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DAY 3 - 10:15 - Assembly Area

In Nairobi: developing the SemaNai model for hybrid participation

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Session recap

At a glance

Martha Lemba and Geoffrey Omatoke Mosiria of the Nairobi City County Government presented SemaNai ('Let's talk, Nairobi'), the county's CONSUL-based model for combining digital and in-person participation, introduced on Day 2 during the city panel. The presentation itself was not recorded. The transcript covers the final discussion with participants, which ranged from AI and co-provision of services to road safety campaigns, enforcement and changing civic culture.

Key messages

- Participants observed that Nairobi shows much more enthusiasm for digital participation tools than Germany, where people are more tired of and sceptical about online participation.
- The speakers' main concern is AI: people fear it may replace human participation and make young people stop thinking for themselves.
- Nairobi already involves residents in delivering and monitoring services through project management committees and partnerships with neighbourhood associations.
- Good local governments 'steal' ideas from each other: Nairobi's motorcycle helmet campaign was inspired by Ethiopia and Rwanda.
- Changing civic culture (respect for rules, rejecting vote-buying) is seen as essential alongside new participation tools.

Facts, figures and references

- SemaNai means 'Let's talk, Nairobi' in Kiswahili.
- Road safety helmet campaign funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, inspired by Ethiopia and Rwanda.
- Residents' associations deliver training on access to information.

Takeaways for the community

- Nairobi's experience offers a strong case for hybrid participation and community monitoring, and a reminder that AI concerns are shared across very different contexts.
- Peer exchange, including 'borrowing' policy ideas across countries, is valued by city practitioners.
- Differences in legal and civic culture shape what participation and enforcement approaches are acceptable.