

Editorial

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A range of conceptual approaches informs the political economy of communication. No generic frame defines the field. Accordingly, contributions to this issue illuminate some of the political economies available. From the primary insights of Edward Thompson, Raymond Williams and Antonio Gramsci, and the contemporary writings of neoliberalism's opponents, James Compton critically explicates the principle of progressive solidarity. In North America, at least, macroeconomic restructuring, neoliberal individualism and sharpening class division politically implied an oppositional "structure of feeling" built upon socialist foundations. Yet, repercussions from the 2008 financial collapse and the 2020–2021 COVID-19 pandemic suggest otherwise. Here, Compton tracks the coincidences of middle-upper middle-class social liberalism, reactionary populism, declining state legitimacy and deepening anxieties in poor communities. Alt-right radio outlets, Fox-style television shows, alt-right social media and the hyper-polarised public sphere have exacerbated the malaise. From a critical-institutionalist perspective, Greg Taylor depicts the shaping of Canada's spectrum policy as a contest among federal ministers, regulatory authorities, parliamentary political parties, and state governments along with broadband-wireless interests and internet service providers. Specifically, he contrasts the empty rhetoric of "lose it or lose it" pronouncements from politicians and regulators with the underlying reality of a spectrum policy largely influenced by telecommunication corporate interests. Jim Rogers, Sergio Sparviero and Patrik Wikström provide an immanent critique of copyright. In music, it serves as the legal mechanism through which songs are monetised and as a rights-based principle to compensate creators and publishers when their projects are performed. The authors show how this tension plays out for various performing rights royalty collection organisations and advance a methodological framework for doing so.

In the commentary section, Lee Arts argues that capitalist political economies of mass media/social media communication regarding ownership, production, content and distribution should be analysed through a transnational lens. National media and national imperialist perspectives are anachronistic. Randy Nichols implicitly demonstrates the argument in his analysis of Microsoft's 2022 takeover of Activision Blizzard. This acquisition was the largest involving a video-game conglomerate and one of the largest ever in IT history. Similarly, from a transnational media sports perspective, Jennifer Proffitt, Nicholas Sellers and Christopher Garcia investigate why a consortium led by American billionaire Todd Boehly purchased the UK's Chelsea football club. This US\$5.4 billion transaction was the highest in sports team acquisition history. From a media-politics public sphere standpoint, Tim Dwyer considers why Australia's Murdoch media outlets could not sway the May 2022 election result. Anthony Albanese defeated incumbent Liberal Prime Minister Scott Morrison convincingly, notwithstanding News Corp's virulent anti-Labour media campaign.