Dallas Smythe Award Keynote Lecture

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This talk is a lightly edited transcript of Robert Hackett's keynote lecture at the Union for Democratic Communications 2015 Conference, "Circuits of Struggle," May 2, 2015, in Toronto. Hackett is the recipient of the 2015 Dallas Smythe Award, awarded by the Union for Democratic Communications to an outstanding and influential scholar working in the critical political economic tradition of Dallas Smythe. In this talk, Hackett discusses his connections to Smythe, as well as his recent work around journalism, the media, and climate change.

Keywords: Dallas Smythe, political economy, climate crisis, journalism, democratic communication, media justice, activism, environmental communication, social movements, alternative media

I'm going to say a few words about Dallas himself and his influence on me. I'm just doing a reality check because I know now I am almost two generations removed from my undergraduate students, so I often have to stop and do reality checks about what they know or remember. I've stopped asking people if they know where they were when John F. Kennedy was shot, but I wonder if anybody had a chance to meet Dallas Smythe? He passed away 23 years ago. So just two

Hackett, Robert (2016). Dallas Smythe Award Keynote Lecture, *Democratic Communiqué*, vol. 27. 2015/2016 pp. 1–14.

or three or four of you have? Well, he was a mentor to me, both personally and in terms of his approach. I appreciated his generosity, which in part inspired me—he was one of the reasons that I switched from political studies, and I still have a great deal of respect for work in political science and for my old department at Queens University. But he inspired me to switch to communications. The first time I met him was at Simon Fraser University when he gave me a mimeoed copy of his book, *Dependency Road* before it was published. This would be about 1979 or 1980. He was very generous with his time, even though I was an unknown graduate student at the time who just happened to go up to SFU over the winter break, and he gave me that mimeographed copy. He also, coincidentally, grew up in Regina, which was also the first Canadian city I lived in. And then we actually became colleagues at SFU in 1984 and I ended up with an office right next door to him. Those were the days when there were no regulations about smoking. Dallas enjoyed his pipe. Students would light up in my office, so I put up a sign on my door that said, "No smoking in this office." Next week a sign appeared on Dallas's door that said "Smoking is mandatory in this office." This is one of the illustrations of the feistiness for which he was known.

So, apart from making me buy air freshener, what was his substantive influence on me? I read *Dependency Road* with a sense of jaw-dropping revelation, and I think it had both a positive and, in a certain sense, a productive negative influence on me. First of all, I think it provided a kind of structural context for the analysis of ideology, in and through media representations. I was, at the time, very strongly impressed with the work of the Glasgow University Media Group, with Murdock and Golding in Leicester, and, of course, Stuart Hall in the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, all of which I visited in 1981. Dallas Smythe's audience commodity thesis provided me with one structural starting point along with the work—actually the somewhat different work—of Louis Althusser. But nevertheless, they both provided a kind of structural basis for critiquing the radical instrumentalism that was characteristic of Anglo-Marxist analyses of state and media at the time. It is a view that tends to overemphasize the social backgrounds and deliberate control and manipulation of institutions by elites. Instead, I would suggest that we should be looking at how capital logic influences all institutions, including their leaders—the elites that are nominally in charge of them. And more specifically, I've developed an interest in how commercial and market forces function as a kind of censorship in a media system. So that was one contribution that Smythe's work made to my own work.

Secondly, I toyed with the idea that the media-audience relationship, if it was indeed so central to this circulation of capital, could it be an access that would lead to some transformation, much like the capital-labor relationship itself could in more traditional Marxism? But I couldn't get it to work and that's partly because of audience's own complicity in their own position as audience members. I

wanted to resist Dallas' brief flirtation with comparing audience work with mind slavery, which he mentioned in, I think, the first chapter of *Dependency Road.* So that the resistance or pushback of audiences as consumers simply reinforced that relationship.

Let me give you one example. In May 1985, thousands of people in Atlanta, Georgia took part in street protests. What was that about? Anybody remember? Apartheid? About Reagan's indifference to the AIDS epidemic? U.S. intervention in Central America? Can anybody guess? 1985. Big protest. Coca-Cola, exactly. Consumers were upset because Coca-Cola had changed its recipe. So thousands of people went into the streets and forced it to reintroduce the old Coke as Classic Coke. So, that probably wasn't the kind of radical agency we were hoping for in terms of resistance. And it became clear that audiences have transformative potential when they take the form of social movements responding to media from the standpoint of subjectivities other than that of consumer. And a similar point was made by Oscar Gandy in his own recent lecture at Simon Fraser.

So the notion of audience resistance then led me fairly soon to the study of social movements and eventually to a blindspot in social movement theory itself, and that is how to understand the possibility of a social movement that doesn't simply accept the media as a fixed part of the political landscape, but is focused on changing the institutions and structures themselves. And that led in particular to a book with Bill Carroll called *Remaking Media*. Currently I thought that the blindspots in the audience commodity thesis were as productive as some of its contributions. Dallas himself tended to be somewhat dismissive of questions of ideology and textual representation, so I was inspired to take up that work from that sort of structural standpoint. So one of my works in the 80s and 90s, that Dave Skinner just kindly reviewed, was providing empirical evidence via content and textual analysis of news for structural determination of his structural influence. That is, how is the impersonal logic of commercialism and the audience commodity imperative and other structural influences, how are they embedded or translated into the relatively autonomous practices and texts generated by journalism as modernity's most important form of storytelling in the words of John Hartley? So I focused on politically salient issues that potentially called into question the legitimacy of the state and or capitalism, issues like labor struggles, the peace and antiwar movements in the context of a renewed Cold War in the 1980s, and how the regime of objectivity obscures media's ideological functioning, which led to a book with Zhao. I looked also through NewsWatch at broader blindspots in the news agenda in Canada, and finally what what kinds of alternative journalisms might be more productive and more democratic. So I had longstanding concerns there with analyzing the repressive aspects of media representations, but also with the prospects for progressive change in both the media and the broader political environments.

So how did I get to what I am doing now? For the last couple of years, my focus has been on media and climate change. It's not that I have a scientific background, but I do have an interest in human capacity to confront the deepest challenges and the darkest powers. I think that is what we should be doing—looking at the big issues and the big challenges. I think that's really the best reason to be doing critical communications scholarship. So then my latest project, again in collaboration with many people, is media representations of climate change as the greatest threat to humankind perhaps in history and alternatives, at least for communication practices, particularly journalism, which has been my focus for the past few decades.

So let me start by just some general thoughts on the implications of global climate crisis for communication and media studies. One obvious one is that maybe we should be thinking, just in terms of setting an example, of finding ways to reduce our own carbon footprints. For example, can we avoid the technofetishism which is characteristic of the surrounding popular culture? Do we have to buy the latest gadgets? So far I find myself able to get by without even owning a smart phone, although it means sometimes that I am a free rider on others who happen to have them. But nevertheless, we can probably do without having the buy the latest cell phone model that comes out. Does anybody know the number of cell phones that are discarded every day in the US? Four hundred and fifty thousand, nearly half a million per day. The ICT industries actually have a carbon footprint equivalent to that of the airline industry, but relatively under the radar screen. That's changing a bit with work by Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller in their book, *Greening the Media,* as a new lens to assess the relationship of communications to environmental degradation. But apparently, if cloud computing was a country, it would be the 6th biggest consumer of electricity in the world. So that's one thing we could be looking at.

Maybe we should regard academic travel as a perfect example and certainly no exception. Maybe we should be thinking of having fewer or greener conferences, more video participation, and, above all, paying political carbon offsets. And with that I don't mean the corporate-sponsored greenwashing programs, but our own personal engagements and our time and donations to frontline and effective advocacy groups. Maybe, if I can put out a suggestion, maybe UDC could make a contribution to one of the First Nations camps that are being set up along the pipeline routes through B.C. That's a huge issue on the west coast right now. And this became a personal issue for me. You may have heard of the TransMountain pipeline, one of the routes from the tar sands. There's all kinds of reasons to oppose it, including its contributions to global climate change, but I have a personal reason as well in that both of the proposed routes are about 200 meters from our house, one of it along the riverway that is used as a recreational route by local residents. not to mention their impact on indigenous people's rights, as well.

So, reducing our own carbon footprint and engaging with those who are resisting the excesses of extractive capital would be a start. We could also make global climate crisis part of our own teaching and research agendas. It's not too difficult to connect it with questions of power, inequality, representations of ideology. I see at this conference that there are already signs of that kind of work coming to the surface, but there is much, much more to be done. One thing that I think would be interesting—I don't know how it might affect your career—but what about doing research on the connections between universities and the fossil fuel industry, looking at the board memberships, the research funding and the donations. But also on the flip side, what about looking at the practices, the communicative practices of resistance along the chain of extraction-production-distribution and disposal?

We should also consider, and I don't have an answer for this, but just an invitation to think about whether we need to introduce new theoretical tools or amend old ones in light of climate crisis. Should we be talking about productivism as a form of oppression or extractivism as a distinct formal aspect of capitalism, or engaging with John Bellamy Foster's re-reading of Marx in light of ecological crisis?

Climate crisis also gives us new reasons, I think, for careful attention, supportive attention, to indigenous people's rights and knowledge, not only, although importantly, from the viewpoint of identity and decolonization, but also, for example, from sustainability, and I'm going to quote from Naomi Klein's important new book, *This Changes Everything*. She says, "the ways of life that indigenous groups are protecting have a great deal to teach about how to relate to the land in ways that are not purely extractive." And that's very different from the kind of viewpoint that you might get from Canada's corporate press. In particular, a notorious article that was written by Margaret Wente in October 2008 which she said, quoting another author but obviously very favorably in her viewpoint, she said, "The most important explanation for aboriginal problems today is not Western colonialism, but the vast gulf between a relatively simple, Neolithic kinship-based culture and a vastly complex late industrial capitalist culture. She went on to say, "Most of traditional knowledge is useless, a heap of vague beliefs and opinions that can't be verified or tested." That's a direct quote, okay? And this person is still writing for the *Globe and Mail* which, if you are staying in the hotel, you can get for free. It's Canada's self-proclaimed national newspaper.

So the point is, thinking of the power of corporate capital in the media is part of the struggle—both for indigenous rights and for addressing climate change. There's also another reason Naomi Klein gives for taking indigenous rights seriously. She says, if aggressively backed by court challenges, direct action, and mass movements demanding that they be respected, indigenous rights may now represent the most powerful barriers protecting all of us from future of climate chaos.

So, what I am suggesting is that sustained attention to both the material roots and the political and cultural implications of global climate crisis can be a valuable and profound research agenda. We could ask about the apparent decline of universalism, the retreat to sectional identities, the withdrawal of trust from people outside of your particular group, however that group is defined, as nations scramble for scarce resources, as we're faced with millions and perhaps soon hundreds of millions of climate refugees, and so on. How does the political and economic power of extractivist industries link with what appears to be resurgent militarism and fascism? I think we can start using that 'f-word." Somebody suggested yesterday that we seem to be in a fascist moment and maybe we should start making that part of our research agenda more explicitly, as well.

But also the flip side is that there are new forms of emerging transnational resistance and solidarity. There is much to be supported and celebrated as well. In short, what I am asking for, I guess, is the critical analysis of communication practices and structures from the viewpoint of their relation to environmental crisis and sustainability. And that's why I have taken up the work I am now doing at this late stage of my career. In collaboration with the Centre for Policy Alternatives and colleagues like Shane Gunster and Kathleen Cross and SFU, my particular question is, having looked at media for the last twenty-plus years as a critic, through News Watch Canada and other vehicles, the question I want to ask now is: What kind of journalism do we need to facilitate an appropriate societal response to global climate crisis?

So I am going to turn to just a few of the findings or at least thoughts that have emerged from this ongoing work that we've been doing through the CCPA and the forthcoming book with Routledge coming out next year, hopefully. We've been looking at the views of several distinct interpretive communities that include professional journalists; focus groups of environmentally concerned butpolitically disengaged citizens; environmental communication practitioners in not-for-profit organizations, otherwise known as NGOs; and journalists in alternative media, all in the Vancouver area. So, let me just take a few fragments from this research to share with you.

One question is: What do alternative media and environmental communication practitioners see as the main problems with media coverage? You probably won't be surprised with what they say. They don't actually see outright anti-environmental bias or climate change denial, the major problems that are still there but are diminishing in importance. The most common complaint is about coverage that is too episodic, not sufficiently analytical, doesn't connect the dots. There's too narrow a range of sources. There's not enough attention to policy responses or solutions. It's too often presented as a narrow scientific topic. There's too much focus on political conflict or competition within elites when it is treated as a political issue. And there is not much attention to who is responsible for

climate change, not much analysis of capitalism or critique of social structures. And in their view, what accounts for these deficiencies in hegemonic media is dwindling resources. Fewer science and environment reporters. Backlash or flak from a small but vocal, ideologically-motivated right-wing constituency. Let me just give you one example of that: my colleague, Shane Gunster, has a chapter in a book called *Climate Change Politics.* It's reviewed on Amazon, and it's got just one review, and that review says: "The authors of this book should be jailed for their subversive activities. These people are financed by the UN criminals that have pushed the man-made global warming. True science indicates the Earth, as well as other planets, is, in fact warming, but there is no reliable evidence that proves man has caused this issue. Down with the criminal UN conspiracy, long live the republic of the United States of America." So that's the kind of flak I am talking about. Fortunately, Amazon allows readers to respond to reviews and informs us that zero of 21 people found this review helpful. Anyway, just imagine dealing with flak like that all the time when you're trying to write about climate change issues seriously. Also news values are an impediment. Climate change is a slow-motion disaster with consequences that are perceived as being distant or in the future, so it doesn't fit well with dominant news values. And stereotyping of the environment as being separate from mainstream news topics and sources. And those of our interviewees who responded to a more radical take, if they have a sort of radical structural analysis of climate politics, they tended to interpret media though the same light—as structurally linked to a system of oppression. So they pointed to commercial pressures, corporate ownership, and advertising from big oil companies.

Okay, so what does academic research add to this list of grievances about hegemonic media? Pretty much our research would support those critiques. Simon Cottle, one of the English-language world's leading writers on global crises and the media, talks about the fundamental disconnect between media's representation of climate change and the politics and policies needed to effect meaningful change.

So, what I wanted to turn to is how can journalism be improved, if indeed journalism still is one of the world's most important form of storytelling in contemporary culture. And we can look at this through at least four levels, the first being better practices—basically, tweaking media's practices within the framework of the status quo. And I won't spend too much time on that, but things like better training for journalists in science communication; broadening the range of sources so that you use more scientists and everyday people, rather than simply officials and politicians; avoiding false balance between opinions and science in covering the environment, and so on. So there's a set of literature in the so-called grey literature produced by professionals and by journalists and educators about

how you can do it better within existing structures. I don't mean to dismiss or ignore that, but you have to question whether that will be enough.

So I think we also have to turn to a second level of possible change, and that is the idea of changing the frames through which news is filtered and presented. I will use here Todd Gitlin's classic definition of frames as persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. So I think probably the most important thing is for the journalists themselves to be aware of the frames that they are using. And I am very glad, by the way, I recently had the chance to visit the University of Regina's Journalism School, and I am glad that they actually teach students—journalism students, potential practitioners—about the concept of media frames, to be aware of what lens they are reporting from or through. And that's not always the case. I interviewed two very bright and productive journalists where I spend about 10 percent of my time, down in the California desert. And that desert becomes bigger and dustier every year with the historic drought they are experiencing. Those reporters are doing excellent coverage of energy and environmental issues, but neither of them was very familiar with the concept of media frames. I would like to see more journalism schools follow Regina's example and incorporate that concept into their curriculum, and perhaps critical communication scholars can make a contribution there.

Anyway, if you look at what sorts of specific frames can appeal to people, what is most likely to engage members of the public and to perhaps help them feel they can be politically active and influential, given that the focus groups seem to suggest the main barriers to engaging with climate politics are not lack of information, but alienation from political structures and institutions, from other people and the notion of the public, and indeed from the notion of political activism. In other words, you could say these are the sort of cultural byproducts of neoliberalism and distance from and contempt for the public sphere. The remedy, insofar as journalism can play a role, is to offer compelling arguments, inspiring stories, and practical examples of effective political engagement. So, for example, our focus groups responded well to a profile of a local climate activist against coal exports, someone who could be considered a social movement animator, but also somebody who could be your neighbor. Political success stories, and Naomi Klein's book provides a good many of them. A localized political scale—localize the global challenge of climate crisis. Pursue cultural resonance. Inform the community of both of its complicity and its opportunities for change. Normalize political engagement. Avoid words like activist to describe engaged citizens. Tell stories of people who are just like us and highlight the emotional satisfaction of engagement. And, finally, concretize political action and provide localizing information, that is information that actually people can use—a website, or contact

event information, to lower the costs or promote the threshold of active engagement.

Another group we looked at was communication practitioners in NGOs and alternative media. They had a somewhat similar list, but they added to it that journalism could be providing solutions to a greater extent, that it could be telling the missing stories that are not covered in the hegemonic media, could be promoting awareness of the scientific consensus, but get out of the science box, both by humanizing the science through, for example, stories on the methods and personalities of scientists, but also illustrating the implications of climate science on people's lives. Make clear that this is a policy issue relevant to people that requires political action. And rethink the idea of conflict, how you cover conflict, in journalism. Some of our respondents wanted media to move away from conflict frames altogether, but more radical views, like those expressed by folks at Lead Now make a useful distinction between types of conflict narratives. The conventional one in hegemonic media is not terribly helpful. It's about horse race conflict or strategic positioning between and within elites. You see it all the time. Does anyone still watch CBC National? Anybody at all? Okay, both of you? There's a regular weekly panel, The Insiders, where basically 90 percent of the conflict seems to be horse race news—the strategies of the parties. That's useful up to a point, but it doesn't really tell us what is substantively at stake if one party or one group wins over another. So the folks at Lead Now are suggesting, and this is certainly very much part of Naomi Klein's work as well, we need to sort of remap how we understand conflict around climate change—not as political conflict within elites but rather as, for example, fossil fuel industries vs. global place-based civil society. And that has lots of implications for journalism practice, as well.

And the final suggestion from our practitioners is that media should be moving towards analysis, activism, and advocacy—get to the root causes, connect the dots, tie climate change to other issues. It wouldn't be difficult to connect the tar sands mega-project, the Harper government's wish to make Canada a so-called energy superpower to climate change and with anti-terror legislation that could be used to protect fossil fuel projects because it's so broad and vague. Connect climate change struggle with human and constitutional rights, as another of our activists responded. Naomi Klein in her book illustrates many other connections between issues and movements, including indigenous rights, community-based democracy, and poverty reduction.

So if those are some of the helpful frames, what are some frames we might want to question or avoid? And here we can go with the well-known work of George Lakoff in the United States to identify frames that he associates with a conservative moral system, that are hostile to collective political action, like climate action. And he see this as including the idea of man's domination of nature; free market fundamentalism, with the market as the only legitimate allocator

of resources; limited concepts of causation and focusing on personal intention, rather than systemic or structural causation; and the myth of the liberal elite as the main sponsors and beneficiaries of environmental regulation. So those are frames that are obviously not helpful to climate change action as a political policy issue. Other to avoid arguably: Question every time you hear 'environment vs. jobs,' because a given amount of money invested in green jobs—in renewable energy, for example—creates vastly more long-term jobs than do the short-term construction projects associated with the pipeline or tar sands. And obviously consumerist greenwashing and pseudo-solutions are not terribly helpful.

So, I've spent a lot of time on the frames. There's a lot of work going on around how to frame these things. There's obviously, too, a strategic problem with frames in that they are a relatively short- to medium-term strategy, because for frames to work you have to start from where people are at and they may get change around a particular issue, but it's not quite the same as the long-term hegemonic project that the right and the neoliberal have been engaged in since at least the 1970s of changing the entire culture. So that's a second level, however, that we do have to pay attention to: the framing of news and political messages.

But I wonder if we should also be looking, when it comes to journalism, at entirely new paradigms of journalism—whole new ways of reporting, of engaging in relationships with audiences, with constituencies. These new paradigms might include revisiting the public journalism movement of the 1990s. It was sort of a movement in the 1990s, mainly in American newspapers. That basic idea was that journalism should consciously seek to engage or even create publics and pursue their agenda, rather than simply report as stenographers on what officials and politicians were saying. So there may be lessons. Somebody calculated that there were about 600 experiments done under the rubric of public or civic journalism during the 1990s that sort of faded away by the turn of the century when funding dried up. But there may be some important lessons there about how you can actually get communities engaged. Another emerging paradigm that David Skinner mentioned is that of Peace Journalism, which is basically a set of practices and choices that increase the chance of society recognizing and valuing opportunities for the peaceful resolution of conflict. So it involves, for example, conflict analysis, rather than simply looking at battles and violence, illustrating and highlighting that there are multiple stakeholders and venues and aspects of a conflict, not just a two-sided tug-of-war, providing context, and so on. So there's a lot of work that's been done in that in the last ten years, particularly in conflict-ridden countries in the global South. So, one thing I would like to explore is the extent to which the practices and philosophy of journalism could be transposed to a climate crisis.

The third possible paradigm would be that of environmental journalism, particularly the ideas put forward by Robert Cox, as one of America's leading envi-

ronmental communication scholars, who suggest four points for environmental communication as a discipline. Firstly, a crisis orientation: enhance society's ability to respond appropriately to environmental signals for the benefit of human and environmental health. Secondly, make relevant information and decision-making processes transparent and accessible to the public, while at the same time people affected by environmental threats should have the resources and information they need to participate in decisions affecting their community or individual health. And that sort of leads us into the idea of environmental and climate justice as a whole sort of meta frame when thinking about how to approach climate crisis: that those who are most responsible for causing the crisis should be those who pay off a debt to those who are most affected by it. By and large that means a transfer of resources from the global North to the global South. A third point that Robert Cox makes is engage various groups to study, interact with, and share experiences of the natural world. And fourthly, something that we can do, of course, is critically evaluate and expose communication practices that are harmful, or unsustainable policies toward human communities and the natural world.

So the question is, can those types of explicit commitments, whether it's peace journalism or environmental communication, can they be transposed to journalism? Wouldn't it result in abandoning objectivity or producing propaganda? Would it violate the independence of the journalist in the field by imposing external logics or constraints or mandates or criteria? Well, I would say no, not if we accept that all journalism is in some sense ideological. It privileges certain values and social positions, even if implicitly, and there are already ways of doing committed journalism even within the journalism field already. And if we take precautions, like not evaluating journalism only on the basis of its environmental consequences, I think carefully and thoughtfully some of those ideas could be introduced into journalism practice and structures.

Which leads to the question that Zhao and I addressed in 1998, *Sustaining Democracy:* should journalists be objective, should they try to be objective? And, as a typical academic, my answer would be yes and no. No in the sense that he conventional practices of objectivity, which Gaye Tuchman calls strategic rituals, have their own biases towards official sources and elites over grassroots activists or peacemakers, social change agents; biases towards events over processes, conditions, and structures; a bias towards the simplistic, two-sided construction of conflicts or issues over multiple perspectives. Objectivity also leads journalists to frame blindness. If you think you're being objective, you're less inclined to think about what lens or frames you're being objective through. And one of the examples, of course, of the problems of objectivity, is the notion of objectivity as balance between two sides, which the Boykoff brothers have demonstrated for years hindered American public understanding of climate crisis by giving nearly equal weight to scientists and unscientific deniers. That's changed in recent years,

but it hindered getting this issue onto the public agenda for a long time. And it still has influence in some parts of the U.S. So obviously yes journalists should be objective in a certain sense, in the sense of truth-telling in the public interest being a core value. So, there have been recent and current movements for change within the journalism field, as I have outlined. But how do we get there, and how sustainable are these models, these alternative ways of doing journalism within existing structures?

So I think we have to have to look at the fourth level, and that is changing structures and what kinds of strategies we need to adopt to change communication practices fundamentally. Because many of the frames and proposals that I have just been outlining would be difficult to achieve by individual journalists in hegemonic conventional news organizations. You need resources from an organization, committed to doing that kind of finer journalism, and I have already mentioned that there are examples of some great work. I don't mean to dismiss everything that everyone does within corporate-owned media. But I think by and large that you have a better chance of success through collective organized efforts within news organizations and journalism educational institutions that have that commitment. Because currently those paradigms and frames operate at the margins of hegemonic media, and/or in some cases they've been co-opted, much like citizen's journalism, which is sort of a catch phrase for any journalism that's not produced by professionals is being domesticated as user-generated content. And I've already mentioned the abandonment or decline of civic or public journalism once it ran out of nonprofit funding. So there's structural forces that need to be addressed if we're going to have better journalism.

So this is what I want to conclude with: that there are certain concepts we need to use, I think, which we could use in our classes that would help out with the strategies for transforming structurally the media system. Consumer sovereignty is the idea that media give people what they want, the key rationalization for a commercial media system that Smythe outlined so brilliantly, but it has inherent biases that are generally hostile to environmental communication. Most obviously, it is linked to a consumerist culture, and its whole revenue stream is historically dependent on advertising revenue. So it is pretty difficult to introduce a kind of journalism that is systematically opposed to consumerism and that challenges corporate power and priorities and the extractivist state and hegemonic media. And I would argue that even if the media system could register consumer preferences more accurately, the environmental deficit in the media would continue. And three concepts here. By the way, I am glad to see that these are used by Robert McChesney in his work, and I am glad to see that Victor Pickard has made good use of them in his recent excellent book on the American struggle for media democracy. One is the idea of merit goods, that environmental communication, good quality climate news may be a merit good, something like education, health,

public service broadcasting, or fresh vegetables—something that would benefit people, but they tend to underinvest in it, even relative to the benefits it brings to themselves. So it's a merit good and, if that's the case it's more difficult to finance simply through market mechanisms.

Environmental communication is also to some extent a public good. It's difficult to produce as a privately-owned property. What do we mean by public good? It's non-rivalrous, that is, by and large, my consumption does not detract from yours, and it's not excludable, that is it's difficult to exclude free riders who haven't paid for it. So when you have a public good, markets are likely to underproduce socially necessary goods and services. So we need to find non-market mechanisms to support them. And then the third concept of course is that of externalities, that there are positive externalities, that is benefits to good environmental journalism, and having an environmentally-informed society, that are not generated from the buying and selling of, let's say, a newspaper, or access to a website or whatever. In other words, there are positive benefits that are not captured by individual market transactions.

So, for all those reasons, I think we need to be looking at two paths to change, one of course, is independent alternative media, which I've already sort of generally referred to, but I would offer as examples in British Columbia <thetyee.ca>. Tyee is a type of fish, famous for swimming upstream. It's doing excellent environmental news, stimulating conversations and covering stories that the Vancouver Sun and dominant media in the area don't. And my colleague Shane Gunster found that searching The Tyee or other alternative media vis-à-vis the daily corporate press, the alternative media offer better coverage of the politics of climate change. They treat it as a political issue without reducing it to official politics, they offer a greater sense of agency and hope, and they are more open to criticism of power and paradigms, including the fossil fuel industry.

And finally, of course, the other routes, which is, we don't just have alternative media out of nowhere, we need supportive policy. We need cross-subsidization within the media system to make that kind of journalism possible. I won't go into any detail since we are running out of time, but media reform coalitions, media justice, grassroots activism, are all important to try and change the very structure, the architecture, and the policies through which media stories are generated. So, to conclude then, in the context of global climate crisis, and if Naomi Klein is right that responding to climate crisis requires deepening democracy and social movements against extractive capitalism, then the projects of generating better journalism, and democratic renewal, and effective climate justice communication, and building alternative and community media are all interlinked and synergistic projects. And the need for effective climate policy then provides a new and urgent rationale for media change. Better climate communication needs radical change in the media and political systems, and neither climate justice nor media

justice, I would argue, are achievable without structural changes that entail basically revolutionary challenges to existing power. And in the final analysis, I think, all roads lead through political economy and social movements towards a post-capitalist society.

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