



Moritz Konrad

From Scapegoats to Lolcows: Anti-Fandom, Hatewatching and the Dialectic of Participatory Culture

Extended English Abstract of “[Vom Sündenbock zur Lolcow: Anti-Fandoms, hatewatching und die Dialektik der Partizipationskultur](#)”

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines contemporary anti-fandom, focusing on the variety of the practices involved, the relevance of digital infrastructures and affordances, as well as the affective economy underpinning it.

The text first situates the spectrum and the extremes of the practices involved here through the anti-fandom around the German YouTuber Drachenlord, which has come to be known as the ‘Drachengame.’ Ever since viewers provoked Rainer Winkler, the content creator behind the account, into revealing his address in a video, he has become the victim of highly organized forms of cyberbullying and of harassment in the physical world. His anti-fans ridicule him online in the form of hateful comments, memes, and parody videos, even catfishing him in order to publicly humiliate him. His viewers connect through forums and chat groups, create archives of his videos and activities, and reupload his content to external platforms in order to interfere with his ability to monetize the attention he attracts. Winkler has become his audience’s ‘lolcow’—someone who is agonized for their amusement. In order to justify their behavior, Winkler’s anti-fans invoke what has been described as the pseudo-fantastical, viewing his life through the lens of fiction and dividing it into seasons as if it were a TV show.

Similar dynamics have emerged around content creator MaxPro3500, the paper’s second case study. While his audience is not as organized as the ‘Drachengame,’ comparable styles of humor can be observed alongside direct references to the anti-fandom around Drachenlord. The comparison of the two makes evident the role of platform-specific affordances, with MaxPro3500’s anti-fans using tools such as TikTok’s automated closed captions to mock his speech impediment or Twitch’s cheers feature to insert insulting comments into his live streams. The latter in particular illustrates—as does MaxPro3500’s situation more generally—the precarious financial situation of the objects of anti-fandom, which the paper explores by extending Sara Ahmed’s concept of the affective economy: Not only is the hate around MaxPro3500 increased through comments, memes, and parodies, but through an affective economy of a secondary order, he is incentivized to tolerate the hate as he is reliant upon the income generated through these interactions.

The central practice of both of these anti-fandoms is hatewatching, which the paper in turn analyses to extend the existing typology. Through an analysis of Instagram accounts such as @psychosenpetra and @digitaleswaterboarding, the paper proposes ‘casual hatewatching’ as a practice in which users interact with clips and compilations of cringeworthy content without becoming invested members of a particular anti-fandom. Both accounts repost TikTok videos created by other users and integrate them into an affective economy of their own, effectively exploiting them for financial profit while increasing the hate directed at them.

As a final case study, the text explores Sören-Santiago, a fictional character created by filmmaker Jon Grandpierre. Sören-Santiago exhibits many similarities to the cases discussed thus far, taking on the appearance of a typical object of anti-fandom. The reception of his content varies between hateful comments by the uninitiated and ironically affirmative reactions presumably left by those who see through Grandpierre’s pseudo-authentic performance. Through his ironic stance, the character enables a practice the paper terms ‘ethical hatewatching.’

Moreover, Sören-Santiago is emblematic of content creators adapting the figure of the 'lolcow' to experiment with new narrative strategies.

The text concludes with a reflection on the ethical implications and the methodological challenges raised by the study of anti-fandom. Researchers face the dilemma of describing concrete practices to further their argument without reproducing the hateful content in question. Additionally, the content of both anti-fans and their objects are routinely subject to deletion, which not only makes the activities and relationships of the two hard to follow but in effect renders anti-fan archives the most reliable—though by no means neutral—source for researchers.

Through the analysis of these dynamics, the paper makes apparent the power imbalance manifesting between highly organized anti-fandoms and their object of ridicule, with the former in extreme cases being able to control the life of the latter. This relationship is emblematic of how the affordances of digital infrastructures and social media platforms in particular—once described as democratic and subversive—enable the proliferation of hate, e.g., in the form of cyberbullying, which the paper situates as the dialectic of participatory culture.

KEYWORDS

anti-fandom, hatewatching, participatory culture, YouTube, Drachenlord, MaxPro3500, affektive economy, cyber mobbing

AUTHOR

Moritz Konrad studied Fine Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, as well as Art History and Media Philosophy at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. He is currently a research associate within the CoE "Imaginamics: Practices and Dynamics of Social Imagining" at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena. He is pursuing a PhD in Media Studies, researching the forms of visual humor in internet memes and their influence on the political thinking and actions of collectives and individuals.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0320-0736>