

Halfway the first decade of our 10 cities, were they worth it?



GenZ: What the heck is happening here! These councillors in Arua want to shift the city to another place called Oluko. Am I dreaming?

Mzee: I also read something they said about the current location being too congested, thus insisting that the headquarters and administration should be taken to Oluko, where some seven acres belonging to the Government are free and can host the headquarters, while the present Arua city

remains a commercial centre or something like that.

GenZ: So Oluko becomes Washington D.C. while Arua remains New York?

Mzee: You also, why don't you come nearer home and say Oluko becomes Dodoma while Arua remains Dar-es-Salaam?

GenZ: Or in another Pan-African example, Oluko becomes Abuja and Arua, Lagos.

Mzee: One wonders if the meticulous studies and plans the Government undertook provided for the new cities splitting into a commercial city physically separate from its administration located elsewhere in the region.

GenZ: In which case Jinja city's council can resolve to relocate its administration to Mabira and probably name it Jinja eco-city? But seriously though, does it mean the lengthy process that the country and Parliament went through to create the new cities was not at all informed by physical planning?

Mzee: Are you saying Arua councillors aren't serious? You know, things change.

GenZ: You mean things are allowed to change contrary to the approved physical plan of the city?

Mzee: Assuming there was a master plan...

GenZ: Sir, I don't know how this can be put

politely, but please, we are not talking about a decision being pondered by a social club, whether it should allow people to attend a session wearing sandals or only closed shoes. This is about the national Parliament approving and creating cities. There must have been significant input by the National Planning Authority and the local government's physical planners. So, with due respect, how do local councillors change the location of the city's heart, which was so deliberately planned at the national level?

Mzee: Well, the councillors are the ones on the ground, and they know the realities.

GenZ: Does it give them the power to change what was created at the national level?

Mzee: I am sure they will seek approval from the national level.

GenZ: And if it is approved, then the Gulu city councillors could decide to shift Gulu city headquarters to Atiak, where there is more space, right? So, Gulu city would become Atiak city, like Oluko city for Arua, right?

Mzee: I am not saying it will be approved, so the Fort Portal councillors can, for example, opt to shift their tourism city headquarters to some national park where it feels more touristic.

GenZ: So, if the central government wouldn't approve the shifting of Arua city, why are the councillors wasting time?

Mzee: Well, their effort is maybe what will motivate the new 12th Parliament to look again at the new cities.

GenZ: And revoke the city status of the 10 slum-like settlements being created and are trying to compete with our main national slum of Kampala?

Mzee: No, the Government cannot revoke the city status that our people are so proud of; that would injure our collective pride in our regions. But the 12th Parliament would then invoke its oversight mandate to ensure that no slum mentality is allowed to influence the development of our 10 new cities. Let what has transpired in the first unfortunate years be reviewed under the mid-decade review, starting with all plot allocations in the 10 cities. Let no council and senior administrative position be confirmed until the physical master plans of a city are approved by the relevant Parliament committees; and let the physical developments be approved annually by the Parliament committee. We cannot afford to turn the whole country into a slum.