

Dr Job M Mwaura

Digital Media, Youth Civic Participation & AI and Society Researcher

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Website: job-mwaura.job-mwaura.chatgpt.site

Professional Profile

Interdisciplinary researcher with more than twelve years of experience examining digital media, youth civic and political participation, social movements, citizenship, journalism and technology in Africa and beyond. My PhD in Media Studies, completed in 2020, investigated the motivations, practices and political consequences of digital activism in Kenya, with particular attention to young people and marginalised communities. Since 2024, my research and public scholarship have closely followed Gen Z-led protest movements, AI-generated political expression, state repression, citizen journalism and changing forms of democratic participation in Africa. I combine qualitative research, digital ethnography, literature review, media analysis, secondary-data synthesis and policy analysis, and have managed multi-country and time-bound research projects for universities, government, civil-society and international funders.

Core Expertise

- Gen Z and youth civic and political participation; aspirations, values, identities, experiences, relationships, action and context.
- Digital activism, social movements, protest cultures, citizenship, political communication and emerging forms of politics.
- Digital technologies, platform governance, generative AI, AI-enabled civic expression, misinformation, surveillance and digital repression.
- Youth futures, climate anxiety and activism, social inclusion, cultural representation and inequalities in digital participation.
- Global and comparative landscape analysis; literature review; secondary-data and media-source analysis; qualitative and digital-ethnographic research.
- Conceptual framework development, research synthesis, policy briefs, stakeholder engagement, multicultural collaboration and delivery to deadline.

Current Appointments & Affiliations

Research Fellow | Feb 2025-present Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany (Full time)

- Conducts qualitative and digital-ethnographic research for the ERC-funded SMALLPLATFORMS project on platform governance and contentious discourse across Telegram, Reddit, TikTok and X, with Kenya as a primary field site and an Africa-Europe comparative orientation.
- Examines knowledge integrity, misinformation, algorithmic moderation and consensus-building in decentralised and volunteer-driven information ecosystems; produces peer-reviewed research, policy briefs and public engagement outputs.
- Teaches the current course Digital Publics, Protest and Everyday Speech in Africa, addressing digital democracy, political participation, online activism, platform power, content moderation and digital ethnography through African cases.

Affiliate Senior Researcher | May 2026-present UNESCO Chair in Cultural Inclusivity and Equity in Digital Media in Africa, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

- Contributes research on cultural inclusivity, equitable participation and representation in African digital media, with particular attention to AI, platform power, youth and decolonial approaches to the internet.

- Supports collaborative scholarship and policy-facing engagement on how digital transformation can widen or constrain access, voice, knowledge and democratic participation in Africa.

Research Fellow | Apr 2023-present Institute of Public Policy and Governance, Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya

- Contributes to research and grant development and designs, updates and teaches short professional executive courses in public policy and governance.

Education

PhD in Media Studies | 2017-2020 University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

- Dissertation: #DigitalActivism: A Study of Socio-Political Movements in Kenya.
- Comparative empirical study of digital media, political participation and protest, integrating media studies, political science and sociology to explain the motivations and dynamics of politically led and grassroots movements in Kenya.

Master of Science in Communication and Journalism | 2010-2014 Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

- Thesis: The Practice of Citizen Journalism in Kenya: A Study of Kibera News Network.

Bachelor of Education (Arts): English and Literature | 2003-2008 Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kakamega, Kenya

Previous Research and Academic Appointments

Research Associate | Apr 2023-Mar 2025 Wits Centre for Journalism, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

- Conducted and published research on digital media, AI ethics, responsible AI, journalism, protest and public-order governance.

Adjunct Lecturer and Programme Lead, Media and Communication | Sep 2023-Dec 2024 Department of Humanities, University of Embu, Kenya

- Led the programme, designed and delivered undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, mentored students and aligned curricula with contemporary media, peace, technology and development debates.
- Conducted research, prepared policy-facing outputs and strengthened departmental collaborations and stakeholder engagement.

Research Fellow | Jun 2022-Mar 2023 Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST), Stellenbosch University, South Africa

- Designed and managed research, analysed data, prepared academic and policy outputs, presented findings and contributed to grant proposals and collaborative projects.

Adjunct Lecturer, Media Studies | Jun 2022-Feb 2023 University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

- Designed and taught Digital Media and Society, including social media, online culture, digital privacy and critical engagement with digital technologies.

Postdoctoral Research Fellow | Jan 2021-Jun 2022 Institute for Humanities in Africa, University of Cape Town, South Africa

- Researched the politics of scholarly publishing and knowledge dissemination in Africa; published findings, coordinated partnerships and mentored students.

Teaching Assistant and Doctoral Fellow | Apr 2018-Mar 2020 Department of Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

- Co-taught media theory, journalism, global media, digital society and research methods; managed the tutoring programme and supervised and mentored 48 tutors over two years.
- Contributed to the team recognised with the 2019 Vice-Chancellor's Teaching and Learning Award.

Project Researcher, Media and Communication | Feb 2014-Dec 2016 University of Sussex - ERC-funded Cultural Politics of Dirt in Africa, 1880-Present (DIRTPOL), Kenya / Nigeria / United Kingdom

- Developed four research proposals, instruments, workplans and budgets adopted across project teams; piloted and implemented nine studies using interviews, ethnography and document analysis.
- Prepared ethics and data-management protocols, conducted contextual analysis, wrote donor reports and academic outputs, and managed partnerships in Kenya and Nigeria.

Qualitative Research Consultant | May-Nov 2016 FHI 360 - Cross-Border Health Integrated Partnership Project, East, Central and Southern Africa

- Led the qualitative component from protocol development and piloting through field implementation, analysis and reporting; managed a research team and implementing-partner relationships.

Research Officer | Jul 2012-Jan 2014 National Cohesion and Integration Commission, Government of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

- Developed research logic models, results frameworks, evaluation plans, indicators, data flows, workplans and budgets; led evidence-review meetings and managed partnerships with public agencies, civil society and community organisations.
- Research findings informed five national programmes and community projects on cohesion and integration.

Teaching, Curriculum and Supervision

Digital Publics, Protest and Everyday Speech in Africa | Winter 2026 course currently in session
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany

- Examines how global and smaller digital platforms shape public life, political participation and everyday speech in Africa, with particular attention to Kenya and East Africa.
- Integrates digital democracy, platform power, online activism, content moderation, extreme speech, generational identity and digital ethnography.

Media and Communication programme teaching | 2023-2024 University of Embu, Kenya

- Designed and delivered undergraduate and postgraduate courses; led curriculum development, academic coordination, student mentoring and programme growth.

Professional executive education | 2023-present Strathmore Institute of Public Policy and Governance, Kenya

- Designs, updates and teaches short executive courses for professional and policy audiences.

Digital Media and Society | 2022-2023 University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

- Designed and taught lectures and seminars on social media, digital culture, privacy, participation and critical digital-media research. University of the Witwatersrand undergraduate courses (2018-2020): Reading Media Forms (2018-2020); Sociology of News Production (2018); Research Methods in Media and Cultural Studies (2018-2019); Media and Global Culture (2019); New Media and Society (2019). Supervision and examination: Honours supervision of Wandile Mkansi, Exploring Colourism: Understanding Colourism and Its Articulation Among Black Men in the Web Series Men on Colourism (completed 2019); Internal Examiner, Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand (2019).

Current Manuscripts and Editorial Projects

Akpojivi, U., Mwaura, J., Ngomba, T., & Ochieng, J. (Eds.). Gen Zs, Digital Media, Elections and the Politics of Inclusive Democracy in Africa. Edited volume in development with Wits University Press.

Mwaura, J. Hakuna Mageuzi, Hakuna Uchaguzi: The Gen Z Movement and the 2025 Tanzania Vote. Chapter in preparation for Gen Zs, Digital Media, Elections and the Politics of Inclusive Democracy in Africa.

Mwaura, J. Platform Power under Repression: AI, Digital Publics and Democratic Citizenship in Kenya's Gen Z Uprising, 2024- 2025. Research agenda and manuscript in development.

Research Outputs

Accepted / In Press

Mwaura, J. M., et al. (2026). The technopolitics of AI surveillance in urban Kenya. Accepted for publication in Journal of Eastern African Studies.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles and Proceedings

Mwaura, J. M. (2026). Digital ruptures: AI-generated activism, state repression, and the politics of dissent in Kenya. *Selected Papers of Internet Research*.

Mwaura, J., & Govenden, P. (2025). Special issue on decolonising the internet in Africa: Fostering cultural inclusivity in the era of 4IR. *Communicatio*, 50(2), 1-12.

Sobel Cohen, M., & Mwaura, J. (2025). 'You cannot sway them with logic': Journalists' responses to public support for censorship in Kenya. *African Journalism Studies*, 1-18.

Sobel Cohen, M., Mwaura, J., & McIntyre, K. (2025). Citizen journalism revisited: A case study of Kenya's Kibera News Network. *Journalism*, 26(5), 1008-1026.

Mwaura, J., & Balliah, D. (2024). Championing inclusivity: Under-representation of women in African academic leadership and scholarly journal management. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 19(2), 42-59.

Mwaura, J. (2024). Navigating the digital horizon: Future trends and predictions in Africa. *Dialogues on Digital Society*, 1-5.

Mukhongo, L., Mwaura, J., & Omwoha, J. (2024). Reconceptualising media ownership and shifting power relations in an emerging digital media framework. *African Studies*, 82(3-4), 300-315.

Mwaura, J., Dambo, T., Ataguba, O., Mare, A., Mukhongo, L., Chuma, W., & Mano, W. (2023). Digital technologies and revolution in Africa: Complexities, ambivalences, and contextual realities. *AolR Selected Papers of Internet Research*.

Mwaura, J., & Akpojivi, U. (2022). 'Imagine dying from an overseas disease when you don't even own a passport': A decolonial analysis of Twitter conversations in the wake of COVID-19 in Kenya and South Africa. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 14(1), 29-44.

Mwaura, J. (2022). The practice of citizen journalism at Kibera News Network. *African Journalism Studies*, 42(4), 31-45.

Kubheka, B. Z., Carter, V., & Mwaura, J. (2020). Social media health promotion in South Africa: Opportunities and challenges. *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*, 12(1), a2389.

Mwaura, J., & Oiruria, C. (2017). Representation of femininity and masculinity in televised advertisements: The paradigm shift. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 6(4), 3-9.

Chepkemei, A., Biwott, C., & Mwaura, J. (2012). The role of integrity and communication ethics in corporate governance: A study of selected companies in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences*, 3(6), 940-944.

Research Papers and Working Papers

Bosch, T., Jordaan, M., Mwaura, J., Nkoala, S., Schoon, A., Smit, A., et al. (2023). South African university students' use of AI-powered tools for engaged learning. SSRN 4595655. DOI

Mwaura, J., & Kadiri, K. K. (2016). Public exposure to information about cancer on social media: An exploratory study of Lagos and Nairobi. Working paper.

Book Chapters

Mwaura, J. M., & Govenden, P. (2026). AI-driven citizen journalism in Kenya's protest movements. In S. Allan & E. Thorsen (Eds.), *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives* (Vol. 3). Peter Lang.

- Mwaura, J. (2026). Who owns the news? The political economy of generative AI journalism in Africa. In T. Matsilele & L. Tshuma (Eds.), *Generative AI in African News Media: Opportunities and Challenges* (pp. 69-82). Routledge.
- Uzuegbunam, C. E., Mwaura, J., & Ononiwu, R. C. (2025). Digital self-representation, African youth and the question of performative authenticity in a globalized world. In A. Mare & O. Ureke (Eds.), *African Digital Cultures: Platforms, Performances, and Perspectives* (pp. 121-136). Peter Lang.
- Kaskinen, M., & Mwaura, J. (2025). Activist contestations in contemporary socio-political change making in Kenya. In *Citizenship Utopias in the Global South* (pp. 21-37). Routledge.
- Mwaura, J. (2024). Publishing as revolutionary tools from pre-independence to post-independence Kenya. In L. A. Tshuma, T. Matsilele, M. J. Msimanga, & S. Jamil (Eds.), *Media, Social Movements, and Protest Cultures in Africa: Hashtags, Humour, and Slogans*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Mwaura, J., & Sobel Cohen, M. (2024). Harassment and threats faced by journalists in Kenya: Implications for press freedom and independent reporting. In *Patterns of Harassment in African Journalism* (pp. 141-157). Routledge.
- Mwaura, J. (2024). Silicon Savannah or digitising marginalisation? A reflection on Kenya's government digitization policies, strategies, and projects. In T. Chari & U. Akpojivi (Eds.), *Communication Rights in Africa: Emerging Discourses and Perspectives*. Routledge.
- Mwaura, J. (2022). Digital dissident or whistle-blowers? A critical analysis of microbloggers in Kenya. In F. A. Kperogi (Ed.), *Digital Dissidence and Social Media Censorship in Africa*. Routledge.
- Mwaura, J. (2020). Class interplay in social activism in Kenya. In E. Polson, L. S. Clark, & R. Gajjala (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Class*. Routledge.
- Newell, S., Oloko, P., Uwa, J., Olutoyosi, T., Nebe, J., Mwaura, J., Onwonga, R., Kirori, A., & Craig, C. (2018). Dirty methods as ethical methods? In the field with The Cultural Politics of Dirt in Africa, 1880-Present. In C. Lury et al. (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Interdisciplinary Research Methods* (pp. 248-265). Routledge.
- Mwaura, J., et al. (2013). The influence of media ethics on governance in Kenya. In G. F. Nduku & C. Stükelberger (Eds.), *African Contextual Ethics: Hunger, Leadership, Faith, and Media* (Vol. 13, pp. 127-141). Globethics.net.

Policy Reports and Briefs

- Mwaura, J. (2024). Ethical guidelines for artificial intelligence in crime control and public order management in Kenya. Social Science Research Council, New York. Policy brief
- Mwaura, J. (2024). Promoting gender equity in scholarly journal management. Social Science Research Council, New York.

Book Reviews

- Mwaura, J. (2026). Review of *The BBC's Legacy in Africa: Continuities and Change*, edited by A. Sharra, J. Kainja, and A. M. Gunde. *International Journal of Communication*, 20, 2398-2400.
- Mwaura, J. (2024). Review of *The Elgar Companion to War, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Africa*, by G. Harris. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 24(2), 125-128.
- Mwaura, J. (2022). Review of *Searching for a New Kenya: Politics and Social Media on the Streets of Mombasa*. *African Journalism Studies*. DOI
- Mwaura, J. (2021). Review of *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing*, by J. B. Thompson. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. DOI
- Mwaura, J. (2020). Review of *Being Watched: Legal Challenges to Government Surveillance*, by J. L. Vagle. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(4), 627-629. DOI
- Mwaura, J. (2019). Review of *Media, Conflict, and the State in Africa*, by N. Stremlau. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(4), 1188-1190. DOI
- Mwaura, J. (2019). Review of *Digital Identity and Everyday Activism: Sharing Private Stories with Networked Publics*, by S. Vivienne. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(2), 652-654. DOI

Mwaura, J. (2017). Review of Digital Activism in the Social Media Era: Critical Reflections on Emerging Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journalism Studies*, 38(1), 152-155. DOI

Public Scholarship and Media Writing

Mwaura, J. (2024, July). Kenya's digital divide: Pastoralists are key to the country's economy, but they're being left behind. *The Conversation Africa*.

Mwaura, J. (2024, June). Kenya protests: Gen Z shows the power of digital activism - driving change from screens to the streets. *The Conversation Africa*. Widely republished and translated internationally, including by Wits University, Daily Maverick, The Independent (Uganda) and Modern Ghana. Article

Mwaura, J. (2021, November). African institutions of higher learning need to foster the craft of scholarly writing. *The Metric*. Article

Mwaura, J. (2021, November). Police brutality: The intersections of class, cultures of silence and policing in Kenya. *Ukombozi Review*. Article

Mwaura, J. (2021, August). Marginalisation and exclusion of women in scholarly publishing and dissemination in Africa. *African Book Collective / SOAS University of London*.

Mwaura, J. (2020, August). Digital access: 17pc of Kenyans now use social media. *Business Daily, Nairobi*.

Mwaura, J. (2020, June). Digital activism during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Ukombozi Review*.

Karuitha, J., Mwaura, J., & Kamau, S. (2019, August 4). Going beyond the rhetoric: Fixing Kenya's broken university system. *Daily Nation*.

Mwaura, J. (2017, April 1). Book takes a look at effects of Africa's digital activism. *Daily Nation*.

Mwaura, J. (2017, March 11). Decolonising the mind: Ngũgĩ tours South Africa. *Daily Nation*.

Research Grants And Fellowships

2023-2024 | Lead Researcher | USD 15,000 | African Peacebuilding Network / Social Science Research Council (Carnegie Foundation). Ethical Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence in Crime Control and Public Order Management in Kenya: A Multidisciplinary Approach. 2023-2024 | Co-Researcher | USD 9,000 | Scholars at Risk / New York University (Mellon Foundation). Academic Freedom in Kenya and Zimbabwe: A Comparative Analysis.

2022 | Lead Researcher | USD 5,000 | Meta and Africa No Filter. The State of Immersion: Exploring the Utility of VR, AR and XR in (Re)Creating Africa's Image.

2022 | Co-Investigator | ZAR 180,000 | SARChI Science Communication Chair. Climate or Consumption? Youth Aspiration, Anxiety and Activism in Kenya and South Africa.

2022 | Co-Investigator | USD 5,000 | Regis University. Dynamics of Press Freedom in Kenya.

2022 | Lead Researcher | EUR 5,000 | British Institute in Eastern Africa. Bringing Research Home dissemination grant.

2020 | Research Fellow | USD 2,000 | CAACOR, WiSER, CIPIT and CILET. Silicon Savannah or Digitizing Marginalization? A Critical Analysis of Kenya's Government Digitization Projects. 2018-2019 | Researcher | ZAR 20,000 | Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research. NVivo Training: Towards Digitization of Qualitative Research.

2017 | EUR 1,000 | Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique. PhD fieldwork grant.

2016 | Fellow | Social Science Research Council Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa. Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Fellowship.

Selected Invited Talks, Workshops And Conference Contributions

2026 | Facilitator and speaker, Social Media, AI and Politics: An Immersive Workshop, Center for Digital Dignity at LMU Munich / ERC SMALLPLATFORMS, British Council, Nairobi, Berlin, London, and India.

2025 | Digital ruptures: AI-generated activism, state repression, and the politics of dissent in Kenya. Association of Internet Researchers Annual Conference, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro / Niterói, Brazil.

2024 | Ethical AI in Africa: Developing frameworks for sustainable peacebuilding. African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago.

2024 | Unmasking the shadows of progress: The plight of Africa's digital workforce in the AI era. Association of Internet Researchers Conference, University of Sheffield.

2024 | Evolution of democracy, media, identity, and citizenship in Africa: Discourses, critiques, and contestations. International workshop, Accra, organised by the University of Toronto.

2023 | Emerging technologies and civic engagement in Africa. African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia.

2022 | Twitter Spaces as a new digital space for civic engagement in Africa. South Africa Communication Association, Johannesburg.

2022 | The politics of scholarly publishing in Africa. Listening and Learning from Africa symposium, University of the Arts London.

2022 | Panel convenor, Africa Scholarly Publishing and Research Dissemination, African Studies Association of Africa 4th Biennial Conference, Cape Town.

2019 | Context matters: Advocacy messages in language activism. Social Justice, Language Diversity and Globalization workshop, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

Honours, Scholarships and Travel Grants

2019 | Vice-Chancellor's Teaching and Learning Award, team category, University of the Witwatersrand. 2017-2020 | Postgraduate Merit Award / full PhD scholarship, University of the Witwatersrand.

2019 | Travel grant, Initiative for Multilingual Studies, Georgetown University - Social Justice and Multilingualism workshop, Washington, DC. 2017-2019 | Association of Internet Researchers travel grants - annual conferences in Estonia, Canada and Australia.

2018 | University of Michigan School of Information travel grant - Social Media and Democracy Workshop.

2018 | Bergen Summer Research School travel grant - Cultural Heritage and Policy in a Digital Age, University of Bergen.

2018 | University of Cape Town travel grant - Liberation, Revolution, Transformation, Decolonization summer school.

2017 | Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies travel grant - Media and Democracy Symposium, Austria.

Academic Leadership, Service and Networks

- Executive Committee Member, Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), 2021-2025 (two terms).
- Peer reviewer: African Journalism Studies; Journal of African Media Studies; Inter Communication: A Journal of Communication.
- Moderator and Organising Committee Member, African Digital Diplomacy Seminar Series, 2020.
- Project Manager, Urban Anxieties Seminar, Wits Media Studies, 2017.
- Affiliate Faculty Member, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution, George Mason University.
- Affiliate Member, African Studies Centre Leiden; member, Center for Critical Race + Digital Studies.
- Member: British Institute in Eastern Africa; SSRC Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Alumni; International Association for Media and Communication Research; Association of Internet Researchers; Arts Council of the African Studies Association.

Selected Research and Professional Training

2019 | AoIR Doctoral Colloquium, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

2018 | AoIR Doctoral Colloquium, University of Tartu, Estonia.

2018 | Summer School in Language Activism, University of Cape Town.

2018 | Summer School in Digital Media Culture, University of Bergen.

2014 | Research Methodology Training, University of Sussex.

2020 | Ethical Social Media, University of Sydney (online).

2020 | Creating and Designing Social Media Campaigns, Institute of Coding / University of Leeds (online).

2019 | Social Media Analytics: Using Data to Understand Public Conversations, Queensland University of Technology (online).

2017 | International and African Legal Framework on Freedom of Expression, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (online).

2017 | People Power: The Study of Strategic Nonviolent Resistance, ICNC / Rutgers University (online).

Selected Media and Public Engagement

- Featured guest, SABC Channel Africa programme 1000 African Voices.
- Producer and host of a four-episode scholarly publishing podcast series featuring Prof Denis N. Ocholla, Dr Tom Odhiambo, Dr Helen Komolafe Obadeji and Prof Dzodzi Tsikata.
- Regular contributor to public debates on digital activism, youth politics, AI, media freedom, scholarly publishing and digital inclusion in Africa.

Contact and references

Contact through the website. Referees are available on request.