Interview with Stuart Hall, June 12, 2012  
Interview conducted by James Hay  
Interview edited by James Hay, with suggestions by Lawrence Grossberg

**James Hay:** Stuart, as I explained in advance of our interview, for the first issue of the journal which I am editing (*Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*), I am conducting interviews with various individuals whose work allows me to highlight voices and perspectives that, over the long term and still today, shape questions which are asked from the intersection of critical studies, cultural studies, and communication studies. I have been interested in conducting an interview with you not only because you remain a visible point of reference in the compass of cultural studies throughout the world, but also because you clearly have more to say about the present context. There are so many ways to talk about your relation to cultural studies and about the various interventions and arguments that you have contributed to debates about forms and formations of power in different historical contexts. Beside having participated in debates about critical theory and cultural studies, you also have been interested in rethinking an intellectual's role in the world—something that you have done always with an eye toward how the past informs the present and with a restlessness about what kinds of questions might be most useful for responding to a current context.

With these thoughts in mind, it might be helpful to begin our interview by discussing your recent essay, “The Neoliberal Revolution” because it provides us a way to discuss how your current perspective about the present develops out of your earlier ideas and how you see the present political formation (indeed a “revolution”) as having emerged out of the past—out of previous political formations and crises.

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For readers of this interview who may not have read your essay, would you say something first about its publication? I have read different versions of the essay, though I don’t mean to suggest that they resemble one another exactly. It is worth noting to the reader of this interview that one version appeared in July 2011 in the British journal of culture and politics, *Soundings* (which you helped found in 1995), and another, shorter version appeared in the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, September 12, 2011, under the title “The March of Neoliberalism” (i.e., without the term “revolution”). Then another version (longer than the one in *Soundings*) was published in the journal, *Cultural Studies*, in November 2011. That the essay can be found in, or was conceived for, an academic journal as well as a newspaper and *Soundings*, which is not primarily an academic journal, speaks to the multiple fronts on which your work has occurred. The version in *Soundings* was part of the journal’s Special Issue on what the editors titled, “The Neoliberal Crisis” (with contributions also by John Clarke, Doreen Massey, and Michael Rustin). These different venues for the essay affirm, among other things, that your interventions are designed as much for academic debate as for a broader, public conversation.

**Stuart Hall:** I wrote a short piece in *The Guardian* about “the neoliberal revolution,” and then, just around that time, *The Guardian* conducted a long interview with me about it. But it began as a medium-length piece published in the journal, *Soundings*, because that’s where the discussion began, though I’ve been thinking about it for a long time. And you are right that in *Soundings* it was part of a group of essays—a small discussion issue with the people whom you mentioned. We had been discussing the present conjuncture since the crises of 2007–2009, and in that context we began to talk about neoliberalism.

**JH:** So the conversation with the other contributors occurred when, roughly?

**SH:** Well, the last two years, though it’s still going on. As the title of the Special Issue suggests, my essay is really about the [financial] crisis, about the nature of the crisis. The crisis is economic manifestly, which has interesting dimensions for me, in relation to cultural studies, which you might want to ask me about.

**JH:** You make my job as interviewer so easy.

**SH:** It’s an economic crisis, but it’s also a big political one, because of course, the recent [UK] political coalition—Conservative and Liberal-Democrat coalition—has changed the terms of reference. They [the parties of the coalition] are using the crisis to restructure the whole, entire, bloody show—economically, socially, legally, and every way. They intend that Britain will never again look like it did, and will never undertake the kind of redistributive government that the Labour government and the welfare state were—never. They want to liquidate the welfare state’s institutional basis and liquidate the ideas of collective provision which supported it, and to wipe out the notion of a mixed economy by marketizing, “modernizing,” privatizing.
JH: Did you write the essay out of a sense of urgency, or because somebody asked you to write on the subject?

SH: I've always been interested in political developments, as you know, but I became more and more obsessed by what has been happening lately. So it wasn't that I set about trying to write an article. [Laughs] It happened because I started talking to the television, and shouting at the radio.

JH: There's nothing wrong with that! I do a bit of that myself, heaping abuse on the mechanical messenger because the message riles me.

SH: So I had been starting to think about these developments. In the context of *Soundings*, we said, “Well, what is the nature of this crisis? It's not just a passing series of events. What's its history, where does it come from?” We started to discuss it as the “neoliberal conjuncture.”

JH: But it developed as a conversation, a collaborative project?

SH: Yes, and through that conversation and collaboration, I began to take interest in the more theoretical questions about “what is a conjuncture?”—which I'm still trying to write about.

JH: Well you have been writing eloquently about it for a long time, and I have questions along those lines, but since you mentioned that the essay belongs to a conversation about “crisis,” I'm wondering whether you think of or mean that term in relation to “financial crisis” (about which a lot has been said recently) or whether you and perhaps the others are using the term in a broader sense (to describe the current conjuncture) or whether you see financial crisis as having developed from a crisis that is broader and not, strictly speaking, “financial.”

SH: The financial crisis is, in a way, a cover for advancing the neoliberal revolution which is basically the economic and financial crisis. Financialization hit everybody, so in thinking about that, I began to think about the financial crisis as a wider economic phenomenon that had politically interlocking effects, which come out of particular cultural shifts that have been going on. So, it [the neoliberal revolution and the broader crisis] widens out from the financial crisis. But the financial crisis was a spark. So I ask where it came from. The supposition before the crisis was that we'll never go into debt again with the virtuous circle of investment, consumption, and production. By increasing and improving living standards, why (the assumption went) should it all ever come to a stop? Economic theory is of the moment, so many people thought that there's no reason it should come to a stop, and that we're sufficiently in control of the levers and the consequences now to sustain this forever.
JH: In describing a crisis of finance as a “cover” for a neoliberal revolution, do you see the financial crisis as a different kind of crisis than, say, the crisis that legitimated and rationalized a “global war on terror,” which formally was launched (in name anyway) by the Bush administration after the attacks in New York on September 11, 2001? In other words, why emphasize this crisis over others? Or is the financial crisis the crisis that most vividly or critically “sparked” a “neoliberal revolution”?

SH: Yes and no [about the financial crisis as a different kind of crisis from the crisis which stimulated the “war on terror”]. The “global war on terror” is another kind of crisis—a crisis within what I call the neoliberal epoch. But it’s much more rooted in international relations, it’s much more rooted in geopolitical power, it’s rooted in globalization, which has its economic dimension, you know, so it’s not a rivalry. There’s not only one kind of crisis, but overlapping crises. The geopolitical one and the financial one go very much together.

One result of the crisis of the economic system, a neoliberal system, is that people begin to question globalization, and the Euro-zone. That becomes a crisis because, well, we supposedly can’t have all these people asking that kind of question; it presents a problem that is difficult to deal with.

We’re now societies that massively [speaker’s emphasis within the interview] overspend our capacities—on debt, on derivatives, on making money out of making money, on making money out of thin air and vapor. These mysterious derivatives, and the economic formulae which were generated in the business schools, all spring from a deep economic irrationality on top of an apparently perfectly rational, perfectly transparent, fully controllable situation that assumes we shouldn’t be in trouble and that we should be prospering on and on.

JH: Particularly in the United States, there is a political rationality supporting the injunction to make up the debt by cutting all sorts of public goods and services which, compared to the UK, have never comprised a robust or even adequate welfare state.

SH: Well, that is the most important aspect of the crisis in Britain. What is being experienced is a huge set of cuts of public expenditures, public services, caps on earnings, lowering the standard of living, attacks on working people, and so on! All of that is being treated by the new government coalition as an opportunity to restructure. We supposedly can’t get out of it by borrowing any more money. We supposedly can’t have deficit funding anymore. We supposedly can’t have the Keynesian route. We supposedly must have completely different institutions.

JH: I’m wondering whether you are familiar with Naomi Klein’s take on “crisis government”—the recent tendency, because of the proliferation and scale of crises, for government to act on and through crisis in order to achieve those kinds of policies.
SH: Yes, I think her argument is very good. I’m quite close to that position. The person who has most influenced me, in thinking that way, though, is Milton Friedman. Because Friedman once said, as I believe I quoted him in the essay, “Don’t waste a crisis!” Don’t waste it! It’s an opportunity! It’s the moment when you can raise deeper institutional questions, the moment when you can actually change something.

In Britain it’s the first moment since 1945 when anybody has actually tried to change the National Health Service, which had been sacrosanct. Even Mrs. Thatcher said, “It’s safe in my hands, don’t worry about it.” It’s the most popular welfare institution in Britain. It has transformed thousands, millions of people’s lives since 1945. But now we’re just passing a bill that will hollow out and privatize substantial parts of the National Health Service—pass it back to private providers, contract it out, open the market of investment to American health companies, and so on. That is a fundamental change to what has been the structure of health care in this country for over 50 years. The crisis enabled that. Without the crisis, people would have said “Don’t touch it!” Sorry, but you know, as bad as it is, and as inconvenient as it is, and as many waits, postponements, delays, and problems as it has, the fundamental principle holds. But not any longer supposedly. So it’s that kind of revolution.

JH: A moment ago, you referred to the importance of thinking about the current context, and the neoliberal revolution, “conjuncturally.” Could you talk briefly about your current (and perhaps past) thoughts on conjunctural analysis, and how that kind of analysis involves historicizing the current crisis? I ask this question because, at the risk of stacking too many questions, I’m wondering how much your diagnosis of the current conjuncture as neoliberal revolution involves rethinking the history of liberalism? The long history of neoliberalism which you undertake in your essay seems fairly important in your description of neoliberalism as a “revolution,” and the tension between a long history and suddenness and critical-ness (“crisis”) seems fairly important to your conception of a conjunctural analysis—now and perhaps in your earlier work.

Typically, I do not find the term “neoliberalism” very useful to describe the present moment, in part because it quickly became a short-hand—an excuse to avoid grappling with complexities, unevenness, and exceptions. The term’s use often lacks detailed or long historical analysis. I do appreciate Michel Foucault’s introduction of the term1 as part of his history of liberal government from the eighteenth-century through mid-twentieth century. He uses the term “neoliberalism,” well before the term gained wide currency, to refer to a governmental rationality and its economic subject that were located particularly in the US. I also find it interesting against the background (history) of your work because it was not a term that you used (to my knowledge) until recently.

SH: You also don’t find it a lot in cultural studies these days either. Well there are two big issues you raise, and I’ll separate them out a bit. One is about conjuncture, and the other is about the historicization of it. Let me say something about conjunctures
first. I’ve been thinking about conjuncture since reading [Antonio] Gramsci, which began a long time ago.

JH: Was that before [Antonio] Gramsci’s “prison notebooks” were translated into English in the early 1970s?

SH: Before that there was not very much Gramsci available in the UK. There was a short selection of work by Gramsci which I read—his The Modern Prince and a few other writings. But then I read the big translation by Smith and Hoare, Selections from the Prison Notebooks.

Before I read the Smith and Hoare collection, however, I was introduced to Gramsci by my friend Lidia Curti, who came to the Centre [Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in the UK] in the very first year of the Centre’s formation. She had been sent to the Centre by her department in Italy, and her professor there, to make contact, because her professor was familiar with [Richard] Hoggart and [Raymond] Williams’s work. She became a language teacher in the Italian Department in order to finance her studies at the Centre. And when she took part in our early theoretical discussion, she always would ask whether any of us had read Gramsci and [Benedetto] Croce. So, I had read the little volume [The Modern Prince] and I had read an essay by Raymond Williams on hegemony, but I really didn’t know who Gramsci was. I learned a lot from Lidia about a Gramscian perspective. I read Selections from the Prison Notebooks voraciously when it was translated/published in 1971, and have been influenced greatly by his writings ever since then.

Gramsci attracted me in many ways. He works, broadly speaking, within a Marxist framework, but in some ways like me, he was not a classical or traditional Marxist at all. I don’t like to be pinned down, and I’ve always thought within that framework—have always been a very committed revisionist. I recognize that tendency in Gramsci, but there are a lot of other facets of his writing that I like and have been influenced by. He was an intellectual and an activist. He had a colonial relationship to mainland Italy as a Sardinian. I feel drawn to him, not just intellectually, but temperamentally as well. I’ve been working with his concepts, trying to expand, trying to do what he’s done in relation to lots of old concepts—which is to expand, develop, and apply them, put them to new uses, shift the direction, etc. It’s hard work.

JH: And to what extent does your interest in and understanding of Gramsci extend to his relation to the Italian context in the 1920s and the 1930s? In other words, to what extent do you think about the lessons from Gramsci as suited more to that context—that historical conjuncture—than to later times and places (for instance, late-twentieth or early twenty-first-century Britain)?

SH: But his work was relevant later in Italy, and in the role which the Italian Communist Party played when the break-up of the Communist world began. The Italian Communist Party was one of the [Communist] parties that did identify with
Czechoslovakia and did make its move out of the Soviet Russian-oriented orbit very quickly. So at that stage [the late-1960s] I was working with Marxism Today, and the Italian historic compromise policy seemed to us very Gramscian. I've been interested in Gramsci in all sorts of ways ever since then. "Gramscian" is about the only title I own. When people say, "You're a Marxist," I don't really recognize that, except in the way I just described. But when they say, "You're a Gramscian," well, sort of, yes. "Hegemony," "historical block," "conjuncture," "social forces," the whole panoply of his terms, have become the instruments or weaponry in my analysis of the present. So that explains why these concepts are very important.

But let's return to the question of conjuncture. I'll give you a basic definition, which I've only just come to. A conjuncture is a period in which the contradictions and problems and antagonisms, which are always present in different domains in a society, begin to come together. They begin to accumulate, they begin to fuse, to overlap with one another. The ideological becomes part of the economic problem and vice versa. Gramsci says that they fuse into a ruptural unity, and that's the beginning of conjuncture. The aftermath of the fusion, how that fusion develops, its challenges to the existing historical project or social order, the efforts of the state and the people who run it, etcetera, to contain that, or the success of change and transformation—all [speaker's emphasis] of that arc constitutes conjuncture.

So it's the accumulation and condensation of different strands of contradiction and problems.

JH: Would you say that rupture and crisis have become more part of the way you think about conjuncture?

SH: Yes, yes. I persuade myself that this is Gramscian as well, because a conjuncture, as I see it, is really a kind of periodization. It's based on drawing a distinction between a period of relative settlement—relative stability when the dominant project doesn't take over everything, but succeeds, becomes hegemonic in defining reality. But then the cracks begin to appear. Their appearance, the break, the fusion, the contestation, the struggles, the attempt to remedy it, its success or its failure or the lack of resolution, all [speaker's emphasis] comprise the elements of the conjuncture.

Now that does a lot theoretically for me which you might want to come back to in our interview. For instance, one of the most important things it does is to make the conjuncture not reducible to an economic phenomenon. It is the fusion of the economic and the social and the political and the ideological and the cultural. It is overdetermined, and the notion that something is determined "in the last instance" by the economy does not work—really does not work. And my own view now, looking back at the origins of cultural studies, is that is one of the key problems we were addressing: how to think about the cultural, and not as a "base superstructural" reflection of the economy, which none of us ever thought worked anyway. These overdetermined conjunctures appeal to me because it's one of Gramsci's moves away
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from a base-superstructure model to what he calls a “structure-superstructure” complex: the passage between daily events and deeper structural causes.

**JH:** So do you see a conjunctural analysis as a way to discuss financial problems [in the “neoliberal” revolution], without privileging the institutions of finance as the cause of crisis or hegemonic formation?

**SH:** Yes, that’s why I said that I believe that there has been a return to the economic—a rediscovery of the economy. My friends are preoccupied now with capitalism, its crisis, and financialization.

**JH:** Your [and my] friend, Larry Grossberg, for example?

**SH:** Yes, exactly.

**JH:** I would add, however, that in some respects his view of recent “financial crisis” (as I understand his view) overlaps with yours?

**SH:** Well, let me elaborate a bit further, then. In a conjuncture, different kinds of contradictions can play the leading part, but they never define it entirely. So it can begin with an ideological crisis—for instance, 1968 is a kind of ideological crisis that does not have immediate economic dimensions but unravels something, so to speak. In this present conjuncture, the economy is really pretty dominant. But it is not necessarily so—not because it always is, but because in this instance it is.

But there is another, related issue with respect to conjunctures—and that is, how long is it?

**JH:** So that introduces an intriguing question about how long you have been working on this particular conjuncture! I pose this question because I have been following (and inspired by) your work for a long time, so some of our conversation now about conjunctural analysis of a recent financial crisis (and its diagnosis and misdiagnosis) brings to mind your collaborative project, *Policing the Crisis* that often is cited as one of the more elaborated conjunctural analyses conducted by those of you working from the CCCS, though (to my recollection) that study never uses or devotes much attention to the term “conjuncture.” The book’s section, “Modes of Hegemony, Crisis of Hegemony,” works from many of the key terms that you have mentioned a moment ago in relation to Gramsci’s writing, but does not represent the project as a conjunctural analysis.

So it is interesting, and worth asking, how the trends and crises that your group examines in *Policing the Crisis* figure into the history of forces and structures that you outline in “The Neoliberal Revolution.” This is a complicated, fascinating, question because each project refers to a “crisis” [the title of the 1978 book, and currently the significance of “financial crisis], but also because your analysis of the present builds on (and may now depart from) that earlier analysis, both conceptually and
historically as you have adopted the term “conjuncture” to explain the current crisis and your way of analyzing the current crisis.

**SH:** I regard the Reaganism and Thatcherism of the early 1980s as the real turning point into the neoliberal period. But your question is partly whether these are different conjunctures or part of one conjuncture. I usually have used “conjuncture” to mean a narrow period of crisis. So the crisis of Reaganism or the crisis of Bush or the crisis of the “war on terror” are each a conjuncture. What do you call the whole period then? Well we don’t have a word for it. Epoch? Era? Age? Not the neoliberal age! It hangs together, but it hangs together differently from the banking crisis, the Euro-zone crisis, the recession crisis in America, etc. It seems to me that conjuncture should be very loosely used to describe a duration of time. To tell you the honest truth, trying now to write a definitive position is painful because I don’t, well I cannot quite, settle for one or the other. I know in most of my writing I settle for the shorter duration, more classically a crisis-type period. But then I find myself talking about the “neoliberal conjuncture” as beginning in the 1970s and still going on into the twenty-first century. So there’s confusion around this term, and I think there always has been a little, and I acknowledge this in my essay [about the neoliberal revolution], or the version I’m working on at this moment. Because I think there’s no point in trying to resolve it. I’m also thinking about a longer term [a term referring to a longer duration].

Let me give you a Gramscian example. Gramsci obviously is thinking in the latter terms when he discusses Italian Fascism as a crisis. But he says, you know, the conjuncture opened by the French revolution in 1789 was not finally resolved until the Paris Commune of 1870. Excuse me! That’s more than 50 years, that’s nearly 70 years, and it includes: the storming of the Bastille, the assassination of the king, Napoleon—it includes all sorts of things, moments, crises, deep crises. So in what sense is it one [conjuncture]? Well I suppose from the point of view of the remodeling of the Fascist regime into a bourgeoisie society, it is one. That is what was going on in that period. So from that point of view, it is one conjuncture. From the point of view of the more narrowly defined economic and political moments, it’s full of many moments, interlocking, interweaving crises.

**JH:** And wouldn’t you agree that’s precisely what’s both useful and problematic about term “conjuncture”?

**SH:** It is, exactly. I don’t resolve it in my essay about the neoliberal revolution, and I haven’t resolved it in my head, definitively. It matters to define the term in relation to the criteria that is being used. If you say, “it’s a long-term economic . . .,” then you know better where you are.

**JH:** So let’s say, then, that you are interested in the term to describe and analyze both the immediate and the long term, and to acknowledge that there are specific conjunctures within a larger, more enduring conjuncture.
SH: And I really would like to discover another word for the longer span, but [laughing] there's no point in my making one up, and I can't find one.

JH: I press this question in part because your current project about a neoliberal revolution seems circumspect about the "neo-"ness of the current liberalism, and about neoliberalism’s historical longevity. In some respects, I am not as comfortable as are you about using the term—partly because I want to avoid the confusions about the (epochalist) historical rupture that the term suggests. So I ask myself why not simply refer to a “current stage” of liberalism, acknowledging that histories of liberalism do not involve easily identifiable ruptures, and recognizing that histories, formations, and rationalities of liberal government are even more complicated when charted in different regions of the world. All of that strikes me as too unwieldy to support a broad historical description such as “neoliberal.”

SH: I agree, although I feel less confused about that. I would say that neoliberalism, as the word suggests, is the revival of classic liberalism in twentieth/twenty-first-century life.

JH: A revival of classic liberalism?

SH: Yes, the market economy, free enterprise economy, the priority of the individual. You know, what Marx calls the lexicon of bourgeois values, which begin in liberalism, are reworked by Cameron—reworked in relation to a different economy, a different society, but reworked nevertheless.

JH: On that point, to what extent are you amplifying or riffing on [F. A.] Hayek’s notion (affirmed explicitly or implicitly by Chicago School economists) that we should go back to that pure, unadulterated liberalism, before the early twentieth-century experiments that, in their opinion, perverted the “true,” original aspirations of liberal government?

SH: That’s absolutely what they think, that somehow, at the beginning of the century good liberals like [John Maynard] Keynes and [William] Beveridge got trapped by social democracy and taken in the wrong direction, into a more redistributive, egalitarian direction, and that now we need to go back to the moment before that, when markets decided and supposedly allocated resources independently and impartially, when people owned their own property and decided what to do with it, when the state was minimal and couldn’t really tax unless people wanted it, when the state didn’t really interfere with your life, etc. Their/that conception of freedom and equality is market liberalism.

When Mrs. Thatcher took over, she appointed her first great guru, Sir Keith Joseph, the one who taught her how to read Hayek, and he became, he made the treasury, the people of the treasury reread Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*. Joseph alleged that British government had been corrupted by Keynesian general
theory, that there were Keynesians lurking in all the centers of government, and particularly amongst the people in charge of the economy. His mantra was, "get those old ideas out of your head, and go back to the beginnings," and he became Mrs. Thatcher's great ally.

So the neoliberal revolution involves a kind of revaluing, but it's not just that, because each time liberalism is revived it's transformed. But you still can see the classical liberal roots in the neoliberal revolution.

JH: I sometimes think (and have written recently) that the Tea Party in the US, a radical libertarianism on the Right, aspires to a pre-"national popular"—to suggest a twist on Gramsci's term. Whereas the political struggle of the Left and Right (Communism and Fascism) in 1920s Italy was, as Gramsci contended, over the "national-popular" (as an articulation of two signifiers and as a crucial bridge in hegemonic formation), then the current Right in the US, mobilized energetically through the Tea Party, aspires to a "state" of things that is populist but that returns to an imagined origin of the nation—a state of "nativity" (in all its racialized overtones) before the formation of the United States. The Tea Party early invoked the Boston Tea Party as a founding event/myth in their account of history, to represent their coalition as "grassroots" and "populist" and as throwing off and overthrowing the "tyranny" of states that tax. Part of their valorization of the absent state through a reasoning about a pregovernmental "state" folds into their federalism (the autonomy and sovereignty of individual states that comprise the United States) and in their (thus far unsuccessful) proposals that states secede from the United States.

SH: Yes, absolutely. The "national-popular," in my reading of Gramsci, would be what 1945 was like—an attempt to speak on a broader basis, for the good of society as a whole, for the common good, etcetera.

JH: You could say that Fascism and Communism in Italy in Gramsci's day (1920s and 1930s) were in some ways . . .

SH: . . . distortions and perversions of that [idea of the national-popular]. The aspiration now is for the moment before that, when the state is much smaller, and the nation is big but not yet identified with the state. In that sense, the British Right has become more American recently because, although we don't have a secession problem or a states'-rights problem, we invent something quite close to that: the ideal days, back when individuals were free, propertied, in charge of their fortunes, could make or break it, etc.—a time when supposedly the state did not interfere.

And when Hayek says that there's "no such thing as the common good," it's an attack on the national-popular version of that, and an attempt to "return" to an older liberalism, although you can't return to classic liberalism anymore, because you know, the individuals are not individual capitalists anymore—they're huge corporate giants. So you can't just apply the idea now. But, you know, people here talk about the market exactly as Adam Smith did—exactly! "The market" is said to be
“unsettled” today. The market! “The market” has decided to move on from Spain to Italy. Which market?! What is this hypostatization of a force? Well the hidden hand [referred to by Adam Smith]—a hand which supposedly allocates equally, evenly, creates equality between the buyer and seller. Very old notions are still present in very modern speak.

JH: Then there’s the Modern assumption, which still is in play, that political economy becomes the (one and only) lens through which everything can be explained—so that it becomes possible and natural to generalize or reify “the market” as a singular actor.

SH: We also reify “the economy.” I mean what the hell is that as a single noun? There’s no such thing! So I absolutely agree with that. But we’re going too long about the first of your two questions. Your second question involves history.

If you think of Gramsci as interested in the relation between the current conjuncture—what’s happening now in the political scene and the cultural scene, etc.—and deeper structural causes, then how do you bring those structural causes into relation with today’s events? You have to historicize them. You have to give them a context. Well we’ve always given things a context, but “context” is a very loose term, which typically involves “sketching” a history, and then leaving it. To understand the relation between those two things [a specific conjuncture and its deeper structural causes], you have to make them historical—[emphatic] show that the effects of the historical are in the present and show that there are connections. You don’t just say, “the crisis has a long history.” What long history? Which one is it that is operating now? I mean, suppose that I said “this is a neo-imperial moment.” Ah, well which history is that you’re referring to? So the historical becomes more and more important—not as a history that hypostatizes, but as a way of understanding what presents itself in the appearance of all sorts of rows and struggles and shifts of political parties, and changes in ideology and movements of cultural fashion, and all with deeper structural, i.e., historically determined, roots.

So I have been realizing recently that, from the beginning, I have been interested in historicization and that I always have historicized [in my analyses] more than cultural studies ever did.

JH: I do see that tendency in your work, though it is evident in various ways and perhaps has evolved [particularly if one compares Policing the Crisis, The Hard Road to Renewal, your contributions to Modernity, “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’”, and “The Neoliberal Revolution”]. I take you to mean now that you are interested in a conjuncturalist analysis that grapples with a conjuncture’s multiple temporalities/durations (as the analysis moves between daily life and older structures), that works sometimes toward “counter-histories” (alternative explanations of the financial crisis, for instance), and that emphasizes the overdetermination of a single practice (“the economy”).
SH: I think other people also are interested in doing that, but I would add that I, of course, am not a historian. A proper historian would say, “Oh the details . . .” you know—and I'm not good at that. But understanding the broad forces, and the way in which history determines the present, is just built in now to my way of thinking. You know, Marx once said, “Men and women make their own history, but on the basis of conditions which they did not make, which were made for them.” So you can’t deny the historical move.

JH: Your historicization of neoliberalism as a “revolution”—indeed your use of the term “revolution” to understand neoliberalism—complicates what is “revolutionary” about neoliberalism. How long has the revolution been going on? For a while? If neoliberalism is revolutionary, how can it also involve elements of classical liberalism? Does it involve multiple temporalities, then? And is there something paradoxical about its relation to the past (i.e., a sense of moving forward, even rapidly, through an aspiration toward an “original state” before the state became too big and involved)? In other words, is the “revolution” about going backwards rather than forwards—or doing both simultaneously (as Umberto Eco has suggested about politics and culture in twenty-first-century Italy in his recent book, Turning Back the Clock?) These all are rich and fascinating questions that your conception of the neoliberal revolution as conjuncture opens up. And this way of thinking about “neoliberalism” usefully complicates its (increasingly casual) usage and currency in analyses of the present, and it certainly complicates the tendency to use the term “revolution” to describe a flash-point—a transformation that occurs quickly and dramatically.

SH: I would say that you’ve got the meaning of using the word “revolution” absolutely right. That’s why I used it. But I would add to that, that I myself have always tried to move away from the notion that there’s one kind of revolution, and that is the moment of the “flash”—of the Winter Palace, of the storming of the Bastille, of entry of insurgents into Havana, of Mao’s entry. That is one kind of revolutionary moment. But the welfare state is another kind of revolutionary moment, because it unpacked some of the fundamental relations of economic property, the structure of ideas, etc., and that’s revolution too. So I don’t hypostatize the word revolution and don’t think it has to be what Gramsci would call a “war of maneuver”—groups against groups in the streets.

No doubt that’s a moment [flash-point], and a moment like that happens quite often. We may still see that here. Greece has gotten to that moment recently—thousands of people in the streets, saying “No,” and making a political difference. There are flash points still to come. But revolution involves deep structural change—sometimes peaceful or largely peaceful, and sometimes boisterous, very fluid, and with deep ruptures. We need to think of structural transformation as revolutions. So that’s why I deliberately use the term “neoliberal revolution”—to shock people out of a conventional use of the word “neoliberal” by calling it a revolution. Because structural change is going on, and in Britain it has been going on ever since the 1970s
and across different political regimes. Thatcher’s regime was the inauguration of the neoliberal revolution, but a very incomplete one. It smashed up the surface, but it did not initiate anything much. A great deal is initiated [the neoliberal revolution gains momentum] with [Tony] Blair’s New Labour Party, a deeply neoliberal project even though it’s lead by the political “opposition.”

JH: Your description just now of that history reminds me of the occasional suggestion in the US that, whereas the term “revolution” was appropriated by the Left during the 1960s, it now is deployed by the Right (the Tea Party activists). And as many have pointed out, the idea of a “grassroots” politics-as-revolution (a new political populism) on the Right has occurred through funding by corporations—an Astro-turfing, or what my friend, Jack Bratich, has referred to as “genetically modified grassroots.” That’s not exactly your point about Blair’s New Labour as a period and catalyst for a neoliberal revolution’s momentum, but your description of the contradiction of New Labour’s contribution to a momentum that did not occur under Thatcher underscores what is complicated historically about painting actors and subjects of neoliberalism as “revolutionaries” (against the backdrop of the 1960s).

SH: I think it [revolution] means deep structural transformation, wherever it comes from. You could say that Fascism was a revolution against having another kind of revolution. What prevented having a revolution [in Italy] like the Russian one was the turn to Fascism, and we could see that again. So it’s not a term addressed to the Left or the Right.

Secondly, in relation to the Tea Party, I felt, I didn’t say so a moment ago, but I thought your example of the Tea Party was absolutely, spot-on perfect. The Tea Party is a kind of moment about going back into US history, before the United States as a nation-state really achieved its formation. Lots of other groups of a similar kind are making that kind of return.

Third, that can occur from either the Right or the Left, and it doesn’t really matter what precise form it takes. So, don’t become besotted by the romanticism of the revolutionary moment, because that may not bring structural change at all. Look at the Middle East. We’ve had our “revolutionary” moments, but structural change? Still to be shown. Still to happen, really. So I don’t define revolution in terms of its appearance as a revolution, or of its élan.

JH: For reasons suggested by my prior comment about the contradictions of a political “grassroots” in the twenty-first century, and of the new political populisms on the Left and Right (such as the Tea Party), I am interested in your essay’s passing references to “the popular” and populism. For instance, your essay refers to Cameron’s “phony populism,” and his invocation of the 1960s expression “power to the people.” Is there a need to rethink “the popular,” or is the new and current political populism what always has been at stake in struggles to claim the popular? This question is particularly salient because of your longstanding attention to “the popular,” in your book with Paddy Whannel, The Popular Arts, but particularly in
“Notes on Deconstructing the Popular”, wherein you discuss how “the popular” is up for grabs, and can matter that way, politically.

I think a lot these days not only about how the uses of the term “popular” have changed in the current economies of media, but also about whether the term “popular culture” is useful anymore and about what exactly the term refers to now. A number of people, myself included, have suggested that in the twentieth century, popular culture has an organic relation to the project of a national-popular, but that this seems to have changed as we have entered a media economy of more refined differentiation of audiences and marketing. There’s lots to say about that, and I don’t want to digress, but I’m explaining why it is useful to grapple with the uptake of “the popular” in what you refer to as the neoliberal revolution.

SH: I wrote an essay earlier than “[Notes on] Deconstructing the Popular” which I titled “Popular-democratic vs. Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of Taking Democracy Seriously”), but “[Notes on] Deconstructing the Popular” is where this is best expressed. “[Notes on] Deconstructing the Popular” proposes that there is no guarantee that the popular is either radical or conservative, and that in fact it probably contains both elements because the popular always wants to conserve and protect the life of those who are not in power. But at the same time the popular is penetrated by media that are invested in advertising, etc.; so it is not located in a pure world. You cannot go to a folk song and pretend this is what those people really thought. There is no “the people really thought” in the popular, the popular is a terrain of struggle—how ordinary people live, how ordinary people think, what they do, what they support, etc. So it’s a terrain where these different influences intersect.

JH: But you don’t see it simply as a rhetorical trope, the way the Ernesto Laclau does in his On Populist Reason, which strikes me, though I could be wrong in my reading of it, as mostly about the popular and populism as floating signifiers in history. The way in which you just described it suggests that the popular does not operate and matter simply or only as a floating signifier, and that the analysis of it should involve . . .

SH: The part of Laclau’s current book that makes that claim narrows the way in which he explained the popular before. That is partly because he has gotten very involved in theories around the floating signifier and has taken the analysis off in a different direction from the past. If you go back to Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, you’ll see exactly what I am saying: the popular is a terrain of struggle and has more substance to it. But if you said to me “well, so it is not one thing or another, it’s a floating signifier,” yes, yes it is, but [laughs] so what? That just means that you can’t tie it down. Lots of things are floating signifiers.

JH: Should I take what you said just now as a criticism of Laclau’s recent argument?

SH: No, of course not. But I do think there is a sort of narrowing. Basically, he’s thought about it a lot more, and also he’s thought about populism from the very
beginning. I've never understood well the Latin American politics on which Laclau's account of a populism of the Left and the Right is grounded, and so the way in which the current book comes out of his re-involvement and reinvestment in what is going on in Latin America. You really have to understand that he is concerned with populism from that point of view. It strikes me that he always has thought that the popular can be commanded either to the Left or to the Right. So it's a floating signifier. However, I don't want to make a song and dance about that because I think we need to know what a floating signifier is, so you need to read Derrida etc., but apart from that, that's not the substance. The substance has to do with what the popular is in the current political economy. And what is it culturally? What is it socially? What is being fought over in relation to it? I use the popular in that sense.

JH: So your reference to Cameron's phony populism and to his invocation of the 1960s expression, "power to the people," was an effort to describe one way that the popular has been rearticulated to and through a neoliberal revolution?

SH: Yes, one version of or approach to the terrain. And you know, Laclau has had this argument in his work as well. In the earlier work, he sees the popular as one of the key sites. Unless you command conscious, thinking, everyday spaces, the way people just think instinctually, habitually, the frames of interpretation, etc., unless you are actually effecting that area at some point, you cannot bring about long-term transformation. So there is an ideological dimension of cultural struggle implied in the word "popular" from the very beginning.

I made a reference to Cameron's expression, "power to the people" because behind that statement is Laclau's notion that "the people" is a discursive construct. So when I hear all the politicians say "here is what the British people think," that expression does not refer to what the people really think. It is an attempt to construct what the politician hopes they will think because [the people think] that's what that politician thinks! It's a very complicated thing. So the people are always being invented and reinvented in the politicians' image and mold. The word "popular" carries a lot of meanings and it covers not only a political sense of the people but also a cultural sense. Libertarianism was a powerful, powerful political and cultural strand in 1968. All sorts of lines and cultural tendencies hover within the political, and certainly hover within the popular.

JH: As I mentioned a moment ago, I increasingly am inclined to think that current market research and mechanisms for sorting consumer markets have made it difficult any longer for the popular to be articulated to the national (the "national-popular" which Gramsci described). Whereas the popular or national-popular once may have been represented and enacted through "broadcasted channels," those networks, technologies, and institutions of a national-popular citizenship have disappeared through a logic of "narrowcasting" and "lifestyle clusters." The articulation of the national to the popular always has been complicated, as Gramsci, you, and others have shown. And I am not suggesting that the popular no longer matters economically
and politically, though it may matter as a residual term from the past. But I'm not sure how or whether their relation is organic or is an objective any longer, and certainly not in the way that it was in the age of radio and TV broadcasting during the twentieth century.

SH: Well, first let's try to agree on what we mean by the “popular.” If what we are talking about under that term is namely what the people think and do, how they think, and what they'll support, and that [speaker’s emphasis] level where the people are involved—and not the elite, not the powerful, not the ruling classes, but the ordinary people—then, when you have to win those people, that level of social life, you have to have a way of understanding what is going on with it/they. And we have operationalized it—posed questionnaires to more sophisticated lifestyle analysis and whatever. So there is the need to know—to know empirically, to know exactly whose lifestyle might fit and who exactly might buy a product that is launched.

JH: Are you referring to how research (marketing research, policy research, etc.) calculates and represents the “average man” or “common man”—or how that research normalizes a representation of what is “common” and “average”? That syndrome?

SH: Not just the average man, but the specialized market. Who is the man for this product? Who is the woman for this product? Where do they live?

The whole internet, the whole digital world, is currently financed by using this information as a commodity. You have to ask yourself “how do they manage to have ‘free’ sites?” They have free sites because they sell the demographic information for a high price. By Googling, for instance, any program or purchasing anything online, massive amounts of detail are accumulated that can be fed into apparatuses that convert that information to calculate what programs I watch, what music, where I live, how I dress. This information is operationalizing knowledge about what the popular is, making it more empirically precise, giving it demographic location, giving it place, situation, etc.

JH: And that process or dynamic becomes profoundly part of the current operation of political apparatuses—in political mobilization, campaigning, citizenship, political branding, etc.

SH: I think you are quite right about that. In a way, not only is it operationalized but it becomes a kind of cultural force of its own and intersects with other kinds of cultural forms.

JH: Let’s go then to a few questions that I have about the essay’s closing discussion of a “neoliberal culture.” Interestingly, you come to that topic and term at the end of the essay. I say “interestingly” because much of the essay sets up a history of the welfare state which you explain as moments/contexts of government and economy, but then at the end the essay pivots toward culture. Why tell the history of, and explain, the
neoliberal revolution that way? Is "culture" your way of punctuating other histories of liberalism and other recent usages of the term "neoliberalism" that have forgotten about or ignored liberalism's cultural production? Given your longstanding interest in representing "cultural studies" as an academic, intellectual, and political project, this is no small question.

SH: No, it's not. It's a big question. You asked about the motivation behind the shape of the essay. It's very deliberate. It's very deliberate because what is Stuart Hall from Cultural Studies going to say about the crisis? He's going to begin by discussing representations of it. He is then going to explain it with thoughts about language and television programs, and music, and etc. I wanted to begin instead with the bloody financial system!, which I think is penetrated by cultural ideas and notions. That's what I want to think about. Cultural Studies is about the cultural as a distinctive sphere, but it very much is about the relations between the cultural and other social practices. Cultural Studies emphasizes that the cultural is overdetermined. So, for a change, let's have a Cultural Studies historicization of the economic. Let us leave what you expect to find there, namely the cultural, to a more residual place [in the analysis]. I haven't spent as much time on it ["neoliberal culture"], I don't have as much to say on it. I want to remind you that it is there. So this is not an essay about the financial, economic system only; bear in mind the political, the ideological, and the cultural. But I am not starting with the ideological and the cultural and invoking the economic at the end. So it is a deliberate reversal of what I understand to be many of the traditional narrative structures of Cultural Studies.

JH: But you also are introducing something that tends to be neglected or omitted in more economistic accounts?

SH: The essay's order [that way of historicizing the neoliberal revolution] acknowledges what has been left out of both kinds of analysis. In a way, I am trying to enlarge the economic history, to represent "the economic" in a larger sense, which includes the production and reproduction of material life, consumers, etc., and not just the factory. The economic dropped out of Cultural Studies largely, except as an invocation. It was not at the center of people's minds [who were doing cultural studies]. It not only was not at the center of the analysis, but cultural studies often failed to think about the questions of how the cultural is articulated with it. So we've returned to it because the economic is on our heads; our jobs, our pensions, our futures depend on it! You better think about it! So, some of the old questions return; I wanted the essay to signal that explaining the neoliberal revolution and understanding the current conjuncture means doing cultural studies in a different sort of way.

The beginnings of that idea were in the talk that I gave at the conference the last time we met. My way into explaining the neoliberal revolution came from Gramsci, where he argues that conjunctures are not just economically determined, though the economic can never be neglected. Is it possible or easy to think about all those things at the same time [in an analysis]? No. So narratively you have to foreground one but
you have to always say look, this or that is linked with the cultural. You have to sketch out [multiply] the other things that it is linked with. You can't develop them [the connections and enfoldings] to the same extent, but you can't forget them either. You can't forget or neglect their causal structural impact on what you foregrounded. I could have written that essay starting with celebrity culture.

JH: But when you discuss a "neoliberal culture," you don't mean that neoliberalism determines or explains the culture?

SH: I could have meant that, I could have taken that way in. I think both "overculturalist" and "overeconomistic" explanations go in the opposite direction. But they go away from a position I want to hold, which is overdetermination—all [speaker's emphasis] of the practices and contradictions articulated together, fused into a unity.

JH: I also should acknowledge that you mention at the beginning of the essay that there are many neoliberalisms around the world, and that your focus is on Britain. Your historical analysis also highlights, rather than brackets, the ways that a neoliberal culture is part of a geopolitical posture for a Western country and plays in particular ways in a particular part of the world. You don't say in this essay that neoliberalism is Western, though I'm tempted to ask you a question about that.

SH: Its origin is deeply Western, yes.

JH: To the extent that liberalism is political Modernity in the West?

SH: Yes, exactly. So it does belong to the West in that sense. But it is readily present in a contradictory way that Britain ruled its entire empire, because liberal imperialists were a very particular brand who believed in advancing people at a steady pace toward freedom, etc., but not too fast. Meanwhile the state has to retain the powers of coercion, violence, etc. Liberal imperialism is a deeply contradictory structure but it's already global. So you can think of the global aspect as another element, like the cultural. I could have developed in the essay some notion of what this [neoliberal revolution] has meant geopolitically, and then I would have started someplace else—with 9/11, the politicization of Islam, for instance.

JH: Actually that does come into your essay in the end, where you talk about a neoliberal culture in relation to race. And at that point, you refer to the multiculturalism of British youth in relation to the history of race in Britain, which you know all too well is a history of immigrant populations. So it is the history of the relationship of Britain to its liberalism vis-à-vis populations that are coming here [Britain] but are not necessarily welcome here.

SH: Oh yes, surely. This is a problematic dimension of the neoliberal revolution. And it involves a different history of race than in, say, your country [USA]. Catherine's
[Hall’s] work on postimperial history is mainly about this contradiction—about how the empire, long before immigrants “came home,” was predicated on the kind of distinction that British history makes between domestic and imperial history. She is interested in the interlacing of those histories, and I am too. That is one point that needs to be made.

Secondly, the big disseminator of this from the West to the non-West is globalization. As soon as globalization gets underway, ideology has no limits, it has no fixed terrain. Neoliberal influence needs to be understood that way—through, for instance, super-rich Dubai. Migration is part of globalization. The British ruled colonies for 300 years but very few of the subjects came to live in the UK [for much of that history]. Some of them did, of course. There has been a Black presence here in Britain ever since. There is a moment when Queen Elizabeth I said that there are too many Blackamoors here and that they should be sent forth from the land. So the thing about racism here is that it is long standing. However, something new begins in the 1950s when I came, namely “they” come “home.” “They” come back here. They came to fight for the Mother Country, but then they came to stay, and that is where things suddenly become interfused. And at that point the dominant cultural force, which is basically what I would call neoliberalism, but it’s not only that—it’s also consumerism, whatever you want to call it—becomes disseminated in different ways throughout the world. The media are the carriers—essentially, fundamentally—the agents for making what I call a neoliberal culture a global culture. And that is exactly what it is.

JH: As many readers of this interview will know, in Policing the Crisis you and the other contributors examine the ways that news representations linked muggings (as law-and-order crisis) to young Black men...

SH: ...yes, and to migration.

JH: ...so I’m wondering whether you have thought about the media and the news in explaining a neoliberal revolution.

SH: Yes, I see what you mean. I haven’t in great detail, which is another reason why it figures mostly as a subtheme in the essay. As I said, because I was trying to bend Cultural Studies against the grain, I didn’t want to go back to our old stomping ground—the media, the news, fiction, the visual, etc. It’s not because I think that is unimportant, it is just that I didn’t want to do it that way this time.

JH: For various reasons, you don’t need to convince me on that. It makes sense. Those practices were a frequent way into conjunctural analysis for British cultural studies at that time, but as you point out today, they are not the only or primary way to diagnose a conjuncture.

SH: So, I’ve spent a lot of time there. The area that I have spent some time thinking about [in relation to the neoliberal revolution] is the one I give examples of, celebrity
culture. And I think the articulations between celebrity culture and neoliberalism are absolutely clear cut—clear cut. Especially the impact of celebrity on the popular! It holds out the image, “I don't need to break my guts like my father did all his life to have a decent house to retire to...something will happen that pushes me into the global super-rich...someone will lift me out.” It is that magic of celebrity culture that interests me and that I see operating in neoliberal culture.

JH: Also the interactive economy of media either promises or provides the tools for the young enterprising citizen-consumer-subject that interests you about contemporary celebrity culture. That media regime provides the provision of resources that promise to maximize the capacity to put yourself into the public eye, to brand yourself, to distribute yourself, to produce yourself, to reinvent yourself...

SH: ...to fashion yourself. Well, I am of course interested in that, which is why I found an easier way of evoking the cultural popular in that essay, which is not principally about that because I do think the connections are clear, easy to see.

JH: As I noted a moment ago, *Policing the Crisis* offers an analysis of a hegemonic formation wherein the national-popular culture was shaped partly, but profoundly, through a national broadcast system. Although the current mediascape and media culture/economy lack many of the features of that era of broad-casting, it persists, exerting a residual force in the present environment of "social media" and "social networks."

Although I do take your prior point about why you chose not to explain the neoliberal revolution or a neoliberal culture through media practices, to what extent is and isn't the neoliberal revolution a "media revolution"—a term that often was used by academics and journalists to describe the so-called Arab Spring because those analyses emphasized (arguably overemphasized) the instrumentality of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube in how a younger generation mobilized and (more or less) overcame longstanding political regimes? Your account of the neoliberal revolution recognizes Thatcherism as a catalyst or turning point toward the present conjuncture (and crisis), and yet you are relatively silent about how the media institutions and practices that contributed to mugging as a crisis in the run-up to Thatcherism have shifted—some would say, have been revolutionized. I am not suggesting that you should figure that out, I am just suggesting that thinking and writing about the present as conjuncture and crisis warrants grappling with this transformation, and with the recent discourse of a "media revolution" in the context of what you are describing as a neoliberal revolution.

SH: Well you are quite right about this. But remember when *Policing the Crisis* was done—the 1970s. Remember that some concepts were not available to us—neoliberalism, globalization. We didn't think about it in those terms. In that moment national broadcasting systems, the BBC, the established press, these were the mechanisms of opinion formations. Our project was launched in that moment. It's true that
moment was the beginnings of globalization, but we did not see it that way. We didn't see migration in that way at all. We just thought "empire comes home." But all around the world empires have come home. Even people that didn't belong to an empire have come to the West for other reasons!

Without the concept of globalization, without the concept of neoliberalism, *Policing the Crisis* was of a particular moment, and it now needs to be seen in its own conjuncture, in its own conjunctural moment—because now we are in a different moment. And one of the ways in which it is different is exactly in the way you are talking about. We couldn't write the chapter on the media in that way any longer. We couldn't dream of doing it! It would have to deal with interactive social media, the so-called democratization of public opinion and comment, individualization; they are what has transformed the situation. So you are dead right, but *Policing the Crisis* is itself historical now. It's interesting because it *Policing the Crisis* is a history of that moment and provides a lot of forms of analysis which were different than what was current at the time. It is not because the analysis holds now in the same way, so that's one of the reasons why the new version of *Policing the Crisis* has Afterwords to address what has happened to race and crime over the last 30 years. What has happened to the state over the last 30 years? We saw the state becoming more coercive, but the state also has become more neoliberal. So it all requires updating to a new historical moment. And if you use the long version of the neoliberal revolution, well each of those moments and the crises that belong to them are very distinctive ones, and the conditions are very different.

**JH:** It is interesting that your group, after all of this time (over 30 years) returns to and reflects on what has and hasn't changed between then and now, as well as on the place of that study in a history of social, cultural, and political analysis—and indeed its place in the formation and transformation of cultural studies. I am quite excited to enter those histories again through this book. However, it also is fascinating that the new edition of *Policing the Crisis* coincides with your account of a neoliberal revolution wherein you chart connections and trajectories to the present from the 1960s and 1970s (the moment that a lot of *Policing the Crisis* addresses). And I might add that in light of persistent assumptions that the 1960s marked the formation of “counter-cultures” and even a Left “revolutionary” politics in the West, the history from the 1960s that your essay charts offers fresh and important insights about the emergence at that time of a neoliberal political rationality.

**SH:** One of the reasons that I was drawn to the notion of a neoliberal revolution was because it passes through such different political phases. It unifies what would otherwise seem very different political regimes—Thatcherism, Blairism, and the Conservative–Liberal-Democratic coalition—that were opposed to one another in the immediate/current politics. They are eating one another! But they are all at a deep level advancing the neoliberal project. Each time they leave office we are further ahead in a funny kind of way. It's operated, as Marx once said, behind men's backs.
In going back now, I see that what we call the welfare state is not just a British moment. Indeed, I think the New Deal is the welfare-state moment in the American context. So it's the New Deal, it's the post-war Labour government, it's social democracy and the welfare state in Sweden and to some extent in Germany and France. It's a more general phenomenon. If it is possible to think just for a moment of an unscratched resource called capital, capital was seriously undermined in some ways during that phase. The welfare state took money away and redistributed it, and the New Deal brought the state further in, and other countries created massive welfare states. I think it's a big historical issue globally, and my reading is that if you can think of an abstraction called capital, capital evaded the impact of that by breaking down the nation-state boundaries, so it had to go global. It had to use the global as a way of coming back to attacking and undermining that welfare state. So I see globalization now as the route of capital out of the limits imposed on it by a reformist, redistributionist, collectivist, socially responsible, more egalitarian political regime. This takes different forms in different countries, but there is [speaker's emphasis] such a moment, and the moment of globalization is when they tried to jump over that hurdle. Well, you can't recapitulate the history of the welfare state on Taiwan, or South Korea. The South Korean government doesn't want that [in South Korea]. Capital finds arenas of free operations globally where it is only beginning to have to address the demands to which the welfare state was a response.

JH: And there are also countries such as Brazil that push back against what they see as "the neoliberal tide." Or you can think of Russia and its oligopolies as an anomaly to the Western neoliberal trend. So, there are exceptions to the neoliberal revolution, as a singular, homogeneous crisis/formation.

SH: There are many version of this [neoliberal revolution]. Russia obeys and exploits market forces and privatizes, like China. China is one of the biggest and most sophisticated exploiters of market forces that we've ever seen on the basis/history of a Communist state, a political authoritarian government.

And as you rightly point out, there is also resistance to it [the neoliberal revolution]. The current resistance to the austerity program [in the UK] advocates "growth." Well, what do you mean by growth? Let us go back to the idea of a state, borrowing money so you can build some roads, so you can raise employment, so that you can pay people so that they can buy something—and so that, in this way, the economic cycle revives. It's pure Keynesian economics! He said you could give it away on the street corners, doesn't matter, you've got to stimulate demand. If you have to borrow to do that, borrow. You'll get it back through tax revenue and economic activity. As soon as you see growth highlighted against austerity, which is the way the European argument currently takes form, you know that is what it involves. That welfare state, New Deal, Keynesian moment is not over. Its traces are still there; its effects are still there. And you can see resistance to globalization. America and Britain are very good examples—don't give jobs to other people when your own people want
them. "British jobs for British people," is the slogan. It's a very big move away from globalization, the Euro-zone, the breakdown of national barriers, opening of migration.

**JH:** Stuart, I reluctantly will let you end on that note—actually a note that eloquently calls attention to the historical contradictions of political resistance. Anyone who has followed your work will understand well why this is a suitable "punctuation mark" for a conversation with you about the present conjuncture—more an ellipsis and an injunction for the conversation and work to continue, than a definitive *period mark.*

**Notes**

[1] In his lectures during the late-1970s on “The Birth of Biopolitics”.

[2] The Cultural Studies Now conference held at University of East London, 2007, where Hall was one of the plenary speakers.