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**SONIC WAVES: CULTURE, MUSIC, AND IDENTITY IN TANZANIA**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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by

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Abstract

**Sonic Waves: Culture, Music, and Identity in Tanzania**

Erick Msumanje

This hybrid dissertation (with a written and creative video component) uses Singeli (popular music and cultural practice) as a site to meditate on the everyday lives of Black people in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Furthermore, this dissertation focuses on how Black people are reimagining themselves as modern subjects, shifting culture and identity in a manner that expands notions of freedom and liberation.

# Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mama, baba, and kaka. This dissertation is also dedicated to my bibi, who continues to inspire me every day through her resilience, strength, love, and courage.

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This project would not have been possible without many caring and supportive people. First and foremost, I want to thank my family and girlfriend for their care, encouragement, insight, and love.

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# Introduction

My dissertation project focuses on Singeli, a genre of electronic music created in marginalized neighborhoods of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Singeli is a genre-defying form that expands sonically by the day and is fueled by artists using DIY techniques (e.g., increasing pitch over 180 BPM) that challenge Western perceptions of African music. I approach Singeli as a cultural assemblage through which artists and consumers embody and voice alternative modes of expression, which deepen and extend current understandings of Black youth and urban life in Africa.

This dissertation engages Singeli in two distinct yet interconnected sections. The first is a written component that provides the foundation and background of this Project by describing and analyzing Singeli as a music genre and cultural practice. It explores Singeli as a medium for creative expression, which fosters unique Black youth identities that push against hegemonic norms of personhood ingrained in Tanzanian society. While embodied practices of hybrid Black youth identities have been a source of moral panic since colonial times, I am more interested in their techniques and technologies for re-imagining and re-making young Black people and their worlds. The second component of this dissertation is a split-screen art video entitled *All We Got.* The video focuses on the lives of everyday Singeli artists in their local neighborhoods. In addition, the video explores how Singeli is an emergent cultural practice that fosters possibilities for more liberating life experiences.

As a Tanzanian, I have long been familiar with Singeli and related urban musical genres. Yet, as a diasporic person, I had not, until recently, experienced Singeli in its birthplace, Dar es Salaam or been closely aware of the musicians who created the music. While I knew Singeli was different from anything happening socially and culturally in Tanzania, I did not understand why. I did not know firsthand how Singeli reflected, refracted, and represented African urban life and how Singeli artists pushed the sonic boundaries of African music, urban and otherwise. This dissertation reflects my own journey towards a better understanding of the genre.

In the summer of 2019, I traveled to Dar es Salaam to meet with artists at a studio named Sisso Records in a poor neighborhood called Mburahati. There, I learned that the studio played a critical role in creating the sound of Singeli. In explaining this point, Makaveli, a rapper and key architect in developing the music, informed me that Singeli stemmed from two interwoven elements. The first is Vigodoro (literal meaning: mattress) parties in the early 2000s thrown in the streets of Black neighborhoods like Mburahati. Vigodoro provided a space where people could freely engage in pleasure. At these parties, people would dance (e.g., twerking), drink, and smoke. As a result of the increased popularity and frequency of Vigodoro functions around Dar es Salaam, widespread moral panic arose because the state perceived them as morally opposed to the dominant culture of Tanzania, leading to the outlawing of Vigodoro.

Performances at Vigodoro functions consisted of a DJ and MC. Makaveli points out that DJs played a vital role in creating Singeli by experimenting with

speeding up the tempo, manipulating the pitch, looping beats, and sampling local and global musical genres. As a frequent MC, Makaveli would freestyle to the DJ's party mixes. As a result of the increased popularity and frequency of Vigodoro functions around Dar es Salaam, a widespread moral panic arose because the state perceived them as morally opposed to the dominant culture of Tanzania, leading to the outlawing of Vigodoro. Due to Vigodoro becoming criminalized, its core elements (street parties, DJ, MC) were transitioned by artists and producers into Sisso Records, who ultimately birthed Singeli as a music form with its unique signature sound. In the current moment, Singeli has become more challenging to criminalize since it is a music and cultural practice embedded in Tanzanian popular culture consumed by predominantly Black youth.

This dissertation investigates Singeli as an essential practice articulating contemporary urban life in Tanzania. In particular, I use Singeli to examine the experiences, conditions, and desires of Black youth living in the poor neighborhoods of Dar es Salaam. Although this dissertation is not a study of the racial dynamics of Dar es Salaam, it is essential to point out that the city has other racial groups. There is a population of Europeans, Indians, and Arabs dating back centuries along with stemming from British colonialism.[1] More recently, there has been a growing Asian

[1] Within this discussion (and the fact that my dissertation does not center fully on race/racialization in Tanzania), I do not directly examine the Arab population (along historical, racial, class, religious lines) due to the type of British colonial policies that I chose to examine which focus on Dar es Salaam's urban policies (to highlight the shaping of the city) that predominately center on Europeans, Indians, and Black people. However, I did want to acknowledge that Arabs are also a part of Tanzania's population.

(primarily Chinese) population sparked by China-Tanzania relations that has brought significant development projects (e.g., highways, skyscrapers, trains) all over the country.[2] Despite these populations (i.e., Europeans, Indians, Asians, Arabs) having a presence in the nation, they are the minority since the largest racial group is Black. Nevertheless, this does not translate to Black people holding power or higher-class status.

These disparities are historically rooted in British colonial policies grounded in racial segregation. Another element of these policies is that they designed Dar es Salaam as a city using a segregated racialized logic.[3] As a result, the layout of urban spaces (i.e., neighborhoods) was initially designed to separate different groups through the creation of racial zones.[4] Brennan further suggests that colonial urban policies contributed to shaping the racialization of people in Tanzania.[5] To illustrate, Zone 1 was called *Uzunguni* (place for Whites), Zone 2 as *Uhindini* (place for Indians), and Zone 3 as *Uswahilini* (place for Blacks).[6] While these Zones segregated people from one another, they were also purposely built using racially motivated building codes and standards. For example, houses in Zone 1 (Uzunguni) and 2

[2] Martin Bailey, "Tanzania and China," *African Affairs* 74, no. 294 (1975): 39.
[3] James R. Brennan, *Taifa : Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania*, New African Histories (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 2.
[4] James R. Brennan, Andrew. Burton, and Yusufu Qwaray. Lawi, eds., "Dar Es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis," 2007, 139.
[5] James R. Brennan, *Taifa : Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania*, New African Histories (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 1.
[6] In this discussion, I have not focused on the Arab population due to not being the focus of British colonial urban policies in Dar es Salaam (at least the policies that I directly examine in this dissertation).

(Uhindini) were constructed with flushing toilets and windows.[7] However, in Zone 1 (Uswahilini) the houses were constructed as huts due to the colonial racial logic that Black people were backwards and savage.[8]

The Zones were also created to manage economic activities and capital investments.[9] Due to this, Zone 1 (Uswahilini) did not have significant access to wealth and power - which greatly contributed to fueling a poor Black class. Another consequence of these urban segregationist policies is that they controlled who could legally be in the city through policing access to renting housing, employment, and land ownership. Additionally, the policies punished those who could not afford taxes and provided the authority to remove people from urban spaces.[10] Of course, these urban policies were directly linked to the British colonial state attempting to create a vision of an African city.

In forming a British colonial vision of Dar es Salaam through a racial framework, Black youth were viewed as an extreme source of anxiety. They were categorized socially as Wahuni (e.g., gangsters, undesirables, criminals, prostitutes) in society.[11] Strategically, the term Wahuni makes it possible to target Black youth as representing disorder and not being a functioning part of society. In attempting to control Black youth, colonial administrators criminalized activities, maintained who

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[7] Sarah L Smiley, "The City of Three Colors: Segregation in Colonial Dar Es Salaam, 1891-1961," *Historical Geography* 37 (2009): 181.
[8] Smiley, 184.
[9] Brennan, Burton, and Lawi, "Dar Es Salaam : Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis," 119.
[10] Brennan, Burton, and Lawi, 126.
[11] Brennan, Burton, and Lawi, 36.

had access to employment, and regulated who belonged and became integrated into the city through stringent strategies mirroring South African apartheid laws.[12] The use of oppressive law and control limiting the movement of Black people in space resulted in colonial authorities creating two different populations in the city. The first consisted of people (i.e., predominantly Indians and Europeans) with access to employment and legal residency in the city.[13] The second was largely poor Black youth who did not have access to jobs and official housing. In addition, they were excluded spatially in urban areas. In this vein, Black youth were forced to actively engage in informal economies to survive since the State denied them access to any form of resources.[14] Due to them not being recognized as legal members of the city, poor Black youth became socially categorized as Wahuni in society.

For the colonial state, Black youth were a source of anxiety because they represented disorder by troubling the idea and function of cities and which kinds of people were allowed to belong and exist within them.[15] Because of this, the colonial state implemented laws like the "Townships (Removal of Undesirable Persons)

[12] Brennan, Burton, and Lawi, 48.
[13] Andrew Burton, "The Haven of Peace Purged: Tackling the Undesirable and Unproductive Poor in Dar Es Salaam, ca.1950s-1980s," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40, no. 1 (2007): 149.
[14] Andrew. Burton, "Jamii Ya Wahalifu. The Growth of Crime in a Colonial African Urban Centre: Dar Es Salaam, Tanganyika, 1919-1961," *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* 8, no. 2 (2004): 5, https://doi.org/10.4000/chs.465.
[15] *Generations Past : Youth in East African History* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 5.

ordinance,"[16] which gave police officers the ability to arrest or forcefully remove Black youth from Dar es Salaam. After Tanzanian independence, the post-colonial state further expanded on these laws that criminalized Black youth due to the fear of them disrupting order and committing crime in the city.[17] Laws that targeted Black youth stem from them being perceived as a threat to Ujamaa (socialism) and Tanzanian nationhood.[18] This is a consequence of Black youth operating in informal economies, making it possible to subvert official state control and surveillance. In fear of losing control of Dar es Salaam, the government engaged in brutal operations throughout Tanzania's Ujamaa era (1960s-1980s) forcing Black youth into work camps to capture them into the state's gaze and integrate them into society on the government's terms. This is because the ultimate goal of the state was to assert order and shape Dar es Salaam in their vision aligned with their nation-building agendas.[19]

In the contemporary landscape, the population of Dar es Salaam is still made up of Black people, Indians, Europeans, Asian, and Arab citizens who live in neighborhoods shaped by race and class dynamics. Furthermore, these neighborhoods are largely still segregated due to the legacy of colonial urban zones and modern-day state policies. Moreover, these neighborhoods are still locally referred to as Uzuguni,

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[16] Joe L. P. Lugalla, "The State, Law and Urban Poverty in Tanzania," *Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 22, no. 2 (1989): 134, https://doi.org/10.5771/0506-7286-1989-2-131.
[17] Burton, "Jamii Ya Wahalifu. The Growth of Crime in a Colonial African Urban Centre: Dar Es Salaam, Tanganyika, 1919-1961," 92.
[18] Brennan, *Taifa : Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania*, 6.
[19] James R. Brennan, "Youth, the TANU Youth League and Managed Vigilantism in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, 1925-73.(Tanganyika African Nationalist Party)," *Africa* 76, no. 2 (2006): 228, https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2006.76.2.221.

Uhindini, and Uswahilini. Because of this, the dissertation primarily focuses on poor Black people's experiences and their local spaces that inhabit Uswahilini. While Uswahilini has been predominantly used to identify place/space, over time it's evolved to also embody Blackness and cultural practices that are especially associated with poor Black people. For the sake of this dissertation, when using the term "Black neighborhood/s" I am referring to Uswahilini spaces, to examine the experiences of poor Black folks. In connection to this, poor Black people also identify as the term Waswahili, which carries a racialized (predominantly tied to Blackness), cultural, and class component. This is because there are local understandings around race/culture that make it possible for people to embody multiple identities and categories of identification. For example, while this isn't the focus of the dissertation the term "Waswahili" also represents the Bantu/Black/Arab ethnic group that have inhabited the Tanzanian Swahili/Indian ocean coast for centuries.[20] In connection to this, Tanzania also has hundreds of ethnic groups.[21] However, after Tanzania gained independence president Julius Nyerere worked to depoliticize ethnicity.[22] To do this, Nyerere emphasized the creation of a cohesive national identity and used Kiswahili (language) to unify different groups of people. In terms of local Black people, Nyerere also pushed for them to embody their Blackness and advocated for Pan-Africanism to connect with other Black people in the diaspora/African continent.

[20] It is worth noting the focus of this dissertation does not analyze the historical, social, political, cultural dynamics of the Tanzanian Swahili/Indian ocean coast.
[21] This dissertation does not focus on the ethnic dynamics of Tanzania.
[22] James R. Brennan, *Taifa : Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania*, New African Histories (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 146.

Since Tanzania has different races, ethnicities, and classes, in this dissertation I use the terms (and often interchangeably) “Black youth” or “poor Black/youth/people" or “Black people” to make a distinction that I am analyzing a particular population in Tanzania.

Today poor Black youth continue to be a source of anxiety for the state and middle class (composed of various racial groups) in the city. Thus, Singeli is viewed as something with the potential to manifest into a disruptive force that could trigger violence and resistance like the Kenyan Mungiki or, more recently, Bobi Wine in Uganda.[23] Based on my encounters with Singeli artists, I observed that they performed at local political rallies as a mode of survival (which requires strategic compromises) and to gain material benefits, my dissertation focuses instead on Singeli as a form that functions as an alternative mode of expression to dominant culture for Black youth. I demonstrate that Singeli gives Black youth a voice, a mode of representation, hybrid identities, and a cultural practice they can call their own. This dissertation examines Singeli as a site that provides insight into the lives of Black youth, the dynamics of Dar es Salaam as a city, and how the nation is performed differently. In this vein, I reveal an alternative perspective that does not view Black youth, cities, and the state as being in constant crisis, failure, or doom. Instead, I focus on how dominant culture is challenged by Black youth through

[23] Mungiki is a youth movement known for anti-government resistance. Bobi Wine is a popular musician who ran for president attempting to challenge Yoweri Museveni who has been in power since 1986.

creative practices that allow them to embody and project alternative forms of being within society, where they have been significantly marginalized in all forms.

Throughout this dissertation, I utilize various disciplines and concepts to guide the exploration of Singeli as a music form and cultural practice more broadly. To illustrate, I am mainly influenced by cultural studies scholar Raymond Williams's formulations of dominant, residual, and emergent culture. I use Williams in order to better understand Singeli as a practice generative of new meaning and relationships in society that produces alternative ways of being that challenge dominant culture through alternative tactics.[17] Bear in mind, Williams applies emergent culture through the lens of class struggle to analyze how movements can dismantle capitalism and state power.[24] With that said, I do not present Singeli as being against capitalism but more about how it troubles state power and dominant culture. In this vein, Williams' concept of emergent culture helps consider how Singeli is a strategic cultural form that circulates and flows through bodies, technologies, radio waves, social media platforms, and urban spaces. Therefore, a significant theme in my dissertation is exploring how Singeli disrupts dominant cultural forces in society to carve out alternative modes of existence in the Tanzanian context. Of course, since poor Black people predominantly practice Singeli music and culture, I want to point out that my analysis recognizes that due to their class and not having access to significant

[24] Raymond. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Marxist Introductions (Oxford [England: Oxford University Press, 1977), 125.

resources means not having traditional modes of "power" to dismantle dominant culture entirely on a wide scale. Nonetheless, my aim with this dissertation is to show how the cultural practices of poor Black people in Tanzania have real impacts in reimagining what it means to be a modern Tanzanian and shifting aspects of dominant culture that are imposed on citizens through everyday acts of micro-resistance. These modes of micro-resistance are grounded in how poor Black people express themselves in their daily lives, which expands their identities and presents new ideas and practices that reshape Tanzanian culture.

My analysis is also influenced by cultural studies Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity. Hall explains that cultural identity is the ongoing process of being and becoming that's continually transforming and shaped through interconnected elements like history, slavery, colonialism, diaspora, capitalism, and power.[25] Hall's ideas around cultural identity directly apply to how I explore Singeli in the dissertation as a medium that helps counter and reclaim the way dominant forces in Tanzanian society attempt to represent and position (i.e., Wahuni, thugs, prostitutes, undesirables) poor Black people. Also, I think through Homi Bhaha's notion of cultural hybridity, which fosters difference and operates as a mode of survival against power. In doing so, allowing for thinking about the possibilities for constructing postcolonial worlds differently that are beyond fixed ideas on things like identity, sexuality, representation, gender, borders, race, and hierarchical

[25] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 227.

biopolitical structures.[26]

The dissertation is broadly inspired by Black Studies, and its challenge to Western hegemonic epistemologies and systems that attempt to erase Black existence and experiences. As an interdisciplinary framework, Black Studies allows me to explore how poor Black people in Tanzania are actively reimagining themselves in a manner that I believe challenges our perception of contemporary urban Africa. To illustrate, I am influenced by Xavier Livermon's investigation of Black youth and Kwaito music and culture in post-apartheid Africa. Specifically, I find Livermon's theoretical framing of the Kwaito body as a site to examine how Black people practice notions of pleasure, freedom, and liberation in a post-apartheid reality useful in my thinking.[27] For instance, my dissertation focuses on how the Black body has always been a site of struggle in shaping identity and gender roles in Tanzanian society. Due to this, I examine how Black people reclaim their bodies through acts of pleasure (a topic discussed in Chapter 1) that disrupts dominant practices of gender and identity. I am also inspired by Black Studies scholar Camilla Hawthorne, who examines how Black Geographies challenge oppressive spatial practices meant to control and surveille Black people.[28] To illustrate, a theme in my dissertation examines Black urban life in Dar es Salaam. Therefore, I use Black geography

[26] Homi Bhabha, *The Location Of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 41.
[27] Xavier Livermon, *Kwaito Bodies : Remastering Space and Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 24.
[28] Camilla Hawthorne, "Black Matters Are Spatial Matters: Black Geographies for the Twenty-first Century," *Geography Compass* 13, no. 11 (July 5, 2019): 3, https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12468.

frameworks to build a historical and present-day understanding of how urban spaces were designed to manage Black life. Moreover, I look at how Black people in Dar es Salaam strategically fight back to maintain their sense of place and belonging in the city.

My analysis also examines the sonic elements of Singeli and the urban soundscapes of Dar es Salaam (discussed in Chapter 1) using a Sound Studies framework. This conversation is especially guided by David Novak, who focuses on noise as a concept and symbol that provides people power against oppressive systems.[29] I find useful how Novak views noise as a mode that represents identity, culture, and agency. In this vein, I apply their thinking to explore how Singeli resists dominant culture in Tanzania. This inquiry views Singeli music and cultural practices as a form of power for Black youth in Tanzania. Due to immersing myself in the urban soundscapes of Dar es Salaam, I also use Ari Y. Kelman and Gascia Ouzounian who critique R. Murray Schafer's binary of "lo-fi" and "hi-fi" soundscapes. Schafer positions urban soundscapes as "lo-fi" that represent noise which are unwanted sounds that are impossible to listen to. On the other hand, Schafer views "hi-fi" soundscapes as pristine harmonious sounds that mimic nature that are not associated with the hectic cacophony of modern life. However, Kelman and Ouzounian find Schafer's viewpoints of labeling urban soundscapes as "lo-fi" that represent noise problematic because it is a form of erasure, which does not take into account how

[29] David Novack, "Noise," in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novack and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 130.

different cultures experience and create sound.[30] In this vein, I examine how the urban soundscapes of Dar es Salaam operate as power and agency for everyday Black people. Doing so shows that African cities are not noisy and chaotic but foster community, belonging, and identity.

My dissertation broadly uses Film and Digital Media Studies elements to examine music videos and celebrity culture (topics in Chapters 2 and 3). Literature focused on these topics in the Global South and especially on the African continent are slim. However, I think through music video scholars like Carol Vernallis to meditate on how music video techniques and storytelling become a site for reflecting the practice of alternative identities for Black youth.[31] In connection to this, I draw from celebrity culture scholars like David Marshall to think critically about how "celebrity" functions as a tool that disrupts dominant culture due to Black youth significantly connecting with popular music artists in Tanzania.[32] Within this framework, I also examine how celebrities in Tanzania use social media to mirror the realities of Black youth, making it possible for them to identify with them at a deeper level in a way the state can't compete with.

This dissertation further uses a creative practice methodology framework inspired by Hazel Smith and Roger Dean. In particular, Smith and Dean suggest that

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[30] Gascia Ouzounian, "Rethinking Acoustic Ecology: Sound Art and Environment," *Sound Art and Environment* 6, no. 1 (2017): 9.
[31] Carol. Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video : Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 10.
[32] P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power : Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2014), 11.

practice-led research that use creative methods (e.g. filmmaking, art making) produce different forms of knowledge by producing useful insights into one's research inquiries.[33] In my case, I use filmmaking as a way to build a stronger understanding of Singeli music, culture, and Black urban life in Dar es Salaam. To do this, I created a video piece entitled *All We Got* that focuses on the everyday lives of Singeli artists. To illustrate, Singeli artists gave me access to their local neighborhoods, recording studios, and homes. In doing so, I also practiced the method of 'deep hanging out' by Clifford Geertz by immersing myself into the daily lives and routines of Singeli artists.[34] As a process, I was able to experience Black urban life, rather than simply observing it from a distance. This opened up the opportunity to engage in a collaborative art making relationship with Singeli artists that is inspired by filmmaker Pedro Costa. In particular, Costa's collaborative method involves re-enacting the lives of his actors.[35] For my own process, I worked with Singeli artists to figure out how they wanted to represent their lives and local spaces in a creative video.

For example, we acknowledged that we wanted to present an alternative perspective of Singeli music and urban life. Notably, both agreed that the representation of Singeli and African cities in media and popular culture often positions them as

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[33] Hazel. Smith and Roger T. Dean, *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts.*, 1st ed., Research Methods for the Arts and Humanities (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 1.

[34] Ben Walmsley, "Deep Hanging out in the Arts: An Anthropological Approach to Capturing Cultural Value," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 24, no. 2 (March 4, 2018): 277, https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2016.1153081.

[35] Sean Nam and Pedro Costa, "The Zero Degree of Filmmaking," *Cinéaste* 45, no. 2 (2020): 14.

chaotic. In creating an alternative mode of representation, I used fiction strategies through performative re-enactments of Singeli artist routines that made it possible to present a way of experiencing their lives in a way that was aligned with how they wanted to be viewed on screen. My aim in using performative re-enactments that centered on the routines of Singeli artists was to avoid negatively stereotyping them and allow them instead to be represented in a manner they were comfortable with. Thus, I was able to creatively open up my dissertation by providing a first-hand perspective on how local inhabitants experienced urban life and how Dar es Salaam functioned as a city outside the framings of the popular imagination.

Ultimately, *All We Got* turned into a video art piece that builds an intimate understanding of Singeli music, culture, and urban life in Dar es Salaam not represented as chaos and disorder. Chapter 4 covers the strategies I deploy to make the film *All We Got* that does not showcase Dar es Salaam, Singeli, and local inhabitants through the lens of spectacle and entertainment. I use long takes, for example, to expand the representation of marginalized people and places. In particular, I wanted *All We Got* to drift away from popular representations that negatively depict Black people and spaces in Africa. Therefore, the film does not showcase constant pain or trauma nor attempt to be a positive, uplifting piece to make viewers feel better or be used for virtue signaling on social media. Instead, I simply focus on experimenting with a way of representing Dar es Salaam connected to daily Black life through the experiences of Singeli artists and local spaces in their neighborhoods. That said, I understand there isn't a fixed approach to broadly

representing Dar es Salaam and the folks in the film. Nonetheless, my film contributes to how contemporary artists work towards disrupting negative modes of representation and dominant regimes that enforce them.

Organization

This dissertation has four chapters highlighting how Black youth in contemporary Tanzania currently imagine themselves as modern subjects. Taken together, these chapters are meant to contribute to growing literature and research dedicated to expanding our understanding of people and places in the Global South. To illustrate, Chapter 1 (Pleasure and Urban Soundscapes) examines pleasure at local nightlife spaces and parties. I argue that these sites allow Black youth to perform alternative ways of being in Tanzania that contribute to troubling dominant culture. I further discuss how Dar es Salaam's urban soundscape is a contested sonic space where local Black people generate noise to exercise power and agency. Chapter 2 (Music Videos and Hybrid Identities) focuses on the role music videos play in shaping the identities of Black youth. To do this, I examine music videos from Bongo Flava and Singeli to discuss the evolution of identities Black youth practice in the contemporary landscape. I argue that music videos operate as a site for facilitating how Black youth represent themselves, given how they are socially positioned as Wahuni. Chapter 3 (Celebrity Culture and Social Media) examines the role social media and celebrity culture play in Tanzania in expanding how Black youth express themselves. I argue that the practice of celebrity is a form of power because it appeals to Black youth in a manner the state cannot. Apart from this, I point to how social

media allows Black youth to bond and slow down due to the hectic nature of their daily lives in a demanding city like Dar es Salaam. This process involves assessing the interactions of Singeli artist Dulla Makabila on his Instagram live feed with his girlfriend, friends, and fans.

In the final chapter, I focus on the film production strategies grounded in my artistic practice that guides the media component of the dissertation entitled *All We Got*. The film centers on the lives of Singeli artists and local neighborhoods in Dar es Salaam. The film is not a direct representation or reconstruction of the written aspects of the dissertation. Instead, the film centers on Singeli artists' lives and local neighborhoods in Dar es Salaam and illustrates the broader themes in the dissertation overall. In doing so, my aim is that *All We Got* contributes to broadening our perspective on Singeli music, culture, urban Black life, and Dar es Salaam as a city.

# Chapter 1: Pleasure and Urban Soundscapes

## Introduction

I have spent a significant portion of my time in Dar es Salaam exploring Black neighborhoods through long walks. As someone from Tanzania, I am always surprised by how Dar es Salaam changes every time I visit. Therefore, walking became a way for me to reorient myself to the rhythm of the city. This mode of exploring Dar es Salaam was a research strategy designed to get more intimate with the people and urban spaces. The act of walking and allowing myself to drift through the urban landscapes of Dar es Salaam provided me access to modern public Tanzanian life. I remember walking through crowded streets, weaving through bodies, cars, and soaking in the urban sounds coming from every direction. This allowed me to develop a strong sense of the urban topography and more importantly the sort of daily patterns and activities people engaged in. The part that excited me most about these walks was taking them at night because it revealed a different aspect of people in terms of how they imagined themselves out in the world. For example, one night I was drawn to a local bar packed with Black youth dancing to Singeli music, with its trembling bass. I realized that I was amongst Black youth who were at the forefront of redefining their place and who they were as modern subjects in Tanzania. These young Black people were operating in an emerging culture reimagining identities and modes of being in a contemporary Tanzanian landscape connected on a local and global level through the processes of capitalism, globalization, and neoliberalism. The fascinating aspect about the local bar was

witnessing how Black youth were using pleasure as a mode of performing ways of being that I believe challenged dominant Tanzanian culture.

In this chapter, I focus on exactly the ways pleasure allows Black youth to engage in alternative performances that are reshaping what it means to be Tanzanian. In the same vein, I discuss the activities Black youth use that directly shapes and expands what it means to belong in a contemporary city. During my first trip to Dar es Salaam in 2019, I began to observe nightlife in Sinza, a Black neighborhood a few miles away at the heart of downtown Dar es Salaam surrounded by government buildings, shopping malls, hospitals, beaches, and universities.

I examined about four blocks of Sinza streets that I believe served as a good representation of Black nightlife that is especially accessible to the poor folks but also widely consumed by other urban inhabitants. I would explore these blocks at night while staying at a small hotel with single rooms rented out to short and long-term occupants. Additionally, the hotel was frequented by people looking for an escape to engage in pleasure, primarily with lovers and prostitutes. What exactly were people escaping from? It must have been the demands of urban life and chasing middle-class desires. Therefore, pleasure was key for people to survive and feel alive.

I recall one night across the street from the hotel, police raided an abandoned building where people were having sex because they could not afford a room. Fortunately, no one was captured or killed at the hands of the police. This event presented the opportunity to think about exactly how pleasure troubles the state's

mode of discipline, especially in terms of attempting to control people's activities, movement in space, patterns, and schedules of their daily lives. In what follows, I discuss the performativity of the Black body as a set of everyday practices that counter dominant perceptions that Tanzanians are supposed to use their bodies for nation-building, denying foreign influence, and upholding traditional patriarchal Tanzanian values.

To build an understanding of the politics surrounding the function of one's body in the Tanzanian landscape, I provide a brief historical assessment of the construction of dominant culture post-independence. In this context, the body was thought to be in need of decolonization through restoring African traditions and disciplined towards building the nation and culture. As a result, the Tanzanian body was extremely policed and surveilled to form a dominant culture. Furthermore, the body in the construction of Tanzania became a site "for negotiating anxieties about urban order, gender chaos, and undisciplined youth in a cosmopolitan capital."[36] As Andrew Ivaska explains, to implement dominant culture, the state exercised aggressive tactics like "Operation Vijana," which was a war "against a range of cultural practices and icons deemed antithetical to it [African socialist state], including wigs, cosmetics, miniskirts, tight trousers, bell-bottoms, Maasai traditional dress, beauty contests, soul music, and Afro hairstyles."[37] In this light, I argue

[36] Andrew M. (Andrew Michael) Ivaska, *Cultured States : Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam*, Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 39.
[37] Ivaska, 39.

operations like Operation Vijana were designed as a strategy for the state to attempt to control and discipline the body. As Priya Lal explains, state actions like Operation Vijana were meant to target subjects that did not fit Tanzania's nationalist project.[38] I point out that such government-led operations were fueled by the state's fear of losing control in constructing dominant culture. This fear is further explored in the present moment, particularly in how Black youth use pleasure in the city as a form of micro-resistance to free the body from the state and reimagine the function of Dar es Salaam.

In expanding this discussion, in my 2022 trip to Dar es Salaam, I decided to shift my observation of nightlife from Sinza to Mburahati because it is where I directly interacted with Singeli artists and developed a closer relationship with their community. Specifically, I thought it would offer a deeper and more intimate analysis of how Black youth use pleasure and their bodies to disrupt dominant culture. Therefore, this chapter examines a local bar in Mburahati called New Apartment Bar, which local Black people frequent. In my analysis, I focus on the night I visited the bar during a Singeli performance by Makaveli and his producer DJ Bampa Pana which provides a better understanding of the current modes of pleasure at the forefront of defining Tanzanian urban life.

In addition, I examine another Singeli performance that takes place in an area called Guinea Bissau in Mburahati as a way to examine pleasure as a liberating tool

[38] Priya Lal, "Militants, Mothers, and The National Family: Ujamaa, Gender, and Rural Development in Postcolonial Tanzania," *Journal of African History* 51, no. 1 (2010): 8, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853710000010.

for forming community and expressing alternative identities through dancing that I believe make it possible for Black youth to navigate dire urban circumstances. The Singeli event took place deep in Mburahati, an infamous area called/nicknamed Guinea Bissau, similar to the "city of god" favelas in Rio de Janeiro. While Guinea Bissau is not notorious for drug trafficking or extreme gun violence like the city of god neighborhood, Singeli artists explained to me that it is a zone that people fear in the city due to crime and gangs. Lastly, within these observations of pleasure in Mburahati, I weave my encounters with soundscape and noise to build a strong understanding of how the sonic environment (e.g., people, technology, cars, sound systems) plays a significant role in forming community, belonging, resistance, and identity.

Contested Bodies

To understand the current state of the Black body and Dar es Salaam, I must briefly touch on the key difference between my exploration of the city in the summer of 2019 and the 2022 trip. In my 2019 visit to Dar es Salaam, President Magufuli had not yet passed away. I recall the atmosphere of Dar es Salaam feeling extremely tense in public (e.g., streets, bars) and private spaces (e.g., offices, homes), but I could not figure it out until riding a Baja Ji (three-wheeled taxi) around the city. In my conversation with the Baja Ji driver, he warned me to be careful what I talked about with people and to keep my ears and eyes open, because Magufuli's spies (i.e., plain-clothed agents, informants) are everywhere, which could result in me vanishing. I immediately realized Dar es Salaam felt tense because its inhabitants lived with the

fear that at any given moment they could disappear. For this reason, my experience of Dar es Salaam radically shifted with me being fully aware of how the state shaped people's everyday lives: through the possibility of unleashing violence through unpredictable tactics that can render someone invisible.

My first encounter with one of these unpredictable strategies was at a bus station in downtown Dar es Salaam. I was taking photographs and video (which was an unwise decision, but at the time, I thought it was fine since I was in a public space) when, out of nowhere, I was swarmed by plain-clothed agents who wanted to seize my camera and arrest me. Thankfully, I was let go after I "deleted" the camera's content. This experience taught me that the state also exerted its power and control by making it impossible for people to predict when violence is about to occur or knowing when agents surround them. Moreover, this experience explained the immense fear and anxiety that gripped the city.

In this context, I want to briefly touch on Tanzania's historical roots after Nyerere's launch of the Arusha Declaration, which I believe have shaped the state's practices of attempting to control the Black body. In a period of roughly a year in 1968 and 1969, Tanzania's Youth League (TYL) launched "Operation Vijana," which banned western items (e.g., mini-skirts, lipstick, tight pants, lightening creams) that threatened the country's dominant culture.[39] The operation focused on the city of Dar es Salaam. It involved hundreds of men who were Youth League members dressed in

[39] Andrew M. Ivaska, "'Anti-Mini Militants Meet Modern Misses': Urban Style, Gender and the Politics of 'National Culture' in 1960s Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania," *Gender & History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 591, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.00283.

military attire patrolling the streets looking for anyone violating the TYLs ban. Often, TYLs tactics resulted in beatings, arrests, and vigilante behavior. Furthermore, Operation Vijana functioned through a gendered lens.

According to Andrew Ivaska, Operation Vijana predominantly targeted women due to anxieties centered on gender roles in relation to questions around labor, mobility, and sex in Dar es Salaam.[40] Ivaska argues that the city became a site of struggle because Operation Vijana quickly turned into the construction of gender and the function of urban space in pushing forward the state's agenda of implementing dominant culture to shape one's identity and form a model citizen.[41] Ivaska further points out that Operation Vijana has always been aligned with Tanzania's state practices of launching campaigns "to sift and purify [traditions] in order to remove or lessen elements that are inappropriate in that they are shameful or disgusting for a condition of civility and modern development in general."[42] The goal for such operations has always centered on removing all elements in Tanzania that do not fit within the rigid definition of what constituted as dominant culture through the state's framework. Doing so, resulted in the criminalization and positioning of anything that went against the state's vision of culture and identity as Wahuni.

Even though the state continues to engage in a pattern of launching different iterations of Operation Vijana, Ivaska suggests that one of the main reasons for this is that the state attempts to control and shape what modernity looks like for Tanzanian

[40] Ivaska, 596.
[41] Ivaska, 597.
[42] Ivaska, 591.

people and spaces.[43] Therefore, the state is constantly anxious when confronted with any form of difference and must attempt to disrupt and police it since it troubles notions of belonging and being in the Tanzanian nation. I believe this is due to Tanzania struggling between balancing its African socialist roots (that are infused with government policy, nostalgia, and desire to revamp Nyerere's Ujamaa nation-building project that attempted to build a specific national culture and identity while being confronted with the realities of globalization, capitalism, materialism, consumption, and circulation of competing ideas. In addition, the state's vision of what it means to be a contemporary modern subject fails to connect with people's everyday experiences and modes of self-expression grounded in pleasure that free up the Tanzanian Black body in today's landscape.

For these reasons, Black people in Tanzania are currently practicing modes of being influenced by local and global exchanges. I want to acknowledge that these practices are also expressed differently depending on an individual person's access, often regulated through the lines of class status that give them the ability to self-fashion, consume, and experience pleasure in a particular manner. That being the case, it is crucial to note that my discussion of examining pleasure and how Black people embody alternative modes of being does not center on ones that are accessed through being middle-class or provided by high-end exclusive spaces. Instead, I look at pleasure that is practiced in Black neighborhoods by poor Black people that are the

[43] Ivaska, 599.

most targeted and impacted by state policies/ideological frameworks which attempt to control their bodies in society.

Defiant Performance

In the next section, I will discuss my experience at the "New Apartment Bar," where Singeli artist Makaveli and DJ Bampa Pana performed on a Saturday night. This performance is in the media component of the dissertation entitled *All We Got*. However, in this current section, I do not touch on the film but rather focus purely on my own observations and experiences at the New Apartment Bar.

It was around 10 PM at the New Apartment Bar. People were excited with their eyes glued to the television screens watching an intense football match. These spectators are mainly from the local neighborhood of Mburahati, where Sisso Records is located. I am hyped to be at the New Apartment Bar to hangout with Singeli artists and witness everyday poor Black people in Dar es Salaam engage in pleasure in nightlife spaces. These spaces further reveal how Black people in Tanzania are articulating what it means to be a modern Tanzanian subject along with contributing to shaping the purpose of African cities, which destabilizes the state's vision of national identity and ambitious nation-building schemes.

In this discussion, I am very much a participant and co-performer (that is also from Tanzania) that experiences pleasure alongside local Black people and Singeli artists at the New Apartment Bar. Nightlife spaces in Tanzania are not new experiences for me. However, what makes this instance different is that I was investigating how pleasure operates as a strategy to trouble modes of being that are

deeply embedded in Tanzanian society. These modes of being are directly influenced by state ideologies and African traditions clashing with contemporary realities. This tension is connected to the national shift from African socialism to Democracy and overlapping factors (e.g., capitalism, neoliberalism, globalization, consumerism, technology, social media, and culture) that I believe play a role in Black people in Tanzania reimagining themselves for survival and creating spaces to experience life on their own terms.

In this context, Black people in Tanzania engage in pleasure in nightlife spaces to practice suppressed modes of being that are specifically linked to performing alternative/new identities aligned with their everyday realities. I think these nightlife spaces are significant because they cater to local poor Black people who are unable to directly influence the state. Therefore, pleasure within nightlife spaces at the micro level are playing a role in reshaping notions of Tanzanian identity. In this scenario, nightlife spaces become sites where Black people can exercise a form of agency and power over their lives through displaying ways of being as forms of micro resistance to dominant culture.

The process of performing alternative identities has always been an ongoing process since Tanzanian independence. However, I believe the process is different in the current landscape because Black people are confronting the rippling negative impacts of African socialism and the destructive nature of global systems of neoliberalism and capitalism in terms of the extraction of resources, labor, and time which continue to marginalize people. In addition, Tanzanians are recovering from

Magafuli's complicated autocratic turn and the consequences of the COVID-19 global pandemic on a local level. In this vein, the current practices of alternative identities that poor Black Tanzanians embody translate to modes of freedom within a context full of uncertainty about their personal futures and the nation.

At the New Apartment Bar, the space is now transformed into a dance floor with DJ Bamba Pana blasting hot Singeli beats (running 300 bpm) as Makaveli raps along to them on the mic. I stand in the corner, scanning the bar; all kinds of people are dancing, drinking, and smoking. At this moment, I realized that spaces like New Apartment Bar were accessible to everyone by providing people with affordable prices for beverages, food, and entertainment. These spaces were not designed to exclude through mechanisms such as class but were meant to operate as places where anyone can participate in having a good time. In particular, New Apartment Bar did not have the usual cover charge or bouncer. The bar was also conveniently located on the side of a busy road, making it possible for a wide spectrum of people to come and go as they pleased. Therefore, I was able to encounter a mixture of local people from the Mburahati neighborhood along with folks from all over Dar es Salaam. They were drawn to the bar because of the electrifying DJ Bamba Pana and Makaveli Singeli performance that echoed throughout the area via a fantastic sound system.

In my observations at the New Apartment Bar, I witnessed people on the dance floor primarily performing two kinds of dance expressions which I believed to be quite significant since Tanzania is historically socially conservative. The first dance being performed was twerking by Black women. While twerking is common in

African dance practices and expressed in Tanzanian music genres (e.g. Taarab, Bongo Flava, Singeli) the context of where it is performed in Tanzania has shaped how it is viewed in society. To illustrate this point, twerking has widely been accepted in national dance competitions and positioned as a traditional mode of expression when being associated with Tanzanian genres Ngoma and Muziki wa Dansi formed by Nyerere. However outside the context of dance competitions and Ngoma and Muziki wa Dansi genres, twerking is seen as a non-traditional practice that is immoral and corrupting Black youth.

Dance has always been contested and regulated in Tanzania. According to Kelly Askew, stemming from Nyerere's Ministry of National Culture and Youth, Tanzania's cultural policy has always utilized dance as a mechanism for constructing a national culture.[44] Askew argues that in Nyerere's government, officials strategically identified certain dance expressions as traditional and used them as symbols for Tanzanian national culture that represented/performed the ideal vision of the state and people.[45] However, this created a binary where certain dances were viewed as traditional while others became detrimental. This is because dances that were classified as non-traditional meant they were not acceptable and representative forms of cultural expression. Askew points out officials used rigid definitions of what constituted "traditional dance," which further fueled a scenario that eliminated

[44] Kelly Michelle Askew, *Performing the Nation : Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 221.
[45] Askew, 13.

diverse cultural dance practices found in Tanzania. In addition, dance expressions like twerking became policed and surveilled which still occurs today since they are deemed to be not representative of national culture and identity.

Another reason twerking continues to be controversial in Tanzania is the ongoing anxiety around Black women in attempting to control their gender roles and bodies in society. In this vein, twerking functions as a mode for expressing female agency and freedom on sexual, economic, and political levels.[46] Poor and working class women's expression of agency threatens heteropatriarchy and a dominant culture that attempts to suppress and manage women. In direct relation to pleasure, Elizabeth Perez suggests that twerking further allows women the "right to feel pleasure and pride in their bodies despite the onslaught of symbolic and material violence confronting them."[47] When applying Perez's point to my observations at the New Apartment Bar space, I also find the ability for self-expression through dance and more broadly access to pleasure also operates along class lines. In this case, I believe that poor Black women expressing themselves through their bodies and exercising their right to pleasure is much more surveilled and ultimately perceived as disorder and immoral. Therefore, witnessing poor Black women in nightlife spaces like New Apartment Bar participating in pleasure and dancing is an act of resistance

[46] Elizabeth Pérez, "The Ontology of Twerk: From 'sexy' Black Movement Style to Afro-Diasporic Sacred Dance," *African and Black Diaspora* 9, no. 1 (2016): 26, https://doi.org/10.1080/17528631.2015.1055650.
[47] Pérez, 21.

that I believe pushes against dominant systems and ideologies in society that attempt to control and oppress them.

The second dance I observed at New Apartment Bar was moshing by Black men, which is predominantly performed in Singeli. To illustrate, it is difficult to exactly trace how moshing as a dance practice entered Singeli music and culture since it is typically associated with Western music genres rock, punk, and heavy metal. However, those Western genres have been performed locally since the 1970s on the African continent. For example, Zamrock is a musical genre in Zambia which is a form of rock influenced by the Blues and bands like the Rolling Stones. More recently, Kenyan youth have built an underground heavy metal and grindcore scene. In particular, the Kenyan Black youth band Duma has really experimented and pushed the sonic boundaries of those specific genres.

A unique aspect of heavy metal and grindcore is that moshing tends to form spontaneously. Similarly, moshing occurs in Singeli the same way. I believe this is because heavy metal, grindcore, and Singeli sonically trigger moshing since the music is aggressive, violent, high-tempo, and full of rage. Of course, to an outsider moshing may be read as representing chaos and disorder. However, I find moshing allows people to form community, heal, bond, and outwardly express themselves in a manner that is not allowed in their everyday lives. I argue that for these reasons, moshing is prevalent in Singeli music and culture. For example, Singeli performances where Black people mosh provides them an outlet to articulate a way of being and existing in Dar es Salaam not dictated by the state or middle-class perceptions. The

act of performing aggressive and energetic mosh dancing within the Singeli scene operates as a ritualistic space for Black people allowing them to gain pleasure. In addition, within the ritualistic space, Black youth can release the pain that stems from hardships in their daily lives, constant marginalization from the state, and global capitalism that perpetuates poverty.

Black people having a space to display raw, painful emotion through mosh dancing is crucial since they cannot do so in their everyday lives. According to Gabrielle Riches, moshing "acknowledges the essential conflicts of life and, as one enters the mosh pit, one embraces all the pain, hurt, joy, pleasure, and suffering that delineate existence."[48] Riches further points out that moshing spaces allow people to "play with darker aspects of existence, subvert normative social conventions, and release pent-up frustrations of mundanity while fostering a strong sense of community."[49] In doing so, mosh dancing becomes a performative act that counters perceptions of normativity, and defies order and power in society.[50] These are accomplished through moshing because it is a dance activity that allows people to suspend and escape ways of being (e.g., gender, identity, behavior) and structures that dictate their everyday lives.[51]

[48] Gabrielle Riches, "Embracing the Chaos: Mosh Pits, Extreme Metal Music and Liminality," *Journal for Cultural Research* 15, no. 3 (2011): 320, https://doi.org/10.1080/14797585.2011.594588.
[49] Riches, 316.
[50] Riches, 321.
[51] Riches, 322.

When conversing with Singeli artist Makaveli about the significance of moshing in Singeli, he explained that the genre sonically makes it possible for people to reach a trance state and moshing occurs because it is a way for people to release and express whatever tension they are experiencing in their lives without a filter. In those moments, people express extreme joy, pain, and rage through moving their bodies. As a process, I believe moshing is important in Singeli because it acts as a form of catharsis for poor Black men, which is crucial since they aren't allowed to perform alternative suppressed forms of masculinity that especially center on showing intense emotions or femininity because it is read as weakness. Furthermore, moshing becomes a site where poor Black men can exercise and reclaim a sense of power allowing them to have control of their identities and place in society.

Singeli for Black people in Tanzania is grounded in allowing them to be oppositional and resistant to dominant cultural ideologies, especially for poor classes that experience marginalization in society. As an emergent culture, Singeli fosters a sense of community and belonging sustained through venues like the New Apartment Bar, where people can exercise freedom away from state surveillance and engage in deviant activities (e.g., moshing) considered to be immoral. When people entered New Apartment Bar during DJ Bamba Pana and Makaveli's Singeli performance, they were allowed to momentarily perform different identities and ideologies without fear or consequence since such spaces exist at the margins and at the periphery of mainstream Tanzanian society.

Urban soundscapes

This section examines the urban soundscape I experienced during my time in Mburahati to understand how the practices of sound operate as a form of power for local communities in Dar es Salaam. My encounters with sound in Mburahati contribute to a better understanding of how Black people are reshaping and remastering the use of urban spaces, which reimagines the function and meaning of the city. To begin, sound is everywhere in Mburahati. Car engines rattle; motorcycle taxis whiz by; street vendors use megaphones to sell their wares; music spills from people's apartments, shops, and buses. During one particularly rich sonic moment, I encountered Singeli blasting from a barbershop, loudspeakers from a mosque spreading prayer, a Black man walking by Bongo Flava on his smartphone, and Taraab echoing through narrow alleyways where Black women are braiding each other's hair, and young children are shouting together as they play. The experience of moving throughout Mburahati meant being immersed and listening to various sounds produced by people, cars, technology, and sound systems. From an outside and primarily Western perspective, the urban soundscape of Mburahati would sound uncomfortably loud and, therefore, potentially dismiss it as unwanted negative noise.

Within this viewpoint, I want to highlight the discourse around the concept of soundscape that mainly stems from Western acoustic ecology and sound studies more broadly to provide an alternative approach better suited for understanding the urban soundscape I encountered in Mburahati. R. Murray Schafer defines the soundscape as simply the sonic environment, and his acoustic ecology centers on assessing the

effects the soundscape has on human beings and the natural environment.[52] For him, the soundscape comprises keynote sounds, signals, and sound marks. Keynote sounds emerge from the natural environment (e.g., birds, wind). In contrast, signals are human-made, consisting of sounds usually generated by technology or a mechanical device that serve a functional purpose in society by forcing the listener to interpret them.[53] For example, a police siren is a signal, since it carries a specific meaning (e.g., emergency) that grabs the listeners attention and makes them respond/react accordingly. Sound marks, the third element of the soundscape, carry value or purpose in a community, like a church bell.[54] Schafer believes when the sonic elements (keynote sounds, signals, sound marks) of the soundscape are unbalanced or erratic, society sinks into a devastating condition and becomes consumed in a cacophony.[55] He argues that a soundscape can become damaged and unbalanced, due to an overpopulation of noise.[56] As a self-proclaimed environmentalist, his ideal soundscape is one grounded in natural keynote sounds. In his vision, a natural soundscape reflects a pre-modern space, quiet, and representative of a harmonious and balanced life. It is pristine, ancient, and undisturbed.

Schafer uses the terms "hi-fi" and "lo-fi" to distinguish between what he sees as good and bad soundscapes. A hi-fi soundscape, in his formulation, possesses a

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[52] R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape : Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 1994), 271.
[53] Schafer, 272.
[54] Schafer, 274.
[55] Schafer, 237.
[56] Schafer, *The Soundscape : Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, 71.

signal-to-noise ratio in which sounds can be heard with clarity due to a low ambient level of noise.[57] Accordingly, the hi-fi soundscape communicates and reflects clear and concise sonic information, because sounds do not overlap. For him, sounds in the hi-fi soundscape are not confusing or difficult for the listener to gain a sonic perspective.[58] In the contemporary and modern world, he locates the hi-fi soundscape in the rural countryside, since its' much closer to nature.[59]

Schafer associates the lo-fi soundscape with the modern city. He believes the lo-fi soundscape originates from increased sound congestion, which masks and obscures natural sounds. In his formulation of the lo-fi soundscape, signal-to-noise ratio becomes one-to-one. As a result, he argues, acoustic signals are overloaded, resulting in the loss of perspective and ability to listen to anything.[60] Schafer characterizes the lo-fi soundscape as chaotic, unnatural,and disruptive of the sonic rhythms of life. Schafer calls unwanted sound noise, and he sees it as a problem in the soundscape.[61] In order to get the soundscape back into its hi-fi natural state, he prescribes controlling, reducing, and eliminating noise. To make a hi-fi soundscape, in Schafer's view, acoustic designers

should approach the soundscape of the world like a musical composition, where they decide what sounds to preserve or remove. This process of "re-naturalizing" the soundscape requires listening first and foremost. Schafer emphasizes that acoustic

[57] Schafer, 43.
[58] Schafer, 43.
[59] Schafer, 43.
[60] Schafer, 71.
[61] Schafer, 182.

designers should listen for silence, because that represents the sounds of nature and a harmonious world.[62]

Scholars who critique Schafer's notion of acoustic ecology and soundscape find his definitions biased and based on spurious notions of harmonious nature. This originates from his ideological framework, which seeks to identify and eliminate "imbalances which may have unhealthy or inimical effects"[63] in the soundscape, in order to bring about a preferred sonic aesthetic. Gascia Ouzounian argues that Schafers approach to acoustic ecology fails to incorporate diverse cultural and social groups that experience noise and sound in complex ways.[64] Ouzounian believes, Schafers model creates a binary, where so-called natural sounds are desired, while man-made or machine sounds are automatically labeled as noise.[65]

Ari Y. Kelman suggests that Schafer's approach to viewing the lo-fi soundscape is anti-urban and anti-modernist.[66] For Kelman, labeling the city a lo-fi soundscape denies people who actually live there any power or agency. He finds Schafer's definition of soundscape to be overly limiting, without the possibility of perceiving new sounds and how they relate to society in general.[67] For Ouzounian, urban life cannot be understood through the Schaferian binary division of labeling a

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[62] Schafer, 208.
[63] Schafer, 271.
[64] Ouzounian, "Rethinking Acoustic Ecology: Sound Art and Environment," 9.
[65] Ouzounian, 9.
[66] Ari Y Kelman, "Rethinking the Soundscape: A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies," *The Senses and Society* 5, no. 2 (2010): 217, https://doi.org/10.2752/174589210X12668381452845.
[67] Kelman, 217.

sonic element "noise" and another "sound." For her, it denies the ability to generate any form of context or meaning in how the sonic element relates to the people or space.[68] For example, she argues that the sounds of traffic "in and of themselves do not possess positive or negative attributes; they are only meaningful in relation to the particular environment, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which they are heard."[69]

Scholars find Schafer's definition of noise as "unwanted sound" to be problematic as well due to its unacknowledged biased subjectivity. Schafer creates an unrealistic ideal, which he uses to describe the city and to identify and eliminate any sound he finds undesirable. From Schafer's putatively environmentalist position, noise is a form of sound imperialism that impinges on an already perfect world.[70] Marie Thompson argues that positioning noise as inherently undesirable limits its potential to understand how it functions as a medium. Therefore, she says noise should be approached as a relational concept that affects and mediates our everyday experiences.[71]

While Schafer acknowledges that cultures can tolerate noise (e.g. car horns), he struggles to see its expanded potential in how it signifies and signals difference in society (e.g. race, class, power).[72] David Novak explains that noise has a

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[68] Ouzounian, "Rethinking Acoustic Ecology: Sound Art and Environment," 9.
[69] Ouzounian, 9.
[70] Schafer, *The Soundscape : Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, 77.
[71] Marie Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect, and Aesthetic Moralism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 78.
[72] Novack, "Noise," 130.

social function that goes beyond Schafer's definition of unwanted sound. He argues that noise can symbolize and sound race, class, history, culture, and even resistance through giving marginalized, often silenced people a voice, where they are rendered invisible.[73] Noise also is a cultural and social device that fosters identity and community formation.[74] Jacques Attali argues that in general "noise" represents disorder, disrupting the illusion of an organized and cohesive society. It is a form of power, which the modern state attempts to control and silence, because it signals cultural autonomy (e.g. freedom, resistance) and difference (e.g., minorities, identity).[75] From this angle, noise as a structural logic and mode of expression/perception plays a role in shaping people's everyday lives. Furthermore, noise becomes a key component in the general makeup of the soundscape.[76]

Despite the lack of literature and research examining soundscape and noise on the African continent, Black artists are at the forefront of exploring how communities, environments, and people are shaped by them. In doing so, they deepen and expand our understanding of soundscape and noise. For example, Nigerian artist Emeka Ogboh's work *Lagos Soundscapes* challenges the idea that "soundscape" is a Western concept and uses Lagos as a site to conduct exploring the city sonically. For Ogboh, the soundscapes of Lagos are not noise. Instead, they operate as musical compositions that reveal the identity and culture of people and their environments. In expanding

[73] Novack, 126.
[74] Novack, 130.
[75] Jacques. Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music,* Theory and History of Literature ; v. 16 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 26.
[76] Novack, "Noise," 131.

notions of soundscape, in Zimbabwean artist Masimba Hwati article *The Black Market: Sampling a Micropolitical terrain of listening resistance and refusal* examines the sounds generated by a black market space in Harare and how they are a reflection and critique of violence in the postcolonial state.[77] Furthermore, Hwati highlights how sounds within the black market (i.e. generated by people's voices, technology, fashion, bodies) produce an alternative cultural space for everyday people who practice modes of survival and resistance against oppressive systems.[78] Hwati suggests that Black sonic spaces in the African context require deep listening strategies in order to understand the sonic complexities and what they reveal about society more broadly.[79] In this vein, I believe that such a listening practice must be an embodied experience that interacts with sounds, spatial urban topographies, and organizational systems (e.g. power relations) to build a firm understanding of Black life and local spaces.

Within these alternative frameworks, I will attempt to discuss my experiences that I encountered during my exploration of the urban soundscape in Dar es Salaam. In addition, I will touch on a current debate concerning noise pollution in the city and how its shaping local frameworks on soundscape and noise more broadly. My ultimate goal of examining soundscape and noise in Dar es Salaam is to complicate the perception that sound produced in African cities, especially in spaces occupied by

[77] Masimba Hwati, "The Black Market Sound: Sampling a Micropolitical Terrain of Listening, Resistance and Refusal," August 12, 2021, 4, https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.15129750.v1.
[78] Hwati, 3.
[79] Hwati, 5.

poor and marginalized Black people, are simply undesirable negative cacophonies that are a problem and therefore need to be silenced. This perspective is limiting because it generates a situation where people are conditioned to listen and associate otherness/difference as dangerous, backward, and threatening. Furthermore, it fuels the idea of the need to exert control and power over the soundscape, which results in targeting vulnerable groups of people often through racial and class lines, denying them the right to exist.

In the African context, these tensions of attempting to control and silence undesirable components of the soundscape certainly exist. For instance, in Dar es Salaam, since independence, the state has always conducted campaigns against poor Black people by removing them from the city. More recently, in 2022, authorities targeted informal petty traders from the streets through massive demolitions of shops and forced displacements.[80] This removal process from Dar es Salaam's streets has been devastating and threatens poor Black people's livelihoods. The reason for such operations is directly linked to the Tanzanian government wanting to transform and gentrify Dar es Salaam for middle-class people. In direct connection to the soundscape, the state attempts to shape and shut out which sounds are allowed to exist in the urban soundscape.[81]

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[80] Priya Sippy, "Tanzania: Displaced Petty Traders Struggle with New Market Rules," April 6, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/4/6/tanzania-displaced-petty-traders-struggle-with-new-market-rules.

[81]"Crackdown over Noise Pollution Begins Today," 2021, https://www.ippmedia.com/en/news/crackdown-over-noise-pollution-begins-today.

In spite of the state's effort to control the soundscape, I have witnessed the power of poor Black people not willing to be silenced through counter practices of making noise as a mode of resistance that fosters community, belonging, and identity in the public sphere. More importantly, I believe the noise they make reverberates and dominates the urban soundscape signaling their right to exist and exercise of agency. To illustrate this point, I want to invite readers to a moment where I stepped outside a recording session at Sisso Records that has expanded my view on the possibilities noise creates for poor Black people and formation of urban soundscapes. At this particular session at Sisso Records, Makaveli was recording a song with other Singeli artists led by producer Jay Mitta who creates the beat in real time. Mitta's Singeli beats are notorious for being fast-paced and looped with synthesized drums. The sound of the beat blasts through the speakers and vibrates all over the neighborhood. It's extremely loud. In my frequent visits to Sisso Records, I often wondered how are local inhabitants negotiating the intense Singeli noise? However, I quickly came to the realization that the circulation of Singeli was normal to local inhabitants. More importantly, Singeli artists played a direct role in shaping the urban soundscape and noise. Therefore, Singeli was a part of the larger sonic presence in the neighborhood, which was surrounded by sound everywhere.

Due to this reality, the lines of private and public sounds are blurred. At Sisso Records, I can hear people's home stereos. Buses honk through traffic, sound systems blast music and television shows from bars. I am surrounded by a mixture of voices: shouting, laughing, babies crying, dogs barking, people fighting. For an outsider,

encountering all of these sounds all at once could seem excessive and disorienting. However, in my observation these sounds generate a strong sense of shared space and convey the dynamics found in certain communities. Furthermore, I find that noise making from everyday people to be central to exercising power in two broad ways. The first and most obvious one that I have previously touched on is that noise making operates as a mode of power in order not to be silenced by the state. The second form of power, which I personally encountered at my time exploring Dar es Salaam was seeing people use noise making as a way of imposing and asserting dominance within the urban soundscape. This is directly linked to the fact that sounds within the urban environment are not sonically and spatially distributed at an even level. Therefore, the ability to generate noise is a way of claiming space, being heard, showcasing agency, and sustaining survival. For example, I witnessed Dala Dala (shared taxi minibusses) drivers compete with each other using sound systems to attract customers. In another instance, people would turn on their home stereos to drown out the sounds of an annoying neighbor. More astonishing, churches use powerful mega sound systems to spread prayer in local neighborhoods at night, waking up residents.

Despite noise being a mechanism for people to claim their stake in the urban soundscape, I find the examples I touch on above also reveal the ongoing tension on the urban soundscape in Dar es Salaam. First, I believe local residents experience anxiety over noise pollution. Second, the urban soundscape is constantly reshaped due to the state attempting to control sounds fueled by residents complaining about noise levels and ultimately wanting to deploy their vision of the city. To illustrate this

point, the debate around Dar es Salaam's urban soundscape began taking full effect in the mid 2000's, when the state started to draft laws in an attempt to curb noise in the city by setting up "the maximum permissible noise pollution in churches, mosques, nightclubs, bars, public rallies, public address systems, industrial machines and even promotional road shows."[82]

According to a 2014 report entitled *Noise everywhere in Dar: Who will stop the hell?* by a local Tanzanian newspaper called *The Citizen*, "Noise pollution in residential areas--brought about by loud and pounding music in bars and shops, live promotional roadshows, dance halls and cars--has subjected residents to distress beyond description. This state of affairs has also exposed them to serious health hazards."[83] The report continues by highlighting how noise pollution is a terror and menace that has disrupted every aspect of city life. Furthermore, the report points out cracking down on noise pollution was impossible because no laws were actually in effect and any effort to pass them were stalled in parliament. Therefore, the "police cannot arrest people who causes noise pollution and courts cannot sentence them in the absence of specific laws."[84] After the release of *The Citizen* report on noise pollution, the state signed into law regulations that would attempt to control noise in Dar es Salaam. These regulations gave police authority to crack down on noise.

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[82] "Noise Everywhere in Dar: Who Will Stop the Hell?," 2014, https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/noise-everywhere-in-dar-who-will-stop-the-hell--2516860.
[83] "Noise Everywhere in Dar: Who Will Stop the Hell?"
[84] "Noise Everywhere in Dar: Who Will Stop the Hell?"

Furthermore, courts had the ability to fine and imprison people up to five years for breaking the noise ordinance law.

Since the noise pollution law took effect, I believe it has contributed to an increase of policing noise generated by poor Black people and more directly Singeli performances that are framed as disturbing the peace and order in the city. Therefore, Singeli parties that often take place in public spaces are immediately shut down by the police. Nevertheless, Singeli events strategically occur even if they are perceived as illegal and unwanted sound. As an example, after Makaveli finished recording at Sisso Records, I attended a Singeli performance in Guinea-Bissau with him. This Singeli performance is held every weekend to bring community members together to socialize, engage in pleasure, and escape realities in their daily lives. Here, I invite the reader to accompany me on my experience at the Singeli performance.

Upon arriving at the Singeli event that was located deep in the Guinea-Bissau neighborhood that was embedded in steep and dangerous hills, I was honestly surprised at how the event organizers brought such a massive speaker system. This is because there were no clear pathways and streets accessible to cars or motorcycles. I learned later that Guinea-Bissau was strategic for holding Singeli performances because the police could not easily access it to disrupt and shut them down. That said, the Singeli event was packed with hundreds of people - brought together by the

powerful sound system (that fostered the of sharing space, rather than separating and controlling it) playing music at an extremely high volume.[85]

Because of this, I could not converse with anyone. Therefore, I decided to focus my attention on the Singeli music - which was aggressive and hypnotizing. After a few minutes, I was on the dance floor, engaging in the powerful ritual of moshing with everyone for what felt like hours. In these moments, I was able to understand the impact of Singeli music (especially when collectively experienced and blasting from a loud sound system): it triggered intense feelings of ecstasy, joy, out-of-body experiences, and transformational energy where people could briefly let go of things in their lives and feel free.

To return to the Singeli performance, it is now nighttime, and the large crowd has dispersed due to the event being over. I walk to the nearest street with Makaveli and other members of Sisso Records to catch a trusted friend's taxi. As we were waiting for our ride, I asked Makaveli why he enjoyed Singeli performances and doing shows in local Black neighborhoods so much. He responded:

> "The real culture and soul is in Black neighborhoods. I want to be with my people, where I truly feel like I belong and can be myself - You see those middle-class high-rise apartments spring up around the city? Those are prisons. The people in them look lonely, in deep isolation. I do not want to be

[85] Henriques, Julian, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 47.

one of them. I can't be in silence. Silence is death. I want the vibe and to feel alive. I want the noise."

Makaveli's words are significant because my interpretation of what he means is that "silence" is a form of erasure and people forced to be silent are basically experiencing death. Therefore, noise represents life. The taxi arrives and we all squeeze in. I realize the air conditioning is broken but at least the driver has the coldest Singeli tracks playing. The driver quickly works his way through a traffic jam. We are surrounded by a loud unforgiving urban soundscape that refuses to be silent.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted how pleasure (particularly in nightlife scenes and daytime parties) operates as a form of resistance, giving Black people the ability to engage in expressive practices that are perceived as taboo/immoral in Tanzania. The sort of instances (i.e., twerking, moshing) I have observed function as a way of challenging fixed social perceptions/state policies that target and discipline Black bodies, particularly ones from marginalized communities and the poor class. I touch on the discourse around soundscape and noise to insist that they are not neutral concepts, but ones that carry with them social, political, and ideological frameworks to negatively label people and places. In the process, I show how alternative approaches to soundscape and noise are productive in better understanding urban life and sound in African cities. In doing so, I insist that urban soundscapes and sounds produced predominantly by poor Black people operate as a form of power that pushes against but also exist alongside forces that attempt to exclude/silence as being part of

society. At the same time, I highlight current local debates around soundscape and noise to showcase how everyday people and the state perceived them in terms of attempting to shape the urban sonic landscape.

The encounters I have discussed in relation to pleasure, dancing, and noise are not a complete representation of people's urban everyday experiences or complex dynamics found in African cities as a whole. Instead, in this chapter, I use the themes above to think about how poor Black people in Tanzania express themselves and engage in practices that offer a bit more liberated life experiences.

## Chapter Two: Music Videos

### Introduction

This chapter engages with the medium of music video to build upon how it facilitates the process of countering dominant perceptions of Black youth in the Tanzanian context. Since the 2000s, the music video as a form driven by access to high-quality production technologies, a rise in consumer culture across media platforms, and fueled by an audience seeking a visual and sonic experience, has evolved significantly. While this chapter does not focus on the history and development of music video in Tanzania, I examine the way music video articulates the experiences of Black youth as a mechanism that contributes to generating a sense of belonging and being. To make this analysis, I focus on how the music video constructs a mode of representation that counters the social categorization of marginalized Black youth as Wahuni, which labels them as criminals, nihilistic, and hypermasculine. I argue that the music video creates a sense of identity Black youth relate to because it primarily reflects their urban realities and desires. As Mamadou Diouf explains, since the 1970's postcolonial Black youth have been stripped of identity and citizenship that positioned them as active participants in creating the nation.[86] Therefore, Black youth have been forced to engage in creative ways to rework their identities in society. In this context, I suggest that since music videos

[86] Mamadou Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures: Black youth and Public Space.(Author Abstract)," *African Studies Review* 46, no. 2 (2003): 4, https://doi.org/10.2307/1514823.

inception, Black youth have used it as a vital part of their construction of alternative identities, particularly aligned with their real-life worlds. This chapter analyzes the music video in two popular genres in Tanzania, Bongo Flava, and Singeli, which cater to Black youth differently in terms of identity formation. I begin with making a comparative reading of Bongo Flava music videos alongside the ones in Singeli to explore how they differ in representing identity formations of Black youth. First, I discuss how Bongo Flava group TMK Wanaume's music video "Wanaume Kazini"attempted to repair the identities of Black youth through the process of restoring a kind of masculine identity connected to nation-building instead of not positioning them as Wahuni. I further examine the music videos of Bongo Flava female artists Zay B's "Monica" and Rosa Ree's "Vitamin U" to discuss how Black women play a pivotal role in countering assigned gender roles and re-constructing the identities of Black youth more broadly that are tied to the realities of urban life. Then, I transition to assessing Singeli music videos in terms of the way they reframe Wahuni through alternative performances of masculinity through the depiction of everyday life instead of grand narratives of nation-building. This assessment involves examining Singeli artists Meja Kunta's music video "Mamu," which deals with mental health, and Dulla Makabila's "Ningekuwa Demu," where the artist cross-dresses as a woman. I take the stance that Singeli music videos are more invested in presenting hybrid identities that reflect the dynamics of Black youth and urban realities they encounter in their local geographies. This chapter further examines the representation of urban space in Singeli music videos and how it fosters a sense of

belonging and community. In assessing Bongo Flava and Singeli music videos, I build an understanding of how they construct the formation of identities of Black youth connected to their everyday experiences. For this reason, their music videos provide a context in the way Black youth represent themselves and currently imagine themselves within contemporary Tanzanian society.

Restoring Performances of Identity

As the music video "Wanaume Kazini" from the Bongo Flava male group TMK Wanaume begins, we are introduced to an opening scene of the artists wearing military camouflage attire. The commanding officer shows them a map focused on Dar es Salaam. It cuts to a long shot of the artists saluting, then to a sequence of them working in a construction site with other men. Throughout the music video, sequences of labor being performed by men is a major component of the piece as a whole. It is clear that these images are tied to an ideal masculine identity aligned with a nation-building agenda, reconnecting to Nyerere's ujamaa policies (e.g. villagization, communal farming, technical skills) now deployed in the contemporary urban environment. In one sequence, artists march with farming tools and dig in a row reminiscent of what took place in Nyerere's Ujamaa villages, where members communally engaged in agricultural production. This sequence acting as the main grounding thread is cut with images of the artists in different settings and attire (i.e. construction, military, street clothes) performing forms of labor.

These images in the music video capture the song's main theme which is centered on repositioning Black youth in society through the act of reimagining

nation-building and the social categorization of Wahuni. This is because the identities of Black youth being aligned with nation-building changed due to the economic crisis and ideological shifts in the 1970s. In the Tanzanian context, nation-building was associated with labor, which meant that the identity of Black youth was defined through that fixed lens. The positioning of Black youth in this manner was fueled by Nyerere's expansionist policies, which primarily focused on agricultural production and the public sector controlled by the government. While Nyerere's policies triggered a period of increased economic activity and employment, a large portion of the population was unable to participate. Therefore, Black youth were forced to engage in forms of employment outside of the state apparatus, which fueled a situation where those operating in the informal economy became socially categorized and identified as Wahuni.

While this form of identifying Black youth has its roots in colonial state laws, it was further expanded upon in Nyerere's Tanzania. When examining Tanzania's state laws post-independence, Joe Lugalla argues that a section entitled "Idle and Disorderly Persons," gave the state power to imprison and remove people from public spaces if they were not legally employed.[87] Lugalla, notes that "in practise it means that a person who is unemployed, and is actively seeking employment but cannot get one, is a criminal according to this law."[88] These laws were implemented because

[87] Joe L. P. Lugalla, "The State, Law and Urban Poverty in Tanzania," *Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 22, no. 2 (1989): 133, https://doi.org/10.5771/0506-7286-1989-2-131.
[88] Lugalla, 133.

Black youth who operated in informal economies, subverted official state control and surveillance. To deal with this issue, Nyerere launched operations like "Nguvu Kazi" that forcefully removed unemployed Black youth from Dar es Salaam and put them in work camps because they were deemed to be enemies of the state, that represented disorder that disrupted his vision of Ujamaa (socialism) and Tanzanian nationhood.[89] Since the government feared losing control of Dar es Salaam, such brutal operations allowed them to capture Black youth into the state's gaze and integrate them into society by asserting a sense of order and shaping the city in their own vision aligned with their nation-building agendas.

For these reasons, the position of Black youth in Tanzanian society has always been in constant limbo due to the fact there isn't much room for other modes of existing in the nation besides being viewed as a legal worker or Wahuni. The music video "Wanaume Kazini" attempts to merge these two forms of identifications available to Black youth as a strategy to showcase that they can be embodied together at the same time. This is presented through the use of pseudo-documentary style techniques, where the artists engage in various forms of labor in real-life locations. This process is achieved through merging the two forms of identification (i.e. worker, Wahuni) forced on Black youth, conveying that both could be embodied at the same time in a way that is tied to their contemporary environment. Xavier Livermon's notion of remastery in his assessment of how Black youth in post-apartheid South Africa's kwaito scene practice freedom is useful here. This practice involves the

[89] Lugalla, 141.

ability to "signify differently in a context that is not so dif-ferent after all."[90] For Livermon, this means performing alternative ways of being within the realities and dominant order of state power, capitalism, heteronormativity.

The act of remastering in "Wanaume Kazini" is performed using disjunctive editing. According to Carol Vernallis predominately music videos utilize disjunctive editing, resulting in not presenting seamless chronological order. Vernallis suggests that "music video's disjunctive editing keeps us within the ever-changing surface of the song. Though such edits may create a momentary sense of disequilibrium, they force the viewer to focus on musical and visual cues, allowing the viewer to regain a sense of orientation."[91] In the case of "Wanaume Kazini," Vernallis viewpoint doesn't quite fit so smoothly. This is due to the fact that her assessment of the role of disjunctive editing is rooted in Eurocentric perceptions about the function and purpose of cinematic techniques in music videos. In addition, Vernallis's analysis of the music video as a medium does not center the global south. With that being said, disjunctive editing for "Wanaume Kazini" plays a different role that is more concerned with constructing a possibility of intertwining the worker and Wahuni identity. This results in the identities taking on a new meaning, where Wahuni becomes a category that is aligned with Tanzania's nation-building project making it a part of the national identity just like the legal worker.

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[90]Livermon, *Kwaito Bodies : Remastering Space and Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, 11.
[91] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video : Aesthetics and Cultural Context*, 29.

This is significant because it is a direct reflection of the political and economic transformations sparked in the 1970s-90s in the country. To illustrate, Julius Nyerere stepping down from power resulted in the state shifting to a multi-party system and reversing his Ujamaa policies. While it established the emergence of neoliberalism, paving the way for globalization, expanding consumerism (i.e. cultural goods), access to foreign music styles and technologies, it triggered a crucial ideological shift in Tanzanian dominant culture.

Since Tanzania was formed under Nyerere's Ujamaa ideology and Arusha Declaration, the nation-state was built on a system of self-reliance geared towards nation building through authoritarian practices. According to May Joseph, these modes of governance produced citizens who "would devote their services to the sovereign nation… Ujamaa's logic of sacrificing individual desire on the altar of public good was intended to achieve a radical delinking in the present while laying the foundation for a more egalitarian and self-reliant society in the future."[92] In addition, any aspect of culture, particularly linked to the construction of identity was controlled and heavily policed by the government. This meant an individual could not exercise their desire to perform different identities in society because it would go against the ideologies of the state. For Joseph, such an ideological space made it difficult for Black youth to imagine alternative forms of being because Ujamaa did not allow it. Nevertheless, she finds that beginning in the 1970s youth rebelled

[92] May. Joseph, *Nomadic Identities : The Performance of Citizenship*, Public Worlds ; v. 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 40.

through covertly engaging and consuming in Black western cultures (i.e. soul music, cinema) which introduced them to different ideologies not dictated by the state.[93] While this is linked to the political and economic collapse at the time, I believe Tanzanains desired a transformation, where they could perform differently as citizens since Ujamaa's ideological framework and the state made it difficult for such articulations to take place. Because of this, the resignation of Nyerere and the shift away from Ujamaa ideology created a situation where youth had the ability to reimagine themselves, influenced by the Black diaspora, modernism, wider access to music, technology, cultural practices, and alternative modes of self-formation.

This is the context that birthed the Bongo Flava genre and particularly the logic of the Tanzanian music video utilized in "Wanaume Kazini," literally grounded in reshaping ideology. Music video becomes an effort to merge the identifications of legal worker and Wahuni together. Since the merging of the identities is happening between the post-Nyerere in the 1980s and mid-2000s, its evident the video is influenced from Black diasporic practices in reimaginging them, especially in the construction of Wahuni. This is due to the fact that Bongo Flava is influenced by U.S. hip hop, which is a medium by which marginalized people navigate their worlds. Furthermore, U.S. hip hop gives Black youth the ability to construct alternative identities for themselves in order to sustain a sense of existence and community. Because of this, "Wanaume Kazini" borrows from U.S. hip hop's gangsta rap genre, particularly its gangsta identity to reformulate the concept of Wahuni. "Wahuni" is

[93] Joseph, 40.

linked to gangsta performances in U.S. gangsta rap in a couple of ways. The first has to do with the way in which Black youth are perceived to be criminals and a source of anxiety in society that disrupt order. Secondly, "Wahuni" also carries similar qualities found in gangsta performances in U.S. gangsta rap by acting as a mechanism for voicing the experiences of oppressed Black youth and a rebelling force against a violent system that alienates and forces them into social death status.[94] Therefore, "Wahuni" as a social category and identity registers as a form of gangsta performativty in the Tanzanian context. However, within the Bongo Flava genre "Wahuni" is not portrayed as violent or nihilistic which are prevalent aspects of U.S. gangsta rap. This is not to dismiss the productive aspects of nihilism in gangsta rap, which Nick De Genova suggests as a radical device opens up the possibility for freedom and dismantling hegemonic oppressive systems.[95] With that said, I believe gangsta performativity is infused in Bongo Flava Wahuni identity formation because it is connected to similar conditions that Black youth experience in Tanzania: extreme marginalization, violence, and struggling for power which they are denied in society. Furthermore, I think the impulse for utilizing gangsta performativity within Bongo Flava is because Black youth were seeking a way to voice their harsh realities and

[94] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise : Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Music/Culture (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 21, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=45315&site=ehost-live.

[95] Nick De Genova, "Gangster Rap and Nihilism in Black America: Some Questions of Life and Death," *Social Text*, no. 43 (1995): 90, https://doi.org/10.2307/466628.

transform Wahuni into a productive way of identifying that has power and can be a mode of resistance - which past generations couldn't really do under a Ujamaa state.

The ability for Black youth to utilize Black diasporic forms of identity performativity and cultural practices in expanding their self-making and self-actualization was easier in the post-Nyerere landscape, which "Wanaume Kazini" illustrates well. The strategy of weaving Wahuni and gangsta performativity is intended for imagining the productive aspects of performing those identities in Tanzania. It's an act of signaling solidarity and shared community with the Black diaspora but also challenging and reinterpreting how Black youth are positioned in society. At the same time, "Wanaume Kazini" is not truly meant to challenge how citizens are identified (i.e. legal worker, Wahuni) but rather attempts to restore and rehabilitate Black youth into the nation-building agenda in the post-Nyerere landscape. As a consequence, "Wanaume Kazini" does not offer alternative modes of being that would extensively counter how Black youth are positioned by the nation-state. Instead, the video positions Black youth as productive nation-building citizens, who are meant to use their labor, bodies, and performances of identity in a manner that does not disrupt order or dominant ideologies.

The music video "Wanaume Kazini" is a representation of showcasing the process of Black youth attempting to reimagine themselves (even if it's aligned with dominant culture) and shines light on urban realities. Nonetheless, the video does not present a full picture of actual dynamics found in the lives of Black youth, especially ones centered on shifting away from forming identities tethered to dominant culture.

Furthermore, the video only has a representation of men, reproducing the notion that Black women are not positioned in a similar binary (i.e. legal worker vs Wahuni), negotiating urban environments, and more importantly engaging in the work of identifying themselves differently in Tanzania.

In order to understand the efforts of Black women countering how they are positioned in Tanzanian society, it is key to keep in mind that Ujamma constructed specific gender roles for men and women differently. According to Priya Lal, Black women's identities were structured around national familyhood through a socialist villagization agenda outlined in Nyerere's Arusha Declaration. [96] Lal points out that under Ujamaa policies, Black women were positioned as mothers, who took care of their families and the nation.[97] As an example, Lal says that the state organization *Umoja Wa Wanawake wa Tanganyika* (UWT) developed initiatives directed to women in order to 'inoculate them in 'modern' methods of childcare and housekeeping' fixed on developing the state and not actually liberating them.[98] This is because Ujamaa policies were not intended to challenge patriarchy or change conceptions of gender roles, but rather reinforced them at an ideological and institutional level. To further complicate how Black women were positioned in the state, they were viewed as representing and embodying Tanzanian dominant culture. This resulted in a great deal of anxiety surrounding the role women played in society,

[96] Priya Lal, "MILITANTS, MOTHERS, AND THE NATIONAL FAMILY: 'UJAMAA', GENDER, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN POSTCOLONIAL TANZANIA," *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 1 (2010): 1–20.
[97] Lal, 7.
[98] Lal, 7.

triggering government campaigns like Operation *Vijana* that deployed militants in places like Dar es Salaam and other urban areas to brutalize and arrest young Black women wearing make up, miniskirts, and even wigs.[99] Since these items represent Western capitalist culture, the state actively attempted to eliminate and police them, because they disrupted fixed notions of gender roles and identity forced upon Black women for implementing a socialist vision of the nation. Through actively performing alternative identity formations and challenging gender roles, Black women are central to countering dominant cultural ideological frameworks.

Because of this, "Wanaume Kazini" operates as a music video that is a nostalgic Black male fantasy about Ujamaa's past, where Black women were supposed to be subordinate, a symbol for the nation, and being mothers. Moreover, as a fantasy the music video constructs a visual world where Black men are reconnecting to Ujamaa in order to rebuild and save the nation–which almost is a mechanism for placing the blame for its original failure on the actions of Black women. This becomes a dangerous and problematic fantasy since the music video does not highlight how Ujamaa was a system not designed to positively uplift and change Black women's lives. As a music video in the contemporary landscape, it ignores the fact that Tanzania is a different world since Nyerere's inception and does not take into account how Black women navigate life and mold ways of being not dictated through patriarchy or hegemonic ideologies.

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[99] Andrew M. (Andrew Michael) Ivaska, *Cultured States : Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam*, E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 39.

Towards Alternative Representations of Identity

The next section explores the music videos of Black women artists and their active role in presenting alternative forms of identity and gender that expand the ways in which contemporary Tanzanians re-imagine themselves even with constraints from the state and society more broadly. The section begins with Bongo Flava artist Zay B who was active in the early 2000s who really touches on Black women urban experiences and opening up the possibilities for identifying differently shifting away from nation-building frameworks. Afterwards, I examine Bongo Flava artist Rosa Ree, who has been in the scene since ~2015, resembling modern day rappers like Nicki Minaj and Cardi B.

In tracing the representation of Black women in the Bongo Flava music video realm, I turn to the artist Zay B and their video "Monica," as an example that showcases the shift away from constructing music videos with nation-building messages. "Monica," is one of the earliest music videos from the 2000s visibly showing the process of Black women actively exercising identities not defined through Black men, Ujamaa, and state policies. The music video is further grounded in highlighting Black women's experiences and urban realities in the contemporary space, rather than being tied to a nostalgic past order like TMK Wanaume's "Wanaume Kazini." As a result, "Monica" shines a critical light on how Black youth are engaged in countering dominant culture through practicing alternative ways of being that are in-tune for their own survival, modes of self-expression, and more conducive for their changing worlds.

To illustrate these points, Zay B deploys a feminist framework in the music video to explore ‘‘Black female popular pleasure and public presence by privileging Black female subjectivity and Black female experience," which gives voice to Black women especially those from poor marginalized communities.[100] Zay B accomplishes this by borrowing from hip hop Black feminist practices meant to give Black women the power to express themselves in a way that challenges fixed notions of identity, gender, sexuality, and pleasure.

As an example, Zay B's fashion choices is a practice that engages and expands modes of representation for Black women in the Tanzanian context, as she uses U.S. hip hop fashions that like baggy pants and timberland boots register as masculine. As a strategy, Zay B highlights how Black women engage in practices of self-identification that move beyond how they are positioned in society. This is further propelled by the music video's narrative that focuses on a Black women's urban experiences, which plays with the viewers' perceptions and nation's expectations of Black women.

The narrative of the music video "Monica," revolves around a Black woman who is kicked out of her parents house due to failing school and no longer putting up with physical and verbal abuse. She ends up in the city with her friend Monica who

[100] Tricia Rose, Black Noise : Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America , Music/Culture
(Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994),182
https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=45315&site=ehost-live.

gives her tips on navigating the realities of urban life in order to survive. With no money or legal job prospects, Monica helps her find potential sugar daddies for some form of financial support to make it easier to navigate city life. In the process, she becomes pregnant and has an abortion that nearly kills her. Structurally, the music video centers on Zay B rapping in first person telling this Black woman's painful story while video sequences operate as flashbacks that capture her experiences. These sequences span different settings like bars, hotels, busy streets, inside cars, stores, offices, operating as scenes that showcase Black urban everyday life.

The music video is a representation of modern Black women shattering the illusion of how dominant culture positions them by offering experiences more in tune with their everyday realities. As the narrative in the music video develops, it is clear that it questions popular gender roles and identities forced on Black women because they do not reflect their contemporary life experiences. In doing so, the music video begins the work of providing a more diverse depiction of Black women not fixated on how patriarchy and the nation imagines them to be.

Because of this, the music video presents Tanzanian Black life not firmly centered on engaging in labor for nation-building purposes nor presenting the social categorization of Wahuni as something that needs to be rehabilitated into wider society for producing good citizens. Instead, “Monica” is about negotiating the implications of Ujamaa (i.e. on an ideological, political, economic, and social scale) and navigating the aftermath of Tanzania transitioning into a hybrid regime that’s also pivoted to liberalism and capitalism. The video captures the way in which Black

youth attempt to survive and remake themselves in a world where ongoing forms of oppression (e.g. displacement, policing, patriarchy) and crises outside of their control (e.g. no access to employment, education, class) shape their new realities. Furthermore, the music video sheds light on performances Black youth engage in order to exercise acts of freedom. In this case, finding ways of being and belonging in a contemporary Tanzania even when it's tethered to biopolitical disciplinary methods and cultural hegemony that attempts to maintain notions of order and normality.

For these reasons, "Monica" highlights the continued trend of Black women engaging in the work of reimagining what it means to be a modern Tanzanian. In today's current landscape, a leading force is Bongo Flava female artist Rosa Ree, who in 2019 was banned from making music and touring by the Tanzania Music Regulatory Board (TMRB) for six-months for her music video "Vitamin U" that has depictions of sexual acts.[101] This is because TMRB ruled that Ree went against the nation's morals and did not depict values that are aligned with dominant culture. While Ree could be read as a controversial figure, I am drawn to the way she constructs identities that allows for a wider articulation for how Black youth perceive themselves in Tanzanian society. Ree models herself on U.S. hip hop artists Nicki Minaj, Rihanna, and Cardi B in an effort to challenge respectability politics that are dictated by hegemonic forces meant to control and police Black youth for the

[101] SDE, "Rosa Ree Slapped with a Six-Month Ban over Steamy 'Vitamin U' Video," 2019, https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/entertainment/african-news/2001349531/rosa-ree-slapped-with-a-six-month-ban-over-steamy-vitamin-u-video.

purposes of either integrating or excluding them in society as legal citizens. Because of this, Ree is under constant state surveillance since her performances of identity trouble gender roles.

In Ree's music videos, her performances shift between being an independent boss Black woman, an unconstrained and free hypersexual Black woman, queer Black woman, traditional and normative Black woman as depicted in the popular imagination. Through performing such expanded identities, Ree reflects the identity formations that are connected to practices of Black youth in society, geared towards pushing against forces that attempt to control how they represent themselves. Ree's performances further highlight the break away from the labor/ Wahuni binaries formed by the state's imagination, showcasing that Tanzanian people are much more complex. This is due to the fact that current forms of identity formations are centered around desire and pleasure, connected to materialism, consumerism, capitalism, embracing the flow of global cultures and ideologies fostering alternative modes of being and belonging in the nation.

To return to "Vitamin U," Ree was banned because the music video actually explores the possibilities of Black youth engaging in sexual desire and pleasure. As a process, Ree disrupts the state's construction of Black women's identity: representing the collective symbol of the nation-state. In doing so, she sparked a debate on body politics in the Tanzanian contemporary space. In this instance, the music video came out (~2019) during a time when the country seemed to be taking a deeper authoritarian turn and channeling Nyerere's Ujamaa vision of nation-building. At the

center of the debate was the question of Black women's bodies and how they can best serve the Tanzanian state. At a public rally in 2018, President Magufuli told women to stop using birth control because the nation needed to increase its population. He is quoted in a Tanzanian newspaper saying "I have traveled to Europe and I have seen the effects of birth control. In some countries they are now struggling with declining populations. They have no labor force."[102] Furthermore, he highlights that birth control is an evil plot by foreign and corrupt forces. In that same year, Tanzania's parliament outlawed women in government from wearing fake fingernails, eyelashes, jeans, and short dresses in further attempts to control their bodies.[103]

In this vein, the President's comments and policies targeting Black women's bodies, are an attempt to return to a kind of legible formation of identity through the reinforcement of policies meant to control the population and orient them towards a past Ujamaa order of nation-building. This is because current performances of identity from Black youth are not legible through the eyes of the state since they trouble the formation of a national identity which hinders the practice of power. Since Tanzania's nationalist framework is grounded on strict roles of gender and identity, alternative manifestations of them are viewed as a threat. Therefore, resulting in the

[102] CNN, "Don't Use Birth Control,' Magufuli Tells Tanzania Women," September 12, 2018, https://citizen.digital/news/dont-use-birth-control-magufuli-tells-tanzania-women-211848/.
[103] Marilynn Manuel, "Tanzanian Female MPs Banned from Wearing False Lashes, Fake Nails or Excessive Makeup in Parliament," September 25, 2018, https://www.news24.com/w24/Work/Jobs/tanzanian-female-mps-entering-parliament-banned-from-wearing-false-lashes-fake-nails-or-excessive-makeup-20180925.

expansion of policing and surveillance of Black youth. This generates a dangerous situation where suspected alternative performances of identity are seen as corrupt forces and quickly used as scapegoats for issues that arise in society.

While this is a complicated scenario, artists like Rosa Ree and today's Black youth continue to strategically perform alternative identities, as an act of exercising freedom and not abiding to a system that oppresses them. In the music video "Vitamin U" Ree builds a space to engage in desire and pleasure, using the Black body for exploring sexual acts. In doing so, her work challenged the idea that the Black body is only meant to engage in manual labor. Furthermore, the music video presents sex not as a transactional activity for nation-building purposes, but one where Black people can find desire and pleasure individually or with their respective partners.

The "Vitamin U" music video takes place in a domestic setting, where Ree and a male rapper named Timmy T Dat are largely naked engaging in foreplay in various parts of the home. The shots in the video range between medium shots and close ups that focus  on capturing the action and beauty of the Black body. In each shot, the camera invites the viewer to witness moments of intimacy, where Black bodies are engaging in touch and sex. This is a different representation of the use of Black bodies in the Tanzanian context that view them disciplined objects for building the nation. The images of Black bodies in the music video cause moral panic because they perform in a way that disrupts the state and social logic of how to be in

Tanzanian society: disciplined, constrained, sacrificing for the greater good of the nation-state.

The music video further invites the viewer to confront their own repressed desires and pleasures not allowed to be expressed in society. I find this to be a contemporary strategy being used by other Tanzanian music video makers. This music video strategy is not aimed at restoring or reshaping the formation of identity to align with dominant cultural constructs. Instead, the goal is to make the audience witness a way of acting, feeling, and performing differently. As an intervention in the music video arena, this strategy certainly is imperfect because it reproduces hetronormative performances of identity.

However, keep in mind that we cannot totally disconnect from the context in which these Tanzanian music videos are operating in. In using this lens, it's possible to ascertain how music videos complicate hetronormative performances, even if they present outwardly as such. In particular, Singeli music videos construct hetronormative and patriarchal spaces but strategically reposition Black youth in a manner that offers alternative performances of identity that are linked with their urban environments and seeking pleasure oriented towards their everyday lives.

To illustrate, Singeli music videos are different from ones in Bongo Flava. First, Singeli music videos do not present grand narratives of nation-building, invest in showcasing upper middle class desires, or heavily influenced by the global flows of capitalism and consumer popular culture. Second, the identities produced in Singeli music videos are deeply grounded in everyday social and cultural dynamics that stem

from urban life. Therefore, Singeli music videos require a different kind of reading because the performances of identity are not as easily legible, for example, like Rosa Rees. This is because performances of identity in Singeli music videos do not revolve on popular persona's (e.g. Boss lady, Gangster, Rich rapper) as directly as Bongo Flava.

Rather, Singeli music videos produce localized performances of identity grounded in the experiences of the poor Black class and Black neighborhoods where Black youth predominately live. It is important to situate Singeli music videos in this way because while they circulate globally (via YouTube and social media), they are tailored to speak to and connect more deeply with local audiences. Thus, Singeli music videos redirect attention to how Black youth at a local level engage in the process of self-realization and practices of freedom not dictated by the dominant culture. At the core of this process is situating Singeli music videos in local urban spatial geographies as a mechanism for conveying how people experience and make sense of their worlds.

Since a significant amount of Singeli music videos are shot in public locations in Black neighborhoods, they tend to replicate vigodoro parties. Often, shoots attract large groups of people who watch the filming, and even participate in the video, before continuing on their everyday lives. It is in these local geographies that Singeli music videos carve out a space for fostering and experimenting with reshaping performances of identity that are accompanied by melodramatic stories viewers connect with.

To explore this point, Singeli artist Meja Kunta's music video "Mamu" is located in familiar settings (e.g. streets, bars, markets) within Black neighborhoods. The music video's narrative has Meja performing as a man who tries to win back his wife after kicking her out due to experiencing a nervous breakdown triggered by the intense hardships of urban life. As he goes around the neighborhood asking his wife for forgiveness, the camera tracks him at various locations (i.e. bar, restaurant, streets), capturing his deteriorating state. In one scene, he is passed out drunk in an an open sewer at a busy street with people looking at him.

While the music video as a whole could be read as a reproduction of patriarchal order due to the narrative centering on a domestic dispute where a man aggressively kicks his wife out, simultaneously it also challenges hegemonic masculine performances that make it difficult for men to be vulnerable emotionally. Even though Singeli music videos do have images of marginalizing women and cater to privileging men, they disrupt the labor and Wahuni binary meant to dictate masculine identity and behavior even if it's being regulated through dominant cultural ideologies that attempt to exclude alternative modes of existing in the nation.

Meja's performance is one that showcases a vulnerability, quite the opposite of the dominant formation of masculinity, where Black men are portrayed as tough, emotionless, mentally strong, even between the labor and Wahuni binary. In witnessing a Black man having a mental breakdown in the music video, with his world shattering around him,  speaks to the real life struggles Black people experience daily caused by extreme forms of marginalization forcing them to be in a

constant mode of survival. The narrative in the music video is designed to capture the trauma Black youth endure from not having access to vital resources in order to enhance their lives. In addition, the music video complicates the viewing and positioning of Black youth through the labor and Wahuni binary because the framing does not shed light on the sort of performative outcomes produced on the ground from life being complex, tense, unstable, and full of uncertainty.

According to AbdouMaliq Simone,

For many urban residents [in African cities], life is reduced to a state of emergency. What this means is that there is a rupture in the organization of the present. Normal approaches are insufficient. What has transpired in the past threatens the sustenance of well-being at the same time as it has provided an inadequate supply of resources in order to deal with this threat. Emergency leaves no time for accounting, no time to trace out the precise etiology of the crisis, for the sequence of causation is suspended in the urgency of a moment where recklessness may be as important as caution.[104]

For Simone, state emergency doesn't necessarily translate into complete despair. He views it as a process that fuels ways of thinking and practices, even if they may be unstable.[105] In addition, those who experience a state of emergency set in "motion a specific way of seeing, of envisioning the environment that will inform how people,

[104] A. M. (Abdou Maliqalim) Simone, *For the City yet to Come : Changing African Life in Four Cities*, E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.
[105] Simone, 5.

things, places, and infrastructure will be used."[106] In this lens, Singeli music videos are situated in a reality, where Black people struggle daily to survive in a context where the past, present, and future is determined through the logic and structures in society that are designed for exclusion. Thus, Singeli music videos reveal how Black people negotiate through life to generate possibilities for themselves and actively engage in forms of performativity that disrupt and renegotiate notions of identity closely associated with real-life experiences found in the daily lives of Black youth. Even though Singeli music videos do this through blending elements of fiction and non-fiction to construct narratives, they operate as a vehicle for broadcasting an alternative that pushes against popular notions of being in Tanzanian society that are oriented towards assimilating to middle class desires and being disciplined by state power.

The music video "Mamu," showcases the everyday relationship between Black people and the oppressive social, political, economic structures that govern them. This is accomplished through a framework of showing the ongoing ripple effects of extreme hardship and mental instability fueled by conditions which everyday people negotiate daily. Thus, producing performances of identity that are shaped by the environment and on the ground context that centers on people's actual real life experiences. This type of performativity that is captured in the "Mamu" music video that directly borrows from real life scenarios I believe is linked to navigating a world already in disorder triggered by colonialism with political elites

[106] Simone, 5.

and higher classes practicing new forms of exploitation, exclusion, and marginalization.

In this environment, Singeli music videos construct narratives that convey the effects of living in a condition of disorder but also show how Black people remaster their realities. This process recognizes that oppressive power structures, dominant cultural ideologies, inequality perhaps are not going to change per se, but there is still agency to build alternative pathways that are resistant, defiant, trouble, and even intersect alongside them in order to carve out a possibility for people to exist in their own terms. This is where different performances of identity reveal themselves and the reason why Singeli music videos differ from other genres like Bongo Flava in Tanzania because they do not purely reject or push against dominant ideologies, power, and structures, but rather work within them.

Meja Kunta's performance liberates and troubles notions of normalcy in Tanzania because it represents disorder. Tanzanian ideas around normalcy have always been shaped by Ujamaa's Arusha Declaration policy, an ideological doctrine focused on self-reliance and rooted in defining how people act and the roles they occupy in society. Furthermore, its implementation requires fixed performances of gender and identity for a sense of normalcy and order to operate effectively. However, the Arusha Declaration and more broadly its governing laws and policies, do not take into consideration that people will perform differently due to oppressive conditions and extreme forms of exclusion on a structural and societal level. Therefore, a person that shows any form of vulnerability or erratic mental behavior

and distress conflicts with the notion of normalcy. Because such actions represent disorder, they have contributed to fueling policies like “Idle and Disorderly Persons” and operations similar to Operation Vijiji as strategies for rehabilitating people through strict definitions of normalcy and order to become productive members of society. Of course, the problem here is that they do not address or fix the root causes that create vulnerable populations in the first place.

In today's contemporary landscape, structural conditions on a local and national level that foster inequality, exclusion, and extreme poverty, are largely addressed through police raids that put vulnerable people in detention centers. As Sheryl L. Buske notes, these tactics in Tanzania have replaced the serious care and protection people require, because they are viewed as being weak and not taking responsibility for themselves to better their situation in society.[107] Therefore, they need to be removed from urban spaces and hidden from the public. These actions are justified with Tanzania’s vagrancy laws that stem from colonial rule, which give police the power to conduct massive and wide-scale arrests at any given moment.[108]

To further situate how the state exerts power to restore order and the kind of ripple effects it produces, I highlight briefly the practice of the government demolishing informal settlements around the country and especially in the city of Dar es Salaam. For example, in 2015 there was an incident in the neighborhoods near

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[107] Sheryl Buske, “A Case Study in Tanzania: Police Round-Ups and Detention of Street Children as a Substitute for Care and Protection,” *South Carolina Journal of International Law and Business*, 4, 8, no. 1 (n.d.): 125, https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/scjilb/vol8/iss1/4/.
[108] Buske, 88.

Msimbazi river, a prime location in the city, where authorities demolished over 1,000 houses which resulted in the displacement of approximately 10,000 people.[109] These demolitions are positioned as tactics to combat climate change (i.e. flash flooding) and to eliminate informal housing settlements.

The intensity of the demolition and aftermath are captured in a Slum Dwellers International data report, that reads:

Some residents dispersed, relocating outside of the neighborhood or finding space with their extended family who lived in neighboring areas. However, some residents have no alternative. These families moved away from the area in the day but returned at night and slept among the rubble. The difficulties are immense. Some families have suffered further. One man died from stress as he watched his house being torn down. A woman was forced to sleep out with her two month child who subsequently died. Since the injunction was secured, some families have built corrugated iron shacks in the wasteland that the government has created.[110]

This report illustrates the conditions created by state power but also highlights how bodies can forcefully be displaced and spaces can be destroyed if they are not legally recognized. The report further elaborates: "People were phoned at work by their neighbors to be told that their homes were being taken down. Tenants and resident landowners had their belongings crushed with the buildings. Food, clothes,

[109] "Evictions Continue to Wreak Havoc in Dar Es Salaam," March 9, 2016, https://sdinet.org/2016/03/destroying-lives-evictions-in-dar-es-salaam/.
[110] "Evictions Continue to Wreak Havoc in Dar Es Salaam."

documents… were all destroyed."[111] In a reality where people are in a constant state of emergency, navigating unpredictable chaos, crisis, and limbo, triggers everyday performances of being and identity that push the boundaries of normality in Tanzanian society.

The music video "Mamu" does not directly present such extreme examples of becoming unhinged or experiencing the destruction of power that I have touched upon. However, Kunta playing someone who navigates through intense conditions which triggers a mental episode with references to real, everyday situations where people break down because they are truly pushed to the limit in attempting to survive. This music video is significant because it shows that the rigid definition of masculinity given to Black men does not align with their real life experiences and worlds. While any behavior or expression outside the dominant practice of masculinity registers as Wahuni and even kichaa (i.e. crazy), they become a process that speaks to the extreme conditions people endure in their daily lives and more importantly generates a form of *disorder* troubling fixed notions of order and being in Tanzania.

While I touched on urban environments in assessing Meja Kunta's music video in relation to representing vulnerable masculine identities and the state of crisis associated with contemporary urban life, in the next section I will focus on the significance of Singeli music videos' representations of urban spaces as a strategic element for articulating alternative identities and belonging for Black youth.

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[111] "Evictions Continue to Wreak Havoc in Dar Es Salaam."

Urban Place and Space

The concept of urban space is a crucial element in Singeli, being that it is a genre borne from the Black neighborhoods of Dar es Salaam. Often, the songs of Singeli artists center on narrating experiences associated with negotiating urban life and navigating through a terrain of urban environments. Because of this, Singeli music videos are largely set in urban spaces and are key devices in constructing narratives for songs. At the same time, urban spaces in Singeli music videos operate to convey social connections, cultural practices, and more importantly shape identity. For Jada Watson, a person's relationship to their geographical spatial environment is essential to expressing and forming their identity to place. In direct relation to music, it "plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings."[112] In this vein, music videos utilize spaces as settings to advance a song's particular theme, even pushing or countering messages tied to social, cultural and geographical dynamics.

Watson further suggests that places and spaces in music videos are "not merely a setting for a music video, but also a defining element and even an active participant in complex narratives about a region's community, traditions, practices, and culture."[113] For example, Murray Forman argues the representation and

[112] Jada Watson, "Rural-Urban Imagery in Country Music Videos: Identity, Space, and Place," in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Popular Music Video Analysis*, ed. Lori Burns and Stan Hawkins (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 279.
[113] Watson, 280.

exploration of place and space in hip hop is important because it conveys the way people experience and make sense of their world. Forman elaborates that spatial articulations in hip hop generate an understanding of how "urban black youths imagine their environments and the ways that they relate those images to their own individual sense of self."[114] Within this framework, place and space are essential for sustaining Black youth in terms of providing identity, community, and modes of belonging. Most importantly, they provide pathways for Black life to survive.[115]

Therefore, spatial representation in Singeli music videos functions as a strategy to show that places and spaces Black youth navigate daily are real and not abstract in form. It is also a mechanism conveying that Black places and spaces matter, especially in the context where Black neighborhoods are demolished and policed by state agents, destroyed by climate change, or reconfigured through aggressive urban development schemes tied to global capitalism. Such scenarios create a situation where Black places and spaces are constantly under threat of erasure and Black life becomes despatialized. [116] Of course, my focus here is not to dive into the ways in which Black places and spaces in Dar es Salaam are rearranged, surveilled, and erased. However, in investigating Singeli music videos utilization of urban spaces it is important to keep those factors in mind. With that said, I largely

[114] Murray Forman, *The 'hood Comes First : Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, Music Culture (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 29.
[115] Camilla Hawthorne, "Black Matters Are Spatial Matters: Black Geographies for the Twenty-first Century," *Geography Compass* 13, no. 11 (July 5, 2019): 5, https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12468.
[116] Hawthorne, 1.

assess the ways in which urban settings in Singeli music videos are utilized to create, sustain, and represent Black places and spaces in all manners. This inquiry further keeps in mind the way Singeli music videos use urban settings is never ending and therefore my exploration simply provides a pattern I have witnessed in them more broadly.

To begin, let's start with Makaveli's music video called "Naikoki" featuring artist Salu with a simple set up, where the viewer is presented with different urban settings that provide a sense of the neighborhood the music video was filmed in. The music video opens up with a beautiful drone shot that reveals tightly packed buildings, then cuts to a panning shot of busy streets, until finally settling down on a shot of railroad tracks that pierce through the urban landscape. Throughout, the music video cuts to various locations (i.e. car wash, outdoor gym, barbershop, store) in the neighborhood. While the music video does not revolve around a narrative structure per se, it showcases local everyday spaces and places people in the neighborhood utilize.

I find this to be a significant pattern in Singeli music videos that use urban settings within neighborhoods; they do so to strategically connect with local viewers through presenting them places and spaces tied within their real world realities. The urban settings in Singeli music videos do not feel detached and out of reach in a manner tied to a fantasy world or being in a different geographical location. Instead, the urban settings in Singeli music videos are spaces which are accessible and situated in real worlds everyday consumers exist in. Therefore, viewers better connect

to the urban settings showcased in Singeli music videos because they actually navigate them in their real lives.

While space in general is abstract and a construct in form, Murray Forman suggests that it operates like a "product that is shaped by human agency and the subsequent social practices that occur within a given frame of action or within a range of human relationships."[117] Forman points out that examining "space" also requires keeping in mind how it's linked to hegemonic order and logic of power and capitalism in terms of the ways in which it organizes people's lives, spatial arrangements, the formation of social and cultural practices.[118] Because of this, the creation and control of space becomes highly contested.

In Forman's work, he argues that space matters because artists engage in "narrative descriptions of urban conditions involve active attempts to express how individuals or communities in these locales live, how the microworlds they constitute are experienced, or how specifically located social relationships are negotiated."[119] In this vein, space is vital because it dictates the sort of modes of existence people embody and experience in their lives. This is also tied to the way in which space is structured (e.g. power, order, class, apartheid) and how everyday people attempt to survive and exercise autonomy to form techniques of existing.

Forman finds that in the realm of hip hop, artists engage in spatial practices as a way to represent and "produce spaces of their own making. This includes their

[117] Forman, *The 'hood Comes First : Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, 6.
[118] Forman, 6.
[119] Forman, 8.

enunciation of patterns of circulation and mobility, the renaming of neighborhoods and thoroughfares; the specific reference to city sites, including nightclubs, subway stops, and so on; and the 'claiming' of space that makes existence, no matter how bleak or brutal."[120] In this framing the presentation of urban environments in Singeli music videos, especially one's situated in Black neighborhoods is a strategy for showing the existence of Black youth and spaces. Thus, Singeli music videos operate as a form that pushes against systems of oppression that attempt to erase and control Black urban spaces. In addition, Singeli music videos contribute to sustaining culture, identity, social relationships, sense of belonging and community.

For example, in Singeli artist Mzee Wa Bwax's music video "Kisimu Changu" presents a narrative where a character gets his cell phone stolen (due to being a drinker and weed smoker who falls asleep in the streets) and navigates the terrain of urban spaces in search of it. Simultaneously, the music video reflects on the importance of having a cell phone to navigate urban life in Dar es Salaam. From a spatial analysis, "Kisimu Changu" really is about highlighting the urban spaces that form social relationships and community, where local people gather to seek pleasure, rest, and briefly escape hardships in their everyday lives. Several scenes in the music video follows the character essentially bar hopping at these makeshift informal places throughout Black neighborhoods and spaces (e.g. street corner, under a tree, store) where everyday people simply hang out at. In particular a sequence (1:27-1:42) where the character drinks and smokes with people I find significant for a couple of reasons.

[120] Forman, 8.

The first has to do with the fact that in that sequence (1:27-1:42) Mzee Wa Bwax raps "I say let me stop alcohol, what will I drink with you guys? If I say let me stop weed, what will I drink with you guys? Homies drop your stuff and engage in pleasure." This line accompanied with images of people drinking and smoking is important because it pushes against Tanzanian laws and ideological moral beliefs that perceive idle/restful bodies as illegal, since they are not engaged in forms of labor. The act of showing people not working through the making of spaces that foster pleasure and leisure, contributes to the ways in which Black youth defy order and practice freedom through producing opportunities to experience life and time the way they want.

The second aspect about that sequence that I also find throughout "Kisimu Changu" and a majority of Singeli music videos, is the presentation of places and spaces interwoven with actual local people (i.e. non music video actors). While I touched upon this point briefly in assessing Meja Kunta's music video "Mamu" due to the fact that Singeli music videos are predominantly shot in public locations, additionally provides viewers a deeper, intimate connection tied to people and spaces they encounter in their everyday lives. This use of shooting music videos in public locations allow Singeli music videos to register as authentic and real representations of the urban spaces for Black youth. Because of this, Singeli music videos are largely not invested in presenting spaces through the lens of consumption and crafting upper middle-class desires and lifestyles of excess that are inaccessible to poor Black youth. As a result, Singeli music videos present urban spaces as mechanisms for sustaining survival, culture, pleasure, and identity formation.

Remixed Identities

Singeli music videos strategically remix identities that produce a more complicated understanding of being in Tanzanian society, subtly showing that modes of representation are not completely controlled by dominant culture. While the state and elite attempt to create fixed roles of identity grounded in nation-building, class, patriarchy, capitalism, moral values, Singeli music videos intervene through communicating images that push against such a hegemonic process. As a result, Singeli music videos show that culture in the Tanzanian context does not operate in a fixed or singular mode. Instead, there are many forms of culture that run parallel to or intersect with dominant forms as a way to survive but also destabilize them.

Singeli music videos become spaces where dominant ideologies are contested and contradictory ideas around identity are constantly at play. This is not necessarily a good or bad thing, but rather provides a perspective on how Black youth engage in practices of identity formation challenging popular perceptions of being an everyday modern Tanzanian, resulting in expressing and portraying themselves in a diverse manner.

As an example, in Singeli artist Dulla Makabila's music video "Ningekuwa Demu," the artist cross-dresses and imagines himself as a Black urban woman. Upon viewing, the music video easily reads as negatively portraying Black women as hypersexual deviant criminals. Yet the music video also invites the possibility of remixing gender and identity together, especially in a nation where there are rigid definitions of both. Since Tanzania has strict laws that target people who show

behavior outside what is considered natural and moral, the music video “Ningekuwa Demu" is unique in this light because it explores forbidden modes of practicing gender, identity, and sexuality in a manner that the Tanzania Music Regulatory Board has not banned or censored.

To note, the music video was not constructed to challenge policies that discriminate against people or operate as an advocacy piece. However, “Ningekuwa Demu” presents an alternative mode of gender and identity presentation, that is outlawed from the public and private sphere in Tanzanian society. How does the music video successfully accomplish this and evade censorship? Especially since signs of difference (i.e. gender, identity, sexuality) are heavily policed and targeted in the nation. Despite this, “Ningekuwa Demu” shows Dulla Makabila cross-dressing as a Black woman and engaging in same-sex forms of intimacy.

The music video is able to strategically convey these situations through positioning Dulla Makabila’s performance as cross-dressing comedy. While cross dressing is evident in other forms of Tanzanian media (e.g. Bongowood films, Television, Instagram, TikTok), I believe it’s role in popular music (i.e. Singeli) contributes to disrupting normativity and expanding notions of masculinity in Tanzania - which continue to rely on rigid definitions fueled by the state and dominant culture. In this particular context, I think that cross-dresssing in Makabila’s performance functions in an allegorical manner. While this may not have been it’s original intention, the music video manages to display and narrate a different way of being within the context of state power and local dynamics.

Through an allegorical approach, the music video brings to mind Fredric Jamesons' definition of national allegory, where "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society."[121] However, the music video does not directly fit Jamesons' framework because his viewpoint of how national allegory works is connected to making a commentary on postcolonialism, the effects of global capitalism, critiquing the state and power. Still, the music video does utilize concepts of gender and identity which are common allegorical tools used to examine and assess power and dominant ideologies in a nation.

Another aspect found in "Ningekuwa Demu" is the use of melodrama, which is a dominant strategy found in Singeli music videos. The use of melodrama stems from local experiences and is used as a device to represent a current view of Tanzanian society predominantly from the perspective of the poor Black class. The influence of melodrama in Singeli music videos is connected to Nollywood (Nigerian film industry), Bongowood (Tanzanian film industry), and the circulation of Asian films in the country. In assessing the contemporary African nation and urban environment, melodrama is a technique that many forms of African media use to explore the turmoil and uncertainty that African populations face in relation to constant shifts in political, economic, social, and ideological dynamics that determine their livelihoods and recognition as legal citizens.

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[121] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15, no. 15 (1986): 69, https://doi.org/10.2307/466493.

In examining the use of melodrama in Nigerian films, Brian Larkin argues that they are "a fantastic response to the insecurity and vulnerability of everyday life," while simultaneously critiquing the conditions of modernity and negotiating a world where the state has marginalized and abandoned vulnerable populations.[122] Therefore, revealing the structures ( i.e. political, economical, social, ideological) that oppress and control one's personhood in society. Larkin finds that this is accomplished in Nigerian films through using themes of corruption, poverty, love, witchcraft, and sexuality that are tied to everyday realities. They further present a fictional world of excess and pleasure within the melodrama format to connect with viewers and to depict contemporary Nigeria in a manner that state media does not.[123]

When more broadly applying melodrama to Singeli music videos, they are certainly not as intense, emotional, nor provide viewers with a direct message like in Nigerian films. However, melodrama is a tactic in Singeli music videos used to connect with viewers, showcasing everyday situations and realities that are not widely represented in Tanzanian media. As a result, showcasing the experiences found in the worlds of poor Black people, presenting ways of being the state attempts to ban, police, and destroy in Tanzanian society. This is the reason "Ningekuwa Demu" is an effective music video due to its ability to combine melodrama and queer allegory together, to highlight that a wide spectrum of gender, sexuality, and identity are at

[122] Brian. Larkin, *Signal and Noise : Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 172.
[123] Larkin, 171.

play in contemporary Tanzania even if they are publicly denied and made illegal by the state.

To illustrate, the music video is grounded in two sequences. The first is Dulla Makabila rapping about imagining himself as a Black woman. The second follows Dulla Makabila cross-dressed as a Black woman engaging in daily activities that revolve around shopping, partying, and hooking up with multiple men in a local neighborhood. These acts are shown through a series of close-up shots that allow the viewer to get a sense of Makabila's alternative reality as a Black woman in the urban Dar es Salaam landscape. I want to particularly focus on two scenes in the music video, where Makabila's character is in bed with a man (after sex) and hooking up with another in a dark alleyway at night. Even though we are to understand Makabila's character as a Black woman, I believe his performance produces multiple expressions of identity suppressed in Tanzanian society. In this case, Makabila's character uses cross-dressing and performance as a Black woman to challenge notions of hetronormative expression. In doing so, Makabila's character also operates as a vehicle for exploring same-sex desire and attempting to develop notions of masculinity that disrupt dominant frameworks of identity and sexuality. I find Makabila's performance significant within the context of strategically circulating alternative modes of representation through using the popular music genre Singeli and music video medium because it contributes to shifting Tanzanian culture. This viewpoint directly stems from Stuart Hall's framework of circuit of culture, particularly in terms of how representation and meaning is formed in our society. Hall

believes that culture is shaped through "shared meanings" constructed by images and language.[124] Therefore, current hegemonic notions about gender, identity, and sexuality within society can be challenged or disrupted through the act of presenting new forms of meaning and circulate them within the shared cultural space. Thus, citizens are exposed to new modes of representation or ways of being that are often repressed, hidden, or made illegal.

I believe that these alternative representations found in Singeli music videos are facilitated through the shifting landscape of mass media that has occurred in Tanzania more broadly. To illustrate, Tanzanian media has gone through three major phases. The first, the colonial phase, where media supported colonial policies and rule. The second, the socialist phase, where media centered on nation-building and Ujamaa ideologies. The third phase occurred after Nyerere stepped down due to a flow of disasters (economic, Uganda war, oil ) in the 1970s and 1980s, Tanzania shifting from a socialist nation to embracing a capitalist and neo-liberal system. This change resulted in the state no longer having full control of media institutions (e.g. Television, Radio, Recording Studios) and the ways in which content circulated in the country. In addition, everyday people gained access to media technologies (e.g. cell phones, recording equipment, computers, cameras) In this scenario, Tanzanains suddenly had greater control in dictating the role of media in their everyday lives and could become active participants in shaping or disrupting dominant culture as a

[124] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Culture, Media, and Identities (London; Sage in association with the Open University, 1997), 18.

whole. In the case of music artists specifically, they were able to access equipment to build independent studios and video recording technologies to create music videos outside the state apparatus. Currently, this process has vastly expanded for music artists with access to the internet, smartphones, and social media. They can now record music from anywhere, shoot a music video, instantly upload it to YouTube and social media platforms (e.g. instagram, tik tok) without easily being detected or surveilled by the government.

In this current landscape in Tanzania, the state has increased its efforts to control media. According to a United States Agency for International Development report entitled *Situation Of The Media In Tanzania Mainland,* government officials over the years have engaged in passing severe policies designed to give them greater power over the media environment in the state. The most strict laws so far have been the Tanzania Communication Regulation Authority Act (2003), Cyber Crimes and the Statistics Acts (2015), Media Services Act (2016), and Electronic and Postal Communications Regulations (2018).[125] These laws have restored power in the state to be able to control and surveille media in Tanzania. In fact, authorities can now fine and arrest citizens for content and use of media (e.g. blogs, radio, social media, technology) in a manner deemed a threat to the state. In addition, the government has the ability to ban social media apps and more broadly disrupt and disconnect access to the internet.[126]

[125] "Situation Of The Media in Tanzania Mainland" (USAID, May 12, 2021), 1, https://www.usaid.gov/documents/situation-media-tanzania-mainland.
[126] "Situation Of The Media in Tanzania Mainland," 15.

For example, in the 2020 Tanzanian presidential election access to internet and social media apps was shut down and deliberately interrupted.[127] While this is a clear human rights violation, in terms of denying citizens access to freedom of information, communication and modes of expression, it reveals a larger, ongoing, contested process of the overall non-linear multi-directional network steering the direction of the nation on a ideological and cultural level that will also play a role in reshaping what it means to be a modern Tanzanian. This raises a broader question of who has the power, the state or the population to determine which path Tanzania heads in. Of course, we cannot deny that in recent years Tanzania has become more authoritarian, especially with the recent passing of the controversial bill Basic Rights and Duties Act (2020) that gives full immunity to any members of government, allowing them to be above the constitution and legal parameters.[128] However, this does not mean that there hasn't been a rising pattern of resistance to Tanzania's authoritative moves. During the 2020 elections, there were oppositional protests, people fighting for their right to cast their vote. While their actions resulted in a brutal response by security forces that triggered violent clashes, massive arrests, torture, and death, it revealed a significant number of Tanzanian citizens imagine alternative

[127] "Tanzania Is Weaponizing Internet Shutdowns. Here's What Its People Have to Say," n.d., https://www.accessnow.org/tanzania-internet-shutdowns-victim-stories/.
[128] "Tanzania's Bill Amendments Grant Government Leaders Immunity from Prosecution," *African News Agency*, June 22, 2020, https://www.polity.org.za/article/tanzanias-bill-amendments-grant-government-leaders-immunity-from-prosecution-2020-06-22.

modes of freedom and liberation.[129] Media plays an important role in this process because it generates and facilitates the possibility for people to exchange, connect, and reproduce alternative ways of being. Furthermore, media has the potential to organize people that are attempting to counter oppression and imagine different modes of existing in the present. At the same time, it is also a tool states can use to their advantage to suppress any form of dissent or disorder to the dominant culture.

In relation to Singeli music videos, the shifting landscape of media in Tanzania makes it possible for artists like Dulla Makabila to release content that goes against dominant forms of identify in Tanzanian society due to the fact that any person at any given moment can create, post, share content without directly going through state institutions. Moreover, I believe that the state recognizes that over censoring Singeli artists in particular could potentially backfire due to their large influencing capabilities, since their fans and online followers are largely young and poor Black youth, who make up the majority of the population. This is because the state is aware of the potential power Singeli artists hold and the way the music movement more broadly can operate as a disrupting force. Therefore, the state aggressively attempts to integrate Black youth into its new vision of making Tanzania great again, connected to nation-building, even if it has taken a dangerous authoritarian turn. This process entails the state embracing and devouring Singeli

[129] "At Least 11 Shot Dead Ahead of Tanzania's Presidential Vote," *Associated Press*, October 27, 2020, https://apnews.com/article/international-news-shootings-tanzania-elections-arrests-9fa98fce198457c50b498e44af86ad1f.

artists and culture in order to expand its power and push forward their ideologies.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, beginning with the analysis of Bongo Flava and Singeli music videos presents an exploration of how they operate as spaces for navigating and imagining the possibilities of identity formation for Black youth within the context of how the state positions them in society. In tracing the evolution of the ways Bongo Flava attempted to restore and reshape the identities of Black youth, highlights the ways in which "identity" is not fixed or isolated, but rather a constant shifting process that is also connected to one's personal desires and everyday environments. For TMK Wanaume, they strived to reconnect Black youth to grand narratives of nation-building and grapple with the social categorization of Wahuni as a way to rehumanize and shift them away from being perceived as criminals. In Zay B's and Rosa Rees music videos, the goal was to push against patriarchy and counter fixed representations of gender in relation to the nation. In doing so, opening up possibilities of imagining ways of being in Tanzanian society through acts connected to everyday realities and desires. Because of this, Singeli music videos reject inscribed modes of representation and construct alternative identities tied to the life experiences and everyday environments of Black youth. Meja Kunta expands on this by demonstrating the need for the expansion of identities in order to better represent the ways in which Black youth navigate urban cities and the trauma associated with living in a state of crisis. In Dulla Makabila's world he bends our understanding of

gender and identity through cross-dressing (which he continues to do at live concerts) in a Tanzanian context where policies prohibit such actions to take place in real life.

# Chapter Three: Celebrity Culture, Social Media, Slowness

## Introduction

When the January 6th, 2021 Insurrection (J6) was unfolding in real-time at the U.S. capital, I watched and listened on multiple screens across various platforms. Similarly, I experienced the death and mourning of Tanzania's president John Magufuli the same way. While J6 was terrifying and Magufuli's passing was shocking, these events signaled new realities. J6 revealed the splintering of American democracy, a rise in ideologies of fascism rooted in white supremacy, and a divided United States of America. The death of Magafuli left the Tanzanian nation in a mode of uncertainty, especially with its deepened authoritarian turn (i.e., supported through the constitution) during his presidency. Even though Tanzanians were in mourning, it was apparent the country was divided in political ideologies enhanced by a highly controversial and violent 2020 presidential election.

In the immediate aftermath of J6 and Magufuli's death, I found myself wondering what was next, particularly in the transfer of power. In the United States, Joe Biden was sworn in, and immediately over 25,000 national guard troops deployed to secure and protect the U.S. capital, making it feel like a war zone. In Tanzania, it was still too early to predict if there would be a peaceful transfer of power or how Magufuli's death would shape the country's direction. In the end, Tanzania's VP Samia Hassan was sworn in as the new president even with tensions running high. In the new realities present in the United States of America and Tanzania, both presidents in their respective countries engaged in rhetoric focused on healing, unity,

and restoring faith in the ideas and systems that formed their nations. I ambivalently experienced these moments online through never-ending social media feeds.

Since the global pandemic triggered a new normal of experiencing life in online environments, I began the journey of reimagining my engagement with Singeli and Tanzanian culture by surveying social media practices and watching YouTube content. These shifts led me into a deep dive of consuming Tanzanian memes, TikTok videos, Instagram posts, Twitter feeds, and YouTube live events with ceaseless comment threads. As a mode of media ethnography, I built a firm understanding of Tanzanian online culture and practice from content creators and users. To narrow my focus on Tanzanian online culture, I decided to examine the social media accounts of Singeli artists and particularly how notions of celebrity trouble dominant culture. Additionally, I looked at popular online YouTube shows to explore the ways Black youth are currently engaged in entertainment and culture-making that provides an alternative representation of how the nation perceives its Tanzanian citizens. Within these frameworks, I started thinking about the power of celebrity, social media, and online YouTube shows in terms of having the ability to influence culture and identity formation as it intersects with Tanzanian Black youth and society at large.

The first section of this chapter I explore how Singeli artists construct a relatable celebrity identity that connects with their fans on Instagram. This is accomplished through focusing on the Singeli artist Dulla Makabila and an Instagram post that was recorded live–which I've entitled, *Singeli Care*–during the COVID-19

lockdown. In discussing *Singeli Care*, I touch upon how artists create intimate celebrity image that register as authentic by mirroring fans' life struggles and desires. I believe this is because predominantly Singeli artists come from working-class backgrounds, where their practices of celebrity don't necessarily change access to material accumulation or significant wealth. This is significant since it plays a direct role in dictating what sort of celebrity images they are able to construct. In assessing these celebrity images, I shift away from Western conceptions of the role they play in popular culture. To illustrate, I don't approach celebrity images as being a "coercive force, shaping society according to oppressive ideologies that favor the powerful elite, rather than the general public." Moreover, I do not suggest that celebrity images are " the center of false value that works to deceive audiences into equating real life with the movies or other culture industry fabrications" and that "the celebrity is not a real person, but merely a commodity, an image without substance, used to control the consciousnesses of a malleable public."[130] This is because understanding the construction and role of celebrity images in contemporary Tanzania generated by Singeli artists, requires reading them using a local perspective that acknowledges that celebrity is performed differently depending on social, cultural, and political contexts. In addition, the type of media (i.e. social media, mass media, centralized/decentralized media) plays a role in the kind of celebrity images artists can produce.

[130] ERIN MEYERS, "'Can You Handle My Truth?': Authenticity and the Celebrity Star Image," *Journal of Popular Culture* 42, no. 5 (2009): 891, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2009.00713.x.

I argue that Singeli artists construct celebrity images that center on a persona in tune with their fans' daily experiences and environments as they often navigate the same spaces and neighborhoods as their local fanbase. I find this strategic because it allows Singeli artists the ability to provide a relatable celebrity image that aligns with their fans' current realities and practices on the ground. As a result, fans register the Singeli celebrity image as a symbol that embodies meanings that connect to their worlds. In doing so, Singeli artists resonate as regular and average people in the lives of their fans. I suggest this is fueled by the fact that Singeli celebrity images facilitate an intimate relationship with their fan base, which is not provided by the state apparatus or other celebrities in other music genres. I believe the process of creating a relatable celebrity image centered around being intimate is very effective because it allows Singeli artists to connect more deeply with their fans. This approach contributes to cultivating a unique Tanzanian celebrity culture that centers on relatability, where celebrities construct a persona/image that connects to people's local realities and desires. Therefore, Singeli celebrity culture does not attempt to exclude others, create hierarchies between fans, or project unattainable middle class fantasies.

While exploring the role of social media connecting celebrities and fans together, I also discuss how platforms like Instagram facilitate the process of challenging Tanzanian dominant culture. In making this observation, I examine a controversial Instagram post made by Diamond Platnumz, a high-profile celebrity Bongo Flava artist, which led to his arrest. This moment was significant because it

was an example of the state exercising its power over the Tanzanian media landscape using laws originally designed to target political dissent. In the final section, I examine the online YouTube entertainment show called, *Big Sunday Live* from Wasafi Media, a network in Dar es Salaam that functions like MTV and BET. I focus on the show because it presents an alternative construction of Black youth performing notions of freedom and liberation aligned with consumerism and pleasure. In doing so, I argue that it complicates our current understanding of Tanzanian Black youth and nation as a whole.

Instagram, Singeli artists, Celebrity culture

When surveying and endlessly scrolling the Instagram accounts of Singeli artists I found that the content largely revolved around music promotion, memes/GIFs, dances, music shows, comedic pranks/skits, viral trends, resharing TikToks, IG reels, and snapshots of their daily lives. These moments were presented through regular Instagram posts, stories (which last 24 hours), or spontaneously using live mode. At its core, examining how Singeli artists use the Instagram platform invited thinking about how everyday contemporary Black life online was represented and constructed in the Tanzanian context. It is important to keep in mind that my assessment is not an exploration of the entirety and complex dynamics (e.g. class, political, social, materialism, global pandemic) that shape and mediate possibilities of Tanzanian Black life representations on Instagram as a whole. Also, while Instagram is ideologically and logically grounded on consumer culture and capitalism, my analysis of Singeli artists on the platform does not dive deep into that territory. In this

regard, I focus on the ways Singeli artists utilize Instagram to showcase their everyday lives to connect to their fans and perform notions of celebrity which disrupts the dominant culture in Tanzania.

In thinking about 'celebrity,' I recognize that as a concept and area of study it is mainly analyzed in Western worlds and very little in the Global South. When 'celebrity' is examined in Africa, it is often linked with humanitarian and international development agendas. In my case, I do not examine 'celebrity' and 'celebrity culture' as an attempt to define them or explore what they mean in the Tanzanian context. Instead, I focus on what sort of performative possibilities they open up for contemporary Tanzanian Black youth.

In a period of several months when the globe was on lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I periodically consumed Dulla Makabila's Instagram account. I first learned about Makabila at Sisso Records. According to producers and artists, Makabila was molded at Sisso Records, and it is the place that ultimately launched him into his current fame as a Singeli artist and well-known celebrity in Tanzania. For these reasons, Makabila is a good choice for thinking about how Singeli artists utilize social media to connect to fans and perform notions of celebrity. While Makabila's Instagram feed is flooded with content promoting his music, he invites fans into intimate aspects of his everyday life that embodies broader practices of celebrity in the Tanzanian landscape. My attraction to Dulla Makabila's Instagram account is also influenced by how the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown demanded everyday people to shift their relationship to a temporality and grind required by

capitalism. In this case, Singeli artists were forced to slow down since they could no longer engage in the intensive labor of touring to promote their music, record in studios, and have in-person interactions with fans. In regard to this, my relationship with Singeli shifted along the thought of, "what do the lives of musicians look like when they slow down in their everyday lives," especially in considering that Singeli is a fast-paced genre and culture that reflects the intense, chaotic nature of urban life. From this perspective, I decided to actively look for moments of care and slowness on Dulla Makabila's Instagram account. My discussion here examines a 30-minute Instagram live screen recording, *Singeli Care*, where Makabila hangs out with his girlfriend in their apartment as she braids his hair. In the video, they chat about random topics together with fans and celebrity friends that drop into the live Instagram session.

I use *Singeli Care* to explore how a form of celebrity is practiced in Tanzania that intersects with care and slowness. To set the scene, in the video Makabila and his girlfriend are laying in a bed full of pillows. He rests his head on her chest as she holds a cell phone over his ear. At first, we do not know who Makabila is talking to on the other side of the line but we can hear the chatter of a faint voice. Makabila says "sister-in-law, she has to love me, the styles are there, I have air in my lungs, I know that my frame is skinny but–" and bursts out in laughter. He continues, " I love her very much, everyone knows that even my exes know that." His girlfriend interrupts and says, "they also pretend to call me wifi, but they've already been eaten, those damn motherfuckers." Makabila quickly responds with, "she's so jealous," and she

interjects, “men are jealous as well, he would lose it if someone even offered me water.” The comment section in the Instagram live feed is flooded instantly with laughing emojis from fans watching. Throughout the 30 minute duration of *Singeli Care*, Makabila and his girlfriend discuss various topics together (i.e. sex, relationships, gossip) conversing with celebrity friends and engaging with fans in the comfort of their home.

This sequence that I have described above in *Singeli Care* directly relates to the everyday performances of Black youth engaging in acts of slowness. In assessing contemporary Black life, Tina Campt argues that slowness (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic), is a key element in exercising an ethical mode of care grounded in taking care of Black people.[131] When applying Campt’s framework of slowness to thinking about Black youth in the Tanzanian context, it allows us to see how performative acts of slowness in their everyday lives is a strategy of care that is not being provided by the state. This form of care activated through the act of slowing down allows Black youth to bond in an intimate and vulnerable manner that takes place away from immediate tactics of state surveillance. I believe that acts of slowness are important within the current socio political landscape in Tanzania because the state continues to demand citizens to embody rigid performances of identity geared towards nation-building and focused labor. Therefore, Black youth slowing down and practicing forms of care operate as defiant acts.

[131] Tina M Campt, *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2021), 112.

Even though these practices of care are being mediated through technology (i.e. cell phones, the internet) and facilitated through Instagram (and many other social media platforms) they allow Black youth to be part of a larger community with a wide range of people on a local and even global level with different backgrounds (i.e. identity, class, etc). In this vein, the purpose, meaning, and function of technology and social media platforms are shaped through everyday people.

In *Singeli Care*, we witness Black youth (Makabila and online participants) using technology and social media in a manner that suits their needs, allowing them to connect and hang out online with their respective communities. While media, information, and the online landscape are highly controlled in Tanzania, Black youth being online (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic) actively showcases how they exercise freedom of expression and gathering together on social media platforms which is more difficult for Tanzanian authorities to disrupt. For example, at the 10:00 mark of *Singeli Care*, Dulla, his girlfriend, and friend named Stan openly discuss the pleasures of sex. Stan also makes fun of Dulla for being a hoe due to wanting another girl's phone number. In these exchanges, fans erupt in laughter by commenting with laughing emojis and express how happy the conversation is making them. For me, this moment in the Instagram video functions as a mode of freedom of expression because such conversations (i.e. sex) are viewed as taboo topics and therefore people do not engage in them quite openly and unapologetically in the public sphere.

This does not mean that Black youth are not constantly targeted online, especially with Tanzania's strict Electronic and Postal Communications Regulations

(2018 and 2020 version) law that gives the state power over the media and internet landscape.[132] This law is controversial because it gives the government the ability to do two things simultaneously: 1) possess authorizing power on who can be an online content creator and 2) can remove content from the internet that "causes annoyance, threatens harm or evil, encourages or incites crimes" or jeopardizes "national security or public health and safety."[133] Although the law was primarily designed to police blogs, newspapers, and various media outlets engaging in any perceived activities of dissent, it also applies to social media platforms and whoever uses them. Anyone found in violation of the law faces fines and prison time, no matter your status or position in society.

For example, online activities of Tanzanian celebrities and musicians are constantly surveilled and policed for misusing social media due to their influencing power. Nonetheless, it was not until the arrest of prominent Bongo Flava artist Diamond Platnumz in 2018 for sharing video content on his Instagram account of him in bed flirting with a woman to his 14+ million followers that Tanzania witnessed the range of possibilities the Electronic and Postal Communications Regulations law gave the state. After the news broke out to the public that Platnumz had in fact been

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[132] "Tanzania: Online Content Regulations 2020 Extremely Problematic in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic," https://www.article19.org/, January 19, 2021, https://www.article19.org/resources/tanzania-online-content-regulations-problematic-covid-19-pandemic/#:~:text=Background-,The%20Electronic%20and%20Postal%20Communications%20(Online%20Content)%20Regulations%2C%202020,privacy%20and%20access%20to%20information.

[133] Lab Team, "The Consequences of Social Media Taxes on the Digital Divide," https://www.betterplace-lab.org/, March 11, 2022, https://www.betterplace-lab.org/the-consequences-of-social-media-taxes-on-the-digital-divide.

arrested, Tanzania's Minister for Information, Sports and Culture Harrison Mkawyembe gave a speech in a live televised parliament session. In his speech, Mkawambye said,

"When you start doing uhuni uhuni (Wahuni stuff) inside social media, yesterday we were able to catch Tanzania's star Diamond, we took him to the police station and is being interrogated due to his disgusting and pornographic content, a warning to all the young people out there, don't go posting dirty things on social media, since we have removed all obstacles that were blocking the proper use of this law, we can now see the law operating the way it was designed, which is to protect and cleanse Tanzania for current and future generations."[134]

Mkawyembe's address to the nation in parliament is quite significant because it highlights how the Electronic and Postal Communications Regulations law could more effectively be applied to policing the social media landscape, since in the past the state lacked the tools to do so. Even though the law had been active since 2018, it was predominantly used to control media companies and everyday political bloggers. However, the high-profile Platnumz case represented a shift in practice in how the law could be used for monitoring social media and punishing individuals for a wide range of topics, activities perceived as immoral or a threat to the state. The Platnumz case was a key moment because it showed Tanzanian citizens that the state now fully had the tools through the framework of the law to police, enforce, and ultimately

[134] "Diamond Arrested over Controversial Clip." (KTN News Kenya, April 18, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDiQxO1_-WI&t=21s.

define the use of the internet and social media in their own vision. In connection to this, the state possessed the ability to control the power and influence of celebrities on social media like Platnumz who have millions of followers. While Platnumz's actions on Instagram were not harmful to Tanzania's national security, I believe the state finds the power of celebrities to be a threat with the potential of disrupting national identity, challenging order, and sparking forms of dissent. This is due to the fact that Tanzanian Black youth gravitate towards celebrities and the shifting media landscape (social media platforms, human to human online connections) makes it possible to access information and consume content outside of official state-run outlets.

Of course, Tanzania has not quite witnessed the power of celebrity in terms of influencing global politics or triggering some sort of humanitarian action. However, the role of celebrities and their ability to wield their power plays a role in influencing local politics and reshaping the identities of Black youth in Tanzanian society. I believe this is directly linked to a couple of factors. First, the power celebrities possess does not operate like state power, which centers on having power and control *over* others (which contributes to the Tanzanian state's anxiety of losing control of its citizens). According to Lena Partzsch, celebrities exercise power *with* various actors (i.e. corporations, everyday people) in order to build awareness (e.g. inequality, hunger, war).[135] Additionally, celebrity power within the framework of culture connects with individuals through relationships of effect giving them the ability to

[135] Lena Partzsch, "The Power of Celebrities in Global Politics," *Celebrity Studies* 6, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 179, https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2014.955120.

identify with something by seeing themselves or what they strive to be from a celebrity.

Moreover, celebrities can use their power to influence and display unique forms of authenticity (e.g. style, dance, identity, representation) that people gravitate towards because it represents an alternative that rejects the current order (i.e. the past, oppressive policies). This utilization of power especially applies to popular music celebrities because it requires them to be connected to the communities their core fans are a part of. For these reasons, practices of celebrity utilized by Singeli musicians are quite effective because they project themselves as coming from the same urban environments and struggle with the urge of countering how Black youth are positioned in society. This approach registers to their core local fanbase and therefore received as authentic.

*Singeli Care* is an example of authenticity at play which highlights one of the many ways Singeli musicians perform and are actively defining celebrity in the Tanzanian context. Makabila utilizing acts of slowness in the clip reflects how Black youth use different modes of temporalities as a form of care. In this case, Makabila's interpretation of celebrity operates as a mechanism for reflecting back the tactics (i.e. slowness) Black youth apply for survival and navigating the uncertainties of daily urban life in cities like Dar es Salaam. For example, Black youth congregate for hours at local sites like barbershops and street corners which allows them to foster a bond and connection. In these spaces, Black youth engage in various activities, like listening to music, smoking, checking in on each other, and conversing about

potential leads on any kind of work. As a result, Black youth have a greater sense of belonging and community in a Tanzanian state that attempts to discipline them. Because of this, Makabila harnesses social media (Instagram Live) to perform and replicate an authentic representation of Black youth slowing down and coming together which is a practice they embody in their daily lives to take care of one another.

Therefore, Black youth become more attracted to celebrities. Thus, the power celebrities possess challenges Tanzanian dominant culture and fuels the state to enact laws like the Electronic and Postal Communications Regulations act in an attempt to control their influence over the population and utilize it to push forward their own agendas, (especially in recruiting celebrities for political rallies and local elections). Celebrity power in combination with social media platforms shows the possibility in what they can do together in terms of shaping culture and communicating messages that construct and facilitate modes of identity that influence, "who we are" and "aspire to be" in society.

In the next section, I find it necessary to expand upon the role of media and celebrities more broadly in Tanzanian society in relation to challenging dominant culture. This assessment discusses a YouTube show, *Big Sunday Live,* that represents a more accurate and balanced depiction of the contemporary moment aligned with the experiences of Black youth and urban conditions in Tanzania. *Big Sunday Live* operates as Tanzania's version to MTV or BET's 106 & Park. The goal of examining this show is to convey how the media facilitates and shifts our understanding of

contemporary representations of Tanzania. In doing so, we witness how the media in Tanzania contributes to the production of an emergent culture being fueled by Black youth and their favorite celebrities.

Big Sunday Live: Shifting Tanzanian Media Landscape

In order to understand the significance and impact of YouTube shows on Tanzanian dominant culture, I provide a brief historical overview of how media was imagined in Tanzania after independence and the way its role shifted over time. For Tanzania's first president Julius Nyerere, media was a crucial mechanism in broadcasting his vision of Ujamaa socialism that forged Tanzanian dominant culture. Therefore, he approached media as a tool for disseminating Ujamaa ideology, nation-building, constructing a national culture and identity. In order to have media operate in this manner in Tanzania, Nyerere created Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam and passed bills that gave the government full control over the media landscape.[136] For this reason, the state controlled who had the ability to broadcast, create content, possessed the technology required to disseminate, consume, and receive information. Accordingly, private businesses and citizens could not establish their own media services and create content for mass consumption. This is because they represented the potential for challenging Ujamaa ideology by utilizing media in a way that would disrupt dominant culture through threatening the security and unity of the country.

[136] Alex. Perullo, *Live from Dar Es Salaam : Popular Music and Tanzania's Music Economy*, African Expressive Cultures (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 189.

After Nyerere stepped down in 1985 due to the crippling effects of Ujamaa, his successor Ali Hassan Mwinyi changed the Tanzanian media landscape by signing into law the Broadcasting Services Act (1993).[137] This law loosened the government's control of media and therefore made it possible for individuals and private entities to launch radio and television stations. Furthermore, Tanzanian citizens now had access to a wider range of media technologies (cassettes, TVs, satellite dishes) and could freely consume foreign content that was banned in the country due to being perceived as western capitalist propaganda.[138] In analyzing the broad changes to the media environment sparked by the Broadcasting Services Act up until the mid 2000s, Alex Perullo observed that local Tanzanians had access to:

programs from South Africa, the United States, and England, interspersed with local news briefings and occasional sports and arts coverage. By the year 2000, news programs, particularly from CNN and the BBC, American sitcoms such as Diff'rent Strokes,The Steve Harvey Show, and Silver Spoons, and American hip-hop music videos were broadcast on local television stations. It was not until 2006 that local movies, music videos, and documentaries started to overtake these foreign imports in the amount of local airtime and in popularity.[139]

Since the government originally used media as a device to directly discipline the population and ways of being in Tanzania, Perullo notes further that the Broadcasting Services Act gave Tanzanians access to media and diverse content not

[137] Perullo, 188.
[138] Perullo, 189.
[139] Perullo, 189.

regulated or filtered through the state. As a result, Tanzania's dominant culture, which controlled and shaped Tanzanian identity in terms of being and belonging to the nation, was challenged due to greater access to media technology, the circulation of content that transmitted different images, sounds, ideas, and voices. I find this fascinating because private businesses and everyday people gain the power to shape, influence, and produce culture at a scale never before seen in the country. This is because Tanzania went through a second cultural revolution, as Ali Hassan Mwinyi policies assisted in reshaping Tanzania's music economy.[140] Artists could have independent recording studios without needing a government permit. Moreover, with Mwinyi embracing liberalization, artists had access to recording equipment, computers, foreign music, and pirated audio software. This further allowed artists to have the ability to make music in local spaces or in their private homes.

In the contemporary landscape, artists and everyday people now have greater access to engage in the production of culture with the internet, smartphones, YouTube and social media. These media tools give them the ability to communicate, connect, collaborate, consume, and create never-ending content. This is significant because culture is no longer being produced, dictated, or fully controlled by the state. Therefore, culture operates as a space for interpretation and negotiation, where everyday people practice emergent practices to disrupt dominant cultural formations.[141]

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[140] Perullo, 188.
[141] Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular' [1981]" (Duke University Press, 2018), 357, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw7c7.20.

I believe in the current moment in Tanzanian society, culture is constantly being contested and media plays a direct role in shaping it. I think Diamond Platnumz media company *Wasafi Media,* (launched in 2011 which produces the show *Big Sunday Live*) has really integrated and dominated various media ecosystems (tv, social media, Youtube, reality tv, gossip news, radio) in a strategic manner that has allowed them to be a key player in the production of culture in Tanzania that Black youth greatly connect with. To illustrate, *Wasafi Media* symbolizes Tanzania's version of MTV/BET, operating as a media entertainment network that provides daily celebrity gossip, news, reality tv, and music videos that are being broadcasted on YouTube, social media, radio, and television.

In comparing *Wasafi Media* and state-owned media outlets in the country, the content *Wasafi Media* produces caters to a larger Black youth audience because they perform aspects of being packaged together in the form of entertainment. On the other hand, state media engages in a kind of performativity that represents governance and dominant cultural ideologies that center on labor and nation-building. Because of this, Black youth are more attracted to *Wasafi Media* because it constructs a media world that is more in tune with their own notions of cultural order, everyday life, desires, and urban realities away from state authority and power. As an example, YouTube show *Big Sunday Live* is a show that constructs a media world consumed by Black youth. The show follows a similar format to BET's 106 & Park with music videos, performances (music and other forms of entertainment), conversations between celebrities and hosts that cover a spectrum of gossip-like topics. The show also

consists of a live audience of Black youth dressed in the latest fashion trends, dancing along to the performances, and reacting to whatever is happening on stage.

In essence *Big Sunday Live* functions as a party gathering full of entertainment for Black youth inside a studio space, where they can briefly escape their everyday lives and urban conditions. The studio space further operates as a place for them to connect with a generation that navigates the consequences and rippling effects of past and present ideologies and policies, as they practice a culture imagining the possibilities of what it means to be Tanzanian. A unique aspect about this generation of Black youth, which is well represented in *Big Sunday Live*, is the embodiment of capitalism, neoliberalism, and consumerism. While such systems of order have been utilized to exploit and negatively impact the lives of Black youth, I believe that in this case they open up alternative notions of freedom and identity not previously available to Tanzanian people just a few decades ago.

For example, the show especially Season 2 Episode 1 (2021) presents consumerism as a liberatory practice that captures conceptions of Tanzanian modernity. This is significant because we are also witnessing a phase in the nation where Tanzanians can now fully consume (i.e. products) and access content (i.e. various media platforms) due to the transition of socialism to neoliberalism in the country. Even though neoliberalism constructs the illusion of freedom and oppresses marginalized people, I believe this shift in Tanzania has played an active role in providing Black youth possibilities that weren't accessible to them in a socialist state since the 1990s. For Ronald Aminzade, neoliberalism further contributed to

redefining the meaning of a Tanzanian citizen. Aminzade argues in the socialist era, a citizen was defined as someone who "obeyed the law, worked hard on the land in cooperative and communal endeavors, was willing to take up arms to defend the nation against imperialism and colonialism."[142] In addition, this mode of citizenship fueled strong notions of belonging to the nation. On the other hand, Aminzade points out that Tanzania turning into a neoliberal state "emphasized possessive individualism and mobility, encouraging citizens to engage in private capital accumulation"[143] and characterized citizens as "those willing to work hard for their individual advancement and upward social mobility, take risks, and act as diligent consumers by paying their bills on time and not obtaining public services (such as water and electricity) illegally."[144] An unexpected consequence of framing Tanzanians in this manner under a neoliberal state fueled the rise of consumerism, expanding ideas of citizenship in the country. For Nestor Canclini, nation-states that shifted from socialism to neoliberalism restricted and disrupted traditional notions of 'citizenship' that were shaped purely by the state.[145] This is because neoliberalism connected people globally by providing greater access to consuming technology, culture, information, media, and ideas. Because of this, Canclini suggests that people

[142] Ronald Aminzade, *Race, Nation, and Citizenship in Postcolonial Africa: The Case of Tanzania*, Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107360259.
[143] Aminzade, 241.
[144] Aminzade, 241.
[145] Néstor. García Canclini, *Consumers and Citizens : Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts*, Cultural Studies of the Americas ; v. 6 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 160.

under a neoliberal order become consumer citizens who can construct their own identities.[146] This does not mean that people in neoliberal consumer-driven culture have full autonomy to exercise individual agency and control to dictate their own lives on a macro level. However, on a micro level, I believe that it provides everyday people with expanded possibilities to shape their own individual lives given their existing circumstances.

Episode 1 reveals how Black youth are participating in a culture where they have greater freedom for shaping their identities in society through consumerism tied to their own fantasies. However, this does not translate to the actual realities faced by a majority of Black youth that live in places like Dar es Salaam that largely make up the poor class, who do not have the resources or capacity to reshape their lives due to conditions of crisis which make it difficult to change their circumstances. This does not mean Episode 1 presents a false and entirely inaccurate reality. A good portion of the episode connects to the fantasies of Black youth.

To illustrate, in Episode 1 car ownership is a fantasy that is explored through a game show where audience members compete to win one. Before explaining the game itself, the fantasy of cars is significant within postcolonial Africa because owning one means greater practices of freedom, mobility, and the construction of a modern identity. According to Lindsey Green-Simms:

Cars provide its owners and drivers with concrete and indisputable social advantages. And, most importantly, it makes them de facto global subjects, subjects

[146] García Canclini, 160.

who are cosmopolitan and defined by their "first- class" status (Ferguson 2006, 187) rather than by a condition of poverty. Cars are important belongings, then, precisely because they allow one to belong.[147]

Green-Simms further notes that an array of factors like gender, class, geography (urban/rural), and politics play a role in how people experience cars in their everyday lives. Therefore, "automobility is implicated in a deep context of affective and embodied relations between people, machines and spaces of mobility and dwelling, in which emotions and the senses play a key part."[148] In this vein, Green-Simms argues that the car functions as a social object that shapes peoples accessibility to ways of being, feeling, and acting in the modern world.[149] Therefore, cars are a crucial part in dictating how people experience and live in the world. For Black youth in Tanzania, cars are key in constructing a sense of modern life and belonging due to them representing status, freedom, being a part of a city like Dar es Salaam even with its challenges to mobility due to poor road infrastructure and traffic. Still, the possibility of car ownership helps Black youth connect to the city in a manner that allows them to engage in leisure and pleasure, especially if they are from low-income communities.

For these reasons described above, *Big Sunday Live* having Black youth compete for a car in a game show is strategic knowing the sort of possibilities they

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[147]Lindsey B. Green-Simms, *Postcolonial Automobility: Car Culture in West Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 23, https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt6tp.
[148] Lindsey B. Green-Simms, 23.
[149] Lindsey B. Green-Simms, 22.

open up to enhance their lives. The game show consists of two rounds. In the first round, contestants spin a wheel that is marked with traffic signal signs, where they have to explain what they mean. The wheel also has a key symbol, which allows the contestant to automatically advance to the second and final round. In this particular round, all the contestants have 5 minutes to search for a hidden key on the car and whoever finds it wins the game. Within each respective round, a government official ensures that the rules are followed, no cheating occurs, each step in the game is fair and legal. In fact, the official even inspects the car (with the contestants and hosts looking away) to make sure it is not illegally registered, stolen, or manipulated in some way to give a contestant an advantage. Furthermore, audience members are instructed to remain completely silent in each round to reduce the chances of cheating.

In the second round of the game show, a young Black woman named Irene (who was the only female contestant) won the car after finding the key. She was full of excitement and joy. At one point, she hugged the car and sat down to catch her breath. The camera zooms up to her face, showing the various emotions she was processing. A host named Lil Ommy kept repeating "Let her breathe, this game is not easy, all of your dreams have come true." When interviewing Irene, another host Ammy Gal comments "You no longer have to take public transportation." After asking her questions, Irene is instructed to turn on the car. However, she struggles to open the car door with the key. This prompts Lil Ommy to ask her whether she knew how to drive and had a drivers license. Irene, confidently grabs the microphone and

says no. The crowd laughs, acknowledging the situation that most low-income Black youth in Tanzania in fact do not have drivers licenses because the process of learning how to drive is expensive and therefore inaccessible to them. Instead of embarrassing Irene at this moment, Lil Ommy informs her that it is ok that she doesn't know how to drive and reiterates that this is her car now. He gently instructs her how to open and start the car. Out of pure joy and confidence, Irene honks the car and starts the engine which gets the crowd riled up. Afterwards, Irene's brother (who also does not have a license) comes to support her and they hop inside the car with a *Big Sunday Live* host helping them drive out of the studio set through a huge door with the show's logo painted over it.

My impression of *Big Sunday Live* as a whole is that it centers fostering a sense of belonging and community for Black youth. At the same time, the show positions entertainment, pleasure, and consumption as practices aligned with embodying alternative modes of liberatory practices in a Tanzanian landscape where often the freedom of Black youth is constrained. These liberatory modes are a direct reflection of the ongoing changes happening across urban areas like Dar es Salaam, where there has been a surge of malls, clubs, and various entertainment hubs for Black youth to engage with. They further reveal how shifts in policy and ideology over time have played a role in dictating what sort of possibilities are available to Tanzanian citizens. In this particular case, the changes in policy in Tanzania has allowed for the influx of local and foreign entities to greatly invest in creating spaces for consumption and leisure. These spaces have been made possible through

aggressive urban planning schemes to implement public transportation systems and placing shopping/entertainment hubs closer to where people live in order to meet their everyday needs.

While this process often displaces local people (i.e. from Black neighborhoods), it highlights the ways in which notions of liberation and freedom are being imagined in postcolonial Africa in relation to urban development agendas that advocate for connecting people to places like shopping malls and various entertainment outlets. Of course, spaces constructed for consumption have always been contested in African countries due to people not gaining equal access to them because of their class. Nevertheless, the ability to participate in consumption in the contemporary world allows Black people to exercise freedom and agency that allows them to engage in pleasure.

*Big Sunday Live* portrays and constructs a culture where Black youth utilize consumption and pleasure as devices to embody different ways of practicing freedom and liberation within the context of the country's ideological shifts post-independence to the present moment. This is facilitated by technology (i.e. media, television, social media) and celebrities who become representations of alternative practices of freedom and liberation in the contemporary landscape for Black youth. As a consequence, Black youth gravitate towards celebrity culture because celebrities become symbols that reflect their own repressed desires (consuming, pleasure) and do not directly represent state power. Celebrity culture rubs up against dominant culture through

presenting a set of practices that redefine notions of normalcy and what it means to be a modern Tanzanian.

Conclusion

This chapter explores what sort of performative possibilities are being facilitated by celebrities, social media platforms, and online YouTube shows that allow Black youth in contemporary Tanzania to construct a version of themselves that best projects their own notions of practicing freedom. Although these performative possibilities are generated through the lens of consumption, celebrity culture, and entertainment, I argue that they are a much better representation of how Black youth build an identity formed through an interconnected circulatory process. The first section, specifically focuses on Singeli artist Dulla Makabila and the clip *Singeli Care* recorded from his Instagram account during the COVID-19 global pandemic, because I wanted to highlight how celebrities perform a relatable image tied to the way Black youth experience their everyday lives by practicing acts of care and slowness and countering perceptions of urban life as constantly fast-paced. Additionally, I discuss how celebrities and social media fosters spaces for Black youth to bond and care for one another even under the state's deployment of laws to control and surveille every aspect of the media ecosystem in Tanzania. In the second section, I focus on the online YouTube show *Big Sunday Live* to provide a snapshot of the media worlds that contribute to the production of culture in Tanzania that Black youth are actively a part of. As an emergent culture, I discuss the way entertainment, celebrities, and

consumption give Black youth the ability to practice alternative modes of freedom aligned with their realities and sociopolitical context.

Through broadly examining the role of media, celebrities, entertainment, and consumerism in challenging Tanzanian dominant culture, I find that they strategically allow Black youth to express and shape what it means to be a modern Tanzanian today. While many Black youth have to navigate a world of class and social inequalities that dictate what sort of resources are available to them to build and experience life possibilities, they work within these constraints to imagine notions of freedom and agency. The next chapter focuses on the split-screen experimental art video entitled *All We Got*, serving as a representation of the various practices Black youth utilize in their everyday life. The video will not be a direct representation or reconstruction of the chapters covered in the dissertation, but rather documents the flow, process, and multilayered connections associated with the main themes in them as a whole. In this vein, the upcoming chapter is dedicated to discussing critical and creative strategies deployed in the video that help in better understanding Singeli music, culture, and the lives of Black youth in contemporary Tanzania.

# Chapter Four: The Logic Behind *All We Got*

## Introduction

I first filmed Singeli artists in the summer of 2019 on a sweltering and humid afternoon in Dar es Salaam at Sisso Records. I recall coordinating with artists and riding a motorcycle in Black neighborhoods to find the Sisso Records studio. Notably, at the time, I had not developed the critical and creative filmmaking strategy that is now guiding the media component of this dissertation. I spent the first day getting to know the various artists at Sisso Records by conducting video interviews, recording studio sessions, and walking around the neighborhood called Mburahati. On my next visits to Sisso Records that summer, I continued to hang out with artists to get to know them and better understand their everyday lives. I developed friendships with the artists that would lead to creative collaboration. I became familiar with Mburahati, which enabled me to get in tune with local dynamics and how everyday people utilize urban spaces. This experience was significant because Singeli artists in their local spaces helped me develop strategies to avoid repeating content circulating online and in the popular imagination about Singeli culture, Sisso Records, and Dar es Salaam.

More importantly, I wanted to create a film that did not outright register as content that positioned Singeli music and culture through the lens of entertainment and consumption for viewers: i.e concerts, artist interviews, twerking, and dancing aspects of the culture. Many representations of Singeli as a genre fixate on the music production's energy and speed (i.e., 300 BPM). Much video content on Singeli takes a

journalistic and documentary form packaged as music entertainment that doesn't provide a more complex analysis of the culture and people participating in it. Therefore, my goal was to break away from these modes of representing Singeli by constructing a video for experiencing it at a deeper and more intimate level. The best way to achieve this would be to focus the video on artists' everyday lives within local spaces. I hoped this process would create an alternative representation of Black youth and Dar es Salaam. In the next section, I cover the strategies I use in, *All We Got.* These strategies widen our understanding of Singeli and urban life in Tanzania.

Slowness

In the summer of 2022, I spent a couple of months filming *All We Got* in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I packed only a DSLR camera and audio recording equipment (recorder, shotgun mic). This mode of shooting films aligns with one of my essential artistic practices that does not follow 'traditional' productions with lots of film equipment, crew, and intense shooting schedules. This filming approach makes it possible to shoot without interruption for an extended time. I learned this way of filmmaking through watching Pedro Costa's film *In Vanda's Room,* which depicts the lives of people in a marginalized community called Fontainhas in Lisbon, Portugal. Costa shot his film using a digital video camera, which allowed him not to be tethered to traditional filmmaking modes and granted him the freedom to use improvisational techniques that focused on shooting the daily routines of nonprofessional actors and various moments in the Fontainhas neighborhood. In addition, Costa used long takes to depict people's everyday experiences and local spaces in the film. Witnessing

Costa's long-take technique in his work profoundly impacted my development as a filmmaker.

For instance, I became fascinated with how long durational shots functioned as an aesthetic style, shifted the construction of narratives, and challenged how viewers experienced watching films. These led me to the genre and concept of slow cinema, which Matthew Flanagan defines as "'the employment of (often extremely) long takes, de-centered and understated modes of storytelling, and a pronounced emphasis on quietude and the every day.'"[150] In this view, long takes in slow cinema allow viewers to experience the duration of time, and counters mainstream cinema emphasizing speed. Furthermore, using 'slowness' as an aesthetic and narrative technique makes it possible to present different modes of temporalities in nonfiction and cinematic fiction worlds.

I acknowledge that the strategy of 'slowness' in slow cinema can operate as a political device to challenge traditional modes of cinema (labor, technology, narrative) and counter the demands of modern life and capitalism, which have sped up our lives and ultimately how we experience time in society. However, my interest in 'slowness' also relates to how it shapes our engagement with people and places. Within this framework, I decided to use 'slowness' as a strategy in *All We Got* to depict the lives of Singeli artists and local neighborhoods. In doing so, this made it possible to present Singeli artists and African urban life differently. From a western

[150] Tiago de. Luca and Nuno Barradas. Jorge, *Slow Cinema*, Traditions in World Cinema (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 1, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748696031.

perspective, Singeli and African cities are often represented as chaotic. Therefore, slowness in my filmmaking creates an alternative representation centered on the various temporalities found in people's everyday experiences and urban spaces. I aim to disrupt the assumption that modern Africa is chaotic. I suggest that temporality is nonlinear. In addition, our experience and existence in time are shaped by many factors like culture, history, technology, and sociopolitical realities.

I also chose 'slowness' to explore Tanzania's past and present, which are constantly negotiated. For example, *All We Got* is filmed in a post-Magufuli and global covid-19 pandemic environment. Therefore, slowness in the film would allow for exploring how everyday people were reimagining themselves, attempting to return to their lives before or adjusting to new realities caused by these altering disruptions. I kept in mind that perhaps I would not capture anything significant in how people's lives shifted or even practiced alternative modes of being. Nevertheless, I moved forward with slowness as a filming tactic because I thought it would be instrumental in revealing everyday life in an urban Tanzanian context.

The filming of *All We Got* mainly took place in the Black neighborhood of Mburahati, accompanied by Singeli artists who were a part of Sisso Records. These artists allowed me to gain trust and access to the people and places I recorded at various locations. This was pivotal since using the technique of slowness for filmmaking took a long time. Moreover, filming in this manner required ample patience since it relied on improvisation and filming whatever was unfolding in front of the camera in case it could amount to something to thread a piece together in the

editing process. Over time, I developed a pattern of recording moments that connected with the more prominent theme of showing the flow of urban Tanzania and the lives of Singeli artists. For example, I had the unique opportunity of recording a group of women from Makaveli's family, along with their neighborhood friends hanging out and braiding each other's hair. This sequence and other moments in *All We Got* attempt to disrupt how traditional documentaries often exoticize Black people. I accomplish this by not using the voice of god technique and providing a narrative. While *All We Got* is imperfect at disrupting how traditional documentary negatively represent Black people, I am aware that the film cannot escape being read from Western visual practices that position the camera as a tool of oppression and dehumanizes subjects. I work through these tensions by mixing nonfiction and fiction strategies (i.e., improvisation) that produce different meanings and counter positions. In doing so, I attempt to complicate film approaches and ways of looking that often generate negative representations of people and places. In the next section, I discuss the use of split screen in *All We Got* as a mode of intervention that makes it possible to trouble negative representations and how viewers experience watching films.

Split-screen

I built a more robust understanding of how split-screen as a technique can be used for creating counter positions (i.e., challenging traditional narrative making, oppressive gazes/visual representations, how viewers experience films) when I was accepted into the Isaac Julien Lab at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2019. I was mentored by Isaac Julien and Mark Nash at the lab, which is a platform where

artists and scholars can learn and develop their visual and sonic strategies for producing work. These strategies include weaving together theoretical concepts, cross-pollinating disciplines, moving image, photography, video art, and methodologies found in curation and installation to enhance one's creative practices. As a Ph.D. candidate in the Film and Digital Media department, the lab was vital for the creative development of my dissertation because I had reached a point in my artistic film practice where I wanted to take things in a different direction.

The lab allowed me to experiment with split-screen as a technique to develop my dissertation project, which was meant to capture themes in the written chapters. In my original dissertation proposal, the media component explored Singeli as an emergent cultural movement that challenges the formation of a dominant culture in Tanzania. This process would involve constructing a split-screen video that combined online archival footage and fictional recreations after Tanzanian independence that highlighted the nation-building process, the construction of what it means to be a modern Tanzanian, and the reshaping of the city of Dar es Salaam. Also, the video was also to include online material from social media and personal WhatsApp accounts from Singeli artists that focused on the experiences of Black youth.

The original plan for the split-screen video was grounded in two elements. The first element in the video would explore the formation of a modern-day dominant culture using found footage of Julius Nyere. In particular, the footage would come from online sources like YouTube, and the material would center on Nyerere’s speeches, state ceremonies, and television appearances. Furthermore, I would have

included material associated with Nyerere's socialist policies (e.g., work camps, urban removal) tied to nation-building. The goal was to capture the country's creation post-independence, the modernization of the city of Dar es Salaam, and highlight the experiences/positionality of Black youth during that time. In addition, the fictional rendering of Nyerere was meant to reflect his dominant vision of constructing Tanzania. I chose Julius Nyerere to explore dominant culture because he was pivotal in Tanzania's construction of ideology and national identity. Therefore, I wanted to use Nyerere to build a firm understanding of the country's direction, along with highlighting moments of resistance (e.g., protests, oppositional figures) in an attempt to imagine alternative futures for the Tanzanian nation.

The second element was to show Singeli content that was supposed to function as emergent culture in the video to unfix and complicate Tanzanian dominant culture and national identity. The goal was to showcase how Singeli generates new forms of being and becoming for Black youth. I planned to use online footage (e.g., YouTube, social media), along with filmed content at recording studios, private homes, concerts, and around Dar es Salaam to showcase how Singeli music and culture provide different formulations of Tanzania oriented towards the experiences of Black youth and urban life. While the bulk of the second element utilized realist techniques focused on Singeli artists and their experiences in Dar es Salaam, it also mixed fictional strategies (e.g., improvisation, scripted performances) as a lens through which to build a more robust understanding of what it means to perform everyday life as urban youth and particularly within an emergent culture.

At the time of formulating my original media component proposal and these two elements, I was not sure if I would be able to visit Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to film due to the global lockdown from the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I had to keep in mind that I could not execute all of the proposed elements. Ultimately, the video would shift over time with experimenting and allowing things to evolve creatively. I did not view this as a constraint but rather as an opportunity to explore different possibilities for the media component. The first iteration used online footage from YouTube, social media, and clips shared with me by Singeli artists that captured their everyday lives.

For example, I developed a split-screen video called *Chapa Radio* which was the first iteration of this film. My goal was to understand the logic of split-screen editing and how to construct a narrative with split-screening techniques. This is because I wanted to learn how to put visual and audio material together in a way that is connected to the themes of my dissertation. As an exercise, this helped me think through my research questions and theoretical concepts by using art-making as a mode of research. This way of working allowed me to understand better the various relationships and connections in the dissertation. This is because I could work non-linearly, which is challenging in the writing process.

Blending found footage in *Chapa Radio* from Nyerere's era (i.e., African socialist agendas, Uganda-Tanzania War, Operation Vijana) and pairing them with clips from Singeli artists (i.e., Instagram accounts, concerts, studio sessions, WhatsApp videos) made it possible to see how Tanzanian dominant culture is

disrupted. In particular, by Singeli cultural practices and creative actions of Black youth, specifically in how they choose to express and formulate their identities. For example, the videos of Black youth I used were vibrant, beautiful, funny, and showed everyday people engaging in activities considered to be socially unacceptable and deviant. They were smoking weed, popping wheelies on motorcycles in the streets of Dar es Salaam, playing video games, and twerking/moshing at parties. In these moments, I could visually and sonically witness how Tanzanians imagined themselves out in the world. I believe these images challenge state practices from the past and present that attempt to discipline, shape, and imagine the role of Black youth in society.

The use of split-screen in thinking about the lives of Black youth in the contemporary environment is influenced by artist Khalil Joseph and his two-screen installation video called *BLKNWS* (2018-ongoing). *BLKNWS* weaves together an assemblage of videos from social media, YouTube, and other online materials that center on Black life in connection to real events (e.g., gun violence and criminalization of Black people). I am attracted to *BLKNWS* as a source of inspiration because it performs an alternative representation of Black people. This is accomplished in the video using the split-screen, where a Black perspective responds to how mainstream media stereotypes Black Americans. Moreover, the video explores how Black Americans are violently positioned in society by state power. These two themes are explored using split screen by building an understanding of how Black people are disciplined by modern techniques (i.e., policing and how

mainstream media operates in constructing negative stereotypes) and biopower in the American landscape. Simultaneously, the split-screen in the video functions as a critical device that showcases how negative representations and attempts to control Black life are contested. This is accomplished through showing online content created by Black people on social media that is aligned with their modes of being/construction of identities tied to their values, experiences, and communities. For these reasons, I experimented with split-screen on *Chapa Radio*. I used social media content from Black youth to highlight how they actively produce alternative representations of themselves in Tanzania. Furthermore, by combining footage from Nyerere's era with current social media material, I could track the shift in the formation of identity Black youth practiced since Tanzania's inception.

This was important because I needed to understand how Black youth envisioned themselves in the contemporary Tanzanian landscape and wanted to create work that accurately reflected and documented it. This is directly connected to a theme throughout the written component of the dissertation that is concerned with the socially constructed form of identity, Wahuni (i.e., thug), that stems from anxiety around Black youth who are viewed as representing disorder, which has resulted in the expansion of criminalizing them since colonial times in Tanzania. Nonetheless, in my conversations with Singeli artists, Black youth have embraced Wahuni to counter negative connotations associated with that mode of identity. For example, Makaveli explained that Black youth identify as Wahuni because it represents a community of oppressed and marginalized people. Therefore, Wahuni becomes a way for Black

youth to practice a way of being and belonging in a context that attempts to exclude them.

Sound

Another strategic component of *All We Got* is the use of sound within the film. To illustrate, every scene in the piece has a carefully crafted sound design. While sound design traditionally is meant to assist viewers in understanding the overall world and narrative of a film to move forward the plot, I wanted to disrupt this logic of experiencing video work. To illustrate, *All We Got* does not contain non-diegetic sound (i.e. sound effects, music) because I wanted viewers to focus on simply listening to things that are generated within the world of the piece. To take this further, I chose to remove sounds (e.g. road traffic, voices of people, footsteps) in certain scenes that viewers are taught to easily associate with or trained to hear on a daily basis. The aim was to challenge how viewers use sound to make sense of visual spaces, narratives, and characters within a video. In doing so, I believe the removal of certain sonic information makes it difficult for viewers to fully discern/decode exactly what is going on in the piece. The reason why I chose to remove certain sonic elements in *All We Got* is because it's filmed in real places with local people. Therefore, cutting out sounds in the film was a strategy to take away power from the audience. In doing so, my hope is that limiting what sounds viewers are exposed to in the video assists to counter preconceived notions about people and places.

## Conclusion

After understanding alternative representations of Black youth through the video *Chapa Radio*, I felt confident in creating *All We Got*, which serves as the official media component of the dissertation. *All We Got* does not use any social media or archival footage. I wanted to document how Black youth represent themselves outside social media platforms and focus on present-day Black life. This is accomplished in the video by using the split-screen technique to present non-linear open-ended moments in Singeli artists' lives and community members juxtaposed with one another. Moreover, the split-screen scenes are edited using predominantly slow cuts. The aim of editing in this manner made it possible to capture the pace and rhythm of the neighborhoods I filmed. In addition, slow cuts and strategic use of sound further troubled the notion that Black youth and African cities are chaotic by demanding the viewer's attention.

The ultimate goal for using these strategies in *All We Got* is to contribute to alternative approaches in representing and creating narratives about Black people, which many contemporary artists are already doing. In this case, I wanted to develop a way of experiencing Singeli culture and Dar es Salaam in a manner that did not exoticize them. More importantly, I wanted *All We Got* also to disrupt the disturbing viewpoint that the African continent was frozen in time and in a constant state of development. In doing so, I was able to showcase the complex realities of urban life and how Black youth are currently practicing notions of freedom in Tanzania.

# Conclusion

In the last few days of filming the media portion of the dissertation *All We Got*, I chatted with Sisso Records artists about the future of Singeli. I knew that the next time I visited Dar es Salaam, Singeli music and culture would be different and beyond what I have described in this dissertation. Therefore, I wanted to understand how Singeli artists envisioned the state of the genre moving forward. I greatly valued the Singeli artists' opinions because the dissertation project would not have been possible without their support. The Singeli artists gave me unfiltered access to their worlds and local neighborhoods, significantly influencing this dissertation's critical and creative direction. Due to this, I could freely explore the current state of Black youth, culture, and urban life. In my immersion in Singeli music and culture, I found that it was genuinely pivotal in revealing the alternative practices of identity and ways of being Black people engage in their daily lives in the contemporary Tanzanian landscape. Still, I recall asking myself on the last days of filming: What exactly is next for Singeli? Would Singeli slowly die out or continue expanding? In the following section, I explore these questions with conversations I had with Singeli artists, reflect on what my dissertation covered, and imagine the potential next steps of my critical and creative research.

During my time in Dar es Salaam in 2022, an emerging Sisso Records artist named DJ Travella exploded everywhere. I first encountered DJ Travella on Instagram, where he posted a reel of doing a show in his local Black neighborhood. In the clip, DJ Travella stood on top of these massive speakers, surrounded by hundreds

of people dancing to his Singeli music. I was instantly drawn to DJ Travella's Singeli production style because it was something I had not heard before. At that moment, I realized that DJ Travella represented a new wave of Singeli sound, propelling the genre into a new and exciting direction. I aimed to include DJ Travella in my dissertation to build a more robust understanding of his Singeli production style. However, when I was in Dar es Salaam, he was doing an international tour in Europe and in the process of collaborating with Venezuelan musician and producer Arca. Of course, Sisso Records artists have long been collaborating, touring, and doing festivals with other musicians inside and outside Africa. For example, the artist Sisso will be performing at the 2023 Roskilde music festival where Kendrick Lamar will be headlining.[151] In addition, Sisso Records artists are heavily involved with the Nyege Nyege collective in Kampala, Uganda, which functions as a label, festival, and collaborative space for artists and producers worldwide. Therefore, Sisso Records artists have been critical architects in pushing Singeli into innovative and radical sonic spaces.

In answering my question about the future of Singeli, Makaveli expressed:

> There's a presumption that certain music practices die. However, that is not the case. Music genres and cultures evolve in many ways, even if there isn't a large audience consuming them. These new up-and-coming producers and artists are reimagining Singeli in extraordinary ways–driven by greater access to technology,

[151] https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/years/2023/acts/sisso-maiko-plus-rehema-asher-tajiri/

media, music, social media, culture, and opportunities to collaborate internationally with other artists. My job is to teach these new artists the blueprint of Singeli and support their artistic journey because it's their turn to elevate and spread Singeli worldwide.

Singeli artist named Sisso chimed in:

> You must remember that before Singeli became infused with mainstream popular culture and traveled outside of Tanzania, the music and culture were first practiced in our local Black neighborhoods. This means Singeli is not going anywhere. It is a part of our community and DNA. We welcome the change in Singeli - because without being open to experimentation and change - it is impossible to expand sonically and culturally.

The comments made by Makaveli and Sisso connect to themes in my dissertation that examine how Singeli and young Black people shift dominant culture in Tanzania. This process has involved Singeli artists and Black youth experimenting, adapting, and being open to change. As a result, Singeli continues to grow and circulate locally and globally. In addition, Black youth perform new modes of representation that allow them to experience life differently. Even though Singeli continues to be under surveillance for being a practice conducted by predominantly poor Black youth, it is now fully submerged within the larger sphere of Tanzanian culture. Therefore, Singeli disrupts the dominant culture by introducing alternative notions of expressing identity, gender, and sexuality. Singeli unapologetically makes visible the lives and experiences of poor Black people, particularly those who are

socially categorized as Wahuni and continually marginalized in society. For this reason, Singeli is essential in understanding how Black people in Tanzania reimagine themselves as modern subjects, often in dire and unpredictable circumstances.

The main objective of my dissertation was to reveal an alternative understanding of contemporary Black life in Tanzania. For this reason, I dedicated each chapter to examining Black life using themes that I believed were insufficiently explored by scholars in modern-day urban Africa. To illustrate, Chapter 1 explored pleasure in nightlife spaces as a way for Black people to express alternative ways of being that are denied to them in other contexts. In doing so, I show that pleasure makes it possible for Black people to reclaim their bodies and subvert how the state/dominant culture attempts to discipline and control them. I further demonstrate this process by exploring how acts of dance (i.e., twerking, moshing) are liberating performances that allow Black women to push against forces that attempt to define their gender roles and control their sexuality. Additionally, dance allows Black men to perform vulnerable forms of masculinity that they cannot express publicly. Chapter 1 further explores soundscapes to build an understanding of how noise making and noise operate as a form of power and resistance. Moreover, I closely examine how soundscapes shape Black identities, communities, and, ultimately Dar es Salaam as a city.

In Chapter 2, I examine music videos as a site that constructs and represents current practices of Black youth identities. To do this, I analyze how the identities of Black youth evolved (from Nyerere's era to the present day) and how music videos

show alternative ways of being that counter Tanzanian dominant culture. In addition, I argue that Singeli music videos produce local performances of identity that are more aligned with the everyday experiences of Black youth. In Chapter 3, I discuss the way social media fosters forms of care, community, and freedom of expression for Black youth. Furthermore, I explore the role of celebrity culture in Tanzania as a space that Black youth gravitate to because it does not attempt to control or oppress them like dominant culture or state power. In Chapter 4, I focus on the various theories and production techniques that influenced the making of the film *All We Got*. These chapters are connected through their exploration of Singeli music and culture. My research revealed that Singeli operated as a medium that provided a deep understanding of Black people's everyday lives and experiences in Dar es Salaam.

Throughout the dissertation process, I became more exposed to the reality that poor Black people in Tanzania do not want to necessarily be in constant resistance to systems of oppression or state power. Such actions could result in death, disappearance, or imprisonment. Therefore, poor Black people tend to operate alongside them as a mode of survival and to reduce exposure to violence. This strategy directly connects to poor Black people not having equal access to power and resources. Due to this reality, they focus on securing their livelihoods. Nevertheless, I wonder what the future holds for poor Black people in Tanzania primarily because in 2023, the state lifted the controversial law that banned political rallies from

oppositional parties.[152] In this light, it could provide poor Black people greater freedom and possibilities for shaping their lives.

I chose to focus on Singeli in my dissertation to demonstrate that it is a practice that documents Black people's experiences but also visualizes freedom. Singeli operates as a form of agency where Black people have control over their identities, voices, and bodies. In doing so, I demonstrate that Singeli is a unique tool of resistance against dominant culture and order that attempts to regulate and exclude certain practices of Black life. Therefore, Singeli becomes a way of knowing the experiences of poor urban Black people. In this vein, my research reveals that Singeli is a site that produces local knowledge that helps us better understand how Black people are currently responding and critiquing their place in Tanzania on an individual and collective level.

To return to my conversation with Sisso Records artists about the future of Singeli,  Makaveli pulls out his phone. He plays a song where he collaborated with producer Jay Mitta and Brazilian band Baiana System to highlight how Singeli continues to experiment sonically. When listening to this particular track, I was impressed with how it sounded because the Singeli song was mixed with Samba Reggae sounds and production techniques. Strategically, it indicated that Singeli would continue to thrive, survive, and continuously be reimagined by connecting with other music styles, cultures, and locations. For future critical research on Singeli, I

[152] "Why Lifting Tanzania's Opposition Ban Suits President Samia," 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64485779.

intend to focus more on the music production aspects of the genre. To do this, I will first examine Singeli's production roots, grounded in the Tanzanian genres Taarab and Mchiriku. In addition, I want to analyze further the role of Vigodoro parties and how that influenced producers and artists in constructing Singeli. In direct connection to this, I would explore how producers and artists are currently experimenting and collaborating locally and globally to push the boundaries of Singeli music production. Also, I am interested in examining how technology plays a crucial role in expanding the creation, performance, and recording of Singeli more broadly. Regarding a creative research direction, I want to create a film documenting Singeli music production that will show long durational recording sessions in artists' studios, homes, and tours. Doing so would allow for building a solid perspective on the creative process in Singeli music and how it shapes the ongoing evolution of the genre.

I close this dissertation with the words of Makaveli after he finished playing his song. He proudly says: "Singeli Never Dies."

Appendix of dissertation video art piece

***All We Got* (2023)**
Link: **https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/777751574**
Password: ALLWEGOTdaressalaamfinalversion2023dab-luh

A still from a scene in *All We Got*.

All We Got is a 30 minute split-screen video art piece that explores the lives of Singeli artists, local inhabitants and urban spaces in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. While the video might read as a ethnography/documentary, it actually blends together fiction and nonfiction storytelling strategies and techniques to reveal how everyday people in Dar es Salaam are reimagining themselves as modern Tanzanian subjects and navigating daily life.

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