Reflections on the Academic Milieu of Media Studies[1]

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This essay draws on one of Foucault's lectures to discuss his concept of the "milieu" in order to transport this concept into an analysis of the academic milieu of media studies. By linking the milieu as a problem of circulation to his analysis of the neoliberal concept of "human capital," I import a Foucaultian perspective on governmentality into liberal arts education, communication studies, and the knowledge economy. From this perspective, power operates within the conduct of academic conduct by normalizing and maximizing the production and dissemination of knowledge that can be "transferred" or "mobilized." Drawing on a series of examples from universities in Toronto, my analysis shows how events and elements of media studies have become complicit in neoliberal discourse. Given the harmonization of the network university's internal research priorities and the external government funding priorities for public/private research networks and academic/government/industry internetworking, I conclude that the academic milieu is being regulated so that academic career time in communication studies becomes formative of "human capital." Our curricular control and the academic freedom to do critical media studies is conditional upon the academic milieu which bears upon all who work within it.

Keywords: Foucault, Milieu, Liberal arts, Human capital, Communication studies, Knowledge economy, New media education, Research networks, Academic freedom.

We live in a social universe in which the formation, circulation, and utilization of knowledge presents a fundamental question. If the accumulation of capital has been an essential feature of society, the accumulation of knowledge has not been any less so. Now, the exercise, production, and accumulation of this knowledge cannot be dissociated from the mechanisms of power; complex relations exist which must be analyzed. (Foucault, 1991, p. 165)

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> There are intellectuals who question the world, but there are very few intellectuals who
> question the intellectual world. This is understandable if we bear in mind the paradox
> that this is the more risky undertaking, because it is where are own stakes are involved.
> (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 308)

In this essay, I shall take Michel Foucault's notion of "milieu" as a point of departure for thinking about the university, the academic milieu, and media studies.[2] In a January 11, 1978 lecture, Foucault said the milieu "is what is needed to account for action at a distance of one body on another. It is therefore the medium of action and the element in which it circulates" (Foucault, 2007, pp. 20-21). He transports this notion from physics and biology into town planning in the 16th and 17th century. The milieu is less a space where discipline is carried out than the planned space where possible events or elements are regulated. The milieu, Foucault noted, is "where circulation is carried out," and it involves a mix of natural and artificial "givens." Politically, it is also a "field of intervention in which . . . one tries to affect, precisely, a population." In the milieu, circular links are produced between causes and effects, and these effects bear upon all who live in it.

Foucault's discussion of town planners and their projects to build bridges and quays prompted me to think about my own university at the beginning of the 21st century. In the past decade, York University has been transformed into Canada's third largest university. Like these town planners, university presidents and the Board of Governors have regarded the university space as a site of academic planning and real estate development. For information technology (IT) managers and support groups, it is a matter of organizing the circulation of information and integrating technological developments into the academic plan and everyday functioning of the university. Since the mid-1990s, the administration has made increasing investments in IT projects to build a distributed campus-wide network, computing and network services, and a software framework. Today, academic discourse and network topography are wired together in the subterranean central server or "machine room." Since 2000, the main campus underwent the largest expansion of buildings in its 50-year history, at a cost of $318 million, in order to become a "comprehensive university." The significance of information technology can be seen in the $88 million Technology Enhanced Learning Building, completed in 2003, which houses a new School of Information Technology to educate IT professionals who can plan, design, build, and administer information systems for network enterprises, including post-secondary educational institutions. What is at issue is the question of the opening up of the university; here, as in many other places, the network university has risen out of the modern "university in ruins" (Readings, 1996) to become a node in the network society (Pruett & Schwellenhach, 2004; Barney, 2004).

In a January 25, 1978 lecture, Foucault defines "circulation in a very broad sense of movement, exchange and contract, as form of dispersion, and also as a form of distribution, the problem being: How

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2 According to Michel Serres, "the French language defines this word *milieu* as a point or an almost absent thread, as a plane or variety with no thickness or dimension, and yet, all of a sudden, as the totality of the volume where we live: our environment" (1997, p. 43).

should things circulate or not circulate?" (Foucault, 2007, p. 64). From the point of view of sovereign power, the aim is to allow circulation to take place, to get things moving, "but in such a way that the inherent dangers of this circulation are cancelled out" (Foucault, 2007, p. 65). The significance of town planning is not in the details, but in the mechanisms of security that replace the safety of the sovereign. Consequently, power does not operate by prohibition but by the "delimitation of phenomena within acceptable limits, rather than an imposition of a law that says no to them" (Foucault, 2007, p. 66). In this new form of life politics, the government acts on nature — air, water, forests, mountains — and the sovereign, in turn, exercises power over the human population by intervening on the milieu.

To transpose Foucault's analysis of the milieu, which gave birth to biopower and biopolitics, into an analysis of the academic milieu requires a few preliminary steps. First, there is the matter of the scale and object of analysis. Although Foucault's analytical perspective on micropowers shifted from the disciplines to the state, it is not limited to the level of the state and its technological systems. Whereas Foucault's interest was early urban infrastructure and technologies of security within the grid of sovereignty and liberal rationality, my interest is in the information and communication infrastructure, the conduct of academic conduct, and the organization of the academic milieu in these neoliberal times. Universities are knowledge centers, and the age of digital reproduction presents new possibilities for open access research and scholarship (Hall, 2008). However, as we shall see, "creativity" in the academic milieu often signals the imbrication of faculty, knowledge, and the new political economy of wealth.

Second, there is the matter of natural and artificial givens. In line with Foucault's thinking, we could say that every university has an ecological footprint that alters nature. The population of faculty, staff, and students exist as a biological species bound to this materiality. The environmental discourse of "sustainability" has begun to circulate on some university campuses after universities and chancellors signed the 1990 [Talloires Declaration](), a 10-point action plan for incorporating sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching, research, operations, and outreach. York's President Lorna Marsden signed this declaration in 2002, but also proceeded, in the manner of a corporate executive officer, with the private real estate sale and development of the campus landscape that was built on agricultural land 50 years ago. Foucault was concerned with "natural" givens such as rivers, marshes, and hills and artificial givens like individuals, houses, etc. While Stong Pond is a tranquil 'natural' place on the York Keele campus to hold stormwater, the York University Development Corporation built the $45 million Rexall Centre for Tennis Canada on top of its most significant landscape feature, the Black Creek tablelands ecology (Sandberg & Foster, 2004). However, the real material ecosystem of the university and the flaws of York's sustainability projects are beyond the scope of this article; suffice to say the university collects roughly 2,200 tonnes of waste each year, and the campus network is vulnerable to quasi-natural events that can produce data disasters. From an eco-ethical viewpoint on the university's inputs and outputs, network computing centers consume fossil fuel and nuclear-generated electricity that is neither emission nor waste free. The consumption, upgrading, and disposal of media technologies also contribute to the growth of electronic e.waste (Miller & Maxwell, 2008).

Third, in contrast to town planners who organize elements by asking what makes a good street, academic planning and policy have been reorganizing the university to answer the question of what makes for cost-and-operationally effective, anywhere/anytime higher education.

Due to the anti-education policies of Ontario's Harris Conservatives in the 1990s and the underfunded "Reaching Higher" policies of the McGuinty Liberals in the mid-2000s, the answer to this question has become less tied to any political philosophical notion of the "good society" and more centered on the "knowledge economy" and the "brains and know-how of a skilled workforce."[3] As Peters and Besley (2006) show, the knowledge economy" and "knowledge capitalism" can be traced back to late 1990s Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and World Bank reports. Once the "knowledge economy" prescribes educational policy, education is seen as a form of investment in human capital. The size of this investment can be calculated. In the province of Ontario, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities defines full-time students as "basic income units" (BIU = FTE [full-time equivalent] X weight of applicable program) in determining annual university operating grants. Such policies and formulas have shifted academic managerial priorities further away from the substance and quality of education toward revenue units (students) and cost units (faculty and staff).

In the early 2000s, a vision that embraced the "communication revolution" to create a "connected campus" and "connected community," "freed from the bounds of time and place," emerged as part of academic planning (York University Information Technology Strategy, 2001). University leaders and the IT professionals who report to them applied ICTs to improve the performance and value of university processes and activities. What is missing from this pragmatic philosophy of technology and its language of "tools" and "users" is how the whole infrastructure of academia is altered. After reviewing 800 years of university-based media history, Freidrich Kittler has gone so far as to argue that "universities have finally succeeded in forming once again a complete media system" (2004, p. 249). More recently, Andrew Wernick has commented that

> On the teaching side, however, the value added by direct contact and tangible facilities
> has continued to command a premium, and the impact of the telecommunication
> revolution has been more directly and profoundly felt in libraries and administration (at
> all levels), as well in all the interactivity and information-gathering that computerization
> enables, disables and imposes. (Wernick, 2006, p. 562)

However, the aleatory symbolic interaction of faculty cannot yet be totally reduced to integrated circuits, digital internetworking, data streams, routers, switches, codes, and protocol.

Fourth, it needs to be emphasized that Foucault's concept of governmentality exceeds what is usually meant by "government" today. As Thomas Lemke elaborates,

> Government was a term discussed not only political tracts, but also in philosophical,
> religious, medical and pedagogic texts. In addition to control/management by the state
> or the administration, 'government' also signified problems of self-control, guidance for
> the family, and for children, management of the household, directing the soul, etc. For

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3 For a fuller account of the political context of higher education in Ontario, see Lewis (2008). For a
  sociological study of the Canadian university system in crisis, see Côté & Allahar (2007).

> this reason, Foucault defines government as conduct, or, more precisely, as the 'conduct of conduct' and thus as a term which ranges from 'governing the self' to 'governing others.' All in all, in his history of governmentality, Foucault endeavours to show how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence. (Lemke, 2001, p. 191)

Many scholars have found the notion of the conduct of conduct helpful in understanding power and practice because it focuses on how government governs the complex of 'men and things'—including culture—so that the subject of governmentality is self-managed (Foucault 2007, p. 96-7). In the context of higher education, governmentality does not only concern neoliberal government policy directed at higher education institutions. Rather, governmentality is "the rationality immanent to the micro-powers, whatever the level of analysis being considered . . . (Senellart, 2007, p. 389). With this notion in mind, we could say that academic program reviews are textual practices that inscribe the teacher-student relation. University media releases inscribe the individual faculty-public relation. One can read these internal and external pedagogic texts for what they tell us about the conduct of academic conduct. In what follows, I suggest that such texts indicate an intellectual turnaround in academic freedom: academic laissez-faire has been normalized to integrate academic knowledge production into the neoliberal economy.

This field report on media knowledge presumes that the network university is an important site of the "*unconditional* freedom to question and assert, or even, going still further, the right to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge and thought, and thought concerning the truth" (Derrida, 2001, p. 24). The university is still a place where forms of counter-conduct develop even as the university is failing (Beverungen, Dunne & Sørenson, 2008). In the radical imagination, communication studies is a discipline rooted in the recognition of the human right to communicate. In a realistic utopian vision, communication departments are autonomous zones where faculty are educated, hired, and tenured to pursue their academic freedom and research interests free of the tyranny of the market (Bourdieu, 1998, 2003). What follows is an analysis of the academic milieu of media studies. I focus my attention on three institutions that host media studies in, or just outside of, Toronto: York University, the Ontario College of Art & Design, and the University of Toronto at Mississauga. There are a plethora of sites of media studies to choose from; my reason for reporting on these three is that these sites and their inner institutional workings are accessible to me. My own historically constituted, epistemological standpoint is as a contract faculty member who has taught media studies primarily at York since 2000. My overall contention is that by seeing the problem of 21st century education in the same way Foucault sees the problem of the mid-18th century town — as "problem of circulation" — we can perhaps better understand what media research knowledge will be encouraged and legitimated, what media knowledge circulates in the circuits of university media relations, and what risky media research will be minimized or marginalised. Power does not operate by disciplining *homo academicus* but by normalizing and maximizing the production and dissemination of knowledge that can be transferred or mobilized. Knowledge of the impact of cybernation on the university is important, but knowledge of knowledge is also indispensable to critical media studies.

For neoliberals, education is just one market among others, and only the intellectual innovations that can be brought to the market matter. On the other hand, academics have produced critiques of the corporatization, commercialization, and commodification of higher education that show how the space of

autonomous academic fields of knowledge production is increasingly linked to the capitalist circulation of goods, people, and wealth in ways that restrict or threaten individual academic freedom or the autonomy of academic fields. Since the publication of Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the academy has been viewed as "simultaneously inside and outside the direct influence of external political or economic forces" (Hearn, 2003). Most critiques of the corporate university proceed from the outside to show how the modern university can be understood on the basis of something external and general, such as "academic capitalism" or the "military-industrial-academic complex" (Slaughter, 2004; Giroux, 2007). To supplement these valuable critiques, I adopt Foucault's methodological principle of "going behind the institution and trying to discover in a wider and more overall perspective what we can broadly call a technology of power" (Foucault, 2007, p. 117).

In this respect, I do not analyze the university on the basis of functions we expect it to perform, because that would lead us to the history of its successes and failures. Rather, I study the institution from a Foucauldian angle to show how the redevelopment of the university is "inserted within strategies and tactics that find support even in these functional defects themselves" (Foucault, 2007, p. 118). Despite rebranding the university and adding the slogan to "Redefine the Possible" to York's traditional motto *Tentanda Via* (the way must be tried), York has not fulfilled the utopian dream of an unbounded interdisciplinary space and disciplinary innovation. Rather, after a decade of attempting to balance academic growth and the quality of education, it is a difficult and stressful place to think, particularly for the growing cadre of contract faculty (Rajagopal, 2002; Bauder, 2006; Bousquet, 2008). On January 29, 2009, teaching assistants, contract faculty and graduate assistants at York, represented by CUPE 3903, were forced back to work by the McGuinty Liberal government (Newstadt, 2008, York Democratic Forum). The union was no match for a two-pronged attack against the democratic right to collective bargaining. Internally, anti-CUPE tenured professors, managerial intransigence, and a university president advised by union-busting lawyers breached the duty to bargain in "good faith." Outside the neoliberal university, premier McGuinty, under pressure from the opposition party and from public opinion primed by the dominant framing of the strike in the media, sent in his "top" mediator — for one day. With the passage of Bill 145 — the York University Labour Disputes Resolution Act — the "education premier" completed the attack on collective bargaining begun by York's academic managerial class and set a dangerous precedent for the university sector. When the longest strike in English-Canadian university history is not sufficient to sustain an open discussion and debate about the internal organization and functioning of a public university, and the quality of graduate and undergraduate education is at risk (OCUFA Research Report, May 14, 2007; March 12, 2009; March 23, 2009), extreme reflection on the practice of media studies in this academic milieu — as extreme as the political-educational reality we work in — is called for. What follows is a minority report on media studies and knowledge.

Human Capital, Liberal Arts Tradition, Communication Studies and the Knowledge Economy

Focussing on the U.S. nascent neoliberalism of the Chicago School, Foucault shows how U.S. neoliberalism redefined the social as an economic domain. All social relations and behavior are deciphered according to economic criteria, and income derives from "human capital." For example, in the mid-1950s, Milton Friedman argued that the U.S. government should invest in "human capital" in order to raise the economic productivity of human beings (Friedman 1955). For Foucault, neoliberalism's "human capital" is

made of two components: "an inborn physical-genetic disposition and the entirety of skills that have been acquired as the result of 'investments' in corresponding stimuli: nutrition, education, training, and also love, affection, etc." (Lemke, 2001, p. 199). In this neoclassical economic theory, the issue is how the people performing their labor use the means at their disposal. Everyone is an "autonomous entrepreneur" and encouraged to give their life "entrepreneurial form" (Lemke, 2001). The key point is that neo-liberal governance responds to demands for more autonomy by "supplying" individuals and collectives with the "possibility of actively participating" in matters which had been the domain of industry or state. By extension, we could say that whole capitalist system depends not only on ICTs and network enterprises but upon academic "players" who hear the call for "innovation" and pursue instrumental "interdisciplinary," "collaborative" research (Barney, 2006). These tenured "scholar entrepreneurs," as Phil Cohen (2004) calls them, are also supported and enriched by the growth of untenured contract faculty.[4]

Moreover, capitalism and communication have become integral to each other. In the post-Fordist stage of capitalist economic development, universities are knowledge factories, and the discipline of communication studies comes to occupy a unique place among the social science and humanities in knowledge production and reproduction. It is significant as a "growing academic field and infrastructure of the general intellect" (Bratich, 2007, pp. 137-138). For autonomous Marxist theorist Paolo Virno, the general intellect refers to "formal and informal knowledge, imagination, ethical propensities, mindsets, and 'linguistic games' " (Virno, 2004, p. 106). Summoning Virno, Jack Bratich has argued that "embedded intellectuals" and "hegemonic communication studies" are making U.S. communication studies a "value-adding discipline" (2007, p. 146). Although the professionalization of media research may not have advanced as far as in the U.S., Canadian media scholars are increasingly enticed to collaborate with the state and private-sector industry. Canadian public universities are shaped by the broader policy environment and a national innovation agenda since the establishment of the Canadian Foundation for Innovation in 1997. The Canadian university has been a selective target of government intervention "in order to produce, multiply, and guarantee those liberties the liberal system needs" (Senellart in Foucault 2007, p. 385).

To develop this last point, a brief discussion of the place of the liberal arts is in order. The question of whether a neoliberal system even needs "liberal arts education" began to be framed in the 1990s. In York's Strategic Plan for the New Millennium, the Vice President of Academic Affairs noted that the university's historic mission, autonomy, and social benefits were all under attack by anti-intellectual political discourse in the name of globalization and the knowledge-economy. With the triumph of the political will to advanced technology, the liberal arts tradition came under attack:

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4 See Farr (2008) and Oliver et al. (2009) for further discussion on this point. The growing trend toward teaching-only faculty in Canada, Britain, and the U.S. supports the tierification of tenured "research" and non-tenured "teaching" faculty with the latter group being denied access to research opportunities at their own institutions. All internal institutional resources at research-oriented universities, including academic employee relations and unions, should address and resist this trend.

The apparent contradiction between these positive and negative effects of globalization on the universities is partly resolved by appreciation of changing perceptions of the value of liberal education in the arts and sciences. The historic acceptance of the value and transferability of the critical, analytic skills learned from a liberal education has been undermined by the increasing importance of technology. Advanced technology requires advanced technological know-how, and concerns about education for technology have replaced concerns about general education. Government, private sector and student demands increasingly emphasize more vocationally specific, employment-related opportunities in post-secondary education. (Stevenson, 1999)

A decade later, communication studies departments are still struggling to balance liberal arts educational objectives with technological know-how geared to jobs in the knowledge economy. Of course, the old media industries of print, film, radio, and television also exerted pressure on media education to be more applied and practical rather than historical and theoretical. Established programs have traditionally maintained a distinction between education and vocational training by separating critical and production studies or by hiring part-time instructors from the industry to teach production, applied, or professionally relevant courses. However, technological change has blurred the activities of production, consumption, and distribution of media content, and the creative/practical component of media work has been expanded now that academic work is dependent on ICTs and constant re-skilling is necessary to keep up with the growing demands of teaching and research. No matter how much the term "new media" has been put into question by scholars, communication studies has tended to grow by defining its programmatic needs in terms of new media industries (the Internet, video games, cell phones, etc.) rather than by responding to pressing social problems that need to be addressed philosophically, theoretically, historically, politically, and ethically (e.g., the democratic deficit).

Faced with greater student demand and greater financial austerity, the Communication Studies Program at York has departmentalized itself to enhance its academic profile and position in the intra-university competition between disciplines over scarce resources. The provision of arguments and justifications for investing in the growth of communication takes the form of a recent internal report written by a senior, retired faculty member to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts (Fletcher, 2007). Written at the dean's request in the context of the restructuring of faculties, the report was to provide an overview of degrees in communication and culture within York, across Ontario, and throughout the rest of Canada. But if such program reviews are any guide to academic reflection and modification, then we should not look only at its definition of education but at its objectives. To persuade administrators to invest, this academic growth forecast begins with the popularity of communication studies based on a combination of educational market "demand" and "social need." While cultural identity and "social cohesion" necessitate "critical education," equal, if not greater, weight is accorded to the "growing societal need for well-educated workers in the 'knowledge industries' and the cultural sector, in which both levels of government are beginning to invest." The term "social cohesion," which circulates in social policy, sociology, and political science, has a strong connotation of a liberal reformer's response to social inequality and "disturbance" that is associated with, and sometimes even attributed to, cultural difference. This term's frame of reference is policy analysis, research, and impact, rather than social transformation, new subjectivities, or models of criticality (Maras, 2007; Fuchs & Sandoval, 2008). Experience shows that

social cohesion depends on social rights; the absence in this report of any reference to progressive social change indicates the kind of political-educational rationality within which the program is surveyed, assessed, and modified. There is no critical reflection on the much recycled concept of "knowledge industries," which, alongside "knowledge worker" and "knowledge work," was coined almost 50 years ago by Peter Drucker, a professor of management in the graduate business school of New York University. Reports are not genealogies of the "knowledge economy" but professors of education have shown us that "there is a struggle over the meaning of the concept of economy, just as the term and its various appropriations point to the struggle of the meaning and value of knowledge" (Peters, 2008, p. 42). Moreover, the "knowledge economy" is haunted by the spectres of alternative economies — the risk economy, the gift economy, and the survival economy (Kenway, Bullen, Fahey, & Robb, 2006).

There is more to this internal report than conceptual recycling and structured absences. While the York University Academic Plan states that the university "should support academic discourse in all its accents and idioms, and promote interchange and exploration across the arbitrary boundaries of disciplines and faculties," the academic milieu marks out what research knowledge can pass between the constellation of academic programs, research centres, and the multiplicity of individuals working within them, and what can flow into the deeper channel of funded-research opportunities in "culture and entertainment." If the "growing importance of information and communication technologies" is only a good first reason to invest in communication studies, the emergence and capacity to seize funding opportunities is the "bottom line" reason. The Fletcher (2007) report is addressed to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, but it is also feedback directed to the Vice-President of Research & Innovation, affirming that communication studies is open for neoliberal government action in the "information/knowledge economy and entertainment and culture (or entertainment and creative) clusters."

To expand upon this last point, it is necessary to note that "culture and entertainment" is an extra-disciplinary research category created by the Vice-President of Research & Innovation and a strategic research planning group of faculty led by a Canada Research Chair[5] in Law, Communications, and Cultural Studies. Their case for research funding begins in these terms:

> First we made an extensive case for the funding of research at York University in the culture and entertainment field, detailing the very special position of York in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in terms of our well-established connections to GTA cultural industries, community arts organizations, ethnic and faith communities and alternative sexual citizens. The case was made in terms of the cultural work we produce, the knowledge and technology transfer we facilitate, the policy recommendations we

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5 The Canada Research Chairs Program was created by the federal government to "attract and retain some of the world's most accomplished and promising minds" in 2000. Today, there are more than 1,800 faculty members who occupy these positions across Canada. From a strictly academic labor perspective, this program may have strengthened Canada's "international competitiveness" by creating another two-tier faculty on top of the existing two-tier academic employment system.

provide, and the way we contribute to the building of social capital and social cohesion in
the knowledge-based economy. (Coombe, 2003)

At the highest level of institutional planning then, economics is determining of the interdisciplinary, collaborative research process in the first instance. In this strategy for acting on the future of communication and culture, the "knowledge-based economy" is recycled, along with "technology transfer," which is the circulation of research knowledge from the publicly-funded university to what is of commercial interest to the private sector, and "social capital," which signifies association, connections, networks, sociability, or cooperation that confers advantages to the possessors. These are all essentially contested concepts, but the network ties between scholars and cultural industries matter more to the economy than the production of the common. For the Office of Research Services, "research," "funding," and "impact" circulate in a circular flow chart as causes and effects of each other.

In the more open knowledge organization of the network university, the Canadian government's contribution to the problem of how to get the social sciences and the humanities moving is the "knowledge-broker model." For example, York is partnered with the University of Victoria for Research Impact. This is a network to move from knowledge transfer to knowledge mobilization by focusing on research strengths in Health and Society and partnering with public sector organizations. This prototype for a knowledge mobilization unit (KMU) is being rolled out for all social science and humanities research at Canadian universities. It is anticipated that this new mode of health research will be used by policy makers and health and social service agencies to make more effective, efficient, and responsive public policies that result in cost savings. Analysis of the impact of this KMU will lead to a knowledge mobilization strategy that will acutely affect other researchers working with non-university partners. However, in the social sciences and humanities, different disciplinary cultures have different objects, forms of knowledge, and social practices of scholarly communication. In media and cultural studies, it is unclear what the use and implications of the "knowledge-broker" model will be. However, we can speculate that engaging media companies and communication policy makers in the design and funding of media research may result in conscription and pseudo-innovation in line with private interests and market forces rather than critical engagement in line with the public good and democratic forces.

A search of the *Canadian Journal of Communication* reveals the extent to which academic concerns about the subordination of basic research to industry needs have been forgotten or dismissed. Eleven years ago, Clair Polster showed how the social relations of academic research are reorganized so that university/industry links "emerge out of a reconcerting or re-co-ordination of the activities of those involved in academic research across a variety of locations (particularly, the university, industry, and government)" (1998, p. 92). Similarly, Janice Newson, a York sociology professor, analyzed the de-differentiation of the university and corporate sector that was stimulated by the neoconservative agenda of the Mike Harris government in the 1990s. Contrary to the common sense view that such changes are external and inevitable, and that adaptation is the only choice, she argues

that these changes in university practices constitute a potentially, if not already realized,
significant transformation in the *raison d'être* of the university: from existing in the
world as a publicly funded institution oriented toward creating and disseminating

> knowledge as a public resource — social knowledge — into an institution which, although continuing to be supported by public funds, is increasingly oriented toward a privatized conception of knowledge — market knowledge. (Newson, 1998, p. 110)

Whereas Readings (1996) argued that the "post-historical" university dereferentialized "culture" and turned to the rhetoric of "excellence," York's Vice President of Research and Innovation has recognized the expediency of culture as entertainment. Like the university-based science that produces biotechnology, the social sciences and the humanities can be brought into line with the economy by producing social capital and cohesion.

With this in mind, let us return again to the strategy of developing communication studies. On the one hand, the Fletcher (2007) report entails dispelling misconceptions that communication studies is a professional or applied field of study and asserting its critical roots and disciplinary status; on the other hand, it means seeking "potential synergies," closer cooperation with applied, "hands-on" programs, expanding joint applied programs with colleges, and offering a new BA degree in "digital media." The report maintains a distinction between "education" and "training" that is proper to a faculty of arts, humanities, or social sciences, but does not differentiate "alternative approaches and practices" as forms of critique from "methods of innovation" that are believed to be the key to economic prosperity and social progress. The report recognizes the growing "societal need for well-educated workers in the knowledge industries," but is silent on cultural citizenship, political identity and the growing democratic deficit. While "increasing attention to cultural factors" is cited as a good reason for investment, the report neglects any sources of intellectual ferment in the field, such as post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism (Alhassan, 2007). In this strategy, the growth of communication studies is not theory and research driven. Critical and liberal arts education, rather than vocational or professional training, remains a central pedagogical goal, but some applied communication to deliver professional studies has its place and may even make "room for collaboration." In the ordinary language of this report, the field is modeled to pay its respects to, rather than contradict, economically-defined "education" for the knowledge economy. Without taking further intellectual responsibility for the political-ethical-aesthetic-ecological dimensions of the media, communication studies appears to be technologically-driven, without making any detour through "technological literacy" (Dakers, 2006) or the "technologies of the common" (Zehle & Rossiter, 2009), by the "rapidly changing mediascape (whether examined in terms of news, popular culture, interpersonal communication, or artistic creation/self expression, or the pervasive use of information and communication technologies" (Fletcher, 2007).

New Media and New Media Education

Outside the network university, the digital, interactive, user-based content race is on and the leaders are Everquest, Google News, YouTube, MySpace and iTunes. With the advent of networked so-called "sociable media," the quality of labor is being modulated once again. New media puts our time to work in new ways. In August 2006, for example, the entertainment and electronics conglomerate Sony acquired a video site called Grouper for $65 million (U.S.) that brings together copyrighted and user-generated content across devices and platforms. Viewing a Web site once or twice has zero economic value; what counts is the stickiness of Web sites. The value of this acquisition is not based merely on hit

rates, which can be manipulated in the short-term, but on future revenue potential that depend on a host of variables, including the loyalty of visitors. Sony is betting that getting users to enter their user profile to access Sony videos, or to mash some of them up to create new videos, is just the beginning of a lifetime of downloading and uploading video activity.

The old utopian dream of the first dot.com boom-and-bust cycle was of "no-collar" work, where work and play became indistinguishable (Ross, 2002). New media use is still considered "playful," but the new utopian dream of work is represented by Neil Cicieraga, a 20-year-old "grandaddy of animutation" — an Adobe Flash animation genre of pop cultural mashups. He is part of the generational shift in media consumption now underway, where television seizes less and less time, and hours spent surfing the Net are rising in proportion. His musical contribution to *Ultimate Showdown of Ultimate Destiny*, a hit on the Newgrounds Flash Portal, has generated so many CD sales that he doesn't have to get a "real job." In fact, he says he would "just sit around and pursue artistic projects" if he didn't get sick of spending all of his time online (Remple, 2006). Work and free time, capital time and life time, production and creative destruction converge. As the cultural industries morph into the "creative industries," there is no clock to punch, no labor time to measure, and no capitalist owner of time. As Andrew Ross writes: "Hailed as a refreshing break from the filtering of editorial gatekeepers, they are also sources of free, or cut-price content — a clear threat to the livelihoods of professional creatives whose prices are driven down by, or who simply cannot compete with, the commercial mining of these bourgeoning, discount alternatives" (2007, p. 21). Along with Ned Rossiter, I wonder whether user-produced mix culture and the peer-to-peer drive to collaborative production is "symptomatic of capital's quest for new economies of scale that minimize the cost of labor (2008, p. 9). In his reading of the advent of Web 2.0 and social networking sites, the will to connect is linked to the neoliberal "will to outsourcing" (Rossiter, 2008, p. 9).

In Toronto, the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD University) has been a site of electronic arts production since the 1970s. The current president invites the public to "Imagine a More Creative Toronto" (Diamond, 2006). In the "creative city," culture is the driver of the economy, cultural research networks galvanize academics, companies and non-profit organizations, and citizens are being hailed to become "creative contributors." Meanwhile, the liberal Ontario provincial government is also investing in the digital future. With $9 million from the Ministry of Research and Innovation, OCAD is building a research and innovation laboratory for interactive design, art, and digital media. Research projects, internship opportunities, and technology upgrades are funded through "partnerships" by private sector companies like Apple, IBM, Xerox, and Astral Media. More Ontario government funding to "bridge the digital divide" means more expansion of infrastructure, curriculum, and library, and this means more graduates who will be able to contribute to the "emerging global 'imagination economy' "(Sketch, 2008. p. 4). The techo-economic is clearly the catalyst for these changes in arts education. As Kenway, Bullen, Fahey and Robb (2006) have argued, the "ideology of the market" has altered the way artistic work is created, received, and produced and our understanding of art as a catalyst for social transformation. In applied arts like design, artistic creativity is channelled into the manufacturing of commodities (Kenway, Bullen, Fahey, & Robb, 2006, p. 84). OCAD's Faculty of Design is seeking to join other universities (such as York), businesses, and not-for-profit organizations to develop "green, clean and relevant information and communication technology (ICT), design and architectural strategies, methods and technologies, urban farming solutions, interior design and appliance solutions, materials innovations and economic

models and relevant social media" (Sketch, 2008, p. 2). This gives a green twist to the UK and Australian "creative industries" discourse, which moved arts-based research into the orbit of the knowledge economy. But if this discourse extended "creativity" from scientists working on the government's "innovation" agenda to artists as "creators and innovators working on real-world challenges," the flip side of innovation in this techno-economic paradigm — rapid obsolescence and the production of waste — is missing. One problem the "imagination economy" dissimulates is any incommensurability between aligning the arts with the growth sectors of the knowledge economy, predicated upon the economic growth ethic, and the zero growth that would be needed to counter the global ecological crisis, exemplified by climate change.

It is not just OCAD that has entered the post-industrial cultural economy and its dialectic of media creativity and productivity. While the University of Toronto, Canada's largest public research university, managed to avoid institutionalizing communication studies on its downtown St. George campus after the pioneering work of Harold Innis, and during and after Marshall McLuhan's tenure there, the university did branch out, with the Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, to create a new Communication, Culture and Information Technology (CCIT) program at its Mississauga campus in 2001. Combining arts and science courses with applied courses in digital media and technology, the curriculum is designed to turn youth who are enamoured by the Internet into communication professionals. It is not a renewed appreciation of the legacy of Innis and McLuhan or a new Toronto school of communication theory that gives impetus to new media studies; rather, bureaucratic administrators responding to government priorities in the area of digital media and the ICT sector have realigned academic plans and priorities to anticipate or match government priorities.

If the question on every tech-savvy student's mind today is, "How can I turn my immersion in the new media into a career?" — then the CCIT Program provides the answer and the digital toys to play with. Consider this co-curricular digital media research project:

> The MediaGenerator — a KMDI/ICC (1) collaboration will institute a broadcasting and production studio for the digital media age enabling students to create, produce and distribute multimedia content and programming as part of an enriched student experience. Funded by the Provosts Student Experience Fund this student-led, faculty-supported project starts in September 2006 with CCIT students as the first participants. While the media models of a previous generation — the college newspaper and radio station — continue to engage students today, a turn to the digital recognizes the potential for students to create novel multimedia content for their community and to distribute it in innovative ways that accommodate the mobility of the student population, and the need for location-independent access across a range of devices such as laptops, cell phones, MP3 players, etc. Media Generator will offer students the opportunity of experimenting with a variety of media technologies to create and explore ways of authoring, broadcasting, and receiving programs that contain still images, audio, and/or video, and static, dynamic and interactive content that are relevant to their experiences. (KMDiary, 2006)

By participating in the MediaGenerator, students can individuate themselves and develop their multimedia skill sets and portfolios, the first stepping stone toward a career that moves from project to project in the digital media industry sector. The investment in education that stimulates digital communication skills is predicated upon the belief that the knowledge economy will yield increasing returns to those who possess this component of "human capital." Program directors are mindful of the succession of media generations, but they have not yet grasped the increasingly "liquid life" of contingent media employment, precarious labor, and job insecurity (Deuze, 2007).

New Media Research On-the-Move

New technologies, such as the Internet, have led to the development of new methodologies and research tools. The mobile phone is perhaps the most important portable digital technology within the assemblage of media extensions of ourselves, mobilities, and circulating entities that have combined to produce a "mobilities paradigm" shift (Urry, 2007).

Student and faculty are on the move and the image of "mobility" is circulation, as we can see in this excerpt from a story in York's daily online bulletin, headlined: "York Prof Helps to Democratize the Mobile Technology Industry"

> Leading-edge, creative, and future-oriented: these adjectives all apply to York University Professor Barbara Crow's research on digital and mobile technologies. Working as part of an interdisciplinary team, Crow is helping to develop new ways in which Canadians can create, access and share content through mobile, or wireless, devices, such as cell phones.
>
> What we are interested in doing as a group of social scientists, artists, designers and engineers is to create cultural content and develop applications on mobile technologies to allow people to use them in different ways than we are normally used to, says Crow, who teaches in the joint graduate program in Communication & Culture, offered by York University and Ryerson University. She is also involved in CONCERT, a York-led consortium of academic institutions, companies and government and industry associations that are collaborating to boost the entertainment, new media and creative industries in Canada and in the GTA, in particular.
>
> On sabbatical until June, Crow has spent the past year in Montreal, where she has been active with the Mobile Digital Commons Network (MDCN). Funded by Canadian Heritage and institutional partners, including York University, the MDCN facilitates innovation and policy development on wireless technologies by connecting Canadian academic researchers, artists and business people.
>
> As part of an MDCN initiative, Crow and her associates have developed an interactive, location-based game called The Haunting. Game players are sent on a special mission to

find eight ghosts in Montreal's Mount Royal Park, using their cell phones at night.

With the creation of MEE, which operates on unlicensed spectrum and is open-sourced (available without cost), the MDCN team has changed the telecommunications landscape. Now, artists and social activists, two groups that usually have limited financial resources, will be able to easily inform cell phone users about their work. And, if the mobile technology field follows the Internet industry's lead, many commercial applications will also be developed. Open-source applications have been used by many business ventures to develop Web sites that generate huge profits, dating and networking forums among them. Similar moneymaking commercial opportunities for Canadian companies using mobile technologies may be on the horizon.

Crow notes that MEE also has nation-building implications. "I think it's very important for us to have content developed by Canadians and applications that are relevant to our content," she says. "Historically, one of the reasons that we have had the railway and such excellent land [telephone] lines is that we are very concerned about connecting Canadians. Part of being Canadian has been trying to attend to our huge land mass and communications devices have been ways to bring us together." (Wawryshyn, 2007)

In addition to the tradition of connecting Canadians, there is a history of the market subsuming the state so that the Canadian government acts on behalf of the telecommunications industry to get media researchers involved in the research and development of new technologies and services. In the late 1990s, the CultTech Collaborative Research Centre conducted trials on residential community, high-speed broadband networking, user-directed content in York's Calumet College student residence and in Newmarket, Ontario. With funding from Industry Canada (1.5 million) and a private sector Intercom consortium of Bell Ontario, the Rogers Communication Centre, Ontario Hydro Technologies, IBM Canada, and Apple Canada ($120 million), social science was enlisted to help these companies determine how to allocate resources to develop the "info way" for data transmission and video communication. CultTech was also developing a trademarked framework for courseware and learning modules called VITAL —Varied & Integrated Teaching & Learning — that would respond to the "knowledge economy" by optimizing the production and distribution of educational multimedia content via digital networks. This project foresaw "partnerships" among educational institutions, publishers, broadcasters, information carriers, and technology companies. Its failure was probably due to the complexity of bridging hyperlinks in CD-ROMS, which was the state of the art of electronic publishing at the time, with the rapid growth of the WWW and software. The history of Web-based education would be written by the winners of the race to create the first commercially successful virtual learning environment, which turned out to be WebCT Educational Technologies Corporation, a spin-off company created by Murray Goldberg, a computer scientist who had created Web-based, online-only, course tools at the University of British Columbia.

The Canadian government has been interested in mechanisms for distributing new media content since the late 1990s. A decade later, after the takeoff of wireless telephony and the construction of wireless 'hotspots,' including university campuses, the theme of "connecting Canadians" is in the air again. The MDCN offers a rapproachment between past Canadian cultural-technological nationalism and future

economic globalization designed to circulate technological know-how and innovations in wireless and mobile technologies that flow from the local, to the national, to the global and from artists, designers, and engineers to the market. In contrast to CultTech's traditional market research-oriented approach to uncertain "demand" for new technologies and applications, the MDCN invokes the notion of a digital "commons" against the enclosure of the commons and the monopolization of the wireless spectrum by telecommunications corporations. Whereas CultTech pinned its hopes for greater democracy on interactive broadband that gave consumers greater access and control over media content, MDCN pins its democratic hopes on the Mobile Experience Engine (MEE), a software development kit for creating advanced applications and media-rich experiences on mobile devices.

Creating mobile platforms and software tools that are not owned by corporations is undoubtedly a public good. In this public-private initiative, however, the role of social scientists is to conduct "usability studies" to understand the mobile experience of users, not out of mere curiosity or to address essential questions in the discipline, but to catch up with European Union "work" on the interoperability of devices and personal area networks. The entire project is haunted by the spectre of the Canadian wireless industry monopoly and the digipreneurs who will deploy the same sociotechnical know-how and open-access resources for their own commercial interests. What is being tested and prototyped in games like *The Haunting* are mobile, locative media devices that incorporate the user's position as well as sensor input on their activity and the environment. "Locative media" augment the mobile user's cultural experience by interacting with the territory so as to alter the qualities of the territory. By creating a "collaborative portal," the MDCN is geared to turning emerging technologies into products by connecting academics, art projects, wireless development centers (New Emerging Wireless Technologies), ICT development consortia (TRLabs), and technology consulting firms that create interactive visual systems for advertising in which the consumer participates and that provides advertisers with measureable viewer data (Freeset). In this "design research," the emphasis on the challenges facing designers and engineers appears to cancel out any critical evaluation of how this emerging responsive, intelligent wireless technology (aka "smart phones") may expand the spread of surveillance (Lyon, 2007). One may catch only a glimpse of the real difficulties of "collaboration" with an MDCN partner and also a critical perspective on WiFi technology, community development, and democracy in one Ph.D. student's online field notes (Powell, 2007) and postdoctoral work (Powell, 2008).

These developments are part of the flow of public university resources toward industry partners and the marketplace due to chronic underfunding. But there is also what Andrew Wernick (1991) has called a "promotional interest" in "York prof helps to democratize the mobile technology industry." This story about a particular faculty member's research and the academic milieu of media studies is mutually reinforcing. This news marks the quality of this research by association with government and industry, rather than the judgement of academic sub-collectivities or peer-reviewed scholarly communication. The framing of this research in terms of technological nationalism marks York as a university of technoculture with links to the nation-state and national culture. In reality, York is a servant of the province, which views postsecondary education as a producer of "human capital." In the Toronto region, digital, communicative capitalism depends on tinkering on the edge of its ever expanding networks. York has met the demand for academic autonomy by supplying communication studies professors with the possibility of participating in the Ontario "knowledge — or idea-driven creative economy" (Martin & Florida, 2009).

To return to Foucault one last time, the 18th century territorial sovereign become the "regulator of a milieu, which involved not so much establishing limits and frontiers, or fixing locations, as, above all and essentially, making possible, guaranteeing, and ensuring circulations: the circulation of people, merchandise, and air, etc." (2007, p. 29). As he describes, circulation presupposes the construction of immobile infrastructure. Bridges establish the connection between places, and the quay is the interface between different systems of transport. In the 21st century, the circulation of cultural commodities presupposes the construction of mobile infrastructure. With a total investment of $27.3 million, the federal government's New Media Research Networks Fund

> supports innovative applied research at the intersection of technology and culture through networks of public and private sector researchers that share knowledge, resources and facilities. Networks develop a research program that has relevance for the cultural sector and promotes technological innovation in new media or interactive digital content. (New Media Research Networks Fund, 2005-2007)

This applied research fund excluded content creation projects, sociological and other types of research based in the social sciences, and cultural activities that mostly involve the application of existing technologies. Heritage Canada invested in six projects, one of which was the MDCN. With $1,152,715 in funding over two years, wireless networks were built in Montreal and Banff to connect Hexagram, The University of Quebec at Montreal, McGill University, Concordia University, and the Banff New Media Institute, as well the Society for Arts and Technology (SAT) and InterAccess. The MDCN's purpose was to "create mobile games that help Canadians using their mobile and wireless devices to experience and explore outdoor life, wellness, urban living, history, and tourism" (New Media Research Networks Fund, 2005-2007). These places are not merely of scholarly interest; they are also of pecuniary interest as emerging markets for G3 wireless locative services. According to this spin-off conference announcement on "Mobile Nation: Creating Methodologies for Mobile Platforms," multi-platform content design is where art and technology meet to create the new wealth of networks:

> Mobile Nation will provide an important means to engage designers, engineers and end-users across diverse sectors, such as cultural industries, architecture, educational content delivery, way-finding, and advertising in the exciting potential offered by mobile platforms, such as cellular telephones, MP3 devices, Personal Digital Assistants, and mobile game systems. Mobile Nation will also explore and share the many challenges faced by designers and engineers supporting design for these platforms, within an array of technological contexts. These include WiFi; sensor systems such as Radio Frequency ID, Global Positioning Satellite and Bluetooth; various networks such as Personal Area Networks); as well as responsive wearable and ambient contexts, such as intelligent garments and billboards. Multiplatform content design will be a key element of the conference. (Bolingbroke, 2007)

The circulation of Canadian content over mobile phones presupposes a platform to circulate on and any public platform requires a code politics that can counter the telecommunications industry's

proprietary code which controls wireless distribution. One can either hack the existing code to set the machine in motion or write new, open-source code, and the MCDN has chosen the latter option. The democratic politics of the open source software movement has been well documented, but what is missing in this research enterprise is any theorization of the "mobile commons" model (Goggin, 2008) or any attention to issues arising from wage labor politics, copyright, intellectual property regimes, net neutrality, or e-waste. What remains of the academic freedom that depends on the autonomy of an academic field when social scientists are internetworking with digipreneurs? In the 1990s, CultTech was roundly criticized by faculty for lacking the independence of pure research, discovery, and critique. Since then, there has been a turnaround in the intellectual atmosphere. In the 2000s, faculty who collaborate in such research and development networks for the metaproduction of wireless culture are honoured as TELUS™ Distinguished Scholars. This honorific title marks the faculty subject who has governed herself well, that is to say, in conformity with the academic milieu and infocapitalism. For such free, flexible and virtuous tenured faculty members, the university is still a secure place to work, and the telecommunications "future is friendly."[6] If the milieu is the medium of action of one body upon another, the message is that communication studies faculty are expected to seize the opportunity to make such contributions and become representatives of the creative class. What is hidden is how social science becomes captive to corporate influence and how collective ideas of what intellectuals do has shifted. For the new agreeable faculty subject of governmentality, faculty development occurs in ways that foster the strength of the state. When individual, tenured faculty become functionaries who embody the new academic milieu, and they assume a lower management position in relation to contract faculty, they become tenured bosses who can "use economic, ideological, administrative or actual weapons to either control or make space for what those in the academy can do, and where they can direct their work" (Lewis. 2008, p. 46).

By Their Edufactories, Ye Shall Know Them[7]

The developments I have described are partly to be understood as the corporatization of communication studies. There is no doubt, as David Noble (2007) has documented, that this is consistent with York President Mamdouh Shoukri's "mind to market" (read: submission to market) mandate. From the perspective of governmentality, the network university allows media research to circulate and media researchers to get their projects moving, but in such a way that reflexivity and criticality are cancelled out.

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6 This is the advertising slogan for TELUS, a Canadian telecommunications company with $9.2 billion of annual revenue and 11.2 million customer connections, including 5.7 million wireless subscribers, 4.4 million wireline network access lines and 1.2 million Internet subscribers. TELUS provides a wide range of communications products and services, including data, Internet protocol (IP), voice, entertainment, and video. One of its 4,000 retail stories is in York Lanes, the university's shopping mall.

7 The title of this subsection is spliced together from two sources. "By their factories, ye shall know them" appears in Wilém Flusser's (1999, org. 1993) essay on *homo faber*, the telematic society, and the coming of factory-schools and school-factories titled The Factory. The "Edufactory" is from the edufactory.org manifesto by the edufactory collective that aims to "open a process of conflict in the knowledge production system and its mechanisms of hierarchisation."

In this new form of academic life politics, power does not operate through a hegemonic process or by saying no to those who practice critical media studies; rather, it operates within the conduct of academic conduct to delimit useful research. As predicted by a former York vice-president of academic affairs and provost, universities have become more important to the knowledge economy as producers of research that can lead to knowledge "transfer" and "mobilization" (Stevenson, 1999). But a decade later, the recession has shattered the fundamentalist belief in the market. The current economic crisis is accelerating the crisis of the university, so perhaps it is time to develop a double strategy of refusal: a refusal to formulate our research interests to fit neoliberal policy objectives and a refusal to shape our curriculum to accommodate the market.

Given the contemporary academic milieu I have described, the future academic freedom to do media studies is likely to be constrained if tenured faculty respond favourably, or with passive indifference or complacency, to announcements like this:

> York University Will Lead Consortium to Boost R&D in GTA's Creative Sector
>
> TORONTO, February 15, 2007 — York University today received funding from the Ontario government to lead a unique public-private partnership that will help fuel the economic development of the GTA's creative and entertainment industries.
>
> The Consortium on New Media, Creative, and Entertainment R&D in the Toronto Region (CONCERT) has raised more than $500,000 in support from partner institutions and will now receive $300,000 in matching funds as part of the Ontario government's Entertainment and Creative Cluster Partnerships Fund.
>
> Founded in partnership with The Ontario College of Art & Design and Ryerson University, CONCERT now consists of more than 20 partners. The consortium will bring multinational, mid-sized and small companies in the entertainment, screen-based and other creative industries together with academia, government and industry associations to build a consensus on regional priorities.
>
> The matching funds provided to CONCERT through the province's Entertainment and Creative Clusters Partnerships Fund are an important investment for the region," says Stan Shapson, vice-president, research & innovation at York University and Chair of the CONCERT Steering Committee . . . (York University Media Relations Archive)

Communication Studies faculty with ties to media organizations are nothing new. In the early years of the mass communication program at York, some faculty had ties to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Before the 1990s, the CBC was still a public broadcaster mandated and publicly funded to act on behalf of the public interest. The CONCERT company partners have no such noneconomic interest. Such examples of "partnerships" could probably be multiplied in other universities and jurisdictions. Given the harmonization of the network university's internal strategic research priorities and the external government funding priorities for public/private research networks and academic/industry

internetworking, we can characterize a tendency for the academic milieu to be regulated so that academic career time in communication studies becomes formative of "human capital." In this academic milieu, it becomes normal and acceptable for personal research interests, large government grants for large-scale, interdisciplinary, multi-sector, "collaborative" applied research into technology and culture, and professional career advancement to converge. Faculty's hands, keyboards, and cell phones are freely tied to the political rationality of liberalism. Given the submissive Senate and undeveloped public sphere, the norm for political communication in this academic milieu is not to be outspoken. The norm is to receive academic speech that is a reprise to silence with silence. Moreover, the stability of tenured faculty now depends on the flexibility of contract faculty for whom the future is precarious. For communication studies, the casualization of academic labor not only places limits on the volume and quality of critical work (including inquiries into the real subsumption of academic labor in the rigid, crowded, dystopic university), but also works to diminish the formation, circulation, and utilization of media knowledge in the future. The 2008-2009 York University strike indicates that resistance is possible but no match for a president and an academic managerial class that will push a university into deeper crisis by locking out its own students. After the strike, President Shoukri, who receives a $325,000 base salary and a guaranteed performance payment of $81,250 for the first year of his contract, went on the [Excalibur YouTube Web site](#) to teach the retrograde academic lesson that "there are no winners and losers in a strike, there are only losers and losers."

For all the attention to the political economy of communication, there is a tendency toward a knowledge production process *within* and *for* the circulation process we have yet to open a dialogue about in communication studies. The York social historian of education, Paul Axelrod, wrote that

> Critical thinking, and thus liberal education itself, can be compromised by forces that erode the autonomy of the student, or the professor. Teachers including those in the liberal arts — who tolerate no questioning of their own ideas, or demean those students who express alternative views, diminish the educational experience . . . . Similarly, academic researchers — in the arts and sciences — who skew their research interests to serve the interests of funding sponsors threaten the integrity of the university by surrendering their intellectual autonomy to influential patrons. (Axelrod, 2002, p. 41)

Seven years later, Axelrod (2009) would count himself among the tenured conservative faculty who argued, in petitions and in the media, that it was the strike that damaged York's reputation and the union's job security proposals that threatened the "integrity" of the appointments process. From the point of view of maintaining the status quo, the conduct of the union — the only form of power within the unequal employer/employee relation and a form of collective defence against unbridled neoliberalism — has been deemed "unacceptable" for every university in Canada. Yet, as of July 1, 2009, the liberal arts will be decentered from the university curriculum when the new Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies opens. Preserving the quality of liberal arts education and commitments to social justice within the largest faculty in Canada will require continuous organizing and mobilizing against the casualization of academic labor.

Further discussion and debate on these issues would add some ferment to our field and help prevent it from becoming the new dismal, depoliticized social science. If contemporary social life has become the conquest of mobility, the commercial-technological imperative is that technics must evolve more quickly than culture, and the techno-economic is moving the whole communication research process onto the side of the capitalist teletechnological megamachine. The macro and the micro come together when the state, the corporation, and the educated networked faculty are optimized to innovate, and mobility is accommodated by adopting miniaturised place-shifting information and communication technologies. In this new mobile lifeworld and neoliberal-networked university interspace of productivity and creativity, critical media studies work must be defended.

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