

學術對談

與高士柏教授對談(第二部分)

## 文化研究之落地生根

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高士柏 (Lawrence Grossberg)

「盲目學習西方文化研究不是亞洲文化研究需要做的事。你想做的是，汲取經驗並且書寫這些知性、理論性、實證和脈絡化實踐，可能還有你在其他地方找到的東西，把它們融入你的周遭，並創造出一套你自己的文化研究，是從你的脈絡說話，也向你的脈絡說話的。那大概就是陳光興主張的，你得肩負起你自己的知性傳統，就像非洲人、印度人和拉丁美洲人一樣。那些傳統可能有一部分是受西方理論和西方研究影響，但它最後的面目卻會不一樣，我認為那就是文化研究獨特之處，文化研究並不嘗試自我再生產。你不用變得西化才能做文化研究，某程度上你要接受西化才能做個德里達派 (Derridean)，但文化研究就不用。事實上，要是你硬要變成西化的話，大概你做的文化研究也不是做得太好。」

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## 高士柏教授簡介

高士柏是當代文化研究的重要學者之一，他的研究興趣廣泛，當中包括美國流行音樂及青少年文化等。他在傳播及文化哲學領域方面的研究貢獻是毋庸置疑的。

高士柏於1968年畢業於美國羅徹斯特大學，取得歷史及哲學學位。畢業後，他跟隨賀格(Richard Hoggart)及霍爾(Stuart Hall)在英國伯明翰大學當代文化研究中心接受訓練及參與研究工作。經霍爾教授推薦下，高士柏其後到伊利諾大學修讀傳播學博士課程，並跟隨凱里(James Carey)進行研究。

取得博士學位後，高士柏獲邀於伊利諾大學擔任助理教授，更於1990年被擢升為教授。1994年，高士柏轉到北卡羅來納大學教堂山分校的新聞及大眾傳媒學院任教。高士柏現為該學院的Morris Davis Distinguished Professor of Communication Studies and Cultural Studies。

高士柏參與不同期刊的編輯工作，包括*Cultural Studies*和*Public Culture*。高士柏的學術出版包括《後生可畏：後生、政治，與美國的未來》(*Caught in the Crossfire: Kids, Politics and America's Future*) (美國Paradigm Publishers出版社2005年出版)、《新關鍵詞：文化與社會詞彙的修訂本》(*New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*) (與Meaghan Morris和Tony Bennett合編，英國Blackwell出版社2005年出版)、*Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (美國Duke University Press出版社1997年出版)。

FC: 馮應謙、陳韜文

LG: 高士柏

FC: 我們的期刊是面向亞洲和中國的讀者，今天文化研究在中國實在十分流行，所以我們希望把討論延伸到這些地區。文化研究源自看來較自由和民主的社會，那麼，它在中國這個市場化社會主義國家或以一黨專政的國家又有多適用呢？你認為有把文化研究在中國本土化的需要嗎？如果有的話，你有沒有甚麼建議該怎麼做？

LG: 嗯，讓我首先表明，當然，我對中國的認識是十分有限的，因此很難作具體的評論。但是，某程度上我已暗示了我的答案。要是你所講的文化研究是一套特定的在英語和西方世界發展出來的理論，不管是英式文化研究、法國的符號學，或是後結構主義等，要是你的意思是那些東西能否全盤搬過來移植到中國，我想是可以的，可是我不知道那樣做有甚麼意義。而且在我的心目中，這種「移植」跟文化研究扯不上任何關係，因為正如我嘗試說的，文化研究實際上包含三件事。第一是我所描述的一種知識份子的政治，認清關係性的複雜性和矛盾，把關於形勢 (conjuncture) 的故事說好，以求開啟諸如轉化、掙扎、改變等政治可能性，並保持樂觀的態度。那是文化研究的一個承擔。文化研究的第二個承擔是我剛才所描述的脈絡性，文化研究是關於脈絡的，而研究脈絡唯一的方法就是發展一套適合該脈絡的文化研究。而第三，當然是文化，不管你如何理解它：語言、日常的文化實踐、流行文化、傳媒文化，文化有各種複雜的形式，卻對理解形勢很重要。若不理解文化所建立的關係和它如何配置其中，是沒有辦法理解形勢的。

FC: 那如果文化研究要在中國按照你所說的去發展，它會是甚麼樣子的呢？

LG: 文化研究人士以人類生活的文化作為切入點和重點，並嘗試從那

裏開始再建構關係。我猜想有其他同樣致力研究脈絡性的學者，從事着與文化研究同等的東西，但他們從經濟而不是文化着手。也可能有人是從政治切入，一些政治研究的學者在從事脈絡性(contextuality)的研究，但他們從政治而不是文化着手。所以，有了這三件事：脈絡性、文化，和一些政治，就有文化研究。因此，文化研究當然能在中國發展，我卻不知道它會是甚麼樣子，我不知道某些理論會不會成立。我真的不知道，若沒有經過試驗，我相信沒有人會知道。

FC: 你可以舉一些例子，理論可以怎樣應用於中國的文化研究嗎？

LG: 我常講我寫 *We Gotta Get out of this Place* 時的故事，它本來是一本關於樂與怒青少年文化的書，後來卻成為一本關於列根和保守主義興起的書。當我發現它的內容越來越多是關於保守主義的時候，那就是說，它是一個形勢(conjuncture)研究，我想，那真的很棒，因為我已經有霍爾(Stuart Hall)、馬丁·雅克思(Martin Jacques)、約翰·克拉克(John Clarke)、保羅·吉洛依(Paul Gilroy)等人就戴卓爾主義的回應發展出自己的理論，我可以就用那理論來分析美國所發生的事，結果我寫了一本沉悶透頂的書，我覺得那簡直是災難，所以我得說，我問錯了問題，而且理論上有一些遺漏，我需要其他的理論工具。於是我開始轉而讀列斐伏爾(Lefebvre)和一點德勒茲(Deleuze)，還有多一點福柯(Foucault)，然後建立了一套理論混合體，並以我之前做的實證工作為基礎，組織成一個比較好的故事。所以說，我不知道在中國、香港、台灣要問的問題該用甚麼理論混合體來回應，我也不知道該用甚麼實證方法，甚至不知道要問的問題是甚麼。牙買加(Jamaica)人類學家大衛·史葛特(David Scott)有一個很棒的概念叫問題空間(problem spaces)，他說，不同的形勢提出不同的政治問題，要是你問錯問題，你的分析無論如何都不會帶來甚麼意義，因為你是在回答錯的問題。

FC: 你剛剛說的似乎是現在一些做文化研究的人的問題。

LG: 對，那是部分原因因為甚麼文化研究變得如此沉悶和失效，它甚至不願去探究世界向我們學者提出的問題是不是已經改變了。那不只是假設問題的答案隨時間和空間改變了，而是問題本身也改變了。但這也不單是說只要找一個看來在提出新問題的新理論家就可以了，我知道這聽來很天真，我們也可以大談怎樣去重新思考與世界的實證關係，但世界和形勢提出問題，然後這些問題塑造出我們該用甚麼理論工具。有新的問題被提出，又有舊的問題被重新闡述，這對我來說是很清楚的。同樣，形勢的本質，就是權力和論爭的空間的本質，已經改變了，這對我來說也是很清楚的。我們要學習用超越國家甚至地區這些空間的角度來思考，並且找出構成這些形勢和從這些形勢產生的問題。

我很清楚問題空間正在改變，我不知道中國的問題空間是甚麼。當然，或者我隨意推測一下，我們大概可以說，中國提出的是一個或者一套獨特的問題，其空前高速的經濟現代化與其獨裁和集權的政治和文化條件並存着，而兩者又同時受到幾乎無法控制的新傳播科技牽制。在我看來，也許那現代性與現代化的矛盾所造成的形勢中存在着獨特的問題，但我的想法可能是非常膚淺的。那對現代性和現代化的理解是從西方的角度出發，然而這套理解對於在中國所發生的事情卻未必適用。所以，你得先找出你要講這個形勢的故事要解答的是甚麼問題，才能找出該做甚麼樣的理論、方法論和實證研究，以致找出文化研究在這裏會是甚麼樣子。中國應該有文化研究嗎？應該，我相信應該。我相信這類知識特別有用，它不是唯一的知識，不是唯一有用的知識，也不是唯一在政治上有用的知識，但我相信霍爾所說的形勢知識 (conjunctural knowledge) 是一個很有用的政治維度，因此文化研究是當代世界一個很有用的知性工程。我認為它在中國大概跟在任何地方一樣有用，不過，你或者可以把霍爾和我的著作視為如何脈絡化思考、文化思考和政治思考的模型，但它們不能說明甚麼就是文化研究的模型。我一向的作品就是企圖去找出怎樣在美國透過發展脈絡化的接合理論與實證工具去講一個比較好的故事，那是我做文化研究的原因。然而，我的理論、我的工具在中

國不會成立。但我可以肯定，在世界各地(包括中國和亞洲)，有很多這樣的模型。事實上，現在我教授研究生程度的文化研究時，我會投放整個下學期在所謂南方世界的文化研究上。

FC: 文化研究在中國學者之間越來越盛行，事實上，它正被你剛才提及的問題困擾。首先，他們有一個社會現象要去研究。然後，他們可能仔細研究過脈絡，因此跟你提及的第二點吻合。但問題是，在中國的脈絡裏，他們避談敏感政治或是對社會實踐、社會運動、應用、解放和充權的承擔。因此，今日中國的文化研究似乎是問錯問題的研究，它已淪為某些文化的研究，以致不少重要問題，諸如宗教、種族，和其他敏感題目，在中國是幾乎不存在的。這樣，作為文化研究的領導學者，你怎樣看在中國這種對文化研究的非政治化進路？

LG: 所以你的問題就是，怎樣在政治壓抑下做文化研究。

FC: 是的，而且不單是怎樣做。他們也聲稱他們是在做「文化研究」，或者他們在沒有一個適當的問題的情況下做，甚至他們不想去問適當的問題。所以他們從事青少年文化，只因它是一種學術時尚，然後他們做很一般的文化研究，對文化政治也沒有很強的承擔，也不在意要問對的問題。

LG: 我對你提及的那些研究沒甚麼認識，所以很難評論。但要是你的研究是談譬如流行文化，然後你描述中國的流行文化在發生甚麼事情，那不一定是文化研究。要是你談的是文化研究與社會上更多的複雜性之間的關係，那才是文化研究，那樣的話，某程度上是沒有可能回避政治的。可是，我想說故事是有不同方法的，在很多地方、很多時候，人們發展了各種說故事的方法，把當中的政治維度和含意編碼，希望當權者不會察覺。你知道，葛蘭西(Gramsci)大部分的作品都是在獄中寫的，他就用一套方法希望獄卒看不出他寫的是馬克思主義的東西。威廉士(Raymond Williams)承認他早期的作品實際是在談馬克思主義的概念和政治，但在他那個時代的英國，沒有人願意認真聆聽馬克思主義的

分析，因此他用另一套語言和論述去寫。我看不到如何能做我剛才談及的文化脈絡工作而不含任何政治含意，我理解不少人能夠把流行文化脈絡化，但那跟以流行文化為切入點去分析形勢是不同的。很多媒體在做一些我稱之為非常有限的脈絡化，但他們看不到脈絡建構媒體，也並不是以形勢作為研究中心。我研究的中心不是流行文化，而是社會整體。要是你寫的是關於社會整體，怎能不處理各種組織和轉化社會整體的力量之間如何在政治和經濟上接合呢？

FC: 這當中的重點是甚麼呢？

LG: 重點是：沒有人說政治和文化研究必定是左翼的。我想人們錯誤地假設既然英式文化研究和我們所讀的那些東西都是左翼的，文化研究的政治就必然是左翼的。我不認為如此，我認為可以有自由派文化研究，當然也有保守派文化研究，各種各樣的保守派文化研究。在美國，有些最好的文化研究是右翼人士做的，所以你說的這些並不政治化的人也許有些也是這樣，他們的政治化只是跟你和我心目中所想的不同，他們的政治是不同的，他們可能支持社會整體中現存的轉化和組織。他們可能認為他們的政治任務不是挑戰現有權力，而是提供一套分析，讓現存的體制能繼續發展下去。

FC: 好，讓我們談談亞洲的文化研究。台灣的陳光興、新加坡的蔡明發、香港嶺南大學的學者和不少人都正大力從事文化研究，也獲得不少認同。你知道文化研究為甚麼在亞洲這樣盛行嗎？亞洲文化研究是否只是從西方入口流行一時的學術風尚呢？

LG: 你知道我是這個圈子和《亞際》(*Inter-Asia*) 期刊的擁護者，我對亞洲文化研究的認識也大致是由那圈子的人士、他們的工作，以及我在香港的經驗和朋友來定義。文化研究為甚麼這樣盛行？要回答這問題真的要做一個關於亞洲文化研究的文化研究才行，我相信這問題的答案絕不簡單，它是相當複雜的，而且涉及形勢的問題。顯然這一方面與資本主義在亞洲不少地區的快速興起有關，



同時某程度上亦與我們所說的民主化興起有關，包括公共空間和流行文化、從台灣和韓國等地的極權統治倒台而帶來的政治與文化規管的放寬等，雖然民主化的程度相當有限。縱然這些經驗並不是在亞洲各地都出現，但它們的影響卻遍及各個地區。還有快速的經濟增長與繁榮、傳播科技和流行文化的全球化。全球化的問題不能簡單化，西方人往往認為全球化就是亞洲人人都收看和收聽西方文化，其實不是這樣的，而是文化空間的穿梭、流通，是空間的擴張與文化傳遞鏈、創意、生產時間的緊縮。當然，現在互聯網更帶來了進一步的爆炸，那也是形勢的一部分。

FC: 讓我問一個很膚淺的問題，我們怎樣才能在亞洲從事文化研究，而又無需化身一個「西化」的文化研究學者呢？

LG: 嗯，我想我認為亞洲最好的文化研究，不論是來自台灣(陳光興)或中國(王曉明)或新加坡(蔡明發)(Chua Beng Huat)或嶺南(陳清僑)或印度(帕塔·查特吉 Partha Chatterjee)，雖然它願意用上任何它認為適合的工具，但它對再生產北大西洋所做的學問的興趣不大。他們想做亞洲研究，可能更確切的說是台灣文化研究、香港文化研究等，視乎他們怎樣建構他們的形勢。文化研究在這邊的模樣跟它在西方的模樣一點都不會相似，問題不是要成為巴巴(Homi Bhabha)的追隨者，或是把德里達(Jacques Derrida)引進，又或是跟隨詹明信(Frederick Jameson)的路徑，而是打造一套方法(apparatus)，幫助你理解導致那套特定論述方法被遺忘的條件。不過，這不是容易的事情。

盲目學習西方文化研究不是亞洲文化研究需要做的事。你想做的是，汲取經驗並且書寫這些知性、理論性、實證和脈絡化實踐，可能還有你在其他地方找到的東西，把它們融入你的周遭，並創造出一套你自己的文化研究，是從你的脈絡說話，也向你的脈絡說話的。那大概就是陳光興主張的，你得肩負起你自己的知性傳統，就像非洲人、印度人和拉丁美洲人一樣。那些傳統可能有一部分是受西方理論和西方研究影響，但它最後的面目卻會不一樣，我認為那就是文化研究獨特之處，文化研究並不嘗試自我



再生產。你不用變得西化才能做文化研究，某程度上你要接受西化才能做個德里達派，但文化研究就不用。事實上，要是你硬要變成西化的話，大概你做的文化研究也不是做得太好。

FC: 是的，你說得很對。你知不知道文化研究在世界其他地方例如拉丁美洲和印度是否跟在亞洲一樣盛行？

LG: 是的。我的意思是，我們《文化研究》(Cultural Studies) 期刊有一期的內容關於殖民性與現代性，那很大程度都是關於拉丁美洲的，另外一期的作品中則有一個關於拉丁美洲文化研究各種制度化的問卷調查。拉丁美洲的很多人，他們都是我的朋友，他們不喜歡用文化研究來代表他們的工作，因為他們認為那是一個北方的、西方的，或是英式的詞。他們也不願用這標籤。但他們大多會同意其實都是一樣的工程，我們知道我們分擔着同樣的工程。而各地的人，不管在厄瓜多爾、哥倫比亞、在阿根廷、巴西、在加勒比海一帶，拉丁美洲各地他們有他們的一種文化研究。顯然我把文化研究定義得比很多人要狹窄，很多我可能不認為他們所做的具有顛覆性的脈絡性，但我仍然樂於稱他們為我的同伴，他們也是文化研究的一份子。所以我想在拉丁美洲有很多人是很具體的專注在文化研究上的，他們以此作為對世界的批判性和脈絡化理解，作為對關係性的跨學科實踐、對複雜性的承擔等。是的，拉丁美洲和亞洲有很多這樣的人，同樣，我們《文化研究》也刊登過來自亞洲和關於亞洲的作品。同樣我亦發現在非洲有很認真的文化研究，而我們也刊登過一些這樣的作品，但我們希望能刊出更多，還有來自東歐和中東一些地區如土耳其等地，也是如此。

世界各地的人都漸漸發現文化研究是一種不同的做研究和做知性政治工作的方式，因為它既認真看待文化和流行文化，但也用更複雜的方式思考，明白到事情的複雜性，不會說一個很簡單的故事。人們漸漸理解簡單的故事不再能讓我們找出正在令世界改變的力量，當然，因為在世界很多地方，泛稱為左翼的力量正在敗退，或者至少不再佔上風。雖然不是在所有地方都是這樣，

情形也不是徹底的，但至少對大部分人而言如此，我們也計劃不久的將來刊登一篇重要的文章和對話去談論究竟這是甚麼回事。雖然金融危機發生了，但你不可以說資本主義正朝向我們所想的的方向，或者它有被嚴重削弱的跡象。要是我們的任務是講一個有助我們理解為甚麼世界正向着現時的方向走的故事，以致我們能找出更佳策略去對抗它，看來我們沒有把這個任務做好。顯然，世界在朝一個我們不願它走向的方向進發，而我相信，知識份子的工作是重要的，我們得找些方法去講更複雜的故事，我們得找些方法去認清宏大敘事起不了作用，我們得講一些形勢化的故事去解釋世界正在發生甚麼事。

FC: 來到這裏，讓我們談最後一個問題，是關於你在1992年出版的 *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*。你在書中談及新保守主義在美國的興起，而這是不利於年青一代的，你似乎認為流行文化中的新保守主義是來自商業化和商品化的擴散。這些年以來，你對這些觀察有沒有新的反思？你認為這個保守主義的趨勢有沒有蔓延到其他國家？

LG: 讓我分別回答這兩個問題。第一個問題是關於流行文化與政治和商品化的關係。我從不認為流行文化在本質上是抗爭性的，從這方面來說我跟我的朋友費斯克 (John Fiske) 的想法從來都很不同。我不想把他的立場簡化；反之，我希望把它脈絡化地解讀為對某個特定問題空間和議題的回應，而在這個問題空間中，有必要主張權力的「受害者」和從屬者並非單純是被動和被騙的，而是積極地與加在他們身上的力量周旋，並從中找尋讓他們可以活出人生最美好一面的空間和方式。我想在某種特定的脈絡條件下、在某種關係之間，流行文化可以是積極和抗爭性的，並可以運用某些政治可能性。因此，在那書中我其中一個論點是，戰後那種青少年文化政治並非由任何明顯的對資本主義和當時的國家權力結構的反對而定義的。我提出的並不是和政治有關，而是一種對當時社會的日常生活感性層面，或者說得更好是情感層面的拒絕。你不想跟你父母一樣，你不想忍受沉悶，你不想受驚，有這

樣的一大堆的關係在六十年代被動員而令流行文化顯得進步和左翼。然後，到了八十年代，我指出由右翼人士組成的新聯盟也用上同樣的情感政治，來將一部分人接合到右派，或者至少令他們變得比較政治冷感和去政治化。

同時，我認為文化研究跟商品化和商業化的關係是其中一個很重要卻未被回答的問題。我不認為商品化有很大的解釋力，因為文化長久以來在很多地方就是商品化的。商品化的主張過於抽象，以致它在任何批判性的故事中起不了甚麼真正作用。同時，它也太簡單、太普世通用，欠缺形勢化分析的複雜性。

FC: 你認為上述那種文化研究的故事仍然存在嗎？

LG: 這是一個很有趣的問題。我正在準備教授一個本科的課，比較1960年代與現今的抗衡文化。我想要做的是看看兩者從不同方面帶來的一些共通點：靈性主義 (spiritualism)、政治 (橫跨不同立場，從黨派政治到無政府主義到環保主義和本體論政治)、逃避主義，和文化的複雜構成。但同時我也想研究六十年代的成與敗，以及這兩個時代的不同。我的假設是，一個很大的分別在於六十年代有很多不同的流派——嬉皮士、民主社會學生組織 (SDS) 示威、暴力問題，當中有很多不同的斷片和不同的意識形態、不同的承擔，但將他們連在一起的是，首先，一個共同或至少是重疊的文化，而這個文化由一個共同的敵人所定義，就是當時的「系統」，雖然這個共同敵人很大程度上是象徵性和不着邊際的，但當你看看當代抗衡文化，不論是本土的還是全球的，似乎沒有甚麼能把不同的組群連成一體。今日並沒有一個流行文化是接合到抗衡文化上的。有些事情發生了，這裏我要轉到你或是其他研究青少年文化和科技的學者身上，因我認為這跟文化的重要性和運作上的變化越來越有關係，也與科技的重要性有關。某方面來說，音樂和其他文化形式都得屈居在科技之下。某方面來說，科技已定義了這群年青人的文化，這固然帶來不少優點，但同樣也窒礙了另一些可能性。

FC: 回到我們的問題，你認為世界是不是變得越來越保守呢？

LG: 嗯，我不能評論全世界，在世界某些地方的國家政治有一些有趣的事情在發生，而正如我所說，我認為是有一個龐大和活躍的抗衡文化存在的。可能性是存在的，但整體來說我並不樂觀。我認為世界正越來越走向致力於一個我形容為保守價值和理念的方向，而非致力於公義和公平的原則，非朝向保障所有人合理的生活質素和尊嚴。我認為世界正朝相反方向而行，但那不只是資本主義，而是由資本主義與政治、社會及文化構成的接合造成的。在某方面來說，我在美國看到這個情況，甚至在關於奧巴馬的論述上亦然，縱然他對很多人來說正正是盼望的象徵。但顯然組成這個盼望的議題諸如醫療、環境問題、和平及自由市場的限制等已經被佔領，更甚的是我們已被帶向支持資本主義甚至是保守的方向。因此我對世界不表樂觀，而這現象當然亦已對向奧巴馬投注希望的人在情感上帶來了深遠的影響。

但我相信部分問題與知識份子有關，這是部分原因因為甚麼大學對很多人來說不再是唯一甚或是最重要的生產知識的場所。正如我所說，我認為我們沒有說出一些很好的故事，我們沒有解釋這一切是怎樣發生的，我們沒有說出那些複雜卻可信的故事，解釋社會怎樣被改變和那些在當代權力的空間中生活的人的機制是甚麼。當然，要是我不認為美國的這個勢頭是可改變的，或是世界是可改變的，我不會說這些故事。我可以活得輕鬆一點，隨便寫寫樂與怒，而不需要花時間研究經濟學，還得重新學習微積分。

FC: 那麼你近期是在認真的研究經濟學了？

LG: 在我剛送到出版商的新書 *We All Want to Change The World: The Intellectual Labor of Cultural Studies* 中，有約一百頁的章節所強調的是要認真對待經濟學和經濟體系。讓我介紹一下這本書，它試圖描述我們大概需要做的事情——一些我們大概需要的概念（例如：現代的多樣性）、各種我們需要重新思考的問題、以及在一些塑造着文化研究的基礎概念上，諸如文化與傳媒、政治與經

濟等，我們需要如何重新闡述對它們的理解。

FC: 把經濟學加進你的研究裏，那是否說你採用政治經濟學的進路呢？是否從你的角度對政治經濟學的重新演繹呢？你會怎樣解釋它？

LG: 這是一個好問題，在傳播學裏，文化研究和政治經濟學一直有着很多爭論。而我總是覺得，問題不是在於有沒有做政治經濟學研究的必要，而是大部分從事政治經濟學的人怎樣做研究。問題是你怎樣認真看待經濟問題，將之視為形勢化分析的一部分。我不是說我現在是憑一己之力去做，或者我是史上唯一一個在做着這嶄新嘗試的偉大學者，這其實是一個已經進行了好一陣子的工程，有很多不同學科和在不同位置的人在參與。我跟世界各地很多人進行對話，包括經濟學家，而我也在書中提及他們。我們正嘗試改變我們理解經濟學和經濟體系的方法，因此當我發現世界有這樣一場對話在開展着，我就加入了這場對話。當中包括了來自經濟學和政治經濟地理學、人類學、傳播學、文化經濟和文化研究的學者，他們都在重新思考怎樣在當代形勢中理解經濟問題。

因此我不是採用政治經濟學進路，至少在傳播學對它的理解和實踐的層面而言不是。反之，我仍然批評這個對經濟體系的角度是如何過度簡化。如我所說，我不認為商品化的概念能解釋些甚麼，它是一個抽象的概念。我不知道指出某些東西是商品化的可以幫助你知道甚麼，我不相信單憑物品的生產可以讓你理解那複雜的接合性和某些特定環境中有甚麼實踐的可能性。我不知道訴諸150年前馬克思在他那個獨特的時代對資本主義的理解如何可以作為理據。另一方面，其實在很多其他知識份子圈子裏，有不少重新思考馬克思主義的工作正在進行，試圖把其概念帶進當代的形勢。但同時我也讀新古典經濟學，我的大學裏有好幾個讀書小組和工作小組都在這些題目上共同努力，最近就有關於金錢和金融的討論。我要說的是，我不想只是回答政治經濟學家或新古典經濟學家告訴我們關於經濟體系的東西，我希望能夠循着他

們所說的去思考，當然更希望能超越他們所說的，來將經濟學作為文化上和形勢上的問題去看待。我們需要親自去研究它，並且與那些願意跟我們對話的人進行對話。

## 高士柏著作選

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ACADEMIC DIALOGUE WITH PROF. LAWRENCE GROSSBERG (PART II)

## **Cultural Studies Taking Roots in Asia**

LG: Prof. Lawrence Grossberg

FC: Anthony Fung and Joseph Chan

**FC: Thanks for your insightful answers. Our journal addresses the Asian and Chinese readers. So we would like to extend the discussion to these parts of the world. You know that cultural studies is very popular in China nowadays. Cultural studies is originally from the seemingly free and social democratic country. So how applicable is cultural studies in China—a marketized socialist state or an authoritarian country? Do you think there is a need to “localize” cultural studies in China? If yes, any suggestions on doing it?**

LG: Well, let me begin by first saying, of course, that my knowledge of China is very limited. So it is difficult for me to say anything much specific about China. However, in a way I had already suggested my answer. If what you mean by cultural studies is a particular set of theories that have developed in the English-speaking and Western world, whether you talk about British cultural studies, or French semiotics, or post-structuralism or whatever; and if what you mean is can those be brought in total and just transplanted into China, I suppose they can. But I don't know why you would want to do it. And that wouldn't have any relationship, in my mind, to cultural studies. Because cultural studies, as I tried to suggest, really says three things. One is the kind of intellectual politics I have described, telling a better story of the conjuncture, recognizing all the complexity and contradictions of the relationalities, in order to open up political possibilities for transformation, struggle, change, etc. Holding up optimism. That's one commitment of cultural studies. The second commitment of cultural studies is what I earlier described as contextuality. It is about context and the only way to study context is to develop cultural studies appropriate to that context. And the third of course is culture, however you understand it: language,



everyday cultural practices, popular culture, media culture. Cultures are complicated forms that are crucial in understanding the conjuncture. You cannot understand the conjuncture without understanding the relations that culture creates, locates itself within.

**FC: What would cultural studies look like in China, if it can be developed according to what you have suggested?**

LG: Cultural studies people start with and focus on cultural points of human life, and try, starting there, to re-construct the relations. I suppose there are other scholars, also committed to contextuality, who do the equivalent of cultural studies but start out with economy, not culture. You could imagine people in politics. Some people in political studies start in a way that practice contextuality, but start with political instead of the cultural. So, if you have those three things, contextuality, culture, and certain politics, then you will have cultural studies. So of course cultural studies can work in China. I just have no idea what it would look like. I don't know whether certain theories work or not. I don't know. I don't think anyone knows until you test them out.

**FC: Can you give us an example of how theories might be useful for doing cultural studies in China?**

LG: I often tell the story about how I wrote *We Gotta Get out of this Place*, which was started out as a book about the rock and roll youth culture and ended up being a book talking about Reagan and the rise of conservatism. And when I realized it was more and more about conservatism—that is, a conjunctural study—I thought this is going to be great because I already have the model that Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques, John Clarke, Paul Gilroy, and others developed about and in response to Thatcherism. I can just take the theory and analyze what is happening in the United States. And I wrote a book which was incredibly boring. I mean it was a disaster. So I had to say, I got the question wrong, something is missing theoretically. I need other theoretical tools, and I started to turn to Lefebvre and some Deleuze, and more Foucault, and I created a theoretical mélange that I thought may be able to build on the empirical work I had done in order to organize it into a better story. So I don't know what the theoretical mélange necessary to respond to whatever questions China, Hong

Kong, Taiwan, need to pose would be. You know, I don't know the empirical methods, I even don't know what the questions are. David Scott, a Jamaica anthropologist, has a wonderful notion called problem spaces. He says, different conjunctures pose different political problems. And if you don't get the problem right, then your analysis will have no bearing whatsoever. Because you are answering the wrong question.

**FC: What you have just said seems to be a current problem for some who are doing cultural studies.**

LG: Right, that's partly why cultural studies has become so boring and ineffective. It hasn't even bothered to ask whether the questions that the world poses to us as scholars have changed. This is not just assuming that the answers change over time and across space. It is the questions themselves that change. But this does not merely mean that one takes up a new theorist who seems to pose new questions. I know it sounds naïve—and we can talk a lot about how one rethinks an empirical relation to the world—but the world or the conjuncture poses questions, that then shape what theoretical tools one takes up. It is clear to me that there are some new questions being posed, and other older questions being re-articulated, It is clear to me that the very nature of conjunctures—of the spaces of power and contestation, are changing. One has to learn to think across the spaces of nation-states and even regions, even while one refuses to give up such spaces. And one has to figure out the questions that both emerge from and constitute such conjunctures.

It is clear to that the problem spaces are changing. I have no idea what the problems spaces in China are. Obviously, and here I speculate without any grounding, one might start by saying that China poses a unique problem or spate of problems. Its extraordinary rapid economic modernization, more rapid than the world has ever seen before, is juxtaposed to its authoritarian and centralized political and cultural conditions, which are at the same time undermined by new communication technologies that are almost impossible to control. From my perspective, but it's extraordinary naïve, I might begin by suggesting that there're unique problems in that conjuncture around the contradiction of modernity and modernization, as it has been understood in the West. But those understandings seem less

relevant to understanding what's going on in China. So, you know, one has to figure out what the problems are that you are trying to answer by telling a story about what's going on in the conjuncture, in order to figure out what kind of theoretical, methodological, and empirical research you need to do, in order to figure out what cultural studies would look like. Should there be cultural studies in China? Yes, I believe so. I believe this kind of knowledge is particularly useful. It is not the only kind of knowledge, it is not the only useful kind of knowledge, it is not the only politically useful kind of knowledge. But I believe that what Stuart Hall called conjunctural knowledge is a useful political dimension, so cultural studies is a useful intellectual project in the contemporary world. And I think it probably is as useful in China as anywhere else. But what it looks like, I mean, you can read Stuart Hall or me, as models of how to think contextually, to think culturally, and to think politically, but not as models of what cultural studies is. The history of my work is to attempt to figure out how to tell a better story in the United States by developing contextual articulated theoretical and empirical tools. That's why I am doing cultural studies. But my theory and my story aren't going to work in China. But there are many such models I think, from all over the world (including from China and Asia) I am sure. In fact, now when I teach cultural studies at the post-graduate level, the second semester is entirely devoted to cultural studies from the global south as it were.

**FC: Cultural studies is getting popular among scholars in China. Actually, it is also haunted by the problem you have just mentioned. First of all, they have a social phenomenon to study. Secondly, they may have studied the context in detail, thereby matching your second point as well. But the problem is that in the Chinese context, they are forbidden to talk about politics, or the commitment to social practices, movement, praxis, emancipation, and empowerment. So it seems cultural studies in China today is very much like research without asking appropriate questions. It is reduced to some sort of cultural analysis. So that's why some important questions about religion, race, and other sensitive subjects are virtually non-existent in China. So, as a leading scholar in cultural study, how would you**

**see this kind of apolitical approach to cultural studies in China?**

LG: So you are asking how you do cultural study under conditions of political repression.

**FC: Yeah. It's not just how we do it. They are actually claiming that they are doing it, or do it in a way that they don't have an appropriate question, or even they don't want to ask an appropriate question. So they just do the youth culture because it is an academic fad and they do some common cultural analysis without a very strong commitment to cultural politics and asking the right question.**

LG: I would argue that it's hard to say without knowing the work you are talking about. But if your project is to talk about, for example, popular culture, and you describe what is happening in the popular culture of China, then it is not necessarily cultural studies. If you are talking about popular culture in its relations to the larger complexities of social life, which is cultural studies, then in a way you can't avoid the political. But I suppose there are ways to tell stories. People have, in a lot of places over a lot of time, developed ways of telling stories of what's going on, in which the political dimension and implication of their stories are coded, and in ways that one hopes the authorities don't see. You know, Gramsci wrote much of his work in ways he hoped the prison guards would not realize he was writing Marxist stuff. Raymond Williams has acknowledged that in his early work, he was really talking about Marxist concepts and politics. But at the time in England, no one was willing to listen seriously to Marxist analysis and so he wrote in other languages, other discourses. I don't see how you can do the kind of cultural contextual work that I am talking about, without having political implications in it. I understand that a lot of people can contextualize popular culture but that is different than writing an analysis of the conjuncture using popular culture as your entrance into it. Lots of media does what I would call a very limited contextualization, without seeing that the contexts construct the media, and without allowing the conjuncture to become the object of study. The object of my study isn't popular culture, it's the social totality. If you write about social totality, how can you not deal with the political and economic articulations of the forces that are organizing and transforming that social totality?

**FC: So what is the critical issue here?**

LG: Here is the issue. There is nothing like a guarantee that political and cultural studies are left wing. I think people make the mistake of assuming that because cultural studies in Britain, and all the stuff we read, is all left wing, the politics of cultural studies is necessarily left wing. I don't believe that. I think they can be liberal cultural studies, and there certainly is conservative cultural studies, different sorts of conservative cultural studies. Some of the best cultural studies in the United States are done by the right wing. So that maybe some of these people who you say are not really political, are, but not in the sense you and I want them to be. Their politics may be different. They may actually support the existing dimensions of transformation and organizations of power and social reality. They may not see their political task as to challenge that but in fact to offer an analysis that helps it continuing further down the road.

**FC: Ok. Let's talk about cultural studies in Asia. Chen Kuan-Hsing, Chua Beng Huat, scholars in Lingnan University and many others, are actively doing cultural studies and are quite well recognized. Do you know why cultural studies is so popular in Asia? Is Asian cultural studies simply an academic fashion imported from the West?**

LG: Yes, well, you know I am a big fan of the formation as well as the journal *Inter-Asia*. My knowledge of Asian cultural studies probably is pretty much defined by that body of people and work and my experiences and friends in Hong Kong. What make cultural studies so popular? Answering that would really require a kind of cultural studies of cultural studies in Asia. I believe there is no simple answer to that question. It's complicated and there are conjunctural questions, and obviously it has to do on the one hand with the rapid rise of capitalism in many parts of Asia and, at least in some parts, with what we might call the democratization, although always limited, of the public sphere and of popular culture, the loosening political and cultural constraints under which people operate—made possible by, the overthrow of dictatorships in Taiwan, in Korean, etc..... Even if such experiences are not universal across Asia, they have their impacts across the whole region. But also the rapid economic growth and prosperity. And the communication technology

and the globalization of popular culture. That's not globalization in simple sense. People in the West too quickly think globalization as if everyone in Asia is watching or listening to Western culture. Not at all. But it is about transits across space of culture. It's the circuitry; it's the expansion of the space and the contraction of the time of cultural transmission chains, creativity, production, and of course it's an explosion now with the Internet, that too is a part of it.

**FC: To ask a very naïve question, how can we practice cultural studies in Asia without the need to be a “Western” cultural studies scholar?**

LG: Well, I guess I think that the best cultural studies in Asia, whether coming out of Taiwan (Chen Kuan Hsing) or China (Wang Xiaoming) to Singapore (Chua Beng Huat) or Lingnan (Stephen Chan) or India (Partha Chatterjee) has little interest in reproducing what is doing in the North Atlantic academy, although it is willing to use whatever tools it can find there when appropriate. They want to do Asian studies—more perhaps Taiwanese cultural studies, Hong Kong cultural studies, depending on how they construct their conjuncture. What cultural studies looks like here will not nearly be what it looks like there. It is not a matter of becoming a follower of Homi Bhabha or importing Jacques Derrida, or of following the path marked by Fred Jameson. It is the more difficult task of forging the apparatus that will enable you to understand the very conditions that enabled and required you to forget that particular discursive apparatus.

But cultural studies says that's not you want to do. What you want to do is take the lessons and write these intellectual, theoretical, empirical, contextual practices, as well as others that you may find elsewhere, into your own formations. And create your own cultural studies that speak from and to your own context. And that may mean as Kuan Hsing argues, that you have to take up your own intellectual traditions, as people in Africa, India, and Latin America. Some of them may be influenced by Western theory, Western research, but what it looks like is different in the end. I think that makes cultural studies unique. It doesn't try to reproduce itself. You don't need have to become Western to do cultural studies, in a way you have to come to be Western to be Derridean. But you don't have to in order to do

cultural studies. In fact, if you do, you probably are not doing a good job of it.

**FC: Yes, you are right. Do you know if cultural studies is popular in other parts of the world such as Latin America and India as it is in Asia?**

LG: Yes. I mean, we have had an issue of the journal *Cultural Studies*, on coloniality and modernity, which is largely from Latin America and we have another one, a survey of sorts of the institutionalization of cultural studies in Latin America, in the works. There are some people in Latin America, friends of mine, who don't like to use the term cultural studies for what they do because they think it's a Northern, Western, or Anglo term. And they are reluctant to use the label. But they are likely to agree that it's the same project. We recognize we share the same project. And people in all over—in Ecuador, Columbia, in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, in the Caribbean, all over Latin American they have their kind of cultural studies. Clearly I define cultural studies more narrowly than many people. There are a lot of people that I may not think are practicing radical contextuality, but I am happy to call them my allies, and say, ok, you are cultural studies. So there are a lot of people in Latin America I think very specifically devoted to cultural studies, as a critical and contextual understanding of the world, as an interdisciplinary practice of relationalities, committed to complexity, etc. Yes, lot of people in Latin American and Asia—again, we have published issues of *Cultural Studies* from and about Asian work—and I am discovering that there is serious work in Africa (again, we have published some work but we are trying to do more), from eastern Europe and parts of the Middle East (e.g., Turkey).

People all over the world are discovering cultural studies as a different way to do research, to do intellectual political work, both because it takes culture and popular culture seriously, but also because it thinks more complexly, recognizing the complexity. You don't come up with the simply story. People understand that these kinds of stories don't work any more to allow us to find the forces that are changing the world. Because, of course, in much of the world—not all of it and never completely, what you might broadly call the left is losing or at least not really winning, with some parts



of Latin America being a noticeable exception (at least to many people and we are planning to publish soon a major essay and conversation about what is going on there). You can't really say the capitalism is moving in the direction we might want it to, or that it shows signs of seriously weakening (despite the financial crisis). If we are supposed to tell a story that enables us to figure out why the world is going in a direction like this, so we can develop better strategies to fight it, we're not doing a very good job. Clearly, that the world keeps on moving in the direction we don't want it to move. And I believe that intellectual work matters. We need to find ways to tell more complicated stories, we need to find ways to recognize the grand narratives don't work, and we need to tell the conjunctural stories about what's going on here.

**FC: At this juncture, let's go to the last question to talk about your book, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* published in 1992. You talked about the rise of a new conservatism in American life that was not good for the young generation. You seemed to have attributed the new conservatism in popular culture to the proliferation of commercialization/commodification. What is your reflection on these observations after all these years? Do you think this trend of conservatism will also spread to other countries as well?**

LG: Let me separate two questions here. The first question is about the relationship between popular culture and politics and commodification. I have never particularly thought that popular culture was inherently resistant. In that sense I was always in another stream from my friend John Fiske. John insisted that popular culture was inherently active and resistant. I do not want to oversimplify his position; instead, I want to read it contextually as a response to a particular problem space, a particular problematic: in which it was necessary to argue that the "victims" of power, the subordinated, are never simply passive or duped, but are actively engaging with the forces weighing down on them, and finding the spaces and practices that enable them to live the best life they can. And I thought under certain contextual conditions, in certain kind of relations, popular culture could be active and resistant, making use of certain political possibilities. So part of what I try to argue in that book is that the

kind politics of youth culture in the postwar years wasn't defined by any kind of obvious opposition to capitalism or existing structures of state power. But I argued, it was not primarily about politics, it was about rejecting the emotional or better, the affective life, the everyday life, of the society of the time. You don't want to be your parents, you don't want to be bored, you don't want to be terrified, there are whole set of relationships which in the 60s, were particularly to be mobilized by the whole set of relationship that make popular culture seem progressive of left wing. And in the 80s, I argued that the emergence of a new formation of alliances on the right was using some of the same affective politics to articulate some populations to the right or at least to kinds of apathy and depoliticization.

At the same time, I think the question of the relationship with popular culture and commodification and commercialization is one of the great unanswered questions. I do not think that commodification explains much, since culture has been commodified for a long time and in many places. The claim of commodification is too abstract to be really useful, by itself, in any critical story. Again, it is too simple, too universal, with none of the complexity of conjunctural analysis.

**FC: Do you think the story about that sort of popular culture continues?**

LG: That's a really interesting question. Because I am planning to teach an undergraduate class that compares the countercultures of the 1960s and the present moment. What I want to do is to look at the similarities both bring together in a variety of ways, spiritualism, politics (across a wide range of positions from party politics to anarchism to environmentalism and ontological politics), escapism, and complex formations of culture. But I also want to look at the successes and failures of the 60s, and at the differences between the two moments. My hypothesis is that the great difference is that while there were enormous differences in the 60s—hippies, SDS protests, and violence, with many different fragments and different ideologies, different commitments, but what held them together was first, a common or at least overlapping culture, and the fact that the culture itself defined a common enemy—even if it was largely symbolic and

entirely inadequate to the task (“the system”). But if you look at contemporary countercultures, which are similarly local and global, nothing seems to bind the groups together. There isn’t a single popular culture today that is articulated to counter-culture. Something has happened. Here I need to turn to people like you, or others who study youth culture and technology. Because I think it has to do increasingly with the changing ways in which culture matters and works, and with the centrality of technology. In a way, the music and other cultural forms are subservient to the technology. In a way the technology is that it defines these kids’ culture and while that has enabled some amazing things to happen, it has also worked against other possibilities.

**FC: Going back to the question, do you think that the world is increasingly conservative?**

LG: Well, I can’t speak of the world. There are interesting things happening in some parts of the world in state politics and I said, I do think there is a large and vibrant counterculture. There are possibilities but overall I am not optimistic. I think the world is moving in ways that are increasingly committed to what I describe as conservative values and ideals, which are not committed to the principle of justice and equality, which do not aim at giving to all people a life of reasonable comfort and dignity. I think the world is moving to the opposite direction. But it is not just capitalism, it’s the articulation of capitalism to political, social, and cultural formations that’s doing that. I can see this in the U.S. in a way, even in the discourses around Obama who was for so many such a sign of hope. But it is clear that the issues around which that hope was organized, like health care and environment, like peace and the limits of free markets, have already been taken over, moved at best to the center and at worst to pro-capitalism if not to conservative positions. So I’m not optimistic about the world. And that of course is already having profound affective effects on people who invested so much hope in Obama.

But I believe that part of the problems has to be laid at the feet of intellectuals—and this is partly why universities are no longer, for many people, the only site or even the most important site of knowledge production. As I said, I don’t think we are telling good

stories. We don't offer explanations of how these are being done. We haven't told those complicated but compelling stories about how society has been transformed and what are the mechanisms by which people live within the spaces of contemporary power. Of course, if I didn't think that the direction could be changed in the United States or the world could be changed, I wouldn't do this. I could have an easier life, just writing about rock and roll. I don't have to spend my time reading economics and try to understand calculus again.

**FC: So you are actually working on economics in these days?**

LG: In my new book, which I just handed in to the publisher, it's called *We All Want to Change The World: The Intellectual Labor of Cultural Studies*, there is a hundred-page chapter on taking economics and economies seriously. Let me say a word about the book. It is an attempt to begin to describe the work that we might have to do—some of the concepts we might need (e.g., multiplicity of ways of being modern), different questions that we might have to rethink, and ways we might have to rearticulate our understandings of some foundational concepts (like culture and media, politics and economics) that have shaped cultural studies. It is, if you will, my manifesto for a future cultural studies.

**FC: By incorporating economics in your study, does it mean you are adopting the political economy approach? Is it a rediscovery of political economy on your part? How do you take it?**

LG: It's a good question. There has been a long argument between cultural studies and political economy in the field of communication. And I guess my feeling has always been the problem isn't the need for political economy, but for the way most of the people doing political economy do it. The question is how you take economic matters seriously as part of a conjunctural analysis. Now I do not mean to sound like I am doing this on my own, or that I am the single noble intellectual blazing new trails. This has been an ongoing project for some time, for many people, across many disciplines and positions. There are a lot of people around the world, including economists, and I write about them in my book, and I am in conversation with some of them. We are trying to change the way we think about economics, and the way we understand the economy. So

I have entered into a conversation which has already been going on when I discovered it. It includes people in economics and political economy geography, anthropology, communication, cultural economy, and cultural studies, who are trying to rethink how to understand the economic in the contemporary conjuncture.

So I am not taking up a political economy approach, at least not as it is understood and practiced in communication studies. On the contrary, I continue to criticize the way in which this perspective on economies is too reductionist. As I have said, I don't think the category of commodification explains anything. It's an abstract category. I don't know what you know by saying something is commodified. I don't believe that you can understand the complex articulations and possibilities of specific practices of formation simply on the basis of their production. I don't know how appeals to Marx and Marx's understanding of capitalism in very specific formations 150 years ago are supposed to operate as justifications. On the other hand, there is a lot of work that has been done, in a variety of other intellectual formations to rethink Marxism, to bring its concepts into the contemporary conjuncture. But I am also reading neoclassical economics, and we have had a number of reading and working groups at my university to work collectively on such issues. (The latest is looking at money and finance.) The point is that I do not want to reply to what political economists or neoclassical economists tell us about economies, but to think within (and hopefully beyond) what they can tell us, to take up matters of economics as cultural and conjunctural questions. We need to take it up for ourselves and enter dialogue with all of them who are willing to talk to us.

## Selected Works by Lawrence Grossberg

Please refer to the end of the Chinese version of the dialogue for Lawrence Grossberg's selected works.