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**A: On your website, on the front page, you state that one of your goals is to conduct top quality academic research, but then you go and you say as well in this mission statement that you have excellent relationships with the world of practice – that is media and other cultural industries. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about what you mean by excellent relationships with the cultural world?**

R: Ok. I guess I should start by saying that this doesn't mean we're in anybody's pocket. Because the starting point is our independence as academics – that is, to make judgments as we see fit. But, in terms of our teaching we have a Masters in media management and one of the things we think is absolutely crucial for students is to meet people who work in the media industries. So we have people coming in who run media companies or who regulate or work in the public sector (whatever it may be) so they have a direct experience of such people giving a talk to them and then they can question them – so that's one thing. If we are studying media or communications, if we are studying cultural organizations, we believe we need to know them from the inside as well as just in terms of published reports; to establish – actually – relationships and discussions with people.

The second aspect is, I guess, in terms of research we do – I speak for myself but it's also the case for my colleagues. A lot of our work is focused on cultural and communication industries. For example, the most recent piece of research I did was a study on how policy gets made in the UK government in the relation to creative industries. So in order to do such a study you have to talk to the people from the government, you have to interview them. We also have a habit of inviting people to come here for seminars so we can have private exchanges apart from the things that go on the record. If you want to know how things operate, in this particular study I was looking at the UK Film Council which is a body that awards funding to filming – it's a film agency. So I went to interview people in the Film Council. It was similar with the BBC – I was interested in how the BBC is related to government policy. So it's just become a normal thing to go and talk to people in these organizations and I would use those interviews as evidence that I would run against other sources of information.

The third thing – In the British academic world there is also quite a drive to engage with the world of work, the world of policy, the world of government and so on. Actually we don't need to be told to do this because we think it's essential but there's another aspect of it that is maybe the normative dimension – how do you conceive your role as a researcher? Do you conceive your role as a researcher just as somebody writing for other researchers or do you conceive your role as a citizen, you know as somebody who's producing work that can make a difference. Not all of it can because a lot of academic work is focused on problem development which only other academics will understand but there are ways in which – certainly in the humanities and social sciences – you can turn some of what you do into platforms for public debate.

So these are three ways of answering your question. So I guess it is important that we are not driven towards this conception of our role – if you like – as a citizen by the economic imperatives we have within the university but this is something I think is inherent to being an academic myself.

**A: Something that you said that I find interesting is that as an academic you would pursue research and a whole bunch of this research is not understandable to anyone outside the field.**

R: It's not terribly interesting if only *they* can understand it, you know. So you have to find ways of translating it – it depends on the problem, of course, you know. But, for example, the area of policy

tends to be an expert field. Of course there are costs of entry – so you have to acquire some kind of knowledge. So inevitably, informed debate about policy tends to be relatively limited. But most people – particularly if you are talking about culture or communication – ordinary people think about these issues and they have lots of views. So it's a question of how you engage in those areas where they are most capable. At the same time they presuppose a lot of knowledge. There are no perfect answers to this but you know, everyone has opinions about newspapers or television, or whether we should fund artists. They don't necessarily know what the arguments behind it are but you start with something that's quite fertile, actually.

**A: OK. So you would start with that and then you would try to translate this particular expertise into a language that somebody else could understand. And from what I understand you would try to “sell” it to someone. What steps would you take to sell it?**

R: Well, it depends who you want to sell it to. There are different audiences. In respect of academic audiences you have the idioms that everybody is going to understand. In respect of policy world you need to know what are the existing concerns – what is fashionable, what is current. How – if at all – does what I know relate to current debate. In terms of wider public – and by “wider public” I don't mean everybody, I think a wider public would be an interested public – it's entirely possible, if you assume you have intelligent people to speak to, that you can simplify, that you can get away from jargon and you can present lively examples and engage people on the territory they can understand. If you like – the French idea of *vulgarisation*: this is the idea. Essentially making things accessible. I think there are different approaches to different audiences.

**A: You would say that you would look at what the different concerns are, what is in the debate...**

R: Yeah – what is in the debate. Within the world of practice and also within the world of policy I think. And this is not necessarily to accept the terms of the debate but the first step would be to understand what the people are talking about, because if you don't in some way or other connect with what's in play then nobody is going to be interested.

**A: In this Center you have many people doing all sorts of research, dealing with different topics. To what extent, you would say, this view or this focus on what's hot in the world of practice is actually influencing what the people are actually researching here?**

R: It's an interesting question. Well, as far as my academic colleagues go, it's so much the heat of the question as the interest from the intellectual point of view and possibly its policy pay off that drives the work. There is no kind of uniformity in terms of what's chosen. It is very much interest-driven rather than expedient – for my colleagues. In terms of my students, most of whom come from overseas, it's interestingly very often triggered by issues that are of main public concern in those countries. For example, if you look at our website you will see an interest in creative industries and exports in Korea, an interest in propaganda in China, an interest in film policy in Thailand. So these are things that are clearly different from the things that we do here, but those are things that people want to pursue which have high topicality and relevance for them. To take some other examples, a couple of PhDs are just starting, one on games and another on the internet: you know there are issues around the internet regulation and around games production and its effects on its marketability which are very much matters of contemporary interest. So, I think, certainly in some

way or other, most of the work – including historical work - is also related to contemporary problems.

**A: Now, when you are searching an answer to a problem and you find some sorts of answers that can be interesting and informative to someone in the world of practice or the regulatory world – how do you make that leap? How do you communicate this?**

R: Well, there is no magic solution. Let me illustrate by noting the things that I have been doing myself in the last couple of years. This coming Saturday, for example, I am giving a lecture to a group of artists who are interested in understanding the policy context of artistic practice. I've talked to students in the Glasgow School of Art, who would be doing only artistic practice, but again whose teachers thought they need to know more about what happens when they get out – what are the framing conditions if you like. I've spoken to an artists' workshop where the objective was really to challenge them to think outside of the box, for me to act as provocateur and make them think outside their practice and reflect on how they talk about their practice. So there are all sorts of different circumstances in which – these are generally the result of invitations. Some of your reputation gets around and people ask you to do things. There are other ways of intervening – we do occasional radio interviews or TV interviews, and sometimes you write something intervening in the debate in the press.

**A: So you would say that the relationships with media actually, apart from the interest in the study...**

R: ... Yes of course. To be treated as an expert for certain purposes is also a part of it.

**A: So then if you're seen as an expert for the people who are pursuing the topic and they know...**

R: They'll ask you to give your great wisdom in 30 seconds. So, you know it's a range of different things. Now, grants are a different matter because that's highly competitive in the U.K. research councils and it depends on many things. Possibly there is a sort of *zeitgeist* which affects how they evaluate projects you put forward but essentially they're evaluated on their academic content (whether they theorize things well, whether the methodology is good) and are highly competitive. So if you are going to come up with something that's fashionable that certainly does not going to mean you get money; that's determined by the academic content. Then there are other ways in which things may happen – you might get commissioned, which we have been, and you get to do the occasional bit of advice for government or to run an event because they know you can get the right people together. We don't do a huge amount of that but we do our regular seminars, we invite people to come both from the various creative industries and also from who would be interested in government to come along. And they do actually! We have no problems.

The Centre has always had certain proximity to public bodies and now people even think it's gone a little bit more distant because when I took over as a Director I wanted to put the academic identity absolutely at the top. Because I think that if you are starting from a position of real academic strength where people respect the quality of the work and they don't think it's compromised in any way this is really helpful to you. I think that's the core of our activity really.

**A: What I want to ask you about at this point is that you mentioned "a service": if I asked you what kind of service you provide? What could you do for government?**

R: We don't market ourselves as a service at all. And if people want us to do things they come and ask us and we say "yes" or "no". I'll give you an example of one of the things we did. This happened during the reform of arts bodies in Scotland. We were asked to inform the process so we arranged some seminars and gave some briefings – that's an example. We may have purely academic seminars here where there is a strong interest, for example, let's say around violence in video content, so we invite somebody from government and the broadcasters to come along and hear the arguments – you could say that's providing a service. We don't charge for it. We just think that if we have this interesting thing going on they can bring something from their perspective. So I mean – if you're asking me about what the core business of CCPR is, it's teaching and research, and what we do after that is in various ways because I have colleagues who are very much out in the world and we have various forms of influence really and at times we get asked to do things. But if you want to end up being a consultancy you need to have quite a few people who can just pick things up and do them without any other commitments and it's really quite difficult in the academic world for people to have that kind of gearing. And also, the economics from the point of view of this University are not greatly 'incentivizing', you could say. So we see our influence as giving advice to public bodies – for example, I chair the Advisory Committee for Scotland of the UK communications regulator, Ofcom. It's a lot of work, you know. It involves going to meetings with my Committee and reviewing the whole communications scene having occasional meetings with Ministers and other public figures. So there is a variety of ways in which my colleagues and I can take what we know as academics and take our own analytical abilities and make them available for people and it's not about a financial transaction. It's much more about how you affect the context, the debate without any sort of exaggerated expectations.

**A: Could you maybe say how do you make people aware that this academic – critical approach – can be important? What kind of steps you would have to take as a person with a particular academic interest and you would say – look "this is interesting, this can change the way you think, this can change the way you operate..."**

R: I think it's a continuous struggle actually. It's not as though a field like this necessarily becomes well established; I think there is always a job of persuasion to be done. But I think – particularly in the field of media and communications, it is so obvious. People spend so much of their time in one form or other with media. So nobody, I think, would imagine that this is not a significant part of one's life.

Culture is a government obsession everywhere – whether because of its importance for identity or for the economy – so I think there is a sense in which media and culture are just obviously important. In a curious way, the reason it's hard sometimes to convince people it's because, first of all, they're snobs about the significance of media and maybe 'low' culture, popular culture, and secondly because everyone thinks they're an expert, but they are not. Everyone has an opinion – so what, you know?

**A: So what would you say academics have to contribute here? Why is their knowledge special?**

R: Well, because it's different and because you may see things that people don't. Because you may challenge them in ways they are not used to. So I think it puts you in position of dialogue, which adds a great deal of value not just for yourself but for the other party.

**A: So you're saying academics a little bit more objective, maybe? A little bit more distant from the topic – is that what you are trying to say?**

R: Yes, actually. I just gave a talk this morning about some research I have done on the BBC. I think that there are ways in which, if you are observing, you see things that people who are in the situation do not see. For example, you may see some systematic characteristics, you may analyze certain kinds of power relations, certain kinds of constraint, and you may see opportunities. So, I think, that actually, being outside of a practice carries huge value.

**A: Is there a difference between the work of an academic – in this particular context – and the work of a consultant?**

R: Yeah – I think so, because a consultancy generally works on different time scales. Consultancies produce relatively quick solutions. Usually consultancy work is not theorized; it's oriented towards the problem in question. And sometimes it's oriented towards the solutions of the problem in terms of what the client may wish. An awkward consultant would tell the client things they don't want to know, but it may be difficult if you want to go back for further business. In a way, I think, that we are liberated from that and we don't need to tell anyone things they want to hear. And also our time scales are bit frustrating for people to understand but they are different and there are plusses and minuses of that. Actually, I am just involved in discussions about some of the problems of the different phasing between academic research and what people want to know, as it were, within the policy world. It's interesting – I don't think there are any easy solutions. But there might be some kind of practical ways of dealing with it.

**A: How should the young PhD go about involving himself in a world of practice? If were to generalize: you are an academic and you want to communicate – how to do you do it exactly; I mean “step-by-step”.**

R: Well, let's say you're interested in music for example and you want to find out how a record company works. Then you must get access; you must convince people to talk to you, to allow you to understand how the system works, to understand something about the economics, to understand how they make aesthetic choices. I think these are all very practical steps in many ways described in textbooks on methodology about doing social research. I think it is interesting enough – I have been doing piece of work with a professor of law, and for her interviewing people was fantastically exciting because she had never done it before. And the idea of filming some interviews (as we have done) – that was completely off the scale. So there are many ways of doing empirical research but then again what we do is not necessarily what everybody does. Maybe the issue for you is that there are some bits of the field which ought now to be analysed quite differently and there are others which still ought to remain extremely conservative because somehow they work better that way – at least for the academic practitioners.

**A: OK. You would say that then – through this work you develop contacts and then you would try to maintain them, but you mainly do it on the personal level. You would not institutionalize them so much.**

R: No, because as you will find out yourself, in the end it's always about people and whether people get on, whether people have the drive and the interest to do things. It's very difficult to maintain

institution-to-institution links. In the end it's always about particular people – people move on and the links break. These are time-consuming and difficult to maintain, actually.

**A: If we were to summarize a little bit what we have said so far. What we have actually said so far is that because of the top quality research, because you maintain contacts with people, because you're maintaining contact with media – so you're trying to be very active in commenting the current issues within the research field that you are currently involved in. Would you add anything to that?**

R: Those are probably the key elements. Of course there is also academic and professional publication. However, I guess this is the crucial element: what I was trying to underline is that you have to speak to different groups. You don't just restrict yourself to talking to same crowd – and this is challenging.