

Sheng': Kenya's Language of Defiance
Mutanu Kyany'a – African Digital Heritage

In her talk, Mutanu takes us through Sheng'; an argot language that was born in Nairobi in the 1960s that's a fusion of majorly English and Kiswahili, but also borrows from multiple other Kenyan languages.

Taking on an auto-ethnographic angle, Mutanu acquaints us with the history of Sheng', it's spread in Nairobi and the rest of the country, plus the kind of encounters it has produced in its evolution. The talk delves into Sheng' as an expression of freedom thinking, as a language that centres play, as a language where art and activism meet and lastly, as a memory map.

The talk hopes to serve as a perfect example of how language can be used to study the clash between hegemonic and minority cultures and identities, even as communities pursue decolonization.