

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

Ian Anderson

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

A strong case study, with some conceptual refinement needed. The paper presents a compelling textual analysis of animation as political propaganda, underpinned by a convincing claim that animation serves as much of a political function as written text. The argument that subaltern counterpublics do not always advance pluralist perspectives, but rather can advance politically monopolistic perspectives in this case is persuasive.

However, other aspects are less convincing. The paper argues that animation itself functions as a public sphere. This is an intriguing proposition theoretically, but arguably contradicted by the paper's own claims. The paper outlines a propagandistic party-political perspective advanced by animation supporting the MDC, but a public sphere in the classical sense is generally conceived as a space where multiple perspectives can be advanced. I would suggest the animation in this context is comparable to the role of a specific political publication intervening in a classical European public sphere: not a public sphere itself, but a crucial part of a broader public sphere. While this is a less radical claim theoretically, it seems better supported by the observations the author makes about the case study. It would be useful to have a section defining key concepts, especially the public sphere, before moving into the analysis.

A copy-edit is also needed.

With some refinement, the paper can make an important contribution to understanding the complexities of contemporary digital counter-public spheres in an under-explored national context.