The Point is to Change It! Critical Political Interventions in Media and Communication Studies

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Image: Graffiti at University College London during the 2010 anti-austerity protests (used with permission by Sašo Slaček Brlek)

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The Point Is to Change It! Introduction to Critical Political Interventions in Media and Communication Studies

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Abstract: The intention of this paper is to provide a historical overview and an introduction to the interviews with Bodgan Osolnik, Breda Pavlič, Cees Hamelink, Daya K. Thussu, Peter Golding and Dan Hind presented in this special section. Following Marx, we entitled the section *The Point Is to Change It! Critical Political Interventions in Media and Communication Studies*. We discuss the need for critical theory to bridge the divide between theory and practice because this notion is central to all of the interviews in one way or another. We also provide a historical contextualization of important theoretical as well as political developments in the 1970s and 1980s. This period may be seen as a watershed era for the critical political economy of communication and for the political articulation of demands for a widespread transformation and democratization in the form of the New World Information and Communication Order initiative. We believe that many contemporary issues have a long history, with their roots firmly based in this era. The historical perspective therefore cannot be seen as nostalgia, but as an attempt to understand the historical relations of power and how they have changed and shifted. In our view, the historical perspective is crucial not only for understanding long-lasting historical trends, but also to remind ourselves that the world is malleable, and to keep alive the promises of the progressive struggles of the past.

Keywords: Praxis, Critical Political Economy of Communication, Karl Marx, MacBride Report, New World Information and Communication Order, UNESCO, New International Economic Order

Dedication: We dedicate this section to Jernej's daughter Zoja, born on the very evening we were finishing this manuscript. Whether she chose to emerge then because she was fed up with our endless ramblings about a bygone era or she felt inspired to enter the world in order to change it remains to be seen.

In his 11th thesis on Feuerbach, Marx penned one of his most quoted lines, famously claiming that "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it" (Marx 1975c, 5, emphasis in original). This quote has often been interpreted as an outright dismissal of philosophy, an activist call to arms, which must simultaneously bring an end to theoretical flights of fancy. Heidegger, for example, charged Marx with supposedly overlooking the fact that "changing the world presupposes a change in the conception of the world and that we can arrive at a conception of the world only by interpreting it adequately".[1] Presumably, Marx wrote *Capital* simply out of boredom rather than to provide an adequate interpretation of the world as a basis for social change.

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[1] See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxmzGT1w_kk (February 15, 2017).

Yet, even a great thinker like Adorno seems to have succumbed to an interpretation that pits theory and practice against each other, choosing this bold statement to be the opening lines of *Negative dialectics*: "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed" (Adorno 1966/1973, 3). He further elaborates: "A practice indefinitely delayed is no longer the forum for appeals against self-satisfied speculation; it is mostly the pretext used by executive authorities to choke, as vain, whatever critical thoughts the practical change would require" (Ibid.). The problem with such a statement is not merely that the wholesale retreat from practice is too pessimistic – after all, the charge of pessimism is a purely subjective one, and Adorno did have very good reasons to be pessimistic.

Instead, emancipatory theory and practice cannot simply be separated without each of them becoming deformed in the process. Marx (1975c, 3) already in the first thesis objects precisely to a philosophy that would conceptualize contemplation as distinct from practice: "[Feuerbach] regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and defined only in its dirty-judaical form of appearance". In Marx's eyes, philosophers were not guilty of interpreting the world, but of *merely* interpreting it. Mere interpretation is not an excess of interpretation, but quite the opposite: it is an inadequate interpretation of the world in that it fails to grasp how at the same time it is a product of the world it is interpreting and an intervention in it. In short, it fails to grasp its own character as a "practical, human-sensuous activity" (Ibid.).[2] The alternative to mere interpretation is not blind action but what Marx (1843) called "ruthless criticism of all that exists" in a letter to Ruge. Such criticism takes real social struggles as its starting point and intervenes in them, in contrast to those philosophers who Marx chides for acting as if the "stupid, exoteric world had only to open its mouth for the roast pigeons of absolute knowledge to fly into it" (Ibid.).

1. Praxis, or: On the Unity of Theory and Practice

Marx did not see philosophy as redundant, but neither was it capable of bringing about social change on its own. In his view, it was not enough to simply *think* about society in order to truly change it, even if that remained an unavoidable part of political struggles. A parallel line of thought, which can give us a more complex understanding of these issues, was already present in earlier texts of Marx and Engels where they agitated for thinking that would be both a platform for, and based on, practical activity.[3] Commenting on the French Revolution, they for instance stressed how: *"Ideas* can never lead beyond an old world order but only beyond the ideas of the old world order. Ideas *cannot carry out anything* at all. In order to carry out ideas men are needed who can exert practical force" (Marx and Engels 1975b, 119).

This was, again, not to say that ideas as such are not crucial aspects of social struggles. It is precisely political action that has to exert and anchor ideas in social relations. In his *Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, Marx (1975a, 182, 187), for example, almost poetically emphasized a similar point when writing:

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[2] Marx's dialectical approach was also a critique of Feuerbach in the way it aimed to overcome and supersede dualisms that were ever-present in both Feuerbach's writings and the work of his contemporaries. The goal was not only to overcome the theory and practice dualism, but also the deadlock between Hegelian idealism, which Marx credited with developing the activity of the subject, but in an abstract way, and old (Feuerbach's) materialism, with an aim of a new materialism of practice (see Balibar 1995, 15, 17).

[3] It was already in his doctoral dissertation on ancient Greek philosophy that Marx was interested in praxis and "insisted that philosophy be made practical" (Mosco 2009, 35).

The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it becomes radical. /../ As philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *spiritual* weapons in philosophy. /../ The *head* of this emancipation [of the human being] is *philosophy*, its *heart* is the *proletariat*. Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality.

As noted by Bloch (1995, 271-272), theory and practice in this sense "continually oscillate. Since both alternately and reciprocally swing into one another, practice presupposes theory, just as it itself further releases and needs new theory in order to continue a new practice". It thus seems obvious that, for Marx, philosophy and theory were far from unimportant. The question in fact was how to realize them, how to enable them to make transformative practice possible. The reasons, according to Marx, seemed obvious: radical analysis or theoretical demystification does not in itself also lead to changes in wider social relations and neither do such theoretical interventions necessarily put an end to the practical reproduction of myths in people's everyday lives. What is needed is political activity that feeds itself on theory. In this regard, praxis is necessarily connected to the *socialization* of critical thought which, as Gramsci (1971, 323-349) would say, must in effect become a collective activity influencing and transforming social relations and thus becoming a social fact. For Gramsci (Ibid.), the actual influence of philosophy, which is always part and parcel of human existence (knowingly or not), can therefore only be measured through the feedback it made on society.

This "fundamental unity of thinking and doing" (Mosco 2009, 4) characteristic of praxis has been a mainstay of most critical approaches throughout history, including of political economy. As noted by Mosco (Ibid.), this approach has "consistently viewed intellectual life as a means of bringing about social change and social intervention as a means of advancing knowledge". Overturning the artificial gap between research and action (Ibid.) has also been a fundamental goal of critical media and communication studies, especially for the political economy of communication.

As the interviewees' scholarly research and practice largely overlaps with the political economy of communication's approach, it is no surprise that all of the interviews presented in this special section – which, following Marx, we entitled *The Point Is to Change It! Critical Political Interventions in Media and Communication Studies* – in one or another way deal with conscious bridging of the mentioned division. Topics covered in our interviews range from holistic academic interventions and critiques of the increasingly commodified and instrumentalized research and education systems that are structurally making critical scholarship impossible, to policy proposals aimed at restructuring the existing media systems and wider political actions for a more just global communication system that emerged within critical scholarly circles, but later achieved international political resonance.

2. Legitimation Crisis and the Return of Critical Approaches in Media and Communication

We live in a historical period of destabilizing economic and political processes in many (Western) countries. These deep social perturbations, as Wallerstein would call

them, have manifested themselves in the rise of far-right populist nationalistic parties (Mudde 2007), the Brexit vote and the election of Trump as president of the USA, the 'hollowing out' of institutional politics that is losing support and seeing high electoral volatility (Mair 2013), deepening economic divides and inequalities between and within nation states (Beck 2013; Streeck 2013), the looming disintegration of the European monetary union, the absence of a common European public sphere (Trenz 2008, 2), and the growing concerns over the European democratic project voiced by citizens and academics alike (Habermas 2009).

Contradictory as it might sound, the end of "the end of history" (Mosco 2004, 171-174) has therefore proven to be quite a lively and eventful period. Liberal democracy or, to be more precise and borrow a phrase from Wolfgang Streeck (2013; 2014), "democratic capitalism" is buckling under the contradictions between its two constituent elements: capitalism and democracy. States are burdened by the debt they have taken on themselves to rescue capitalism from collapse in the wake of the 2007-2008 financial crisis and are left vulnerable to the blackmailing of the international financial markets (Ibid.) – the same international financial markets that were the recipients of generous state aid. Austerity has turned out not to be a temporary adjustment to an economic downturn, but has become a permanent structural feature of the contemporary "consolidation state" (Streeck 2015), thereby intensifying pressures for privatization and to make cuts in public services. The balance of power between the two constituents of modern states, markets and people, has swung decisively towards the former. The development of information and communication technologies has been at the heart of these processes as it has been supporting financialization and the spread of global capitalism (Hamelink 1983; Schiller 1999; 2014), intensified processes of commodification (Amon Prodnik 2016), contributed to the standardization and deskilling of intellectual labour (Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011), and expanded the capacities of states as well as private corporations for widespread surveillance beyond previously imaginable levels (Greenwald 2014).

In the wake of the crisis, capitalism has become unable to return to the levels of growth that would enable it to secure popular consent through concessions in the form of wage growth and wealth redistribution. Instead, reliance on the brute force of international financial markets and unelected technocrats to quell popular resistance is increasing, contributing to a systemic crisis of legitimacy. It has become obvious that, to paraphrase Dorfman and Mattelart (1971/1991, 30), the velvet glove of the emperor has in fact been concealing an iron fist.

At the same time, mainstream social science – and economics as arguably its most mainstream and simultaneously most prestigious part – has been unable to provide answers to these challenges. One reason for this is the fact that universities have long since become thoroughly integrated into the capitalist system and been heavily influenced by the trend of marketization, especially in the USA (Newfield 2003; Newfield 2008; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). The dominance of administrative and ahistorical approaches has nearly guaranteed that, as a whole, the social sciences remain blind to the fundamental contradictions of the existing social order, while also being unable to imagine a better world. It is therefore imperative to investigate our collective capacity to formulate critical thought. In the interview, Peter Golding mentions the need to investigate and critically reflect on the funding of media research since he suspects "that in many countries, including international, research funding, for the example by the EU, of critical and theoretically informed political economy research is becoming less and less supported, with administrative, applied

and uncritical research becoming more common, including industrial and pragmatic 'administrative' research".

Nonetheless, there has been notable growth in research dealing with the problems of labour in media and journalism industries, the commodification of privacy and mass surveillance and the free labour provided by audiences to corporations on digital platforms. Historians have rarely observed news organizations through the lens of labour and focused on the labour process and worker-management conflicts over working conditions, the distribution of power, and wages (cf. Hardt and Brennen 1995; Hardt 1996). Yet, with the global economic crisis exacerbating the long-standing trends of pauperization of newswork, and with newsworkers in the developed world facing mass layoffs, lower wages and worsening working conditions, these issues have been receiving increasing attention. Researchers have been focusing on issues like employment types, wages, job security, management control and workplace conflicts (see, for example, Deuze 2007; Cohen 2015; Mosco and McKercher 2009; Paulussen 2012; Ryan 2009). While this research has helped fill an important gap in communication research, many aspects of newswork remain under-researched. For example, there is a noticeable tendency to focus on professional elites – journalists and editors – while there are far fewer studies looking at other newsworkers like newspaper deliverers (Bekken 1995) and workers who are even lower down on the global commodity chain of contemporary communication and information production (see Fuchs 2016).

Another area of research that has gained traction in recent years is connected to the spread of digital communication technologies and their impact on traditional business models and issues of privacy. First and foremost among the pioneers are Google (or Alphabet, as the corporation is officially called since its 2015 reorganization) and Facebook, which manage to capture an ever larger share of the advertising pie each year by monetising the unpaid work of their users and the massive amounts of user data they are able to capture. The impact of digital technologies has been a subject of scholarly attention from the perspectives of Marx's value theory (Fuchs 2014), commodification and monetization of audiences (Buzzard 2012; Napoli 2011), shifting barriers between content providers, platforms and advertisers, as well as the threat to privacy entailed by the gathering of private data on such massive scales (which Mosco [2014, 137-155] calls *capitalist surveillance*).

But while it is fair to say there has indeed been renewed interest in a critical politico-economic analysis of communication, these approaches represent a fraction of media and communication studies, a field that has seen (perhaps the most) rapid growth in recent decades. Critical and radical approaches, furthermore, remain increasingly marginalized within this and other fields. As noted by McChesney (2004, 47-48), this cannot really come as a surprise. Critical scholarship, by definition, puts dominant interests under question and challenges their legitimacy. Such a stance by itself makes its financing unattractive to both the state and industry. As Splichal (2014) claimed:

> Professional institutionalization of social sciences increased interest in the reliability and validity of applied research but also often tended to over-emphasize the importance of operational definitions and empirical reliability of concepts to solve practical problems – while discriminating against the critical role of theory in steering social development. In some cases, high costs of experimental and field work led professional research into dependence on the policy world and

capital. Financial support from corporate foundations required researchers to shed and avoid political radicalism (rather than *any* political alignment).

This means there are deep structural reasons for critical scholarship's marginalization that are often difficult to overcome, an issue also raised by Peter Golding in the interview. Even though funding for critical research has always been scarce, he points out it is shrinking even further.

We therefore live in a context of a dire need for more critical scholarship able to make sense of the vast inequalities and deep legitimation crises that the key social institutions are facing today. The systemic possibilities for such work, however, are being reduced rapidly with the logic of the market not only influencing but fully colonizing and submerging higher education and research for its particular goals to the point that indeed no alternatives remain. The consequences of these processes are not trivial. As Golding so lucidly emphasizes, there is a constant need to provide a critique of all ideological production within societies, but – and one cannot overemphasize this point – "if universities are not places where radical critique is possible and allowed to be articulated and injected into public debate, then where is?".

3. The Many Faces of Globalization

A historical perspective is crucial for critical scholarship not only for understanding long-lasting historical trends, but also to remind ourselves that the world is malleable, and to keep alive the promises of the progressive struggles of the past. In the absence of a historical perspective, the status quo can seem to be set in stone, while contemporary trends can appear transhistorical and preordained rather than contingent. One such instance is the dominance of the market-based, neoliberal model of globalization, which has become synonymous with globalization itself. Opposition to neoliberal globalization is often denounced as anti-globalism, as a naïve and utopian attempt to halt the inevitable march of progress. What such a perspective overlooks is that the neoliberal model's dominance was only enabled after the alternative visions of globalization, very much alive and influential in the 1970s and 1980s, were crushed and exiled from international institutions like the UN and UNESCO. As Breda Pavlič notes in the interview regarding the leading capitalist powers' fierce reaction to UNESCO's attempts to promote a *New World Information and Communication Order* (NWICO):

> With hindsight one understands even better the stakes on both sides. In a nutshell I would say that the assault on UNESCO and the MacBride Report was basically spurred by big-capital interests. The media and all of information & communication being an essential instrument of economic, financial and political power, the global corporations and big-capital in general could not tolerate anyone's interference in this area. When the Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77 began organizing itself in this regard (the Pool, and various South-South networks of cooperation that followed) and, moreover, succeeded in influencing the UN and its agencies (UNESCO) to move in that direction, the corporate-big-capital powers clearly became sufficiently alarmed to stifle the process.

The move against UNESCO was masked by an apparent concern for freedom of the press (Roach 1987, 38) and the US authorities quoted UNESCO's supposed endemic hostility "towards a free press, free markets and individual human rights"

(Ayres 1984) when leaving the organization in protest in 1984. In truth, the move was part of a broader attack not just on the Non-Aligned Movement and developing countries, but against the United Nations and the principle of multilateralism in international relations. As Osolnik claims in the interview: "They [the USA and the UK] wanted to show the Non-Aligned countries, which already had the majority in these global organisations, that they could not play around with this majority. The first measure against UNESCO was in fact only the beginning of a sharp international course the Americans then chose". Hamelink drew a similar conclusion about the naïve belief of decolonized states that the 'One state – one vote' principle could in fact provide a different form of governance for the world economy.

It is therefore crucial to take a historical view at globalization processes not simply to understand their development, but in addition to understand and keep alive more progressive alternatives. The countries that today act as driving forces and chief promoters of globalization were acting as chief opponents of these alternative visions of globalization in the 1970s and 1980s. As Bockman (2015, 109) argues:

> If we examine economic globalization more closely and from the perspective of Second and Third World institutions, we can see that the Non-Aligned Movement, the Second World, and the Third World more broadly worked hard to create a global economy in the face of active resistance by the United States and other current and former colonial powers, which sought to maintain the economic status quo of the colonial system.

The vision for an alternative global economy was strongly based on the experience of former colonies that gained independence after the end of World War II. It became clear to them that relationships of substantive inequality and dependence were persisting notwithstanding their formal independence. Global development remained unequal and, despite some efforts on the part of the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the gap between developed and developing countries was not shrinking (Sauvant 1977, 4). This persisting gap was being challenged by developing countries, most strongly by the Non-Aligned Movement, as a symptom of the structural deficiencies of the world economic system that has failed to break with its colonial past. In this sense, leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement saw the contemporary economic system as a continuation of colonialism by other means and claimed that the: "persistence of an inequitable world economic system inherited from the colonial past and continued through present neo-colonialism poses insurmountable difficulties in breaking the bondage of poverty and shackles of economic dependence" (Resolutions 1970, 21).

While developing countries were occupying a subordinate position in the world economic system, they were by no means powerless. Several factors enabled them to organize and use the forum of the UN to adopt favourable resolutions regarding their demands for a fundamental restructuring of global economic relations to the benefit of equality and development. Post-war economic growth was heavily dependent on natural resources controlled by developing countries – particularly oil – and through organized action and willingness to assert sovereignty over resources within their borders (cf. Documents 1973, 67) they were able to use this to their advantage. As the international activity of (primarily US) corporations was increasing (Gwin 1977, 89; Sauvant 1977, 8), access to the markets and resources of developing countries, which could not be gained through coercion alone, was in the interest of the developed countries. Finally, the relative stalemate of the blocs in the Cold War meant that

through the politics of non-alignment and cooperation in the forum of the UN (particularly via the Group of 77) developing countries could be very successful in asserting their interests.

The strengthening of trade was very much on the agenda of developing countries, both in the sense of demands for developed countries to remove trade barriers and positive measures to strengthen the developing countries' position in global trade as well as cooperation among themselves (so-called South-South cooperation), while the US tended to see these attempts as a threat to its hegemony and was particularly opposed to engaging in free trade with communist countries (Bockman 2015, 112). The aim of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) was to achieve developing countries' more equitable position in world trade and the global division of labour and it thereby demanded concessions and adjustment from developed countries. It was clearly not a revolutionary programme, but it nonetheless envisioned far-reaching alterations to the global economic system, "changing its mechanisms and structures to serve new aims" (Sauvant 1977, 10), that is, to achieve more equal development and to strengthen the position of developing countries.

4. A New World Information and Communication Order: The Alternative Path for International Communication and its Antagonists

Discussions on the NIEO were an important basis for the demands for a *New World Information and Communication Order* (NWICO). They opened and articulated questions of global inequalities and imbalances between the developed North and developing South. In this context, some studies found that information and communication flows are also highly unbalanced, with content predominantly flowing from the developed to the developing countries (Nordenstreng and Varis 1974). Critical media and communication scholars connected these imbalances to questions of cultural and media imperialism (Boyd-Barrett 1977; 1982; Schiller 2000), the ideological influence exerted by imported cultural goods as well as the reproduction of inequalities within the international trade of different types of commodities (Dorfman and Mattelart 1971/1991).[4] These imbalances constructed new dependencies that were intellectually reflected through the frameworks of cultural imperialism and dependency theory.

At the same time, the ways of addressing these problems were also similar between the two initiatives as developing countries found that the UN forum with – at least in principle – equal representation of all nations enabled them to exert an influence that far surpassed their economic and military clout. Therefore, UNESCO be-

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[4] As written by Dorfman and Mattelart (1971/1991, 97-98), the dependent country is dependent on the capitalist centre "precisely because it depends on commodities arising economically and intellectually in the power center's totally alien (foreign) conditions. Our countries are exporters of raw materials, and importers of super-structural and cultural goods. To service our 'monoproduct' economies and provide urban paraphernalia, we send copper, and they send machines to extract copper, and, of course, Coca Cola. Behind the Coca Cola stands a whole structure of expectations and models of behavior, and with it, a particular kind of present and future society, and an interpretation of the past. As we import the industrial product conceived, packaged and labelled abroad, and sold to the profit of the rich foreign uncle, at the same time we also import the foreign cultural forms of that society, but without their context: the advanced capitalist social conditions upon which they are based. It is historically proven that the dependent countries have been maintained in dependency by the continued international division of labor which restricts any development capable of leading to economic independence".

came a crucial arena for debates on the NWICO as UNCTAD was for debates on the NIEO.

As with the NIEO, the NWICO's goal was not to limit global information and communication flows but to strengthen the position of the weakest countries, increasing their output of cultural goods to the developed world in order to improve inter-cultural understanding and enhance the developing world's independence by increasing South-South cooperation, for example through news-exchange mechanisms like the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool (NANAP) and other forms of news cooperation schemes (for an overview, see Jakubowicz 1985). But the NWICO was not merely the NIEO applied to information and communication. The most innovative proposals of the MacBride Commission were those pertaining to the democratization of communication (Thussu 2005, 33-34), to constructing two-way communication systems that enable not only access but also participation and exchange.

Faced with the Scylla of free market fundamentalism and the Charybdis of Soviet etatism, the Commission managed to steer clear of both monsters by developing the notion of the right to communicate as an individual human right. In this conception, the right to communicate is not merely a formal right but demands that means be made available in order that people may take an active role in communication processes. In this sense, the right to communicate can be violated not simply by state censorship, but also by corporate monopolies and underdeveloped infrastructure, as well as the subjugation of the freedom of expression to the freedom of the entrepreneur. The Report made it quite clear that the Commission regards communication first and foremost as a fundamental human right and a social need: "The freedom of a citizen or social group to have access to communication, both as recipients and contributors, cannot be compared to the freedom of an investor to derive profit from the media. One protects a fundamental human right, the other permits the commercialization of a social need" (UNESCO 1980, 18).

This alternative vision conflicted strongly with powerful interests. Private corporations in the developed world had a keen interest in penetrating developing countries and had little intent to tolerate the attempts to develop indigenous capacities in the developing world. Attempts to strengthen the developing countries' position through the news exchange mechanisms came into stark conflict with the interests of the big four international news agencies (AP, Reuters, AFP and UPI) in global market dominance (Sauvio 2012, 236). Further, the US government regarded the cultural sphere as a crucial battleground for securing global hegemony, as evidenced by the CIA's extensive involvement in the field (Stonor Saunders 1999).

It is therefore not surprising that Western media greeted the NWICO initiative less than enthusiastically. As McChesney (2008, 351) claims, "the U.S. press regarded [NWICO] as a distinct threat to its modus operandi overseas. The press coverage was totally one-sided. /../ [It] characterized the NWICO as a callous effort by second-rate hacks to manipulate the news and interfere with a free press". The 1980 UNESCO general conference in Belgrade, where the MacBride Commission recommendations were adopted by consensus, was covered overwhelmingly negatively in the French Press, which reported on UNESCO's alleged support for government control of the press and omitted reporting rebuttals of such claims by UNESCO's director-general (Roach 1981). US news media coverage was so strongly one-sided and hostile to the degree that only a small minority of news sources even attempted to explain the position of the other side (Raskin 1981).

Yet, notwithstanding the obvious bias in these reports and the conflict of interest of the leading global news media and news agencies reporting on a proposal that might

threaten their profits, the critiques were not groundless. Supposed friends of the NWICO initiative were at the same time its liability. Allegations by capitalist powers that the initiative was being (mis)used to distract from infringements of the freedom of expression in developing countries held true in many cases (cf. Mattelart 2011, 503-504). Daya Thussu notes a telling paradox in the interview:

> Indira Gandhi was the prime minister of India and she had imposed a state of emergency which involved muzzling the press. Thankfully, it was only for two years: 1975 to 1977. During this period, she was going around the world and telling Western media that you guys distort reality, you do this, you do that ... but at home she had journalists arrested and newspapers were shut.

The Soviet bloc also opportunistically backed the NWICO efforts because it was hoping to "impose wider circulation of its material" (Sauvio 2012, 235), a move that further increased the West's animosity towards the initiative. Finally, the election of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the USA meant that radicals were now in power who were prepared to take drastic steps in order to secure Western hegemony and put the developing world in its place. The attack on UNESCO was part of a broader neoliberal turn in international relations and the withdrawal of the USA from UNESCO in 1984, followed by the UK and Singapore in 1985, effectively put a stop to the NWICO initiative.

5.   The Political Economy of Communication in its Watershed Period

This same period of the 1970s and 1980s was a watershed era for critical media and communication studies, especially for the political economy of communication. After the approach's very conflictual formal emergence in the 1950s and 1960s, when Dallas Smythe, Herbert I. Schiller and Thomas Guback published the first works that explicitly debated the political economy of communication, while also enduring considerable political pressures (see Smythe 1994; Schiller 2000; Maxwell 2003), the final years of the 1960s and 1970s enabled an expansion of critical approaches. Earlier non-administrative authors in the USA were entrapped in the Cold War context and the McCarthyist witch-hunt, with vast peer-pressures in academia and any serious critique of the system even potentially leading to the loss of a job. As noted by Schiller (2000, 21), the political atmosphere after Harry Truman's election win in 1948 "was overhung by the reality of investigations commissions, firings, the blacklist, and the generalised repression and coercion", with oppositional voices silenced: "A curtain had come down in America, smothering free discussion" (Ibid. 22).

Only later, with geo-political perturbations (especially several years of decolonization and Vietnam War protests) and new social movements coupled with counterculture, could critical voices re-emerge in earnest. Several authors, including Schiller (2000, 118-120), Meehan and Wasko (2013), McChesney (1998, 11) and Nordenstreng (2004, 6-8) thus agree that the late 1960s and 1970s were in many respects the most open for critical approaches in media and communication studies and the era of their strongest expansion. This includes the political economy of communication, which experienced a phase of considerable intellectual strengthening, while "for about a decade, the hegemony of establishment communication theory and scholarship was on the defensive" (Schiller 2000, 119).

Even though the NWICO initiative and recommendations made in the MacBride Commission Report failed to provide fundamental transformations in world communication, there remains a consensus in critical literature that this was perhaps the most

important critical political initiative in media and communication, especially since it was closely connected to the academic community. The MacBride Report was a culmination of the NWICO because it took into consideration all of the working papers (approx. 100) that had been prepared within UNESCO's programme, which attempted to analyse what were the relations between the new international economic order and the new communication order (Thussu 2005, 50). Following publication of the MacBride Report, one such report entitled *The New International Economic Order: Links between Economics and Communications* was prepared by Breda Pavlič and Cees Hamelink (1985), who we both interviewed for this thematic section. In the paper, they analysed the dialectical relation between "economic" and "non-economic" that are often artificially separated, even though the mass media and ICTs "have long since developed into industrial and business activities and are linked to a society's economics in more than one way" (Ibid., 10). What is perhaps especially important in today's context of vast global conglomerates is their pertinent observation linked to technological convergence:

> The convergent nature of information-communication technology also implies strong industrial concentration. Formerly separate fields such as data processing, text processing, information storage, photocopying, and information transmission are increasingly integrated through the merger of technologies and can be operated by a single, vertically integrated corporation. /.../ One of the basic assertions of this study is that developments of technology such as digitalization of information require that mass communications and computer communications (including telecommunications) be no longer treated as separate issues. Media-data convergence, as this process is called, lies at the heart of the present technological revolution in the information-communication area, and is crucial to understanding the relationship between economic and communications process. (Ibid., 10-11)

Their observation proved to be correct, with one of the key trends in the last decades being "the growth of large media corporations that have exploited new opportunities to establish multiple media ownership nationally and to transcend national boundaries in ownership and operations" (Hardy 2014, 81), also due to "digitalisation and technological convergence [that] have increased the strategic importance of connections between and across businesses formerly organised around distinct market sectors and services" (Ibid. 83).

6. For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything that Exists

It is undeniable that many of the issues and antagonisms we are witnessing today have a long history, with their roots firmly based in the 1970s and 1980s. Our interest in this watershed historical era, which is present throughout the interviews, therefore cannot be simply seen as nostalgia. It is an attempt to understand historical relations of power in a period that was by all accounts momentous and has not been repeated on the level of political action or academic articulation of critical ideas in the field of media and communication. Marx and Engels might have gone a step too far when claiming in *German Ideology*: "We know only a single science, the science of history" (1932/1968). Nonetheless, we firmly hold on to the belief that an in-depth understanding of historical processes and transformations is fundamental to a comprehensive analysis of present social conditions not only for historians, but for the social sciences as a whole (cf. Williams 1961; Braudel 1980, 34; Wallerstein 1998).

Even though proposals that emanated from the NWICO were ultimately unsuccessful, they thus remain fundamentally important because of their determined and vocal demands for global communication democracy. The NWICO was the first initiative that demanded "universal access to communication media, control over decisions about the production and distribution of communication, and the basic human right to communicate" (Mosco 2009, 72) on such a large scale. It also "gave a political purpose to a dynamic new research agenda for political economy of communication" (Ibid.), which may be seen as a direct connection between theory and practice, and opened the doors for radical research approaches in this field. Thussu (2015, 252) saw the MacBride Report, which was a direct consequence of the NWICO, as "arguably one of the most significant multilateral interventions in the history of international communication".

Accordingly, it remains vital to critically evaluate the NWICO's ideas and their relevance to the present era. It is important to keep these critical approaches and alternative visions of globalization alive, especially since they have been thoroughly purged from the collective and institutional memory. As Breda Pavlič notes in the interview regarding UNESCO and NWICO: "Today, it seems as if it never existed! It has been deleted not only from subsequent and present programme and budget, but largely also from its institutional memory".[5] While the NWICO was a product of its time – both of the intellectual atmosphere as well as of the political space that opened up between the two opposing blocs to make non-alignment an effective political position – and cannot be merely transplanted to the present, the guiding principles remain the same for contemporary critical scholarship and emancipatory political practice as they were 40 years ago. To quote the MacBride Report, our task must be to ensure that the "media of 'information' become the media of 'communication'" (UNESCO 1980, 212). In this respect, the proposal to democratise journalism by making the public directly involved in the distribution of public subsidies that Dan Hind is advocating and which is the primary focus of the interview, can be seen as a contemporary application of the principles espoused by the MacBride Commission. Hind points out that editors and journalists act not only as a check on governmental power, but they themselves wield considerable power that is often obscured:

> As you know at the current time we have a kind of coalition of professional and owner groups who determine the news agenda in an essentially invisible process. It is secluded from public scrutiny and it stands in very marked contrast to the journalistic instinct to make everything public. The means by which they make things public are kept substantially obscure.

Democratization of the means of (mass) communication remains an important goal for any emancipatory struggle not only because participation in the life of the community through communication is a fundamental social need and a valuable goal in and of itself. To return to the relationship between understanding the world and changing it discussed at the start of this article, the media of communication have

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[5] It is telling that according to the official website of UNESCO (2016), the USA withdrew because of "disagreement over management and other issues". In contrast, the reasons for the withdrawal of the Republic of South Africa in 1956 are clearly stated as supposed interference with the country's "racial problems". One can imagine a top-secret communique informing all UNESCO employees that the NWICO must from now on be referred to strictly as 'other issues', while Sean Macbride should be referred to only as 'He who must not be named'.

come to play such an integral role in the way people understand the world that meaningful progressive social change is hard to imagine unless our tools for understanding the world are reformed. As Hind puts it in the interview:

> I can't imagine a radically reformed political economy that isn't built on a radically reformed public sphere, that isn't built on a radically different set of generally accepted descriptions. It seems to me that it is prior to any kind of hope we might have for a reasonably orderly transition to an economy that is reasonably just, reasonably sustainable and not as obviously pathological as the one we have now.

Robert McChesney, who has also been advocating for media reform in the US context, similarly views the essence of the battle over media and communication to be "about whether people or corporations, public interest or private profit, should rule the realm of communication" (McChesney 2008, 499). Movements for the reform of the media system and communication order will therefore at some point have to go into "direct confrontation with capital" (Ibid.). According to McChesney, the question of media reform is not secondary to broader social reforms since "no one thinks any longer that media reform is an issue to solve 'after the revolution'. Everyone understands that without media reform, there will be no revolution" (Ibid.).

If a young Marx believed that "criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism" (Marx 1844/2009), nowadays that wording would have to be broadened to include both the media and the conditions of "intellectual production whether it's at universities or anywhere else", as Golding claims in the interview. We hope that the interviews presented in this section can contribute at least a little to this goal.

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"The intention was to democratise the sphere of communication." An Interview with Bogdan Osolnik.

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Abstract: Interview with Bogdan Osolnik, active member of the Yugoslav liberation front during World War II, member of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems under the leadership of Sean MacBride (commonly known as the MacBride Commission), former vice-president of International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR), one of the pioneers of theoretical and practical research of public opinion in the Yugoslav socialist society and one of the co-founders of the first journalism program in Yugoslavia. Osolnik was an engaged critical researcher of media and communication in the international environment and combined theoretical work with political activity.

Bogdan Osolnik was born on 13 May 1920 in Borovnica, at the time part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In 1942, he became a journalist in the (then illegal) press of the anti-fascist resistance. After the liberation of Yugoslavia, he was editor-in-chief of *Ljudska pravica* [People's justice], a correspondent of the Tanjug press agency, and in 1951 he became the director of the newly established *Radio Jugoslavija* radio station. In 1958, he was appointed Secretary of Information of the Federal Executive Council of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY). In this position, he was responsible for preparing the Law on Freedom of the Press and Other Means of Information, which in 1960 laid the foundations for the democratisation of this sphere of public life in Yugoslavia. He was the initiator of the foundation of the Yugoslav Institute of Journalism that provided education for journalists from developing countries. He was a member of the Steering Committee for the first Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-aligned Countries in Belgrade (1 September 1961) responsible for information, and this marked the beginning of his activity in the area of communication in the Non-Aligned Movement.

In 1962 he helped establish the first university institution for the education of journalists in Yugoslavia. He became Head of the Department of Journalism at the then School of Political Sciences in Ljubljana (today the Faculty of Social Sciences), where he lectured on the subjects Public Opinion and Sociology of Mass Communication from the foundation of the Department of Journalism until 1966. In the first year, he was also president of the Fund for Journalism at the Department of Journalism. He also lectured on the subjects of Sociology of Mass Communication and Public Opinion at the School for Political Sciences in Belgrade.

He was one of the pioneers of theoretical and practical research of public opinion in the Yugoslav socialist society. During his pioneering work in the field of media and communication studies, he came into contact with a number of media and communication researchers from other countries. In 1970, in the German town of Konstanz,

when Jacques Bourquin won his fourth presidential mandate, he was chosen as vice-president of the International Association for Mass Communication Research – IAMCR, which even today remains perhaps the most important organisation in the field of media and communication research. He remained in this capacity until 1980. He was also president of the International Communication Section of that same association, which he helped establish at the IAMCR symposium in Ljubljana in 1968. Its purpose was to study the media in the context of international communication. Osolnik was actively involved in preparation of the 1966 IAMCR conference in Herceg Novi, which Kaarle Nordenstreng and Cees Hamelink in their IAMCR retrospective described as a turning point for the organisation. In addition, Bogdan Osolnik was a member of the Yugoslav National Commission for UNESCO and led its Committee on Information for many years. Later, he remained as a standing member of the committee.

The international symposium on the subject of information and international understanding, which he helped organise in Ljubljana in cooperation with IAMCR and UNESCO, was attended by researchers and journalists from 26 countries. The discussion and conclusions at the symposium demonstrated the far-reaching impact of new communication technologies on cultural and social life as well as on international relations, and thus the need for a thorough questioning of the status quo in the field of international information flows. Based on the these ideas, Osolnik, who was a member of the Yugoslav delegation, advocated at the fourteenth General Assembly of UNESCO held in Paris in 1968 that UNESCO engages in comprehensive research of the impact of modern communications on social life, not only on culture, but also on the whole of development and international relations. This approach was supported by the Canadian, French and some other delegations, which led to UNESCO becoming significantly more active in this field. A meeting of experts on communication in Montreal under this programme opened new perspectives for the further engagement of UNESCO in the field of information, which had a considerable impact on development of the initiative for the *New World Information and Communication Order,* or *NWICO.*

During his many years of cooperation with UNESCO, Osolnik was involved in all stages of preparation of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War. He worked as a coordinator of delegates from non-aligned countries and participated in the final redaction of the declaration at the General Conference in Paris in 1978, when this important document was adopted by consensus.

At the request of the Director-General of UNESCO, in 1977 he became a member of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems – the so-called MacBride Commission. The Commission's task was to prepare a comprehensive study on the state of communications in the world and on the policies of their further development. The result of the work of the Commission was a report published in monograph form under the title Many Voices One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow. In the preface, the Commission's Chairman, Sean MacBride, specifically points out Bogdan Osolnik's contribution to the Commission's work. He was especially active in elaborating all aspects of the new international order in the field of information and communication as a process of building new, more equal and fairer relations in which there would be greater freedom and actual opportunities for communication between nations and between individuals. He developed his views in his study The New International Information and Communication Order

(1981), which was also published in several foreign languages in an edition of the Yugoslav newspaper *Međunarodna politika* [International Politics].

At the twenty-first General Assembly of UNESCO in Belgrade in 1980, as a member of the Yugoslav delegation and the coordinator of the delegations from non-aligned countries Osolnik contributed to establishing the principles of the new international information and communication order in a Resolution on the report of the Director-General on the findings of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, which was adopted by consensus. In the same way, he contributed to the Resolution's adoption by which the International Programme for the Development of Communication was established.

In 1981, he was elected a full professor of international communication at the University of Ljubljana. He has participated in several national and international conferences on the subject and lectured at various foreign universities, including the University of Leuven, at Charles University in Prague, and at the Institute of Journalism in Munich.

As a member of the Yugoslav Federal Parliament from 1969 to 1982, he advocated the creation of a democratic system of communication in Yugoslav society, all the while not giving up teaching and journalism. In a number of articles published in Yugoslav newspapers, he dealt with the question of the role of communication in the self-managing socialist society, of the process of shaping public opinion and its impact on the development of society, of the normative regulation of the sphere of information, of the issues of freedom of information and ethics of public speech, and of the impact of communication technologies on social life.

We spoke with Bogdan on 8th of October, 2015, at his home in Ljubljana, while making some additional clarifications later, when we finished the interview. The interview was translated from Slovene to English by Marko Kozar, with additional editing and proofreading done by Murray Bales.
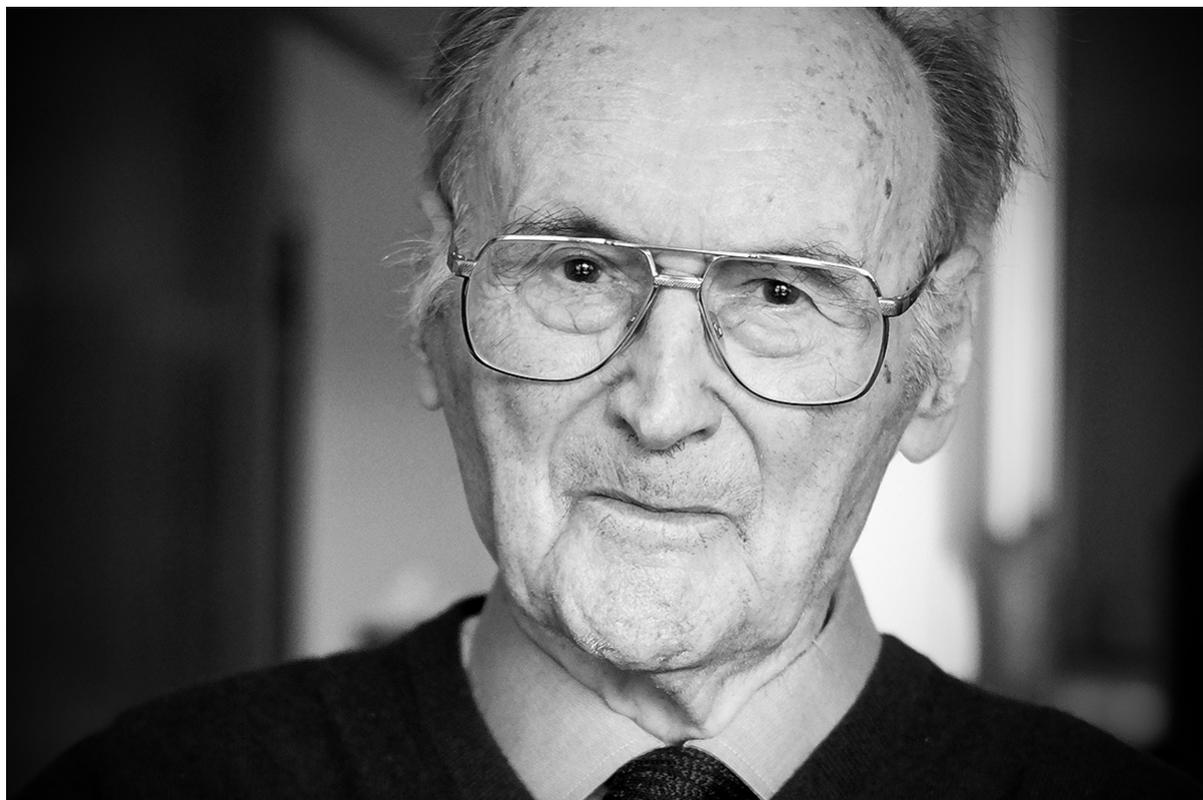
(Photo: Jernej Amon Prodnik)

Sašo: How did you become interested in questions of communication?

Bogdan: I entered the world of communication during World War II when information was very important, especially for us as members of an occupied nation. We had been cut off from the world and were prevented from communicating in our own language. The occupying forces seized our radios so that we could not listen to the international news and so on.

That's when underground communications developed in our resistance movement. We developed many techniques for reproduction, as it was called at the time, as well as genuine print shops. We also had a wide courier network that made it possible for the materials to get from the print shops to the people. Parallel to the cultural colonisation system of the occupying forces, there existed an underground system of antifascist communication, and I would say that this was in fact the first front of our resistance, through which many people passed. The movement affiliation usually began by someone accepting to deliver our newspapers like *Poročevalec* [Reporter], despite the mortal danger associated with this activity.

Then the authors who turned into partisan journalists started to appear, even though they had not been educated for such work. I was one of them. Just before the end of the war, I became the editor of the *Ljudska pravica* [People's Justice] newspaper and had some very nice colleagues. Bojan Štih was my assistant editor. Also among the members were the writers Miško Kranjec and Cene Kranjec and some others who, led by patriotic feelings, agreed to participate in the press.

Sašo: Did you continue your work after the end of the war?

Bogdan: Yes. The end of the war naturally meant we would get a chance to operate the print shops that had now passed into our hands, which was of course a giant leap. Despite all the good intentions, we were not technically ready for the take-over of modern print shops. We started to prepare for the new job with the help of the typesetters and other workers who remained there.

This transition was very difficult, especially because the sources of information were not organised. We received information mainly from our regular collaborators and from their acquaintances and so on. Especially delicate was the verification of information about foreign affairs. As the editor-in-chief of *Ljudska pravica*, for example, I wrote an aggressive article on how we were going to resist the withdrawal of the Partisan army from Trieste. In the evening, when Boris Kidrič saw this, he jumped to his feet and said: "You don't know, but just today at Tito's request we agreed to withdraw the forces because he said that we could not afford to cook up a new world war". And then he added that they had forgotten about the journalists (*laughter*). This is just an example of how difficult the work was. Everything was improvised. The print shop was of the old type and everything was done with lead. Lead plates were prepared during the day and they went into the machine close to midnight, so I was receiving doses of lead myself as well because I wanted to participate in the whole

process of the copy. Because of that I became ill. I already had lung problems from the partisan times and this finally forced me to give up that work. I did not intend to become a professional journalist anyway.

Then I was a political worker and did what I had been doing when I had been a partisan. I was a political activist of the Liberation Front. First in Gorenjska, like back in the partisan times, and then in Dolenjska in Novo mesto.

Then, suddenly, I was given a new task. In 1946 I was called to Ljubljana. There I was received by Edvard Kardelj, who was then the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Yugoslav government. He told me they intended to send me on a very important mission related to the peace treaty with Austria. Namely, that Yugoslavia would demand the annexation of Carinthian Slovenians to the Slovenian nation and that it would be very important to inform not only the Slovenian public, but also the Yugoslav one and possibly also the foreign public for our demand to come true. He was very convincing. I intended to devote some time to my personal questions, but he said: "This is the last opportunity, a historic opportunity to save the Carinthian Slovenians from Germanisation".

They recalled me at the end of August, after almost nine months, when a further conference had shown that the Yugoslav demand would not be realised. At the same time, the disagreement began between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the so-called Cominform dispute, had broken out and it was even clearer that the Soviet Union would not support Yugoslavia in the international field. In 1949, there was a conference of foreign ministers in Paris where the Soviets renounced their support and said that they had voted for the resolution prepared by Western countries, and that now the only question was how the State Treaty with Austria would be formulated.

When I returned, I asked Kardelj: "Were the things we sent from Carinthia of any help to you?" These were various historical documents, declarations and so on. Kardelj's answer was curt: "You know what the minister said?" He meant the then Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Vyshinsky. "This is just paper. It would be something else if blood was spilled." And then he added: "The Soviet Union wants imperialism to bleed wherever possible." I was astonished. First, I thought this was a critique of my work and the work of the regional committee. But I immediately calmed down because I told myself that surely they knew I would never support bloodshed after what we had experienced in that terrible war.

Jernej: How did you return to questions of communication?

Bogdan: It was the time of the Cold War and there was a feeling of terrible tension and war on the airwaves. The Soviet Union in particular used radio as a way to build a campaign against Yugoslavia, accusing the Yugoslav leadership and urging the people of Yugoslavia to renounce such authority. Our services were receiving these attacks and I must say that at times the Soviets were quite disgusting, calling us American agents, denying our struggle against Nazism, saying that Yugoslavs were German agents in the concentration camps and all sorts of things. At that time, we of course cut diplomatic relations with them and their affiliated countries.

The West did not provide any help because many thought that this was a pre-arranged game between the Soviets and us. I led one of the journalist delegations to England and this was the first question they asked. Our task was to present the depth of this conflict and that these were already two different systems, and that we were certainly willing to defend the freedom and the democracy of our development.

In response to these attacks Radio Jugoslavia was established. The primary intention was to inform foreign audiences so, in addition to Yugoslav languages, we were also broadcasting in six additional languages. That meant the two minorities' languages, Italian and Hungarian, along with German, French, Russian and Spanish. Of course, the broadcasting and the success of the broadcasting depended heavily on how well we would get accustomed to the situation in those countries, the lives of their people, and what we would focus our attention on, as well as which parts of our history and our present we would present to those nations.

When working for *Radio Jugoslavija* I got somewhat involved with diplomacy because press coverage involved cooperation with experts on those countries, thus in a way I was already close to diplomacy. At that time, we also needed to improve our relations with Western countries, especially West Germany, with which we had established our principal economic relations. I was sent to Bonn to our embassy in the Federal Republic of Germany as a political advisor, mostly to make contact with social organisations, trade unions, social democrats and others to deepen our economic relations and to overcome the distrust of Yugoslavia that was still present in those countries, including Germany. We were still regarded as part of the Soviet bloc.

I wasn't happy in Bonn. It was a lifeless bureaucratic town. I requested a transfer to the position of Consul-General in Munich. Here I was closer to Slovenia and life was livelier. Political and economic life as well as economic relations with Slovenia were very lively.

Sašo: During this time, was there similar hostile communication by the West as there had been by the Soviet Union?

Bogdan: We know from literature that the Truman Administration adopted a policy of 'keeping Tito afloat' (*laughter*).[1] They provided just enough help so that Yugoslavia didn't sink under the burden. And only later came the talks and the aid in the form of food and weapons.

Sašo: What changes did you experience when relations with the Soviet Union improved?

Bogdan: When Stalin died in March 1953, a question was raised of what would happen with the Soviet Union and what the consequences for Yugoslavia might be. Just then, Kardelj and Vladimir Bakarić were on their way via Munich. They had given a lecture on self-management for the Social Democrats in Sweden. They stopped at

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[1] See Lees, Lorraine M. (1997). *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War*. University Park (Pennsylvania): Pennsylvania University Press.

my place in Munich because it was the time of Oktoberfest *(laughter).* They both believed some change was very likely to happen since the young followers of Stalin could not afford the same methods of governing that the autocrat Stalin had introduced. Kardelj also told me that because of that I would be sent to our embassy in Moscow as a diplomat so that we could monitor these things and regulate the relations with the Soviet Union in a slightly different manner than before. Soon after, I was indeed appointed as Minister Counsellor at the Embassy of Yugoslavia and at the end of 1954 came to Moscow.

There I encountered a state of war psychosis. West Germany had just joined NATO and the Russian media was spreading the rumour of that being the first step towards a new attack on Russia. People began stocking up on food, there were international memorandums, not only by the government, but also by the Orthodox Church, academics and so on. They were all turning to the European public to prevent another attack.

Then I experienced something that diplomats rarely experience – the new Soviet leadership under Khrushchev really felt the need to normalise relations with Yugoslavia. They actually wanted to overcome the isolation that Stalin's politics had led the Soviet Union into. Khrushchev stood at the forefront of a new course to find a way and restore diplomatic relations.

I have written about the details of these meetings before,[2] but let me mention just one, when Ambassador Dobrivoj Vidić and I raised the issue of the Peace Treaty with Austria. The Soviet Union had been hindering the adoption of the treaty which had been lying in a drawer for six or seven years. When the Soviets claimed they could not talk about peaceful coexistence since Germany was allegedly arming itself for a new attack on the Soviet Union, I firmly and sharply told Khrushchev that I had just arrived from Germany and that I had witnessed the recent elections, that there was broad support for peace, that the Social Democrats had received nine million votes in the elections and that what he was saying was simply not true. This made the Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, who was also present at the meeting, shudder. Khrushchev went silent, but in a few weeks he appeared at a reception and came straight over to Vidić and myself and said: "Let's sign the contract with Austria!".

What had happened? They realised they had to make direct contact with the Yugoslav leaders and demonstrate a change in their politics. They were so hasty that on 15 May of the following year the Peace Treaty with Austria was signed in Vienna. On 26 May they took a plane to Belgrade and proudly presented this document as proof: "There you have it, we have started to arrange matters".

After Stalin's death, many things changed in the field of information as well. In particular, they were no longer attacking Yugoslavia. That was settled. They even decided to publish something positive. I suggested to their company for foreign literature to publish a booklet on the national liberation struggle of Yugoslavia, which was translated by the historian Jovan Marjanović. And they actually published it. After many years, this was the first positive book about Yugoslavia.

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[2] See Osolnik, Bogdan. 1992. *Med svetom in domovino. [Between the World and the Homeland].* Maribor and Novo mesto: Založba Obzorja and Dolenjska založba.

When some of our experts came to see the Soviet archives, they discovered that their libraries had been completely cleansed of everything related to Yugoslavia. Before Tito's arrival, their musicians turned to us asking if we had any music notes because they didn't have any music notes for the Yugoslav anthem. We didn't have the notes either, but we advised them to play the Polish anthem, which had the same melody, with less beat and at a slower pace. They asked for someone from the embassy to come and show them what the Polish anthem sounded like, so the ambassador sent me because he had heard I once played the violin. And so I came to the theatre and was honoured to intone the first few bars for the Soviet orchestra, who had in front of them the notes for the Polish version of the *Hej, Slovani* anthem.

What can I say? It was difficult to change what had been spoken and written about the Soviet Union in Yugoslavia. The key moment was the arrival of the Yugoslav delegation led by Tito and Kardelj to Moscow upon the Soviet invitation. This is when the ceremonies began. This is when the restoration of fraternity started. I accompanied President Tito on the way to Stalingrad and that train ride was a special experience. Stations were packed with people, some were even standing on the rooftops. I was afraid that the rooftops would collapse and that there would be accidents, but everything turned out okay.

Jernej: When did you occupy yourself with communication issues again?

Bogdan: My work in the Soviet Union ended soon. Two years later, I received a notice from Belgrade informing me that a new executive council had been elected and that they wanted me to become the Secretary of Education and Culture. I was hesitant because I felt that additional work in Moscow would soon be needed, that the festivities then held would not be permanent and that new problems would arise. The field of culture and education, however, was also very tempting so I quit my job at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the autumn of 1957 went to Belgrade to pursue the new job.

I must say that the Secretariat of Culture was something completely different from a Ministry. Boris Kidrič in particular argued that the questions of culture, education and economics were in the domain of individual republics, and that they did not require any ministry at the federal level, rather only coordinating bodies so that the republics would be well connected. I shared the opinion and worked in that way, mainly meeting with representatives of republics in the field of culture, ministers of culture, representatives of academies and so on.

This job also involved a lot of activities with communication characteristics. Among other things, we were the authors of cultural conventions with countries that had broken off relations with Yugoslavia because of the Cominform dispute, and I was the proposer and signatory of the first cultural convention with Czechoslovakia. Even the question of informing our own public was closely related to educational problems. At the time, a large part of the population in Yugoslavia was still illiterate. The illiteracy level among women, especially in the southern part of the country, was as high as 80 percent in some places. I pushed for our educational activities to be linked to cultural

ones as much as possible, not only in terms of increasing literacy, but also in terms of cultural activities, which also requires school education.

Before introducing a reform of education we did a lot of preparatory work. My task was to finish up the four-year work on this reform. I must say that cooperation with UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, was very helpful. They provided us with a lot of valuable material on how the areas of education and cultural education were organised in other countries.

When my work came to an end, new elections took place and the Executive Council was reorganised. I was appointed Secretary of Information. The work of the Secretary of Information brought me to a field I really liked. I must say that the timing was also very appropriate for it. It was the time of an ongoing information revolution. New media were appearing. I was in contact with our comrades in the Republic of Slovenia who operated under the auspices of the School of Political Sciences that later became the Faculty of Social Sciences, especially with comrade France Vreg, who had been my friend since the Partisan times. His partisan name was Mile. Vreg struggled with all his might to put more attention to journalism and to educate journalists for this work. In fact, all the staff that worked in this field were either from the partisan or post-war times. They lacked knowledge of the new communication technologies and general and university education were poor as well. And I was witnessing all of this. I was coming to Ljubljana from Belgrade and was also giving lectures at the new Department of Journalism, established at today's Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana.

Jernej: You helped establish the Department?

Bogdan: Vreg and I established it together, and also addressed concrete questions. It wasn't easy to find lecturers. It wasn't easy to begin to addressing communication as a theoretical question, a sociological question.

To establish a new department, we also had to provide the necessary financial resources ourselves. *Radio Ljubljana* and the newspapers were interested in training their personnel or hiring new staff with an appropriate education so they contributed to the Fund for communications, with which we funded the lectures, as well as all the necessary teaching aids and literature.

As a State Secretary, I was lucky to be invited on a semi-tourist visit to the United States. I skipped the tourist programme and instead asked if I could visit four universities with the most intense activity in the field of journalism. And it was made possible. They also provided me with books with which I armed myself for work, for a detailed study of communication issues. When I came back, our School of Journalism had already been established. It was the first School of Journalism in the Balkan area and, in addition to the Polish one in Warsaw, the only School of Journalism in the socialist countries.

Jernej: What was the attitude towards the research and study of media and communication, public opinion and journalism within the former School of Political Sciences?

Was there any resistance?

Bogdan: There was no resistance within the faculty. We were all learning together, students and professors alike. This was something new for all of us and, as such, an even greater challenge. We would buy literature wherever we could, borrowing from each other. We were, after all, pioneers. Discussions were very constructive. It wasn't as if some were teaching and others were learning.

(Photo: Sašo Slaček Brlek)

Sašo: What were the key questions you were facing at the time?

Bogdan: We had to break ground for some of the basic concepts. I was giving lectures on the sociology of communication. During those lectures, I was trying to capture the role of communication processes in social events and bring it closer to what was happening in our reality. In doing so, I came across the question of public opinion as one of the main results of communication. Our efforts were criticised by some, particularly by some Communist Party functionaries and authorities, arguing that we were introducing too American views on this issue. I tried to bring the Western European concept of public opinion closer to our reality and show that public opinion can be associated with self-management processes or, rather, that public opinion is even an essential element of self-management. They were telling me that public opinion did not exist here, that the function of public opinion was already being performed by social organisations, that the Socialist Alliance of the Working People was the intermediary institution between the decision-makers and the citizens, and so on.

The first books in the field of communication appeared at the time. There was Vreg's book about communication in self-management and there were some translations. We had more and more foreign literature available. Later, when I was a member of the Federal Parliament and participated in conferences abroad, I would always inquire what was new in the field of communications and public opinion. And that was the information we all gladly exchanged at that time. We were not shutting ourselves off, as I hear some at the faculty nowadays do.

But let me get back to the detailed study of the content and the sociological importance of communication, during which we were able to add our own findings to the conventional views coming from the West. For example, previously there had been much discussion about the basis of communication, the so-called line: who–what–to whom. We established, however, that it was particularly important who this "who" was from a broader environment. From which social environment does a person enter into this communication? And further: not only how communication arrives to someone, but also what are its consequences for the broader environment, so that the communication process actually becomes integrated into the social process. And this is how various discussions went on. In Ljubljana, we also organised round tables for colleagues from other republics, and so on.

Jernej: In the 1970s, Professor Vreg was criticised by the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia. How did you "defend" media and communication studies and Professor Vreg against the sanctions of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia?

Bogdan: That is a very difficult question for me. At some point, the Secretary of the Central Committee, France Šetinc, informed me that a special committee to discuss the professors at the school would be formed. When we were founding the faculty the basic question was whether journalism had its basis in some science or was it just a writing competence one acquired after he became a lawyer, a doctor or something similar, in short, after he had already obtained some other education. Even at the time of founding, some thought that this course of study was not necessary because journalism didn't have a scientific basis. It was considered just an ability to write that one had to acquire in addition to some other profession if one wanted to become a journalist. We were saying just the opposite – that research of communication and journalism was a special science, not just a writing skill. This was the basic dilemma and the main argument against establishing a specific journalistic faculty and the study of communication processes. This was the first and foremost problem at the school and later at the faculty.

Jernej: Even before the department of journalism was founded?

Bogdan: At the time when we were setting up the department. Other sciences were dealing with similar problems as well. There was also the question whether sociology was a science or not, and even a long time after there were faculties of sociology

elsewhere, we didn't have a separate department of sociology. At the time, Jože Goričar was struggling for the recognition of sociology. It took even longer to recognise media and communication as a science on such an important phenomenon as communication, especially during the information revolution and at the time of the invention of new means of communication and their ever larger impact on people's lives.

Jernej: And how was this then linked to the sanctions against Professor Vreg?

Bogdan: Sanctions weren't directed only against Professor Vreg but against several professors. The Secretary of the Central Committee, France Šetinc, who even graduated under my supervision with a thesis on freedom of information, informed me that some sanction against Professor Vreg was being prepared, and told me: "You can help by becoming a member of this commission, so you can advocate your position and defend it". Journalism as such was in danger and the abolition of the study of journalism study was imminent.

Jernej: The department as a whole?

Bogdan: Closing the department and, of course, removing Vreg as the main pioneer of the study of communication. I participated in that rather unpleasant company so I could advocate the importance of this field of study and Vreg's positive contribution. I think three professors were expelled from the faculty at the time, but Vreg was spared. He only received a warning not to introduce too much American influence into the study of communication.

Jernej: Another key question at the time was the one we already posed at the beginning, namely whether there was any sense in journalism being a fundamental discipline?

Bogdan: It was the last time we had to defend the position that journalism had a basis to become a scientific study, and it was on that position that the Department of Journalism was based.

Sašo: In the 1950s you were actively engaged with media legislation. Can you describe how this work was done and what were the key challenges?

Bogdan: As the Secretary of Information I immediately felt the need to break new ground in this area, especially regarding the issue of freedom of communication. The issue of freedom of information, particularly with regard to newspapers, had been discussed by the United Nations since their beginnings. The first year after the end of the war they organised a conference on freedom of information, but it wasn't successful because representatives of the socialist countries and Western capitalism failed to reach an agreement. I felt that there was too much bureaucratic interference

in the area of information in Yugoslavia. That some newspapers were abolished or individual contributions or even authors denounced. Because of that, I made some determined attempts to find solutions that would be at the level of advanced European countries. Comrade Marija Vilfan, who was President of the National Commission for UNESCO in Belgrade, helped me at the time. When I was involved in the reform of education, we sent a lot of teachers to other countries at UNESCO's expense so they could get acquainted with their school systems. At the time, Marija supplied me with a lot of literature, constitutional arrangements, laws of other countries, and the results of UNESCO's efforts for decisive solutions in this field. In cooperation with journalists from all republics, especially from Slovenia, and after taking into consideration all the variants used in different countries, especially those with the most advanced press and communication systems, I managed to finish the Law on Freedom of the Press and Other Means of Information.

It even contained some solutions that were more advanced than the ones we have today. The issue of reply, for instance. On one hand, the right of reply is something very important. It is a right that everyone whose honour or reputation has been tarnished or who has suffered economic damage should have. On the other hand, the media must be protected as well so that this right is not exploited to fill their pages with contributions of individuals who want to push their way into the content. We achieved that by granting the right of reply to published content to those whose reputation had been tarnished or who had suffered economic damage, and by making it obligatory for the publisher (the newspaper) to publish such a reply. If this is not done within a certain time limit, the case moves to court. Our solution was quoted even in the documents of the United Nations.

The Secretariat for Information was also a direct producer of important publications. We were the publisher of *Mednarodna politika* [International Politics] and *Jugoslavija* [Yugoslavia], which was a special representative magazine, as well as a newspaper that was lexicographically edited to complement the lexical data about Yugoslavia, and so on. We also published a magazine on topical issues of socialism in French. After 1961, *Socialistična misel in praksa* [Socialist Thought and Practice] was being published in English and French, and was intended for an international audience. We were trying to be intellectually active in the international area so that we could point out that, apart from the Soviet, there were also other models of socialism.

We also established some international contacts. Among other things, I was a member of the international committee in support of the Algerian revolution and sent a team of Belgrade cameramen to Algiers to film the Algerian fighters. That was the first documentary film about the Algerian revolution.

Let me also mention the cultural sphere. I was convinced that the best international propaganda for a country was its literature, its fiction. I managed to convince the parliament to approve a campaign in which ten works of fiction from all parts of Yugoslavia got translated into English and published by an English publishing house. Thus, for example, a few years later Ivo Andrić received a Nobel Prize for his most

famous work *Most na Drini* (The Bridge on the Drina). By then, the English version of his book had already been available all over the world.

Working with information at this Secretariat allowed me to take an in-depth approach to the issues mentioned. I started attending lectures at the Faculty in Ljubljana and at the School of Political Sciences in Belgrade. When my mandate ended, I temporarily took over the editing of the *Komunist* [Communist] newspaper, which I tried to change into some sort of a normal social newsletter. Above all, I achieved that its production became decentralised. Previously, it had been published in Belgrade only, and there translated into Slovenian, Croatian and Macedonian. After decentralisation, everything was transferred to the editorial offices of the individual republics, which not only published material from the central editorial office, but were also allowed to complement the newspaper with happenings in their own republic. Some even accused me of trying to republicanise the Communist Party, but it was complete nonsense to print the newspaper in, say, Italian, in Belgrade. And I was striving for the same arrangement in the operation of the television broadcaster: we moved TV shows in Italian to Koper and even contributed 50 percent of funding to set up the Koper studio and begin its expansion to Italy.

Jernej: Who else in Yugoslavia was theoretically researching communication at the time?

Bogdan: That was mostly done in Ljubljana.

Jernej: Professor France Vreg and you?

Bogdan: Vreg was the central figure. His first book was some sort of a starting point in this field. However, it was also very important that we opened up to other faculties. We had a bilateral agreement with the faculty in Munich. Dallas Smythe was teaching at our Department of Journalism as a visiting professor for one year. Ever since my work for the radio, I had also been interested in international communication. From Belgrade, where I was still working at the time, I managed to convince the faculty in Ljubljana to opt for the programme of a symposium on the theme of communication and international understanding. Funding came from Belgrade, but the content preparation took place mostly here in Ljubljana. Here we would meet and discuss the content. Of course, we also informed UNESCO and asked for their patronage. The Vice-President of UNESCO was selected as the patron and they promised he would attend this symposium. That was the reason we invited even more people. We searched foreign literature for experts or universities that were particularly active in this field and then sent invitations to distinguished professors of journalism and communication in the United States, other countries and, in line with the policy of non-alignment, to countries such as India and Egypt. One of the main contributors was Ambassador Mustapha Masmoudi, who was the representative of Tunisia to UNESCO and supported our operations from there. The turnout was very high. I think there were about 120 participants from foreign countries alone.

The symposium started on 1 September 1968 – on the same day, the Soviet Union occupied Czechoslovakia. The session was somewhat out of focus because our friends from other countries were wondering what would happen next. In Yugoslavia, some were even saying that after Czechoslovakia it would be Yugoslavia's turn.

I argued that it was necessary to conclude this symposium with an urgent appeal for peace, and against incitement to international hatred or threat of war. People were telling us that the Soviet Union was spreading the rumour that they were actually defending Czechoslovakia against a new German aggression. I hoped we would be able to adopt a resolution on avoiding incitement to war and threat of war at all times in international relations. That did not happen because some of the non-aligned countries that received a lot of Soviet help, including military assistance, weren't willing to sign something like that.

Jernej: What about IAMCR, the International Association for Media and Communication Research? You were also a part of it. Were you active from the beginning?

Bogdan: When I started working at the Secretariat for Information, Yugoslavia had already been a member of that organisation. This organisation was interesting not only because it dealt with communication, but also because it had members of both blocs as well as the non-aligned. Members of this organisation came from Moscow as well. The organisation was in financial difficulty and under pressure to align itself with one of the blocs. But I wanted to support the openness of the organisation, and we managed to arrange a conference in Herceg Novi, which we also financed. We started the conference off with a paper on communication in the self-management system, to show off a little. Later, I was elected Vice-President of IAMCR and we carried out a conference in Switzerland and one in Pamplona in Spain. The organisation was very important for developing contacts and communication with experts and scholars all over the world.

Jernej: Was the 1968 symposium in Ljubljana a turning point at which communication became a major question for the Non-Aligned Movement?

Bogdan: Shortly after the symposium, in October 1968, there was the UNESCO General Conference in Paris. At each General Conference, the issue of culture and communication was on the agenda. Marija Vilfan invited me into the international delegation of Yugoslavia and I gladly joined because I knew I would meet new colleagues and gather new materials. And that indeed happened.

After talking with some of the participants, I felt that there was a lot more interest in communication issues in the organisation than seemed at first glance. When it came to information, the Congress leadership's only agenda item was the spread of a publication on UNESCO. During the discussion, however, I introduced the idea that UNESCO should act in a broader context and tackle the phenomenon of communication as a new social phenomenon that affects the lives of millions of people and also the relations between nations, and that there should be a scientific approach to the

study of this new phenomenon. The idea was immediately supported by participants both from Canada and India. In a way, it was also adopted by the leadership of UNESCO. The Assistant Director-General, referring to the work of our section for information at the congress, also praised the Ljubljana Symposium and the idea that the study of communications required scientific devotion. Thus, it was concluded that UNESCO would organise an initial consultation of journalists, theorists, professors of journalism and others to form a programme on this issue.

The following year there really was such a consultation in Canada. I was not able to attend it as in those days my father was on his deathbed. After so much suffering (he had lung cancer) I had to stay with him to the end, so I excused my absence and asked for the resulting materials. The result of the consultation was a conclusion that UNESCO should organise a much broader scientific consultation on communication, and of course invite all the member states and all countries to join. This consultation in Canada had already sparked an idea that was also present at the next UNESCO General Conference where it was finally concluded that a Commission would be formed. It was named the MacBride Commission, after its president. It was assumed that Marshall McLuhan would be the leading force of the commission since he was one of the main and leading theorists of communication (which he called extensions of man), but because of health problems he could not participate. This commission met at the end of 1977 and in 1980 ended their work on this report. I prepared two papers for the Commission. One was a study on the new information order (what it would be like and what it would mean) that gave the Commission some basic orientation. The other was a paper on professional ethics in communication.

Sašo: The Non-Aligned Movement also addressed these questions. If I'm not mistaken, it was in 1973 at its Algiers conference that the Non-Aligned Movement first spoke out on communication issues.

Bogdan: Exactly.

Sašo: How did this happen?

Bogdan: The main initiator of this was Mustapha Masmoudi, who was the ambassador of Tunisia to UNESCO headquarters, but otherwise he was a participant of the economic conference of non-aligned nations in Algiers. It was in Algiers that the idea of reducing the economic gap between the non-aligned and the developed world was born. This encouraged him to present the proposal during the talks in Paris. I joined him immediately. I argued that the absolute dependence of certain countries on the information of the developed world had to be overcome since the non-aligned were appearing in the world media only when there was some natural disaster or a government was overthrown. It was necessary to develop the national media and so on. I immediately suggested that we work together and later I even prepared a study on the new information and communication order for the MacBride Commission where I argued that this issue should in fact be the central issue of our Commission.

Jernej: How were you appointed to this Commission? Did MacBride himself suggest any members?

Bogdan: Since I had contributed to some other UNESCO projects, I was probably put on the preliminary list by UNESCO and Yugoslavia was only asked for confirmation.

Jernej: Do you perhaps know how it was in the case of other countries?

Bogdan: You know what, I think the quality of work was the most important factor. The Indian member of the delegation, Boobli George Verghese, was the leader of the Indian national commission which dealt with the question of how communications should be organised in very difficult conditions, since so many different states needed to be united. There was also Hubert Beuve-Mery, the founder of *Le monde*, the French newspaper, Mustapha Masmoudi, Gamal El Oteifi from Egypt and, of course, Gabriel García Márquez from Columbia. Márquez was invited not only as a writer but also as a publicist, and he was extremely friendly.

At my initiative, one of the MacBride Commission's sessions was held in Dubrovnik. Márquez fell in love with Yugoslavia when he was in Dubrovnik. He visited a barber's shop and, while chatting with the barber, he mentioned the country he was from, and the barber said: "I've just finished reading a great book by some author. One Hundred Years of Solitude or something like that". And Márquez exclaimed: "Well that's me!". The fact that he was recognised in a foreign country in this manner made him communicate with me even more.

Sašo: In our recent interview, Breda Pavlič[3] mentioned that Yugoslav politicians were not favourably disposed towards the study communication issues, that there was quite some resistance.

Bogdan: Well, you know, their opinion was that information is primarily a tool of power. Everything we were doing, researching public opinion and so on, meant removing their monopoly in a way. They were against my commitment to public opinion, as well as against other measures that led to the democratisation of this area. And the intention really was to democratise the sphere of communication and to democratise the system.

Sašo: What was the view on the social role of journalism?

Bogdan: The official position on the role of journalists was that a journalist is a socio-political worker and must carry out the mission of social organisations. When we gave up on that and gave freedom to journalists, it was a big move. At the congress

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[3] See interview with Breda Pavlič in this thematic section of *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism, Critique* (2017).

in Novi Sad, Manca Košir and I defended the position that journalists cannot be burdened with the role of a socio-political worker because then they would basically have to represent the interests of social organisations. Up to this congress, journalists were seen as socio-political workers who were responsible for the social situation, rather than free commentators reporting about this situation. This position was changed at the Yugoslav Congress of Journalists in Novi Sad back in the 1980s.

Sašo: So there was no considerable support from politicians when you were addressing the issue of the democratisation of communication at UNESCO?

Bogdan: I never had much chance to tell the Yugoslav public what we were doing in Paris in that Commission. The Soviet representatives were especially problematic. At the first meeting of the Commission, one of the prominent members of the Central Committee addressed the American representative and said: "Of course, our task is to find faster, more efficient forms of communication. Our agency, TASS, for example, needs so many bytes for a piece of information, in Paris they need so many. In Paris, they need this much time to publish the information, we publish it in this much time".

Jernej: So a purely technical approach.

Bogdan: Purely technical. I said this: "I believe we haven't come here as engineers, but rather as social scientists, therefore we must treat information as a social phenomenon. Information in the service of man. This is what the new economic order and the new information and communication order should lead to". This was the first time the Soviet representative jumped on me and said: "What order? This sounds like Hitler's order to me". And I replied: "You're going to talk to me about Hitler's order in connection with Yugoslavia? You know well enough what our contribution to the fight was". And this conflict apparently intrigued the Western press well enough that they started paying more attention to our Commission. Also, there was no more fear that his was something one-sided, something in the political domain of communism.

The Soviet Union on the other hand soon realised that it would indeed be foolish to be against it. This man was recalled from the Commission and they sent another member of the Commission, Sergei Losev, the director of the TASS news agency. All of a sudden, people in other countries under the Soviet influence started to support the new order. They were saying countries would be given more power and that this field would be better controlled. And at the end that actually became the main problem.

In the West they started turning against us, saying that we were talking so much about how countries should support the construction of new communication systems, radio stations and so on. They argued this would lead to the nationalisation of communication activities.

Jernej: So, first you had major difficulties with the Soviet Union, and then with the Americans?

Bogdan: Exactly. Especially after the MacBride Report was published just before the 1980 UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade. In the preface, MacBride even thanked Masmoudi and I for having influenced the direction the Commission took. And of course I had a feeling that we must prepare well for the conference so they would not refute our report and with it the very idea of a new information and communication order.

I even made some extra effort and wrote a brochure in Slovenian. During the preparations, I managed to convince the Secretariat for Information in Belgrade to finance my book in foreign languages so before the conference my book on the new order had been published in English, French and Spanish. Later, I learned from some of my colleagues that it had been warmly received, especially in South America, because the question of increased independence from the US monopolies that were controlling their communication world was particularly pertinent to them.

Sašo: The MacBride Commission Report is quite radical in some parts, criticising the doctrine of the free flow of information, speaking about economic censorship and that economic censorship can be as dangerous as the bureaucratic one. You were probably expecting that the United States would react strongly to it.

Bogdan: The first chance was at the UNESCO Conference and the non-aligned countries elected me as president of the Committee on Information. I led the Committee in such a way that it confirmed the MacBride Commission Report and the requests for a new communication order as well. Thus, when the voting took place, only the English delegation expressed some restraint, but did not vote against it. The Americans even confirmed it. Nonetheless, the American representative came to me after the conference and asked whether the public could be informed in such a way that it would seem they were against the new order as well. I replied: "I'm sorry, it has already been published (*laughter*) and nothing can be done now". The first test was thus successfully passed.

Sašo: However, the West later intensified its resistance. In 1984, the USA withdrew from UNESCO in protest, followed by the UK the next year as a sign of protest against the new international information and communication order...

Bogdan: At the time, I wrote an article entitled *It is not only about communications*. The English and the Americans were annoyed by the fact that every meeting of the United Nations and other international forums were attended by so many representatives of the non-aligned countries. They wanted to show the non-aligned countries, which already had the majority in these global organisations, that they could not play around with this majority. The first measure against UNESCO was in fact only the beginning of a sharp international course the Americans then chose.

Jernej: If the American leadership were different, they probably wouldn't have reacted like that. Jimmy Carter, for example, was more moderate with regard to American actions in international relations.

Bogdan: No, I think that this is not a matter of one man, but rather of the entire American international political direction that was changing. Above all, I think I can hold the position I then wrote down – that it was not just about communication, but also about general relations in the international arena.

Jernej: How would you assess the work of the MacBride Commission today?

Bogdan: We conducted a round table about the MacBride Commission Report that was arranged by the European Institute for Communication and Culture and chaired by Slavko Splichal. It was interesting. The title of the consultation was "25 Years Later". I prepared the introductory article[4] in which I talked about what, in my opinion, survived from our work and our report. Also about all the major changes in the world of communication. And that was also my final act in this field.

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[4] Later published as Osolnik, Bogdan. (2005). The MacBride Report – 25 Years Later. *Javnost*, 12 (3), 5-12.

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"What happened was foremost an assault by interests of the big capital." An interview with Breda Pavlič.

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Abstract: Interview with Breda Pavlič, critical researcher and former staff member of UNESCO's *Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies* in the 1980s (1984-1989). We discussed her path towards the critical-analysis approach to information and communication problems, the role of such analyses in the academic field of the time, as well as within the political context of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and their initiative in UNESCO and in the United Nations Organization for a *New international information and communication order* (NIICO).

Keywords: Unesco, New International Information and Communication Order, Non-Aligned Movement, the MacBride Report, political economy of communication.

In the 1980s a major conflict took place at the highest level of international relations. Had it not been subsequently swept under the carpet, it would still be a significant event in global politics. It focused on the increasingly evident inequality between the industrially developed countries on one hand, and the so-called developing countries on the other hand, particularly their respective roles in the worldwide exchange of information, i.e., in the global flow of information via the mass media and all other means. Manifesting itself as a 'cultural imperialism' in which transnational corporations (TNCs; known also as multinational corporations, MNCs) held a dominant role, the debate about this was eventually brought to UNESCO as the UN's main body responsible for worldwide education, science, culture and communication. It culminated with the publication of the report *Many Voices, One World* prepared by an eminent international commission that was presided by Sean MacBride from Ireland. Published in 1980 by UNESCO, its very title – and even more so its subtitle (i.e. *Towards a new more just and more efficient world information and communication order*) - underlined the need to promote various development paths in order to help foremost the developing countries in building indigenous capacities in accordance with their respective populations' social and cultural needs. This vision, however, came upon immense resistance of certain governments, non-governmental organizations and private corporations, primarily from the United States and the United Kingdom, which were by then already aiming at creating a different *'unified'* global framework for unobstructed market expansion of the mightiest (corporations) in the rapidly growing area of information and communication.

   Breda Pavlič witnessed these events from close range. At the beginning, by cooperating with various critical communication researchers, mostly through AIERI/IAMCR [*International Association for Mass Communication Research*], who were first to point out the on-going economic and cultural dependence of former colonies upon their former colonial masters, especially through the rapidly growing power of transnational corporations, the increasing submission of information and communication to

market logic, and the potentially irresponsible consequences of a worldwide spread of the mass consumption mentality. Some years later, she continued to observe these processes while working in UNESCO's *Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies*, particularly during the key period when Ronald Reagan's administration in the US and Margaret Thatcher's government in the UK stifled ruthlessly all endeavours to create a different information and communication order. The conflict that ensued finally led the two Member States to abandon UNESCO for nearly two decades.

Breda Pavlič's concern regarding cultural imperialism, commercialization of culture and the role of TNCs in these is rooted in her early life experience, notably the four years she spent as a teen-ager in the International School in Kebajoran, i.e., in Dja-karta (Indonesia), where her father was posted as diplomat. It was there that she first experienced 'the American way of life', including fast food (hamburgers, pizza, etc.), Coca-Cola, pop music and American fashion – all of which bedazzled her in the beginning. However, it also underlined more poignantly the immense gap between the poor and the wealthy, especially within context of a developing country. Later, while studying sociology at the Ljubljana University and at the Universite Libre in Brussels, which helped her understand the role of culture in colonialization (particularly certain writings in anthropology of the 1950s and 1960s) she was shocked by news of the bloody military coup that took place in Indonesia, in 1965, 'which was endorsed primarily by the US and Australia, i.e., their governments and the so-called multinational – or rather, transnational – corporations'. Beyond these events, her interest in information and communication matters was spurred further during her undergraduate studies particularly by writings of C. Wright Mills, notably his *The Power Elite*, as well as Erich Fromm's *The Sane Society*, John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, and many other incisive scholars.

We conducted the interview with Breda on 5th of September, 2014, in Ljubljana. The interview was translated from Slovene to English by Breda herself.

(Photo: personal archive of Breda Pavlič)

Jernej: How did you adhere to the critical approach to communication?

Breda: Initially, Bogdan Osolnik played a very important role. By accident, or fate, Ljubljana hosted in September 1968 its first international symposium by AIERI/IAMCR, i.e., the *International Association for Mass Communication Research*, which was at the time the principal NGO of information-communication researchers from various parts of the world. This symposium on *Mass Media and International Understanding* was organized by the Faculty for Sociology, Political Sciences and Journalism (FSPN, now FDV – Faculty of Social Sciences). More specifically, the main organizers of this event – the first of its kind in former Yugoslavia – were Bogdan Osolnik, the late prof. France Vreg, and the late Tomo Martelanc. At the time I was completing my studies in sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy. Given my fluent knowledge of English, French and Srbo-Croatian, I was invited by Osolnik to help the Organizing Committee in preparing the gathering. This turned out to be a most valuable experience. My main task was to read all of the received written contributions. These came from various parts of the globe and, moreover, dealt with communication problems from different angles: anthropological, psychological, socio-political, economic/financial, etc.

The participants included a number of eminent persons, notably Jean Schwoebel (from French *Le Monde*), prof. Juan Beneyto from Spain, prof. Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann from Germany, prof. William E. Porterand and prof. Gertrude Robinson from USA, Dinker Rao Mankekar (known editor from India), prof. Dallas W. Smythe from Canada, prof. Yassen Zassursky from Moscow, prof. Kaarle Nordenstreng from Finland – to mention but these. Among those who confirmed attendance was also the well-known prof. Herbert I. Schiller, but he unfortunately had to cancel his trip at the last moment (due to a tragic event in the family). However, considering that his paper entitled *International Communictions, National Sovereignty and Domestic Insurgency* was ready for distribution, and the Organizing Committee found it outstanding in many ways, the latter decided that the paper deserved to be presented also orally during one of the sessions. Since video-conferencing was not yet in use, I was asked to present Schiller's paper (somewhat shortened, by highlighting main points) on his behalf. And so, immediately after my presentation prof. Dallas Smythe – one of Schiller's long-time friends – approached to congratulate me. Thereupon he asked what my further plans were once I graduated. More specifically, would I consider going abroad – notably to Canada - for graduate studies in information-communication research? Indeed, I got two other similar proposals in the following days, one for University of Michigan (Ann Arbour) and the other for University of Washington (Seattle). Upon careful consideration I chose Canada because Smythe's scholarly approach seemed the most interesting and his university was the first to offer me enrolment in the MA programme together with a modest salary as research assistant which covered my basic livelihood. As a result, I plunged further into the critical approach to research of information and communication institutions and processes, as spearheaded at the time by Schiller, Smythe, Cees J. Hamelink, Tom Guback, Bob White and their followers (e.g., Janet Wasko, Eileen Meehan, Oscar Gandy and others).

By June 1970 I accomplished my MA in Regina by presenting successfully my thesis on *The Self-Consuming Consumer Society: The Effects of Consumption upon Education in Mass Society*. Following the tradition of C. Wright Mills, Erich Fromm, Thorstein Veblen and other eminent scholars, it focused on the rapidly expanding consumer society and the intense commercialization of mass media. In former Yugo-

slavia – and in Europe at the time – mass advertisement was still in its beginning stage. Hence I was appalled by North American mass consumption, clearly spurred by omnipresent advertising in commercial media. This, in turn, revived quite unexpectedly my teen-age experience of 'the American way of life' which, as said, happened in the altogether different social and cultural setting of Indonesia in the 1950s. Taking into account the belief – especially of economists and business experts – that mass consumption and advertising are indispensable for any society's development/progress, I thus addressed in my thesis a key question: 'What is the human cost of such development, implying both the individual (personal) cost and that of a society (collective)?' In other words, with what consequences upon human and natural environment, and on the basic socio-cultural values of a society, which are meant to help educate children to respect nature and life, feel a sense of responsibility, use rationally their resources, develop feelings of solidarity with other human beings (and, indeed, with non-human beings as well), etc.? Two years later, in 1972, while working as a teaching and research assistant of prof. Vreg at FSPN, I wrote an additional, fairly comprehensive text, as second part of my Regina thesis (in order to have it recognized by University of Ljubljana) in which I focused on consumer behaviour in Yugoslavia.

Jernej: You then worked at FSPN and became actively involved in IAMCR?

Breda: Yes. From 1970 until 1980 I worked at FSPN where I obtained my Ph.D in July 1977 under scholarly guidance of the late, deeply respected prof. Vlado Benko, and as co-tutor prof. France Vreg. Thereupon I became Assistant Professor (dozent), and in 1978 I was two semesters Visiting professor in the Communications Department at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champagne campus, where I worked primarily with prof. Tom Guback. I was even offered to continue my academic career there, but for personal and administrative reasons I decided to return to Slovenia, i.e., to FSPN. Then, two years later, by free will I switched to the Centre for co-operation with Developing Countries, led at the time by Dr. Boris Cizelj, as their programme was better suited to my research focus on developing countries and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. I continued, however, to honour some of my teaching assignments at FSPN, mainly tutoring graduation diploma works. Parallel to this I continued my involvement in IAMCR, where I chaired for some five years its International Communication section. This gave me the opportunity to meet many other outstanding communication researchers such as George Gerbner, Rita Cruise O'Brien, James D. Halloran, Graham Murdock, Peter Golding, Tapio Varis, Antonio Pasquali, Rafael Roncagliolo, Fernando Reyes Matta – to name but these. Among these was also my colleague prof. Slavko Splichal, with whom I shared for ten years, at FSPN, a small, cigarette-smoke-filled office. As you know, he eventually became one of the world's most respected communication researchers and, rightfully so, member of the Slovenian Academy of Science.

At the same time Bogdan Osolnik and I continued to be very active in the Yugoslav National Commission for UNESCO, and in various bodies dealing with the Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77. The latter two represented virtually all of the so-called developing countries, i.e., the formerly colonized countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Allow me a brief digression: It is important to underline that the very first gathering of the heads of state (or other high-ranking representatives) of these countries took place in 1955 at the remarkable Bandung Conference, in Indonesia. Organized by Indonesia's first president, the visionary Dr. Ahmed

Sukarno, it was indeed a major historic moment: the recently decolonized nations got together for the first time to discuss their development aims and to speak up together within the United Nations Organization. (My late father, Dr. Stane Pavlič, became deeply involved in this as Yugoslavia's diplomat shortly after the Bandung event, which later spurred my own interest in this part of modern history.)

Back to what I said before this digression, let me add that Bogdan Osolnik was at the time (end of 1970s) one of the sixteen eminent members of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, created by UNESCO and chaired by the Nobel Peace Laureate from Ireland, Sean MacBride. During its two-years-long deliberations I occasionally helped Osolnik as personal assistant.

Jernej: It was at this time that you wrote together with Cees J. Hamelink a study for UNESCO, right? How did this happen?

Breda: During the 1970s the Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77 proposed within the UN system that a new – i.e., more just – international economic system be created throughout the world. This became known as the developing countries' request for a *New International Economic Order* (NIEO). By then it became increasingly evident that the former colonies of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean despite having won independence in legal and political terms, were in fact still deeply dependent of the industrially developed countries (i.e., former masters) in economic, trade, financial, and technological regard. Moreover, many trustworthy analyses indicated that in given conditions the gap between the developed and the developing countries would become even deeper. What I have just said is, of course, a very rough sketch. There is, however, a great deal of documented literature (available in many languages) on all this. As basic reading I would recommend, for instance, *The New International Economic Order: Confrontation or Co-operation between North and South?*, which was edited by Karl P. Sauvant and Hajo Hasenpflug (Westview Press, 1977).

Critically oriented communication researchers such as Schiller, Smythe, Hamelink and others drew attention very soon to the deep interlinking and interdependence of any society's communication development, on one hand, and its overall economic development, on the other hand. A successful implementation of the NIEO therefore required a parallel implementation of a new international information-communication order, i.e., NIICO. The more so when one takes into account the intensive development of digital info-communication technologies and its invasion of the entire fabric of contemporary life, notably in banking, trade, production, education, security, transportation, etc. The interdependence of NIEO and NIICO was officially discussed for the first time among representatives of the Non-Aligned countries at the conference on this topic, hosted by Tunisia in February 1977, in Tunis. It was there that participants laid also the foundations of the News-agencies' Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, i.e., a network for daily exchange of news among these countries' news agencies and also other developing countries. This Pool was coordinated for many years by Tanjug – the Yugoslav news agency. In addition, the success of the Tunis conference encouraged the participating states – helped by IAMCR's researchers, notably Kaarle Nordenstreng, Tapio Varis, Rafael Roncagliolo, Bogdan Osolnik, etc. – to introduce the NIEO-NIICO interdependence debate also into UNESCO's programme.

At a more personal level I dealt with the above in my Ph.D. thesis, which focused on a critical analysis of the role of transnational corporations in the use and further development of information-communication means, particularly the mass media.

Namely, during my five-years-long work on the thesis the world witnessed on 11th September 1973, in Chile, the bloody military coup which murdered the democratically elected President Salvador Allende and most of his government, together with tens of thousands of Chile's students, intellectuals, and other most progressive persons. This atrocious event (later known as Operation Condor) was again - as in Indonesia - sponsored by mighty transnational corporations, in this case particularly the ITT communication giant, and endorsed by the US government. In other words, by the very agents that Allende publicly denounced a year earlier in his very courageous, indeed unique, speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Then, in early 1980, shortly after the UNESCO General Conference held in Belgrade (at which the MacBride Report was presented), I received an offer from UNESCO's *Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies* (directed at the time by Hamdi Kandil, a former well-known Egyptian journalist) to write a study about the NIEO-NIICO interdependence. Accepting the offer, I immediately proposed as my co-author prof. Cees J. Hamelink from Amsterdam, as he was among the very first researchers to examine critically the role of modern information-communication technologies in the global flow of trade and finance, i.e., the transborder data flows, and how this augments further the already immense power of the TNCs (or MNCs). Our study was published by UNESCO in 1985, in three languages (English, French and Spanish – the Spanish version was reprinted, I was told, even twice) as *The New International Economic Order: Links between Economics and Communications*.

Meanwhile, in the late 1970s and early 1980s I was invited by UNESCO to several expert meetings on this (and related) subject, and had the privilege to be elected as Chair-person at one of them (Nairobi), and as Co-chair at another (Paris). And then, in Summer 1982, the Division of Free Flow informed me that a P-4 (higher-level programme officer) post was open for recruitment. Considering that its job-description corresponded largely to my own research experience I decided to apply. Naturally, the post was advertised worldwide, and there were altogether 92 candidates from various parts of the globe that applied for it. The selection process lasted for more than a year. (Beforehand, I had to go also through a similar process within Yugoslavia in order to be an 'officially endorsed candidate'.) Finally, in December 1983 I received the official letter informing me that the Director-General of UNESCO (Amadou Mahtar M'Bow) had appointed me to the post. Three months later I moved to Paris and literally dived into a very demanding assignment. My work in the communication division went on for six years (till Fall 1989), whereupon the new Director-General, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, appointed me as his representative to Canada (and Director of UNESCO's Office in Quebec), which lasted nearly four years. After that I returned to the Paris Headquarters, with challenging new assignments, first within UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, and then as Director of the Status of Women and Gender Equality programme. Thus, albeit continuing to work on truly exciting UNESCO projects, as of 1990 I was personally no longer part of the international critical information-communication research scene.

Jernej: Could you explain in more detail the activities of UNESCO's *Division of Free Flow and Communication Policies* at the time, when you were there?

Breda: It's been many years since, but let me sketch it roughly as I remember. In Spring 1984, when I began working in it, UNESCO had a Communication Sector (which some years later was fused with the Culture Sector), which had three pillars:

Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies, Division of Communication Development, and a somewhat more autonomous International Programme for Development of Communication (IPDC). The latter two focused on practical and technical assistance and on professional education (e.g., training of information and communication technicians, training of journalists, radio and TV personnel, etc.) in developing countries foremost. Our Division, which was headed (after H. Kandil) by Alan Hancock, an excellent, hard-working British communication expert, focused on enhancing worldwide research in the information and communication area. Based on the decisions of UNESCO's 199 Member-States (every two years at its General Conference) and the budget allocated for each programme, our Division was responsible for implementing these and reporting back to the General Conference. Our work consisted mainly of organizing expert meetings on required topics, training seminars, production of requested studies and analyses (carried out by most competent universities and professional NGOs in various parts of the world). These were selected by strictly respecting the geo-political, cultural and gender balance.

As for my own assignments, these were from the start nothing less than explosive! I was responsible for several 'hot' files, roughly said: (a) the NIICO, and the MacBride Report; (b) the right to communicate, and (c) women and the media. Thus, just two weeks or so after taking up my job I was asked by my superiors to draft the Director-General's reply to some member of the UK parliament regarding UNESCO's position on NIICO. (My draft, of course, went through several other hands before it got its final form – and thus became a noteworthy experience of the so-called 'visa' – i.e., approval – system, which is typical of all highly hierarchical national and international bodies.) The epistolary exchange in question was indeed important in view of the US decision (i.e., of Ronald Reagan's administration) to leave UNESCO because of the latter's involvement in – or rather, endorsement of – the developing countries' promotion of a NIICO. The US government – seconded by the UK government of Margaret Thatcher – opposed vehemently all debate about NIICO, arguing that any such a 'new order' would strengthen state control of the media, and thus impede 'the free flow of information' within nations and globally. At the time, however, there was still some hope that the UK might perhaps not leave UNESCO, and that some sort of compromise could be reached. Alas, this did not happen, and so with the departure of the two Member-States (and Singapore) UNESCO lost about a third of its budget. This situation endured a long time, i.e., until the two reintegrated the Organization at the beginning of this millennium.

Briefly, in those years (until the fall of the Berlin Wall, in November 1989) the UNESCO Secretariat worked daily literally between two fires, i.e., in the conditions of perpetual Cold-War antagonizing, even conflict, between the East and the West, or rather, between the USA and the USSR. This was further aggravated by the North-South confrontation, i.e., between the demands and expectations of the developing countries on one hand, and the as yet relatively covert entrenchment of the corporate, neo-colonial forces, which eventually spread globally – as one clearly sees today.

Sašo: It was at about this time that a shift in terminology occurred: the term 'international' was replaced by that of 'world'. Hence, the term New International Information and Communication Order (NIICO) became known as a New World information and Communication Order (NWICO). Could you explain what were the implications of this change?

Breda: In my view, this change was dictated by political interest. The Non-Aligned and the Group of 77 consistently spoke of a new international order, thus emphasizing interaction between and among nations, i.e., peoples, as one means when speaking of 'international co-operation', 'international assistance', etc. In other words, these countries insisted on national sovereignty. And this, precisely, was contested by the US and most West- European countries. These argued that such an order would favour the role of the state, implying thereby that it would legitimize state control of information and the media, as was at the time true of the so-called 'Soviet model'. As defenders of 'freedom of information' – which (as one saw later) only the sacrosanct 'market' was allowed to regulate! – Western representatives staunchly opposed such terminology and seemingly acquiesced only when a compromise was reached (after long and exhausting debates within UNESCO's governing bodies). The term *world* was thus adopted by consensus, albeit – as it became evident later on – this modification affected also the content and further fate of the original concept. And so, one can say with hindsight, we eventually got a 'new' world order – I mean the one we have now, consisting of highly commercialized media that are controlled by 'big money' , mostly that of transnational corporations. By advocating daily the global expansion of the ruling neoliberal doctrine (as 'the only viable alternative', or rather, as an inalterable, God-given system) most of today's mass media serve in fact the on-going, planet-wide brutal exploitation of human labour and the word's natural resources.

Sašo: The free flow of information doctrine - which sort of contradicts the notion of national sovereignty that the term international information and communication order implies – is rather older, right?

Breda: Indeed. The free flow of information doctrine (re)appeared soon after the end of World War Two. It was at first a rather promising ideal, but the thorough research done by critical communication researchers in the 1960s and later revealed its deep flaws. Given the technical and economic reality of the world at the time – by this I mean foremost the by then visible gap between, on one hand, the industrially developed countries of 'the North' and 'the West', and on the other hand a multitude of industrially underdeveloped or barely developed countries – the free flow of information doctrine only deepened further the already blatant inequality among nations in the information-communication area. This led UNESCO to propose during the rather acrimonious debate concerning the MacBride Report a compromise term, notably, 'a free and balanced flow of information'.

This, however, affected considerably our Division's work. Namely, such politico-terminological compromises look well on paper, i.e., in final documents of international meetings, but are practically useless, especially in research terms. How was one to define 'a balanced flow of information' and who was to judge this? With time it thus became clear that this decision by the General Conference was in fact just a face-saving device, an honourable retreat for the Non-Aligned and other developing countries. Indeed, by then their original quest for a new, more just information and communication exchange/order among nations had been deformed beyond recognition.

Sašo: However, in 1980 the General Conference of UNESCO adopted unanimously the recommendations of the MacBride Report.

Breda: You are right. But this was obtained through consensus. Mr. M'Bow, who was then Director-General of UNESCO, was known as a man of consensus. This was rooted in his African cultural background, in which consensus is the basis of tribal co-existence. It is known as palabra, and is used to resolve any situation of conflicting interests among members of a tribe, a village, etc. Roughly explained, it requires that each of the parties (in a conflict) relinquishes part of its demands in order to come closer to the other, and thus enable agreement that is as just for all concerned as is possible. This is in fact the essence of all honest negotiations. When applied to international documents, however, the notoriously cryptic diplomatic wording used by negotiators tends to turn these into rather complicated texts that are often quite contradictory, and are therefore difficult (if not impossible) to apply in practice. This was of course felt most keenly in UNESCO's secretariat, which was responsible for implementing the decisions of each General Conference by cooperating on specific issues with various partners, notably various universities, research institutions, NGOs, individual experts, and so forth.

Sašo: While reading the MacBride Report, in which one can indeed see traces of compromise, I was surprised by its overt advocacy of developing countries' position. It struck me as exceptionally radical when pointing out, for example, commercial censorship while attacking the 'free flow of information' doctrine.

Breda: The members of the MacBride Commission were, as you know, highly distinguished persons with rich professional experience. Their individual perceptions stemmed from profoundly realistic assessments of the world situation at the time. For example, the famous Colombian novelist-Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez was first a journalist. As such he knew well the situation in various countries of Latin America, which suffered at one time or another from Spanish, French, British, German, Dutch, American and Soviet interference in their respective nations' economics and politics. As you probably know, until quite recently (and esp. during the Cold War) Latin American countries were considered as 'the USA backyard' that no other power should interfere with, while the former Soviet Union treated likewise most of Eastern Europe as its 'sphere of interest'. It is therefore quite understandable that Garcia Marquez and Juan Somavia (from Chile, later excellent Director-General of ILO in Geneva) advocated the views and needs of the Latin American peoples. The same was true of some other members of the Commission, notably those from Africa and Asia.

This being said, I should add that even the views of the afore-mentioned were relatively carefully (diplomatically) expressed. According to many views from academia, especially those of AIERI/IAMCR's critical communication research, the MacBride Report in its final version was a rather watered-down document, i.e., hardly radical! This was clearly expressed in *Communication in the Eighties: A Reader of the MacBride Report* edited by Cees J. Hamelink. However, as already pointed out, even the published 'soft' version of the report proved to be inacceptable to the Western – and esp. the American and British – media, their corporations and their governments.

This was followed by a well-orchestrated, uncompromising attack on Mr. M'Bow personally (indeed, a classic case of dishonest, brutal character-assassination by certain media!) and on UNESCO as a whole. At the same time it was also a somewhat covert attack on the UN system, or rather, on the then principal fora of multilateral co-operation, which the US could no longer dominate and control.

At this point it is necessary to mention also the significant role played in this attack on UNESCO by certain powerful (and wealthy) NGOs, notably the Heritage Foundation and, linked with it, the World Press Freedom Organization. Impregnated with prejudiced, indeed reactionary ideology, their representatives opposed bitterly whatever they deemed as threatening to the dominant position of global news agencies such as Reuters, Associated Press and AFP. Our Division thus had to deal frequently with the WPFO and the equally relentless International Federation of the Periodical Press, which defended above all the commercial interests of privately owned media. On the other side, however, we had to deal at that time also with the equally aggressive Soviet-controlled (including KGB) media proponents – all of which was typical for the Cold War circumstances. Fortunately, in November 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall we needed no longer be concerned with the Soviet/KGB presence, but the American (Heritage and other) surveillance and interference continued unimpeded

Sašo: How did journalists respond to the MacBride Report in your view? When looking through documents I was quite shocked by the denunciation campaign, which took place at the time, which systematically spread lies, some signed even by well-known journalists, editors, journalist associations, etc. One such lie, often found, was that the Commission proposed introducing journalist licences, despite the fact that the Report explicitly states that the Commission was aware of how dangerous this would be and it therefore chose *not* to propose this. I was likewise shocked by how rapidly certain journalists, whose job is to report objectively, chose to serve such a dirty campaign.

Breda: On the whole, journalists worldwide were quite divided. Those adhering to IPS (Roman-based Inter-Press Service), the International Federation of Journalists, the Pool of News Agencies of the Non-Aligned Countries, and some other basically understood and supported the MacBride Report. Albeit in certain cases some might have been suspected of favouring State-controlled media. On the other side of the spectrum, however, were journalists supporting the Western concept of 'absolute freedom of information', total commercialization of the media, etc., promoted by the WPFO and other like-minded bodies. Some of these competed in quoting Mr. M'Bow (or other UNESCO representatives) and/or parts of the Report by tearing these out of context, thereby deforming what had been indeed said. Worse yet, such deformed statements were then spread widely through syndicated press networks to even the remotest parts of the US and other countries. Their readers/viewers were thus 'informed' and 'concerned' (as taxpayers) by the 'dangerous' intentions of UNESCO and its MacBride Report. And then, in turn, these tax-payers were used as alibi by their governments' representatives at UNESCO meetings for justifying their decisions to cut the Organization's funding – and ultimately even their withdrawal from UNESCO.

The conflict at the time was very bad indeed. With hindsight one understands even better the stakes on both sides. In a nutshell I would say that the assault on UNESCO and the MacBride Report was basically spurred by big-capital interests. The media and all of information & communication being an essential instrument of economic, financial and political power, the global corporations and big-capital in general could not tolerate anyone's interference in this area. When the Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77 began organizing itself in this regard (the Pool, and various South-South networks of cooperation that followed) and, moreover, succeeded in influencing the UN and its agencies (UNESCO) to move in that direction,

the corporate-big-capital powers clearly became sufficiently alarmed to stifle the process.

Jernej: This is indeed interesting. Recently I spoke with a colleague in Brussels who deals with these questions. She co-edited a book on NWICO and transition to WSIS [*World Summit on the Information Society*]. According to her the authors wished to present this publication also at UNESCO, but were flatly refused, supposedly because 'Whatever concerns NWICO has no place in UNESCO'. This rather extreme response strikes me as direct censorship.

Breda: Alas, things have indeed gone far. When Federico Mayor was elected Director-General of UNESCO in November 1987, our Division was asked to find a suitable solution, i.e., proposals to appease the conflict which threatened the very existence of UNESCO, i.e., all its programmes (in education, science, culture and communication). At the time it was said that Canada too might leave UNESCO (following the USA, UK and Singapore). Fortunately this did not happen, largely due to Mr. Mayor's immense effort to clarify matters with the Canadian government authorities, and their subsequent involvement in promoting policy changes from within the Organization. (I witnessed this first-hand as UNESCO's representative to Canada in 1989-1993.)

At the same time, however, one should remember that in November 1989 the Berlin Wall fell, and that changed profoundly the entire international scene. The NWICO rhetoric and programme were thus gradually dropped and substituted by UNESCO's greater focus on journalist training, technical aid to developing countries in setting up their media and other information-communication needs, etc.

Jernej: The MacBride Report is still taboo in UNESCO, right? And NWICO is hardly ever mentioned in UNESCO.

Breda: As far as I know, this is so. Today, it seems as if it never existed! It has been deleted not only from subsequent and present programme and budget, but largely also from its institutional memory. Sad – isn't it? It is precisely for this reason that I was most pleasantly surprised when our colleague Slavko Splichal organized some years ago (in 2005) in Fiesa the international round-table on 'The MacBride Report – 25 Years Later'. A very nice way to mark this anniversary. The written contributions prepared for it, and the debate truly impressed me and, moreover, convinced me that all the endeavour to produce the Report, and the struggle around it, were after all not in vain.

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"Well friends, let's play jazz." An Interview with Cees Hamelink.

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Abstract: An interview with Cees J. Hamelink, one of the most important scholars in global communication and international political economy of communication, who was also an active participant in several political initiatives and movements in the field of media and communication, including NWICO and WSIS. We spoke about his political ideas, scholarly work and how his fascinating life-path, which took him to different parts of the world, in many ways had an impact on his intellectual development.

Keywords: Global communication, international political economy, human rights, communication politics, the right to communicate, communication flows, communication rights, World Summit on the Information Society, cultural autonomy, musicology.

Professor Cees J. Hamelink is Emeritus Professor of International Communication at the University of Amsterdam and Professor of Human Rights and Public Health at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. He is considered to be amongst the most important scholars in global communication and international political economy of communication. His erudite approach spans from a critical analysis of communication flows and transnational media industries to human rights, social psychology, public health and culture. While often anchoring his research in political economy, his ideas and influence go beyond it, as his research includes observations from several other fields of study. He published more than fifteen monographs on communication, technology and culture, including *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications* (1983, Longman), *Finance and Information* (1983, Ablex), *The Politics of World Communication* (1994, Sage), *World communication: disempowerment & self-empowerment* (1996, Zed Books), *The Ethics of Cyberspace* (2001, Sage), *Media and Conflict: Escalating Evil* (2011, Routledge) and *Global Communication* (2015, Sage).

Professor Hamelink was also an active participant in several political initiatives and movements in the field of media and communication. These include *New World Information and Communication Order* [*NWICO*] and *World Summit on the Information Society* [*WSIS*]. He was one of the founders of the *People's Communication Charter*, an international initiative of different civil society associations that actively advocated for implementation of the right to communicate, which would enable voices of ordinary people to be heard. He worked as a journalist as well as a consultant on communication policy for various international organizations (especially United Nations) and governments around the world. Besides his political engagement and scholarly work, Professor Hamelink is an avid jazz musician, which translates fully into his improvised lectures and discussions.

We spoke at the annual IAMCR conference in Leicester, United Kingdom, which took place between 27th and 31st of July 2016. Professor Hamelink was, amongst others, also a president of this renowned association of media and communication and is now an IAMCR Honorary President.

(Photo: Jernej Amon Prodnik)

Jernej: Let's start with your personal history. What drew you to media and communication, which was still very much an emerging research field at the time you entered it?

Cees: Yes, and it was not a specific field, like it is today. Some people even call it a discipline, which I think is a mistake, it is just a field of studies. But there are now communication departments. When I began there were of course no communication departments, they were always part of larger departments like sociology or political sciences. So I never studied communication, I never did media studies. I studied theology and philosophy in the early 1960s, combined with musicology, because I was a jazz player when I was young and I wanted to know more about music. As I was doing that for five years, I suddenly saw an advertisement in a newspaper that said 'We are looking for a broadcaster'. Broadcaster with the Churches broadcasting corporation in the Netherlands, which I liked, because that was one of the most radical and critical broadcasting companies. They were also someone who would do radio and television, which seemed to be interesting. There was cooperation with other left wing radical broadcast companies at that time, so this all looked very promising.

At the same time as I applied and got that job, I decided to finish my studies in theology, and then I actually became more interested not so much in what people believed or the content of that belief, but why they believe. I decided that I could probably combine working for broadcasting with studying psychology, so I entered a

course on psychology at one of our universities, studying particularly clinical psychology, psychotherapy and psychology of religion, which was a good combination with working for a religious broadcasting company.

Those five, six years and the practice of journalism taught me a lot about media. You need to understand that at that time there was neither an academic education in communication or journalism and there were also no schools of journalism yet, which exist nowadays. So you could not train to be a journalist, you just learned it on the job. I still think that was a practical school, you were just thrown into the deep and they said: 'Make a radio programme'.

Jernej: When was this?

Cees: That was in 1965.

Jernej: So it was fairly late when journalism departments started in the Netherlands?

Cees: Yes, they only started in the 1970s.

Jernej: That's interesting, even in Slovenia (then part of socialist Yugoslavia), they were founded earlier.

Cees: Even then there was a lot of resistance amongst the editors of newspapers and editors of broadcasting companies to hire young people who were trained for the journalistic vocation, because there was a general belief that the best journalists were those who failed in academia, who studied political sciences and never made it [*both laugh*]. They made *wonderful* journalists.

Anyway, I learned a lot in those years, because I also became a foreign correspondent. I worked as a stringer for *Associated Press* in the Middle East for a little while, I worked in Africa, where I was teaching journalism both in Nairobi and in Addis Ababa… Then the questions began, because I thought: 'Well, there seems to be a sort of an idea that journalism was universal, that it can be practiced *everywhere* in the world in the same way'. I discovered quite quickly being in Africa that was not the case at all. We needed different journalistic standards in different cultures.

At that time I also began to increasingly wonder how well informed people really are. If you listen to a broadcast news programme, how much do you really know and understand about the world. I came to the following conclusion: 'Very, very little'. Because of the pressures of the job – for example you give a two minute account of what happens in the Middle East – it has to be by necessity biased and it has to be distorted. I also began to wonder about the relationship between news and propaganda and I thought that much news was really in effect propaganda for certain ideological positions. As a psychologist, I also began to be intrigued by all the lying and the deception that goes on in the newscasting.

So that was when I was completely open to the invitation from Geneva by The Lutheran World Federation and The World Council of Churches to set up a communication research desk. I applied, I got the job, and I was very happy to move into the international field and into the field of reflection on communication, and more precisely – that is what they wanted in Geneva – to explore the possibility of setting up alternative outlets for media. In the early 1970s, alternative media was the real keyword.

Jernej: How was that financed? It seems fairly unusual by today's standards that someone would be so open about trying to do something with alternative media.

Cees: Well the churches funded that. At that time there was still a lot of money available for such projects. There were – as they say in development cooperation – the usual suspects: the Dutch, and if the Dutch fund something then the Swedes come along, and then the Norwegians come along. So the Dutch development aid, SIDA [*Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency*] in Sweden, NORAD [*Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation*] in Norway, FINNIDA [*Finnish International Development Agency*] in Finland. At that time people were really intrigued by this notion of setting up alternatives to the dominant form of journalism.

Through that I began to be involved with IPS, *the Inter Press Service*, which was – and still is to some extent, although it is now in deep financial trouble – the real alternative press agency. You know, coming from Latin America, building its headquarters in Rome. Within IPS we really found a marvellous agency, because – at that time we had to write for AP [*Associated Press*], TASS [*Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union*] – it became the fourth world leading news agency, with a totally different perspective on how to do things.

IPS was different, because within it different actors were present, like ordinary people or just women, who hardly played any role in dominant newsflows. That was new. What was also new at IPS was looking at the historical background of conflicts. When IPS was covering a conflict, it was not just about the conflict and about the fight. It was also about how to understand it. Good stories, investigative reporting... So it was a very interesting time and I did that for almost six years.

I also began to be more academically interested in communications, so I began to write books about the corporate structure of the media, how corporations really ruled the media. I wrote the study about finance and information, how the bankers had a great deal of interest and investment in communications. And I wrote a book on cultural autonomy, which to my pleasure is still being used.[1] I hear people in conferences say 'Oh that book changed my life!', which is wonderful to hear. Because that book – thinking about cultural autonomy in global communication – basically pleaded for what I called at the time 'cultural dissociation'. I said, 'As long as developing countries remain within the remit of the developed countries, there will never be development, there will be envelopment. You will become a part of the system which is not in your interest. So dissociate yourself from that system.'

I actually learned that in psychology, because I learned that in marriages, when things go wrong, the weaker party will always suffer more than the strong party. And the weaker party in many traditional marriages of course was the woman. If they continue to communicate, it is to the detriment of the weaker party. So I thought, 'Well, that is the same. This insight from psychology can also be brought to countries. When weaker and strong countries communicate, the weaker party will always lose out, because the strong party has a bigger mouth, it has a loud voice. So dissociate yourself.'

That was a very interesting time. In 1976 I then left Geneva – I've been in all these debates, the MacBride debate and *The New World Information and Communication*

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[1] See: Hamelink, Cees. 1983. *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications. Planning National Information Policy*. Longman: New York. In the book, Hamelink for example emphasises that "dissociation means the conscious choice against the delusory offer of integration in an international order which appears to respond to all the interests of the developing countries, but which, in fact, represents almost exclusively the interests of the powerful." (Ibid., 97)

Order [NWICO] and so on and so forth – you could clearly see two different streams of thinking about communication. You had the school that said 'No, we need to do things totally different, we need to build a new order, we need to go for alternatives, we need to go for cultural autonomy'. And of course you had the beginnings of neo-liberalism. People who really believed that the best way to communicate was to use the techniques...

Jernej: Of the free flow of information ideology?

Cees: Yes, but free flow in the sense of being controlled by markets.

Jernej: Of course, in essence the free market ideology.

Cees: Precisely, that was the other side of the coin. I was asked at that time to forget about all these alternative projects – couldn't I do a project that was based on the 'Coca-Cola philosophy'? I remember someone saying: 'But you know, if the things that we want to do – both the ideals of the United Nations and the ideas that the churches have – if we want to make them successful, then if Coca-Cola can be suc-cessful behind the Iron Curtain and sell its bottles, we should also be able to sell our messages. So we want more marketing kind of communication.' And then I said: 'No.' And then my bosses said: 'What if we double your salary and make it tax free? And get you a blue diplomatic passport so you can travel around the world.' That was a good challenge. I'm still happy until this day that I said 'No'. So I lost my very good job in Geneva, my very beautiful place in Swiss mountains, and went back to Am-sterdam.

I had a very good fortune that I was called the next day by the Dutch *Ministry for Development Cooperation*, by the then minister, who said: 'Cees, we need you, be-cause we have a big project in Latin America. We have a cooperation with ILET – which is the *Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales*, the *Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies* – and we want you to join them.' So that was very good news because I could then expand my research agenda into issues like trans-border data flows and corporate control. I spent a little more than three years in Mexico City working with that institute, which was an interesting experience, because the institute worked very closely together with the Non-Aligned countries. We occa-sionally had visits at the institute from Raúl Castro, who was then the *Minister of In-formation* [in Cuba], to talk about the resolutions in the United Nations.

Why was it such an exciting time? They were all Latin Americans, mainly refugees from Latin American countries, who were hosted by the Mexican government at the time. So we had a lot of Chilean refugees that belonged to the [Salvador] Allende party during the early 1970s, who then had to leave the country.

Good people like Juan Somavía, who was later the director of ILO [*International Labour Organization*], Fernando Reyes Matta, Rafael Roncagliolo, so famous names in the Latin American scene. That was really interesting, so my first question when I came there was: 'What is my role as a Dutch person?' And they said: 'Well, we'll study things in Latin America, don't you worry about that. But you are a part of the world, where the real perpetrators of big crimes come from. You are a part of that scene, so you have to study the role of the banks, the role of transnational corpora-tions and how they affect us and what policies could be developed in order to change that.'

I was very much at the centre of all the debates about the *New International Economic Order* [*NIEO*] and the *New International Information Order* [*NIIO*], working on the solutions for the Non-Aligned countries. What I always keep telling students is that the glamorous years were of course the 1960s, when there were student revolutions and the workers revolutions, when you had Berkeley, when you had Paris and all these places. But really, the more important years were the 1970s. They look more boring, because there is not the excitement and the commotion of the 1960s, but the really important years in my notebook are the 1970s, because there was a very serious attempt to make the ideals of the 1960s a reality.

Jernej: To change the social context?

Cees: To *transform* societies. The only drawback in retrospective analysis – but you didn't feel that at the time – was that we just overestimated...

Jernej: What is in fact possible to do?

Cees: Yes, it was a very utopian vision, based on a very simple reasoning, which was: the United Nations is the key actor in transforming the world, but the good thing in the United Nations is that it is based on the principle 'One state – one vote'. And the states that want to change things are in the majority. So I remember sitting and working on resolutions with a team of people, with *sincere* belief that if the next day the United Nations General Assembly would vote, and it would vote in majority that the world economy had to be governed in a different way and that the world communications had to find a new pattern, that would indeed happen.

Jernej: I guess in that sense it was simple mathematics basically?

Cees: Yes, simple mathematics, but also – yes, that's true – but in addition, a firm belief in the power of international law and a belief in the United Nations. The first thing practically all the decolonised states did was to set up an office in New York. They wanted to be close to the United Nations. And the whole notion that we had international law, it was almost like a mantra. You only had to say 'international law'... So that was very much the feeling and the sentiment of the 1970s. I am very happy to have been at the heart of that, being in the UN meetings, being in UNESCO meetings, being in the Non-Aligned meetings, having lived through that.

Then we all of course experienced the disappointment of the 1980s. So we had the revolution in the 1960s, we had the transformation of things – or at least an attempt to transform things – in the 1970s, and then you go to [Ronald] Regan and [Margaret] Thatcher and neo-liberalism in the 1980s. It all breaks down. The United States leave UNESCO, no one wants to talk again about NWICO, that's all taboo and things change rapidly.

At that time, in the 1980s, I was asked by the then rector of the *Institute of Social Studies*, which is an institute for development studies in The Hague, whether I would accept a job there as an Associate Professor for international relations and international communication and come back to the Netherlands, which I did. And that was a good time, because I got the opportunity to meet a lot of students from developing countries and set up a project with UNESCO on communication policy and planning in Africa. So for many years, we did workshops with future ministers of information

and communication in Africa. It also gave me the opportunity to publish more and to write more books.

Then in 1983 the University of Amsterdam said: 'We would like you to become our Professor of global or international communication', in a sort of a combination between the communication department, which in the meantime had been established – just a normal communication department that was growing very rapidly and is now one of the largest such departments in Western Europe, with a lot of research programmes and a lot of students – and my Chair was sort of established between the communication department and international relations and political science. So my mandate was to look at how global communication plays a role in international, political, economic and cultural relations.

Jernej: It is fascinating to hear the eclecticism of the many different strands, fields, traditions and also disciplines you started from, with finally ending in international media and communication. It is interesting also because media and communication is often very nationally based, in that sense it is very closed, but even in this sense you went wider, as you focused on the international arena. You had, so to say, a very generalistic perspective.

Cees: The reason is also because I lived abroad. I lived in the Middle East, in Africa, I travelled a lot...

Jernej: This probably contributed the most to your opinion that you cannot look at these things nationally?

Cees: I can't, because I don't feel like that. I'm a Dutch citizen, but I don't feel like it. I always tell my students: 'You want to be cosmopolitan, but you can't really be cosmopolitan, because no one lives in the cosmos.' [*both laugh*] I think locality is important and for me locality is very important, but not in the sense of the Netherlands, of the Dutch state, but in the sense of Amsterdam. It is like many New Yorkers say: 'We're not Americans, but we are New Yorkers'. I don't feel like a Dutch citizen, but I feel like a citizen of one of the most fascinating cities in the world that is a sort of an amalgam of around twenty different ethnic identities that live in the city. That is why I feel at home. So that makes it easier.

All these years I always had one suitcase ready for travel. Whenever I was called by the UN, or by the World Council of Churches, or by the UNESCO or by whatever other institution, saying 'Could you come, because we need a policy advisor on communication policies in Malaysia, or in Thailand, or in Mozambique…' my suitcase was always ready, so I could go. And I always felt very happy about it, because then I would encounter new challenges and meet new people, I would learn more about different cultural conceptions on communication.

Throughout all of this, of course, I have always played music. So I began to discover that in all these different situations, whether you were in Somalia, whether you were in India, whether you were in Ouagadougou, the common factor, the common ground, was always music. I could always say: 'Well friends, let's play jazz. Maybe we don't understand each other linguistically...'

Jernej: … But through music you can.

Cees: Through music you can. There may be all kinds of different ideas and backgrounds that we come from. Our religious conceptions or moral ideas. But I've always found it tremendously important to first find common ground, to *like* each other. Whenever I was on peace missions in Africa, I always thought my role is to be liked by both parties. Going to a conflict area, it is important that both parties at the end of the day, sitting at the negotiations table, go home and tell their husbands or their wives: 'Hey, he is a nice guy, this Dutch man. We like him, we trust him.'

So you always have to first establish common ground, and not necessarily in a rational way, but in the way of what I like to call "conviviality". People liking each other, wanting to cooperate. Of course playing music is a marvellous instrument to achieve that and then see what the problem is really all about.

Of course for many years I taught at the University of Amsterdam in the communication department, all these courses in global communication, but also at the restriction that I said: 'Don't ask me for administration, because I am a traveller in the department. I want to be free to go on missions, to speak everywhere in the world.'

Interestingly enough, in all those years, there was a new dimension that became more important to me: the dimension of human rights. That was not such a new thing, because I've been dealing with those issues from theology and philosophy. But increasingly in the 1990s that issue became more and more important. So when there were discussions around the world in the preparation for *The World Summit on the Information Society* (WSIS), I became heavily involved in the notion of communication rights and the right to communicate. For me that seemed to be a very natural thing: combining human rights issues with communication issues. That did lead to a new angle.

I also got very much involved in the CRIS movement, *The Communication Rights in the Information Society*. We became involved in the WSIS as one of the advisors, trying to get human rights on the agenda, which was basically a failure. Most of the member states of the United Nations had no interest for human rights dimensions in communication. And then of course I began to write about those issues. The interesting thing was that when I retired from the University of Amsterdam in 2005 – when I reached the age of 65 and there is a mandatory retirement – first of all they said: 'Hang on, keep teaching,' which I liked. But what was also interesting was that at the other university, the Free University of Amsterdam [*Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*], the medical faculty said: 'We need someone to teach human rights and public health.' And I said: 'Well I know a lot about human rights by now. I can claim to be some sort of a specialist in that, but I know very little about health.' And then the doctor said: 'Oh well, that's easy [*both laugh*], we can teach you that in a couple of weeks, that's not a problem.' So I accepted that offer and they also said: 'We don't do age discrimination, we want to have you as a professor in our department. Not a retired professor, but a real professor.' So I got a new chair at the Free University to deal with human rights and global health issues. Again different fields.

Jernej: You really touched every field possible…

Cees: Yes, and I always liked that and I still do. If there's a new field opening tomorrow and they would say 'Hey, would you be interested?', I'd probably say 'Yes'. I sometimes accept invitations for speeches about topics that I know very little about.

Jernej: So that you learn about them?

Cees: I learn about them. My whole mission in life is to do two things: to learn myself and by learning more myself, to be better able to get students to think critically and ask the real questions. My teaching brief is to get students to ask questions. And the best student is the one who comes up to me after a lecture and says: 'Professor, I liked it, but I think it's a lot of bullshit.' [both laugh] Those inevitably get the highest grade.

Jernej: But I presume they have to give you arguments why that is the case?

Cees: There always have to be arguments. But I come from a family that was like this. My father was a lawyer and he always taught the children to sit around the table and debate and ask questions. Ask questions of him. He would never say: 'You have to do this, because I'm your father.' When I was ten years old, my parents taught me that they had an obligation to educate us. But they thought it was very difficult and that we were much too intelligent to be educated by them, so why didn't we educate ourselves. So I come from that tradition, educate yourself, but with parents who were always there. If you had to ask questions, you could always ask questions and you got an argued answer, not an argument from hierarchy.

Jernej: This was also [Paulo] Freire's view on education.

Cees: Of course. Freire was a shining example for me, because I met him when he was in exile. We shared a room for a long time in Geneva, in the building of the World Council of Churches. What I learned from Paulo was that at the end of every working day, when he left, he stood at the door, with his little brief case and he would look at me and he would say: 'Cees, never forget! Trust the people, trust in their capacities!'

So when I later wrote a book on transnational and world communication and when I dealt with the issue of empowerment, I tried to apply all of the things I've learned from him. And the most important thing was that the notion of empowerment is absolutely wrong. Of course, it means 'I am going to empower you', which means 'I know better.' It is still a hierarchical relationship. You need to think about empowerment in terms of self-empowerment. Trust that the people can empower themselves. But create the environment in which that is possible and that certainly means people coming from the more powerful, Western countries, taking away the obstacles.

I still hear – also in this conference – people talking about empowerment, without realising that is a very colonial concept that creates new dependencies. What we really have to do is to be very critical and reflect on what are the obstacles that we create for the people to self-empower themselves. Because, certainly coming from a tradition of colonisation as I do... I mean the Dutch have been there, you know...

Jernej: Of course, if anyone has... [*both laugh*]

Cees: In Indonesia and the West Indies, and even in Brazil. We have done our bit. And I'm always surprised when I hear – also again this week in this conference – people talking about post-colonial studies or whatever… I always say: 'Be very careful, I know what you mean, but colonialism never went away. *Post*-colonialism? When did it ever stop?'

Colonialism is not only the administrative control or military control, it is more in the mindset. The minds of both the people in the former colonized territories and the

mindsets of those who are a part of the colonial strategies need to be decolonized. That is a very tough job! It will take us generations before our minds will be decolonised. It begins of course with using the right concepts and as Paulo [Freire] said, trusting the people and allowing particularly young people to ask all the questions.

Jernej: Who would you say were the key authors that influenced your thinking – besides Freire of course – when you started and when your ideas developed?

Cees: I was asked recently on Flemish television who was the most inspirational force in my life. They were expecting that I would say Immanuel Kant or Socrates. I said it was the teacher I had in basic school, Mrs. Peterson. That didn't seem to be a great philosophical source, but it was because we lived in a small village in the south of the Netherlands and she would run the Protestant school in the Catholic environment. She had all the six groups of that basic school and there were six classes in one space. So I was sitting in the third class, in the row here, and she said 'You do your own thing,' and then she was teaching the others some different classes. She was the forming power in my life, because when I was, I think, in my fourth grade – so I must have been nine or ten years old – there was a conflict between that small Protestant school and the major Roman Catholic school. The kids of the Catholic school were waiting for the protestant gals and guys to fight with them and throw stones at them. So there was a conflict and there had to be negotiations about that conflict. And Mrs. Peterson said to me: 'Cees, you do it, you go to that school and negotiate for us.' And I said: 'How do ...?' And she just answered: 'Don't, that's the wrong question. You can do it. Trust yourself.' So I negotiated at the age of ten, with the *powerful* Roman Catholic majority, how to come to a peace agreement. Now that has been a determining force in my life. The fact that she trusted me.

That of course comes back later with Paulo Freire's saying 'Trust in the people'. I have never believed that there were students that were a lost generation, I never believed in that. Then you addressed them in the wrong way. Everyone has enormous talents, whether they are scholarly talents, musical talents, or social skills, everyone has them. You need people in your environment that say: 'You can do it!' So I now say to the students: 'I am awfully sorry, my generation really messed up the 20th century. We made a mess of it. And now it's up to you to transform the world. And I have great confidence in the fact that you can do that.'

So the authors – to come back to your question – in my life were along the line of that kind of thinking. Many of them, even [Ivan] Illich, who is all forgotten. But if I give students today his books *Medical Nemesis* (1975) or *Deschooling Society* (1971), they say 'Oh my god, the guy wrote that in the 1970s!' I met him when I was working in Mexico. I was there at the moment when he received a letter from the Vatican that he was excommunicated as a priest. And he looked at that letter and he said: 'That's bloody bad Latin!', and he corrected the letter and sent it back! [*both laugh*] Those people I've always found interesting. I remember one day when young volunteers for the American Peace Corps came to be introduced to Latin American by him. And they had great expectations, he's a great philosopher, great theologian, he would tell them how to provide development aid to the Latin American countries. And he had all these young people sitting there and he said: 'I have one advice for you: Don't go!' So that was it. His readings and his talking were very inspirational for me.

On the African continent, in the context of the Algerian liberation struggles, it was [Frantz] Fanon.

So those have been really very important and by and large also the great authors of world literature. I always told students, if you want to really understand human beings, read [Fyodor Mikhailovich] Dostoyevsky, read [Lev Nikolayevich] Tolstoy, read [William] Shakespeare. You'll probably learn more from them than you will learn from handbooks on psychology.

In the communication field, of course, when I did the textbook for Sage on global communication[2] – which I didn't want to do for a long time, because I thought writing a textbook must be the most boring thing you can ever do – so one day Mila Steele, who was then the publisher at Sage, and my assistant Julia Hoffmann, who was the most brilliant assistant I have ever had and my best PhD student, came to me and invited me for a dinner in a very posh restaurant. So I thought, 'Something is wrong here.' And they looked at me and they said: 'Cees, you are one of our dearest friends, but you make a fundamental mistake, you believe in immortality. You believe that you will never die. And we think that we have to bring you the message that you'll die at some point in time.' [*both laugh*] And I said: 'Well what's this all about?' And they said: 'Well, look, you've been lecturing for twenty-five years and you never made a note. You never taught from lecture notes, you never used PowerPoints as we do today, so all of that teaching will get lost when you die.'

Jernej: So this changed your mind?

Cees: That changed my mind, because I thought: 'Yes, they have a point'. I like *talking from the heart*, as they say. I prepare myself, sort of...

Jernej: But it is basically like a jazz improvisation?

Cees: Yes, exactly. When I did my inaugural lecture at the University in Amsterdam in 1984, the only one who understood what I was doing was the piano player with whom I play jazz. He said: 'You play jazz?'

And many of the colleagues were very upset: 'He gives a lecture for forty-five minutes and he doesn't read it? How is that possible?' Well I can't read it, because then I get totally confused. And with the PowerPoint I get straightjacketed. I don't like it. I want to communicate with students, I want to look them in the eyes and I want to interact with them. Of course it is a monologue, I know that, but a monologue can be very dialogical, you can really connect with people and address them.

So the two women convinced me, but then the funny thing was, that I had no notes. How was I going to put together twenty-five years? So Julia [Hoffmann], my assistant, was very smart. She sent messages to former students and asked *them* for their notes. And then the funniest thing was that one of the students said: 'Well I've got to admit that what I did, occasionally, when I made good notes of the lectures – like lectures on propaganda or diplomacy, I sent them to Wikipedia.' And I said: 'Well that's a bloody shame, because now we're not going to be able to use those notes. People will accuse me of plagiarism!' I would plagiarise myself! [*both laugh*]

Slowly I got all those notes and I talked to a lot of people. Your memory also gets triggered off. I never kept a diary, which means that a lot of things got lost, until people talked to me and said: 'But how was that in the 1970s, the 1960s and the 1980s?'

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[2] See: Hamelink, Cees J. 2015. *Global Communication*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.

Then the memories come back. But you'll see in the textbook that for all of the chapters I have an inspirational force.

Jernej: This is what I wanted to talk to you as well, because you have radical authors there, such as Herbert Schiller, Noam Chomsky...

Cees: Yes, but they were friends, that's again the conviviality. I have known all these authors.

Jernej: So they were also personal inspiration?

Cees: Yeah, also when we disagreed. We disagreed forcefully at some issues with Manuel Castells.

Jernej: Yeah, I can imagine. [*laughter*]

Cees: I think he's a technological determinist and of course he doesn't like it. I remember there was an ICA [*International Communication Association*] meeting many years ago and both Manuel Castells and Jürgen Habermas were there. And I got into a debate where I wholeheartedly disagreed with Habermas on certain issues and I also felt he was a coward, because some of the best critiques of his work came from Latin America. And I said: 'You should go to Latin America and really get exposed to what Latin Americans think about you'. But he didn't want to.

Manuel Castells also refused to go into a debate with a colleague from Venezuela at the plenary meeting of ICA. So they are both sort of gurus, primadonnas. They're beyond question and answer sessions. I got into a discussion with them at the reception and they both got fairly angry. And then someone came to me and he said: 'Oh, Cees, I'm so pleased. You managed to piss off the two most important thinkers in our field in one reception!' [*both laugh*] But with most of these people we were also very good friends, like Luis Ramiro Beltran and of course Herb [Schiller], with whom I attended many conferences.

Jernej: I presume that [Armand] Mattelart was the same?

Cees: Yes, Mattelart was the same. I met him in the 1970s and we worked together on a book, which is called *The Corporate Village* (1977). We met again a couple of years ago in Mexico, we were addressing a big audience there together. I've always liked him very much and also his wife, Michelle Mattelart, whom I also know very well.

Those were special relations and I liked the idea, which came from the publisher. They said: 'You should also tell students, who are the people that inspired you.' So all these chapters have an inspirational force. One chapter has a very inspirational force and it's Joseph Haydn.

Jernej: Yes, I noticed that. I wasn't sure when I was reading the book whether it is the composer? And I thought to myself 'Nooo, it can't be him'. [*both laugh*] And then I saw the bio... 'Oh, yes, it *is* him!'

Cees: It was because people were asking where I'm working, knowing that I'm a jazz aficionado. I always listen to string quartets and Haydn is the most inspirational. So I thought, why not mention the guy?

Of course there is also Marshall McLuhan, who I met only once and very briefly. I couldn't claim any kind of real friendship, but I was also inspired by his *out-of-the-box* thinking, which in the end is not so much *out-of-the-box*. And I liked that as well. Sometimes we'd like to think of ourselves as being really revolutionary and creating new models. When we look at it really critically we see that we're still in a certain framework. That also tells you how enormously difficult it is to break out of frameworks.

Yesterday, I was present as a commentator in a meeting on an international panel on social progress, and I said: 'All these things that you're saying, they look new, but they're all rehashing of the old wine.' We see it is often deja-vu.

Jernej: It's also often continuity and discontinuity at the same time.

Cees: Yeah, but there is so much continuity. This whole program is again putting so much belief in the United Nations. They say: 'the United Nations now has a new program for transforming the world.' And I said: 'Wouldn't it be kind if the United Nations started transforming itself?' There is no critical debate within UN about all of its failures.

Jernej: And there were many, right?

Cees: Oh, it's such an incompetent organization, with such a lack of accountability. It's a very problematic organization. And the same is true with the communication research. We study, hopefully in a critical way, although critical research is not the dominant form of media and communication research, it has also been marginalized.

Jernej: Yes, of course.

Cees: We have great people – who are still here, fortunately – like Peter Golding and Graham Murdock. But where are junior scholars? I don't see them. Certainly not in any way as a dominant school of thinking, so critical research is in short supply in the field.

But it's even worse when you think: how critical are we about *ourselves*? It's nice if people study media, institutions and corporate structures in a critical way. But communication as developing discipline is also being embedded in university structures. We also need critical social study of who we are and how we are a part of university structures and how we are ruled by the requirements of fund raising and so on and so forth.

It's nice to study epistemology, theory of science, in a critical way. But we need to spend more time on thinking about our own lack of theoretical thinking, because – as I keep saying, much to the dismay, irritation and annoyance of my colleagues – I don't think that social sciences have developed any solid theoretical framework. Give me one. There's ideas, marvellous visions, there's questions... I have now just finished a new book on communication and human rights and I made the argument from a Darwinist perspective. I'm a strong believer in evolution theory and its application to the social sciences. As [Charles] Darwin himself already said at the end of his

On the Origin of Species (1859) – I think that this might also be very useful for psychology, I think it is for evolutionary type of psychology at least.

I believe we get so many great insights, wonderful diagnoses and descriptions, but lack explanations as to why people behave and communicate in certain ways… But biology, and certainly Darwinian biology, has always been side-tracked in the social sciences. It has always been seen as a threat. Even in science as such, we don't have that many very solid theories on which you can really build on. There is maybe only one or two in physics, you got some fairly solid notions about gravitation, and in biology we've got a solid theory on the evolution of species, which gets increasing support from fossil and paleontological research, so that is a good basis to build from. That, I think, is important. I always tell the students, when they ask: 'But why are you such a Darwinist?' I say to them: 'Because I believe it helps us to understand things that we have never been able to understand by traditional social science approaches. But I'll tell you, the day that evolution theory of Darwin gets fundamentally undermined, I'll have my flag out. That's what science is all about. Science is all about contesting, disagreeing, trying to find better ways to say things.'

Jernej: But that's really going to the most ontological level of human being, starting with Darwin and then proceeding from there to social sciences?

Cees: Yeah. I like the work of a Dutch friend Frans de Waal a lot. He is one of the leading primatologist in the world and I'm always happy to read his new books. He's now written a new book *Are we smart enough to understand how smart animals are?* (2016). I wish that more social scientists would read books like that and begin to understand from his observations. Because mind you, the zoologists and the primatologists spend *so much* time observing the behaviour they want to understand.

I was just reading a study by an American primatologist who spent almost twenty-five years observing little monkeys in Indonesia. After twenty years, he says: 'I slowly began to see the patterns. I began to understand, why they do things in a certain way.' I see very few social scientists who spend that amount of time watching people communicate. It's also a part of the university structure, we do a little survey, we do a mail-questionnaire or whatever and then we publish it.

Jernej: Yes, but it's the "publish or perish" system. It's structurally limiting the critical thought as well.

Cees: Yes, that's the problem and what I appeal to, are my senior colleagues, my generation: 'Let's get away from that whole shit, let's do away with journal impact factors and all these indexes.' They have no meaning for measuring academic quality, but they are obstacles for young people to be very creative and think out-of-the-box. And they can't say it. If you are a junior scholar at the university, you should not rock the boat too early, because you'll never get a professorial post. You are judged by standards that have been cooked up usually in meetings that are attended by people who know nothing about academic quality. They become like mantras or protocols to follow.

The only ones who can be critical about it are seniors, because we have nothing to lose. They can't fire us anymore. That is a great feeling, you can say whatever you want, and no one can do anything about it. We don't have to build reputations. We don't have to build our careers. Many of us have published enough books, the world

will be happy if we don't publish yet another one. So we can do it, but then I see a very lame response on that level as well.

Jernej: It has very much become normalised now, but if you think about it, it is complete insanity to basically bring production process similar to industrial production into academia. It has no connection to what scholarly process should be about.

Cees: Yes, and you are judged in terms of numbers.

Jernej: Of course, it *all* has to be boiled down to a number today.

Cees: As if you are quoted more that means something for the substantial quality of the work. Of course it doesn't, it means you are more quoted, that is the only thing it means. It has no deeper significance. Yet careers depend on this.

I would wish to call upon those of my generation to say: 'Let's stop this nonsense, let's give these juniors a real opportunity, we can trust them, we have confidence in them, many of them are very talented.' That is interesting, because we don't see it usually. Maybe we study media structures critically, but we don't see that the same thing that is happening within media is happening in academia as well. In the media by and large there are many young people who have great talents and want to become really good investigative journalists. But they can't, so we study that critically, we talk about it and we don't realize it is the same in our field. So as long as I live, I won't give up. I belong to the generation of the 1960s that doesn't give up that easily.

It's sometimes ironic to also see at a conference like this that so many things are rehashed, there's so much déjà-vu. Apparently it's so difficult to break through that. /../ Even within this institution – and IAMCR is still a very open and critical platform – it's very difficult to get that. It's also because – again talking about the structures – we are victims of the conference structure. I've been trying to change that when I was president, but not very successfully. I thought we are here to really converse with each other about important scientific issues and political issues. Discussions and dialogues take place in the corridors, of course, but the major structure of the meetings is: you have five papers, which are always longer than the academics promise, because academics are just totally unreliable. 'Yes, but I read the paper, it was ten minutes.' Well, I see from the pile of papers that you're going to read from that is going to be twenty minutes. [*laughter*] And then there's hardly any time for response or a comment and then we go home. So there's very little real discussions. Fortunately there's a lot of informal discussions taking place and that's marvellous.

I think one of the most successful moments in IAMCR's history was in 1980 in Caracas, Venezuela. I managed to get Herb Schiller and Ithiel de Sola Pool to debate each other on the major issues of communication technology. And they were really opposing, whole heartedly disagreeing, but they respected each other.[3] I had a good fortune of moderating that debate in a jam packed audience and it was so hot. We almost drifted away from the audience because of all the transpiration. And people, particularly the young people, came in and sat on the floor and listened. They were so inspired by these two. And that has never happened again. I still say to Janet [Wasko]: 'Let's try to do that once again. Have two major figures that have really dif-

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[3] This discussion was later published in *Journal of Communication*. See: De Sola Pool, Ithiel and Herbert I. Schiller. 1981. Perspectives on Communications Research: An Exchange. *Journal of Communication* 31(3): 15-23.

ferent positions, dialogue with each other.' Not in a shouting way, that doesn't get you anywhere, but trying to understand why they think differently, why one doesn't think the other's arguments are sufficiently solid, that kind of exchange. I think we should do that also to inspire, to say: 'This is what academia is all about'. In the end, it is about conversation in a critical way and listening to each other and building up arguments. But with the willingness to listen to arguments of someone else. It's what I call a wise discourse, we should see wisdom in communication. /../

Jernej: If I may jump back a couple of decades. Was it difficult to be a critical scholar when you started or was it more that you had international connections which made this possible? Would it be more difficult if you were just in Netherlands, especially because of the Cold war and everything that surrounded it?

Cees: Yeah, I think so. Because, remember, when I became involved in communication studies this was, of course, the time of the Cold war and of the colonial empires. Slowly countries began to be decolonized. It was marvellous to be at the IAMCR conferences forty years ago. /../ In 1974 it was in Leipzig, in the middle of the GDR [German Democratic Republic], and then in 1976 there was only 300 people from maybe forty nations, but that was when the globalization of the organization began.

   Jim [Halloran] was a good president in the sense that he really stimulated internationalization and opened up the organization, also by relating it to UNESCO. As this did not happen in all academic associations, the IAMCR has always prided itself in working together. The affiliation with the UN [United Nations] made that possible. Whatever you may have against it, the UN was still a global platform, people from East and West and North and South would meet. The UN has never said: 'Oh, but you come from a communist country, so you can't participate.' That was impossible. So we very much followed the UN model.

Jernej: This was one of the few forums that was really critical at that time, right?

Cees: Very few, very few. This was the attraction for me to join the IAMCR in different positions and also to become a vice president and then the president. It was also because it did meet my needs for critical exchange and to meet critical people, such as Dallas Smythe, Herb Schiller and Kaarle Nordenstreng. People like that, who you would immediately recognize and feel empathy and sympathy with, and you would have the same critical ideas.

   It was wonderful having this global aspect and meet people from *really* different backgrounds and cultures. I have always felt very much at home within the IAMCR. It is also because – even now that it is growing and there's almost five times as many people here [in Leicester] than there were forty years ago – it still has some of – I will use that word again – convivial ambiance, which makes it different from the *International Communication Association* [ICA] that is more American based. ICA is also attracting many people from different countries, but when I was asked what do I see as a difference between the ICA and the IAMCR, I said: 'Well, ICA is more like a business corporation and people deal, compete, maybe cooperate, but it's a different ambiance. IAMCR is more like a family. There are quarrels within the family, people dislike each other, as in any family, but there is this feeling of togetherness and belonging, which is quite pleasant.' I hope that for many, many years the organization will continue to expand. I'll continue to play my small role in it. I'm actually now a

chair of the Fundraising Committee, so I'm more worried about the funds of the IAMCR.

Jernej: How important was IAMRC for NWICO, for bringing people into this debate about the New World Information and Communication Order? Were there any clear connections or do you see them elsewhere?

Cees: No, no, I think more than any other academic association the IAMCR played a role both in the MacBride Commission and discussions connected to it and in the *New International Information Order* [NIIO], what later was baptized NWICO, which I never really liked. I'm still the NIIO person, because that sort of relates it to the *New International Economic Order* [NIEO].

Jernej: And NWICO was already a step away from that?

Cees: Yes, and that was proposed by the American delegation in the UNESCO. I still remember John Reinhardt, the American ambassador, saying: 'It should be broader, it should be world, family of men, ideas and so on, and it has nothing to do with economies.' So they broke the relationship with economy and I thought *that* was the beginning of the end. And it was widely accepted, everyone said 'NWICO, that's what it's all about.' I think what it was all about was the proposal from the Non-Aligned countries to create both a new economic order and a new information order.

Jernej: The latter basically came out of the New International Economic Order.

Cees: Yes, and of course it made the point that information and economics are intrinsically related. If you want to have a new information order, you also need to have a new economic order. But the Americans argued: 'You can have new relations in the field of information and communication, without changing the world economy.' I never believed that was possible, and today I still feel, when people talk about new information structures, you first have to look at the broader context. What's the broader context? That has not been transformed, the UN is incapable of transforming the way in which the world economy runs.

The IAMCR was capable of providing some academic input into these debates /../ and also later with the *World Summit on the Information Society* [WSIS], the IAMCR did play a role in it. Not that it had much effect, but that is what we could have foreseen, because social research never had much effect on policy making. We know that some eighty percent of social research – whether it is international relations or communication – ends up in a wastebasket. Politicians are not really interested in these issues.

Jernej: It lately seems they don't even need legitimization for their actions anymore.

Cees: No. *Unless* you can provide an alibi, unless you can provide research that supports them. In that case, they will use it. But if it doesn't support them, why would they?

In any way, the idea that politicians benefit from well documented and well-resourced information is based on the wrong assumption. Politicians function much better in a grey area, where you can manipulate things. They're not looking for better information or for answers. We always try to provide answers to problems, but they

know better themselves where to go and how to do it. It is all directed by interests of power or resources, material interests.

When yesterday I was in a debate about how we can write a nice chapter for a book that's going to transform the world, I said that this is still based on the assumption that anyone will listen to us.

Jernej: I think that it is an erroneous presumption that academia by itself can really change much, it's a little naïve to say the least.

Cees: We should accept the world of policy making and the world of research are totally different universes. Politicians – if they want anything – want to know that what they are doing is legitimate. And we are in the business of asking critical questions. That's not what politicians are waiting for. Politicians are always under time-pressure. Science needs patience, it is a very slow-moving process. It takes us a long time before we begin to understand things, while politicians, of course, want to know answers tomorrow. So we live in different worlds and maybe that's also good. When we try to mix those worlds, I think we are the ones who will lose out. We will necessarily be used and abused when it fits the politicians. If we get too close to them, I think that's a very dangerous route to go.

On the other hand – and that's maybe been more beneficial – the academic world has got a sort of an insight into these real issues. Yes, we were asked to be consultants to UNESCO, we wrote reports – not that it shook the world – but maybe it was more important for us. It is also because if you study in social sciences, as Jim Halloran, the deceased president of the IAMCR always used to say: 'Many social scientist study the world with the face to the bookcase and their back to the world. And that's not the way we should do it.' So he proposed turning around and looking at the real world. I think that's what happened to some of us, we were confronted with real issues.

Jernej: What you are saying probably doesn't mean that one has to be apolitical and non-normative. Quite the opposite, right?

Cees: No, no, quite the opposite.

Jernej: Also, if one reads your books, they come from certain normative presumptions.

Cees: Yes, and I think that is absolutely important. I'm always pleading that in social sciences we often fail to explain things, because we don't have sufficient theoretical backing for them. We fail to – in a useful way – predict developments. That's why we should be more normative and be more open about it. Maybe we cannot explain how societies work, but we can make a contribution on how societies *should* work.

I'm tremendously inspired by the definition of the *World Health Organization* [WHO], and mind you, this is from 1945. In its constitution they defined health as a 'complete state of physical, mental, and social well-being,' particularly the last one. That's quite something.

Jernej: That's pretty fascinating, I didn't know that.

Cees: That's why I now say: 'If we talk about peace or whatever we talk about, let's look at that definition.' They don't say the absence of illness, they don't say the absence of war, which is peace... And I always notice, when I tell this to the students, that they look surprised. 'Complete state of physical well-being, mental well-being – it's also mental illnesses and aberrations they take into account – and *social* well-being'. That's quite something. So why not set out to and try to achieve that? /../

You start from a normative perspective and say this is the norm. Now, as a social scientist, I look empirically at the real world and… Well, when I wake up in the morning, something obviously went wrong. But then, I see it as a task of the social scientist – and by implication of communications and media students – to think: 'How can we contribute to that normative goal?' Inevitably you will then have to ask very unpleasant and critical questions. Why do every day 32.000 kids die? Totally unnecessary. They have no clean drinking water, there's no hygienic conditions for them, they are far from that complete state of well-being. Did we ever communicate that to the world? Does any newspaper in the world open every day by saying that? Once you begin to see that day in and day out – it was yesterday, it will be tomorrow – and we just go about our business as usual.

Those things are very unpleasant to be confronted with. But in one of her last books about looking at the pain of others, Susan Sontag argues that you need to be confronted with them.[4] For many years, as a researcher in photography and as a photographer myself, I thought the worst things of the world should not be exposed. Now I have changed my thinking. Unless we are forced to look at the pain of others, we will not take them seriously. We need to take the victims of all these processes and be reminded there are human beings and not some alien forces that do that to other human beings. Ordinary human beings do that to other ordinary human beings. And I agree with her that when we *see* that and are confronted with that, we may begin to wonder: 'Why can't we achieve that state of complete well-being?'

It is a long answer to your question, but yes, it's all normative. To restrict it and restrain it, as we do in many academic studies and in many academic departments and at the university – only for neo-liberal way of producing results that counts... It's a waste of our time. We should also be more careful about our time. We don't have millennia to deal with these issues, we are under the pressure of time and we are wasting enormous amounts of time. /../

Jernej: You already mentioned the question of cultural autonomy. Does your idea of dissociation still have any relevance today? Even when you proposed this idea the interconnection of the world economic system was obvious, but today it is even more intertwined through other means, for example through new communication technologies. How to think about these issues of cultural autonomy today? Do they remain in any way applicable or should we radically rethink them?

Cees: I think we need to radically rethink them, but we also should not underestimate the fact that there are still small pockets of resistance, like for example the Zapatistas in Mexico. It's very interesting, whenever I'm in Mexico, I'm always fascinated by the fact that Mayas are still there and speak their own language. And you ask them 'How is it possible that after four or five hundred years of colonialism you are still there and remain resilient?' Of course, they are again the victims of discrimination by the domi-

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[4] See: Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

nant Mexican class and young Mayan woman say: 'I'm so angry, because we are the original inhabitants. We have survived all these years of conquistadores and now we are again second grade citizens. We still have our own music, language, food...' I usually talk to someone who is anthropologist and writes a study on food and Mayan culture. She claims one of the reasons why they kept going was that they were always autonomous in their food production. That's also what I see in the Zapatista movement.

But it's very small pockets that will be increasingly difficult to sustain. /../ Where do you find a zone, where you could be free of all these influences, of this global envelopment? It's a global integration that we are all a part of. The question we have to ask is: How far *real* opposition is still possible? Because the critical social movements that are certainly there, are very successfully integrated into a world system. Or is it that we just have to hope that this system will reach its own limits at some point in time? Because you keep wondering, how long is it possible to let these 30.000 kids die every day? How long is it possible to brainwash people to such an extent that they believe that the system – which is contrary to achieving this complete state of well-being – is also in their interest?

You never fail to be surprised by the fact that in many political elections around the world people are capable of voting against their own interests. But that's understandable, of course, if you also see the media and educational structures. People are educated to believe that – in the end – the system is good for them. It's like a mental slavery.

Jernej: So it is a kind of propaganda, even though it is not really – how to put it – pragmatic to talk about propaganda today? You are quickly labelled as some sort of...

Cees: But it *is*, also because propaganda in its original meaning – as it came from one of the Roman Catholic Popes, who actually coined the phrase propaganda – is the distribution and spreading of a belief. *Propaganda fide*, a wide distribution of a vision of the world.

Jernej: And we have systemic propaganda now, connected basically to consumerism and capitalism...

Cees: We do have it, of course. There is very little you can read that fundamentally contests that. When can you, in half-decent quality or critical newspapers, read a fundamental criticism of the system in which we are? And that's a part of the propaganda, 'Don't undermine the system that people believe is the best that could ever get. There is no alternative,' as Margaret Thatcher was fond of saying.

Jernej: We spoke about the inspirational authors that influenced you, how do students respond to them and how do you explain to them how to be critical? What's criticality today and how do you explain to them how to use these authors.

Cees: Well, by saying to them that I made a normative choice for these authors and that my choice is contestable, while the wonderful thing about being in a scientific environment and having the good fortune and privilege to learn at the university, is that anything that is being said by anyone is contestable. And that you have to learn to raise good questions about what I am saying, and what my good friends are say-

ing. Don't take it for granted, but have the courage to stand up and think for yourself. Try to avoid the enormous risks of brainwashing. You'll be within a system in which people will try to enter your mind. /../ Begin contesting when you read this textbook in the course we are going to do, take it from that perspective, take nothing for granted or as ultimate truth. There is no ultimate truth, there are only different versions of the truth. Try to find your own version. /../

I always say to my students they need to be aware they'll be the ones who will always spoil the Christmas party. [*both laugh*] Think about it, if that's really what you want to do. Because at the Christmas party, all these people will come with all their theories – you know, about migration, or about Islamic state, terrorism, Islam – everyone has his own little theory. And you are the only one who doesn't come with a theory, but you come with this most irritating question: 'Is this the truth?' And you can really spoil a very nice party, particularly with this one uncle who always knows best. You say to him: 'Is it really true? How do you know?' That's not a question that you should ask, but it's a question that you have to ask as a responsible academic. But mind you, you'll lead a difficult life…

Jernej: As you were saying, talking about propaganda, if I am not mistaken you recently felt a need to write an open letter about [Vladimir] Putin and how he's represented in the media.

Cees: No, that's a *very* interesting case, because I never wrote that letter.

Jernej: No?

Cees: No, it's an interesting and instructive case about the media and especially about social media. Some people in the Netherlands wrote an open letter to Putin, claiming that the media have immediately constructed the image and the Russians are being portrayed as culprits – it was said that's the media logic, it's how the media operate – and they said: 'We don't think that's fair.'

I would have agreed with that, so in that sense I *could* have written the letter, if it wasn't for the bad use of English. Someone found that letter and said: 'But that can't be written by you, because the English is so bad.'

Jernej: But you were actually signed under it, right?

Cees: They referred to me in a footnote, to a lecture that I have given at the University of Netherlands – it's a television university – and I've given a lecture on why you can't believe what the newspaper tells you. That is widely quoted in the country, it is one of the most downloaded lectures ever, and they referred to that.

So *someone* thought, well, since they referred to the professor, he has probably written the letter. So the next version of the letter on the Internet was *signed* by me. And it goes from bad to worse. The next version says something like 'Dear Vladimir Putin...'

Jernej: Yes, that was a tad surprising, so I wanted to ask you about that.

Cees: No, I never wrote that letter. I could have sympathized with it, but what I find interesting is two things: First of all, this of course happens within the social media.

Jernej: So it's very hard to check...

Cees: You can't. On some website I said: 'I didn't write this.' And the answer was immediately: 'Since he denies it, he has done it.' [*both laugh*] That's an interesting one, you can't win on the Internet and it's going to lead its own life.

And I thought, 'Well, this is interesting'. Because whatever criticism I may hold against traditional, professional journalism, at least in journalism there's still a sense of checks and balances and asking things. I was called by many media, I was called by a Russian media, by the leading Dutch evening newscast, who said: 'We want to have you this evening, because we've seen the letter that you have written.' But the question was immediately: 'Did you write that letter?' ...Associated Press called from New York. At least all those professionals had a sense of asking me, whether I really wrote that letter. And I explained what happened and I was no longer news.

But it's also interesting that if I had claimed – which I could have easily done – I would have been on Russia Now, the Dutch television, in Associated Press... I got hundreds of support letters, so I still became famous for something that I never did.

Jernej: The representation of Putin actually is quite propagandistic, while he's leading his own propaganda, of course...

Cees: True, in that sense I could have written it. I would have written it in my own way, with a different formulation. But I never did it and it is going to lead its own life.

What I actually found more interesting was that hundreds and hundreds of emails arrived from all over the world. Slowly the letter began to be translated to many different languages. I got a nice message from Croatia: 'All of Croatia stands behind you, you are our hero.' [*both laugh*] But that's interesting, what it tells us is that *so many* people are *so* fed up with the distortions and the lies in the media.

I wrote a book about it in Dutch and a part of it is now translated to English. It's called *How lies govern the media?* I was a year-long Dutch television commentator about lies in the media. So every week I got the opportunity to show what lies media were distributing and commented on that. And then I also wrote a book about it, which was very favourably received. But now again, with this Putin thing, I thought this is a real issue. Because those hundreds of e-mails could have easily been multiplied by many people who didn't take the trouble of sending an e-mail, and they are *really* angry with the fact that they are so disinformed about the world. So when someone with a certain status says this, people reckon: 'That's what I want to hear, someone who stands up and says …they are distorting reality, they're bloody liars.'

I found that really interesting, because it sort of confirms all my ideas and makes me think again about the 1990s, when we established with a number of people the *People's Communication Charter*, which was a movement of critical media consumers after the Gulf War. And of course in that First Gulf War we were *so* misled, and the early 1990s were also the times of human rights movement, pacifist movements, women's movements... So I thought we need to have a media consumer movement. We gathered a number of people in Penang, Malaysia, with a critical Consumers Association of Penang – which is a really good political economy consumers association – and we established an international movement to be better informed and started to get people to sign this charter, which gives the rights to the media consumers. But it turned out to be very, very difficult to get people around the world to support that. It was an interesting experience. I wanted to have one million signa-

tures, to organize an international tribunal against the pollution of our informational environment.

That ran parallel with the *Cultural Environment Movement* in the United States, which was run by George Gerbner, another friend from the IAMCR. We basically came to the conclusion that you have the physical environment, which is heavily polluted, and several organizations try to do something about it. But there's also a cultural environment, which is equally polluted, and we need to do something about it.

Jernej: It's also a nice metaphor.

Cees: The original idea was that the guys who destroy our cultural environment should stand trial. I had cooked up this plan to have a trial in the International Court of Justice in The Hague and we get them to stand trial. But then we need a worldwide movement and we need to have at least one million signatures and we never managed to get that many. Many people said 'Yeah, maybe it's that people don't think about the media, like fish don't think about the water in which they swim.' They take them for granted, there's nothing to really be worried about.

So that never became a great success, but the website of the charter is probably still there. The nice thing is that I got all of those notes from people and from totally unexpected places. I got this letter from a movement for critical media from a small place in India that said: 'But did you know that there's a People's Communication Charter?' Yes, I knew about it.

"Is enlightenment just a European idea?" An interview with Daya Thussu

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Abstract: Interview with Daya Kishan Thussu, Professor of International Communication at the University of Westminster. We discuss his journalistic experience at the Press Trust of India and Gemini News Service, the New World Information and Communication Order and the MacBride report, the rise of BRICS and changes in the sphere of international communications in recent decades, the significance of critical scholarship and the need to internationalize media and communication studies.

Keywords: International communication, New World Information and Communication Order, UNESCO, MacBride report, BRICS, China, India.

Daya Kishan Thussu is Professor of International Communication at the University of Westminster in London and the founder and Co-Director of the India Media Centre and research advisor to the China Media Centre. His scholarly interest in issues of international communication is combined with rich practical experience at the Press Trust of India, where he worked in the turbulent years and as Associate Editor in Gemini News Service, an alternative news agency with a strong third-world focus from 1991 to 1995.

He has been teaching, researching and writing about international aspects of media and communication for nearly three decades. His book *International Communication – Continuity and Change* has established itself as a key text in this area, having been adopted by universities around the world and translated into Mandarin and Korean. His books include: Communicating India's Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood; Mapping BRICS Media (co-edited with Kaarle Nordenstreng); Media and Terrorism: Global Perspectives (co-edited with Des Freedman); Internationalizing Media Studies; News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment; Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow; International Communication – Continuity and Change; and Electronic Empires – Global Media and Local Resistance.

He is also the founder and Managing Editor of the journal *Global Media and Communication* and Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Global Media and China*, published in collaboration with Communication University of China. He is series editor for two book series for Routledge: Internationalizing Media Studies and Advances in Internationalizing Media Studies. In 2014, he was honoured with a 'Distinguished Scholar Award' by the International Studies Association.

We spoke at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, where Professor Thussu was giving a series of lectures on international communication in May 2016.

(Photo: Jernej Amon Prodnik)

Sašo: How did you get involved or interested in questions of international communication?

Daya: I'm actually a bit of an oddity in this field because I have a PhD in international relations and I'm one of the very few people, at least in the UK, who is teaching communications with a background in history, politics and international relations.

My academic background was in international relations which helped me to think about international communication as part of international relations. But in my previous life I have also had experience working as a journalist. In India I worked for the Press Trust of India [PTI], which is the largest news agency in India. In fact, when I was there in the 1980s it was the biggest news organisation in the country. I then worked in a very small organisation in London, in a team of only 4 people. It was an alternative news agency called Gemini News Service, which is now defunct, with a Third World-oriented editorial agenda. It covered regions of the world which are normally not in the mainstream media.

That was also a very important learning curve having actually worked in a very busy newsroom in Delhi and working on international news. Because of my academic background, I was interested in the international desk rather than domestic reporting and then working in a very small organisation in London, again with a clearly international focus. I was Associate Editor of Gemini News Service for 4 years, which meant I did most of the work. Gemini was a tiny organisation, you had to do absolutely everything: research, administration, writing, editing, etc.

That combination I think helped me a great deal in my academic career, in the sense that I had the understanding of how the news system works in a national context but also in a transnational context, in a mainstream context, as well as in an alternative environment.

I moved full time into academia in 1995 and since then my work has been largely about international communication. In fact, I was the second professor of international communication in the UK. The first one was late Phillip Taylor who was a historian by training at the University of Leeds. He was the first chair of International Communication. I got the second professorship in International Communication at the University of Westminster in 2004.

Of course my background was slightly different from Phillip's, he was really a historian. I studied history at University, I also have a Masters in history and a Masters in politics. But my PhD was in International Relations which really helped me in terms of thinking about international media from an international politics perspective and that's what I've been doing since.

Sašo: At what time were you at the Press Trust of India?

Daya: It was from 1983 to 1988. I was there for 5 years, while I was also working for my PhD in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, which is one of the top universities in India, known for its critical research tradition, especially in social sciences. I was very fortunate that I could combine the two. I had a fantastic supervisor, he said 'fine, you can do this', because my job was such that I could actually work night shifts. It was a desk job and that worked brilliantly for me. I could do my research in the day time and at night I would do news rooms. It was like going to the library and reading lots of newspapers. I loved reading newspapers anyway, but reading them from all over the world – in the pre-Internet age - was doubly rewarding. At PTI, I was working on for what was then the non-aligned news agencies pool [NANAP] and PTI was one of the key news agencies along with Tanjug in that pool. We had a dedicated desk and out of my curiosity and interest in international relations I used to work on it. Most of my colleagues found such work rather boring but I was very interested in terms of how news flows south–south. So again: it was a fantastic experience. I was there for 5 years.

And I was associated with Gemini for 4 years which helped me a great deal in my academic career.

Sašo: And those were very turbulent years. In 1984 came the backlash from the United States and United Kingdom against UNESCO. How did you feel that in your work? Or did you feel it?

Daya: Well actually I came to the UK on a Commonwealth Scholarship as a post-doc in 1988 and I was at the Open University in the UK where I met Oliver Boyd-Barrett who had done very good work on news agencies, pioneering study, and he was involved in a UNESCO project on news exchange mechanisms, which was part the IPDC [International Programme for the Development of Communication] programme. So he found this Indian guy who had news agency experience and who he was interested in working with, as was I. I was very involved in this whole debate because we wrote a report for UNESCO and it was published as a book in 1992. It is called *Contra-flow in Global News*, published in collaboration with UNESCO. In that book, we addressed some of these issues about global news flow and US domination and what it meant for UNESCO and generally for the NWICO [New World Information and Communication Order] debate. But I was involved in it even before I came to the UK. In India, it was a big debate. In fact, India was one of the key exponents of NWICO which was again interesting because when this debate was at its height in the 1970s,

Indira Gandhi was the prime minister of India and she had imposed a state of emergency which involved muzzling the press. Thankfully, it was only for two years: 1975 to 1977. During this period, she was going around the world and telling Western media that you guys distort reality, you do this, you do that ... but at home she had journalists arrested and newspapers were shut. It has never happened in India since or before that. It was only those two years. The newspaper, *Indian Express,* was actually shut down. The authorities just cut of its electricity supplies because it was considered as anti-government.

The new world information and communication order debate was big in India and I had a clear understanding of what the issues were when I came to London. The debates were quite dominant in Indian discourses: intellectual discourse, policy discourse, even in media. In the West, it was a marginal debate, it was a debate in academia. It was not really a big thing.

The UNESCO experience and the US position was not surprising. You know we forget it now but if we go back to the time when these debates were taking place, we were still in the Cold War period. It was a debate about information imperialism that the Russians were very keen to exploit. Russia was using it to score points against the US. And there was this idea of Third-Worldism, Non-Alignment was a big thing in those years.

I had deep intellectual interest in it and therefore I was monitoring it extremely carefully. Then I got an opportunity to work on a project where we had to explore the alternatives, how effective are they etc. And the book came out in 1992 about these news exchange mechanisms. You don't have to depend on Reuters or AP, you can have news-exchange among developing countries. But then the problem was both of quality of journalism in most developing countries as well as the partisan nature of foreign reporting. This was the time of the Iran–Iraq war - the first gulf war - often the narrative in Western media suggests that the gulf war took place in 1991. In fact, there was a 10-year war between Iran and Iraq which claimed one million lives and when I was working at PTI and on the non-aligned agencies pool it was fascinating to see what the Iraqi news agency was saying about the conflict and what Iran's media was saying. They were dramatically opposed, you couldn't use either. I ended up using Tanjug or Reuters etc.

I had seen first-hand what the problem was. When the Americans were saying 'this is all state propaganda and we can't take it seriously' they had a point. How could you trust what the mullahs were saying in Iran? That was just after the revolution in 1979, while Iraq was led by a dictatorship. And that wasn't an unusual case as much of the so called Third World media were entirely controlled by the state. The media market was too small – so the government held the sway. And the state in many cases was a family. It didn't matter if it was a Marxist or an American clone, they were not representative governments. India was an oddity in that respect because India had a well-established democracy, very sophisticated press, civil society was highly developed and debates were pretty advanced and comprehensive.

We were witnessing a kind of political football between big powers. The unfortunate thing was that they threw the baby out with the bathwater in the sense that the fundamental issues raised in that debate about inequality, about imbalance, about distortions, about representation, were forgotten. They are as valid today as in the 1970s. But the debate was just framed very narrowly about news and news agencies and this whole idea of inequality and imbalance has just gone out of the window. It's unfortunate because NWICO was the first serious multilateral attempt to address these issues at an international level. If you go to the UNESCO website today and

look for NWICO documents, you have to look very hard. They hide them. Because politically they have been bitten. They are now very shy about talking about this, and of course the world has changed.

But I still believe that it was a very important debate of its time and it has relevance - the basic arguments are as valid today as during those heated debates of the 1970s and 1980s.

Sašo: You have written that the MacBride report remains one of the most if not the most important multilateral intervention in international communication. So after those debates it seems that the questions have died down. Has there been another attempt that you could compare it to?

Daya: Well you see, the world has changed, if you think of the context of the Cold War. Today it is a globalised world, it is a world where there are multiple poles. During the NWICO debate China was not a global player. In the 1970s they were almost having a civil war in the communist party. They were not engaging with the rest of the world. American opening had started in 1971 but it was a very difficult situation for China. Brazil was a military dictatorship, South Africa was an apartheid regime.

Today if you look at this, the BRICS (Brazil, Russian, India, China and South Africa) as a grouping has come up, China especially has become extremely important in international relations and even in international communication. The point about MacBride was that it essentially talked about democratization of international communication, that there should be plural and multi-perspectival discourse, because the discourse was, and to a very large extent, remains an Anglo-American discourse. It was the first document – because of its history and people who were in the group that wrote the final document – it was a first serious attempt to talk about democratization, plurality, multi-perspectival approaches to global communication – something which remains valid today.

Of course, it was published in 1980, we are now talking in 2016 – a lot has changed. They had no internet then. There are other means of democratizing of communication today which didn't exist then. Today you don't need Reuters telling you what is happening in other parts of the world. Within seconds you can find other information. And I think that changes things. Power relations have changed as well. You know, Tanjug used to be a central player among non-aligned news agencies. If you ask people outside certain circles today, they have never heard of it. It used to be one of the most important news agencies among the non-aligned countries.

Jernej: So how was Tanjug perceived in the international community? Was it seen as an important and serious agency?

Daya: Within the non-aligned countries certainly. Yes.

Jernej: What about other countries?

Daya: You see, when you're in a position of privilege, when you are a Reuters or an AP, why should you bother with the likes of Tanjug? It was important within the non-aligned movement, which was again not a major player. Let's not over-exaggerate its importance. For example, one of the jobs I used to do was to look at how many stories from the Pool [NANAP] had made into Indian newspapers. Every day we would monitor that. Very few, very few. Most of it was Reuters, AP.

Jernej: And even though India was a major player in the non-aligned movement.

Daya: It was. But even in India, in India's newspapers it wasn't a prominent presence because Tanjug didn't have a large network. It had limited resources, compared with AP or Reuters who had been doing international reporting for 150 years. Over that period of time they have developed professional journalism. They have good news sources. And it's very rare that you find factual inaccuracies in Reuters or AP. What you do find are contextual inaccuracies. Context is often missing or distorted to present a particular perspective. But factually there is enough professional mechanisms to make sure that the factual element is correct. You cannot say the same things about many other agencies, even TASS.

It was important but in certain parts of the world, not globally. But if you think of it as part of this bigger project, which was the non-aligned news agencies pool, then it becomes slightly more significant. Therefore, the news organisations who had this almost monopoly – 'duopoly' because America had the most and UK was the junior partner - didn't want an alternative like NANAP, however flawed, to emerge. There was a lot of stuff written around that time, both in academia and in mass media about this 'third world conspiracy' to control information. That's how it was framed. The debate was much more complex than that.

Jernej: So there is no truth in the charges that was being instrumentalized by authoritarian countries and USSR?

Daya: The USSR used it for its own purposes, as I said earlier. It was a way to beat the US, particularly.

Jernej: But the MacBride report was very critical of USSR as well.

Daya: Sure. That's what I was saying. The group of experts which wrote that report was very international, they were distinguished people. It was a difficult task, given the political sensitivity. MacBride was a very interesting guy, he had to balance all these different pressures: the third world dictators, Soviet Union, Europeans, USA etc. I think it was a fair document in that sense. And the Soviet Union wasn't known for media freedom. These problems persist even today when Russia is supposedly a democracy. The media are controlled by Mr Putin, not just the Kremlin.

It is still one of the most significant documents. There hasn't been a follow up and it's a pity. Academics have written about it and we do occasional pieces and books about it but at the policy level there is nothing, because the debate has shifted from what were essentially very political questions about inequality and imbalance and distortion and representation to questions of access and creative industries and markets and consumers and social media. The debate has actually shifted and there are reasons for it – the world has changed. There was no Google then.

Jernej: There were also political reasons why these debates shifted from inequalities to creative industries, consumption.

Daya: Sure. Absolutely. Then you have to ask, who sets the agenda. I mean, look at the academic world for instance. Bob McChesney has written about how in US Universities, when they have a new academic position: if a political economist is retiring,

they don't hire a political economist. It's a reflection of the bigger political changes. This critical communication research is at the margins and most of what passes for research has little critical intervention. And if it's critical it's at a very micro level, postmodern approaches to gender and sexuality and ethnicity, rather than looking at the bigger picture about the structures which affect everything: gender, nationality, race etc.

There are exceptions, with some people doing standard political economy, but not that many. It would be an interesting project to look at PhDs awarded in European universities or in US universities in communication and media in the last 20 years and see how many of these are actually about critical political economy. My colleague Christian Fuchs in one of the articles he had written a few years ago looked at the use of the words 'Marxism' and 'Marx' in academic journals in our field and he shows how it had declined in the last 30 years. I think there is, I wouldn't call it apolitical, but a different kind of politics. And not just in our field, across the board.

Jernej: In social sciences.

Daya: In social sciences in general.

Sašo: So what would you say does it mean to be critical today?

Jernej: Would you describe yourself as a critical scholar?

Daya: I would think so, yes. I think critical is somebody who asks some fundamental questions about power. Who has power, how power is exercised or misused and how it can be resisted and how that power shifts. In other words, we are looking at structures and institutions, individuals and their personal interests. It seems to me that the focus is more on that rather than mega-structures. For instance, if you look at the current situation, what is happening in the world: you have these major trade agreements: TPP, TTIP, TISA. Maybe there is work in German or in French, but in English language scholarship there is no decent academic article which looks at it from the communication point of view, how many articles or what kind of coverage has TTIP caught in mainstream media. This is going to change Europe fundamentally and therefore is extremely important for the average European citizen. Now contrast that with how many articles have been published on let's say reality TV or mobile telephony, what do you do with mobile telephony, or Facebook? Americans have made this into a high art. Actually, quite facile stuff, everyday banal stuff. It requires a lot of talent to get that into an article. I can't do that. I need content. I have never done that in my life. But I have great respect for people who manage that. They have nothing to say and they write a book. This is great talent.

But the point is more fundamental, jokes apart. The point is there is this shift. That is critical for me. Or look at 2008, it was the worst economic crisis since the 1920s. I know there have been few publications, but very few.

Jernej: Especially in comparison to reality TV.

Daya: Or other things. There are now about a hundred journals relating to media and communication. I edit one. A hundred journals! Most of what gets published is a kind of business, people just churn out stuff. Because they have a project, they have got

to show that they have published after that. And there are all kinds of mechanisms in place, you have to publish in particular journals. And that's the debate on how ...

Jernej: How academia works?

Daya: Instrumentality of intellectual life, how that has changed and what that means to reflective or critical work. For example, I tell you, I'll get back to Oliver Boyd-Barrett as an old friend. We did this book, I mentioned earlier, *Contra-flow in Global News*, in 1992, and I have known him since 1988. He wrote a book, it came out in 2014, simply called *Media Imperialism*, published by SAGE. It's a very decent book and he's a well-known name. It was totally ignored. There were hardly any reviews because the subject is unfashionable. This is a 1970s discourse. Herbert Schiller is gone. These things are not important today. I'm very pleased that my colleague Christian Fuchs is bringing these things back. But there are not that many Fuchses around. [laughter]

To my mind being critical is extremely important, but I also bring something new to the table in the sense that political economy, for example Herb Schiller's work or Oliver's work, still operates in a narrow, Western view of what culture is, for instance. For example, when I came to the UK for the first time in 1988 somebody asked me – Dallas was a big thing at that time, 'Dallasization' of the world – so somebody asked me: 'Who killed JR?' It was a character in the series. And I said: 'Who is this guy?' And they looked at me as if I had come from another planet. They couldn't imagine that in India we didn't have Dallas. We had our own rubbish, but we didn't have American rubbish.

India is a very big country, a lot of people. In China there was no Dallas and that's another very big country. So, we're talking about 40% of the world's population which had nothing to do with Dallas. There was – and to some extent it continues – that rather Eurocentric view of what the problem is. To me that is a fundamental problem. I have written about it. It's been my endeavour to broaden it a bit. So, for example: China. In relation to media and communication the dominant frame is censorship. What we have forgotten in this frame is that the Chinese, by retaining this censorship have developed what I call 'cyber capitalism with Chinese characteristics'. They have their version of Facebook; of YouTube, of Google and some of these organisations like Alibaba are now operating globally. I can't think of any other country ... Russia has it too but not as big. There is no Alibaba in Russia. By retaining this control they have been able to develop their own. Germany hasn't done it, Britain hasn't done it. So maybe there is a problem in the way that we frame the debate. It's very narrow. We think that if you can't read the *New York Times* you are deprived. I say to my Chinese friends: 'What does it matter if you don't. It's just a newspaper.' I think that requires slightly out of the box thinking.

And I have been privileged because I come from a slightly different background. The advantage that I have that my Western colleagues don't is that I know the Western discourse inside out. I am educated in it. But I also have other things to draw on, which they don't. You see what I'm saying? That is a very interesting shift now. So, you might be an Iranian scholar who has a grounding in Islamic thought but is also very fluent in Western discourse. I think that is what makes it a bit more complicated because academia is more diverse today than before. Not so much here but in UK, US certainly and that's changing the way we see the world and these broad generalisations, assumptions that we have about the world – these are being challenged. And I think that what is happening in China is very significant from that point of view because the scale and scope of change is so profound. We may not appreciate it so

much in Europe, but if you're in Africa or in Asia or in Latin America it's a very different story. That's the majority of the world.

I published a book some years ago, in 2009, called *Internationalising Media Studies* which emerged from a major conference which I had organized at the University of Westminster and the key reason was to say: OK guys, we have got to broaden the discourse a bit. I did not want to use the phrase 'de-Westernisation' because it has a negative connotation, because there's a lot of valuable work done in media and communication studies in the Western world, in the US, in Germany, in UK. What needs to be done now is to expand that. How do we think of the world in critical terms but not based on derivative approaches? How do we use Habermas to explain what is happening in Iran for instance? That requires a lot of work. One book, one conference, one individual ... it takes a lot of time and a lot of people have to get together to talk about it over a period of time to develop an alternative. And I think something is already beginning to take shape. In a very modest way I try to push that a little bit. At least raise the issue. I don't have answers but I raise the issue.

And to be honest, the response has been very positive across the world. For example, I edited a book on *Contra-flow in media* in 2007, the first book looking at the kind of emergence of non-Western media. Again, the main argument was that there is a lot happening outside the Western world in terms of media and communication, whether it is Korean pop music or films, Al Jazeera or Bollywood. And that is increasingly affecting international communication. Some of the critical questions about ownership and structures and how they operate in trans-nationals are as relevant today as before. It doesn't matter which country you study, which media, they are fundamental. I'm not saying you can abandon them. What I'm suggesting is to incorporate all this in a discourse which is slightly more sophisticated, which is not just dogmatic in a manner of speaking. One of the problems of Marxism was that it has a very limited view of culture, a materialistic view of culture. In fact, culture is much more than who owns what. So, I think one thing that cultural studies and post-modernism - we were talking earlier about this shift - one thing it has done, it has actually made political economy more conscious of this aspect.

Jernej: So there were positive changes too?

Daya: Exactly. Also, the kind of power equations which have forced people to think again about China not just as a peasant society but as a serious international player. Or India as a country of superstition, religiosity and backwardness. I mean they were able to send a vehicle to Mars last year at the cost of a Hollywood film. They were able to implement the world's largest IT project, it's called *Aadhaar* (foundation in Sanskrit) Have you heard of it?

Jernej: No.

Daya: Proves my point. This is a project which gave a billion people ... Slovenia has two million people? A billion people – every citizen in India has got an electronic identity card and it was done in five years. It's astonishing.

In the last 20 years, China has raised 400 million people out of poverty. This was not achieved by Oxfam or European Union funding or some American NGO, it was done by the Chinese state. There are certain things happening outside of the Western radar, to me these are extremely significant. They have already changed the world and in the next 20 or 30 years they are going to change it much more. It is in-

cumbent on intellectuals, therefore, to address these emerging issues and engage with them. Especially in the western world it's extremely important because as I have said earlier: the rest of the world, they know the West, but they also know something else. The West only knows the West and that is the problem.

Jernej: But you need a very broad perspective as a scholar.

Daya: If you read the Guardian and New York Times you should know this. You should know about *Aadhaar*.

Jernej: But I'm talking about for example TTIP or stuff like that. You need a wider knowledge as compared to if you only write about Facebook which is a very narrow perspective. It's much easier. That's my point.

Daya: That is the problem in the western intellectual tradition. It is reductionist. And because of that it is all very good: you are looking at one particular aspect and doing a very detailed analysis of Facebook for example, and you get published and it's very thorough, properly researched. But you miss the elephant in the room. The tradition where I grew up is a holistic tradition. It's a very different intellectual tradition. I don't want to sound nativist but it's a Hindu-Buddhist tradition, which is some ways fundamentally different from the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is based on 'the book', the law. There is 'either/or'. In the intellectual tradition, I grew up in, it is always 'and'.

Jernej: So you would connect this to cultural differences?

Daya: Absolutely. Has it ever occurred to you that in every university in America, top university, you'll find an Indian professor and she would be top of her rank. Why is that? India is an extremely poor country. The facilities that most universities have there are appalling even today. There must be something in that culture which sustains intellectual culture, and to me that something is the capacity to have a pluralistic view. Not 'either/or', but 'and'. Holistic view. I think that is to me fundamentally important because then you can look at this as a matter of interpretation. You say 'x' and I say 'y' and that is fine. Under Marxism I only believe in 'x' and everybody else is wrong. Or the other way around. I think that is something which is extremely valuable.

And it's not just an Indian tradition, it is a broadly eastern tradition, which has its roots in Hinduism or Buddhism. It believes in multiple ideas and I think as India becomes more important - economically it is already the third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity - it has extraordinary potential and such ideas will circulate globally. The middle class numbers 300 million people, highly educated, English fluent, able to deal with diversity in a way that a lot of other people can't. World's second largest diaspora. World's largest English speaking diaspora. In a globalised world, this is going to become very important.

So, I think it is important for people to engage with those Indic ideas and ideas coming from China. Already some very interesting work is beginning to take shape in China. It's happening in Chinese so we don't know it. Because I'm also a research advisor to the China Media Centre at our university, and in that privileged position I get access to many Chinese scholars who tell me about what the debates are and it's fascinating.

Jernej: Could you give us some examples?

Daya: Well the way they think about the world for example. It's not just when they talk about this whole peaceful rise, harmony ... it's not just state propaganda. Thinking seriously about how we need to provide an alternative to the largely American discourse about how the world is governed. Essentially, it's about power. If you have the power, people will listen to you. Everybody is queuing to go to Beijing and parts of London are now owned by the Chinese. Chinese university students today constitute a large proportion of postgraduate students in many Western countries: If they withdrew tomorrow many of us wouldn't have a job, because essentially the Chinese students pay our salaries! We sometimes assume certain things. For example, the idea of modernity is associated with European enlightenment. The implied assumption there is that before that people were not rational. That's stupid. There is a lot of history written, recorded history saying that is not the case. Chinese were printing books a thousand years before Gutenberg happened.

Sašo: So it's very euro-centric.

Daya: No, no, this is just wrong. Because if you are a Chinese kid you know it. You don't need to be told. But a European child - an American child knows very little history - but even a European child doesn't know this. It's not so much about university, the problem stems from a more fundamental level: at school.

There is this fantastic book by a former diplomat in Singapore, Kishore Mahbubani, now he's a professor: he talks not 'rise' but 'return' of Asia. Until the 18th century, 60% of global GDP came from Asia, led by China and closely followed by India. The problem is about how knowledge is structured and that hierarchy is fundamentally being questioned. I think it's going to get more complicated because essentially people are going to say: is enlightenment just a European idea? Europe wrote the modern world's history but the world is much older than 200 or 300 years. In a book about 'soft power' which I published in 2013, I mentioned the great scholar and strategist Chanakya (also called Kautilya) I don't know if you have heard of him, have you heard of Chanakya?

Jernej: No.

Daya: You've heard of Machiavelli? Machiavelli wrote The Prince in the 16th century. Chanakya lived in the third century BCE and his book is called *Arthashastra*. In my book, I asked 'Shouldn't Machiavelli be called the Chanakya of Europe' rather than the other way around? Because the difference is of 1900 years, and what Chanakya wrote was far more sophisticated and much more detailed than what is in *The Prince*. This is just one example, there are numerous others and these are going to be raised.

There is a lot of debate going on in India right now because the current government is right-wing and they are trying to extricate a particular kind of history, a project which is politically motivated. But it is also showing that there is a debate beginning to take shape which is challenging some deeply held assumptions about who we are, where we came from, what is our history. It is a more general point but I think it has also something to do with communication and media. For instance, if you look at journalism history books in Europe or in America and see how much there is about the rest of the world in these books.

Jernej: There is basically nothing.

Daya: The assumption is that there was no journalism in these countries. The *Times of India* was established in 1838. When I look at this, I just say OK, fine. I don't get cross because I understand exactly where they are coming from and why they do what they do. Because the idea is that we have the theory and we apply that. Case studies are in what used to be called the third world. We go and say OK, we've done case study of Somalia or from wherever ...

Sašo: But I think there is also a paradox there when you mentioned earlier that in India journalists would more often rely on Reuters for example than on non-aligned news agencies. Could you say that they had this western conception of what it means to be a journalist in which these professional standards like being factually accurate and so on are more important than creating a more holistic picture, giving context, balancing out the perspectives of the global north and south and so on.

Daya: Well the thing is the journalism practices in countries like India are very much influenced by the British model, not American, because of historical circumstances. They would not think twice, they would say: 'OK this non-aligned thing is just government propaganda, that's not serious journalism. Reuters or AP is proper professional journalism.' These are professional organisations. They've been doing this for 150 years or more. They have access all over the world and they do a professional experience and expertise.

And then there is also the question of journalistic routine. From Reuters, for example, you receive a clean copy which is perfectly adequate. With the non-aligned news agencies pool you had to re-write it. It was so badly written and you had to make it look professional, take all the adjectives out. You wouldn't say Zionist entity for Israel but lots of Arab news agencies at that time didn't use Israel. Journalists operate on a very tight schedule and they don't have time to reflect. Academics do that. We have time to say 'what is the context'. Journalists are doing a very routine job. But the point you are making is right in the sense that the tradition is very much a British tradition. That's why it's a better journalism than in many other developing countries.

Sašo: I think from your writing also this paradoxical nature of media globalisation emerges. So on one hand we have new players emerging so that the flows of international communication and information are not so one-sided, just coming from one way. But on the other hand you write how this basically US model of commercialised media is becoming universal. So I think there is a paradox there. The United States is losing its position but its model is becoming the universal model.

Daya: Absolutely, because that model is based on certain attributes which work across cultures: selfishness, profit, influence. Even in China where the state is very much in control, they are encouraging marketization, especially at the regional level, advertising is growing very rapidly. I don't see this as a problem because that paradox is the reality in my view. There is a kind of resistance to this also at some level, but that's more rhetoric than reality. The reality is that this works so we should follow this and for the US it's a great way to get into new markets.

For example, in China there are limitations: you can't show, Hollywood films. What Disney is doing, they're saying 'we'll do collaborations with you, we'll do joint projects

with you, we'll teach you how to make films' and Chinese are saying 'fine, we want to develop our film industry'. So, it's very pragmatic at that level. I don't see that necessarily a problem. I'm just stating what is happening in the real world.

Sašo: But these countries like Russia, India, and China also very consciously chose this path, to become integrated into global markets.

Daya: Yes, but the models are different. The Chinese model is quite interesting because here the state has played a crucial role. It's capitalism with Chinese characteristics, that's how it's been defined before by others. In fact, there is a book being published by Canadian scholar Daniel Bell who is a professor of politics. He is based at Tsinghua University and the book is called *The China Model*. He's not talking about economics, it's very interesting. He's talking about politics. He's saying 'here you have a meritocratic government'. I'll admit that the Chinese government is meritocratic. Like mandarins, they have to go through various systems to get to that level. It's not to say it's not corrupt. There are all kinds of things like anywhere else, but it is ostensibly more meritocratic and it has delivered in many spheres: domestically and even internationally. Therefore, the argument is that it is a different kind of model that it is a kind of state control. Human rights are controlled, news is managed, information is managed, but entertainment is OK. Certain areas have opened-up.

So, there are different models, and China is particularly interesting. In 2014, it became the largest economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity and last year the IMF finally allowed the Chinese currency to be one of the elite currencies in the world, a significant move.

It requires a different kind of thinking of the world. The assumption in your question is that capitalism is Western.

Sašo: I do think it has western origins …

Daya: I'm questioning that. The BBC recently screened a six-part series called *The Story of China*. Six hours of television, presented by Michael Wood, a well-known television historian. Please watch it, you'll feel humbled. I'm a reasonably educated person, I know a little bit about the world beyond the western world. I felt humbled. So, the notion that it all started with capitalism and the rise of Protestantism and all these books we have read, it's beyond that. There is much older history of capitalism. They didn't call it capitalism, but it's a much older history of how people traded.

Jernej: Well it depends on how you define capitalism as well.

Daya: I'm saying that is more than capitalism of a particular historical juncture and we are assuming that what is happening in China is just going to continue in the same version. They might have a different way of thinking about it. Actually, for the last 30 years they have shown they have a different approach and we should take notice of that. I don't want to sound like an advocate for Chinese authoritarianism, I'm not. I grew up in very free country and I live in a very free country. I wouldn't like to work in China or live in China. As an intellectual, I would feel constrained but at the same time I look at my own country – India - and I see that despite all this economic growth it has 300 million people living in abject poverty. It has a stable democracy (the world's largest), great intellectuals at universities but it has failed a lot of its people. China is a different story. There is poverty, there is inequality, there is corruption

but not at the same scale, they have moved on. So, there is a question whether democracy is the best answer to these problems or meritocratic government that gets on with things: 'OK, we've got to do this, we've got to educate women, bring health service, do basic things that are missing in a lot of the developing world'. If you're sitting in Ethiopia or Peru and looking at American discourses on aid and human rights and Chinese investment, I'm very clear in what they will prefer.

I think that aid issue is very interesting as is communication about aid and migration and refugees. A lot is written on this. Last year there was a big debate in the UK about whether Britain should continue to give aid to India. The argument was that India is now doing OK economically, that it doesn't need UK aid, that the aid should go to poorer countries or stay in the UK. And one British academic reminded the BBC that the annual budget of British aid to India was something in the range of 400 million dollars while the annual development budget of the government of India was 74 billion dollars. So, aid to India is not even a bad joke, it gives some jobs to the NGOs who will visit India, the BBC will go with them and report how Oxfam, for example, is feeding children in slums. Such aid is marginal and this is the case across the world. I think we need to be a bit more careful about reasserting those assumptions and be more self-reflexive. Maybe we have certain preconceived ideas about how the world is and maybe the world is not like that.

I have been living in Britain for 30 years and Britain claims to understand India. For 50 years expert professors in Oxford have been saying that this country will disintegrate. They have been saying that it is an artificial nation and that we gave them the English language, that we gave them the railways, we united them. Quite the opposite has happened. India is an infinitely more powerful country today than it was 30 years ago. I say that because this is something I know from first-hand experience. You could make the same argument about Iran. There is so much written in the mass media about Iran's nuclear programme. That is the main story from Iran. Iran is a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, unlike India and Israel, which are not. Both India's nuclear programme and Israel's nuclear programme are in violation of international law. Unlike Iran's, which is legal. Just think, how many times have you seen a story - forget about Israel for a moment - How many stories have you seen critical of India's nuclear weapons programme?

Sašo: I don't think I have seen any.

Daya: I rest my case. What I'm trying to get at is the more fundamental question about what it means to be critical. Not if I'm Marxist or I'm not Marxist, to me that is banal. I think we need to move to the next stage and say OK, let's be more open to different ideas and perhaps think of a new critical, a globally relevant critical discourse. Of course, political economy will be prominent in it because it has traditionally looked at structures and institutions and the material aspect, which is crucially important. But that can't give us the whole story. And that has been my academic endeavour and in a very small way I have always done that. I'm very conscious of how limited our impact is. I don't live in a cloud. I know exactly how limited it is but that's all we can do. We can put up some signposts, some markers and somebody might pick them up. And then somebody else. It's not going to happen in one generation, these things take time.

Sašo: I see a lot of development in terms of market oriented development, I think the current government of India is certainly very pro-business, pro market oriented. Or I

look at media that are penetrating into the west, a lot of them state sponsored like Russia today or Al Jazeera, but how about potentials to democratize media? That was in my view one of the most important points of the MacBride commission. It's not only about these global imbalances, it's about democratizing communication, making it a dialogical exchange not controlled either by the market or the by state.

Daya: Sure.

Sašo: Do you see any developments or what are potentials for that kind of developments globally?

Daya: Well I think the internet offers a lot of potential for that. Some of that has already emerged and it's growing. Many transnational connections are emerging, whether it is about the environment, for instance, or political discourse etc. That has happened. But to me that is still minor in terms of impact and therefore the big guys matter: the Murdoch's of the world or Google's of the world, whether it is Russia or EU or China. In fact, I'm currently writing a book *The Changing Geo-politics of Gobal Communication*. Hopefully it will take 2 years for me to finish it. I'm looking at some of these issues about the rise of for example RT, Al Jazeera, whether this leads to globalism or is it just propaganda, back to the Cold War.

I think for somebody like me who is not Russian or Western, I'm an Indian scholar who works in London, for me RT is a great source of a perspective that I don't get on CNN or BBC. For example, there is a whole discourse about NATO's eastern expansion. What you often get is marginalized in one sentence, but in RT that is the main story. Or on Syria there is a story which we don't get in mainstream western media. So as a student of international communication I find it fantastic that I can watch something coming out of Moscow in a language that I understand and I'm aware that this is coming from a particular perspective. I know it's essentially Putin's viewpoint, but there might be some legitimacy in that viewpoint as well. Why should we assume that the BBC or CNN is telling us the whole truth when there is overwhelming evidence to show that traditionally they only present a slanted perspective?

Sašo: It's interesting to see how one perspective becomes neutralised and the other is particular propaganda. If you look at how the BBC covers …

Daya: Yes, to you but not to me! For me it's not propaganda.

Jernej: But it's portrayed as such in a public discourse.

Daya: But whose public discourse? That's the point. I know that but I'm looking at it beyond that. What do you expect CNN to say?

It's interesting because I was at a panel in Berlin last November and we were talking about media plurality and somebody asked me the same thing about RT and what do you think about propaganda. I said exactly what I said to you now. I benefit as a student of international communication to have access to that information. Ten years ago, I didn't have that so I didn't know what the Russians were saying on Syria for example. And I mean, this is just one channel. Now on the internet there is so much more material available. In fact, there is too much so you must be able to sift the rubbish from good information. I take that as a positive development and in some

way it helps to fulfil some of the ideas raised in the MacBride report about a multi-lingual, multi-polar and multi-perspective world.

We can't be all listening to what the Americans have to say about the world because there is a fundamental structural problem: If the US government is directly involved in bombing Iraq, as it was for many years and continues to be, we're getting information about Iraq from US media. We are not listening to what the Russians are saying about Syria now, we're not watching Russian TV although they have done a lot of interesting work there. The tragedy is that supposedly educated people don't see it. I see it with my students: they can't go beyond RT as a propaganda. Of course, it is propaganda of a sort, but the BBC isn't different in that respect.

Sašo: Recently the former director of the BBC Peter Horrocks said publicly that the BBC needs more funding because they are losing the information war with Russia.

Daya: The assumption is that we are part of a propaganda war. That statement – the assumption is that and indeed there is a propaganda war going on – a neo-Cold War information warfare.

Sašo: It was interesting to me that it was so frankly said: the BBC has to be among other things a propaganda tool of British …

Daya: During the Cold War, it was very prominent and since the end of the Cold War it has been very prominent, it's nothing new.

Jernej: And it also spreads to press agencies which are also western but are also instrumentalized for political reasons.

Daya: Of course.

Jernej: Which you also point out in your books.

Daya: I say to my BBC friends: 'Look guys, you have got to grow up because you are not in China. You are not allowed except in 5 Star hotels. In India, the audience is so small it doesn't even register on any measuring mechanisms.' There are 400 news channels in India. BBC is largely irrelevant. In the Arab world, they have over 100 of their own news channels. Every major European country has its own news. BBC might be in 5 Star hotels and somebody might watch it, but it's not the main source of news. In Latin America, it was never strong. In Africa, the Chinese are coming in a big way. So, I say to them: 'Grow up. Learn some modesty. Don't try to lecture people. You're in decline and if something happens to the City of London - You have little else.' It's a vulnerable situation and I think they are pragmatic enough to realize it.

What is increasingly happening now is that they are focusing on such genres as game shows. BBC Worldwide is the commercial arm of the BBC and they do a lot of programming and they are very successful in creating formats which are sold all over the world and that's non-political and it's not a problem. That's not to undermine their professional news standards. They are good, they are the most respected broadcasting organisation in the world and they have a very long tradition of providing good professional journalism but there is also this kind of mind-set which is yet to fully recognise the realities of a rapidly changing world.

Jernej: You have connected both commercialization and the spread of power of television to infotainment.

Daya: Yes.

Jernej: Could you tell us more about it? How is this influencing, what are the consequences of this rise and spread of infotainment?

Daya: I did this book in 2007. It was the first book to look at television news specifically at an international level. The core argument of the book was that infotainment works as a very skilful and largely successful diversion. So, you keep people busy with Bollywood or Super-girl in China or Big Brother in Europe. Doesn't matter what it is: some version of diversion in television programmes. In the process the more important issues that deserve attention, I was talking before about the trade deal which will change everything, they get displaced. I called it an instrument of neoliberal imperialism, that's the phrase I used. Because there is no coercion involved, this diversion very cleverly legitimizes a particular kind of economic system, which is essentially neoliberalism.

China as a consumer market is, not quite yet, but going to be the largest in the world. It is by the number of people but it will become the biggest also in terms of value in the next five years. So, the Chinese government wants to increase domestic consumption. Infotainment is good for that. And there is an ideological dimension which I wanted to emphasise.

I just don't have the time at the moment, but I've been thinking about doing a follow up. I was going to call it 'Infotainment 2.0', infotainment in the age of the internet and social media. The book was really about television and today, a decade later, if I look at the issue of diversion today it is mostly the internet. It's very fragmented and much more dangerous in a way because now with data mining and geo locations, they know exactly what you're doing, where you're going etc.

That is not to undermine what is good about infotainment. In the book, I have a section where I talk about 'good infotainment' where you can bring some serious issues on the news agenda, which normally would not be covered by television news, by making them more accessible and entertaining.

Jernej: But there is huge corporations on the internet as well. They dominate the internet …

Daya: Exactly.

Jernej: It's basically more or less monopolised now so it leads to possibilities of ... it's not repression, it's actually we voluntarily repress ourselves.

Daya: Yes. We give them information, we tell them what we like, we press 'Like' on Facebook and they know exactly what we like so they don't need to do any marketing. We are doing it for them. But you see, it's like the double-edged sword. At one level, there is this potential for repression and control, but on the other side it also has potential to democratizing communication. There is so much there in cyberspace which is fantastic. You can visit the best museums in the world and have a virtual tour, you have professors who give lectures for free, you have high quality stuff, you

can get government reports, and you can get corporate data. It's a fantastic source so we need to have a little more cyber literacy.

But the other side of that is what I call data driven scholarship. Everybody is doing quantitative research because there is a lot of data.

Jernej: And again there is no context.

Daya: There is no context. And there is no critical involvement. It's 'how many people are using Facebook?' A lot of stuff is published. And you read the abstract, you don't read anything else, because it is just a waste. OK, somebody gets a PhD, somebody gets something published. [laughter] That's fine, I don't have a problem with it. But it is not something which makes you think and the whole point of university life is to stimulate thinking, to disagree, to argue. We are not doing that enough. We are increasingly following a very conformist path.

Sašo: It's interesting also that more and more data is not public but privately controlled. Facebook has a massive amount of data about its users and if you want to do a PhD using Facebook's data you have to go to them and say 'OK, I want to analyse your data,' and they'll respond: 'What can you offer us?'

Daya: Absolutely. There's lots of sponsored research now, it's not unusual. We are very fortunate we live in Europe where there is a tradition of autonomy of universities and we have freedom to do what we want to do. But even that is changing now. There is this hierarchy where you should get published and kind of rating/standing of the journal matters - and I find that quite problematic to be honest. It creates a certain kind of instrumentalisation of scholarship and publication. I'm personally against that.

Jernej: But in a very general sense you were critical of infotaiment, of its consequences …

Daya: Oh yes! If you read the book – extremely critical!

Jernej: What are the key consequences for democracy? The fact that we would like to live in democracy but …

Daya: Well that's true. US is very good example of that.

Jernej: With Trump?

Daya: They elected Bush twice, not once. He was president for 8 years.

Jernej: But Trump is something qualitatively outside of that as well. It's beyond …

Daya: If you look at US television news – infotainment is supreme.

Jernej: So it is celebrity obsessed …

Daya: Sex, scandal, sport … And increasingly now it's happening with the newspapers too. Although my focus in the book was on television news but in newspapers too this is happening because the pressure of the marketplace is so strong and they

are losing readers and advertising revenue. There is an increasing amount of sponsored content, which is another form of diversion. It doesn't add to your knowledge or understanding. Even as good a newspaper as the *Guardian* is now indulging in all that because it has to survive. It's losing millions every month so it's trying every tactic to engage its readers.

Sašo: I think this is one of the instances where the situation is drastically different in the West as opposed to for example China or India. This crisis of traditional business models of journalism or newspapers especially. I believe India's newspapers readership is still on the rise.

Daya: Yes. Because literacy is growing, people have more spare money, the economy is growing. Because the base is so low. But as the internet spreads more widely the problems that they're facing here in Europe or in the US will appear in India. China already is starting to have that problem, the internet access in China is 50%. In India, it is around 30% as of today. When it becomes 80%, which is likely in the next 5 years, since they're spending a trillion dollars on infrastructure, then the same issues will appear.

I think there's a bigger problem across the world with what kind of journalism should we have for the digital age and how do we monetise digital newspapers - that is still a problem. Even big brands like *New York Times* are not making a lot of money on digital versions.

Jernej: If we take just a step back again to the 1970s and 1980s to questions of cultural imperialism and the thesis of dependency theory. Do you think these still have value today or are they obsolete?

Daya: Not at all, I think they are very valid. I already mentioned Oliver's book that came out in 2014, it's a very good book. What he has done, he has brought it up to date, looked at electronic empires if you like, the Google's of the world and how extraordinary powers they wield today, much more than newspaper magnates ever did. Because they are global, their presence is not just in one country or one region. So, the idea of dependency is very relevant in that debate. The idea of control and power is very important although the imperialism word is coming back. It's interesting, Christian Fuchs has been writing on that as well, and Oliver's book is published in 2014 so these people would not be using these words if they were not relevant. I think there is a currency to this, and some people are talking about Chinese imperialism now, in Africa for example, it is a new kind of imperialism. So this terminology is coming back. Its relevance hasn't gone away.

Jernej: So to conclude: do we need a MacBride report for 21st century?

Daya: We possibly do. It would be wonderful to have another similar report for the digital age.

Jernej: Is it even possible? That is the question, because the historical circumstances, the geo-political context is completely different.

Daya: It is. That's right. You see, the thing is, there is also the whole idea of the information society, how this debate came into WSIS, the information society became

a big thing, which was more about data and interconnectivity. Basically, they are doing work for big American corporations, whether it is Microsoft or Google.

So, I think the time is right for a revival of that report, for getting some people together from industry, from different governments … One big debate is about internet governance, how that is going to be done, because there are already different models. The Chinese have their own version, the Russians have their own approach and there is the dominant idea that it should be open and private.

There are other forums where these things are discussed, but it would be good if something like UNESCO or ITU was to take initiatives and get some people together from industry, from government, civil society and academia to address some of the issues that were raised in that report.

But I don't see much happening. Apart from academics who are sort of interested I don't think ... in my experience policy people are not that bothered.

It's important to remind ourselves that today in this changed geo-political situation, the budget of the Bill Gates foundation, is bigger than the budget of the World Health Organization. That puts things into perspective. The biggest UN organisation which deals with global health: its budget is smaller than a US based private foundation.

Jernej: So these inequalities have rapidly expanded and not for the better in any way?

Daya: Let's not undermine what the Gates foundation has done: it has done some fantastic projects around the world, really successful ones and in some ways people have argued are more efficient than government's projects. Because there's less corruption, less bureaucracy etc. So it's a more complex picture. But the answer to your question is that we need to revise the MacBride report and have a 21st century version of it.

triple**C**

"The concentration of power, represented by current prevailing media conditions, is and ought to be open to challenge." An interview with Peter Golding.

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Abstract: Interview with Peter Golding, Emeritus Professor at Northumbria University, Visiting Professor in the School of Arts and Cultures at Newcastle University and one of the crucial figures in Critical Political Economy of Communication. In the interview we discuss the role of critical scholarship, the sometimes troubled relationship between cultural studies and critical political economy of communication, the importance of a sociological perspective in studying media, and the impact of broader socio-political trends on academia.

Keywords: Critical Political Economy of Communication; Cultural Studies; Critical Scholarship, Marxism, neoliberalism

Peter Golding is Emeritus Professor at Northumbria University and Visiting Professor in the School of Arts and Cultures at Newcastle University. He is one of the most important scholars in critical political economy of communication since 1970s, often known for his groundbreaking work with Graham Murdock, with his work also encompassing other fields, such as media sociology. His books and edited volumes amongst others include *The Mass Media* (1974); *Making The News* (with Philip Elliott, 1979); *Images of Welfare: Press and Public Attitudes to Poverty* (with Sue Middleton, 1982), *Communicating Politics: Mass Communications and the Political Process* (ed. volume with Graham Murdock and Philip Schlesinger, 1986), two volumes of *The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (edited with Graham Murdock), *Cultural Studies in Question* (ed. volume with Marjorie Ferguson, 1997), *Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalization, Communication and the New International Order* (ed. volume with Phil Harris, 1997), *European Culture and The Media* (ed. volume with Ib Bondebjerg, 2004), *Digital Divides* (ed. volume with Graham Murdock, 2010).

Professor Golding is also an editor of the European Journal of Communication, Honorary Chair of the European Sociological Association's Research Network 18 – Sociology of Communications and Media Research, and was Co-Chair of the European Science Foundation Programme 'Changing Media, Changing Europe'. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA). He was founder Chair of the subject association for his field, the Standing Conference on Cultural, Communications and Media Studies from 1993-1999, since when he has been Honorary Secretary of its successor body, MeCCSA (Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association). He chairs a task force for the European Communications Research and Education Association (ECREA) on changes in support for media research across Europe.

We spoke at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, in December 2015, where Professor Golding had given a lecture on "Why Studying the Media Needs a Sociological Perspective".

(Photo: Sašo Slaček Brlek)

Sašo: You started as a sociologist, what then drew you to media and especially to critical approaches to media and communication?

Peter: I started as a sociologist and I still think I am a sociologist, which is a very broad category of scholarship. But I am a sociologist with a particular interest in the media as institutions and communication as a social process. And I suppose my interest in that grew as it always does: partly by accident. It would be wrong to pretend that it was a carefully thought through process. I was always interested in journalism and indeed I was editor of a student newspaper at my university when I was a student. But I decided fairly early on that I wanted to be a sociologist studying the media, rather than a practitioner. My interest in the media grew because at that time television viewing and newspaper reading were growing very fast, and their influence and importance were very great. I just felt this was something I wanted to focus my attention on as a sociologist.

Sašo: What were the institutional conditions for critical scholarship at that time?

Peter: They were perhaps better than they are now, but nonetheless, it was not an easy position to take and it certainly wasn't the standard position. Sociology was thought of as critical discipline in those days. We're talking about 1960s and 1970s when a lot of Europe was undergoing quite radical social change. At least there was a lot of radical, critical, political critique in the public domain and the rapid growth of intellectual work. And not least of course in universities and among student populations in my country and in most European countries this was very great and by large that emphasised critical commentary. That wouldn't be true now, but it was true then.

So it was possible to construct critical scholarship around the media. But it was also necessary, it didn't exist and the largely American influence as it was then, was not very critical. It was, to take very old distinction that came out of American scholarship in the 1940's and 1950's, there was much more administrative research than there was critical research.

Sašo: Would you say that these political changes that were going on were crucial in awakening the interest in academia?

Peter: Yes, they were. I wouldn't overstate the amount of critical work that was being done. It was still true then and it is certainly true now that the majority of work in social science generally, not just in sociology and certainly not just in studying the media, was not critical… either in the sense of being well grounded in critique, in theory, or critical in a more conventional sense of being politically questioning and oppositional and morally founded. I think that was always a minority position and I still think it is a minority position. I would say that although I was obviously involved with a few other people in creating a political economy of the media certainly in the UK, we all knew each other and we could probably sit around the table and have coffee. It wasn't a large movement.

Jernej: But it was easier, you were mentioning USA, it was easier in the UK than it was in the USA, because especially in the 1950s and 1960s it was nearly impossible to do any sort of critical research in the USA …

Peter: I think that is true. I think that people who became major figures in critical political economy of media in the United States were probably bolder, more dissident and more visible than we were. I'm thinking particularly of the older generation, people like Herb Schiller and later people like Dan Schiller, his son, and Vincent Mosco and Janet Wasko and many others who were not large in number and they are not large in number now. They were never a major or dominant voice then and they are not now, so I would not want to overstate the role of critical political economy within media studies either in the USA or UK.

Yes, it was easier in the UK, because there was slightly more of a vacuum, whereas the established scholarship in the Unites States was mostly of course vocational and professional journalism schools and so on. In the United Kingdom the dominant voice was probably coming from the humanities, not from social sciences, and it was coming in the form of cultural studies – and we always think of the Birmingham school, so called, and Stuart Hall – but that was the exception … By and large and on the whole media studies, the study of the mainstream media, of the dominant canon, was uncritical.

Jernej: Was this because for example in the UK you had also different political contexts? For example you had the Labour Party in power after the Second World War. Was this political context in any way important or was it just the institutional differences in academia?

Peter: I don't think it's immediately relevant or important in shaping the intellectual firmament. Universities in the UK, then and now, tend to lead a more distant life from political life than in many European countries. And certainly in the 1960s, for example, only 7 or 8 percent of the population went to university. It wasn't a major part of

most people's lives. That's changed very much. It is true that we had prevailing Conservative governments – with few exceptions, you mentioned a Labour government in the period after the Second World War – but mostly in the post war period, we had Conservative governments. And all governments, Labour and Conservative, have moved to the right. Without getting into a discussion about British politics now, the prevailing culture is largely on the right, even or perhaps especially within the Labour Party, which has never been a voice in British politics for shall we say radical democratic socialism.

Sašo: So what drew you to critical political economy in particular, among critical approaches to the media?

Peter: I suppose most obviously the realisation of the massive concentration of ownership within British newspapers especially, and increasingly within commercial television. And also the growing evidence of horizontal integration between companies working in different sectors. So it became increasingly obvious to those of us with the interest that the power was held by fewer and fewer corporate interests. This had enormous consequences. So that in looking at the range of not just news, but even entertainment that was available, we were struck – and by 'we', I mean small number of people – we were struck by how few voices there were and how narrow the range was. I think that created the need to formulate a theory, to try and at least describe, if not explain, all of that. And critical political economy was absolutely the right way forward.

Jernej: Who were the scholars and also people that influenced you at the start?

Peter: Well, that's a difficult one to answer. I mean, there were scholars who were enormously influential in shaping my understanding of sociology and I would certainly include among those Peter Townsend and David Lockwood – amongst then contemporary leading figures in British social science.
    But I would also say I was enormously influenced by colleagues working much more closely, and I would name certainly two: Philip Elliott and Graham Murdock. Philip Elliott I worked with very closely when I first became a media researcher, but he died in 1983 at a tragically young age. Graham Murdock and I of course have continued to work together throughout our academic careers and I'd like to think we've influenced each other. But I think most importantly Graham most certainly influenced me and we're talking right at the beginning, when we were both very young. We worked together really to try and create critical political economy, the first expression of which was in an article published as long ago as in 1973. I don't think we realised then – it just wasn't obvious to us at all, you never realise at the time – just how influential this would become and how much was then going to grow within the next 20 years.

Jernej: How did it happen that you collaborated with Graham so much? Because in most of your works, it's Peter Golding and Graham Murdock … Everyone already expects that when you see one name, there would be the other as well … (*laughter*)

Peter: Yes, it's quite worrying. (*laughter*) We once received a letter from an American department addressed to the 'Golding P. Murdock research centre' and people used to make jokes about never seeing us traveling together and so on.

The easy and obvious answer to your question is that we worked in the same university department. The Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester was opened in 1966. Graham went there as a research assistant in 1968, working initially on a study of media coverage of the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations. I went there just under two years later. But it meant therefore we were both working in the same research centre at a very formative period of our early academic careers. So that's how we met and found that we were both interested in the same things and had very similar intellectual formation and attitudes. Inevitably we developed working habits together and they grew to the point where now we still write together and this is two hundred years later or whatever it is (*laughter*).

Jernej: This question may perhaps be a little personal, but how has this collaboration worked? I mean, you already know what Graham will be able to cover and …

Peter: I write the music and he writes the words (*laughter*). No, I'm not sure there is a formula, I mean obviously if you work with someone over many years, you get used to ways of working. Usually we certainly discuss… if we had something we agree we are going to write together, we discuss it, we formulate a focus and the main themes that will appear in an article. And then we agree a division of labour. You will be, I'm sure, very quick to notice how many of our articles are in four parts (*laughter*); that's not an accident. And usually we are responsible, each of us, for different sections and then of course we do what everybody does when they write together… We exchange drafts and we comment on each other's drafts and then we finally arrive at something that we can both at least agree to disagree about.

Jernej: But your thought processes have to be quite similar, in much of the collaborative work there is a clear distinction, you can clearly see where one author finished writing and the other started to write. And I don't see this clear distinction when I read your work.

Peter: Well, many people have tried and sometimes they get it right and sometimes they get it wrong. I think we have… I wouldn't say identical perceptions, but they are sufficiently similar to allow us to work together. I'm sure if you were a very subtle discourse analyst you could work out which section has been primarily written by which person, but normally by the time we start writing, we have already agreed what the main areas to cover will be and what the main argument is and how it will be presented. The writing is almost the last thing to do. I wouldn't say that it doesn't matter, but by the time you get to write the article, everything is already discussed and agreed.

Jernej: In your research you point out that it is necessary to assess media as a part of a whole society, as a part of social totality basically. Why do you think this is the case?

Peter: I suppose I would almost put that upside down and say: how could it be otherwise? I mean, I can't imagine studying, let's say, education or health or social policy or crime without a wider understanding of the society and the political economy within which they work. I don't find it necessary to argue… Well, I do find it necessary to argue that the media should be studied as part of social totality, but for me, that is a necessary part of any social theory. My worry is the extent, to which people talk

about constructing analysis of the media as though it was something apart. That is the danger, but to situate the media as parts of wider social processes seems to me essential, necessary and unavoidable, not something to argue about.

Sašo: But still, you focused yesterday's lecture exactly to an appeal to take the sociological perspective into account in studying media, to address issues like inequality and power. Why do you think it is still necessary? I completely agree, it should be self-evident, but why is it still necessary to argue this?

Peter: For the reasons I gave in the discussion after the lecture, which is that although I believe we should study the media within that wider context, it's not what always happens. Media studies is often quite enclosed and separated and I think there's an extraordinary amount of myopia within media studies in many countries, where it has become separated from the wider studies of culture, society and economy. So that is why it needs to be argued, because it doesn't always happen.

For me it needs to be argued because it ought to be obvious. I wish it was, but it isn't. You have to make it obvious, you have to explain that … I have interviewed candidates who wish to have an academic position, who are enormously knowledgeable and creative about media theory and about advanced, let say, semiotic analysis. And then I find they've hardly ever heard of Rupert Murdoch. Or one person once said to me that the BBC was a commercial organisation. Well of course he wasn't being subtle in suggesting that the BBC has been forced to be commercial, he just had no understanding that it was a public corporation. And I just thought it's worrying when people have such subtle understanding within some narrow parts of media studies, but such naivety and ignorance of wider questions. So my answer to your question is that the reality, the intellectual and academic and institutional reality, is of a growing separation of media studies from other things. By 'media studies' I'm using that as a short-hand for lots of different things. And that, I think, is not good for students or for social understanding.

Sašo: Why do you think this is? Is it because of the division of scientific disciplines?

Peter: Yes, that is obviously a part of it, it has to do with institutional history of academia, the growing separation of different areas. I mean today in many countries we argue about the virtues of multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. Such arguments would not have been necessary or even meaningful in past ages. A separation between what we now call sociology and economics, for example, was unthinkable.

For me, one of the most damaging divisions in UK academia was the separation in the 1940s and 1950s, between sociology and social policy. So that social policy became the study of what is sometimes called public or social administration, as though that had nothing to do with wider questions of power and equality and so on and so forth. Of course it's absolutely essential that those two are linked and parts of the same study. And that kind of separation I think is always damaging. It doesn't mean we have to study everything all the time. That is not humanly possible, but it does mean being very aware of those divisions and trying to cross them whenever possible.

Jernej: In one of his articles, it was basically a plenary talk, Wolfgang Streeck starts with this brilliant statement: 'Once upon a time sociologists knew that modern society is capitalist society'… But this is basically it. It's also naturalising certain social rela-

tions as though they have been here since always. As though they are natural. And of course capitalism is one of …

Peter: Exactly, I agree.

Jernej: And this is also present in sociology.

Peter: Yes it is. Political economy grew out of an attempt to understand the emergence of capitalism 300 years ago and sociology is a very much later separation. I suppose in the late 19th century – with particularly an attempt to understand very rapid social changes going on, in the growth of cities and the growth of the distinction between rural and urban life and so on – it became separated from what used to be called political economy, which was a very wide and embracing term, rather different from the way we now describe it. If you talk about the political economy of the media, a phrase we sometimes use, it would be meaningless to political economists in the 19th century. But what it draws attention to, and clearly what it is designed to draw attention to, is that the capitalist formation of most media and communications institutions is not a necessary development or an inevitable one. It's a particular formation that has increasingly been supported and encouraged and in many ways subsidized – which is a general term – because of political and economic decisions. It's not given. So Streeck's statement is absolutely right in that sense.

Jernej: This is also why you probably pointed out that it's necessary to focus on history and change, including the power relations in this change, because without this it's impossible to understand that the media of course are private media corporations and so on.

Peter: Yes, yes …

Jernej: I mean, you can understand it very abstractly, but …

Peter: Yes, I agree. That is certainly why I argue that a historical dimension is necessary. In fact it has too frequently been removed, but if we want to understand anything about social formation, about the emergence of capitalism and the media within it, then we need a historical dimension to understand the growth of corporations, the growth of private ownership, the growth of media as private corporations, which is not a necessary and inevitable development. In the media we of course always have the alternative models that are available in fields like public service broadcasting. We do not need to think of the media as only possible in the form of private capitalist corporations.

Jernej: Isn't it strange or somewhat odd and peculiar that especially in a time when historical inequalities are so high and the power asymmetries are rising this naturalization of certain relations is so blatant and so obviously present also in academia when wider perspective should be possible?

Peter: Well, I don't know, it's puzzling on one level, because it relates to what it always seems to me the fundamental question for social scientists and also for sociologists, which is 'How is it that societies, which are hugely unequal, persist?', in other words, 'Why don't those, who are the least provided with cultural, economic

and other resources, try to change the society in which they live?'. And of course there we fall back on problems of ideology. But that is a fundamental question, 'Why is it that people accept or even support a social structure and economic structure, in which they lose?' It's a very simple question, but the answer is very complex and we don't have one. Clearly attempts by Marx, Gramsci and others to formulate explanations – even Durkheim with *conscience collective* – have helped us. But it remains a fundamental conundrum. And we live now in the second decade of the 21th century, at the time of the most – certainly in Western Europe – growing and huge inequality and yet we see politically in many countries at the moment a movement to the right, which is very sceptical and oppositional to radical change in favour of the dispossessed. That poses political problems, not just for the intellectual and the analysts, it poses very real political problems for the political parties of the so called left in Europe. But here, we're moving to another question I think.

Jernej: In the past in academia and also in political practice these questions were more present, do you think this is also connected to the fact that the 'really-existing socialisms' have fallen and that it was basically portrayed as though this is the end of history and that all of the big questions of humanity and society have been answered now?

Peter: Well I'm not sure that it is true that they were much more present. There was clearly a time when there was a great belief in the Soviet model, if you like, the East-European model as demonstrating the effectiveness and possibility of an actually existing socialism. And the disappointment that arose with the historical evolution of these societies was clearly palpable and destructive on the left in Western Europe and the United States… so far as there is such a thing as a left movement in the United States. But I don't think there were ever other than marginal or particularly influential movements nor were they powerful movements within academia or intellectual understanding of the media. So analysis of the media, analysis of society generally, has always by and large been relatively conservative in most European societies. Sociology is a surprisingly conservative discipline, despite its popular perception in many countries in the 1980s and 1990s.

So I don't think there ever was that great power for grasp or potential for change, modelled by Eastern Europe. But of course two things then happened: one was the evident failure – as people interpreted it – of the actually existing socialism in Eastern Europe, and the other was the claim that 'We have won', as Warren Buffett often put it. You've heard Warren Buffet, the famous American venture capitalist not long ago, saying very enjoyably really: 'Yes of course there's a class war and my class has won'. And it's difficult to disagree with him. But it's only a more emotive way of putting the argument of so many analysts, that we have reached "the end of ideology" and the perfect society, namely something like the capitalist United States, has been created.

I think that has begun to fall apart, even though it was very powerful between say 1990 and 2005, and even in the last five or ten years. Now however, there are many things going very evidently wrong in Western Societies: growing evidence and awareness of massive inequality, things like climate change, the growing scepticism about the ability of nation states to provide publicly funded and publicly provided services of one kind or another.

So I think we are living through – if I could be objective about it – a very interesting period, but I can't be objective about it, because I'm also living through it.

Sašo: Ok, we definitely agree that the mainstream of media research has almost always been more conservative, but I think there *were* periods when critical approaches and political economy in particular were much more influential, for example in the 1970s … At least more than they were later or than they are now.

Peter: Yes. Although again, I'm not sure how powerful that was. I mean, clearly, if you think about the MacBride commission and the debate about NWICO [The New World Information and Communication Order], there *have* been moments, very important moments, where radical alternatives and the evident inequities created by capitalist media formation have been quite prominent. But I wouldn't overstate that. My feeling is that for the last 50 years, although media studies in most countries have grown very fast, the intellectual and the academic study of the media has not in itself had an enormous influence on the institutional growth of public or corporate media. And within academic studies I don't think the critical political economy approach has ever been … It's become more or less fashionable, but it's never been more than marginal. Certainly in the Anglophone areas, which I am more aware of, certainly in the UK and in the Unites States, critical political economy or even critical cultural studies, which is *wrongly* sometimes thought of as a critical approach, has never been more than marginal. And the dominant, overwhelmingly dominant form of teaching and research, is largely a conservative one.

Sašo: You said that cultural studies are wrongly thought of as a critical approach, could you explain?

Peter: Well, I thought you'd pick that up. (*laughter*) Let me talk about the UK, because that's what I know best and it's what people often focus on. Cultural studies in the United Kingdom of course grew out of classic humanities studies, not social sciences, and the work associated especially with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and Stuart Hall, was always enormously important, of course, but a small part of cultural studies and it occupied a particular moment. Stuart Hall sadly is no longer with us and he left the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, I don't know, 35 years ago, as did most of the people who were the sort of heroic founding figures … They never agreed with each other. And we should not overstate the influence of Marxism on cultural studies – the political theme of cultural studies in the United Kingdom then and now has often been a largely conservative one.

And I have to say, as an editor of a journal – not like TripleC which has a very particular audience and purpose, but a more general one – European Journal of Communication, we receive a very large number of articles submitted, written by people who are working from within cultural studies rather than social studies or indeed media studies. And the prevailing tone of those is not especially critical in the sense of related to a materialist critique of culture in any way. It's surprisingly often celebratory of the growth of corporate activity and consumerism and the like.

Jernej: Why do you think it's like that? The Birmingham school that you were mentioning after all started from Marxism and Marx and also from this materialist approach to cultural studies. Why do you think this huge shift appeared? Was it a shift or was it just a specific period, with the cultural studies mainstream before and after that?

Peter: I think more the latter. I think most of the people – the names you would now be familiar with, who grew out of that period, of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies – were mostly not social scientists, they were humanities scholars. They were enormously erudite and creative, but not particularly rooted in a materialist or a structural or societal analysis, because that wasn't their intellectual formation. What they did, I think very heroically and importantly, was to rescue the study of popular culture and of working class culture as a major focus of necessary study, whereas humanities scholarship up until then have been rooted very much in a sort of prevailing, dominant, particularly middle class or upper class canon. They also interrogated and expanded the range of behaviour and activities embraced by 'culture' in extremely important and valuable ways.

So what it did, in focusing on working class culture, on popular television, on popular newspapers and so on, was to create a whole new area of study. And it did that with a very self-conscious, Marxist flavoured and influenced understanding of the power and potential of working class culture. But it was a moment. An important moment and a lengthy moment, but nonetheless… When the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies ceased to be influential and then of course ceased to exist at all, and that's nearly a generation ago, while cultural studies has continued since then to be often very creative and important, but I would say the moment of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the Birmingham School – if there ever was a school – has passed.

Sašo: So how do you see the relationship between the truly critical materialist cultural studies and critical political economy of the media?

Peter: It was never as oppositional as it is sometimes portrayed. I mean, there was a period when you could read every week a new article on the distinction between cultural studies and critical political economy as though they were some kind of boxing opponents. It was never like that, because what they shared was enormously important, which was a profound belief in the importance of working class and radical culture, a profound distrust and critique of the growing corporate power of major media corporations, and a profound critique of the content, of the substance, of the prevailing cultural forms of the major newspapers and popular television. So all of that was common ground and I don't think there was ever that huge, major opposition.

But the difference – and it was an important one – was in how to analyse those things and what to do as a consequence. And I think it was often argued within cultural studies that a very important place to start – and they did it supremely well often – was in the analysis of popular response in consumption, in audiences, whereas critical political economy was not always best in doing that work. But I don't think there was any fundamental analytical difference in understanding those things. The danger for cultural studies became that its focus on consumption became a celebration of consumption and the old cliché that 'A thousand housewives can't be wrong' … Well, it was never quite all that naïve, of course, but nonetheless it left cultural studies with no very adequate understanding of the problem of ideology that we mentioned earlier. And Stuart Hall, who was interested in a creative development of a Gramscian analysis, was the exception rather than the rule. I he and one or two other people, were working against the grain. It wasn't where most of cultural studies was going.

Jernej: I found it very interesting when I read an interview with Dallas Smythe, which was done at the start of the 1990s, where he was asked about this relationship with cultural studies, and he basically says that he sees this as a very important critical approach, which has a lot of similarities with political economy. But after that, basically throughout the 1990s, it was portrayed as a hugely antagonistic relationship. I mean, materialist cultural studies and political economy have much more in common, as you say, than the things that would separate them for example. One would focus on production and the other one more on consumption, and these are just different moments in the capitalist accumulation process that both have to be analysed.

Peter: I agree with that entirely. I mean, when people like Dallas Smythe, who was after all writing in an environment where cultural studies was not *that* developed … I mean there never was and hasn't ever been a major cultural studies – of left or right, of radical critique or of conservative tenor – in the United States or Canada. Some, but not very much. And you are quite right to say there is more in common than there is difference between them.

I'm not sure I would entirely agree with the idea that cultural studies has predominantly been interested in consumption and critical political economy in production. Actually, if you look at the work that they do, that is not the distinction between them and it never was. So I think the sort of commentary from outside, 'Here are these kind of warring gangs, one called cultural studies and one called political economy,' was not how those of us in the ring ever experienced it, and it never really felt like that.

You asked me earlier about the people who had influenced me throughout my career and I would certainly put Stuart Hall amongst the three or four names of the people whose work I found most enormously helpful and influential. I think many people in cultural studies … I remember Angela McRobbie, for example, who is of course an important central figure in those early days of the Centre for the Contemporary Cultural Studies. I appointed her to a position in my social science department when I was at Loughborough University and we worked very well together and remain good friends. It's the cliché that some of my best friends are cultural studies people and I think that, you're right, we have much more in common than it is sometimes apparent from the outside.

Sašo: So could you say that materialist cultural studies have more in common with critical political economy than they have with affirmative cultural studies?

Peter: Probably. (*laughter*) Well, one can oversimplify it, but if you look at the actually existing cultural studies, what people actually are interested in, and you say: 'Why are you studying twenty people using Facebook?' … It's rare that someone from a cultural studies perspective would say it's because they're enormously interested in the growth of this megacorporation called Facebook, which now owns massive amounts of private data and it's related to politics and economics, or the development of communications corporations … That's not what drives cultural studies. So I think there is a difference in motivation if you like, or underpinning interest or purpose, between what goes on within cultural studies now, and what goes on in critical political economy now. But where there is common interest and common purpose, why is it called critical cultural studies – analysts want to analyse, let's say, popular cultural consumption – it's because they believe that it is related to this question, which we posed earlier, about people's apparent willingness to accept huge and

growing amounts of inequality, where they are themselves the least well favoured. And how do we explain that? I don't know the answer, but I do know that many people that work within cultural studies are hugely interested and appalled by that question and struggling to try and develop an understanding.

Jernej: How did you observe these debates in the 1990s, which tried to basically *promote* the antagonism between these two approaches? And then we will finish with this question …

Peter: (*laughter*) Yes.

Jernej: For example Graham [Murdock] tried to intervene in this debate as well, to find a middle ground, while [Nicholas] Garnham and [Lawrence] Grossberg were on completely separate sides…

Peter: Yes, but those are rare occasions. Yes, Graham [Murdock] developed that fascinating dialogue with Dallas Smythe that you may be referring to, and then I edited a book with Marjorie Ferguson, which was about cultural studies. And I had a fascinating private dialogue with Stuart Hall about that book, because it was always intended to focus on strengths as well as the weaknesses – as we saw them – of cultural studies. It wasn't a sort of massive onslaught and certainly not intended to be – and I hope not really understood to be … But that period, when there was this apparent antagonism between cultural studies and political economy, was partly artificially manufactured and certainly very ephemeral. I wouldn't now see it historically as crucially what that story has been about. I think your point earlier, about there being more in common than to separate them, is the important one.

And the real worry now is how whether it's cultural studies or let's say social critical political economy, that both are in minority positions within the general study of media and communications.

Jernej: But he saw – you were talking about Stuart Hall – he saw that edited volume as an attack on cultural studies?

Peter: I think he did, at the time when he was understandably quite sensitive to critique about cultural studies. Not just from within academia, of course, I mean, we would need to get into the details of the sort of micro-politics of what was going on in, for example, the University of Birmingham.

So I think he was understandably and rightly worried about any apparent critique. But many of the contributors to that book were of course themselves people working from within cultural studies and what they were trying to do was evolve and develop cultural studies, not critique it … Or critique it in a constructive and positive way. And I have to say that beyond that moment dialogue was much more amicable and constructive.

Jernej: What was the influence of Margaret Thatcher, when she came into power, on academia? I mean, did her government have any influence on it? If I remember correctly, the Birmingham School was under fierce attack?

Peter: Yes. There's always been both a helpful and an unhelpful gap between British intellectual and academic life and British political life. There isn't much traffic of peo-

ple between them. So I mean, I would say the influence of government policy now on British academic life is much more profound and damaging – and frankly quite frightening – than it ever was under Margaret Thatcher. If you wanted me to summarise what Margaret Thatcher did to British society … Well, I'm not sure I could do it very quickly, but I don't think academia was a major target. The professions generally were a target, certainly, including media professionals and academics, but also health professionals and educational professionals within the schools.

Margaret Thatcher was very sceptical about professional judgement and autonomy. But the changes that she made in terms of the re-marketization within society, the resurgence of a capitalist understanding of what I think you described earlier as a sort of normalisation of capitalist relations, was profound and influential and still is … But I don't think the academy, universities, were a primary or major target.

Sašo: But she did introduce a simulation of market mechanisms into institutions of higher education, for example competing for funds, which is still going on and has become more and more entrenched.

Peter: Yes, you are right, but I would say those changes have been so marked in the last five or ten years – and even now – that there are people on the left in British academic life, who say 'Wouldn't it be wonderful to go back to the time of Margaret Thatcher', because now that seems like a quite comfortable social democratic position, compared to the intense and rapid marketization that is going on now. British universities are being hugely marketized since the massive growth of student tuition fees – we are not supposed to call them students, we're supposed to call them customers – and it's a simple market relationship: the customer buys a product. The product is the university education or perhaps more correctly accreditation, which gives you a licence into the marketplace, the labour marketplace. We academics are the providers of that product.

Not long ago I sat in a discussion about a new university teaching programme that was being introduced, but what we were discussing was called 'product development' and it took me a little while to realize that's what discussion was about. 'Product development' was the phrase being used; the biggest department in many universities now is the marketing department. The minister for higher education four or five years ago said that the most important thing for universities to understand now is that they are in the private sector, they are not in the public sector. They are selling a product to consumers. The consumers are students and their products have to be audited, which is why we have something called The Research Excellence Framework or The Research Assessment Exercise, as it used to be called. We're now getting a teaching equivalent, where employers and consumers – students as we used to call them – have to audit the product that they're buying. And it's a very expensive product they're buying.

Fees as you probably know are going up very fast, quite commonly now they are about ten thousand euros per year and it will rise for the undergraduate level, whereas I think it is still free here in Slovenia – but not for postgraduates – and that is an enormous change. It's also the case that in many countries undergraduate programmes are being required to become much more 'market friendly', as the phrase is used. I was in Finland not very long ago, where they are being told that all their undergraduate programmes, in every single module, must demonstrate how they are vocationally useful, how they can be applied directly and immediately in the marketplace outside, beyond universities.

So I think these changes and I won't say a lot more – but there is a lot more going on in British university life – have accelerated very, very fast over the past five or ten years. Margaret Thatcher had sown the seeds, for sure, but the most important changes, I'm sad to say, were under the last Labour government, seven or eight years ago, and they have accelerated massively in the last five or six years, since we've had a Conservative government.

Sašo: Who was it again that said how Tony Blair was the greatest achievement of Margaret Thatcher?

Peter: Margaret Thatcher said that! (*laughter*). 'My greatest achievement was New Labour and Tony Blair.' New Labour in fact, as it became to be known, is a form of Thatcherism. Well it was Margaret Thatcher's greatest 'achievement' and she had the insight to know that and say it. And it's clearly true. This is not an interview about current British politics, but clearly the debate going on – if one can call it a debate – within the British labour party now, is a debate between the inheritance of that Margaret Thatcher creation, New Labour, which is essentially another form of The Conservative Party, and the remnants of a social democratic party – not even a socialist party – which is formed around the current leader of The Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. But at the moment clearly it's a minority movement.

But as far as that relates to academic policy, it's to do with a notion of students-as-customers, universities as private institutions. The government has just published a policy paper – we call it a Green Paper, which is a set of proposals of what will happen to our university education system – and one of its main proposals is the introduction of what are called alternative providers, which is to say private institutions, who charge fees, make profits and will be allowed to call themselves universities. And this is seen as an important innovation both in itself and also as a challenge to the old style public universities, the currently existing universities. So there are enormous changes going on in British academia and I think Margaret Thatcher was only the beginning of that. It's happened mostly in the past four, five or six years.

Sašo: So how do you see the impact on teaching and research? Because I imagine that if the common assumption in the University has become 'We must teach the students for the labour market', it then becomes weird if you have people doing Marxist research …

Peter: There aren't many. (*laughter*)

Sašo: … critically researching this same relationship that universities seemingly accept unquestioningly.

Peter: Yes, all of that is correct. The answer is that there is less and less critical research being done and the worry is that this will continue to be more true. Universities are very keen to demonstrate that their research is valued and useful and in the last Research Assessment Exercise – the most recent one was in 2014 – the research undertaken by universities was assessed in part on something called 'its impact', which has never been true before. And what is meant by 'impact' is its application in the wider society. So the best way you could score points was to show that your research had been adopted by a private company, and the perfect model for research would be: you the researcher work in a laboratory, you invent a piece of

machinery, the company then licences it and sells it, they make a lot of money, you make a lot of money and you've acted as the research and development wing of British industry. That is the perfect model and that is what is valued.

I was until recently a Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, which meant I was a university research manager for research across all disciplines, not just my own. And in not my most recent university, but the previous one, I remember having a meeting with the research director of a very large private corporation, who offered me a very simple syllogism, which he absolutely believed: 'We pay taxes, taxes pay for universities, universities should do research for us', was his little syllogism. Now, I didn't like to point out, but at least two of those three arguments are simply empirically wrong.

Jernej: …Because they don't pay taxes.

Peter: (*laughter*) Exactly. They don't pay as much tax as they should and taxes don't pay for universities. (*laughter*) However, we didn't get into an argument about that, because there was no irony in there and that was his simple view: that the purpose of university research was to act as a subsidized research and development component of British industry and commerce. That is a common view and it's a view commonly held by many senior university managers too. That the way to receive acclaim is to do the kind of research that you and I would probably describe as applied or uncritical, which is increasingly what is funded.

If you get money to do research from a national Research Council in the UK, you have to demonstrate what are called Pathways to Impact, meaning how will the research be applied, how will it be used. And the best thing you can do is to get a large employer or industry to say: 'Yes, this is the research we've been waiting for, we will help them with it and they are working with us to do it'. That's the perfect model.

So your question, 'How is it possible to continue to do critical or theoretical or useless research', is that … with difficulty. There is not much of it and there is less and less.

Sašo: So if you say for example: 'This research will help unions to call a massive general strike and bring down the system', that's not really considered an impact? (*laughter*)

Peter: I wouldn't recommend it. (*laughter*)

Sašo: But to give a less controversial example: 'That it will help', I don't know, 'the BBC to provide a better service to citizens', that's not on the same level as if you say, 'This will help to increase the profits of a private corporation'?

Peter: Yes. (*laughter*) That is correct. How you formulate your research funding application is a very great skill that researchers are learning and of course in learning how to articulate the purpose of research in those terms, those terms can become normalized again: that the researcher begins to think that way. And the successful researcher of course is the one who is most successful in applying those kinds of norms. So it's a self-fulfilling prophecy that the most successful researchers, who probably then become major research entrepreneurs and university managers, are the people who most successfully digested that kind of an approach to research in the first place.

Jernej: Do you find it odd that especially after the 1990s critical scholars, who were always a minority, as you pointed out – but that so many of them have turned away from this critical approach and internalized this logic? For example in critical media scholarship, Nicholas Garnham, who was a true Marxist so to say and he very much says the opposite things now, that the market should actually be taken for granted … Do you find it odd that so many people have turned away from it?

Peter: Well I'm not sure how true that is, I mean, you mentioned Nick Garnham, who of course is now retired and no longer has a university position, who's always been something of an intellectual maverick … Which is not meant to be disrespectful, I think it's an indication of a particularly independent manner of thinking and of course he was a practitioner before he became an academic. I don't think he would argue that his enthusiasm for markets has turned him into a kind of Thacherite market entrepreneur. I think his impatience is often with what he sees as the limited understanding of people on the so-called Marxist left. I don't think he would himself say that he's given up all that kind of radical critique, quite the opposite. He would argue that the radical critique has itself become ineffective and short-sighted. What he is doing is, he's standing still, while other people are oscillating. Now I can't speak for him, so that wouldn't be fair, but I don't think he's typical. There is a common assumption that people move to the right in the course of their biography. I don't think that's generally true for most critical political economists working within sociology or media studies that I'm familiar with. It's just that there never were many of them and now there still are few of them.

Jernej: How would you describe yourself? Would it be possible to do something like that? I mean, also in a historical sense, if you could do something like an autobiography?

Peter: That's very difficult. I certainly … I hope I haven't sort of drifted to the right as it were. What many people on the left in Britain – whether in the academic world or elsewhere – feel is they have stood still and the rest of the world has moved right. So people who once thought of themselves as quite middle or moderate or not particularly politically radical, suddenly find the world seem to have gone so far to the right and left them looking like radical revolutionaries. I'm not sure I feel that. I mean, although one is sometimes embarrassed a little bit to read things you wrote twenty, thirty or even forty years ago, there is nothing in any of that work I would say that I have changed my mind completely now.

Like most people on the intellectual academic left in Britain, I've always worked also outside of the universities. This is where Graham [Murdock] and I differ a bit, not because we have a different way of working: My own interest is primarily in social policy, so I've often worked with welfare and poverty groups and the like and there certainly was a time – I guess in the 1970s and 1980s, perhaps even up to 2000s – when I was doing as much of that as I was doing within the university. I was being politically active in a way that simply took a lot of time and was a major focus. That has changed, I don't do that much of it now. But that is a change in personal energy rather than attitude or political vision.

It's always better that other people make these judgements, it's difficult to write your own biography, but I don't think intellectually or analytically I have changed very much. I hope I've learned something (*laughter*), but the starting point remains much the same, which is the one I articulated earlier: I remain as fascinated and worried

now, as I was forty years ago, by that big question: 'How is it that we live in a society with such huge inequalities and we're not living through a revolution?' How is that possible? How is it that people who can barely – even in a rich society, like mine – who don't have enough food, whose children don't have clothes, who die ten years earlier than people who live in the wealthier parts of the country, who have constant health problems for which there are no public services and so on and so on … How is all that possible? And yet they vote for UKIP [The UK Independence Party], which is the English nationalist anti-immigrant party, or they vote Conservative? Why do people accept or even acclaim an inegalitarian structure in which they are themselves so much the losers? That is for me still a fundamental question and I don't have an answer. I do know, I'm sure, the media are an important, probably central part of understanding that.

Sašo: How do you think we can find the answer, which approaches are the best suited for finding it? What kind of research is best suited to answer this question?

Peter: Well, research that starts with that question is the answer. I'd like to think empirical political economy – I think it needs research, by which I mean intellectual as well as out in the field type of research – is needed trying to understand that. For example there are probably two beginning explanations in my own country: One is that there isn't a political vehicle to articulate a radical critique, so that The Labour Party and now the current Labour Party and New Labour – and all of that – has never been a vehicle for a radical critique. Ralph Miliband, the father of the last leader of the labour party, Ed Miliband, was a Belgian-born political scientist and Marxist, who wrote some wonderful books including analysis of why the British Labour Party will never in his judgement be a vehicle for democratic socialism. And those books and their analysis have never seemed more apposite than now, in the second decade of the 21st century. So one side of the argument is there seems to be no political vehicle articulating a radical critique to which people can respond or at least listen.

And secondly, the media, of course. People's cultural environment, if we take the BBC, the main commercial broadcasters, the main national press – most of which is owned by a very small number of major, often overseas located, corporate dominant entrepreneurs – articulates a consistent critique of *anything* mildly radical or critical of the current dominant British political culture. So the question is sometimes asked: 'How is it even possible we ever had a Labour government, never mind something to the left, which is almost unthinkable'?

So part of the answer to your question is research that shows, how there is an absence of certain kinds of critical ideology – there is neither in political discourse nor in media discourse any kind of popular analysis, radical critical analysis, of currently prevailing political and economic conditions. So it's not surprising there is no mass movement around those critical analyses, because they don't exist.

Jernej: You already described yourself as a political economist – as well as other things of course – so what would you say are the main constituents of this approach to studying media and communication? What are its key aspects?

Peter: I think firstly – not in order of priority – it has a historical perspective. It understands the evolution of media and communications, certainly within the understanding of the evolution of capitalism. That's a necessary starting point.

Secondly, I would describe myself as *critical* political economist and by critical I don't just mean negative about current conditions, I mean critical in the sense of being related to *critique*, to having a theoretical understanding of that which is being analysed.

Thirdly, I think it has a moral dimension, it clearly has a sense of some things being better and some things being worse. It starts with a question about the lack of ability of popular discourse to evolve a critique for example. It starts with the enormous axiomatic understanding that the concentration of power, represented by current prevailing media conditions, is and ought to be open to challenge and has negative consequences. So there is certainly a moral dimension to critical political economy.

And perhaps fourthly, that it is axiomatically understood that there is a relationship – a problematic and complex relationship – between culture and material conditions. It's not a simple base-superstructure relationship, but nonetheless it's not one that says culture operates autonomously. Clearly an understanding of the material conditions, within which culture is produced, distributed and consumed, is necessary to understand how that culture works.

At least those four conditions are necessary parts of a critical political economy. Whether they sufficiently define it, I'm not sure, but it should at least manifest those.

Jernej: This is something I wanted to ask you earlier, when you were talking about materialism. What is your understanding of materialism, when you say that something is materialist? Does for example this matrix of base and superstructure still hold some relevance? You were writing on this issue together with Graham Murdock in the chapter that we recently translated into Slovene[1] …

Peter: Some relevance, yes. I mean, it's been much criticized and written about, of course. And I don't have a simple formula, which explains my own understanding of how the base and superstructure model should or does work, nor a simple definition of materialism. Except to say that, when I use that as a shorthand, that what I'm really saying – as I said about critical political economy – I cannot begin to understand or analyse the transmission or production of content of culture, without a necessary understanding of the material conditions. By material conditions I mean both market and workplace conditions, what are the prevailing distribution and control of resources.

Jernej: Basically relations of production?

Peter: Certainly relations of production, but not only relations of production. But without understanding those, I cannot begin to understand the content of British newspapers or the output of broadcasters and so on. I have to know something about the relations of production, but also the contextual market conditions, in order to begin to understand and explain what those cultural substances are and why they are the way they are.

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[1] We are referring to the text "Ideology and the Mass Media: The Question of Determination", which was first published as part of the edited volume *Ideology and Cultural Production* (edited by M. Barrett, P. Corrigan, A. Kuhn and J. Wolff), published in 1978 by Croom Helm in London.

Jernej: Political economy is often still described as being deterministic and reductionist. How do you answer, when someone says something like that to you …

Peter: I think it's a caricature, I never understood that critique. Well, I've understood it, but I've always felt it was utterly unrelated to actually existing critical political economy. To come back to biography, take the example of Graham Murdock and myself: Most of our research has always been about the complex relationships of production, how journalists work, how teachers work, how in my case people working in the welfare system operate. I had never read any worthwhile political economy of the media, which – as it were – *reads off* the content or substance of media products from an analysis of the mere material conditions, in a way that suggests it's determined. Determinant only in the sense of setting limits, but not determined.

Jernej: Relative autonomy?

Peter: Yeah, *relative* autonomy, but the argument that if you know the material conditions, you know the inevitable and necessary and determined output, is not a claim I have ever seen in any worthwhile political economy. It's a caricature.

Jernej: But it's pretty ironic that in a time when neoliberal doctrine has been so influential – I mean, basically everything has been integrated into the market, it really determines so many things – that there is still this caricature, as you say, about determinism and reductionism … When the market *really* is determining and reducing so many things to its very *particular* logic.

Peter: I think that's right and I think behind it is the remarkable success – ideologically – of the equation of free market with liberty. That is to say, if market conditions prevail, there is almost infinite choice for infinite people; and therefore what many democratic socialists would wish for – the infinite opportunity for people to live life as they would wish to – is best created by free market conditions, obviously bracketing out *completely* the nature of market conditions, which don't allow equal participation of or access to either knowledge or resources. As we saw in my lecture yesterday, if you look at the growing cost and price of being an informed citizen, with the growing unequal material resources people have to get those resources, then it's a very simple conclusion: the free market does not exist, it never has and it has never been less free than in most capitalist societies now. So the ideological triumph of neo-liberalism is precisely to make all of that critique invisible.

Sašo: How important do you think the Marxist approach is to critical political economy?

Peter: Well this is a big one, I had this discussion with Christian [Fuchs] of course … It depends on what you mean. If we're talking about classic Marxism, you know, as developed in Britain a century and a half ago, of course it needs to be adapted and evolved. And many people have worked hard to do that over many decades. I think that it is important and powerful and necessary work to be done. If you mean by 'Marxist work' work produced by Marx, *je ne suis pas marxiste*, you know the classic sort of notion that Marxism is not what Marx wrote, Marxism is what was created by people later, then it's a difficult question to answer. I think if we use Marxism as a kind of shorthand for political materialism, for a materialist understanding of cultural

production and consumption, for a critical political economy, then the answer to your question is: absolutely vital. If you mean something much narrower: Marxism as produced by Marx, then of course it needs to be hugely developed and evolved. But the primary insights – into the importance of the evolution of capitalism, the importance of the circulation of capital and so on – remain powerful and important. And I totally applaud the efforts of people like Christian Fuchs to develop and evolve and apply the insights of Marxism. But I think it's the development, the application and the evolution that's important. There isn't some – heaven forbid – some kind of necessity to sort of preserve intact an intellectual legacy from over century ago, that would be a mistake. We aren't conservationists; that would be a crazy thing to do.

Sašo: I think Friedrich Engels already warned that Marx's writing should not be used as a substitute for research.

Peter: Exactly.

Jernej: I'll be a little provocative and this is back to the previous question … In the seventies you would probably describe yourself as a Marxist, would you still be willing to say so?

Peter: I was always worried then about what that meant.

Jernej: Labelling?

Peter: Because to be a Marxist meant what? Did it mean you subscribe to some kind of particular political creed? I mean, obviously not. Marxist only then – with a small 'm' – in the sense of trying to construct something different from the prevailing, fairly anti-Marxist and certainly non-Marxist, growing media and cultural analysis. So the labels wouldn't worry me too much. I don't think I would describe myself as a Marxist, but only because I think the label is so imprecise. It's not that I would want to argue very clearly 'I'm not a Marxist because of one … two … three'. If it's a shorthand and imprecise label then I have no problems with it, but I think it is actually very imprecise and dynamic at any given moment … What do we mean by Marxism? It's – broadly speaking – an analysis, which makes certain kind of axiomatic assumptions about the importance of material condition, of the evolution of capitalism and so on. And I subscribe to all of those axioms. Whether they add up to something that then says 'Well that that means you're Marxist', I'm not sure that I know and I'm not sure I care either.

Jernej: Perhaps a question on the development of the political economy of communication approach. We could for example describe two important strands, the UK approach and the North American approach, with Dallas Smythe, Herbert Schiller and of course Vincent Mosco. Do you think there are any considerable differences between these two approaches that could be detected?

Peter: Not really, I think the people you've mentioned were in many ways more European in their thinking. They were isolated individuals and they still are. The critical political economy section of American media scholarship has always been about ten people whose names we could all name. I mean, they could all sit around – and they *did* (*laughter*) – sit around a table and have a coffee with each other. It's not a

body of work in the sense of being a block, there are particular prevailing currents of thought, but if you look at the work of let's say Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky and the work of Herb Schiller and the work of Vinnie Mosco, or in another mode Bob McChesney … These people were working quite separately from each other.

Herb is no longer with us, Dan Schiller has recently retired though he remains very active – his work I think is terrific, I'm a great fan and friend, but he's very different from Herb Schiller, his father, an enormously influential worker and writer. Herb – who was an economist by training, a finance economist really, a bit like Ed Herman – provided the kind of evidence that people found insufficient. If you look at the footnotes of Herb's work, 90% of them are clippings from the New York Times or whatever and it was a style of work that I thought was imaginative, inventive, influential and important, but very different from the kind of work done by Dan Schiller. Vincent Mosco is perhaps closer to the European style of work, not least because he's written so much about it as a historian of political economy. Janet Wasko, another Europhile, working mainly on the film industry, but although based in the Western United States, is very often in Europe.

But this begins to be almost sort of biographical, that's the nature of the beast, I think, of the critical political economy of media in America. I think between the three of us we can probably come up with about ten names and that almost is it. So they wouldn't claim to be a dominant or coherent single body of work. I don't think it's even been like that in the United States, more so in Europe, but only to a point.

Sašo: Would you say the researchers in Northern America were more focused on commercial media and the impact of advertising, did this situation have an influence? I mean in Europe, there are strong public service broadcasters, while in Northern America the environment is almost completely commercial, would you agree there was a difference in the focus because of that?

Peter: Yes, I suppose that is inevitable. Whereas public service broadcasters – not least the BBC – loom very large in our consciousness, public service broadcasting really doesn't exist in a significant, or a powerful and important way in the United States, therefore that particular approach was not enormously important to critical political economists. They're often more interested in what we talked about earlier: the relations of production. People like Vinnie Mosco, again, he is very interested in the labour unions and their role in the media production. That has often been a quite important aspect of the work of people working in the United States. They have invaluably added a historical perspective, understanding for example the declining and relatively unimportant role of public regulations, the FCC [The Federal Communications Commission], in not having an influence on communications that equivalent bodies have had in Europe. I think they are aware of this European media history as often being for them a sort of touchstone for the analysis of the political economy of media. Yes, the different historical conditions have had an impact on the way they analyse the media, for sure.

So there is a different emphasis and it is partly shaped by the conditions of American higher education, but partly by different conditions of the newspaper and broadcasting market, inevitably. And the film industry has been – I would say – more important to them, because obviously of the importance of Hollywood, than it has to European media researchers, including … There aren't many critical political economy analyses of the European film and cinema market, which is a shame, but it's understandable, whereas if you look at the United States some people have worked

on that. Inevitably, because Hollywood has been so prominent in their thinking and in their experience.

Jernej: I would like to end this interview with another a little provocative question.

Peter: (*laughter*)

Jernej: With all that's been said and what you said in your lecture yesterday, do you think we live in a democracy …

Peter: (*laughter*).

Jernej: …or not? Colin Crouch is for example writing about post-democracy and so on. What's your view on that?

Peter: Well, I don't think it's a question that can be answered by a yes or no. But if by democracy we mean society in which political, social and economic conditions are determined by the mass of the population making collective and informed decisions, then of course the answer would have to be no. And less and less so. Because we're back to the question I keep repeating, which is the one that continues to keep me awake at nights, which is: 'Why do people applaud and acclaim and support or – at the very best – at least not critique a society in which they are materially and culturally and politically the losers'? And I ask that question, because it is the case that we live in hugely unequal societies, which are in most of Western Europe and in United States becoming more unequal and yet the critique of that inequality, a challenge to it, is less and less evident. So if all of that is true, then it would suggest that if we live in a democracy, it's not a very efficient or effective one.

   The answer to your question, if you force me to say yes or no, is more likely to be 'No'. But if I'm allowed to be a little evasive, I would say 'By and large on the whole no and it could be a great deal more democratic than it is'.

Sašo: Can critical scholarship change this situation or contribute to changing it? And if it can, how?

Peter: Contribute, yes. Certainly not on its own. I think it is a necessary, but not sufficient condition. One of the things that worries me – to go back to an earlier question about changes in the, if you like, the political economy of higher education, in my own country especially, but I see it happening in many other countries too – is the containment and elimination of radical critique. And if universities are not places where radical critique is possible and allowed to be articulated and injected into public debate, then where is? I think in any democratic or civilized society, it's absolutely essential that critique is possible, free and made available to the mass of the population.

   So, number one: you need universities that can do, undertake, and wish to do radical critique. Number two: you need the means of communication, so that those critiques don't remain just within the universities. They need to be present in publicly consumed and popularly consumed communication vehicles. Now, neither of those conditions are fulfilled in most European societies and my worry is that they're getting worse rather than better. So the answer to your question is, 'Academic critique is an

important and necessary and at the moment rather threatened part of the critique of the way in which political conditions prevail'.

One thing I'm currently doing, if I'm allowed to just mention this: The European Communication Research and Education Association, ECREA, has – largely as a result of my persuasion, I have to say – set up a task force to look at changes in the funding and support of media research across Europe, in different countries. And the reason for doing that is because of the worry that in many countries, including international, research funding, for the example by the EU, of critical and theoretically informed political economy research is becoming less and less supported, with administrative, applied and uncritical research becoming more common, including industrial and pragmatic 'administrative' research. Now that's why we set up the task force, to see if that is true or is it not. My belief is that it is true and I'm attempting now, with the help of many others, including Professor Slavko Splichal here, to try and document that, and of course the purpose of documenting it is in order to say: 'It shouldn't be like this and we must try and do something about it'.

So, sorry, that's a very long answer to a very simple, but important question. Academic critique can be, and my worry is, is *not currently*, a necessary part of producing that widely available critique of the conditions in which we live.

Sašo: So if a young Marx said that the critique of religion is the prerequisite of all critique, could we say today that the critique of the existing university is the prerequisite of critique?

Peter: Yes, yes. I think there is a danger that without critique of, let's say the conditions of intellectual production, then intellectual production whether it's at universities or anywhere else, becomes very narrow, constrained and probably ideologically homogeneous. So there have to be conditions allowing for continuous and comprehensive critique of both higher education and indeed religion – and indeed any other form of ideological production.

triple C

"I can't imagine a radically reformed political economy that isn't built on a radically reformed public sphere." An interview with Dan Hind, advocate of media reform.

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Abstract: Interview with Dan Hind, advocate for media reform. We discuss the need to democratise journalism, his proposal to achieve this goal by giving the public direct control over the allocation of public subsidies in the form of public commissioning, possible objections and hurdles in the way of implementing it and his views on the pilot project of public commissioning by the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

Keywords: Media reform; Public Commissioning; Journalism Subsidies; Public sphere; Journalism.

Dan Hind worked in publishing from 1998 to 2009, during which time he focused on current affairs and contemporary history. In 2009 he left his job at Random House to write The Return of the Public (Verso 2010), a book about the politics of the media and the potential for radical reform. In it he proposes that public subsidies for journalism be distributed according to the model of public commissioning in which citizens would be given the power vote on the distribution of public funds for supporting journalism. He writes an occasional column for Al Jazeera and continues to argue for democratic media in his own country and overseas. In 2013 his proposals formed the basis of a journalism pilot run by the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

(Photo: Sašo Slaček Brlek)

We spoke in Ljubljana on April 10, 2014, when Dan Hind was a speaker at the roundtable *Crisis and rebirth of Journalism*[1], organised by the Slovenian Communication Association and the Institute for Labour Studies, and gave a public talk media reform[2] as part of a series of public talks organised by the Institute for Labour Studies.

Sašo: The idea of public commissioning is not well known. Perhaps you could start by explaining what we are talking about.

Dan: Sure. The very simple definition is that funds that are intended to support journalism in the public interest should be substantially controlled and directed by the same public who will ultimately depend on the journalistic product. As you know at the current time we have a kind of coalition of professional and owner groups who determine the news agenda in an essentially invisible process. It is secluded from public scrutiny and it stands in very marked contrast to the journalistic instinct to make everything public. The means by which they make things public are kept substantially obscure. The reasoning behind it is that we don't really have a clear way of establishing what the public is interested in at any given point in time and what it would be in the public's interest to be interested in. And public commissioning makes the news agenda much more unpredictable, makes the nature of the public much more difficult to predict. In a system like this it is not clear how people would organise - whether they would organise on class a basis, on a geographical basis, on the basis of age, shared lifestyle, gender, ethnicity and so on. It allows the public as an entity to form itself in as many ways as it wishes to. It gets away from the idea of a superior organising intelligence of some kind that determines how the news agenda should be formed. It also gets away from the idea that we sometimes have on the left that we know what is best for the public and they need to be enlightened by our superior understanding. If our ideas prosper in these conditions then they become part of a much wider common sense. If they don't then maybe we need to think again.

The process of enlightenment becomes something that is self-governing and unpredictable and therefore much more likely, it seems to me, to make meaningful connections with other radical progressive projects. If you think about the sites where deep structural, even revolutionary reform is necessary, these are areas which are substantially misunderstood or that are substantially invisible to the public. Only by making them both visible and objects of general deliberation do we have a hope of really attacking things like the structure of the financial system and the monetary system with which it is intertwined. Obviously a pressing concern throughout Europe is how to make the financial system obedient to social needs. Until the public has some means to discuss finance outside the terms that are set by political and financial elites serious proposals for reform are not going to emerge. It needs emphasising that serious reform will weaken political and financial elites and so will be resisted by them.

Sašo: This idea of media reform is obviously a part of a larger idea of reform of society.

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[1] See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYMtz_c-pNc (10. 3. 2017).
[2] See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7seHPXVT3MA (10. 3. 2017).

Dan: Yes. It is a very modest; it is a very minor tweak in the way that we distribute subsidies for journalism. It does not pose any overwhelming technical difficulties, particularly with new digital technologies. There are practical details that would have to be decided place by place. On one level it is a minor change to a particular part of the administration. But of course what it does is that it opens up a point at which you can begin to lever out much more far-reaching change.

If you imagine at the moment that the social and economic settlement is a sheer face. By digging out this crack of public participation in the creation of the public sphere you create an opportunity to then open up that fissure wider in a gradual process. A gradual process that might be quite quick ... but step by step you could see how people could start to get a better understanding of their conditions and start to formulate a shared understanding of what needs to be done.

So on the one hand I want to be very modest about what I am proposing. It is not difficult, it is not on any grand scale, but it applies pressure, it seems to me, at exactly the right point to begin to give energy and momentum to a whole range of progressive projects. Progressive projects that we can really at the moment imagine in outline, because they are projects that depend upon the active engagement of large numbers of people in the process of understanding, in the process of figuring things out for themselves. A financial system that is widely understood is a different financial system from one which is largely misunderstood or not known at all, not an object of thought. So even what we have, even the institutional arrangements we have will be transformed by a different mode of securing publicity.

So there is an ambition there to expand and transform citizenship and therefore to change the nature of the state and to bring under general comprehension those things which currently are shrouded in mystery. And they are shrouded in mystery for a very good reason, it seems to me; they are basically indefensible. You simply cannot make a reasonable defence of a financial system which is on the one hand able to secure massive private profits but on the other hand is in effect an arm of the state and enjoys a whole range of public guarantees and immunities. It is an indefensible mix of power and irresponsibility, which only survives for as long as it is not registered or as long as it is only a source of vague anxiety or dissatisfaction.

Sašo: Now this idea might seem very modest but at the same time I think it goes against the grain of both contemporary ideology and political practice. What we are witnessing is after all a trend towards important decisions being removed ever farther from the eyes of the public. And on the ideological level we are faced with the neoliberal idea that people decide on the marketplace, that they are voting with their money on what gets produced, and you will get basically the same result if you give them the vote. On the other hand, even sympathetic voices might argue that there are power structures around the current media system that have resources to communicate and to persuade and they will use those resources in a system of public commissioning to get the results they want. How would you answer such critiques?

Dan: To take the last one first, which I think is the most persuasive one: it is certainly true that those who are currently favoured in the system, those who are well organised in the current conjuncture are best placed to benefit from a system of public commissioning, at least at first. But what they produce will still be subject to public test. Let's say that those who want to protect the current system can control 99% of the expenditure. The 1% of expenditure on critical material will reach a general audience. If those who really want change are careful and self-critical about what they are

doing then they will be able to shift the terms of debate quite quickly. Imagine if 1% of mainstream news was coming from a genuinely critical perspective and the public could increase that amount over time.

Again, to use the analogy of a crack in the smooth surface of media-political communications, it may be that most of what is produced is a kind of concrete that covers up the fissure. But some of it won't be. The groups at the moment which are developing a revolutionary, reformist, progressive critique - however you describe it, but one which challenges the status quo at the moment - they are sufficiently organised to achieve some measure of publicity in a system like this. And if what they produce is superior in the sense that it is better able to take into account the relevant facts of any given situation then it will, I believe, begin to win public approval and support. The current arrangements need a constant effort of confabulation; they rely on claims that are simply and demonstrably untrue.

So I think we need to distinguish between what will happen in the first month or the first year of a system like this and what will happen over a longer period of time as the forms of description which currently predominate become subject to critical interrogation in fora that matter - because they are fora that are exposed to broad publics - and are found wanting. I think that the public sphere that we have is inadequate. It doesn't work and I think that if people were able to see the assumptions and the claims on which the status quo rests at the moment and interrogate it in a form that they couldn't really evade substantive debate, then the public sphere would be transformed. The descriptions that we have will be replaced with better ones. As I say, that is a gradual process, it is a process that happens over time and it is a process that won't be entirely to anyone's liking. No one is going to be satisfied with what the public sphere is at any given moment. There will always be things to argue about, always things to disagree about, but public debate will progressively get closer to reality, because ... well, fundamentally I am of the belief that people prefer truth to lies. Now, they may take refuge in lies, they may find lies consoling, they may build their identity around a lie in some instances, but in the end people prefer the truth. People prefer the truth because the truth makes them free and people want to be free.

That brings us to the other question; I mean the more straightforwardly elitist question: well, won't this just simply reproduce popular tastes? I think there is a useful analogy which can be made with food. If you present someone who is hungry with the choice between some junk food and some ingredients, they may well eat the junk food, because they are hungry. If you say to them: do you want to plan your meal tonight, do you want junk food or do you want to cook some food, then they may well make more healthy food and may make a better meal for themselves, because they are not hungry, they are not in that immediate sense of "I need something to eat" or "I need to know what's going on" or "I need some entertainment" or "I need something that is there". Yes, it's true that people have an appetite for celebrity and gossip and things like that and I don't think that will go away, just as you won't suddenly see the end of McDonald's or fast food joints. That is something that people sometimes want to eat. But it's an unacceptable leap from that to saying that all we want is junk all the time and that our appetite for junk is stable, that it won't be in any way affected by the kinds of decisions we can make that are forward-looking. I might switch on the radio when I want to know what is happening today, but I might have very different preoccupations if someone said to me: "Well, what do you want to know about in three months' time? What do you want to know about in the future?" Those are two very different things. And I think giving people the power to shape the public sphere will in time change the way they relate to the public sphere. They won't want to see an end-

less reproduction of the existing agenda. I remember that I was talking about this to some English academics and one of them was horrified and said: "They'll just want stories about Rihanna." A sort of reflex that burst out. And it is a very common idea that other people are stupid and slaves to fashion or slaves to sensation. But the market already provides that. Why would anyone take the opportunity to get more of that? It's not like it's going to go away. You are much more likely to see people using an opportunity like this to find out new things.

Does that ... oh yeah, the neoliberal thing! It does fly in the face of neoliberal governance, yes, that's kind of the point. What I would say about the daylight neoliberal argument is that the problem with democracy is that it is majoritarian, that it lends itself to a sort of mob rule. And we have to take important decisions like monetary policy away from the unruly public, who are slaves to their passions and are fools and so on, easily lead, and we have to put it in a sequestered space, where experts can make decisions for the public good and that's something that you see in central bank structures, most notably you see it in Brussels. The European project is about saying: "The public is a problem; we can get much more done if we are secluded from them and are able to operate in a technocratic fashion, because of the dangers of populism, because of the dangers of majoritarian tyranny and so on." Well, I am not arguing for majoritarian tyranny. I am not even arguing for a majoritarian public sphere. Quite the contrary, I am arguing for a massively pluralist public sphere, where in theory every individual could start developing their own account of a social reality. The results of public commissioning would not be in any way some sort of political mandate. It would be the basis on which you make further political decisions, hopefully on the basis of better information. So the neoliberals, to the extent that they are sincere, have nothing to fear from public commissioning. There is nothing wrong with it, right? It's just something that they can learn to live with. Of course, they might not be entirely sincere. This is one of the interesting topics that public commissioning could explore.

Sašo: I believe the comparison with another model for media reform invites itself. Robert McChesney has also been advocating for media reform and his proposal of a voucher system has managed to mobilise quite a strong movement in the US. How does your proposal differ from his and why do you think we need this kind of reform and not the one McChesney is proposing?

Dan: Well firstly, I would be very happy to see McChesney's model adopted. It's much, much better than what we have now. The difference between where he and I start may be that I come from a country with quite a strong unitary state broadcaster and America has a tradition of weaker state broadcasting, although, as McChesney has shown, their commercial near monopolies, the big TV networks, function as something like an arm of the state in some ways.

It's important to more than strengthen alternative publications, which I think a voucher system would do; undoubtedly it would channel more money towards journalistic projects which are outside the mainstream, and that would be very welcome. But I'm eager that we develop a media system where the mainstream itself - that is to say what we think of now as the broadcast system, but which will be digitised over time - the main avenues of information and analysis - become sensitive to public decision-making, decision-making by organising publics.

What I propose would benefit non-mainstream publications, but it would also have the potential to create more institutions, to empower individual journalists, groups of

journalists, who aren't necessarily at the outset organised as publishing operations. It wouldn't give more money to editors to then make their own decisions in the same sort of professional seclusion that they enjoy now. Rather, it would open up editorial decision-making to the public in a more direct way and the public would be able to assess the use made of public money more easily.

Implicit in public commissioning is the notion that not only is information-gathering to be funded democratically but that some mechanism exists whereby information that is gathered and is deemed interesting can be pushed into the mainstream by another round of public decision-making.

Because in the end it would be nice if the progressive media were stronger and had more money, it would have important knock-on effects, but what is crucial, it seems to me, is that new kinds of information, new ways of conceiving of the social become available to people who wouldn't pick up a copy of the Nation, or watch Democracy Now!, or whatever, who don't engage with these progressive media, because they've got busy lives, they work hard, they've got families to raise, and actually their opportunities to engage with information are quite constrained. Most of us have time pressures and so the contents of the nightly news bulletin, and increasingly the news stories that feature prominently on Facebook feeds, that will set the terms of political debate. But you know, as I say, what I am proposing would certainly strengthen the sector that he wants to strengthen.

His proposal is much neater. It's much more difficult in a way to pick holes in it, because there's a certain kind of entity that would be eligible for funding, whereas I'm making a proposal for a much more open-ended system; all citizens would all be in a position to seek funding for their projects. Lots of people who don't have a business.

Sašo: The BBC is often thought of as a model of public service broadcasting, but on the other hand there are critiques, I am thinking for example about Stuart Hall, who has been pointing out the class and racial bias of the BBC. Even studies that were commissioned by the BBC itself showed that there is an overwhelming reliance on official sources to the detriment of alternative voices. What is the attitude towards this model institution in the UK and is there a possibility to introduce something new, something more democratic through critique.

Dan: Well, the reason BBC has the form and is as large an operation as it is in terms of its budget is that it plays a very important role in maintaining the status quo. It is a conservative institution in the very broad sense. Part of its great strength, it seems to me, is that it manages to enlist progressive and even radical opinion in its defence. Because the idea is that if we question the BBC, if we criticise the BBC, we somehow give comfort to its sabre-tooth enemies in the private media sector.

In terms of the general attitude I think the News International scandal has slightly lifted the taboo or the prohibitions on criticising the BBC. The BBC is coming up for a charter renewal in 2017, which will be a point of some debate about what the BBC is for and how it might be structured. The BBC wants to have an argument, where it embodies public service values and resists the encroachment of market values. I would like to have an argument between the BBC as an imperial institution that keeps the natives happy and the possibility that the BBC is a democratic institution, which allows the people who live in England and Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom to discover what is going on collectively and to decide what to do about it.

It is a well-resourced public service broadcaster; it has enormous amounts of intellect and talent within it. I respect many of the individuals who work for the BBC, but I

think at the moment its governing structure means that it operates as a defence of the established order. The established order doesn't work and needs to be changed and so I would argue that part of that change would have to encompass the structure of the BBC.

Sašo: At this moment we are going through a period of fundamental change in the way social communication and the flows of information work. Ad supported media are in crisis, they have problems monetising their audience, journalists are faced with mass layoffs and precarisation of working conditions, with the transfer to digital we are witnessing fragmentation of audiences, also rising reliance on the labour of audiences and so on. What does this mean for the fight for media reform? Would you say it opens up an opportunity or is it rather more of a threat now that a lot of media organisations are struggling to survive and are trying to cut costs, to find new ways to commercialise their content and their audiences?

Dan: I think it's a very mixed picture. Journalistic operations that are successful in the current climate - and by successful I mean prestigious more than profitable, because there are "successful" journalistic projects, which are losing a lot of money at the moment - but these successful institutions will fight very hard, I think, to retain their editorial initiative, to keep editorial decision-making away from the eventual consumers. This is the power and the mystique of the editor. Part of what I want to expose to the daylight is the kind of decision-making that goes on in editorial meetings. As long as they've still got the lights on I think the major media are going to be very, very resistant to this kind of approach, because it essentially demystifies them. It takes away their power. What newspapers don't publish is at least as important as what they do publish.

The rising precariousness in the industry does mean, I think, that young people are leaving university, wanting to get jobs in the media, and realising that then they're going to have to work for free or they're going to have to freelance in very precarious conditions to even scrape a living at all. So at that point, it seems to me, the question does arise: well, we do think journalism is a public good and we do spend money on journalism, so why is so little of it finding its way to journalists? So I think that journalists starting out and journalists mid-career as well, who realise that they're not as protected as they thought they were, will gradually become more sympathetic to these kinds of ideas because it funds them to do what they want to do in journalism. And if it means that they have a different boss, the public rather than the boss that is their superior in a hierarchical organisation, then so be it. A boss is a boss.

But, like I say, it's a mixed picture. I don't see the established media reacting to the crisis they're in by saying: "All right, how do we open this process up to our readers, to our viewers?" They're very reluctant to have that conversation, very reluctant to entertain that possibility. It is not what they got into journalism to do.

Sašo: Well, some are claiming that this is happening with web 2.0, user comments and so on.

Dan: Yeah. I think that is interesting in that it is participation of a kind that they're comfortable with. And it is participation of a kind that is not very effective. It doesn't work because it is governed really by the need that they feel to keep control. You don't want to make comments after an article is published; you want to make comments before it is researched. Lots of people have lots of interesting things to say,

but most of the time what you see under articles are just expressions of irritation. I mean, they're not very interesting.

The web is a whole other area, isn't it, in that it is one which has profited vastly from a rhetoric of the voluntary, the idea that we can all do this just in our own time and we don't need to be paid. We can produce all this content and isn't it fantastic. And there's been an enormous explosion, as it were, of free labour online. I don't think it's any kind of basis on which to try and develop a functioning public sphere. Of course as citizens we have important information and of course we will benefit, I think, from things like Twitter that allow us, as it were, to be micro-publishers. Lots of people are using these technologies in interesting and thoughtful ways. But if you want to do this kind of thing well, then in the end you need money. You need money to pay for your broadband, you need money to pay for food, you need money to buy the time that you need to become better informed about things.

So there is going to be a division of labour in the way that we produce and consume socially relevant information and that's fine. The key question is: who's the boss. Who's in charge? Who gets to say yes or no? And who gets to say whether something is worth pursuing further? At the moment a tiny number of people have that power and they have their own preoccupations, some of which they're conscious of, but many of them they're simply not aware of. There were some statistics on the number of times that economic inequality was mentioned in the US media or the US broadcast media between 2000 and 2007. And I think it was like a half a dozen times in the entirety of that coverage that it was even noticed, because the people who were producing that news agenda were incredibly well insulated against the rising inequality around them. I don't think they were consciously censoring this information. Often they wouldn't have been. It just wouldn't have occurred to them that it was a problem. We know that there is an enormous class bias in these kinds of institutions, particularly to the extent that they're successful.

Sašo: What is your plan to get these ideas, these plans for reform into practice?

Dan: There's very little I can do as an individual. All I can do is note and try and publicise the efforts that people are making to bring the media under some sort of democratic regime. I've written down what I think and I've explained my reasoning as best I can and that's there. I mean it's the best summation that I was capable of making at the time. It's really now I think for people who are involved in real struggles, in the real political space, to decide whether this idea is useful to their immediate objectives. And more importantly: is it going to contribute to the kind of world they want to see. I can't imagine a radically reformed political economy that isn't built on a radically reformed public sphere, that isn't built on a radically different set of generally accepted descriptions. It seems to me that it is prior to any kind of hope we might have for a reasonably orderly transition to an economy that is reasonably just, reasonably sustainable and not as obviously pathological as the one we have now. But as I say, what I can practically do now, the most I can do now really is to publicise the efforts that people are making to try and make this a reality.

Sašo: In Croatia a pilot project of public commissioning has been successfully implemented. We talked about it yesterday on the roundtable. How do you judge that experiment?

Doing anything for the first time is always incredibly difficult and my overwhelming relief is that it has happened. And it has happened in a way that was well organised, that was sensible, and that has had some useful outcomes. It's clear that the public were interested in commissioning things that were not being well covered in the mainstream. It took place on a relatively small scale, but it shows that a lot of the, as it were, a priori critiques are baseless. They are without foundation. People are interested about learning about new things and they will give their support to projects that promise to tell them things they didn't know about, about under-described aspects of reality. My hope is that it's the first of many experiments and that each one will learn from the ones before and that gradually this will cease to be an exotic idea. It will become boring common sense and people will wonder why there was such resistance to it.

But it seems to me to be a perfectly unobjectionable idea, so we should just carry on doing it. And that means that we have to be ambitious; we have to get control of public funds and make them available to the public, so that citizens can fund the kinds of journalism they feel they need.