



Eyes Unseen: When the Digital Age Watches the Watchers

A Civic-Tech Reflection on Misinformation, Safety, and Surveillance

We live in a time where a single click can ignite a movement — or silently place someone under watch. Digital platforms have become modern public squares, giving young people the power to speak, organize, and challenge injustice. Yet beneath this promise lies an uncomfortable truth: the same spaces that amplify our voices can quietly observe, record, and restrain them.

Across the globe, and increasingly within Kenya, digital technologies are no longer neutral tools. They are being woven into systems of control — tracking online behavior, mapping social networks, and shaping narratives long before citizens ever step into the streets. Surveillance today does not always arrive with uniforms or force; it arrives through screens, algorithms, and invisible data trails.

Misinformation and disinformation fuel this reality. False stories spread faster than truth, playing on fear, anger, and uncertainty. Artificial intelligence has raised the stakes even higher, blurring the line between what is real and what is manufactured. In this confusion, trust fractures, communities divide, and surveillance finds justification.

Young people carry the heaviest burden. Online harassment, identity misuse, account takeovers, and psychological harm are not abstract threats — they are daily experiences. What begins as digital harm often spills into real life, silencing voices and shrinking civic space.

Civic technology offers hope. When paired with digital literacy, rights awareness, and ethical design, technology becomes a shield rather than a weapon. It empowers youth to question manipulation, protect their privacy, and reclaim digital spaces as arenas of dignity, truth, and participation. In an age of unseen eyes, courage means choosing visibility with agency, integrity, and care.

~ by Rahma Kassim