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Editorial

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The political economy of communication is a dynamic yet well-established intellectual field. This issue of our journal features new areas of research, foundational texts, and long-standing analytic themes alongside commentaries on pressing current issues.

Christian Fuchs' innovative article reveals how the political economies of consumption associated with digital technologies are structurally embedded within political economies of production and labour exploitation. The exterior world of computers, laptops, and mobile phones obscures a globally networked system of digital labour. In a series of case studies, Fuchs demonstrates how wage workers, unpaid 'prosumers', and slave labourers create value and profits for ICT corporations. To this end he develops a Marxian mode of production framework which stresses the contemporary co-existence of different labour forms and the inherent limitations of global value chain analysis.

Transnational regimes of digital labour exploitation generate megaprofits for the likes of Microsoft, Google, Apple, and their major subcontractors. Nuria Almiron reminds us that the CEOs and executives of media-entertainment corporations such as News Corporation, Time-Warner, and Viacom are also well remunerated. In fact, media industry boards comprise some of the most well paid positions in the world, compared to those in much larger industrial and financial conglomerates. Such remunerations reflect stock performance and exemplify the financialisation of corporate governance and profitability which pervades all economic sectors. In this context, top level media executives have become part of a global corporate order shaped by financial oligarchy. Almiron concludes that critical media researchers should agitate for greater controls over media executive salary packages.

Amidst global media corporations, computer-mediated communication, and digital labour, Trish Morgan provides a timely excavation of Adorno and Horkheimer's culture industry critique. Their original account in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) was informed by Adorno's 1938 essay: *On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening.* As Morgan points out, this was a founding text for the political economy of communication field. The key themes she discusses are the replacement of culture's transformative value by an ever-present familiarity, the translation of familiarity into exchange value, the commodification of recorded musical expression, and the regression of listening as an exemplar of culture's industrialisation. For Morgan, these insights remain relevant in a reified post-modern world where commodification and total administrative processes proliferate on a global scale. Additionally, the resilience of neoliberalism, despite its many policy failures, compels us to reconsider the ideological role of culture and communication from an Adornian perspective. Here, it is important to appreciate how commercialised cultural

forms are actually received, in relation to how they might otherwise be received. Doing so may elicit resources for resisting contemporary capitalist manifestations of instrumental reason.

Jane Duncan's article critically examines South African press coverage of the Marikana mine workers massacre of August 16th 2012. Her analysis reveals that coverage strongly favoured official accounts of the massacre and business sourced discussions of the economic context. Miners' voices, independent of the main trade union organisations, were barely mentioned. Consequently, the police version of events, which portrayed miners as violent and irrational, went largely unchallenged. Duncan cites counter examples of investigative journalism amidst the commercial and organisational constraints of newsrooms and the structural limits of a political-economic transition which dismantled apartheid while maintaining financial institutions and the 'minerals-energy complex'. Theoretically, Duncan's account affirms the continued relevance of news source-news work research, content analysis, and ideology critique against the backdrop of the capitalist political economy and hegemonic coalitions of class rule.

The commentary section addresses the contemporary issues of state-corporate surveillance, digital media financialisation, and the clash between protest movements and official media. John Sullivan considers the repercussions of Edward Snowden's revelations concerning the collusion between US security agencies and social media corporations. He notes that the expansion of on-line communications has generated an explosion of individuated metadata which can be routed, stored, and retrieved at will. Furthermore, the line between corporate and government data mining is eroding. It is now public knowledge that Apple and Google have received thousands of National Security Agency requests. Under these conditions, Sullivan recalls the prescient scholarship of Oscar Gandy's *The Panoptic Sort* (1993) and recommends further research on the political economy of personal data gathering, storage, and analysis.

Martin Hirst considers the hype surrounding Twitter's listing on the public share register, despite the absence of visible financial support. The generous valuation, he argues, reflects Twitter's growing strategic importance within the digital media economy. The company sees opportunities in data presentation, software and app development acquisitions, as well as social media engagement with popular television audiences. Evidently, social media companies are going to be the communication giants of the future. Yet, Twitter's capacity for market domination and monopolistic business practices represents the historical pattern of mass media capitalism. Today, the key question is, who are the new media labouring subjects likely to be? Hirst finds them among bloggers, video uploaders, reviewers, 'prosumers', and unpaid citizen journalists. These are the digital serfs who, by undercutting mainstream media professionals, ensure the profitability of digital capitalism.

Ergin Bulut evaluates the performance of the Turkish news media in light of the Gezi Park protests that began at the end of May 2013. Subsequently, five protestors and one policeman died and about 10,000 people were injured. However, the mainstream television and newspaper groups belittled the protestors and deferred to the Erdogan government's perception of events. The result, as Bulut shows, was an expression of digital skills and creative energy designed to ridicule the Prime Minister and his media allies. It is now publicly apparent that the AKP (Erdogan's ruling party) is both conservative and neoliberal in its approach to politics and the economy. We look forward to an update of the situation in future issues of this journal.