Editorial

Wayne Hope, School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology, NZ

Peter Thompson, School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ

Historically, the political economy of communication has drawn its energy from overlapping disciplines and sub-disciplines. The boundaries of our field are, necessarily, porous as PEC scholars re-work the insights of sociology, cultural studies, psychology, anthropology and geography. And, the rapidity and complexity of technological change creates new research specialisms and new contours of interdisciplinarity. In the latter context, Tarek Cherkaoui outlines the internally differentiated conceptions of information warfare – including cyber-war, cyber-terrorism and hacktivism – in order to analyse the current Gulf Crisis. In May 2017, the so-called 'quartet' (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and United Arab Emirates) acted against Qatar for its perceived collusion with Iran. Following the diplomatic offensives, military threats, cyber attacks and joint ultimatum to the Qatar Government, Cherkaoui asks whether fully-fledged information warfare took place among Gulf participants and their backers. He concludes that the cyber attacks were not sustained and did not radically escalate because U.S. military assets and operations would have been threatened as well.

Alana Mann's article conjoins agroecology, farmer/food sovereignty coalitions and activist communication networks. The former term refers to farming methods based upon small producers using sustainable and local resources, primarily for domestic consumption. Agroecology is also a historically rooted resistive epistemology of learning which is opposed to the economic imperatives of agribusiness and the corporate food system. Mann explains how agroecological perspectives have contributed to farmers' movements in Brazil, Chile and Cuba as well as their international umbrella organization La Vìa Campesina. Collectively, these movements have constructed decentralised, territorially-based online and virtual communities that 'promote food as a natural resource rather than a commodity'. Mann's discussion of digital food activism can be seen as an innovative application of the PEC approach.

Paško Bilić, Ivo Furman and Savaş Yildirim contribute to the political economy of communication by developing a computational method which correlates the textual and linguistic elements of mediated narratives with types of media ownership. Their analysis centres upon Croatian media coverage during the 2015 refugee influx into western Balkan countries. Specifically, they collated all articles published by ten news organisations during the two weeks before and after the sexual attacks that occurred in the German city of Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015. Through Natural Language

Processing (NLP) and correspondence analysis, the authors tracked a major shift in refugee issue coverage. The humanitarian rhetoric which prevailed before the Cologne attacks gave way to a security frame which positioned refugees as an external threat to 'our' personal and national security.

Scott Fitzgerald and Dwayne Winseck robustly defend the continuing efficacy of critical approaches to the political economy of communication amidst sweeping changes across the media, creative, telecom, internet and device manufacturing industries. Their argument arises from a critical review of *Media Economics* by Stuart Cunningham, Terry Flew and Adam Swift. While acknowledging the worthwhile material on the creative industries, evolutionary economics and institutionalist economics, Fitzgerald and Winseck insist that *Media Economics* overlooks the internal complexities of critical political economy scholarship. Substantively, Cunningham, Flew and Swift's account is criticized for ignoring the structural linkages between media corporations and finance capital and underplaying the strategic role of telecommunication companies (alongside the related significance of media equipment manufacturers). This journal welcomes further contributions to the cluster of debates that Fitzgerald and Winseck have initiated.

Robert Hackett's distillation of his plenary address at the most recent International Association for Media and Communication conference in Eugene identifies the interconnections between fossil fuel capitalism, socio-ecological sustainability, climate justice politics and media-communication scholarship. Focusing on the detrimental implications of Alberta's Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project, Hackett specifies the contemporary imperatives of critical communications research. The general idea here is to combine understandings of ecological crisis and sustainability with the development of environmental communication via indigenous knowledge, alternative media and journalisms. Doing this will also require that the role of the public intellectual be promoted against the pervasiveness of 'fake news' and internet 'echo chambers'.