

## Editorial

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Political economy of communication research has multiple national applications. The contributions in this issue cover all English speaking countries, China, Spain and South Africa. Nicole Cohen and Grieg de Peuter's examination of unpaid internships in the communication and culture industries features a news frame analysis of 855 press articles in the US, UK, Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand from January 2008 to October 2015. They also conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 10 intern activists in Toronto, New York and London between 2012 and 2017. Their findings reveal a general transition whereby the normalisation of internships as unpaid work gave way to critical coverage which acknowledged the routine incidence of exploitation, illegality and unfairness. In this regard Cohen and De Peuter also record that gender and race based inequities were rarely mentioned in internship stories. The critical coverage that did occur is attributed to growing public awareness of the hard times which followed the 2008 financial bubble and the source prominence of media-savvy intern activists alongside their legal representatives. Here, Cohen and De Peuter note that because intern advocates worked outside of traditional union organisations they could attract a more sympathetic response from journalists.

The growing international presence of China's information-communication technology sector and platform enterprises is the setting for Jin Wang and Mai Anh Doan's account of Ant Financial. This digital financial company forms part of the Alibaba Group, the world's largest retailer. Apart from financial digital services, it specialises in the internet, artificial intelligence and e-commerce. In this context, Wang and Doan identify a three-phase process of corporate convergence. From 1999, Alibaba accumulated e-purchasers on its trading platform, Taobao, and enlarged China's e-consumer population. Then, Aliplay, originally the escrow for Taobao purchasers only, was expanded to incorporate Alibaba's entire e-consumer base. Consequently, Ant Financial extracted consumer data from Alibaba's e-commerce and digital payment platforms to create new, unprecedented opportunities for online financial investment. Within China, such developments reflect the ongoing tensions between the autonomy of consumer-financial markets and state run regulatory regimes designed to circumscribe the risks of financial instability.

The following two articles critically analyse the political economy of communication in contemporary Spain. Núria Almiron's investigation into the Catalan independence controversy challenges the official narrative of a selfish, exclusionary secessionist movement. She argues that

Catalan national consciousness is closer to the inclusive cosmopolitan nationalism of Quebec and Scotland. That the official narrative pervades the mainstream Spanish media is attributable to the institutional legacy of state centralism arising from the Franco era and the anti-Catalonian outlook among political, military, media and business financial elites. Against this backdrop, Almiron traces the marginalisation of Catalonian perspectives across Spanish media outlets and documents the intensification of intimidatory anti-Catalan rhetoric in key influential newspapers. Drawing from the research of C. Wright Mills, she demonstrates that inter-elite analyses further our understanding of the Spain-Catalan crisis and its media representation.

Similarly, Ángel Arrese and Alfonso Vara argue that economic reportage in the mainstream Spanish press privileges the views of financial-business elites and neo-liberal economists. Such occurred with the bursting of the Spanish housing bubble and its socio-economic consequences during 2008 and 2009. From a rigorous empirical analysis of Spanish press content, they found a uniformity of coverage dominated by technical arguments and narrow elite to elite interpretations of the unfolding crisis. Although popular concerns and experiences of the bursting bubble and its aftermath were mentioned, these did not contest the authority of official explanation frames.

Kathleen Kuehn's book review considers Jane Duncan's recent work on the political economy of state surveillance in South Africa. Duncan's book and Kuehn's review offers a primer on post-apartheid political struggles as well as contemporary surveillance practices worldwide.