

Review of: "Animation and YouTube as Alternative and Counterhegemonic Digital Public Sphere in Zimbabwe"

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This article is a vital contribution, expanding upon the academic conversation about political interpretations and possibilities within a digital environment. Overall, the article is an enjoyable read.

The literature reviewed is appropriate, but the theoretical case could be stronger with the addition of ideas from more global scholars working in the fields of culture studies, oppositional readings, and tensions between (potential) polysemy and the role(s) of the non-dominant reader within a society. Furthermore, the citations in the body should all receive ending reference (e.g., Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes and Sasson (1992) is not in references).

Because the materials of study have received less academic attention than political cartoons and animations from the West, for me (and possibly other readers) the descriptions are particularly helpful. After selecting sampled episodes of *Nyoka* and *Kunyepa* found on YouTube prior to the 2013 general elections in Zimbabwe, the authors clearly explain the domestic audience/ receivers' pre-existing, social and political contexts.

From provided examples, the authors create well-reasoned arguments for describing ways they see the images and messages may function. They claim, "this paper explores how the subaltern invent and transform social media into a space for oppositional politics". In my opinion, their argument would be stronger if they also could explain ways that the popular YouTube videos created possibilities for the subsequent dissemination of the political concepts. The authors identify ideas associated with alternatives to (or criticisms of) the hegemonic interpretations of messages disseminated by state media, but how are these ideas received and implemented? Perhaps, the resultant public dialogues and deliberations that transition the offered ideas from individual thoughts, to reflections, discourse, and political action within the (larger) public sphere can be acknowledged (for those of us with less knowledge of Zimbabwean politics).

The authors' argument is that there is an online alternative public sphere— the authors provide a good balance of examples and analysis, and although there is some compelling evidence, I'd prefer stronger statements and support. I look forward to continuing to read scholarship from these authors!