



Rapporteur Report on The Kenya We Want Twitter Spaces held on 3rd August 2022

Rapporteur- Cynthia Nthenya Musyoka

Introduction and preliminaries

The Architectural Association of Kenya through its twitter handle @Arch_KE hosted a twitter spaces conversation on the Kenya We Want Campaign by AAK #KenyaWeWant, on 3rd August, 2022 from 8.00 p.m. The session lasted 2 hours and 18 mins with a total of 1151 individuals tuned in of which 661 were live listeners.

The e-dialogue was opened by the Association's President, Arch. Wilson Mugambi. He introduced the session by highlighting the campaigns the Association had recently launched i.e. the Kenya We Want and Je Una Mjengo? campaigns. The conversation focused on the Kenya We Want Campaign which the Association conducts every election year seeking to address critical matters affecting the built environment and urban governance that incoming governments, both at national and county levels, need to place as a priority. The main pillars of the Kenya we want campaign as mentioned by the President are:

1. Climate Justice
2. Sustainable Urban Growth
3. Improved Business Environment
4. Sustainable Infrastructure Development
5. Reformed Urban Governance

To conclude his introductory remarks, he highlighted that as Kenyans we need to push conversations and actions that will see us get value for money as taxpayers in terms of projects delivered by the elected leaders.

The Twitter space was conducted in two sessions:

1. Panel Discussion session
2. Question and Answer session

HEAD OFFICE

Architectural Association of Kenya,
Blue Violets Plaza, Kamburu Drive, off Ngong Road.
P.O. Box 44258 Nairobi, 00100
Telephone: +254-020-2420806, 2420582
Mobile: +254 721 691 337
Email: aak@aak.or.ke





Panel Discussion

The panel was moderated by the Association's Vice President, Arch. Florence Nyole.

The session incorporated a list of speakers with vast knowledge in the different Kenya We Want campaign themes and included professionals from different sectors of the built environment, varying from academia, practitioners as well as activists in the field. These were:

1. Prof. Alfred Omenya- B.Arch, M.Arch, Ph.D., Reg. Arch, MAAK, Architect & Sustainable Human Settlements Expert
2. Plan. Christine Muchiri- Urban Planner, Vice Chairperson- AAK Town Planners Chapter
3. Mr. Chris Kost- Africa Programme Director, ITDP
4. Arch. George Arabbu- Architect, Chairperson - AAK Architect's Chapter
5. Arch. Githinji Mbugua- Architect. Urban and Environmental Regeneration Enthusiast

The panel discussion was as follows:

I. What measures need to be put in place to ensure inclusive urban management?

Arch. George Arabbu

As noted, Kenya as a country, is urbanizing at a fast rate and clearly lacks a strong base for urbanization. Current measures put in place by politicians and elected leaders are not adequate to meet these urbanization needs. There is a dire need to take into account issues of inclusivity by putting everyone on the table for decision-making.

Arch. George Arabbu highlighted that the main challenge faced in Kenya in relation to effective urban management is the lack of implementation of already existing plans. He indicated that some county plans exist and have not been implemented for more than 7 years. Additionally, he highlighted that enforcement institutions formed such as urban boards are not functional.

As a recommendation, Arch. Arabu stated that organizations such as the AAK should be at the forefront of pushing for the establishment of enforcement entities within our counties whose main mandate will be directing ways in which urban management should be conducted through adequate and inclusive public participation.

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II Kenya lacks a proper planning framework hence the many challenges being faced. What actions need to be taken to curb urban management challenges?

Arch.Githinji Mbugua

Planning should be the basis on which money for development is released. It should be done legally at all levels- from the formulation of National Spatial Plans to the 47 CIDPs for all counties. Any projects outside the plans should not be actioned; take for example the expressway which is not part of Nairobi's Integrated Development Urban Masterplan (NIUPLAN).

Architect Githinji also alluded that just as we have a Building Code, Kenya needs a functional Planning Code established under PLUPA and a planning authority to enforce the code. This would come in handy in handling the currently adopted haphazard way of planning in Kenya. GIS should be a critical tool in consideration for effective planning.

He insisted that it is our responsibility as citizens to be part of the solution to our problems instead of waiting on politicians, professionals in academia or even the private sector to come up with the solutions.

III. Do the manifestos presented by aspiring leaders for the current elections address the challenges faced in the Built Environment? What recommendations

Prof. Alfred Omenya

Prof Alfred Omenya highlighted that the manifestos did not adequately give desirable solutions to the challenges faced in the built environment. The two leading parties mainly focused on housing. To break it down, he highlighted aspects in both manifestos in regards to housing as shown below:

Kenya Kwanza

- Target to deliver 250,000 housing units per year
- Housing units will be distributed through mortgage finance from Ksh. 30,000 to Ksh. 1,000,000 for all Kenyans
- Mortgages will target people earning up to Ksh. 10,000 monthly.
- Housing provision will be linked to the Jua Kali industry

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Azimio la Umoja

- The same level of housing supply, that is 250,000 housing units annually
- Elaborated on opportunities to leverage on including social housing

The *Kenya Kwanza* manifesto did not indicate how the informal industry will leverage the sector, and this comes as a replica of the Jubilee administration which resulted in the demolition of more housing units than the number of units constructed. It is to be noted that through mortgages, low income earners identified by the Kenya Kwanza may not be able to sustain their debt with up to Ksh. 5,000 being deducted from their salaries monthly. An area of concern was also on the quality of the housing units done for such amounts of loans.

Despite *Azimio's* manifesto not being quite elaborate, it recognized that the ideal opportunity of housing is leveraging infrastructure provision. The manifesto tries to reform the failed *Jubilee Administration* program on Big 4 AGENDA- provision of affordable housing, and housing provision and highlights tax incentives they propose to introduce.

As a recommendation, it was stated that it is critical to consider standardization of housing for low-income earners in terms of affordability. Housing provision should also incorporate professional consultancy for professionals within the built environment.

IV. ESG agenda- What opportunities can be explored by the incoming governments?

Plan. Christine Muchiri.

ESG defines Environmental, Social, and Governance. Currently, investors are increasingly applying these non-financial factors as part of their analysis processes to identify material risks and potential growth opportunities. ESG has assisted in helping Corporates to stabilize post-COVID 19 through donor funding.

We should take cognizance of ESG in the implementation of sustainable development goals because:

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- a. Intersects with the needs of the people, society, and environment. In this regard, all regulations and legislations by the government in one way or the other have an impact on the ESG. For example, the Sustainable Management Act of 2021 dictates how and where solid waste should be disposed of.
- b. ESG influences businesses and investor attraction. They assist in determining areas in which money will be directed. Consequently, this boosts the business competitiveness environment in the country.
- c. Affects government crediting and borrowing costs. For funding opportunities, foreign countries and local leaders should apply ESG performance elements before approving funding to different countries.

V. Transport and Mobility in Urban Areas and Cities- what is the future of urban mobility?

Mr. Chris Kost.

Urban Mobility at both National and County Government levels is a crucial element that needs close attention. Currently, Kenya continues to rely upon past approaches to deliver urban mobility needs. Ongoing projects are focusing on meeting the needs of the few individuals who own cars while forgetting that the larger percentage uses public means and non-motorized transport systems such as walking, cycling as well as boarding of public transport (*matatus*).

Solutions to the challenges faced in urban transport and mobility include:

- Provision of high-quality public transport which includes proper implementation of BRT in major towns - Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru.
Implemented BRT systems should ensure a sufficient bus fleet and should borrow strategies from successfully implemented BRT systems e.g. in Dar es Salaam.
- Having properly designed, safe and inclusive streets. Designs should accommodate all users, especially the majority of road users who use public transport and Non Motorized Transport systems.
- Management of the use of private vehicles. This includes enforcement of proper parking fees (which should be higher than the current charges), Incorporating IT-based enforcement and limiting the number of parking units on transit corridors to avoid congestion.

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Q & A session

The Question-and-Answer session was moderated by the AAK Advocacy Officer, Oloo Adhiambo.

a. What measures should be put in place to solve issues of insecurity in public spaces such as markets and bus stations?

Arch. Githinji Mbugua

Incorporate both active and passive security measures. Active security measures include the people living or working in an area. Due to the absence of permanent dwellers in these areas (bus stations and market areas), there lacks a sense of neighborhood which in return promotes high rates of insecurity.

Mr. Chris Kost

There is a need to incorporate mixed-use developments in our urban designs to curb issues of insecurity in these areas. The mixed-use developments should be guided by a Planning Code which should incorporate both development plans and street design manuals for neighborhoods.

b. Challenges and solutions to urban management in Kenya

Plan. David Gatimu

Kenya lacks appropriate planning systems and authority to foster implementation and proper urban management. Therefore, planning plays a vital role in both Leadership and Urban Management and should be part of all public projects. For example, the Expressway would be best suited for public transportation in comparison to private transportation.

There is a need to introduce a Ministry of Urbanization which would target to solve urbanization challenges. The Ministry will aid in the development of important instruments (e.g., the Planning Code) for sustainable urbanization in our urban areas. The Ministry will also come in handy with handling failed policy measures through review, development, and implementation of Urban Planning Policies.

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c. Cost of housing being the Challenge as compared to infrastructure provision

Prof. Alfred Omenya

Turning everyone into house owners is not feasible with the current government approach to housing. 70% of Kenyans are renters therefore we should look into how to improve the quality of rental units both in existence and new developments.

The cost of construction, purchase, and maintenance of housing in Kenya continues to remain high (with some areas like Nairobi being attributed to the high cost of land). However, a change in housing costs will not entirely solve existing housing challenges as compared to provision of basic and essential infrastructure.

Housing in informal areas lacks proper basic infrastructure to support the housing needs. Therefore, the provision of adequate infrastructure such as roads, water, security, and electricity will lead to improved houses and attract more homeowners in an area compared to reduced costs without access to vital infrastructure.

Plan. David Gatimu

The cost of land is not the main contributor to housing challenges in Kenya, rather the availability of house plans in these areas. Currently, it is too expensive to do approval of plans with some counties charging as much as a minimum of Ksh 50,000. If issues of standard regulation are addressed, then standards of housing will consequently change.

Arch. Githinji

Housing is currently not properly done and has destroyed the fabric of the city with some being built on road reserves, riparian areas, etc. Slums come up to meet the housing needs of workers which are close to the CBD and Industrial areas for work. A good urban plan should have the majority who are workers living close to urban areas with the rich living on the periphery of the cities. Workers should be able to walk and cycle to their workplaces and once they have enough money move to the periphery with private housing.

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However, with the current situation, slums need infrastructural improvement. While looking at housing provision, private housing competes with public housing and public housing ends up being cheaper. Therefore, the government should not engage in any housing for sale but for rental which will also assist with the maintenance of the units.

d. Collaboration as the best tool to solve our challenges, especially on public projects

Arch. George Arabbu

We should have a registry for public projects indicating who was involved in each stage of a project so as to promote accountability. All projects should be a collaboration with all appropriate professional consultants involved.

Mr. Chris Kost

All professionals should be involved collectively and also avoid back and forth blame games, e.g., between Engineers and Architects. The incoming leadership should ensure the involvement of all agencies in design, planning, and implementation. The designs should be smart, future-oriented and inclusive for all users to avoid future alterations like those seen on Thika Road to accommodate the BRT system.

e. Progress in already drafted plans in regards to implementation.

Arch. George Arabbu

As a country, we have good ideas on paper but the biggest challenge is the implementation of these plans. For example, implementation of by-passes took over 30 years . Therefore, there is a need to push for effective implementation of documented plans, which the incoming governments should look into.

Arch. Githinji Mbugua

Implementation of projects is done through personalized priorities by elected political leaders. They do not adhere to plans in place that should essentially guide what and when projects should be undertaken. For example, the Nairobi Expressway was implemented within months, yet it is not recognized in the - NIUPLAN. In this regard, projects should not be implemented at any point unless they exist in CIDPs. This will increase the rate of accountability for implemented projects.





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Plan. David Gatimu

Vision 2030 is the blueprint for development in Kenya. We should gauge the implementation of plans by assessing the achievements and failures of vision 2030 which is 8 years away from the given implementation timeline. There is a need to build foundations of what is there and come up with tracking mechanisms for success and failures of already structured plans.

Vote of Thanks

Due to the time limit and the increased interest by listeners, the Q&A session had to be brought to a close. A vote of thanks was given by L. Arch. Ruth Mwai and the session was closed at 10.15 pm.

Link to the Twitter space

The recording link to the Twitter space- https://twitter.com/Arch_KE/status/1554873875477012480

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