

Editorial

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The political economy of communication is not a fixed field of inquiry. Overlapping changes in science and technology, political-economic power structures, cultural systems and global geo-politics require us to rework critical-theoretical standpoints. In this issue, Davina DesRoches' article demonstrates how the critique of commodification in relation to media systems and mediated domains can be applied to other institutional areas. To this end she depicts the museum as a contemporary communications medium riven by conflicting imperatives. The museum profession advances principles of equity, inclusiveness and community engagement in a capitalist environment which positions museum organizations as market actors. In such circumstances, DesRoches argues, cultural knowledge itself can become a function of monetized exchange value.

Helen Popović reminds us that processes of commodification are commensurate with authoritarian rule. In East and Southeast Europe after the fall of communism, media environments were shaped by advertising, infotainment and tabloid news values rather than public sphere principles. Popović considers the case of Croatia with reference to Social Responsibility Theory. From this perspective, self-regulated media organizations represent the public interest while operating as commercial entities. Croatia, however, reveals a co-existence between hierarchical media structures, competitive markets, and political clientelism. Of the major media players, only PSB Croatian Radio-television features diverse non-commercial content.

Measures and evaluations of content diversity need to incorporate multi-platform media. The methodological difficulties of doing so are outlined in Katherine Champion's research. From a three year project entitled 'Multi-platform media and the digital challenge', she here analyses the composition of content bundles from mass media and online outlets across the broadcast, newspaper and magazine publishing industries. Her general finding is that expansions in the volume of media content coincide with the recycling of content and the repetition of programmes and story types.

Ben Garner shows how China's advancement as an economic superpower has repurposed cultural production and cultural policy domestically, and on the world stage. In this context, international trade disputes associated with the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* point to the strategic significance of culture as a vehicle for global investment, industrialization, trade and development. This point is further illustrated in a discussion of the competition between the US and Chinese blockbusters *Avatar* and *Confucius* that occurred within China in 2010.

Tarek Cherkaoui's commentary on the recent imprisonment of Al Jazeera journalists by the Egyptian military regime delineates a struggle between media autonomy and brute state power in the context of Middle East geo-politics.