



Publishing Calls

Special Issue: China's Digital Infrastructures: Networks, Systems, Standards

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Special Issue: China's Digital Infrastructures: Networks, Systems, Standards

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Time Schedule:

—15 May 2022: abstracts (250–300 words) submitted to editor (gabriele.seta@uib.no)

—15 June 2022: Invitation to submit full papers sent to authors

—15 October 2022: full paper submission

—15 January 2023: peer review reports sent to authors

—15 March 2023: final paper submission to Global Media and China

Overview:

This special issue of *Global Media and China* seeks to chart and unravel China's digital infrastructure by examining how networks, systems and standards coalesce in sociotechnical assemblages with profound cultural, economic and geopolitical implications. Decades of infrastructure studies scholarship have demonstrated the increasingly central role played by large technical systems in societies around the world (Bratton, 2015; Edwards et al., 2009; Misa et al., 2003; Parks & Starosielski, 2015). From the beginning of the reform era, the Chinese state has consistently promoted its infrastructure-building achievements by connecting them with economic growth, social stability and poverty reduction. The success of China's informational network-building efforts (Hong, 2017), resulting in the world's largest population of internet users and a national tech industry challenging the global dominance of Silicon Valley, testify to the increasing importance of digital infrastructure 'with Chinese characteristics' (Stevens, 2019). As of 2020, the term *xin jījīan*, or 'New Infrastructure', has become a top policy priority earmarking developments related to key domains of digital technology, including telecommunication networks, smart cities, industrial automation, cloud computing, and energy production (Meinhardt, 2020). Two years into the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, digital infrastructure remains a key priority for both state and tech industries, underpinning experiments in social governance, economic resilience and technological innovation (de Seta, 2021).

But what is China's digital infrastructure? How do networks overlap and intersect, producing new infrastructural effects or reinforcing existing inequalities? Where do large sociotechnical systems emerge and which user populations do they enlist? When do practices and protocols become standards, reshaping global flows of devices and data? In order to answer these questions, we invite contributions from a broad range of disciplines including media and communication studies, sociology, anthropology, science and technology studies, digital humanities, cultural studies, human geography and area studies. This special issue revolves around a broad understanding of digital infrastructure that ranges from physical and material components (QR codes, 5G stations, data centers, surveillance cameras) to software and quantification protocols (social apps, fintech, artificial intelligence, credit scoring), and from policy imaginaries (New Infrastructure, New Silk Road) to industry hypes (smart cities, blockchain, the metaverse). Open to historical reviews, contemporary accounts and future speculations, we welcome contributions that revisit and respond to concepts and theories from infrastructure studies, drawing on empirically driven analyses of networks, systems and standards to articulate new critical understandings of China's digital infrastructure.

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