

Mediascapes, Conscientisation and Personal Foresight

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This paper responds to an ongoing debate about the media and communication of foresight concepts. I combine reflections with an account of commentary methods and seminar presentations made over a decade in university, community and practitioner development contexts. These include Swinburne University's former Australian Foresight Institute; Spiral Dynamics practitioner training; the Australian festival This Is Not Art; and the Oases Graduate School. Personal foresight involves an external vantage point and subjective horizon-building in order to create and self-generate preferred futures. I consider how 'mediascapes' as artefacts and 'conscientisation' processes reflect this, and the lessons they provide. If the foresight community is open and appreciative to new opportunities then many of the problems raised can be reframed and resolved.

1. Introduction

How do media images affect our personal 'self-image' of positive futures? How can foresight practitioners use media to effectively communicate futures concepts to a general audience? What are the opportunities and risks of these approaches? Richard Slaughter raised these issues throughout his development of critical futures studies [1; 2]. In particular, Slaughter critically interrogated popular film imagery of dystopian futures [3]. Subsequently, Jose M. Ramos has used Freirean 'conscientisation' approaches [4] to examine action research and futures methods [5] and why foresight practitioners find it difficult to communicate to the public [6].

This paper responds to this ongoing debate in several ways. As a foresight practitioner and developmental editor I am interested in the issues that Slaughter and Ramos have raised. As the former editor of the US-based news site Disinformation (www.disinfo.com), I experimented with different approaches in two periods: November 1999 to August 2002 and April 2003 to February 2008 (in the interim period US-based researcher Russ Kick handled site editorial responsibilities). However, many of the most 'formative' experiences and important conversations occurred around this process, with Slaughter, Ramos, and others in the foresight community. In this paper, I recount my own 'conscientisation' process, and offer some tentative reflections that have unfolded over almost 20 years of dealing with these issues.

In his early work Slaughter argued that media images have the power to 'colonise' personal foresight. An autobiographical example I offered Slaughter, and traced the effects of, was being accidentally given a photo-novel of Ridley Scott's film *Alien* (1979) at age six [7]. H.R. Giger's set design foreshadowed later subcultural aesthetics. *Alien's* proto-Marxist critique of mercantile capitalism anticipated several ethical conflicts as a researcher. For Arjun Appadurai, such experiences illustrate the power of 'mediascapes'—"image-centred, narrative-based strips of reality"—that can subtly influence our lives, the models we adopt, and the choices we make [8, 299].

‘Conscientisation’ and personal foresight can interact with Appadurai’s ‘mediascapes’ in nuanced ways. ‘Conscientisation’ or the development of attuned ethical awareness is perhaps most identified with critical pedagogy thinker Paulo Freire [4] and with the Satyagraha non-violent activism of Mohandas Gandhi [9]. For me, personal foresight is a way to ‘mediate’ the influence of Appadurai’s ‘mediascapes’ and is deeply connected with ‘conscientisation’. Personal foresight is a subjective orientation that may encompass an individual’s psychobiography. It includes the capacity for conscious self-reflection and dynamic horizon-building, and this may differ from communally verified artefacts. It can be difficult for individuals to convey inter-subjectively to others the impact or significance of specific life experiences—aesthetics, rapport, sensitivity and timing are important.

This paper considers three interwoven strands. I first encountered Appadurai’s ‘mediascapes’ in an active, co-creative sense as a freelance writer and contributing editor with Australia’s *21C* and other publications. During this ‘formative’ period I also had ethnographic ‘encounters’ with several subcultures and philosophical movements. Graeco-Armenian magus George Gurdjieff’s work was influential and introduced me to ‘remorse of conscience’ and ‘conscientisation’ processes [20]. I subsequently honed some commentary methods using film and media clips to discuss the Spiral Dynamics framework for human values, and futures studies concepts, in different contexts. These included early programs in strategic foresight at Swinburne University; the annual festival This Is Not Art (www.thisisnotart.org) in Newcastle, Australia; and more recently, a 2009 seminar run by Jose M. Ramos at the Oases Graduate School (www.oases.edu.au) in Hawthorn, Australia. Finally, I explore the implications of these experiences and methods for the public communication of futures studies and foresight concepts. I draw throughout on over a decade of personal experiences, and in-depth conversations about this with foresight co-journeymen including Jose M. Ramos, Chris Stewart, Josh Floyd, Stephen McGrail, and Karen Dempster, who each have developed individual approaches to ‘mediascapes’ involving foresight and futures studies frameworks and methods. The views expressed however are my own.

2. ‘Formative’ Experiences With ‘Mediascapes’

I first encountered Appadurai’s ‘mediascapes’ in an active, co-creative sense as a student journalist, and then later as a freelance writer, developmental editor, and website editor. Several intellectual influences ‘sensitised’ me into this early career path during the early to mid 1990s. Subsequent work in developing commentary methods built on these ‘formative’ experiences.

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s ‘propaganda model’ of elite mass media provided one early framework to comparatively analyse stories and to conduct institutional analysis [10]. The propaganda model’s five filters combined Herman’s finance and investment skills (‘size, ownership and profit orientation’, and ‘advertising’) with Chomsky’s knowledge of linguistics and an elite model of sociological power (‘sources’, ‘flak’, and ‘anti-communism’ as Cold War era ideology). Here was a model for scholarly collaboration which used joint expertise, and comparative case studies, and content analysis. It left me with three insights: ‘news’ was pre-filtered by journalistic, editorial and subtle institutional choices; to understand an issue it helped to examine diverse sources from different viewpoints; and there were plenty of stories that didn’t receive coverage.

A second major influence was the New Journalism school of the 1960s and 1970s [11]. New Journalism provided several innovations: the use of literary and fiction techniques in non-fiction reportage; ethnographic techniques from anthropology; and acknowledgment of the journalist's subjectivity. Leading practitioners included Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Hunter S. Thompson, and Joan Didion. As a journalist for La Trobe University's student newspaper *Rabelais* in 1994, I adopted Thompson's pre-*Fear and Loathing* 'gonzo' style [12] for music and film industry interviews, and discussed George Plimpton's *Paris Review* with Australian painter and witch Vali Myers. The editors passed around a Hunter S. Thompson biography and marvelled at his evocative self-mythology as we began to experience Appadurai's 'mediascapes' as a constructivist social reality [13]. I saw other facets: university archives of *Rabelais* and its predecessor *Paringa* demonstrated the value of institutional memory; student elections were divisive; and the successor editors faced a 'winner's curse' when the Kennett Victorian Government arrested them for publishing a shoplifting guide and then ended funding for university student media. This decision was widely interpreted as an attempt to curb criticism of new policies on voluntary student unionism. Watching this experience over several years taught me an important lesson about premature 'conscientisation' for activists: ideology can create strategic myopia when tactics fail and the rules have changed.

For the next three years I wrote for two Australian magazines: the Perth-based *REvelation* Magazine which is now a film festival, and the 'late period' of *21C*, a science and culture magazine initially funded by the Australian Commission for the Future, and then by Gordon & Breach Publishers, which Taylor & Francis acquired in 2001. For *REvelation*, I interviewed author J.G. Ballard [14] about the activists in his novel *Rushing to Paradise* (1994) and self-destructive group dynamics [15]. I combined my interest in Noam Chomsky's political critique and Hunter S. Thompson's 'gonzo' style into reportage on Chomsky's 1995 Australian lecture tour and Timor-Leste activism [16]. *REvelation*'s editor Peter Collins subsequently followed up with Chomsky about Timor-Leste film footage. When I interviewed futurist Robert Anton Wilson in his first email interview about internet rumours of his death, Wilson joked that perhaps I was really interviewing someone else: a Discordian variant on 'trust but verify' [17]. An 'encounter' with maverick physicist Jack Sarfatti opened up the 'strange loops' of quantum physics research, intelligence agency projects, self-mythology, and their influences on popular culture [18].

During this same period I intensified a personal search of various philosophical movements and subcultures. I read Jay Kinney and Richard Smoley's work in the influential *Gnosis* Magazine (www.lumen.org). In the early 1990s I had 'encountered' the Graeco-Armenian magus George Gurdjieff (www.gurdjieff.org) through Eric Tamm's biography of musician Robert Fripp [19]. This coincided with the Arkana imprint's reissue of 'Fourth Way' literature including the talk transcripts of Russian journalist Pyotr Uspenskii (Ouspensky), exponents like Jacob Needleman, and students such as Margaret Anderson and C.S. Nott. I soon discovered La Trobe University's Borchardt library had an extensive collection of 'Fourth Way' and other literature, from circa 1966 onward which coincided with the Human Potential movement. I participated in a brief Work group run by Brian and Nina Earl, who taught the zikr ritual for remembrance; reflected on the Persian, Naqshbandiyya and Zoroasterian mythic currents in Gurdjieff's writings; and on the group's last night, showed us photographs from their Sherborne House training in the early 1970s with English philosopher John Godolphin Bennett. This felt like a 'real' moment of transmission. I also corresponded with cyberpunk author John Shirley who has written an excellent introduction to Gurdjieff's cosmology and trans-cultural mission [20]. Gurdjieff's 'remorse of conscience' would deeply influence how I perceived and experienced 'conscientisation'.

At the invitation of co-founder Dr. Michael A. Aquino, I also joined the San Francisco-based initiatory school the Temple of Set (www.xeper.org) in June 1996. I had first heard of Aquino and the Temple in high school, during the Satanic Ritual Abuse rumour panics of the late 1980s and the Parental Music Resource Center's censorship of heavy metal music. Aquino had an enigmatic reputation as a U.S. Army psychological operations specialist and past collaborator with the Church of Satan's Anton LaVey. In late 1993, I came across a 1989 edition of the Temple's reading list on Finland's Lysator server, and used the inter-library loans system to track down titles on Human Potential research, political psychology, and historical magi including John Dee and Aleister Crowley. I also saw some of Aquino's philosophical writings [21] and his *Church of Satan* memoir [22] which are now public although were then only available to Temple initiates and scholarly researchers. During my Temple membership I corresponded with international members; considered Thompson's 'gonzo' reportage through a LaVeyan lens; researched Fourth Way hybrids; contributed to plans for an organisational intranet; and created a reading list on cyberculture and other topics.

These different 'streams' of work—the Fourth Way, the Temple of Set, and *21C*—began to interrelate with complex, multifaceted results. In late 1997 I told *21C* publisher Ashley Crawford after reading Andy Grove that the signs were that the magazine would encounter a 'strategic inflection point' [23]. It did so when Gordon & Breach Publishers decided to cease *21C*'s publication. In mid 1997 I interviewed Don Edward Beck and Chris Cowan about their Spiral Dynamics framework and Clare W. Graves' original research [22] for a November 1997 magazine cover-story on marketing applications [24]. The afternoon after meeting Beck and Cowan, in an online exchange my subconscious asked explicitly for knowledge concerning the Bektashi and Naqshbandiyya Sufi Orders. I also gave a Temple of Set seminar about Spiral Dynamics and memetics to a Sydney audience in January 1998.

This rapid Lakatosian growth of ideas however rapidly fell apart in March-April 1998 in a major experience of conscientisation. On 27th February 1998 I sat down to write down some script ideas after seeing my first *Babylon 5* episode – 'Za'ha'dum' – and emerged ninety minutes later with *The Book of Oblique Strategies*, a Kierkegaardian and Jungian experience of depth psychology written in Nostradamus-like prose. A planned Fourth Way research unit in the Temple of Set was outlined but never formally activated, although Petri Laakso, Vesa Itti, and others developed their own ideas, such as in the Esoteric Order of Beelzebub. I then experienced a Black Swan cascade [25] of unexpected events: *21C* and *REvelation* both imploded, a major personal relationship ended, and I experienced a nervous breakdown and suicidal ideation reminiscent of Jacques Vallee's studies of UFOlogy contacts [26]. I felt 'de-futured' and most of the self-identity I had developed over the past four years was erased. The final lines of John Fowles' *The Magus* [27] and Janet Lewis's *The Wife of Martin Guerre* [28] now had an elegiac, existentialist, and haunting quality. Whatever alternative future that might now tentatively emerge would be built on the ruins of unrealised horizons.

3. Commentary Methods: From AFI to TINA

When Richard Slaughter interviewed me for the Australian Foresight Institute's (AFI) Strategic Foresight program in late 2001, we found several commonalities. We had both written for *21C* and interviewed J.G. Ballard. I knew of some of the media Slaughter had analysed for 'images of the future' from my own childhood. Slaughter had adopted an 'abolitionist' stance to nuclear weapons whilst I distinctly remembered the 1982-83 nuclear

war scares in the United States, Europe, the United Kingdom, Russia and Australia [29]. On 19th August 2002, at Slaughter's invitation, I gave a seminar on Integral Futures and film to the Australian Foresight Institute's first student intake. This was to be one of several seminars I would give to different audiences about Spiral Dynamics and futures concepts, in university, practitioner training, and media activist settings.

The seminar synthesised several years of university studies which coincided with my personal 'formative' experiences. In my initial undergraduate studies I suffered 'analytic overload' in late 1993 when I encountered semiotic, postmodernist, post-structuralist and neo-Marxist traditions in film theory. I felt some of the analyses reflected the critic and stance, rather than what may have occurred in a film production. After reading Pyotr Uspenskii (Oupsensky) and other 'Fourth Way' authors, I began also to perceive how people became self-identified with their views. From mid 1997 to late 1999, I interviewed media studies exponents like Douglas Rushkoff and Kalle Lasn, and memetics researchers including Richard Brodie, Howard Bloom, and the late Aaron Lynch. Many of these people were familiar with cultural evolution frameworks, and with new media experiments.

I then wrote a 40-page list of films, scenes and content imagery, with input from Terry Carty, Brad Hanson and Michael Keleher [30]. Although never developed formally as a cinema studies subject this document was a 'proof of concept' for subsequent research. It was designed to be open-ended so that different film and media clips could be chosen for varied audiences. In 2000 and 2001, I also took two genre film classes with La Trobe University's Geoff Mayer on Film Noir and Westerns. Changes in film structure, narrative and content imagery were clearly evident over a 50-to-60 year time period. Mayer's classes provided a 'sampling frame' to examine how ideas, values and worldviews changed and evolved over time. Rolando Caputo's course on the comparative methods of Syd Field, Christopher Vogler, Andrew Horton and Robert McKee suggested scriptwriting as another potential area where memetics and values frameworks could be further developed.

The seminar classes of Mayer and colleague Felicity Collins introduced me to a commentary method that I honed at AFI and elsewhere for different audiences. Mayer and Collins would screen a short clip. They would comment on a particular aspect of mise-en-scene (the formal elements of a film) or an illustrative principle from a theoretical stance. Then they would replay the scene. They encouraged seminar participants to bring and comment on their own clips, or for content analysis under test conditions. This approach opened the discussions, enabled peer-based learning through sharing expertise and knowledge in a group cohort, and often revealed multiple, conflicting 'readings' of films. Slaughter's familiarity with critical theory and peer-based learning processes meant that this approach could be adapted to an AFI context. Potentially, any methodology or aspect of futures studies could be discussed if appropriate film scenes could be found, coded, screened, and discussed.

Prior to the AFI presentation, I conducted a three hour seminar, 'Spiral Dynamics and Film Scanning', with Spiral Dynamics certification trainers Chris Cowan and Natasha Todorovic on 19th July 2002 [31]. We had discussed the 1998 list of films, scenes and content imagery beforehand. From this list I assembled 50 films that illustrated different aspects of the Gravesian and Spiral Dynamics approach. The session focused on clips which illustrated Beck and Cowan's colour coding framework [32] in situational contexts, and the various anthropological and change management tools which they taught. Todorovic and I agreed that it was difficult to find clips which truly illustrated post-egocentric, 'second tier' values rather than the language used. Cowan also noted that Graves had originally used

number/letter codes, developed his coding from interviews and questionnaires, and was open-ended about where human emergence was heading. The session thus built on several other exercises in the practitioner training to provide concrete, contextualised examples of theoretical constructs and principles.

AFI's three hour seminar on 19th August 2002 had a different purpose. This time I focused on 8 specific clips from the 50 films and encouraged more peer group discussion, modelled on Mayer and Collins' seminar approach. The seminar synthesised aspects of Slaughter's critical futures studies with similar traditions from cinema studies: literary theory, content analysis, and psychoanalysis [33]. The seminar title 'Sculpting in Time' referred to the Russian director Andrei Tarkovskii whose films featured 'conscientisation' as a major theme, and who was an early influence on my understanding of film theory [34]. I focused on environmental scanning methods and anthropological techniques in the Spiral Dynamics and Gravesian approach. However, I noted, potentially any futures method such as Sohail Inayatullah's causal layered analysis or the Global Business Network approach to scenario planning could be studied. The mood was exploratory. I began the seminar with the opening montage from Julian Temple's Sex Pistols documentary *The Filth and the Fury* (2000). Slaughter wryly commented that he was in Great Britain at the time, and had different memories about what had occurred. Slaughter's comment suggested a further use of the methods I was experimenting with: using media as artefacts to stimulate ethnographic reflections and oral histories.

Throughout the seminar, I made several references to the difficulties and dangers of 'overcoding' material. I mentioned Alfred Korzybski's 'map is not the territory' insight, and alluded to my earlier nervous breakdown. Drawing on Mayer and Collins, I showed a scene from *The Matrix* (1999) and discussed how it could be interpreted in several different ways. I highlighted the 'Greed is Good' speech by Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) from Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* (1987). I then highlighted Gekko's private explanation later to Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen) about the social constructivist nature of financial markets and securitisation. In retrospect, my interest in Slaughter's critical futures extended to a critique of how futures methods can lead to information asymmetries. The films I chose described situations where particular values were being used for Machiavellian, pragmatic ends. 'Face value' interpretation would simply be naïve. In a subsequent essay, I outlined a critical process to self-evaluate films as 'mediascape' artefacts [35].

At the time, I was concerned about the effective communication of Spiral Dynamics frameworks. Ken Wilber [36] had popularised his interpretation and later extended Beck and Cowan's colour coding framework [32] into a broader map of human consciousness with Wilber's own interpretation of 'third tier' and other aspects unrelated to original Gravesian theory [37]. This meant the growing Integral community was using a hybrid framework with its own interpretation outside the original context and practitioner network. For example, Clare W. Graves had originally used number/letter codes, had an open-ended framework, and developed his coding 'emergently' from interviews, rather than from an imposed taxonomic structure. Some people began to become obsessed with particular ideas such as that they were 'second tier' or to treat Wilber as gospel rather than one interpretation. For me, this was a reminder of my initial 'encounter' with Spiral Dynamics and how a powerful framework can reshape personal foresight. I tried to remind people that all models have their original contexts and self-limits.

Rather than internecine conflict, one strategy is to present futures methods and frameworks to a different audience. Since October 1999, I had presented or co-presented panels on media strategies at the annual This Is Not Art festival (TINA) in Newcastle, Australia. TINA attracted a very different audience to AFI: young writers, hacktivists, underground musicians, and independent media producers. Although now identified with founder Marcus Westbury the early TINA involved many people in an ‘emergent’ process of personal foresight in various integrative networks of collaborative projects and micro-initiatives. TINA thus differed from the prevailing ‘mediascape’ narratives and also from recent academic interest in cultural and creative industries. Many TINA participants were inspired by Mark Davis and his exploration of alternative social futures [38]. For several years as Disinformation’s site editor, I organised interviews with people like author Howard Bloom and Feral House publisher Adam Parfrey. A ‘do it yourself’ ethic prevailed on many panels with just as many ‘experts’ being in the audience, and often intervening to give advice.

Many of my TINA panels touched on the intersection of ‘mediascapes’ and popular futures imagery. On 7th October 2002, I gave a talk on ‘Info-Psychology and Film-Scanning’ with a nod to the mid-1970s futurological work of Timothy Leary and Robert Anton Wilson [39; 40]. This three-hour ‘live’ DVD-style commentary used 20 clips from the July 2002 presentation. I was mindful that many people had not heard of Spiral Dynamics or attended Swinburne University’s strategic foresight program. I thus focused on introducing futures studies concepts and frameworks ‘on-the-fly’ to a different audience, such as critical futures and scenario planning. For TINA, I stressed the ‘do it yourself’ possibilities of capturing and translating expertise, using ‘off the shelf’ films, and tailoring individualised commentaries. In 2004, I ended working with TINA after mentoring a group of young journalists and editors. TINA had been a vehicle for personal foresight and revisit some of my earlier, ‘formative’ experiences from the viewpoint of a more wiser practitioner.

4. ‘Conscientisation’ and ‘Mediascapes’

In 2003 and 2004, Jose M. Ramos and I dialogued and outlined for a year about the possibility of creating an Australian Foresight Institute unit on media and activism. Several years later the unit emerged in a different context: the Oases Masters program in Integrative and Transformative Studies. Co-founded by Jacques Boulet in 2007, the Oases Graduate School combined action learning, critical pedagogy, integrative dialogue and other frameworks to support creative engagement. Ramos developed the unit ‘Time, Media and Consciousness’, originally titled ‘Temporal Conscientisation: Community Media Production in the Context of 21st Century Challenges’, from our initial outline and his substantive original research. In conceiving the unit, Ramos drew on a range of frameworks including images of the future [1; 2; 3] action research [5], ‘mediascapes’ [8], and media industries as a ‘political economy’ [10]. The emphasis was on self-capacity as a media producer and praxis to address 21st century problems.

Oases like TINA attracted a different kind of student to AFI’s early cohort. Many, like the late Ken Fernandes were committed social activists who emphasised engagement and praxis over theory-building. They wanted to learn how to run their own internet site, edit videos, and to document their personal campaigns. Ramos and I also spent several months during his collaboration with Melbourne-based documentary filmmakers Plugin TV (www.plugin.tv) talking about potential films, approaches to media skills training, and small group dynamics. From this ‘shared’ understanding we developed an intuitive, collaborative workshop

approach very similar to how I had seen Don Edward Beck and Chris Cowan originally present Spiral Dynamics in late 1997.

Ramos and I debated individual activists and whistleblowers who we felt had undergone a ‘conscientisation’ process [4; 20]. Our approach focused on ‘heroic’ individuals who directly embodied ‘conscientisation’ as one alternative to Peter Hayward’s comparative framework analysis [41]. Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, the Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, was an immediate example [42]. Dallaire had the foresight to foresee the 1995 Rwandan genocide between Hutu and Tutsi tribes yet was unable to intervene. ‘Pentagon Papers’ leaker Daniel Ellsberg [43] was another high-profile example of someone ‘conscientised’ for personal reasons [44] to ‘leak’ an internal RAND study on the Vietnam War’s decision-making. This led to a discussion with foresight colleague Chris Stewart and former intelligence analyst and author Paul M. Monk about how the intelligence community may have viewed Ellsberg’s actions. Monk raised another example: Andrew Wilkie, who resigned as a trans-national issues analyst with Australia’s Office of National Assessment on the eve of the 2003 Iraq War, and who later became an independent Australian Senator [45]. The late United Nations negotiator Sergio Vieira de Mello illustrated the more ‘nuanced’ view of a ‘heroic’ individual who had a difficult personal life [46; 47]. This may be a variant on the ‘feet of clay’ problem of ‘conscientised’ leaders who become gurus (Storr, 1997). Ken Booth’s shift from ‘realist’ to ‘critical security studies’ exponent also contains powerful observations on ‘conscientisation’ [49].

Elsewhere, the debates unfolded that later led to the ‘Integral-CLA’ exchange in *Futures* journal. Ramos was also dealing with the group dynamics of Plugin TV productions (www.plugin.tv). Could foresight practitioners and activists be their own worst enemies? I raised this possibility with Peter Watkins’ pseudo-documentary *Punishment Park* (1971) about US responses to Vietnam War activists [50]. I had also discovered in subsequent Masters research that the cyberpunk topics I had researched for *21C* and the Temple of Set had been used in a very different context as ‘screening’ criteria for Aum Shinrikyo members [51; 52; 53]. This problematised our approach to ‘conscientisation’. Personal foresight could lead to an individualised ethics, or alternatively, to rhetoric and symbols of an ethical stance that was not actually held. ‘Mediascapes’ could illustrate examples of ‘conscientisation’ or be used to direct this impulse in particular directions. The debate in late 2010 about Wikileaks publisher Julian Assange brought these issues to wider public attention [54].

I participated in three sessions for Ramos’s ‘Time, Media & Consciousness’ unit at Oases Graduate School. On 27th April 2009, I gave a brief lecture that summarised Appadurai’s ‘mediascapes’ and a tri-partite model of micro, meso and macro factors [55]. I mentioned eight films to illustrate the different factors. Briefly, I suggested practitioner reflection as a way to deal with ‘mediascapes’ and with personal ‘conscientisation’. There were varied triggers: ‘moments of insight’ when the individual questions consensus reality; facing a difficult problematique like Dallaire [42]; or being a ‘whistleblower’ like Ellsberg [43]. These triggers awakened an individual from ‘consensus trance’ and into a ‘conscientised’ state [20, 56]. The meso level dealt with ethical dilemmas, group dynamics, organisational politics and leadership issues. The macro level considered the Gurdjieffian ‘terror of the situation’ [20] of revolutionary politics and war recast as ‘shadow’ globalisation. In 2001, I had reflected on my involvement in the Gurdjieff Work, and reframed these issues for a peace studies class run by Gandhian scholar Thomas Weber [57]. The workshop presentation drew on this earlier work in a new context.

One dimension of ‘shadow’ globalisation came up regularly between Ramos and I in our planning discussions. We both admired Carolyn Nordstrom’s conflict anthropology [58] which revealed the interconnectedness of war to conventional society. Hubert Sauper’s documentary *Darwin’s Nightmare* (2004) illustrated Nordstrom’s thesis in a study of environmental devastation, poverty, and arms trafficking [59]. I remembered Peter Ouspensky’s anecdote of seeing trucks on the Liteiny Bridge in St. Petersburg, Russia, during World War 1 with wooden crutches for the not-yet wounded [60, 51-52]. I had seen similar subcurrents to Uspenskii in New York City just after Al Qaeda’s terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001. I posed two challenges to the class. Do ‘mediascapes’ actually shield us from the large-scale conflicts around us? How can we as activists and media producers deal with this reality, particularly if large-scale processes are involved?

On 7th September 2009, Ramos and I co-facilitated a workshop dealing with media production. I provided an overview of my past work with the Disinformation site and TINA. I then focused on a recent film that offered some answers to the earlier questions I had posed: Louie Psihoyos’s *The Cove* (Psihoyos, 2009). *Flipper* trainer Ric O’Barry became ‘conscientised’ as a dolphin activist when he discovered the multi-million dollar marine park industry that grew up around his work. O’Barry, Psihoyos and a camera team visit Taiji, Japan, which on the surface is an environmental and tourist destination. O’Barry however knows Taiji’s secret: the village is involved in the covert slaughter of dolphins. For me, *The Cove* worked on several different levels which made it relevant to the Oases class [62]. O’Barry evoked the ‘conscientisation’ process I outlined and the film was structured around a closing ‘moment of insight’ to conscientise the audience. *The Cove* dealt with ‘mediascapes’ as agitative propaganda and as production process. Reactions from the local police chief, fisherman and the local industry raised issues of cross-cultural awareness. Most importantly, *The Cove* showed how to plan, finance, and navigate a major covert operation, and then how to run a successful media campaign to raise visibility for an issue. The documentary distilled the insights I wanted to convey about being strategic as activists and media producers.

On 21st November 2009, Ramos and I co-facilitated a final workshop on integrated media practice and futures studies tools and techniques. We each talked about personal approaches to blogging, filming and video editing: approaching the craft and integrating foresight perspectives. For me, the decade spent working with the Disinformation® team provided exposure to United States politics, global issues, and alternative subcultures in which I could experiment with event-driven editing and foresight capabilities.

5. Conclusion

I began this journey almost two decades ago as a student journalist and media producer. After an early period of Lakatosian growth and ‘formative’ experiences I had an abrupt, ‘de-futured’ period that had long-lasting effects. This shaped a more cautious and introspective approach to ‘mediascapes’. Over the next decade I drew on these ‘conscientised’ insights in a range of university, community and practitioner development contexts. Swinburne University’s former Australian Foresight Institute provided ‘shaping’ experiences between 2002 and 2004. However, a range of other contexts from Spiral Dynamics training to TINA workshops provided alternative pathways and different experiences to AFI. The effect was to take foresight ideas out of a university context, and in the cases of TINA and Oases, to engage in ‘foresight for all’. A guild model of knowledge transfer and co-journeys replaced the teacher-student relationship [63].

At the core of this work was an ‘iterative’ experience of cultivating personal foresight: an external vantage point and subjective horizon-building in order to create and self-generate preferred futures. Personal foresight is thus *a priori* to and interprets the ‘contexts of use’ for methodologies and frameworks. As I discovered via Spiral Dynamics, there is value in being familiar with a methodology’s lineage and its research agenda, whilst being ‘agnostic’ enough to tailor its use to different audiences. Personal foresight may involve a ‘conscientisation’ process similar to the ‘heroic’ individuals described above. However, others may adopt very different ethical stances and frameworks. They may perceive foresight as unimportant, as a subset of a domain such as sustainability, or they may even be a ‘presentist’. Foresight practitioners must thus be sensitised to individual cognition, experiences, and narratives, as well as to frameworks and methods.

Slaughter [1; 2; 3] and Ramos [6] have posed the challenges of ‘mediascapes’ and of communication foresight to different audiences. The artefacts in this paper about commentary methods [30; 31; 33; 35; 55; 62] illustrate a decade-long conversation in which technology and pop culture provided a facilitative role, and often led to new collaborations with people outside the foresight community. Throughout, I adopted different roles: journalist, developmental editor, promoter, facilitator, mentor, critic, and co-creator. If foresight practitioners experimented with similar roles, and with new audiences on their own terms, then many of the problems Slaughter and Ramos have raised may be reframed or resolved. Potential conflicts between different ‘schools of thought’ within the foresight community may also be avoided. Whilst Ramos and I spent hours talking through issues, we became more like facilitators of human emergence in particular contexts, rather than teachers. Perhaps the challenge is for foresight and futures studies practitioners to be open and appreciative to such moments and opportunities, and to not be risk-averse.

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