

Commercialization, Mediatization and De-Politization? A Discussion about the Changing Role of Cartoons in the Tanzanian Mediascape

Ylva Ekström¹

¹Malmö University, School of Arts and Communication, Malmö, Sweden

ylva.ekstrom@mah.se

In this paper the changing role of cartoons and comic strips in Tanzanian print media will be discussed. The paper takes its point of departure in discussions with the Tanzanian visual artist and cartoonist Fred Halla, who argues that “the future of cartoons and cartoonists is very frightening as I don’t see the new generation that as inspired as we were in 1990’s”. He maintains that cartoons were politically more significant in the more limited media landscape, and that the commercial media and the rapid growth of audiovisual media such as television and the Internet are competing with the media and art form, both over the audience and the artists. This paper will thus, on the one hand, place the cartoon as a media form in the broader media landscape of Tanzania and the changes it has gone through since the de-regulation and liberalization of the media market in the early 1990’s, and it will on the other hand show and analyze concrete and illustrative examples of Tanzanian cartoons from the 1990’s and early 2000’s. The analysis will serve as a critical illustration of how mediatization and commercialization may lead to de-politization, but it will also problematize the critical discourse and discuss whether the cartoon as a media and art form today may serve as a contemporary popular political culture.