects. This lack of computer literacy, limited access to internet and mobile networks, and a lack of data literacy often lead to failed city projects (Linders, 2012; Laffin & Ormston, 2013). Additionally, citizen engagement in the development and implementation of smart city solutions typically relies on trust between the government and its citizens, as well as the perceived potential for positive outcomes (Kyohairwe et al., 2022). When citizens become demoralized and lose hope in the city's ability to achieve their goals, they may become less engaged and less likely to participate in democratic processes.

8. Conclusion

The Ugandan government's recent decision to create 15 new cities has been met with mixed reactions from citizens. Some are excited about the potential benefits such as increased business opportunities, job prospects, and infrastructure development. Others, however, are criticizing the decision as being unrealistic and overly ambitious, especially given the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Importantly, these new cities are being upgraded from municipalities, which are currently facing financial constraints in their ability to carry out local government functions (Ggoobi & Lukwago, 2019; Mushemeza, 2019). While the phased implementation plan for the new cities may have some benefits, the time between phases seems too short to permit financial sustainability.

Emerging cities in a decentralized governance system, like in Uganda, and in the current globalized world of complex structures, stakeholders, and networks would benefit more from technical expertise and scientific approaches. There is a strong need to think deeply about city perspectives, such as those presented by McFarlane (2011) and Roberts (2014, 2019), which dismiss the historical view of cities being mere dwellings or places for residence. If we consider the fact that cities becoming more of assemblages of sites, actors, relationships, and networks that shape trajectories of the past, present, and future of urban life, then it is essential that citizens should be fully involved in planning for their own localities. True, the scientific methods such as satellite imagery analysis techniques may be used by technocrats in the planning process to determine the urban extent and the measurement of population density to determine the level of urbanization. Technical approaches however should accommodate factual realities like land ownership and land tenure systems, human rights, social-cultural factors, ex-

periences of residents, social factors and characteristics of residents, prevailing political interests, as well as economic and environmental conditions that may deter effective city development. City planners should draw lessons from some past experiences when residents of some villages have declined inclusion of their peri-urban or rural local areas in municipalities or town councils. Further lessons also could be drawn from urban residents that settled in places not earlier well planned resisting infrastructural developments like roads and electricity to an extent of having stalemates of the developments due to demands of excessive land or property compensations. Other instances of drawing boundaries in an urban area or between urban and rural areas due to ethnic settlements, political constituencies, potential of actual economic benefits or natural phenomena like swamps and other water bodies are arguments that may be well articulated by the people living in the area. If this form of citizen engagement is well done, it is possible that once a city boundary is demarcated, there will be less contestation or delays regarding its development and scope.

The debate of engagement should however be well understood. If not, we may also risk to encounter situations where the citizens or local residents and their political leadership may make unrealistic demands of creating cities or other urban administrative structures for some individuals selfish interests. Instances of demands for a town or city to secure political or administrative positions, or as gerrymandering of political constituencies to disadvantage political opponents are also some of the experiences in the Ugandan local government processes. The citizens therefore need a proper guidance of the technocrats where the processes of city creation is demand driven from the residents of the localities

Overall, there is a need for capacity building of both the technocrats and the citizens involved in the city creation. It is when such capacity is built that the process of initiating cities can be meaningfully determined and that all stakeholders can participate and own their city. If there were effective consultations during the planning of cities, the current challenges faced by new cities in Uganda would be minimal.

As urbanisation increases and more cities emerge in addition to other urban structures of town councils, and municipalities, it becomes apparent that there is a necessity to create a suitable law which will address the technicalities of these urban as distinct governance structures from rural councils. In the current legislation, the city creation remains largely guided by the Local Governments Act 1997 and the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) Act 2011. These two legal frameworks are inadequate to guide the emerging cities which largely rely on Uganda National Urban Policy of 2017. The existing gap should call for an Urban development and management Act, a new legislation that will enable operationalisation of the National Urban Policy. The existence of this legal and policy frameworks should guide effective citizens' engagement to make cities affordable, liveable, and sustainable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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