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Title: Light Power: a hitchhiker's guide to the Chinese animateur

### **Abstract**

Film scholarship on the movie-making, movie-viewing and movie-circulating practices that have developed since the mid-1990s in China has appropriately emphasized the role played by the rise of digital video (DV) and its impact on independent, and in particular documentary, filmmaking. One important line of development in DV independent production that has received less attention is the rise of the amateur. I focus on what I call *animateur* cinema – which concerns short digital animations that are made by and/or circulated for online (or on-mobile) movie-makers/viewers. More specifically, this study explores its distinctive contribution to “alternative” cultural spaces, broadly defined by non-institutional and unofficial locations.

In these cultural spaces, the players (and no better word could be more aptly used in this context as playfulness and gaming are at the core of the animateur experience) also engage in often - but not necessarily always – humorous remaking and undoing of Chinese soft power. Their “light power” is part of a broader resistance against regulation and institutionalization of culture and instead promotes its unregulated, spontaneous, and in fact chaotic de-centralization.