

The BBI report: Online trends analysis

How influential and prominent accounts amplified online conversations that were either supportive or critical of the BBI report



The BBI report: Online trends analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary	3
Executive summary: What's the story?	4
The authors	5
The Context	7
The Network	8
The Hashtags	9
Conclusion	14

Glossary

Detailed descriptions and explanations of terms and abbreviations relevant to this report are listed below. These serve to clarify how such abbreviations and terms are used in our report and are not intended to be authoritative.

Abbreviation	Description
ANCIR	African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting
BBI	Building Bridges Initiative
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CfA	Code for Africa
NASA	National Super Alliance

Executive Summary

The BBI report trends analysis: How influential and prominent accounts amplified online conversations that were either supportive or critical of the BBI report.

On 21 October 2021, President Kenyatta **received the BBI report** while at the Kisii State Lodge. Shortly after and for the days to follow, we observed a set of hashtags that began to trend each day, containing narratives that were either supportive or critical of the implementation of the BBI proposals. This included hashtags #BBIsNothing, #RejectBBI, #BBIPeoplesAgenda and #RIPBBI.

We noted that the most popular tweets across the four hashtags were from prominent influencers or politicians. Notably, one of the accounts used to amplify the #BBIsNothing was impersonating a prominent politician and has since been suspended by Twitter.

The investigation revealed a network of 533 accounts that participated in three out of the four hashtags under consideration (#BBIsNothing, #RejectBBI and #BBIPeoplesAgenda). These accounts generated 3,676 tweets representing ~8.5% of the total number of tweets. 12 of these accounts were created after September 2020, just a month to the date of the first observed hashtag.

Further, majority of the posts under the hashtags #BBIsNothing, #RejectBBI and #RIPBBI were critical of the BBI report, while majority of the posts under the hashtag #BBIPeoplesAgenda were generally in support of the report.

The Authors

Code for Africa (CfA) is the continent's largest network of non-profit independent civic technology and open data laboratories, with teams of full-time technologists and analysts in 13 African countries. CfA's laboratories build digital democracy solutions that give citizens unfettered access to actionable information to improve citizens' ability to make informed decisions, and to strengthen civic engagement for improved public governance and accountability.

The African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting (ANCIR) is a CfA initiative that brings together the continent's best investigative newsrooms, ranging from large traditional mainstream media to smaller specialist units. ANCIR member newsrooms investigate crooked politicians, organised crime and big business. The iLAB is ANCIR's in-house digital forensic team of data scientists and investigative specialists who spearhead investigations that individual newsrooms are unable to tackle on their own. This includes forensic analysis of suspected digital disinformation campaigns aimed at misleading citizens or triggering social discord or polarisation using hate speech or radicalisation or other techniques.

The iLAB subscribes to CfA's guiding principles:

1. **We show what's possible.** Digital democracy can be expensive. We seek to be a catalyst by lowering the political risk of experimentation by creating successful proofs-of-concept for liberating civic data, for building enabling technologies and for pioneering sustainable revenue models. We also seek to lower the financial costs for technology experimentation by creating and managing 'shared' backbone civic technology and by availing resources for rapid innovation.
2. **We empower citizens.** Empowering citizens is central to our theory of change. Strong democracies rely on engaged citizens who have actionable information and easy-to-use channels for making their will known. We therefore work primarily with citizen organisations and civic watchdogs, including the media. We also support government and social enterprises to develop their capacity to meaningfully respond to citizens and to effectively collaborate with citizens.
3. **We are action oriented.** African societies are asymmetric. The balance of power rests with governments and corporate institutions, at the expense of citizens. Citizens are treated as passive recipients of consultation or services. We seek to change this by focusing on actionable data and action-orientated tools that give 'agency' to citizens.
4. **We operate in public.** We promote openness in our work and in the work of our partners. All of our digital tools are open source and all our information is open data. We actively encourage documentation, sharing, collaboration, and reuse of both our own tools, programmes, and processes, as well as those of partners.
5. **We help build ecosystems.** We actively marshal resources to support the growth of a pan-African ecosystem of civic technologists. Whenever possible we reuse existing tools, standards and platforms, encouraging integration and extension. We operate as a pan-African federation of organisations who are active members of a global community, leveraging each other's knowledge and resources, because all of our work is better if we are all connected.

This report was authored by the iLAB's East African team, consisting of investigative manager **Allan Cheboi**, data analyst **Jean Githae** and data technologist **Robin Kiplangat**. The report was edited by senior programme manager **Amanda Strydom** and deputy CEO **Chris Roper**, copy-edited by **Natasha Joseph** and approved for publication by CEO **Justin Arenstein**.



Akademie



academy
AFRICA

The Context

On March 9, 2018 Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta and the leader of the main opposition, Raila Odinga, **surprised** their supporters when they publicly shook hands and agreed to work together. Just over a month after Kenyatta and Odinga were shaking hands, they endorsed a framework to address the governance challenges that had contributed to the country's divisive politics and ethnic antagonism. The framework was called the Building Bridges Initiative.

The **Building Bridges Initiative** (BBI) was a set of proposed constitutional amendments to Kenya's 2010 Constitution. Its key mandate was underpinned by a nine-point agenda outlined as Lack of National Ethos; Responsibilities and Rights; Ethnic Antagonism and Competition; Divisive Elections; Inclusivity; Shared Prosperity; Corruption; Devolution; and Safety and Security.

The handshake and the Building the Bridges Initiative evolved alongside the emerging signs of a collapse of the pact between Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto.

On 21 October 2021, President Kenyatta **received the BBI report** while at the Kisii State Lodge. Shortly after and for the days to follow, we observed a set of hashtags that began to trend each day, containing narratives that were either supportive or critical of the implementation of the BBI proposals. This included hashtags #BBIsNothing, #RejectBBI, #BBIPeoplesAgenda and #RIPBBI.

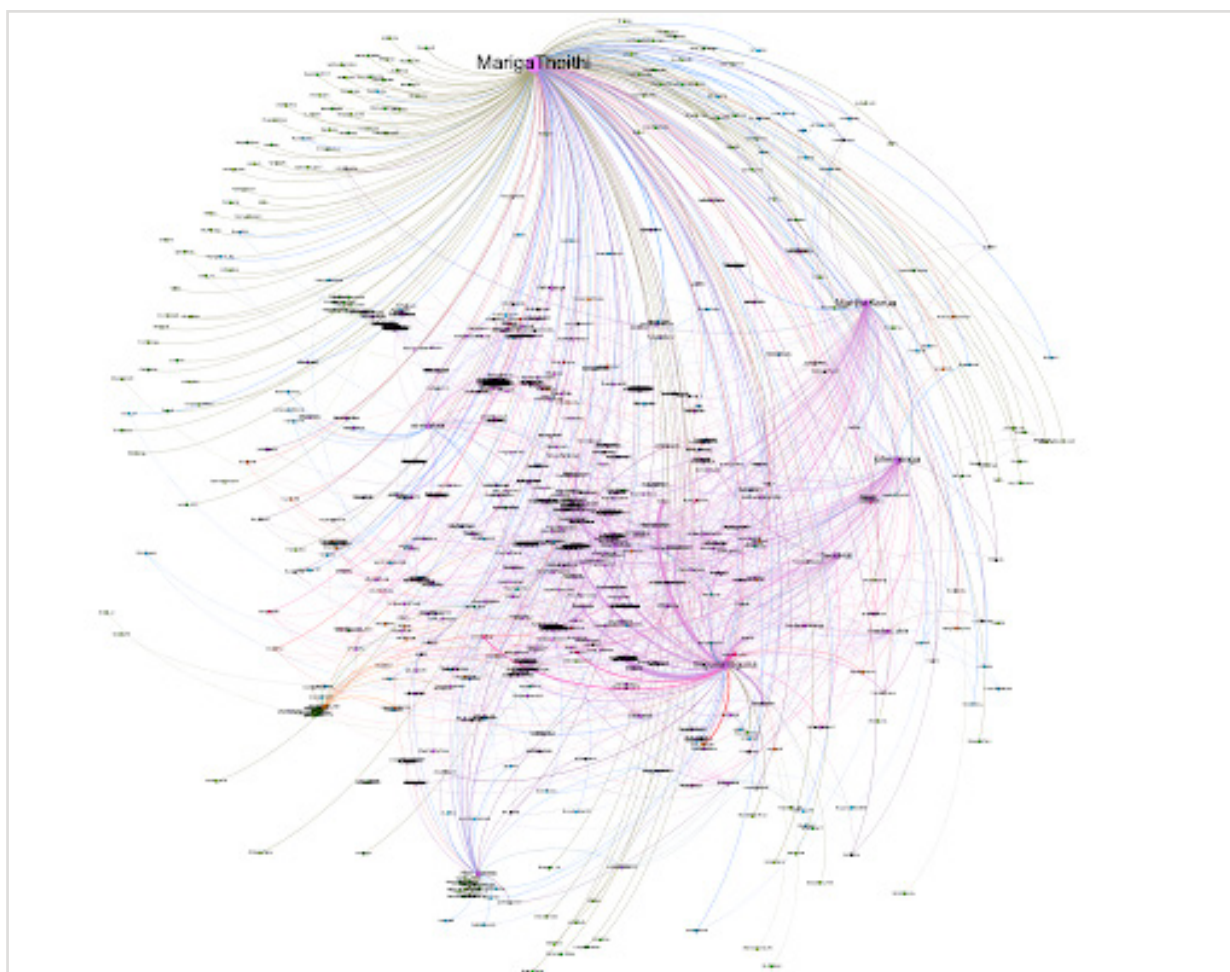
The Network

Using Meltwater, a social media monitoring tool, we extracted tweets that used any of the four hashtags on Twitter resulting in a total of 43,159 tweets posted between 21 October 2020 and 25 November 2020. The tweets had been generated by 1,883 unique accounts. 41% of the tweets representing 17,805 posts, were retweets.

Our analysis revealed that out of the total 1,883 unique accounts that participated in the three hashtags, 533, representing 28% of the accounts participated in the three out of the four trends (#BBIsNothing, #RejectBBI and #BBIPeoplesAgenda). A total of 607, representing 32% participated in the first two out of the four hashtags (#BBIsNothing and #RejectBBI) and a total of 841, representing 44% of the accounts participated in the other two hashtags (#BBIsNothing and #BBIPeoplesAgenda).

The 533 accounts were responsible for 3,676 posts (~8.5% of the total number of posts). Additionally, 12 (0.6%) of these accounts were created after September 2020, just a month to the date of the first observed hashtag.

We noted that the most popular tweets across the four hashtags were from prominent influencers or politicians.

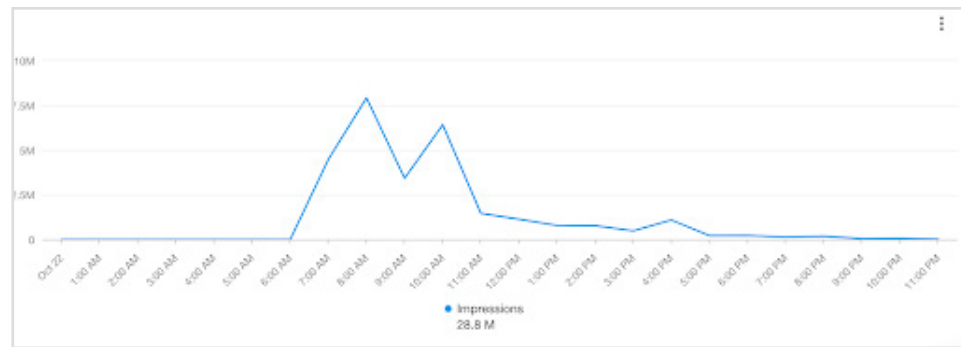
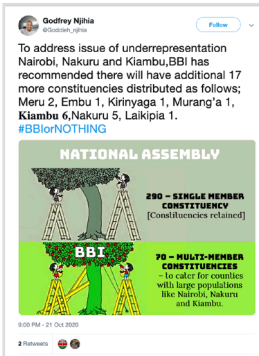


Social network analysis showing how the network of 533 accounts retweeted posts from influencers, politicians and prominent accounts (Source: CfA)

The Hashtags

#BBlorNOTHING

The #BBlorNothing started trending on 21 October 2020, from a patient zero tweet originating from user account @Goddieh_njihia supporting the BBI's proposal to increase the number of constituencies. The hashtag ended up garnering a total of 28.8 million impressions.



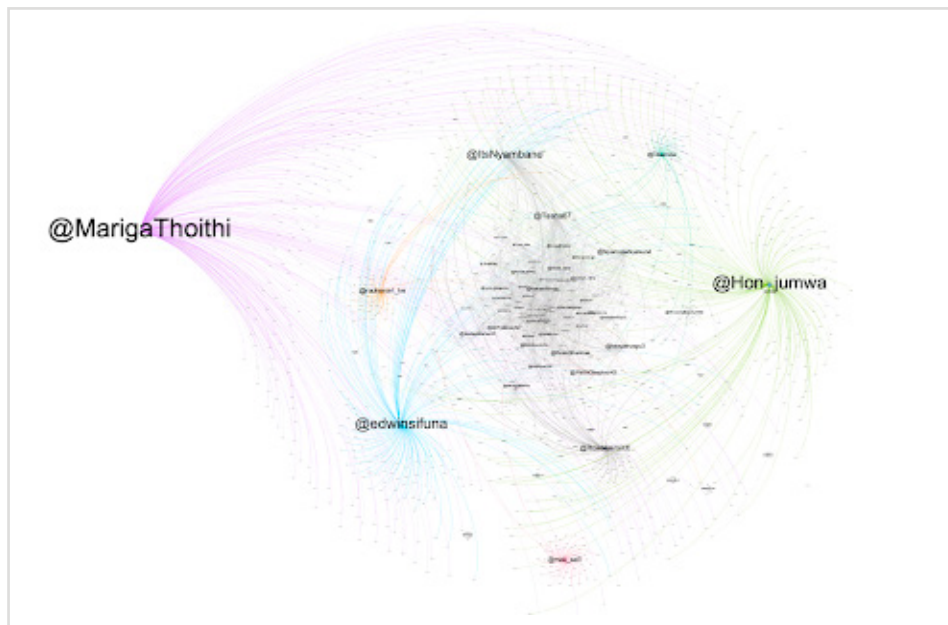
Original tweet and total number of impressions for the #BBlorNothing hashtag (Source: [Twitter](#)/CfA)

The most popular tweet within this hashtag was from user @MarigaThoithi who used the hashtag #RejectBBI, while retweeting a post from politician @edwinsifuna that mentioned the hashtag #BBlorNothing.



Most popular tweet using the #BBlorNothing hashtag (Source: [Twitter](#)/CfA)

A social network visualisation of the hashtag shows the prominence of the three tweets within the hashtag.



Social network visualisation of the hashtag #BBIOrNothing (Source: Gephi/CfA)

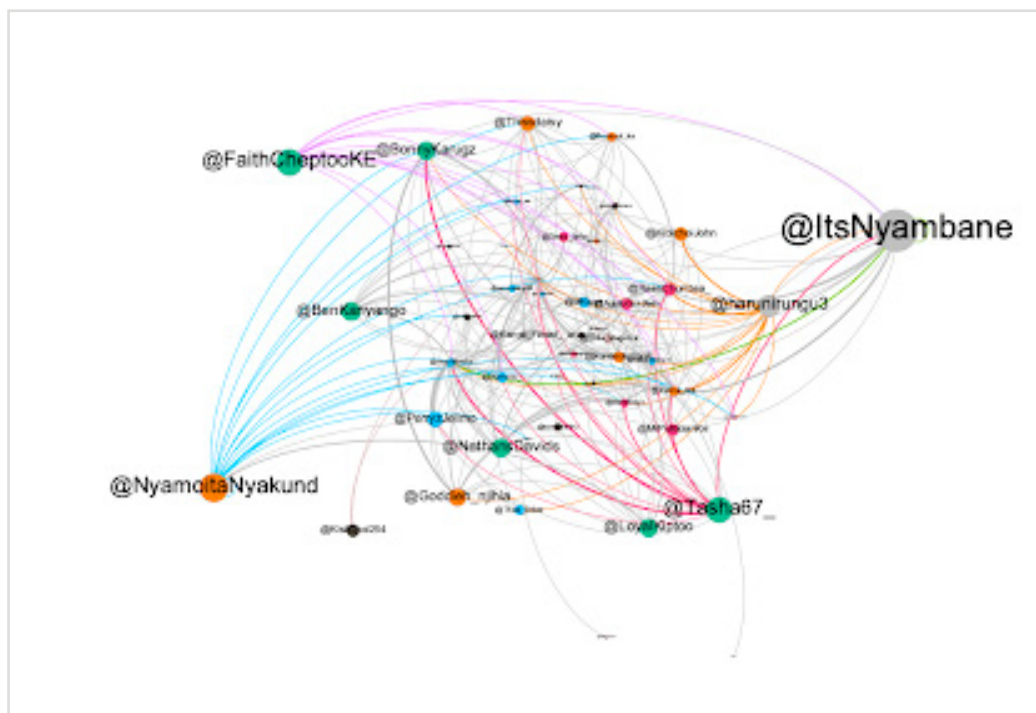
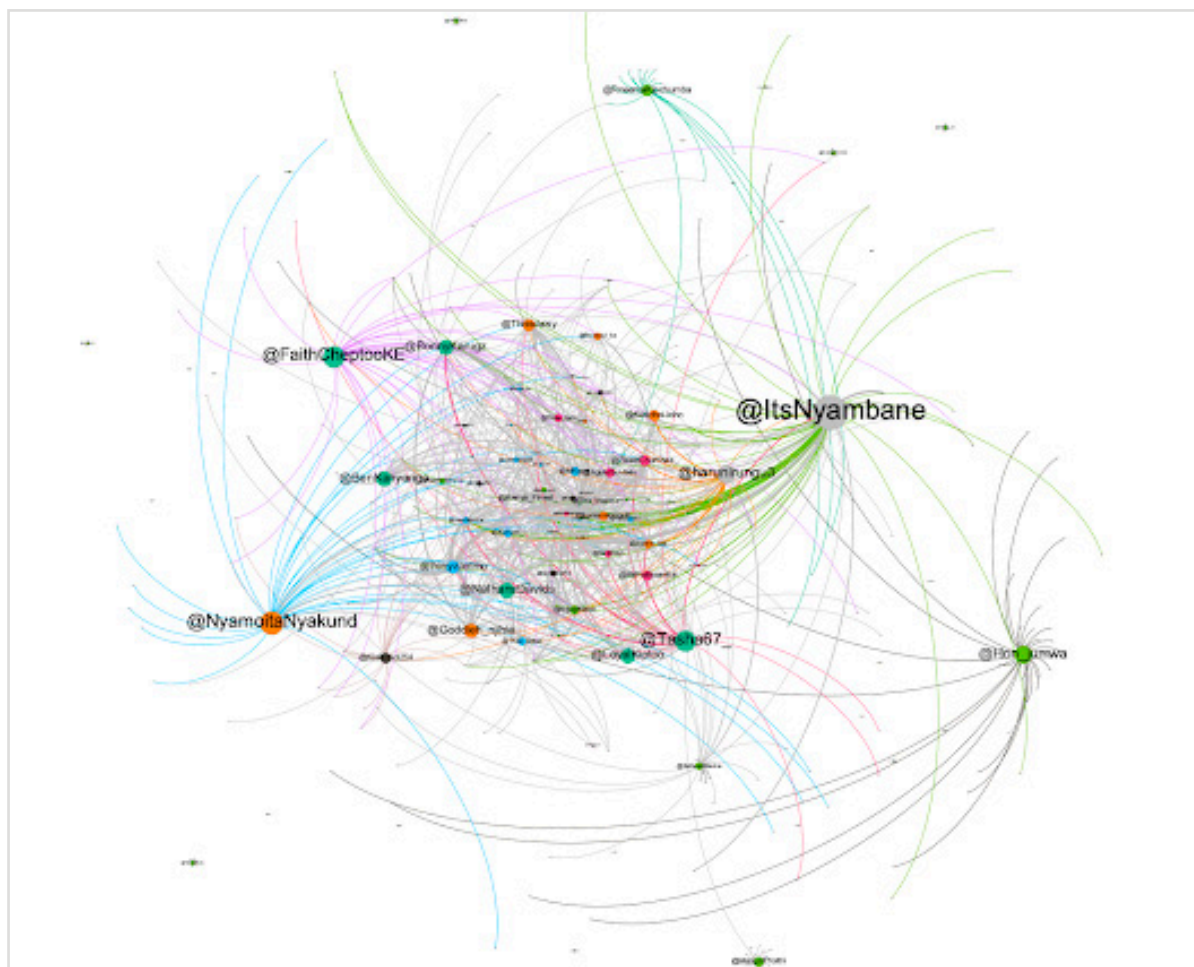
Although the hashtag was started by a user whose intention was to support the BBI report, the conversation quickly morphed to show that majority of the users using the hashtag were critical of the report. Notably, this was due to the subsequent creation of the #RejectBBI which was used together with the #BBIOrNothing.

Further analysis revealed that the user account @Hon_jumwa was impersonating a member of parliament and has since been suspended.



Account impersonating a politician (Kenya's Member of parliament for Malindi), suspended (Source: [Twitter](#)/CfA)

Excluding the most influential accounts from local online influencers and politicians, we noted that the hashtag had been amplified by a tight-knit coordinated network of accounts as seen in the social network diagrams below.



Network analysis of accounts under #BBIOrNothing, excluding influential accounts (Source: Gephi/ CfA)

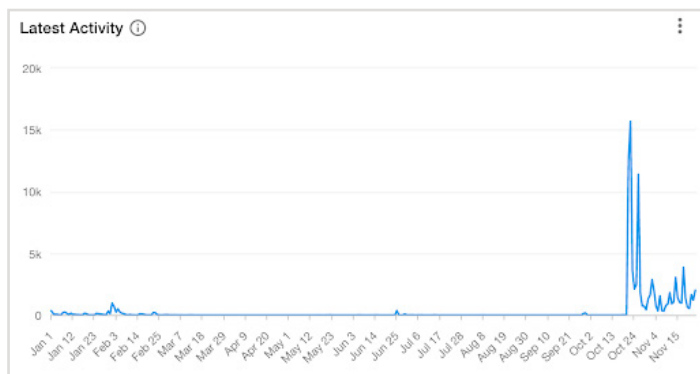
We also observed that some of the pro-BBI accounts using the hashtag used a copy-paste tactic to amplify support for the hashtag.



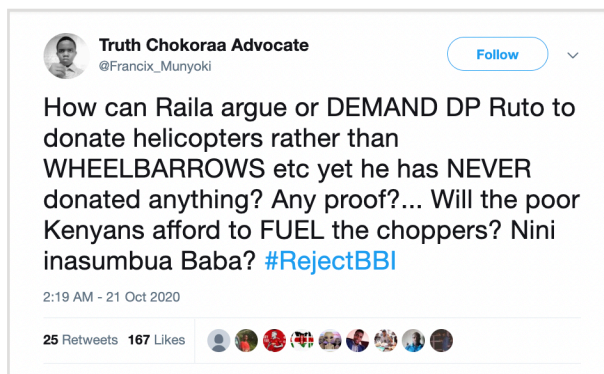
Sample copy-paste behaviour under the hashtag (Source: twitter/ CFA)

#RejectBBI

This hashtag was first traced back to a tweet posted in February 2020, however, it only resulted in a total of 973 mentions at the time. A sudden spike was subsequently observed on 21 October 2020, the day the hashtag #BBiorNothing also started trending. The patient zero tweet was posted by user @FrancisMunyoki_, and was critical of Raila Odinga, who was a key proponent of the BBI report.



Timeline using the #RejectBBI and screengrab of first tweet (Source: [Twitter](#), CFA)

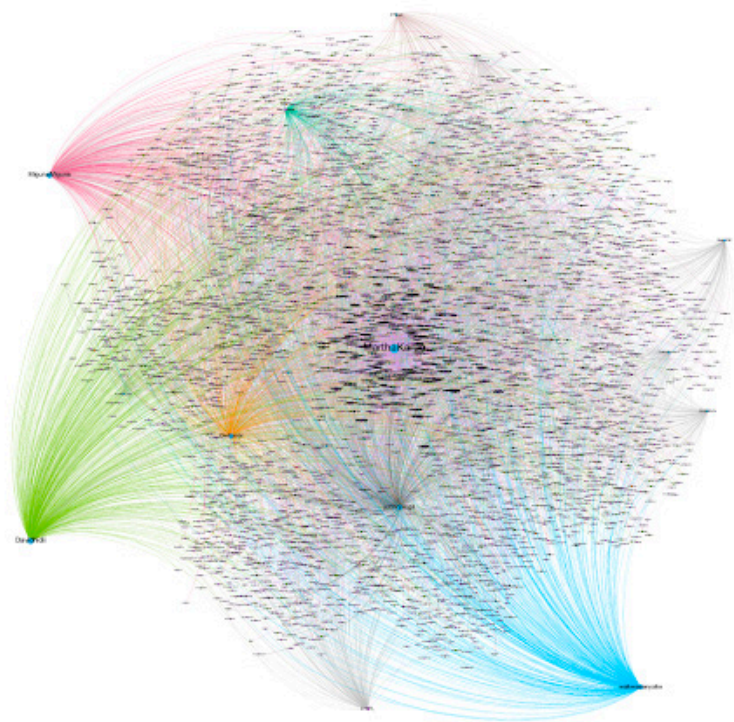


We also observed that influential individuals and politicians participated in this trend, including former Minister of Justice, Martha Karua, former senior advisor to former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, Miguna Miguna and economist and former chief strategist of NASA (Raila Odinga's political party), David Ndii, who were critical of the BBI report and its proposals.



Sample tweets from prominent politicians and influential individuals in Kenya (Source: [left](#), [centre](#), [right](#)/ CFA)

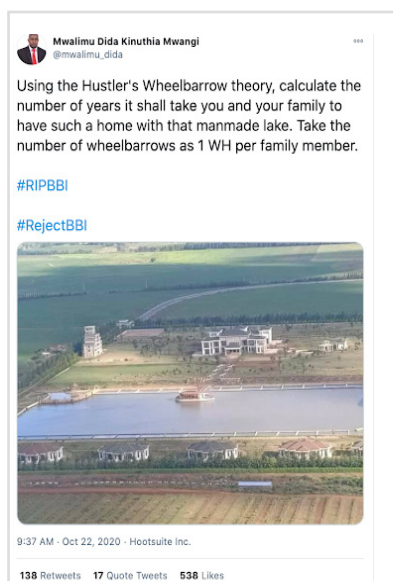
A social network mapping of the network shows the retweet network for the tweets originating from the set of influential accounts.



Social network analysis visualisation of the #RejectBBI (Gephi/ CFA)

#BBIPeoplesAgenda & #RIPBBI

The #BBIPeoplesAgenda and #RIPBBI hashtags both started trending on 22 October 2020, but did not garner significant attention or social media shares, with #BBIPeoplesAgenda garnering 1,360 mentions while #RIPBBI garnered only 138 mentions which were primarily retweets from a single post by user @mwalimu_dida. The #BBIPeoplesAgenda was also amplified by prominent individuals such as Raila Odinga and Junet Mohammed.



Tweets from influential politicians such as Mwalimu Dida, Raila Odinga and Junet Mohamed (Source: [centre](#), [right](#)/ CFA)

The RIPBBI hashtag was mainly used together with the #RejectBBI.

Conclusion

This investigation revealed how prominent hashtags can be used to amplify key conversations that affect the normal citizen in a country. Prominent individuals and influential people participate and significantly amplify such conversations. Accounts that impersonate politicians can also significantly manipulate such key online conversations.

Published by

Code for Africa is the continent's largest federation of civic technology and data journalism labs with teams in: Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mali, Nigeer, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia & Uganda

CfA Secretariat: 112 Loop Street, Cape Town, Western Cape, 8000, South Africa.

South Africa NPO Number 168-092 | Kenya NPO Number CPR/2016/220101 | Nigeria NPO Number: RC-1503312

Kenya Lab: Nairobi Garage, 8th Floor, Pinetree Plaza, Kaburu Drive, Nairobi, Kenya.

Nigeria (Abuja) Lab: Ventures Park, 29, Mambilla Street, Aso Drive, Abuja, Nigeria.

Nigeria (Lagos) Lab: Workstation, No 7, Ibiyinka Olorunbe street, off Saka Tinibu, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria

Tanzania Lab: 7th Floor, 38 Tanzanite, Park, New Bagamoyo Road, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Uganda Lab Pollicy, Plot 7 Kulubya Road, Bugolobi, Kampala, Uganda.



Akademie