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Amon K. Kirui[1,2] & Philip Keitany[2]
[1]*University of Venda, South Africa*
[2]*Kabarak University, Kenya*

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Abstract
The integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into political resistance marks a consequential shift in the mediation of dissent. This paper examines a paradox at the heart of AI music activism: generative audio tools appear to democratise sonic production for marginalised dissidents, yet the surrounding infrastructures operate through logics of cultural extraction, principally the ingestion of uncredited African musical material into foundation-model training corpora and the capture of engagement value by platform distribution algorithms. Drawing on a retrospective qualitative digital ethnography of discourse concerning the 2024 Kenyan #*RejectFinanceBill2024* and #*OccupyParliament* protests, the study analyses how activists and suspected state-aligned actors deployed AI audio systems across X and adjacent networks. The corpus comprises purposively selected creator posts, reception threads and named commentary from X and cross-posted TikTok material, analysed through reflexive thematic analysis and supplemented by computational audio analysis of the disputed Tujadiliane track. The analysis triangulates mass self-communication, networked counterpublics, Oramedia, platform capitalism and data colonialism. Findings show that Kenyan activists engineered what the paper terms Digital Oramedia by prompting generative systems to synthesise Sheng lexicon, isukuti-inflected rhythmic textures and chant-like sonic structures, enabling rapid mobilisation beyond legacy gatekeepers. Audiences simultaneously perceived a countervailing flow of suspected state-aligned material, most prominently the synthetic reggae track Tujadiliane, producing epistemological anxiety alongside outrage at the appropriation of an anti-colonial idiom. Audience discourse indicates a substantive shift in verification norms from source authenticity toward cultural-political alignment. The paper argues that sustainable AI music activism requires decolonial interventions at both the training-data and distribution layers.

Introduction

In the digital media ecosystem of the mid-2020s, a protest anthem no longer requires a recording studio, a record label or a human voice. During Kenya's 2024 Gen Z uprising against the Finance Bill,

activists on X, TikTok and WhatsApp used generative audio systems and retrieval-based voice-conversion models to produce and circulate protest songs at a tempo that outpaced legacy broadcasters and, arguably, the state itself. These synthetic tracks bypassed the editorial gatekeeping of commercial media and delivered culturally resonant political messages across networked publics with unprecedented speed. Yet the same audio circuits, algorithmically curated for engagement rather than civic value, generate a tension between grassroots empowerment and structural extraction that existing scholarship on African digital activism has not adequately theorised. The case is exceptionally digitally native; it coincided with the mainstream diffusion of consumer-grade generative audio such as Suno and Udio; and the state's evident willingness to compete for sonic-symbolic terrain (Amnesty International, 2025) produced a rare field in which the political economy of synthetic media could be observed in situ, across producer, platform and audience.

At the level of production, generative models lower the barriers to high-fidelity audio work, allow creators to disguise vocal identity and enable the encoding of localised sonic markers that would otherwise require specialised labour. The platforms hosting these tracks operate through what Srnicek (2017) calls platform capitalism, in which engagement is monetised irrespective of political valence, while the foundational models are trained on corpora scraped from the open web (RIAA, 2024), a practice Couldry and Mejias (2019) frame as data colonialism when its costs fall on Global South communities whose cultural production is ingested without consent or remuneration. This paper advances a single, qualified argument: generative AI produced a temporary democratisation of protest music production during Kenya's 2024 protests, but that democratisation was enclosed within extractive distribution infrastructures whose logics favour the platforms rather than the mobilised publics. The paper examines how activists, audiences, and potential state actors negotiated these tools, and how audiences reconstituted authenticity amid synthetic saturation, treating platform effects and state coordination as empirical questions. Four contributions follow: the concept of Digital Oramedia; empirical documentation of an understudied African case; identification of a shift in audience verification practices; and a decolonial research agenda that treats production and distribution as analytically distinct but politically inseparable.

Generative AI, dataset extraction, and music production

A growing body of work distinguishes two classes of generative audio system that have lowered the barriers to high-fidelity music production: text-to-audio models such as MusicLM, MusicGen, Suno and Udio (Agostinelli et al., 2023; Copet et al., 2023), which synthesise entire tracks from natural-language prompts, and retrieval-based voice-conversion (RVC) models, which overlay a target vocal onto an existing performance. The two raise partly different ethical questions; the Kenyan case is dominated by the former. Sturm et al. (2019) and Born (2020) note that such systems reorganise the relation between composer, performer and instrument, producing an authorship neither purely human nor purely machinic, a point Eurocentric AI music scholarship rarely extends to communal, oral or non-Western traditions. A parallel AI-ethics literature interrogates the underlying datasets: Bender et al. (2021) argue that indiscriminately scraped corpora encode the asymmetries of their training data; Gebru et al. (2021) propose datasheets to make such asymmetries auditable; and litigation against Suno and Udio has begun to reveal the scale of uncredited ingestion (RIAA, 2024). Where these practices intersect with Global South heritage, Couldry and Mejias (2019), Birhane (2020) and Mohamed, Png and Isaac (2020) frame the asymmetry as data colonialism and call for decolonial AI research centring affected communities. Empirical work has, however, privileged Northern cases; how African activists wield these tools during acute crises remains under-examined.

Platform capitalism and algorithmic gatekeeping

Srnicek (2017) argues that contemporary platforms accumulate value by intermediating circulation rather than producing content. Van Dijck, Poell and de Waal (2018) show how algorithmic curation displaces editorial gatekeeping, while Gillespie (2018) demonstrates that such curation is largely indifferent to political valence, amplifying resistance and propaganda alike when they generate engagement, a structural indifference the Kenyan case renders unusually visible. Zuboff (2019) sharpens the critique: the primary product of platform firms is behavioural prediction, such that engagement with protest music is not merely a metric but raw material for a proprietary predictive apparatus. In African contexts, Nyabola (2018) and Mare (2020) show that these dynamics interact with pre-existing repertoires of state surveillance and infrastructural precarity, while Mutsvairo and Ragnedda (2019) argue that African digital publics resist assimilation to Northern archetypes.

Digital activism and networked counterpublics

Castells (2012) conceptualises mass self-communication as the capacity of networked individuals to reach mass audiences without corporate mediation, while Jackson, Bailey and Foucault Welles (2020) develop networked counterpublics to describe how disenfranchised groups constitute alternative discursive spaces through hashtag ecologies, extending Fraser's (1990) subaltern counterpublics into the algorithmic era. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) emphasise how personalised connective action replaces the collective-identity work of earlier movements; Tufekci (2017) cautions that the affordances enabling rapid mobilisation can also produce brittle movements lacking organisational depth. This tension is directly relevant to the Kenyan case: synthetic audio compresses production and amplification cycles further still, intensifying both the connective-action logic Bennett and Segerberg describe and the organisational thinness Tufekci warns of, since a viral track can substitute for the slower work of building shared identity that traditional protest music once performed. African-focused scholarship (Mutsvairo, 2016; Nyabola, 2018; Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017; Wasserman, 2020) extends these accounts but focuses predominantly on text, image and human-recorded video; the introduction of synthetic audio into networked counterpublics is under-theorised.

A rapidly emerging body of scholarship documents the 2024 Kenyan mobilisation, though almost none of it addresses synthetic audio. Ingutia (2025) reads the #*RejectFinanceBill2024* protests through social-movement theory as a landmark instance of leaderless, platform-mediated youth mobilisation, while Njuki, Mbaka and Atieno (2024) analyse the protest hashtags as an imagined community of language users. Closest to the present study, Karanja and Musili (2026) show how activists built custom ChatGPT-based Protest GPTs to simplify legislation; Maina (2025) finds that AI-generated explainer content raised engagement; and Kimwere (2025) analyses audience sentiment toward AI-generated political imagery. This work establishes that generative AI was constitutive of the mobilisation, but it concentrates on text and image; the production, circulation and contested reception of synthetic audio remain unexamined. Amnesty International's (2025) documentation of state-sponsored troll and paid-blogger networks amplifying pro-government messaging provides independent corroboration that coordinated counter-mobilisation occurred, while stopping short of attributing authorship of any specific track.

Oramedia and African communication theory

Ugboajah (1985) coined the term Oramedia to describe indigenous African communication systems anchored in orality, music, dance, proverb and communal performance, arguing that these forms should be treated as legitimate media systems rather than folkloric residues. In contrast to Western mass media, top-down, individualised and transactional, Oramedia is participatory, relational and inseparable from communal identity: medium and message are constituted together, and

communicative authority rests on communal recognition rather than institutional certification. Ansu-Kyeremeh (2005), Wilson (2008) and Nwabueze (2005) extend the concept, with Nwabueze reconceiving Oramedia as a set of relational principles instantiable in successive media environments rather than a fixed inventory of traditional forms. Recent work on African digital cultures (Mabweazara, 2015; Mare, 2020; Wasserman, 2020) hints at the migration of oramediatic practices onto social platforms, but the intersection of Oramedia with generative AI has not been systematically theorised. This paper proposes that AI-generated protest music composed with explicit cultural prompting constitutes a novel instantiation of the oramediatic principle within an infrastructural environment that is at once enabling and extractive.

Theoretical Framework

The paper works with a composite framework in which Oramedia functions as the theoretical anchor and mass self-communication, networked counterpublics, platform capitalism and data colonialism function as analytic complements. Oramedia anchors the framework because it originates within African communication studies, foregrounds participation and communal ownership, and sharpens the critique of platforms that convert communal expression into engagement metrics. The paper proposes Digital Oramedia to describe the intentional encoding of oramediatic markers, Sheng lexicon, localised rhythmic textures, chant-like structures and communal address, into AI-generated output circulated through networked counterpublics. This is not a claim that generative AI is inherently oramediatic; it names a specific practice in which activists shape prompts, workflows and distribution to reproduce, at scale, the relational qualities Ugboajah associates with traditional African communication. The construct holds two claims in productive tension: generative tools can be domesticated for oramediatic ends, yet this domestication does not neutralise the extractive logics of the surrounding infrastructure. This raises a theoretical question the framework must confront directly: how can a sonic artefact carry oramediatic authority when its generation depends on a corporate black-box model rather than face-to-face communal performance? The paper argues that algorithmic mediation does not confer or destroy oramediatic authority automatically, it displaces the site at which authority is negotiated. Under traditional Oramedia, authority rests on the performer's known relation to the community; under Digital Oramedia, that anchoring migrates to the moment of reception, where audiences audit sonic outputs for linguistic, rhythmic and affective fidelity and confer or withhold recognition on that basis.

Methodology

The study employs an exploratory, retrospective qualitative digital ethnography (Hine, 2015; Pink et al., 2016) of publicly available discourse on X concerning the 2024 Kenyan protest cycle, supplemented by observation of cross-posted TikTok material. A retrospective design is appropriate because the discourse persists as publicly archived interaction and can be reconstructed after the acute events it documents. Digital ethnography is the appropriate mode because the phenomenon under study, the rapid production and circulation of synthetic protest audio, is constituted by and legible only within the platforms in question; interview- or survey-based methods would misrepresent the temporal and relational texture of the case. The design is deliberately interpretive rather than representative: its purpose is to identify and theorise emergent communicative practices, not to estimate their prevalence. The authors engaged the material as non-participant analysts, following the affordances-and-practices orientation of Postill and Pink (2012). A clear distinction is maintained between the event period and the retrieval period: the discourse was produced during the acute phase of the mobilisation in 2024 but was retrieved and analysed by the authors in June 2026. This temporal gap is acknowledged as a methodological limitation; some posts had been deleted, and platform-side

algorithmic changes may have shaped what remained visible, but the archived corpus was sufficient for the interpretive purposes of this study.

Three interlocking sub-sites structured the reconstruction: creator posts discussing generative workflows; posts and reposts under the hashtags #RejectFinanceBill2024, #OccupyParliament, #*RutoMustGo* and, for the state-aligned counter-flow, tags associated with Tujadiliane and Tusigombane; and reception threads flagging tracks as synthetic.

Case selection and analytic procedure

Consistent with the exploratory orientation, communicative acts were selected purposively for their analytic salience rather than assembled into a fixed corpus. The unit of analysis was the individual communicative act, a creator post narrating a workflow, an amplification event, a reception thread or a track flagged by users as synthetic. Salience was assessed along two intersecting criteria: conspicuous circulation (high visible engagement) and analytic distinctiveness (the act illuminated a mechanism the study seeks to theorise, such as prompt engineering, algorithmic amplification, or audience detection of synthetic content).

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), which treats the authors' situated judgement as an analytic resource. Initial codes were generated across two parallel streams: a technological-musicological stream focused on production practices and sonic content, and a media-network stream focused on distribution patterns and reception discourse. For the suspected state-aligned *Tujadiliane* track, the interpretive work was supplemented by computational audio analysis conducted by uploading a raw MP3 capture to the Chosic audio-file analyser, which extracts descriptors directly from the waveform rather than relying on Spotify's Echo Nest metadata (the track is not indexed on commercial streaming platforms). Chosic returned descriptors of tempo, key, energy, acousticness, instrumentalness, speechiness, and liveness, treated as heuristic corroboration of critical listening rather than as independent measurement. Codes were iteratively grouped into candidate themes, tested against disconfirming instances, and consolidated into the four themes presented below.

Ethics, positionality, and limitations

The study was designed in accordance with the Association of Internet Researchers' ethics guidelines (Franzke, et al., 2020) and the reflexive protocols proposed by Markham (2012). Although the posts were technically public, the political sensitivity of the Kenyan context, where participants faced documented risks of surveillance and extra-judicial violence, required a differentiated protocol for handling participant identity.

Under this protocol, two categories of speaker are named and quoted verbatim: accredited journalists and public commentators publishing under their own bylines (the investigative journalist David Hundeyin, whose widely circulated AI-detection analysis is treated as published commentary, is quoted and named on this basis), and institutional and broadcast actors such as Citizen TV whose conduct as public organisations is a legitimate object of scrutiny. All other speakers, ordinary participants whose exposure could carry material risk, are assigned stable pseudonymous codes (creators C1, C2…; amplification-oriented accounts P1, P2…; reception-oriented accounts R1, R2…), and their words are reproduced verbatim with minimal alteration, following Markham (2012). Sheng and Kiswahili utterances are reproduced in the original and glossed in English in square brackets. Reception-oriented posts are quoted directly; creator-oriented accounts of production workflows, recovered in summarised form, are rendered as reported speech. No private messages, closed communities, or age-restricted content were accessed.

The lead author writes as a Kenyan doctoral scholar with a sustained research interest in the political economy of African music and as someone broadly sympathetic to the demands of the 2024 protest movement. This positionality shaped access, interpretation, and voice throughout the study, enabling recognition of Sheng lexical and prosodic details that an analyst without regional fluency would likely have missed. Five limitations should be noted: the study is exploratory rather than systematic and does not estimate the prevalence of the practices it identifies; it cannot verify the training data of the models used; without platform-side attribution data it cannot demonstrate central coordination of suspected state-aligned tracks; X is one node in a broader ecosystem; and the retrospective design means the discourse was reconstructed from archived material rather than observed as events unfolded.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis surfaces four themes. The first documents the intentional construction of Digital Oramedia through generative workflows: prompt engineering, cultural signifiers and hybrid human–AI authorship. The second examines audience perception of a suspected state-aligned synthetic counter-flow, focusing on the widely discussed *Tujadiliane* case and the forensic listening practices audiences developed to identify it. The third foregrounds the extractive infrastructures beneath the democratisation narrative, tracing training-data ingestion and engagement capture. The fourth traces the redefinition of authenticity produced by the saturation of the feed with plausible synthetic voices. Table 1 summarises the coded participant discourse, its analytic function, and its theoretical linkage; the discussion that follows works thematically.

Table 1: Coded participant discourse, analytic function and theoretical linkage. Tier 1 speakers are named public commentators; Tier 2 are pseudonymised participants

Theme	Code	Illustrative utterance / account	Analytic function	Theoretical linkage
T1 Digital Oramedia	C1	Full track composed in ~30 min while queuing (reported)	Temporal compression; near-zero-cost production	Mass self-communication (Castells 2012)
	C2	Prompting with *isukuti* rhythms to sound rooted (reported)	Cultural prompting; indigenous markers	Oramedia (Ugboajah 1985; Nwabueze 2005)
	C3	AI voice lacks soul but 'does the job' (reported)	Pragmatic accommodation; domestication	Oramedia; connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013)
	C4	Lyrics → Suno → video as gatekeeper bypass (reported)	Bypass of legacy gatekeeping	Networked counterpublics (Jackson et al. 2020)
	R1	AI song 'hits harder than real ones'	Utility over biological authorship	Oramedia; mass self-communication
	R2	'They even got the*Sheng*slang right'	Authenticity as linguistic fidelity	Oramedia (relational belonging)
	R3	'Sounds like my neighbour at the protest'	Authenticity as affective recognition	Oramedia (communal recognition)
	R5	'*Hizo songs za AI zinabamba sana* millennials'	Code-switched vernacular endorsement	Oramedia (sonic vernacular)
	R6	'Synthetic or not, it's uniting us'	Source subordinated to solidarity	Oramedia vs transactional media
T2 State co-optation	R7	'…why does it sound like it was AI generated?'	Initial suspicion at broadcast	Gillespie 2018 (reception not indifferent)

	R8	'…every 13 seconds'	Saturation read as coordination	Platform society (van Dijck et al. 2018)
	Hundey in	'…tonal changes… weirdly mechanical…' (named)	Forensic detection claim	Synthetic-media literacy; Chesney & Citron 2019
	R18	'*Nani aliandika na ameimba hii wimbo?*'	Demand for authorship = suspicion trigger	Oramedia (knowable communal author)
	R20	'Government imesponser Song… *Washenziiii sana*'	Vernacular accusation of sponsorship	Platform society; saturation logic
	R21	'…like that other nonsense genAI *Tujadiliane* song'	Places track in state-messaging repertoire	Computational propaganda
	R22	'…*Tujadiliane*… is making me emotional'	Affective traction (disconfirming case)	Probabilistic limit of oramediatic defence
T3 Extractive infrastructures	C5	Irony of tools trained on world's music (reported)	Reflexive awareness of extraction	Data colonialism (Couldry & Mejias 2019)
	C6	Output scraped to train next model (reported)	Extractive loop tracked forward	Birhane 2020 (algorithmic colonisation)
	C7	Safety vs feeding training data (reported)	Safety-vs-sovereignty trade	Data colonialism; Bender et al. 2021
	P1	'…hold MPs accountable… The future is now.'	Pragmatic pro-tool optimism	Platform capitalism (Srnicek 2017)
	R13	'Exploiting our struggle… while we fight poverty'	Folk theory of data colonialism	Couldry & Mejias 2019
	R14	'…scraping our protest songs to sell back'	Commodification loop named	Surveillance capitalism (Zuboff 2019)
T4 Authenticity	R15	'…might as well be an A.I generated voice…'	Sonic evidence not self-authenticating	Chesney & Citron 2019
	R16	'…the most EPIC AI music video of all time'	Authority conferred on anonymous track	Cultural-political authenticity
	R17	'…mechanical, but lyrics are spot on…'	Discredited vocal + endorsed message	Reallocation of verification norms

Note. Creator-oriented accounts (C-codes) were recovered in summarised form and are rendered as reported speech; reception-oriented posts (R-codes) and named public commentary are quoted verbatim. Codes correspond to those used in the discussion below.

Constructing Digital Oramedia through generative workflows

Across the creator sub-site, generative tools functioned less as novelty instruments than as rapid-response infrastructures for political speech. Creators described hybrid workflows in which human-written lyrics were passed through text-to-audio models and paired with AI-generated imagery for distribution. A recurring pattern involved producing an entire multimedia protest artefact within a single evening; what would previously have required a booked studio, session vocalist, and mixing engineer was compressed into an evening of solo work at a marginal cost approaching zero and released while the underlying political events were still unfolding. Cultural prompting was central. Creators reported instructing models to reproduce localised rhythmic textures and Sheng lexicon associated with Nairobi hip-hop, and in several cases testing prompts referencing traditional Kenyan elements such as *isukuti* to make tracks feel rooted rather than generic; reference to established artists such as Wakadinali functioned as shorthand for genre expectations models could not otherwise reliably approximate.

Creators also framed these workflows as a deliberate bypass of legacy gatekeeping, positioning the handwritten-lyrics-to-Suno-to-shareable-video pipeline as grassroots media that no longer required the permission of radio programmers or television commissioners to reach a mass audience, and

presenting their tracks as counterprogramming to the sonic environment produced by state-aligned commercial media. Others were more sceptical: one musician whose posts were observed admitted that AI voices lacked the affective depth of human vocals but continued using them for quick anti-bill anthems distributed through WhatsApp networks. The tension between aesthetic reservation and mobilisational urgency was itself productive, shaping the conventions of the emerging repertoire. A closer reading of the prompt-engineering practices sharpens the analysis. Creators did not simply request generic Kenyan music; they iterated across prompts, adjusted lexical registers between takes and abandoned outputs that were sonically competent but culturally generic, on the grounds that a track without the correct Sheng inflections or rhythmic cadence would fail to circulate.

The participant discourse renders these workflows concrete. One creator (C1) narrated a compressed production pipeline assembled in a public queue, describing how they had made an entire track while waiting in line using their own lyrics, Suno for the music, a chatbot for the visuals, and a mobile editor to assemble it. A second creator (C2) foregrounded the deliberate encoding of indigenous rhythmic markers, prompting the model with *isukuti* references to ensure the track felt rooted rather than generic. A third (C3) offered a pragmatic accommodation: the AI voice, he acknowledged, lacked soul but did the job, a domestication of imperfect tools for urgent political ends. A fourth (C4) framed the entire pipeline as a gatekeeper bypass: from lyrics in Suno to shareable video, without waiting for radio programmers or television commissioners.

Read through Ugboajah (1985) and Nwabueze's (2005) reformulation, in which Oramedia names a set of relational principles rather than a fixed inventory of forms; these practices are legible as the deliberate reconstruction of communal song within a synthetic medium. What makes C2's insistence on *isukuti* or C1's Sheng lyricism oramediatic is not the technology of production but the relational logic of address: the tracks are composed to be recognised, shared and sung by a community that reads its own political situation into them.

Audience reception, drawn from reply and quote-tweet threads, valorised political utility over biological authorship in strikingly consistent terms. One reception post (R1) declared that *This AI song hits harder than real ones*, finally our generation's voice without needing a studio, collapsing the distinction between synthetic and authentic in favour of generational address. Others (R2, R3) located authenticity in linguistic and affective fidelity, praising a track for getting the Sheng slang right or for sounding like my neighbour at the protest, while R5's code-switched endorsement Hizo songs za AI zinabamba sana millennials [these AI songs really resonate with millennials] fused vernacular judgment with generational identification. R6 subordinated source to solidarity outright: Synthetic or not, it's uniting us.

These appraisals evidence a tacit theory of cultural fit that audiences applied to synthetic tracks in real time, triangulating directly with the framework. R2's location of authenticity in correct Sheng and R3's in the felt presence of a neighbour are audience-side confirmations of the oramediatic reading: what authorises a track is its relational belonging within the community it addresses, not its biological provenance.

Suspected state co-optation and the contested village square

The counter-narrative dimension of the field was equally striking. Audiences documented the recurrent circulation of polished pro-dialogue tracks, most notably a widely discussed Tujadiliane (let us dialogue) reggae composition and its companion *Tusigombane* (let us not fight) material, which appeared in broadcast rotation and on social feeds during the peak protest weeks. A recurring

audience complaint alleged that these tracks were AI-generated, saturating airtime through paid coordination rather than earning circulation through organic uptake.

The participant discourse renders this suspicion in granular detail. One reception post (R7) captured the initial moment of doubt: What's that 'tujadiliane song' playing on citizen, and why does it sound AI-generated? A second (R8) tied suspicion of synthetic production to suspicion of paid coordination, complaining that 'While we're using AI to educate the masses, broadcasters were playing the same track every 13 seconds'. Hundeyin's widely circulated forensic analysis identified tonal micro-variation and weirdly mechanical inflections as evidence of synthetic origin. R20 named state sponsorship outright, Government imesponser Song… Washenziiii sana [The government sponsored a song… absolute fools], while R21 placed the track within a broader repertoire of state messaging, dismissing it alongside that other nonsense genAI *Tujadiliane* song.

The study cannot independently verify authorship, attribution, or coordination; the finding here concerns audience perception of a coordinated synthetic counter-flow, which is analytically significant regardless of its accuracy because it structured how audiences related to the media environment. Hundeyin's analysis is treated as a participant's publicly argued detection claim, not corroborated technical evidence. Amnesty International's (2025) documentation of state-sponsored troll and paid-blogger networks lends external support to audience suspicions of coordinated counter-mobilisation, while stopping short of attributing authorship of any specific track. Read across R7 to R12 and Hundeyin's (2024) analysis, the discourse did not merely reject the *Tujadiliane* track on political grounds; it developed a technical vocabulary for identifying synthetic content, drawing on tonal micro-variation (Hundeyin, 2024), suspicious polish and tempo (R11), and the saturation of broadcast rotation (R8) as circumstantial evidence of a coordinated operation. This distributed synthetic-media literacy, emerging in real time within an African public, complicates accounts that assume publics under synthetic saturation collapse into credulity or cynical withdrawal.

The reception of the *Tujadiliane* track was dense and affectively varied. Several users foregrounded the anonymity of the composition as suspicious in itself: one (R18) demanded, "What is this *Tujadiliane* song?" Nani aliandika na ameimba hii wimbo? Inaniudhi btw. [Who wrote and sang this song? It irritates me.]. Another collapsed the state's appeal to dialogue into a rejection of its legitimacy. R22, a disconfirming case, admitted the track was making me emotional despite its provenance, evidence that affective traction was not fully governed by attribution suspicion. Taken together, R18 to R22 sharpen the analysis in two ways. First, the recurrence of demands for authorship, who wrote it, who sang it, why it appears from nowhere, confirms that the absence of a knowable communal author was the primary trigger of suspicion, precisely as the Oramedia framework predicts: a track that cannot be traced to a recognised member of the community forfeits the relational credit ordinary music enjoys. Second, R22 marks the probabilistic limit of that defence: aesthetic craft can still bypass oramediatic scrutiny under specific affective conditions.

A distinctive feature of the suspected counter-flow was its reliance on saturation rather than virality. Where the activist tracks travelled through horizontal, peer-to-peer amplification characteristic of networked counterpublics, the *Tujadiliane* material was encountered primarily through repetitive broadcast rotation, a vertical, resource-intensive mode of circulation available only to actors with institutional access. The audience read the mismatch as evidence of coordination: a track competing organically for attention should not appear on such a compressed schedule. This distinction matters analytically: the two flows drew on different infrastructural affordances (peer amplification vs broadcast saturation) and produced different structural signatures that the audience could learn to

detect. The asymmetry between audience detection-confidence and the paper's own evidentiary position deserves comment. Participants moved rapidly from perception to attribution; the paper reports these attributions as findings about audience interpretation rather than as verified claims about production. This methodological restraint does not weaken the substantive point: the practical politics of the moment turned on what publics believed about the media environment, and the emergence of a distributed synthetic-media literacy is an empirical fact about the discourse regardless of the accuracy of any individual attribution. Read through the networked-counter publics literature (Jackson, Bailey, & Foucault Welles, 2020), the collective construction of this attribution is a form of counterpublics knowledge production, one that is epistemically fallible yet politically consequential, and that the study documents without endorsing as fact.

Close listening and computational audio analysis- Tujadiliane track

The discourse above concerns what listeners heard; the sonic artefact itself is worth turning to briefly. Combining critical listening with computational audio analysis (raw MP3 uploaded to the Chosic audio-file analyser), the track reveals a paradoxical auditory profile. The composition rests on a relaxed reggae one-drop of approximately 85 beats per minute (the automated 170 BPM reading was a double-time artefact corrected against the audible half-time pulse), set over a B minor harmonic foundation, with subdued kinetic energy (32/100) and a largely acoustic soundscape that subordinates the instrumental arrangement to a dominant vocal foreground. The refrain, Habari za leo rafiki wangu … Umoja wetu ni hazina … *Tujadiliane*, tusigombane [Good day, my friend … our unity is a treasure … let us dialogue, not quarrel], is set with an artificially elevated affective valence (66/100) driven by melodically contoured phrasing rather than rhythmic speech patterns (a near-zero 3% speechiness index). Two features mark the vocal as likely synthetic to a trained ear: a complete absence of human micro-timing deviations relative to the tempo grid, and a stark lack of acoustic room tone or spatial liveness (22/100). The clinical polish itself fed audience suspicion of institutional resourcing. Read against the activist material, which wore its low-budget character as a badge of grassroots authenticity, the track's professional finish read not as quality but as evidence of the resourced origin the audience distrusted: reggae idiom supplied a surface of communal warmth while the synthetic vocal undercut precisely the relational authenticity the idiom was borrowed to invoke.

The significance of genre selection warrants attention. The choice of Swahili reggae was not incidental: reggae carries a specific East African political inheritance associated with Pan-African critique, working-class solidarity and resistance to arbitrary state power, and deploying it in service of a message counselling dialogue with a state whose forces had killed protesters read to many listeners as a deliberate appropriation of an anti-colonial idiom for a counter-mobilisational purpose.

Extractive infrastructures beneath the democratisation narrative

Creator posts occasionally surfaced awareness of the structural asymmetries beneath the workflow. A recurring reflexive move involved acknowledging the irony of using globally trained models, whose training corpora were understood to include uncredited African musical material, to contest local political marginalisation. One developer-activist articulated this recognition without concluding that the tools should be abandoned, framing the infrastructure's extractive character as a constraint to work within rather than a reason to withdraw. The participant discourse makes this reflexivity explicit. One creator (C5) named the constitutive irony directly, observing that there was something ironic in using tools trained on the whole world's music to fight one's own marginalisation. A second (C6) tracked the extractive loop forward, noting that they wrote the lyrics and Udio made the track, only for the same platforms to scrape the output and train the next model on it. A third (C7) named

the safety-versus-sovereignty trade-off: refusing to use the tools would surrender the ground; using them would feed the training data.

The paper treats claims about the specific composition of training datasets as reasoned inference rather than confirmed fact, since providers have not disclosed their corpora. Following Bender et al. (2021) and Couldry and Mejias (2019), the point is structural: the political economy of contemporary audio models externalises the costs of training onto communities whose material is ingested, regardless of whether any specific Kenyan track can be traced to a specific model's corpus. Simultaneously, the amplification of protest audio generated engagement value captured by the platforms rather than the creators. Srnicek's (2017) account illuminates why democratisation at the production layer coexists with intensifying extraction at the distribution layer: engagement optimisation is agnostic to political content so long as it generates attention. Zuboff's (2019) framing adds that protest engagement produces particularly high-value behavioural signals because it is emotionally charged, temporally clustered and demographically identifiable.

The uneven distribution of costs and benefits is worth stating along three axes: the costs of ingestion (uncompensated inclusion of cultural material in training corpora) fall on communities whose musical heritage is treated as an unpriced input; the costs of engagement (behavioural data captured during politically charged circulation) fall on individuals whose participation was politically motivated; while the benefits of both accrue to metropolitan platform firms and their investors. Read through Birhane's (2020) framework of algorithmic colonisation, the case exhibits a doubled extractive geometry: at the training layer, cultural material flows from African contexts into corpora controlled by metropolitan firms with opaque disclosure practices; at the distribution layer, engagement generated by African publics flows into revenue and predictive capacity captured by the same firms.

Epistemological crisis and the redefinition of authenticity

The saturation of the feed with plausible synthetic voices produced a recognisable epistemological anxiety, expressed in posts warning that any voice recording might be an AI fabrication designed to compromise the speaker, and that sonic evidence could no longer be treated as self-authenticating. Traditional Oramedia is underwritten by interpersonal trust and knowable communal actors; its digital variant loses this anchor, forcing audiences to construct new verification norms in real time. The participant's discourse evidences both anxiety and adaptation. One reception post (R15) articulated the epistemic threat in its most general form, warning that Whatever you are hearing might as well be an A.I generated voice to frame the speaker, a recognition that sonic evidence could no longer be treated as self-authenticating. Yet the same discourse displays the reallocation of trust: R16 conferred authority on an anonymous track by calling it the most EPIC AI music video of all time, and R17 precisely separated a discredited vocal from an endorsed message, *mechanical, but lyrics are spot on*, a reallocation of verification norms from source to content.

Triangulated against the framework, R15 to R17 evidence a third pathway between Chesney and Citron's (2019) alternatives of paralysing scepticism and cynical selectivity. The community neither trusts indiscriminately nor withdraws trust wholesale; it reallocates the criteria of trust from source to cultural-political alignment. R17's precise separation of a discredited vocal from an endorsed message models the practical epistemics: assess the message on its cultural-political substance while treating the vocal as unauthenticated. Further reception posts consolidate the pattern. R1's earlier declaration that a synthetic track hits harder than real ones is, on closer inspection, an authenticity claim: the speaker ranks the synthetic track above human productions on the criterion of generational

voice, not vocal provenance. R6's insistence that the track unites the public, synthetic or not, subordinates the ontology of the source to the political effect of the address.

The shift from source authenticity to cultural-political authenticity invites a reconsideration of debates in African popular music scholarship on the relationship between voice, identity, and political address. In the pre-digital era, the authority of a protest song derived substantially from the biographical situation of its named performer; the Kenyan case suggests a partial decoupling of that link, in which authority shifts to the message's communal alignment. A further implication concerns synthetic media and state power. Much scholarship on deepfakes and computational propaganda assumes that capable systems will predominantly benefit incumbent state actors. The Kenyan case complicates this without overturning it: the state's suspected synthetic reggae secured broadcast rotation but failed the oramediatic test, while activist tracks passed it, showing that the political effect of synthetic media depends on the relational fit between the artefact and the community, not merely on the resources of the actor deploying it.

Conclusion

Kenya's 2024 Gen Z protests offer a compact yet analytically dense case study of the emergence of AI-mediated political speech. The paper has argued that activists succeeded in domesticating generative audio tools for oramediatic ends, engineering a form of Digital Oramedia that bypassed legacy gatekeeping and delivered culturally resonant political address at unprecedented speed. That success was real: it illustrates a mode of communicative agency neither prior literature on African digital activism nor prior literature on generative AI has fully anticipated, and it demonstrates that indigenous communicative logics can be intentionally reproduced through, not merely despite, contemporary AI systems. But this success was also enclosed within an infrastructural order, from training corpus to engagement algorithm, that is not organised around the interests of the communities whose expression it circulates. This doubled character is not a rhetorical paradox to be resolved but a structural condition to be reckoned with through concrete interventions, community-owned training corpora and consent-based licensing for African musical heritage, publicly funded open-source audio models hosted on African infrastructure, independent algorithmic audits of engagement-optimised distribution, and legal frameworks that treat scraped cultural material as a compensable input rather than an unpriced externality. The most portable empirical contribution is the observation that Kenyan audiences responded to synthetic saturation not with wholesale rejection but with a substantive shift in verification norms, prioritising cultural and political alignment over biological source. As synthetic media diffuse globally, the question of how publics reconstitute authenticity under adverse conditions will become increasingly consequential.

Several implications follow. Technical and policy work on training-data provenance should engage directly with communities in the Global South, moving beyond consent theatre toward governance structures in which originating communities retain meaningful control over the ingestion of their cultural material; datasheets for datasets (Gebru et al., 2021) are a starting point but their promise remains unrealised without enforceable community consent. Distribution-layer interventions, algorithmic audits, adjustable amplification and transparency requirements for saturation-based promotion, deserve equal attention. Longitudinal research on the evolving media literacy of African publics under synthetic saturation is needed to test whether the adaptive verification norms observed here consolidate into durable practice, attending both to their resilience against increasingly capable systems and to their potential exploitation by actors skilled at simulating the markers on which communities have come to rely. Future work should also compare the Kenyan case with adjacent

African mobilisations to identify which features of the observed adaptation are portable and which are context-specific.

Ethics Statement

This study analysed publicly available social media discourse and involved no interaction with human participants, no private or closed-group data, and no personally identifying information beyond that which speakers had already made public. On this basis, it fell outside the remit of full institutional review board scrutiny; nevertheless, it was designed and conducted in accordance with the Association of Internet Researchers' ethics guidelines (Franzke et al., 2020) and the reflexive protocols proposed by Markham (2012). Given the documented risks faced by Kenyan protesters, including surveillance, tech-facilitated violence and extra-judicial reprisal (Amnesty International, 2025), a differentiated protocol was adopted: accredited journalists and institutional actors are named; all other participants are assigned stable pseudonymous codes and their utterances are minimally altered to preserve analytic force while frustrating reverse-search. No content was accessed from private messages, closed communities, or age-restricted spaces.

Data Availability Statement

The empirical material comprises publicly available posts on X concerning the 2024 Kenyan protest cycle. The discourse was produced during 2024; data were retrieved and reconstructed by the authors in June 2026 through systematic search of relevant protest hashtags and of the specific tracks discussed. Consistent with the ethical protocol above, the underlying corpus cannot be released as a dataset because doing so would enable re-identification of pseudonymised participants. Aggregate analytic materials, codebook, memo excerpts, and the Chosic descriptor output for the *Tujadiliane* track are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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