

學術對談

## 社會轉型中的媒介研究： 資本主義、共產主義與媒體

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翻譯、編校：徐來



柯林·斯巴克斯教授  
(Prof. Colin Sparks)

「我常常發現，跟文化研究學者在一起時，我是一名傳播政治經濟學者；與傳播政治經濟學者在一起時，我又是一名文化研究學者；社會科學家聚集的地方，我成了人文學者；人文學者聚首之處，我又成為社會科學家。我不認為我可以被非常恰當地安放在某個學術框架類型當中。一些我寫的東西帶有很明顯的文化研究傳統，另一些則體現出社會科學的政治經濟學研究傳統。為什麼我非得歸屬於某一個學派呢？為什麼我得不是在這個學派中就得在那個學派中呢？它們僅僅只是看待社會現實的不同方式而已。」

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## **Media Studies in Transitional Societies: Capitalism, Communism and Media**

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### **Abstract**

In 1998, Colin Sparks published his famous work “Capitalism, Communism and the Mass Media”, which provided an important theoretical framework for the field of the political economy of communication. It has garnered worldwide attention till now. In this interview, Professor Sparks shared his intellectual experience especially his personal research transition from Cultural Studies following Stuart Hall to the study of political economy of communication, as well as his research interest and observations of what had happened in transitional societies such as the Central and Eastern Europe, Soviet Union and now, China. Revisiting to the theoretical framework he put forward 16 years ago, he had updated his understanding especially on the case of China and tried to develop a more general theoretical framework. Professor Sparks calls for the Chinese media researchers to pay more attention to the non-political aspects of Chinese journalism and ordinary Chinese journalists, which he thinks are much closer to the social changes taken place in China over the last 30 years and Chinese people’s real life.

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## 柯林·斯巴克斯教授簡介

柯林·斯巴克斯 (Colin Sparks)，早年於英國伯明翰大學當代文化研究中心獲得博士學位，1974–2011年執教於英國威斯敏斯特大學，任該校媒體、藝術與設計學院教授、傳播與媒體研究所所長。2011年起出任香港浸會大學傳理學院講座教授，兼傳播與媒介研究中心主任。

斯巴克斯教授多年來致力於批判立場的媒介研究，主要研究領域為媒體與民主化、媒介的全球化、互聯網對大眾媒介的影響等，研究建樹蜚聲國際。憑藉對社會變遷中的媒介角色自始至終的興趣，他長期致力於對中東歐地區的後共產主義國家、以及發展中的中國社會的學術研究。他是學術期刊《媒體、文化與社會》(*Media, Culture and Society*)的創刊人之一，也是該刊長期活躍的編委會成員。

斯巴克斯教授的著作包括《報業傳說：媒體注視下的全球化爭論》、《共產主義、資本主義和大眾媒介》、《全球化、社會發展與大眾媒體》、《21世紀的記者》、《媒介與大眾文化》等。

C: Colin Sparks

W: 王海燕

H: 黃煜

**W:** 作為媒介研究領域的重量級人物，您的每一本著作都引起了學界的廣泛關注，在《共產主義、資本主義和大眾媒介》(1998)這本書中，您詳述了上個世紀80年代末、90年代初的東歐社會變遷對媒介體系的影響。那時隨著前蘇聯陣營的解體，人們開始熱衷於談論媒體轉型的前景，但許多學者並未真正將自己全心投入到此類研究中。那麼我的第一個問題是，您對中、東歐國家的研究興趣是如何產生的？

**C:** 我想這個問題可以有兩個答案：長話短說和說來話長。簡短的概括，就是我的學術訓練生涯使我堅信，知識份子的使命就是投身到同時代的大事件中。顯然，東歐巨變是歐洲歷史、乃至世界歷史的一個重要轉捩點：它結束了美蘇兩國長期存在的劍拔弩張的

軍備競賽狀態，幻滅了千萬人魂牽夢縈的共產主義烏托邦夢想，給予西方國家的部分左派人士當頭一擊，政權坍塌後的塵埃在世界各處飄遊迴盪。它的影響至今存在。不久前我去南京參加會議，發現諸如來自北大、復旦的一些新聞學者，還很熱衷於抨擊顏色革命的理念，仍在討論蘇聯解體所帶來的社會動亂。這顯然仍是中國精英知識份子們一個鮮活的議題。在我看來，任何知識分子對這一歷史事件的淡然與漠視，都是不負責任的表現。

**W:** 那麼長一點的答案呢？

**C:** 我一直對中東歐抱有濃厚的興趣。這其中部分源於知識分子與政治的關聯——每一個左翼知識份子都需要去弄明白俄國革命所帶來的實際後果是什麼。另一部分也源於我的個人經歷。我青年時期最不光彩的一段記憶是，我曾經從事過走私，世界上可能再也沒有比我更最糟糕的走私者。

**W:** 走私？

**C:** 是的。當時有一名捷克的政治異見者，揚·卡萬 (Jan Kavan)，在 1968 年流亡到倫敦。後來他開始幹走私的事，將包括禁書、老式打字機等在內的走私品從倫敦運送到當時仍在蘇聯管制下的捷克斯洛伐克境內。一些像我這樣的西方反史達林主義左派青年被他吸引，於是替他做運送走私品的事情。我所經歷的那次，簡直是一場災難性的、失敗的旅程，我們駕駛一輛老舊的露營車，途中一次又一次地拋錨，整個過程我的神經高度緊張，完全忘了我們是如何躲避搜捕的。但那一次的冒險經歷卻讓我留下了對這個共產主義國家非常生動的記憶，對中東歐開始有了興趣。

**W:** 您是在不同的社會背景、語言、文化等種種差異之下做研究，是否遭遇許多困難？

**C:** 困難的確存在。因為我不懂捷克語，不懂波蘭語，不懂俄語，當然更是對匈牙利語一竅不通。幸運的是我有一群非常優秀的合作夥伴。安娜·芮丁 (Anna Reading) 現任英國倫敦大學國王學院文化、傳媒與創意產業系的系主任，曾與我合作研究，她精通波蘭語。你手中的這本書就是我與她合著的。還有其他的合作者，像後來的卡洛爾·雅格波奇 (Karol Jakubowicz)，能說一口漂亮的英

語。所以研究的可能性是存在的，至少能夠把握整體研究的動態發展節奏與方向。顯然，到了中國，這樣的問題即將又要重演，或許你隨後就會問我關於中國的問題。我想表達的是，我並非真的去這些國家「做」學術研究，因為我首先就過不了語言這一關。對此我更願意換一種說法，即我只是有興趣研究這些國家並將工作放在這上面。我不能聲稱研究了一手資料，我無法在採訪中與受訪者用他們的母語面對面交流，種種不便，給我的寫作帶來了非常嚴格的限制。我想我在查看一手資料時唯一表現出非常自信的異國他鄉是南非，在那裡我可以使用該國十一種本土語言中的一種——英語——暢所欲言。而在任何其他地方，我只能借助他者。由此所帶來的限制是客觀存在的，我猜它幾乎無一例外的存在於任何雄心勃勃的比較研究案例當中。只有極少數人有那樣的語言天賦，可以做到在一系列國家進行大規模的原創性研究。我生為一名英國人，天生裝備不良，但我還是認為這是每個跨境研究者都或多或少會面臨的問題。

- H:** 在您所研究的媒體社會變遷領域，您提出了一個非常有趣的理論分析框架。我記得當時充斥著各種不同的流派學說，研究媒體從共產主義國家到後共產主義國家轉化。而您獨樹一幟的觀點是，這種轉型是一種延續，而非革命或深沉的變革。這一觀點在當時顯得有趣且富有啟發性。您能從這個角度出發，對您的理論作一個概括嗎？並且，最終這一理論觀點又是如何與中國的媒體轉型聯繫起來的呢？
- C:** 對此我不會自謙，也自認為該理論的確有趣。我想我的觀點基本上是正確的。當我剛開始在社會變遷領域起步時，那時有三大基本觀點雄踞該領域。一個主導觀點是：一切都發生了變化。這一觀點由學者法蘭西斯·福山 (Francis Fukuyama) 闡述，即自由民主沒有替代品。另外，以拉爾夫·米利班德 (Ralph Miliband) 為代表的左翼學者也提出，資本主義的重建將意味著新的非民主政權的出現。兩派的共同觀點是，新秩序迥然不同於舊秩序：人們的政治、社會、經濟生活在1989年後已被徹底改變。最後一種觀點則是由保羅·皮可尼 (Paul Piccone) 和環繞在哲學雜誌 *Telos* 周圍的

一些學者提出：幾乎事事如常，工人階級已經被統治精英欺騙，後者仍舊牢牢掌控著社會生活的方方面面。無論從理論上，還是經驗上，我不認為所有這些觀點圓滿解答了發生的問題。顯然情況已經起了變化，一些很基本的社會結構發生了改變：1989年以前，這些都是一黨專制國家；1989年後，他們有了多黨政治。很明顯這就是一場迅速的政治轉型；事實上，政治革命也不是沒有發生過。然而，當你把目光聚焦在這些國家的社會結構，看得再深入些，你會發現那些掌握著國家經濟命脈的人，從曾經穿著極不合身的西裝、駕駛特拉貝特 (Trabant, 前東德汽車品牌) 的共產黨官員，到現在轉身一變成為身著阿瑪尼西裝、駕駛寶馬汽車的資本家，手上還多了手機。同樣的人，順利實現了從舊秩序下的官僚階層到新秩序中的資本新貴的個人轉變。去到警隊，你會發現仍舊是同樣的人在領導著警員；放眼大學，依然是同一批人在管理大學；留神廣播電台，還是那樣的人在領導廣播電台。我記得Ellen Mickiewicz曾經報導過一篇新聞，你能想像1991年蘇聯解體之後蘇聯廣播電台有多少工作人員因此而被解僱？結果讓人大跌眼鏡：3個。在我看來這是非常重要的：這些社會由共產黨的一黨專政，到出現多黨競爭的局面，民主、社會都得到了不同程度的發展，只是卻仍舊還是原先的那一幫人在發號施令。Slavko Splichal (斯洛文尼亞傳播學者) 曾經告訴我說，他眼中最大的不同是，在過去，他們稱他為「教授同志」，在新的世界裡，他們稱他為「教授」。儘管曾有過一場政治革命，但革命的暴風雨過後，社會的基本結構完好無損。

- H:** 但有些人反駁說這裡存在著一個典型的行動者與結構的問題。不同的社會制度下，依舊是同樣的人在掌權，您如何看待？行動者新的結構下是無足輕重還是有所不同？
- C:** 這就涉及到理論問題的核心，讓我無論對於歐洲共產主義的命運，還是中華人民共和國的今天，都深感興趣。遺憾的是，我需要用一些跟媒體毫無關聯的抽象的術語、花較長時間來回答你的這個問題。從根本上說，答案取決於你看問題的角度，即是將蘇維埃社會主義共和國聯盟、或是毛澤東時代的中國，歸為哪一

類的社會制度。如果你把它們看作是社會主義國家，那麼顯然它們出現了從社會主義到資本主義的經濟體制的轉變。但我會持不同意見。我認為無論是中國還是蘇聯，沒有一個國家真正實現了人民的大多數統治。此類社會，從本質意義上而言，曾經是、現在仍然是獨裁社會。國家權力的把持者，不是人民，不是農民，不是勞動階級，也不是任何類似的階級，而是權力屬於「官僚權貴階層」——共產黨的領導人物。今天中國的情形也一樣，甚至我們可以使用相同的術語，去套用到掌權者頭上。

在蘇聯，權力由官僚權貴階層把持，而社會發展的根本動力，不在於提高人民的生活質量，而是力求在一個自認為充滿敵意的世界中，實現國家的自給自足。大量人力物力，投入到既非增產糧食、又非改善居民住房、更非加強國民教育上，而是如石投深淵般投入到大規模戰爭武器的研發生產中。蘇聯試圖在軍備上超越美國，但數據顯示美國當時的經濟實力起碼是蘇聯的四倍。沒人知道確切的數字，因為雙方提供的數據都不足以全信。但美國的經濟實力的確雄厚得多，它只需要支出GDP的8-10%到諸如坦克、潛艇和炸彈的生產上去。蘇聯誓與美國抗衡，為此付出的代價則是他們投入到武器上的費用不再是國家GDP的8-10%，而是30%乃至40%。可以想像，一旦把錢投在坦克上，醫院建設費用就得縮水；把錢投到導彈上，學校教育支出就需要緊縮……蘇聯咬牙努力試圖趕超美國，試圖通過軍備競賽與之抗衡，為此他們苦苦支撐了近半個世紀，付出了巨大的代價。

在我看來，這樣的社會就是資本主義社會，如同任何其他資本主義社會一樣，社會的驅動力來自原始資本積累的需求。只不過它們並非美國那樣的資本主義社會：美國的權力掌握在資本的個體擁有者手中，而在蘇聯，國家權力由官僚階層集體掌握。在中歐和東歐，我所見到的那些國家所經歷的社會轉型，由過去權力在掌握工廠、銀行、礦山等國家經濟命脈的權貴階層集體手中，到如今被逐漸轉移到個人手中，這些個人被稱為「寡頭」。這些「寡頭」往往最初處於權貴階層的底層、或是作為同盟者，故而那些國家現今的資本主義又被叫做「共青團資本主義」(Komsomol

capitalism，在俄羅斯，Komsomol即共青團)。但無疑這些國家經歷了由國家資本主義向個人資本主義的轉變。在上個世紀90年代初，我曾認為這種轉變有且只會在一種情況下發生，即政治革命的爆發。在我看來，當時的共產黨沒有能力主持由計劃經濟向市場經濟的順利過渡，沒有能力引導由官僚集團集體控制到少數個人掌權的社會轉型，唯一的解決方法必須是來一場痛痛快快的突破、一場政治革命。在俄羅斯，俄共與蘇共事實上已被同時取締；在其他歐洲社會主義國家，共產黨轉型為社會民主黨派，目光所到之處共產黨權力皆被摧毀。這也是當時我所認為的轉變的唯一途徑，無論是從國家資本主義到個人資本主義，從共產獨裁到民主資本主義，亦或是像中亞地區那樣成為資產階級專政的國家。

從社會學角度來看，所有的證據都表明我關於「誰是舊的統治階級和誰將是新的統治階級」的論斷是對的。社會精英連續出現，當然會有一些變化。精英階層，尤其是政治精英，有了新成員的加入。揚·卡萬，我之前提到的那位在倫敦的政治異見者，最後擔任了捷克共和國的副總理兼外交部長，並積極推動捷克加入了北約。相比之下，經濟精英、大學精英以及媒體精英等的成員變化則不大。我的錯誤部分，是提出了從計劃經濟向市場經濟轉變的唯一途徑是政治革命；究其原因，則是在兩萬里之外的中國。這個國家正經歷著從官僚機構高層集體控制的計劃經濟向個體掌控經濟力量的市場經濟的轉變歷程，市場成為驅動大多數社會選擇的第一要素。黨的領導人本身並沒有全部都成為資本家，但他們的妻子、兒女、兄弟、姐妹，以及他們的堂兄弟、他們的侄子、他們的朋友親戚卻早已完成了角色的轉換。所有的這一切都發生了，卻並沒有削弱中共領導集體的政治權力。

- H:** 有一個非常明顯但您還未談及的問題——即意識形態。因為在列寧及史達林模式下的共產主義社會，意識形態整合正是其顯著特點。所以，當您的研究失掉對這一部分問題的討論，您是否覺得於此有一些不太站得住腳，需要對此加以辯護？
- C:** 我並不認為到了1991年，蘇聯國內的那些人還真的相信馬克思主義或列寧主義。我認為它已經成為一種國教。這一套「教宗」理念

甚至不能再使統治精英的統治合法化。當今中國的統治精英已不再倚重馬克思主義為其政權合法化服務了。

- H:** 關鍵在於，意識形態實際上不僅起到使政權合法化的國教的作用，也是執政合法化的主要來源。毫無疑問的是，首先，意識形態是一種管理工具；其次，它是關於這個國家應該如何、以及為何被這樣治理的合法性來源。因此假如您要試圖區分兩種不同的社會制度類型，須非常謹慎。試問，當意識形態在諸如蘇聯和東歐國家遭遇煙消雲散，什麼才是區分社會在個人層面以及組織層面不同的因素？
- C:** 中國與蘇聯之間的一個巨大差異在於，中國共產黨成功地維繫了大量青年才俊作為新鮮血液輸入。你會遇到許多精力充沛的年輕人，其中不乏才華橫溢、極具能力者，他們都是中共黨員。而在歐洲，共產黨員都是些垂垂老者。為何中國共產黨能夠成功做到這點呢？因為俄羅斯最終選擇了製造大炮而中國選擇了發展經濟，中共取得了世界歷史上最大的人類發展的成就，使六億中國人擺脫了絕對貧困。把中國和印度這兩個發展起步時間大致相同、規模水準大致相當的國家放在一起比較，包括兒童健康、貧困指數、婦女識字率程度、國民教育水準等在類的各項資料顯示，中國領先於印度。這就是為何在中國人們仍然會選擇加入共產黨——不僅是因為它可以使你獲得更好的工作，而且看上去它所承載的這種意識形態帶來了一個強大的中國。但是，我想說的是，看看中國若干年來高速發展所付出的代價：看看那些仍在賤賣自己血汗的農民；看看那些從富士康宿舍屋頂縱身跳下的工人；看看那些政策執行的尋租代價；看看如今我們身處的艱於呼吸的渾濁空氣……中國人為這樣的發展成就付出了極大的代價。但無論如何，日常生活的改善是實實在在的。相較蘇聯製造了強大的坦克卻沒有人看得到未來的希望，中國沒有那麼多的坦克，但人們認為他們的生活可以變得更好。
- W:** 那麼您是否認為中國當下發生的一切仍能用馬克思主義的分析框架進行解釋？
- C:** 你是指官方的馬克思主義框架還是我的馬克思主義框架？(笑)馬

克思主義的一個核心概念是解放工人階級是工人階級的自發行為。換句話說，你不能硬來，人們必須自己做出選擇與行動。這是馬克思主義的本質內容。回顧1949年，顯然這是一場偉大的革命，但它是否是一場工人階級的革命？解放軍佔領城市後，一些工人接管工廠、銀行及其他行業，卻被告知他們還是得回工廠工作。因此，1949年新中國的建立是一場革命，但絕對不是工人階級的革命。解放軍基本上是像毛澤東、鄧小平、周恩來這樣的知識份子領導下的農民軍隊。解放軍的勝利當然不是工人階級的革命勝利。因此，在中華人民共和國誕生的那一刻，馬克思主義的基本原理就已經缺席，而在這之後中國發生的一切，更是讓中國官方所推崇的馬克思主義與馬克思原本的理念越來越遠。

- H:** 在這本書(指《共產主義、資本主義和大眾媒體》)出版16年後，您有什麼新的見解或對社會變遷部分的理論更新分享給大家？
- C:** 我想我對變化的根本性質的把握是正確的，即社會精英的連續性。這個理論概括了一整套業已發生的不同的社會變革。它可以延伸至上個世紀70年代歐洲法西斯主義的破產、拉丁美洲獨裁政權的倒台，以及南非種族隔離制度的結束。所有這些大事件都或多或少打上了精英統治連續性的標記。在我看來，精英連續性是最有力的解釋工具之一，去解釋過去半個世紀世界舞台上所發生的事情。其中，媒介的變化只涉及到一小部分，但這一部分我今天需要詳述，我想這也是你們此次訪談的目的之一。書中一個非常嚴重的錯誤，即我剛剛所提到的，中國的案例反駁了我從黨派集體掌權到權力收歸個人需要革命催化的觀點。中國共產黨成功地完成了從資本集體擁有到分歸若干大的私營業主的社會轉型，這證實了我的觀點是錯誤的，說明了從計劃經濟轉變為市場經濟的過程中，革命並非必需。
- W:** 您早年受訓於英國文化研究重鎮——伯明翰大學的當代文化研究中心，同時，您還是斯圖亞特·霍爾(Stuart Hall)的學生，他在文化研究學上享有大師級別的聲譽，但您後來所涉足的研究方向卻與文化研究相去甚遠。究竟是什麼吸引著您促成這一轉變？
- C:** 「我是怎樣誤打誤撞進文化研究領域的呢？」答案是，我一開始是

文學理論學者，深受匈牙利著名馬克思主義批評家盧卡奇(Georg Lukács)，以及他的羅馬尼亞追隨者呂西安·戈德曼(Lucien Goldman)的影響。我的大學哲學老師梅紮羅斯(Itsván Mézarós)曾是盧卡奇的學生，所以你可以想見我所受到的那一支馬克思主義流派的強烈影響。後來我跟隨特里·伊格爾頓(Terry Eagleton)開始了我的博士研究，他是一位知名的文學理論家，但我研究進展不大。於是特里對我說：「你為什麼不去伯明翰，和那個叫斯圖亞特·霍爾的家伙一起工作呢？同他談談，你會找到一些樂子。」所以，沒有多想，我就這樣去了伯明翰，學起了文化研究。從哲學觀點來說，伯明翰並不比牛津好多少，引導斯圖亞特的主流思想是結構主義馬克思主義，這是當時西方最具影響力的馬克思主義研究流派。在那裡，我處於一個少數派的位置，基本上仍舊是一個文學理論學者，但我想伯明翰的確讓我不再將文化看作是簡單的文學作品。我是在那吸取了雷蒙·威廉斯(Raymond Williams)的著名論點，即文化是大眾的。

因此，文化研究的學派色彩對我的影響非常淡。我常常發現，跟文化研究學者在一起時，我是一名傳播政治經濟學者；與傳播政治經濟學者在一起時，我又是一名文化研究學者；社會科學家聚集的地方，我成了人文學者；人文學者聚首之處，我又變成了社會科學家。我不認為我可以被非常恰當地安放在某個學術框架類型當中。我寫的一些東西帶有很明顯的文化研究傳統，另一些，我會說，則體現出社會科學的政治經濟學研究傳統。為什麼我非得歸屬於某一個學派呢？為什麼我得不是在這個學派中就在那個學派中呢？它們僅僅只是看待社會現實的不同方式而已。一些政治經濟學家有讓我崩潰過嗎？是的，有。一些文化研究學者有把我逼瘋過嗎？是的，有。僅此而已。

- H:** 您的博士學位是在斯圖亞特·霍爾的指導下完成的，一定是因為他的某些學術靈感激勵了您？還是您在那時已經覺得文化研究對您來說趨於膚淺，不足以解釋種種？抑或您的頭腦中已有其他安排，但又不得不將錯誤繼續下去？
- C:** 我覺得在我離開伯明翰之後，在伯明翰所聞對我影響更深。如果

你留意《文化研究工作文稿》(*Working Papers in Cultural Studies*)，你會發現我那時的作品，我關於盧卡奇的論述，和斯圖爾特·霍爾的對他的論述很不同。斯圖爾特著名的「編碼—解碼」模式是據羅蘭·巴特(Roland Barthes)的理論來的，此後又有阿爾都塞(Louis Althusser)的「最後決定論」的影響。如你所知，阿爾都塞對「表現的總體性」(expressive totality)持強烈的批評意見，而盧卡奇則是這個觀點最著名的擁護者，所以兩者存在著根本的理論分歧。重新回到我們的問題上，我必須得說，斯圖亞特是一個偉大的學者、一個了不起的人，但他同時也是一位可怕的導師。什麼是一位導師應該做的？他應該對督導的學生說：下週二把你完成的論文部分給我看！保持雄心，同時也要虛心！確保你能回答你提出的問題！等等。導師所應做的是有技巧地引導學生。而斯圖爾特卻總是對你說：哦，這想法真妙！為什麼不把它擴大一些呢？這對一個研究生而言，簡直是一場災難，我對此深有體會，因為我花了整整17年時間才拿到我的博士學位。

- H:** 文化研究與傳播政治經濟學作為批判研究都曾受到馬克思主義的影響，二者在上世紀70–80年代期間實際上是開啟了傳播學研究的政治資源。然而作為不同的傳播學研究分支，兩者之間始終存在著張力。這可能也是很多人關心的問題，所以我們想知道您是如何看待當今這兩個學派的學派分野的？
- C:** 我認為學派劃分是舊時代的產物。它是我們那一代學人所看重的，但我不認為當今的年輕學者會真的在乎這種劃分。他們正投身於不同的戰役。
- H:** 那麼您可否給我們描繪一下，傳播學領域目前研究趨勢的大致輪廓，比如像傳統馬克思主義延伸到了新的學派、思潮、諸如此類，描繪一下學術領域的全景。
- C:** 我不確定我是否能做到這一點。我也不確定我對目前的傳播學領域是否足夠瞭解以回答你提出的這個問題。如果你在30年前問我這個問題，我想我會很容易答出。
- H:** 30年前的確容易，因為那時的研究議題和想法都相當簡單。但這一切如今都進入了一種混雜的局面。

- C: 好吧，讓我試著來回答你的問題。首先，必須承認，傳播學領域的大部分研究仍在因循舊路向前推進，沒有多大令人耳目一新的進展。人們還在採用議程設置理論來做調查，儘管這一理論已然發展到二級乃至三級議程設置，但顯然它們本質上仍採用的是同一種方法。就算一年一度的國際傳播學會(ICA)，也依然是此類研究佔據大半江山。
- H: 用中國的俗語來說，這只是「舊瓶裝新酒」。他們仍然使用舊的研究框架，只是內容更新了，所以所談論的東西也就不同。
- C: 是的，許多的方法、觀察、實驗等等，一成不變。若干「中層理論」(middle-ranged theories)，譬如議程設置理論，依然活躍。人們還繼續在這些領域做著他們的博士研究課題，以此獲得飯碗。其次，新媒體已經發展成為一個非常強大的新的研究領域。雖然一些在新媒體分析框架下所進行的研究非常傳統，但相當多的研究實際已開始關注新的社會現象。我認為像克利斯蒂安·福克斯(Christian Fuchs)和梵·迪克(Jan Van Dijk)等人比卡斯特爾(Manuel Castells)更有意思的原因之一，就是因為他們試圖用社會關係來分析新媒體發展，而非用猜測的方式。
- H: 那麼如何將第二點與您剛剛所提到的第一點相聯結？您在第一點中提出大部分傳播學研究仍在走老路，那這裡所指的「大部分」，自然也囊括了新媒體研究對麼？
- C: 相當多的新媒體研究是不太具有自反性的……
- H: 您能不能給出一些當前研究的例子，說明他們正試圖提出新的問題、採用新的視角去看待與新的社會階級相關聯的新媒體問題？
- C: 我認為一個很好的例子便是關於微博在中國的討論，即新媒體現象是如何被解讀與誤讀的。一度我們的世界曾充斥著關於微博的文章。
- H: 在中國，微博正被微信所替代。
- C: 現實生活中走向沒落，但仍是學術論文的課題寵兒。如果你流覽當前論文，十之八九是關於微博的。他們在文中求證：「微博會是中國的公共領域嗎？」或乾脆直接聲稱：「微博是中國公共領域。」問題在於，微博並非一個理性爭論的場域，而是人們釋放諸如激情、仇恨與憤怒等情緒的地方，這些都不是公共領域的組成要素，至少在哈貝馬斯的傳統定義中不是。

**H:** 但是在微博出現的早期階段，重要的替代資訊也是由微博傳出。

**C:** 是的，當然，一種新媒體的出現會有許許多多的用途，這著實已經讓文化研究學者們忙得團團轉。但起碼有數以百計的論文斷言「微博即公共領域」。事實上現在的微博並非公共領域。這個概念雖然於你我而言具有一定的吸引力，但事實上它卻匱於描繪現實世界的運行方式。這個世界充滿了激情。而一種社會理論不僅應該能夠對簡單的理性反應做出解釋，也應該可以對激情參與作出探析。我的建議是，也許新媒體帶來了新問題，也許它們提出了披著新衣的老問題，但我認為以微博為例，中國學界存在著一種對哈貝馬斯所提出的「公共領域」學說的不假思索的套用。哈貝馬斯的「公共領域」是對歐洲市民社會的探討，卻被強加在社會特徵有諸多不同的中國新媒體平台上。當然，微博上也有不乏理性的辯論，但那不是主流，因為上面充斥著太多的激情、憤怒和復仇的欲望。

最後，政治經濟學研究就其本身而言，似乎並沒有取得更多的知識進展。有很多關乎「誰擁有什麼」、「政治制度的影響是什麼」等等細緻的實證研究，但是恐怕我並未看到任何實質性的理論突破。

所以，首先，大部分傳播學者的研究因循守舊缺乏新的進展；其次，新媒體為研究帶來活力，但卻往往沒有得到恰當的理論化；第三，政治經濟學缺乏新思路。文化研究目前已經在很大程度上將目光投向媒體和傳播研究之外。一方面，如果你去參加ICA，會發現沒有多少人在做文化研究；另一方面，「文化研究十字路口大會」（“Crossroads in Cultural Studies”）卻很有可能規模與ICA相當，並且舉座皆為談論電影電視者。目前已經出現機構分工；如果你想探討美國熱門影視劇，比方說《廣告狂人》（*Mad Men*）或是《權力的遊戲》（*Game of Thrones*），你要去的不應是ICA，而是文化研究或影視研究會議。

綜上所述，我想說的是，媒體研究是一個大容器，曾經涵蓋了從新聞到電影的一切事物。如今，人們則在閱讀不同的書籍，去到不同的會議，參與不同的討論。我想你是對的：媒體研究比以往變得更為分散，而且更大。當你（黃煜）還在英國讀博士時，

那裡只有兩個或三個地方在研究媒體，現在則或許已經擴展到了50個以上。在美國，應該有500個。(笑)

- W:** 看上去傳播學研究領域似乎正在陷入某種危機，文化研究曾是我們這個學科的重頭戲，但它慢慢獨立出去了；政治經濟學好像也有窮途末路之感？我不知道。至於公共領域理論，如您所說，只是一個關於理性的理論，無法幫助我們理解激情。我們這個領域需要新的血液、新的思考問題的方式，但大家似乎都覺得待在業已建構好的領域更加舒坦，而非主動去探索新的理論。
- C:** 這只不過是一個年長者的說法罷了。如果你跟年輕人談談，會發現他們正在閱讀齊澤克(Slavoj Žižek)，津津樂道於朗西埃(Jacques Rancière)，沉迷於德勒茲(Gilles Deleuze)以及其他當代思想家的著作當中。只是我不認為他們對傳播學和新聞學研究領域洞悉深刻。新聞學研究最近的理論更新當屬皮埃爾·布迪厄(Pierre Bourdieu)。此外，我認為相較是否出現新的理論觀點，新聞學研究存在著一個更大的問題，即我們的研究對象正經歷著一場變革，新媒體對傳統媒體的影響如影隨形。許多美國式新聞學研究的主要觀點，例如新聞專業主義、客觀性等等，已經在新聞技術變革中被予以重新思考。這終將威脅到新聞院校對新聞學的傳統認知及其教學的方式方法。我認為就知識方面來說，危機還遠未結束。人們清楚地意識到這些問題，但老的包袱依然存在。至少，新興的新聞業與憑藉「專業主義」理念支撐的傳統新聞業很是不同。
- W:** 既然談論到學術領域和青年學者，想聽聽您對年輕一輩在推進學科進一步發展上有何建議？
- H:** 明確而言，您是如何探索與發現理論的呢？因為在學術界，理論成就意味著學術地位，一旦創建理論或嫻熟運用理論，便總是可以得到良好的預期，因此，理論是利器。對於博士生或青年學者而言，首先他們總是被理論所教化的，如若不是，他們也需運用理論來自證其理。上次邁克爾·舒德森教授給了我一段很長的感言，關於他對理論的理解。現在我將同樣的問題給到您，不知您對此會有與他類似、不同、抑或是完全相反的觀點呢？
- C:** 我同意邁克爾·舒德森的看法。在訪談錄英文版本的第23頁上，

他如是分享。我打算把這個拿給我的學生看。(笑)對此我稍作改述，即重要的論點永遠是來自現實生活，而非源自理論。我所處的那一代深受湯瑪斯·庫恩(Thomas Kuhn)所著的《科學革命的結構》(*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*)的影響，他認為大多數科學是所謂的「常規科學」，常規科學僅僅是教條式的穩定，在範式中起作用。但我認為這一點也適用於社會科學和人文科學。我們要求我們的學生閱讀現成的理論，使用現成的方法，按照現成的規則制度去做研究。這正是庫恩所說的「常規科學」。什麼可以當之無愧地成為常規科學的真理？即對「理論驅動研究」的強調。

引申而言，如果你可以採用一種業已成熟的理論，將它運用到你的研究中，再錦上添花地找到一種可以運用到你調查研究中的恰當的研究工具，你將得到一個結果被同行們公認為是「科學的」。你可以在合適的期刊上發表，你會推動常規科學的發展。這樣的學生對教師而言非常招人喜愛，因為師生研究興趣相投令人愉悅；同樣對於學生而言也魅力非常，因為這給他們的研究帶來信心。他們瞭解這個方法與理論已經被既定的學者使用過，他們明白這種方法能產生合意的結果，他們知道結果將如何被評估，他們確信他們將會因此得到一個博士學位。常規科學為研究者提供了一定程度上的研究信心，借此又進一步夯實了既有的理論基礎和研究方法。套用邁克爾的話來說，問題即在於，學生們總是被教導為，不要畫親眼所見，而是畫認為自己應該去看的東西。

但是，在一個健康的學術氛圍中，理論反思與實證觀察之間應該存在永恆的互動。一方面，把現實硬要套用到理論中是完全錯誤的舉動；另一方面，不發一言只讓數據說話的行為同樣無謂，因為數據本身並不能體現任何意義。數據是由人創立的。當然，客觀世界客觀存在，但任何數據，無論是定量的或是定性的，都是通過研究工具收集到的。因此，理論是建立一種研究工具的唯一途徑，我們無法回避它。但但凡明智的科學家、誠實的調研者，都是在經驗觀察與理論思考之間不斷來回移動作出觀察與思考。相對於僅僅是採取業已創建的一套理論與方法，駕輕就熟千篇一律地做研究，這種研究行為充滿更多的不確定性、更

多的干擾因素、操作起來也更加困難。但是，儘管前者往往能夠使研究變得更易操作、更加輕鬆，論文發表也更容易，後者才是使理論得以突破與發展的研究行為。

**H:** 那麼傳播學研究領域是否存在範式轉移？

**C:** 最主要的是從現代主義向後現代主義的轉變。

**H:** 傳播學也在其中嗎？

**C:** 傳播學？我不太確定：相當多的人似乎沒有注意到這樣的轉變。社會科學中的現代主義是關乎確定性。這種轉變則引入了懷疑。這是一種範式的轉變。後現代性為質疑那些針對社會現實的專制單一的解釋帶來一股健康之風。我不認為傳播學領域的轉變如同其他一些領域一樣明晰。就我對傳播學研究的瞭解，它並非倚重於明確宏大的敘事方法，而更多採用的是中層理論，因其不易受到後現代批判家的質疑。

真正讓我感興趣的文章是對我有啟發性的文章、試圖創新的文章、以及攜帶有出人意料的資訊的文章。那些只是簡單地對包括馬克思主義在內的任何一種正統的理論的重複文章，特別是關於馬克思主義正統思想的論文，只會讓我昏昏欲睡。我所看重的是哪一類學術文章呢？獨具匠心的那一類。我所看重的是它能告訴我一些我從前不知道、從未想到過的東西。

**W:** 您認為中國新聞傳播學當前所面臨最緊要、最主要的問題是什麼？

**C:** 在我看來，中國學界存在著一個普遍性的問題，不一定緊急，但卻應引起重視的，是中國新聞學研究一直癡迷於對政治性問題的研究、癡迷於對政治類媒體的研究。你看，中國大概有300個調查記者，但是，中國總共約有250,000名記者，100萬的四分之一……

**H:** 您是指英語文學裡「癡迷」(obsess)的意思對嗎？在中國，它完全顛倒了過來，就是指困擾。「困擾」於非政治的東西，「困擾」於科技，「困擾」於商業研究，「困擾」於種種與政治無關的東西，但沒有一項「困擾」會跟政治掛上鉤。

**C:** 看來這算是用語上的歧義，讓我來更正它。在我看來，中國當前新聞業有更多的研究熱點。在中國，有極富政治敏感度的新聞記者在挖掘內幕、揭露腐敗，但也有其他的記者在記錄社會的方

面面。當你在深圳和上海做調研，你會發現，有許多記者在滿足於做日常生活新聞，享受生活。我期待看到更多關於這些「普通」的中國記者的學術研究。這也是我為何喜歡我的學生呂楠的研究的原因，因為她討論的是中國媒體的一個組成部分，時尚雜誌，看似秋毫無犯於黨的執政力量。遺憾的是，並沒有多少中國的研究學生有興趣研究此類問題。他們來敲我的門，說：「我想要做一些關於政治權力的研究。我對《南方週末》感興趣。我想討論財經。我關注北京新聞……」很少有學生到我的辦公室來，告訴我他們想寫普普通通的中國新聞雜誌。涉及「生活方式」的報刊雜誌在我看來是真正有趣而且重要的。在過去的30年裡，中國業已發生的社會變化意味著上億人從鄉下搬到城裡，成千上萬的人們經歷了「自我改造再學習」：他們學習如何成為一名中產階級；學習如何富有教養；學習適應都市生活節奏……媒體在這個龐大的「再學習」群體中究竟扮演了怎樣的角色？或者，更確切地說，它是否發揮作用，如果是，發揮了怎樣的作用？

我認為所有這些問題都具有巨大的歷史意義，而我的假設是媒體在中國中產階層的締造過程中起到了一個核心的作用。我的目標即是要推動中國媒體研究朝著這個方向努力，探索其間所伴隨出現的關於性別、身份及其他各種議題。除此之外，還有一個剛剛起步卻十分重要的議題是：中國的報紙和廣電事業已經經歷了30年的高速發展，隨著新媒體在全球範圍內對傳統媒體的劇烈衝擊，報紙和電視統統未能倖免，那麼，新媒體對中國媒體是否會產生同樣的衝擊？我確信新媒體所帶來的衝擊一樣會在中國發生，儘管可能會以不同的形式，因此，對於中國媒體如何適應世界範圍內媒體環境的變化，亦會是一個重要的、且極具吸引力的研究課題。

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Academic Dialogue with **Colin SPARKS**

## **Media Studies in Transitional Societies: Capitalism, Communism and Media**

C: Colin SPARKS

W: Haiyan WANG

H: Yu HUANG

**W:** You have written many books, and this book, *Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media* (1998), is my favorite. In this book you studied the impact of the collapse of communism on the media system in Eastern and Central Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At that time, there were many talks about the transformation of the media system following the fall of former Soviet block, but not many scholars really invested themselves in researching it, so my first question is, how did you become interested in it?

C: Well, I think there are two answers to that: a short one and a long one. I will give you the short answer. I was trained to believe that the task of an intellectual is to be engaged with the major events in the contemporary world. Clearly, the collapse of European communism represented an important turning point in European history, and indeed in world history. It was the end of a period of intense international competition between the US and the Soviet Union. It was the end of a long dream of the construction of what many believed to be socialism. It was a very disorienting experience for large sections of the left in the west, and it was an event that echoed around the world. It still echoes around the world. I was in Nanjing last weekend, and speaker after speaker from journalism schools in universities like Fudan and Beida attacked the idea of color revolutions and discussed the chaos that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is clearly still a live issue for leading intellectuals inside China. I think it would be irresponsible for any intellectual not to be interested in and concerned with such a world historical event.

**W: So what is the long answer?**

C: I have always been interested in Central and Eastern Europe. This is partly for intellectual and political reasons, because any leftist intellectual needs to understand what happened as a result of the Russian revolution, but partly also for biographical reasons. One of the least glorious periods in my youth was being the world's worst smuggler.

**W: Smuggler?**

C: Yes. There's a man called Jan Kavan who was a Czech dissident in 1968, and who went into exile in London. He ran a smuggling operation from London into the then Czechoslovakia, which was ruled by a government imposed after the Russian invasion. His operation took things like banned books and untraceable typewriters into Czechoslovakia. He used western anti-Stalinist leftists like me as couriers. I made one very disastrous and very unsuccessful trip and I was completely terrified all the time. We used a very old camper van which broke down time and again. How we avoided arrest I don't know. So I still have a very vivid memory of the old communist bloc and a personal interest in Central and Eastern Europe and in what happened here.

**W: Was it easy to do research in a place where language, culture, society and everything is different?**

C: Very difficult at one level, because I didn't speak Czech; I didn't speak Polish; I didn't speak Russian; certainly I didn't speak Hungarian. Fortunately I had some very, very good collaborators. Anna Reading, who's now Head of the Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries in King's College London, worked with me on the project. For biographical reasons, she has pretty good Polish. So the book is co-authored with her. There were other people with whom we collaborated, like the late Karol Jakubowicz, who were fluent in English. So it was possible at least to get a sense of the overall dynamics. Obviously, this is a question that is going to recur because you will ask me later about China. What I would say is that I don't really do research on these countries, because I can't speak the languages. I would say that I am interested in and work on them. I can't claim to have studied the original documents. I can't interview people in their native tongue, and so on. This puts very severe limits

on what I have written. I think the only place I have ever been confident that I was looking at the original material was South Africa, where I can speak one of the eleven national languages—English. Everywhere else I have been using other people. So that is a real limitation. I think this limitation is almost certainly going to be present in any ambitious comparative research project. Very few people have the linguistic capacities to conduct extensive original research in wide a range of countries. I am an Englishman, so I am particularly ill-equipped, but I think that it is a problem that more or less everybody faces.

**H: Your theory provided a quite interesting framework to the study in the field. I remember there were different schools of thoughts at that time, theorizing this phenomenon, especially media transformation from the Communist country to Post-Communist country. But you are bold to pose a new view, saying that this is a kind of continuation rather than a revolution or a big change. That is quite interesting and inspiring. Could you from that perspective give us a bit summary of the theoretical part of this research? And how it is related to China' media transformation in the end?**

C: I am not saying I did not make a contribution, I am not saying what I wrote is not interesting. I think my argument was basically correct. When I began doing work in this field, there were, as I recall, three basic positions. One was the dominant view that everything had changed. This was expressed very clearly by Francis Fukuyama, who argued that there was now no alternative to liberal democracy. The dominant leftist interpretation, clearly expressed by Ralph Miliband, was that the restoration of capitalism would mean the emergence of new forms of undemocratic regime. They both shared the view that the new order is radically different from the old order: in their view, political, social, and economic life had been completely transformed by 1989. Another view, articulated by people like Paul Piccone and the group around *Telos* was that almost nothing had changed: the working class had been duped by the elite who still controlled all aspects of social life. I didn't find any of these views either intellectually or empirically satisfactory. Clearly there had been a change. Something pretty fundamental had happened. Before 1989,

these were one-party states. After 1989, they were multi-party states. Clearly there had been a rapid political transformation; in fact, there had been a political revolution. However, when you looked a little bit more deeply at the social structure of these countries, you found that the people who ran industry used to be communist bureaucrats all wearing ill-fitting suits and driving Trabants. Now the same people are capitalists, all wearing nicely cut Armani suits and driving BMWs. Perhaps the biggest difference is that they now all have mobile phones. The same people had been transformed from the bureaucrats of the old order into the capitalists of the new order. If you looked at the police, the same people ran the police. If you looked at the universities, the same people ran the universities. If you looked at the broadcasters, the same people ran the broadcasters. Once striking fact reported by Ellen Mickiewicz, who looked at what had happened to Russian television, was the number of people in Russian broadcasting who were fired as a result of 1991: there were three. These seemed to me to be very important facts: these societies went from being communist one-party dictatorships to being pluralist, and to a greater or lesser extent democratic, societies, but the same people are still calling the shots. Slavko Splichal once told me that the major difference was that in the old days they called him “Comrade Professor” and in the new world they called him “Professor.” There had been a political revolution but the basic social structure remained intact.

**H: But some people argue there’s a classic agent/structure issue. When the same people but under the different social system, what do you think of this? Does it really no matter or matter someday.**

C: This comes to the core of the theoretical issues which interested me about the fate of European communism and which interest me about China today. Unfortunately, in order to answer, I am going to talk for a very long time in very abstract terms very far removed from the media. Fundamentally, the answer depends on what kind of social system you think characterized the Soviet Union, or Mao’s China. If you thought they were socialist countries, then clearly there had been a change in the economic system from socialism to capitalism. I take a different view. None of these societies were in any sense run by a

majority of their populations. These societies were, and are, essentially dictatorships, where power was held, not by the people, not by the working class, not by the peasants, or anything like that. The people who held power in the old communist block were the “nomenklatura”—the leading figures of the communist party. The same is true on the mainland today—you maybe even use a similar word.

Power was held by the nomenklatura, and the fundamental dynamic of these societies was not improving the lives of the population but with autarchic national development in a hostile world. The vast majority of human energy, the vast majority of material assets, went not into feeding people, not into housing people, not into educating people, but into building weapons of mass destruction. These societies were essentially societies that were accumulating weapons in order to secure their borders to guarantee autarchic development. The Soviet Union was attempting to match the USA. The US economy was about four times bigger than the economy of the USSR. Nobody really knows the figures because you couldn't trust their statistics, but the US economy was certainly very much bigger. So if the US spent 8–10% of their GDP to produce tanks and submarines, bombs and so on, the USSR had to match them. To do that, they needed to spend not 8–10%, but 30% or 40% of their GDP on weapons. Now if you are spending your money on tanks, you are not spending the money on hospitals. If you are spending the money on missiles, you are not spending the money on schools. The Soviet economy tried to match the vastly superior US economy. They tried to match their technology and their weapons and so on. They managed to do this for nearly 50 years.

They were, in my terms, capitalist societies driven by the need to accumulate like every other capitalist society. However, they were not capitalist societies like the USA. US power resides in the hands of the individual owners of capital. In Soviet Union, that was not the case. The bureaucracy held state power collectively, as a group. What I saw going on in Central and Eastern Europe was a transition in terms the way the society was run. There was a transition from power being held collectively by the nomenklatura. They controlled the factories, the banks, and so on. This was shifting to power increasingly being held by private individuals: what they call in Russia the oligarchs. These were very often junior members of the

nomenklatura or allied with them: hence the Russian term “Komsomol capitalism” (the Komsomol was the Communist youth league). This was a shift from state capitalism to private capitalism. I thought in the early 1990s there was only one way that this shift could happen. That was by political revolution. I thought the Communist Party would be unable to preside over transition from a command economy to a market economy, unable to manage the transition from a society where the bureaucracy collectively controlled it to a society where a small number of individuals controlled it. I thought the only way to do that is by a sharp break, a political revolution. In Russia, the Communist Party was banned, in other countries it transformed itself into a social democratic party, but everywhere its power was broken. I thought this was the only way you can shift from a state capitalism to private capitalism, from a communist dictatorship to a capitalist democracy, or in some cases, Central Asia for example, to a capitalist dictatorship.

Sociologically, all of the evidences suggest I was right about who the old ruling class were and who the new ruling classes are. There was a very strong degree of elite continuity. Of course there were changes. There were new members of the elite, particularly the political elite. Jan Kavan, the dissident in London, ended up foreign minister of the Czech Republic and took the country into NATO. There was much less change in the economic elite, the university elite, the media elite, and so on.

What I was wrong about was the argument that the only way to go from a command economy to a market economy was a variant of political revolution. And the reason why I was wrong is twenty kilometers away across the boundary: China. This has been going from a command economy controlled collectively by the top levels of the bureaucracy to being a place where economic power is held individually and the market drives most social choices. The party leaders have not all become capitalists themselves, but their wives, their sons, their daughters, their brothers, their sisters, their cousins, their nephews, their friends and their connections most certainly have. All of this has taken place without any weakening of the collective political power of the Communist Party leadership.

**on that, the ideology. I saw all the dimensions of course, because the so-called Leninist or Stalinist Soviet Union model of Communist Society is a strong feature of ideology coordination. Do you feel there's something vulnerable to be defended in your argument?**

C: I don't think by 1991, anyone in what was then in Soviet Union really believed in Marxism or Leninism. I think it had become the state religion. It is a set of ideas which don't even legitimize the ruling elite. The ruling elite in China today isn't legitimized by Marxism.

**H: The point is that, ideology actually is not only play the state legitimized religion but also the major source of legitimizing of governing. Ideology, first of all, a governing tool; secondly is about the legitimacy source of how this country should be governed and why. So all this disappeared for instance as Soviet Union and East Europe, what is to make the societies different, in the individual level as well organizational level?**

C: One of the big differences between China and the Soviet Union is that the Chinese Communist Party has succeeded in maintaining a flow of young talent into the party. You meet lots and lots of energetic young people, many of them extremely talented, extremely able, who are members of the Communist Party. In Europe, the Communist Party members were old men. Why can the Chinese Communist Party do that? In the end, because Russia built the guns first and China built the economy first. The Communist Party has achieved the greatest human developmental success in the world history. Six hundred million people were lifted out of absolute poverty. Compare China with India, countries that started at more or less the same level, are more or less of the same size and so on. All of the indicators—the indicators of child poverty, indicators of female literacy, indicators of educational achievement, all the indicators—show China is far ahead of India. So this is why people are still joining the Communist Party in China—not just because it gets you better jobs, but because it looks like this ideology has delivered a strong China. I would say: but look at the price. Look at the peasants who still sell their blood; look at the workers who jump off the roof at Foxconn; look at the terrible toll of executions; look at the places

you can't breathe the air anymore. The Chinese people have paid a terrible, terrible price for this developmental achievement, but nevertheless there have been real changes in people's lives. Compare that with the Soviet Union. They built great tanks, but nobody thought that things were going to get better. China does not have that many tanks yet, but people think that their lives can get better.

**W: So, would you say that what is happening in China can still be explained by the Marxist framework?**

C: Do you mean the official Marxist framework or my Marxist framework? One central concept of Marxism is that the liberation of working class is the act of the working class itself. In other words, you can't impose socialism; people have to make it themselves. This is the essential content of Marxism. Look at the 1949. Clearly this was a great revolution, but was it a working class revolution? The PLA occupied cities, some workers took over factories, banks and so on. The PLA told them to get back to work. 1949 was a revolution but certainly not a working-class revolution. The PLA was essentially a peasant army led by intellectuals like Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai. The victory of the PLA certainly wasn't a working class revolution. So the basic tenet of Marxism is absent at the birth of People's Republic, and I think all of the contortions, all of the twists and turns since then have taken the Marxism of Chinese officials further away from anything resembling the ideas of Marx.

**H: 16 years after this book was published, what is your updated understanding or theorizing of this transition?**

C: I think I was right about the fundamental nature of the change. There was a very high degree of elite continuity. That theory I think explains a whole number of different social changes that have taken place. It can be extended back to the fall of European fascism in the 1970s; to the end of the Latin American dictatorships; to the end of apartheid in South Africa. All of these were marked, to a greater or to a lesser degree, by elite continuity. I think elite continuity is one of the most powerful tools to explain what has happened in the world in the last half century. What happened in media is a tiny part, but that is the part I am professionally obliged to discuss today. What you pay me to do is to talk about media.

The thing that is wrong with the book, which is a very, very serious error, is the point I made earlier: China disproves the thesis that you need a revolution to move from the party's collective ownership of social power to individual ownership. The Chinese Communist Party is well on the way to transforming itself from being a collective owner of capital, to being made up of some of the biggest private owners of capital. I was wrong: you don't need revolution to shift from a command economy to a market economy. China proved me wrong.

**W: You were trained in CCCS (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) in Birmingham, studying after Stuart Hall. But in your later academic career, you have followed a very different path from cultural studies. What made that happen?**

C: "How did I get in to cultural studies?" The answer is that I began as a literary theorist, very heavily influenced by the famous Hungarian Marxist critic György Lukács and his Romanian follower Lucien Goldmann. The man who taught me philosophy in university was Itsván Mézarós, who had been a pupil of Lukács, so you can see I was very strongly influenced by that strain of Marxism. I started my doctoral studies with Terry Eagleton, who is a very famous literary scholar, but I did not make very much progress. Terry said to me: "Why don't you go to Birmingham and work with this guy Stuart Hall? You might find it interesting to talk to him." So not with any serious sense that I was going to do cultural studies, I wandered off to Birmingham. From the philosophical point of view, Birmingham was not much better than Oxford. I was in very much of a minority position. The dominant strand of thinking, led Stuart, was structuralist Marxism, which was the most powerful current in Marxism at that time in the west. I remained essentially a literary scholar, but I guess Birmingham did make me think of culture not simply as literature. I must have absorbed Williams's famous argument that culture is ordinary.

So the cultural studies paint was pretty thin. What I find is that with cultural studies people, I am a political economist; with political economists, I am cultural studies; with social scientists, I am a humanities scholar; with humanities scholars, I am a social scientist. I don't think I fit any of these models very well. Some of the stuff I

have written has been very clearly with the humanistic cultural studies tradition. Some of the stuff I have written has been, I would say, in the social scientific political economy tradition. Why do I have to belong to a school? Why do I have to be either one or the other? They are simply different way looking at social reality. Do some political economists drive me mad? Yes, they do. Do some cultural studies people drive me mad? Yes, they do.

**H: Intellectually, you kept your PhD with Stuart Hall, you must have something inspired by him? At that time you had already felt cultural studies a bit superficial to explain this and that, or you had some other agenda in your mind and felt something went wrong but you had to play?**

C: I think I became much more influenced by what I'd heard at Birmingham after I left Birmingham. If you look at *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* you will see there's big difference between the stuff I was writing then, like my essay on Lukács, and the stuff Stuart was writing them. If you look at the famous "encoding-decoding" model, that comes initially from Roland Barthes. After that, there is the question of determination in the last instance, derived from Louis Althusser. As you know, Althusser was famously a harsh critic of the notion of the "expressive totality" and Lukács was its most famous Marxist proponent, so there was a fundamental theoretical difference at stake. I would say today that Stuart was a great intellectual and a great man but a terrible supervisor. What should a supervisor do? A supervisor should say to a student: Bring me your chapter by next Tuesday! Keep your ambition modest! Make sure you can answer the question you ask, etc. You should guide the student. Stuart always said: Oh, what a brilliant idea! Why not expand it? This is a disaster for a graduate student: I know because it took me 17 years to finish my PhD.

**H: Both political economy approach and cultural study have been influenced by Marxist theory. This two sorts actually originally started a kind of political source for communication studies in 1970–1980s. But there are internal tensions between the two. That's what people are probably more interested to know. So the second question we put is what do you see the major divide nowadays?**

- C:** I think that divide is the product of the past. I think that was something that mattered for our generation, but I don't think younger scholars really care. They are fighting different battles.
- H:** **Could you give us a broad outline of current research trend in the field, for instance how classical Marxism continued into some new schools, thoughts, and this and that? Let us have a kind of whole picture of the map.**
- C:** I am not sure I can do that. I am not sure that I know enough to answer this question. If you asked me this question 30 years ago, I would have found it much easier to answer.
- H:** **30 years ago is really easy because that time the study issues and the thoughts are quite simple. But now everything gets into a chaotic and hybridized situation.**
- C:** OK, let me try to answer that. First of all, you have to say, the majority of the field of communication research continues untroubled. People are still doing investigations into agenda setting. It has developed to the second or third level agenda setting, nevertheless it's recognizably essentially the same approach. Go to the ICA: it remains overwhelmingly dominated by this kind of research.
- H:** **People would say that this is only the old bottle with new wine. They still use the old framework but the content is no longer really the old. They are talking about something very different.**
- C:** That's true, but I think that many of the methods, observation, experiment, and so forth, remain the same. Many of the basic middle-ranged theories, like agenda setting, remain alive. People are still doing their PhDs in these sorts of fields and they are still getting hired. Secondly, new media has developed as a very strong new field of research. Some of the work conducted in the framework of new media is very traditional, but quite a lot of it is actually about new social phenomenon. One of the reasons I find people like the Christian Fuchs and Jan Van Dijk much more interesting than Castells is because they try to analyse new media developments in terms of social relations rather than engaging in what often seems like speculation.

**H: How does this relate to the first point you mentioned? You just said the majority of the research is still untroubled. The majority also includes new media, right?**

C: Quite a lot of research on new media is very unreflexive...

**H: The second question, could you give some examples of current research which are trying to pose new issues, using new perspective to look at the new media in relation to the new social class.**

C: I think a good example of how new media phenomenon are understood or misunderstood in terms of old media, is the discussion of Weibo in China. The world is full of papers about Weibo.

**H: The Weibo in China is replacing by WeChat now.**

C: Declining in reality, but still a major subject of academic papers. If you look at nine-tenths of the papers about weibo they are asking "Is weibo a public sphere?" or asserting "Weibo is the Chinese public sphere." The problem is that Weibo is not a sphere of rational debate. It's a sphere of passion, revenge, anger..., these are not constituents of a public sphere, at least as defined in the Habermasian tradition.

**H: But in the early stages, Weibo transmitted important alternative information.**

C: Yes, of course, and many many of the uses to which it has been put cultural study scholars would see as fascinating. But there must be a hundred articles saying Weibo is the public sphere. Now actually Weibo is not a public sphere. The concept has a certain attraction for people like us but actually it's a very poor account of the way the world is. The world is full of passion. And a social theory should be able to account not simply for rational reflection but also passionate engagement. What I am suggesting is that maybe the new media pose new problems, maybe they present old problems in a new form, but I think there has been, certainly in the case in Weibo, a very uncritical application of a set of ideas, developed by Habermas to discuss Europe that, that has been imposed on a situation where the evidence seems to point to the fact that there's something very different going on. Weibo has got rational debate, but it's not primarily about rational debate: there is lots of passion, lots of feelings of anger, lots of desires for revenge.

For its part, political economy does not seem to have made much intellectual progress. There are plenty of detailed empirical studies of who owns what and what the effects of political regulatory regimes are, and so on, but I am afraid I don't see any serious theoretical breakthroughs.

So, the first of all, the majority of researchers are untroubled by any new developments; secondly, new media provoke vigorous research but often without adequate theorization; thirdly, there is a shortage of new ideas in political economy. The cultural studies current has to a great extent moved outside media and communication research. If you go to the ICA, there are not that many people talking about cultural studies there. On the other hand, "Crossroads in Cultural Studies" is probably as big as ICA, and is full of people talking about cinema, talking about TV, and so on. There has been an institutional division; if you want to talk about American popular TV drama, let's say *Mad Men*, or *Game of Thrones*, you don't go to the ICA to discuss it. You go to a cultural studies or a cinema studies conference.

What I am saying is that media studies is a large container which used to contain everything from journalism to film. Today, people read different books, they go to different conferences, they are engaged in different debates. I think you are right: this is very much more fragmented field than it was, and it is much bigger. When you were graduate student in Britain, there were maybe two or three places working on the media. Now there are fifty or more. In the US, there must be five hundred.

- W:** It looks like communication studies is running into some kind of crisis. Cultural studies used to be a very important part of our field, but now it is an independent discipline. Political economy is in the dead end too? I don't know. And public sphere, as you said, has only theorized rationality, but got nothing to say about passion. We need new blood, new ways of thinking in the field, but naturally people feel more comfortable with the established theories rather than exploring new.
- C:** That's just an old man talking. If you talk to younger people, they are reading Slavoj Žižek, they are reading Jacques Rancière, they are reading Gilles Deleuze, and they are reading other contemporary

thinkers. It is not that their arguments and ideas are right, it's just that I don't think they are penetrating very far into communication studies and journalism. The major recent theoretical renewal in journalism studies was the engagement with Pierre Bourdieu. Besides, I think this is a bigger problem for journalism studies than whether or not it has new theoretical ideas. Our object of study is undergoing a transformation. The impact of the new media on legacy media is not going to go away. Many of the key ideas of American journalism studies, like professionalism, like objectivity and so on, are being called into question by the impact of these technological changes. The material foundation of American journalism is under threat. That will eventually produce a crisis in the way the journalism schools think about journalism and in how and what they teach people. I think that crisis has yet to work itself through in intellectual terms. People are clearly thinking about these problems, but much of the old baggage persists. At the very least, the occupation of journalism that is emerging has a very different dynamic to that which underlies the concept of "professionalism."

**W:** Since we are talking about the status of the field, do you have any suggestions for young scholars to advance the field?

**H:** More specifically, how you feel or approach to the theory, since in academia, theory also always produce the high status, once you have the theory or use the theory well, you could always been well expected, so theory can become a kind of sharp weapon. So for the PhD or the young scholar, the first thing is they always civilized, unless otherwise they can prove. Last time Michael Shudson gave me a long lesson about he understands theory. Now I ask the similar question to you, do you have an alternate view, counter view or the similar view?

**C:** I agree with what Michael Schudson said on page 23 of the English version of his interview with you. I am going to give this to my students to read. (Laugh) I paraphrase, but the import was start from the problems of the world, not from the problems of theory. I come from the generation which was very deeply influenced by Thomas Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He argued that most science is what he called "normal science" which works within paradigms. He discussed the natural science but I think the point also

applies to the social sciences and humanities. We ask our students to read established theories, to use established methods, analyze evidence according to established protocols. That is exactly what Kuhn means by “normal science.” What is considered to be the truth in normal science? The emphasis on what is often called “theory driven research” is an aspect of normal science. If you can take a theory somebody else developed, and use that to help you, and even better find a research instrument that you can apply in your investigation, you are going to get a result that will be recognized as “scientific” by your peers. You can get published in the right journals and you will advance normal science. That is a very attractive to teachers because it’s nice to have students interested in the same things as you. And it’s very attractive to students because it gives them a degree of confidence about what they are doing. They know this method and this theory have been used before by established scholars. They know this method produces acceptable results. They know how the findings are going to be evaluated. They know they are going to get a PhD. Normal science gives you a degree of confidence and that leads to a stress upon established theoretical foundations and established methods of enquiry. To go back to Michael’s point: the problem is that students are taught that you shouldn’t draw what you see, you should draw what you think you ought to see.

In a healthy intellectual climate, there should be a constant interplay between theoretical reflection and empirical observation. If you have forced reality to fit theory, that’s completely wrong. On the other hand, the idea that you can just let the data speak for themselves is equally crazy because data does not exist in itself. You construct data. Of course, there is an external world but any data, whether quantitative or qualitative, is a function of the research instrument you use to gather it. So you can’t avoid theory because that is the only way to construct a research instrument. The healthy scientist, the honest investigator, is constantly moving between empirical observation and theoretical reflection. That is much more uncertain, much more unsettling, much more difficult to do than simply to take an established set of ideas and methods and use them like a cookie cutter. That is much easier and much more comfortable, and you will get published much more easily as well.

**H: So have you seen a kind of paradigm shift of the communication studies?**

C: The major shift has been from modernism to post-modernism.

**H: That includes communication studies?**

C: Communication studies? I am not sure about that: quite a lot of people don't seem to have noticed the shift yet. Modernity in social science was about certainty. The shift was to introduce doubt. That's a paradigm shift. Post-modernity had the very healthy effect of questioning absolutist single interpretations of social reality. I don't think this shift is so clear in communication studies as it has been in some other areas. To the extent that I know anything about communication studies, it tends not to depend upon explicit grand narratives. It tends to use what Merton called middle range theories, which are less vulnerable than grand narratives to the post-modern critique.

The paper that really interests me is the paper that inspires me, the paper that attempt to do something new, the paper that has some surprising information. The papers that simply repeat orthodoxy, any kind of orthodoxy including Marxism, especially Marxist orthodoxy, send me sleep. What do I value in scholarly work? Originality. What I value is something that tells me something I have not thought of before, something I did not know before, something which makes me think.

**W: What do you see are the major issues and urgent problems that need to be addressed about Chinese journalism and media studies today?**

C: There is a general question which I think is not necessarily urgent but which I think is very important. Studies of Chinese journalism have been obsessively about politics, obsessively about political journals. Look, there are about three hundred investigative journalists in China. But there is a total of around two hundred and fifty thousand journalists in China, roughly a quarter a million...

**H: The meaning of "Obsess" in the English literature words, right? In China, it's just upset. The "Obsess" with the non-political, "Obsess" with the technology, "Obsess" with the commercial study, all about this, nothing about politics.**

C: Well, in that case, it is a weakness of the western literature. I would like to help correct it. It seems to me there's more to Chinese journalism. There are these politically sensitive journalists in China who dig out stories and expose corruption, but there are others as well. When you did research in Shenzhen and Shanghai you found that many journalists were content to do uncontentious work and enjoy life. I would like to see more explorations of these "normal" Chinese journalists. I very much like my student Lü Nan's work because she is talking about an aspect of the Chinese media, fashion magazines, which has almost no impact on the party's power. Unfortunately there are not many Chinese graduate students want to talk about these sorts of thing. People come to my door and say: "I want to do something on political power. I want to look at Southern Weekend. I want to look at Caijing. I want to look at Beijing News." Very few students come to my door and tell me they want to write about ordinary Chinese journalism. Journalism that deals with "lifestyle" is one of the things I think is really interesting and important. The social changes that have taken place in China over the last 30 years mean that there are hundreds of millions of people moving from the country to the city. Millions of people have learned a whole number of things: they have learnt to be middle class; learnt to be educated; learnt to be urban. What role did the media play in this massive re-education? Or, more properly, did it play a role and if so, what was it?

I think there are all these questions which are of huge historical importance. I want to hypothesize that the media had a central role in the making of the Chinese middle class. I'd like to push Chinese media studies in that direction. All sorts of issues about gender, identity, and so forth need exploring. Another, very different, issue is just now starting to be important: Chinese newspapers and Chinese broadcasting enjoyed 30 years of rapid expansion. The new media have had a serious impact on journalism around the world, on newspapers in particular but also on television. Will that also happen in China? My bet is that it will, although perhaps not in the same form. There is a major and fascinating research project in analyzing how Chinese media adapt themselves to the worldwide changes that are going on in the media.

## Selected Works by Colin Sparks

Please refer to the end of the Chinese version of the dialogue for Colin Sparks's selected works.