Journey of a Researcher

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ABSTRACT The author offers here a personal account of the development of communication research in Québec, remembering the most significant steps of his career as a researcher. He recalls his training years in social sciences, his beginnings at UQAM, his involvement in starting up graduate studies and founding the GRICIS research group, publishing the journal TIS, team researching and international cooperation. A contribution to the historiography of information communication sciences in Canada.

KEYWORDS Communication research; Historiography; Québec, Canada

When I accepted the invitation to write this text, I saw nothing but kindness in Éric George and Michael Dorland's proposal. Doubtless a bit flattered, if not absolutely blindsided, I could not perceive the pitfalls nor intuit the difficulties of the task at hand. Indeed, right after accepting to write this, I was feeling some regret, embarrassed by an undertaking that somewhat resembles striptease, intellectual as it is.

Why look back on a few decades of research, thought, and writing; on the intellectual joinings, the trials and errors, these sources of countless moments of satisfaction, and the numerous frustrations as well? What interest is there in plunging into the journey of a professor-researcher like myself, who has indeed worked relentlessly and passionately, but in the end has invented nothing at all? Why is this interesting and to whom? Of course, someone who has reached the end of the road might want to compile a summary of sorts, retracing the coherence of his path or measuring his successes. Yet why do so in public? What interest can there be in this for future readers?"
I would have liked to write *Tremblay, chercheur québécois* in order to recreate the joy I got from reading *Grenadou, paysan français* (Grenadou & Prévost, 1966). That said, while my intent is the same—to offer raw testimony of a man and his times—you, dear readers, will have to make do with a life much less lived and with far less talent.

At the beginning of his *Anti-memoirs*, the great André Malraux analyzes the place occupied by the individual, and the requirements of sincerity in the redaction of memoirs. He notes “[a]lthough nobody now believes that the object of the self-portrait, or even the portrait, from the effigies of the Egyptian sculptors to the Cubists, was simply to imitate nature, people still believe it of literary portraiture” (Malraux, 1968, p. 5). This warning applies equally to the reconstruction of a researcher’s journey by the researcher himself.

The subject of this text is not one of memories, nor confessions nor indeed autobiography. Neither is it a last will and testament: institutional retirement does not necessarily mean the end of intellectual activity. If a metaphor must be employed, since this exercise is a bit literary after all, you could say my essay might invoke a travelogue, as banal as that may sound. I definitely set off in a certain direction at the start, and I think I have generally stayed the course, while certain events and meetings have often added the occasional curve in the road. Here is where I have been, what I have seen and heard, and what I have remembered of it. I have spiced up my account a bit, but I apologize, I forgot to take photos.

**In the beginning**

Intent to avoid a cumbersome autobiography, all the same I do have a passport, the basic identification required of every traveller. Place and date of birth: Chicoutimi, 1946 (look it up on an old map; you will not find it on new ones thanks to municipal agglomeration). Marketers file me among the baby boomers, a reference that should explain my tastes, my attitudes, my opinions, my vision of the world. Personally, I find it more useful to note that I come from a working-class family, and that I spent a good part of my youth during the Quiet Revolution in Chicoutimi, a mid-size city north of Québec. I was 14 years old when the people of Québec, following the death of Maurice Duplessis the previous year, elected a Liberal government with a program of change starting with high-speed de-Christianization and walking straight into modernity. I experienced the passage of a society still largely traditional into one taking full stock of its means and capacities, open to innovation and experimentation. Among other important changes, I witnessed the arrival of television when Radio-Canada broadcast its first programs in 1952. It would be two or three more years before a television set appeared at home, and in the meantime my family was sometimes invited to watch television at a neighbour’s house—a veritable to-do every time.

I was 14 years old in 1960 and I had just begun the classic long haul of seminary in Chicoutimi. I finished in 1967 when CEGEPs finally came into existence. On the menu: a lot of Latin, a bit of Greek, ancient history, French history, Québec history, lots of French literature with a touch of québécois, a reasonable amount of mathematics and a tad of physical sciences, and essentially Thomistic philosophy. The Chicoutimi seminary was a fairly conservative environment, where the long hair of the Beatles
caused scandal but where there were also a few progressive types. These I met in the burgeoning student movement and in Jeunesse étudiante catholique (JEC), where I was very active for close to 10 years at the local seminary, and then at the diocese and national levels. Here I underwent an apprenticeship in teamwork and social thought, Christian at first and increasingly secular, eventually proposing the de-confessionalization of the movement at the end of the 1960s. At the time I was president of the national council. Our proposition was defeated, leading to the resignation of a good number of activists.

At the very end of my philosophic studies, I took an elective course that ultimately determined the path I would follow through university: the first sociology course ever offered in Chicoutimi, by professor Richard Fournier, a student of the eminent québécois sociologist Fernand Dumont (1968). I was seduced by the critical questioning of sociology, the breadth of its subject of study, the credibility of its analyses. To my eyes, it presented itself as the science of most broadly encompassing explicative and interpretative value.

Another fortuitous event was, as the song goes: “En soixante-sept tout était beau / C’était l’année d’amour, c’était l’année d’Expo …,” which for me and many others in Québec was a fantastic opening up to the world. I spent the summer of 1967 in Montréal preparing research, reflection, and action documents on the annul JEC theme, which, that year, was media communication. This was my first exposure to the work of Marshall McLuhan; I recently explained my complex relationship with this celebrated and controversial figure (Tremblay, 2012).

In the fall, my journey brought me to the Université Laval, where I did a BA and an MA in sociology. My master’s thesis looked at representations of journalism in the Québec City daily paper Le Soleil, aligning nicely with my progressively reinforced interest in the media. During this period, the work of two major figures radiated from Laval’s sociology department: Fernand Dumont (1927-1997) and Gérald Fortin (1929-1997). The first one, as much a philosopher, theologian, and poet as a sociologist, published several major books on culture, this “place of man” (Dumont, 1968). Fortin, a field sociologist interested in development and participatory democracy, played a referential role in the theory and practice of social action in Québec. Both were excellent pedagogues in their own way and left an indelible impression on generations of sociologists, myself among them.

The end of the 1960s, as everybody knows, was marked by an incredible energy on American and French university campuses. From opposition to the Vietnam War to the existential questioning of capitalism, critique of bourgeois consumer culture was radical in every way. It found its way onto québécois campuses, too, where the reading of classic authors such as Marx and Freud, Durkheim and Weber, Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, Merton and Riesman was supplemented by Marcuse, Cohn-Bendit, Rubin, Leary, and other critical and counterculture thinkers.

In the second year of my BA, I missed out on a nice opportunity—to be part of a team of American researchers (at Columbia University, I believe)—to conduct field research in New Brunswick. I passed all the requirements except for one: my English was not good enough. A path untaken that might have led me toward yet other expe-
riences. Who knows what might have happened? Would I have been seduced by American dynamism and competence? Would I have read a dramatically different set of authors? Would I have headed to the US to continue my studies in one of the many communication or media studies departments? Instead, my opposition to the Vietnam War, my French language and culture, and other encounters led me to other pastures.

During another summer job, this time between the end of my BA and the beginning of my MA, I met a woman, Céline Mercier, a psychology and anthropology student who would become my life partner. We had been both hired as interviewers to conduct follow-up research with an organization long since vanished, l’Office de prévention et de traitement des alcooliques et autres toxiomanes (OPTAT). She had one project: participate in collaborative research on education in Cameroon. I had another: to undertake my doctoral studies in Strasbourg. We managed to do both.

Before Céline and I left for Cameroon, my MA director, Jacques de Guise, gave me a deathly fright. He had misplaced the first chapters of my thesis! With the resources of today—photocopier, personal computer, et cetera—it is hard to imagine this sort of terror. At the time, though, my thesis existed as one unique copy. Copies were expensive to make and so we made them only rarely. Luckily, Jacques found my work a few days later—he had filed it away!

The three months spent in Garoua, in the north of Cameroon, in the summer of 1971, were an occasion to participate in my first anthropological fieldwork, under the supervision of Professor Renaud Santerre. It was an incredibly disorienting experience, approached with a spirit of openness and, I must admit, a bit of naïveté. It resulted a few years later in my first academic article, on educational radio in northern Cameroon (Tremblay, 1974). I would return to Cameroon 20 years later, to the École supérieure internationale du journalisme de Yaoundé, to deliver a few Macintosh computers and conduct an introductory seminar on microcomputing.

I had chosen the Université de Strasbourg in France for my doctoral studies because I had been enamoured with Abraham Moles’ Information Theory and Esthetic Perception and Sociodymanique de la culture. Moles addressed information, culture, and communication from a perspective as broad as that of McLuhan yet with a much more rigorous and scientific spirit. It was through reading these books that I discovered cybernetics and systems theory. Thus I wrote to ask him to supervise my doctoral work. Unfortunately, after a few meetings over the space of six or seven months, we had yet to come to an agreement on the subject of my thesis. Professor Moles was genuine and kind, but still a French mandarin who did not quite understand that I would not entirely and docilely adopt his views. I was a québécois student, a child of the Quiet Revolution eager to test out his new-found freedoms: a young, frisky stallion, restive at the sight of a halter. I was not at all interested by the subject my supervisor wanted to impose: a statistical analysis of inter-city phone calls in France. And he was indifferent to all of the subjects I proposed. The anxiety provoked by this situation having become somewhat paralyzing, I sought the help of Andrée Tabouret-Keller, a sociolinguist and psychoanalyst who was also a professor at the Université Louis Pasteur and the thesis supervisor of my wife, Céline Mercier. Professor Tabouret-Keller graciously agreed to supervise my work, even if it lay at the periphery of her own.
Without her openness, I do not know what ever might have come of my ambitions to be a researcher.

My doctoral research was on interpersonal communication (family, neighbourly, and friendly relationships) and communications media in a “priority urbanization zone” (the French acronym, ZUP) in a suburb of Strasbourg known as Hautepierre. With Chombart de Lauwe (1959) as primary reference, I studied the changes in communicational behaviour according to differences in urban domicile environments. Defended in November 1974, the content of my thesis was unfortunately never subject to publication. My supervisor had indeed invited me to submit an article to a French journal, but the first version was returned with requests for modification and I never took the time to follow up. The “publish or perish” ethos already existed at this time, but the pressure was much less than it later became. I had already plunged entirely into my new job. Other projects and other work demanded all of my attention and energy. The thesis was already part of the past, a student past. It was a mistake to not capitalize on the results of this research to fill out my publication record in light of future funding applications, but what can I say? I had become a prof.

Takeoff
I owe my hiring at UQAM in August 1974 to my colleague Serge Proulx, and indirectly to my MA supervisor, Jacques de Guise, who recommended me. I had considered other options, such as taking a position in a sociology department, but I clearly preferred to labour in an environment entirely dedicated to communication. Plus, UQAM was attractive to me. A young Francophone university created in the heady recommendations of the Parent report to facilitate Francophone access to university education, it experimented with new participatory structures and offered an environment that inspired creation, innovation, and development. When I arrived in the communications module where I was to teach, the counterculture influence was palpable. All around, especially in the in social sciences, various Marxist groups were making themselves heard. The question of Québec independence was on everybody’s mind.

In 1974, the communications department did not yet exist. Thus I had been attached to the psychology department and made a member of the “departmental development committee,” consisting of four other professors and overseen by Jean-Paul Lafrance. This development committee needed to produce the documents and take the administrative steps necessary to create the department. Eventually, it was made official in 1975 in the presence of the Minister of Communication and Cultural Affairs of Québec, Jean-Paul Lallier. Our small group also had to provide teaching services in two different programs—one in communication and the other in public relations. The former proposed courses on the media, and the latter courses on interpersonal and organizational behaviour. These programs constituted the two pillars that would serve as the foundation for communication studies at UQAM.

At the end of my doctoral studies, I could profess to a fine mastery of communication theory, but my knowledge of the history and inner workings of the media in Québec and Canada was largely deficient. The demands of teaching led me to quickly correct these gaps. As I was fresh out of my doctoral studies, it was still my reflex to be more concerned with the quality of content than with the ability to transmit this con-
tent in a pedagogical setting. I had to adapt quickly to the demands of undergraduate teaching.

Following the opening of the department, my colleagues and I got down to the business of creating a master’s program. From the very beginning, though, our group of founders could not reach consensus. Some argued that we needed to dedicate all of our meagre resources to undergraduate teaching. I was among those who thought that, to the contrary, we had to get graduate degrees underway to support research before UQAM became stuck in its role as a teaching university, the image of so many American colleges. We fought hard, internally and externally, but nothing could deter us from our work, and when I was director of the department, our master’s program welcomed its first students, in the fall semester of 1980.

My research during these first years at UQAM (1974–1980) was focused on the place and role of communication technology in society, especially in the domain of education, and can be divided into two parts. The first was marked by my participation in projects that grew out of institutional initiatives: 1) the evaluation of experiences with satellite communication (the Hermès project), from 1975 to 1977, in which the University of Québec network was a major partner; and 2) the LOGO project on computer-assisted learning financed by the Ministry of Education of Québec, first located at CEGEP Édouard-Montpetit and then moved to UQAM in 1976. The first research project was followed by the publication of several internal reports and a book chapter, following a colloquium organized by the Royal Society of Canada (Tremblay, 1977), and a short article in a specialized journal (Tremblay, 1979). The second project provided the occasion to collaborate with French colleagues at the Institut national de la recherche pédagogique (INRP), but numerous technical and administrative problems diverted the most of our energy, leaving little time for effective research. A hard-disk crash brought the project to a close in 1978. It was during the trips that I made to France during these two projects that I made the acquaintance of Pierre Mœglin, professor at Université Paris 13, who at the time was heavily involved in the French satellite education programs. It was the beginning of a long friendship and fruitful research partnership.

The second part of my research activities on this theme followed from an interest in the use of media for socio-economic development and democratic participation. In Québec, the 1970s were a vibrant time of experimentation in this field. With severely reduced means, I proceeded with an inventory of québécois community media and produced a piece of “grey literature” of restricted circulation. With the collaboration of the much-missed Gilles Brunelle of the Université de Montréal, I organized a small colloquium on the subject, which was unfortunately never followed by any publication.

Into orbit

At the beginning of the 1980s, things really got rolling. I had been director of the department from 1979 to 1981 and director of the master’s program from 1982 to 1983. At this point I undertook, with Maurice Charland of Concordia University and the much-missed Luc Giroux of the Université de Montréal, the first steps toward what would lead to the creation of our joint doctoral program in 1987. At the invitation of Liora Salter, I collaborated from 1979 to 1980 with a steering committee working toward the creation of the Canadian Communication Association/Association canadienne de com-
communication, whose founding congress took place at UQAM in the spring of 1980. On the proposition of William Leiss, then director of the communication department at Simon Fraser University, I became the first elected president. At the same time, academic, private, and public researchers in Québec created the Association québécoise de recherche en communication. I participated there as well, serving as vice-president from 1983 to 1984.

In between all of this action, I spent a year of sabbatical (1981–1982) in Grenoble, where I met the French researcher Bernard Miège and Catalan researcher Manuel Parés i Maicas, who would both become long-time close collaborators. With Bernard Miège, Pierre Mœglin, and Jean-Guy Lacroix, I developed a Franco-Québécois exchange program on cultural and media industries, a topic I will return to a bit later.

I first met Manuel Parés i Maicas at the annual congress of the Société française des sciences de l'information et de la communication (INFORCOM) in May 1982, when I presented a paper on the implementation of pay television in Canada. Together, we initiated a research program on the issue of stateless nations that would lead to two interdisciplinary Québec-Catalonia colloquiums, the first held in Barcelona in 1985 and the second held in Montréal in 1987. For these two events, Manuel and I brought together a team of researchers—from all over the Atlantic—from the social sciences and humanities, art history and literature to work in Catalan-Québécois pairs in order to facilitate comparative analysis. With Manuel Parés i Maicas, I personally followed a working process on the communication policy in Québec and Canada that I had initiated during my participation in the work of the Communication Working Group (CWG) of the Institut canadien pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA).

These colloquia resulted in the publication of two collections on the subject, published both in French and Catalan (Tremblay & Parés i Maicas, 1987, 1990). This analysis of Catalanian and québécois society, my first international comparative study of scale, taught us many things. Our attention had at first been drawn to the similarities between these two societies: populations of around six million people, sharing a common language in an environment largely dominated by another international language—Spanish for Catalonia and English for Québec. In both cases, a history of resistance, unique institutions, a specific culture, and an aspiration for political autonomy, independence. The progression of our study, however, tended to bring out numerous differences that were just as significant: among others, there was a Catalonian bourgeoisie much older and more dominant in Catalonia than the québécois bourgeoisie in Québec, natural resources played a more important role in Québec, and the Catalanian proletariat largely consisted of immigrants from other Spanish regions (above all, Andalusia and Extremadura). Thus we learned to be suspicious of superficial similarities and differences. Apart from the content, the completion of the research and the organization of these two colloquia constituted a formidable environment for learning how to carry out multidisciplinary work and international collaboration.

It was during early meetings in Bilboa and Edinburgh, to prepare for the Québec-Catalonia colloquia, that I was introduced to an informal network of researchers from Scotland, the Basque Country, the Netherlands, and Slovenia. Afterwards, I kept in touch with Ramon Zalló and Juan Carlos Miguel de Bustos from the Universidad de...
Bilbao and Philip Schlesinger, today director of the Centre for Cultural Policy Research at the University of Glasgow.

Manuel Parés i Maicas became a close friend and we have collaborated multiple times. In particular, he invited me to take the UNESCO chair for which he was responsible at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from January to May 1995. This was an amazing opportunity for me to polish my Spanish (in a Catalan context, nonetheless! But Spanish was the language of the majority of my students) and to benefit from numerous Latin-American contacts.

The progressive knowledge of other university environments also helped me appreciate the originality of the UQAM experience. Its double structure—with departments in charge of resource management on one side and modules that were responsible for programming on the other—was something seen nowhere else. The same can be said for the institutionalization of student and professor participation. I have gradually familiarized myself with a variety of national academic research funding systems, and few countries in the world at that time had funding agencies like the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), practically autonomous of political power, managing open and peer-reviewed funding programs. Over the years, though, much has changed. UQAM has adopted relatively classic departmental structures and other countries, such as France, have created funding bodies that function according to a model similar to SSHRC.

In 1980, Québec experienced an historic moment: its first referendum on sovereignty. Claude-Yves Charron (UQAM), Gertrude Robinson (McGill), and I saw this as a unique opportunity to undertake research on political communication, and we worked to launch a vast research program on media coverage of the event. The referendum campaign seemed to be a special moment to observe the role of the media (press and television) in the public life of a democratic society. We obtained significant funding from SSHRC and the FCAR Fund (Fonds pour la formation de chercheurs et l'aide à la recherche), and we were able to hire a number of research assistants. I dedicated a good part of my energy to this project for five years. Dividing the work, McGill took care of television while UQAM dealt with the press. As the latter constituted an enormous corpus of articles from the primary Montréal daily newspapers, we resorted to automated textual analysis, which was at the time undergoing significant development.

Several conference papers and a few articles came out of this work (see, among others, Tremblay, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c), but none of them matched the quality and quantity of effort exerted. Looking at it according to today's norms, one could say our research was relatively unproductive. This lack of productivity was the result of a number of factors, first among them my inexperience in supervising a team of research assistants, the early stage of development of graduate communication studies at UQAM, and the even newer collaborative approaches being developed in the social sciences. However, it was something else that led to the unravelling of this referendum research: ultimately, operational issues with our automatic textual analysis tools occupied an inordinate amount of space and time. The enormous corpus needed to be digitized. The incessant redefinition of indexes to study the particularities and to perfect the computerized tool required us to constantly revise our analyses and conclusions, this
leading to skepticism and lassitude. Our work most certainly allowed for the refinement of automated textual analysis at UQAM, which others were able to take advantage of for their own research. However, the objectives of our own project in terms of socio-political analysis had been largely compromised. I learned an important lesson from this affair: never let a technical tool, no matter how sophisticated it may be, define one’s theoretical perspectives and comprehensive analysis.

Fortunately, my research interests were still quite diverse and I continued, parallel to the work on journalistic coverage of the referendum, to read, reflect, and publish on issues related to technological development and the role of the media in the public sphere. Reading the work of authors such as Jürgen Habermas, Armand Mattelart, Herbert Schiller, Dallas Smythe, and many others connected to the political economy of communication movement nourished my thinking and provided theoretical perspectives for studying the profound transformations taking place during this time in the media universe as well as in cultural industries. I published a variety of articles on democratization (1981), public policy (1983), the public service (1985a), and educational television (1985b). I also authored a report on the notion of the public service for the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy chaired by Gérald Caplan and Florian Sauvageay (Tremblay, 1985c). This work had been greatly enriched by my engagement, starting in 1982, in the Communication Working Group of the ICÉA mentioned earlier. This group, led by Lina Trudel, gave me the opportunity to work side by side with media union organizers, and activist and community groups with whom I shared common reflections and political orientation regarding questions of public interest in communication. During this time, I also co-authored memoirs and texts aimed at non-academic audiences. I do not doubt that my understanding of the social, political, and economic roles of the media were profoundly influenced here.

Toward the end of this period, certain factors, coinciding with my own observation of mutations in the distribution of audiovisual products, led me progressively to the subject that would dominate the next part of my journey: culture and media industries (Tremblay, 1986). Chief among them were the works of Bernard Miège and Patrice Flichy and an invitation from Jean-Guy Lacroix to participate in an issue of the journal Cahiers de recherche sociologique, of which he had become editor.

**Cruising speed**

Pivotal moments can often be difficult to precisely identify; there is always something that came before. However, the beginning of numerous projects converging around the year 1987 made this a true turning point in my life. To begin with, the joint doctoral program in communication (Concordia University, Université de Montréal, UQAM), which I would direct until 1990, opened its doors and welcomed its first students. The journal Technologies de l'information et société (TIS) published its first issue in 1988. I would be co-editor-in-chief with François Pichault, professor at the Université de Liège, until the end of that adventure in 1997. Finally, the GRICIS (whose acronym at the time meant Groupe de recherche sur les industries culturelles et l'informatisation sociale), which I co-directed until 2006, was able to develop in earnest thanks to a substantial grant from SSHRC for a research project examining transformations in the television industry.
The joint doctoral program, this ultimate step in academic training, completed the creation of the requisite institutional framework for developing communication research in Québec. The opening was hasty, as the Minister’s official authorization arrived late in the spring, and we had to quickly accept students and prepare our seminars. We were, in fact, able to start the program due to a favourable response from the academic community and because we had begun preparations months earlier. The first years of the program were quite enthusiastic. Other than a bit of tension, inter-university collaboration functioned at a good pace. All seminars were structured around team teaching, with two professors from two different universities teaching each class. The first cohort, consisting of barely seven or eight students (including Michael Dorland, now professor at Carleton University and editor-in-chief of the *Canadian Journal of Communication*), had long awaited the opening of the program and made for a stimulating group of students.

The journal *TIS* was created thanks to the financial support of the Ministère des relations internationale du Québec and the Communauté française de Belgique. It was established to meet a desperate need at the time for French-language tools for distributing scientific research on the social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions of information and communication technologies. Over the space of 10 years, it fulfilled its mission in offering high-quality content. However, its high costs of operation, its multidisciplinary vocation, and changes in library purchasing policies made its survival practically impossible once public funding dried up. Without the technical facilities of today, the practical work of an editorial board whose members were on both sides of the Atlantic was onerous. In addition, the decision to make it a multidisciplinary journal, while theoretically judicious, was ultimately commercially ruinous. Researchers tended to subscribe mainly to the journals in their proper discipline and were not very interested in paying for content that was not among their central concerns. Finally, at the end of the 1980s, most university libraries reduced their journal subscription budgets due to financial constraints. When *TIS* closed its doors at the turn of the century, digital online publishing appeared increasingly to be the future. Thanks to the care of Abdel Benchenna of the Université Paris 13, all issues of the journal have been scanned and are now available online (Revues Disparues). At the initiative of Éric George and Dominique Carré, the journal was relaunched 10 years later, in 2007, in digital form and with a new name, *TIC&Société*.

My partnership with Jean-Guy Lacroix also began to solidify at the end of the 1980s. We had met in 1982, brought together by common interests in critical research on information and communication technology, cultural industries, and an affirmation of québécois identity, and we shared our reflections on québécois policy concerning technological development. Together, we participated in scientific activities, and I invited Jean-Guy to join the group for the Québec-Catalonia comparison and the two accompanying colloquia. In 1987, we obtained two small grants for a study on the representations and uses of new technologies and for an analysis of the membership of the Association nationale des téléspectateurs at the behest of its directors. With the start of the project on the transformations of the Québec television industry necessitating the engagement of several research assistants over a period of three
years, we felt the need to give our partnership an enduring form. Jean-Guy had already used the name “Groupe de recherche sur les industries culturelles et l'informatisation sociale” for some time and registered it officially. Considering that the name adequately included the diversity of projects that we carried out together, we adopted the GRICIS banner.

Gilles Pronovost, from the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, and Kevin Wilson of the Télé-université joined us at the end of the 1980s. Together, we developed various collaborative programs on culture, information, and communication industries with Belgian, French, and Mexican colleagues. Collaboration with the Groupe de recherche sur les enjeux socio-économiques de la communication (GRESEC), directed by Bernard Miège in Grenoble, and with the Laboratoire en sciences de l'information et de la communication (LabSIC), directed by Pierre Mœglin at Université Paris 13, became more formalized and sustainable.

In 1990, I edited the collection *Les industries de la culture et de la communication au Québec et au Canada* (Tremblay, 1990). The book counted on the collaboration of Jean-Guy Lacroix and some of our GRICIS research assistants. The following year, based in the results of our research on transformations in the Québécois television industry, we published *Télévision : deuxième dynastie* in collaboration with Marc Ménard and Marie-Josée Régnier, then research assistants at GRICIS (Tremblay & Lacroix, 1991). This book presented our conclusions regarding the increasing power of distributors and the emergence of a “private club” logic that accompanied it.

At the beginning of the 1990s, thanks to the financial support of the France-Québec exchange program, GRICIS, GRESEC, and the LabSIC undertook a project comparing the transformations underway in the information, culture, and communication sectors. This resulted in the collection *De la télématique aux autoroutes électroniques: Le grand projet reconduit*, which was launched during a colloquium on convergence that we jointly organized in Montréal in 1994 (Lacroix, Miège, & Tremblay, 1994). In these times of hegemony of technological determinism, our work showed clearly that convergence is the result of a process of social, cultural, and political construction.

Our collaboration continued without interruption for several years. It was made more regular by the organization of multiple events and the publication of many collaborative texts. At this time, when the Internet was still relatively undeveloped, we took advantage of every international meeting to organize a few working sessions together and to advance our projects. The introduction of email evidently allowed us to intensify our exchanges.

Our collaboration reached a culminating point around the beginning of the new millennium with the start of the GPB seminar and the organization of the “2001 Bugs” conference. Always wanting to experiment in my professional practice with the communication technologies that were my object of study, I took advantage of a pedagogical innovation program at UQAM, proposing to my colleagues Pierre Mœglin and Bernard Miège that we organize a collaborative long-distance graduate seminar. It would build on a pedagogical model incorporating in-person sessions, video conferences, a website, and a discussion forum. The experience has been productive and appreciated by students enough that it has been renewed year after year since 2000. No
matter the retirement of two of its founders, it continues today, thanks to Isabelle Pailliart, Éric George, and Philippe Bouquillon. The 2001 Bugs conference took place in Montréal in March 2002 after four years of preparation and one complete reorganization following the attacks on New York and Washington. The program leaflet invited the participants to clearly overtake technological determinism, arguing that

Notwithstanding the media hype and the more or less unjustified fears it has raised, the year 2000 bug turned out to be a technical problem that was quite simple to solve. But the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) brings more complex challenges. The organizers of the 2001 Bugs conference would like to highlight other problems (human, social, cultural, political, and economic) facing societies in which ICTs are widespread and play a major role. The conference is an invitation to leave the ground of overly simple short-term calculation and confront a social universe, which includes both possibilities and problems to be circumscribed and resolved. In short, the challenge is to think about pervasive communication in all its complexity from the perspective of its long-term implications.

Four collections were born of this project (Lacroix & Tremblay, 2003; Mattelart & Tremblay, 2003; Miège & Tremblay, 2003; Mœglin & Tremblay, 2003).

Other projects grafted themselves onto this collaborative nucleus (GRICIS, GRESEC, LabSIC), created at the beginning of the 1990s. One with Bernard Miège on theories of communication would lead, at the invitation of Gilles Pronovost, to the publication of a themed issue of the journal Loisir et société (Tremblay & Miège, 1998). Others, with Pierre Mœglin, touched on television (Mœglin & Tremblay, 2005) and, in a more engaged manner, on the industrialization of education (Mœglin & Tremblay, 2008). This second theme is Mœglin's speciality, and for more than 20 years he has regularly chaired a seminar on it in which I have sporadically participated. I also collaborated for a few years with a team of geographers and economists at the Université de Toulouse, directed by Alain Lefebvre (Lefebvre & Tremblay, 1998).

The comparative research of GRICIS has not been limited to Franco-Québécois relations and this work has also taken on a North-South axis, as my interest in Latin America developed during the 1980s. This led to collaboration in 1993 with Mexican researchers Delia Druetta Crovi and Florence Toussaint at the Universidad nacional autónoma de México, Enrique Sánchez Luiz at the Universidad de Guadalajara, and Carmen Gómez Mont at the Universidad Iberoamericana de México. The project examined the development of culture and media industries in the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which came into force in 1994. We called our undertaking Project Monarch in reference to the butterflies that shuttle between Québec and the Mexican state of Michoacán in order to reproduce. The work produced two publications (Druetta Crovi, 1995; Tremblay & Lacroix, 1995).

Project Monarch was the first step in prolonged collaboration with colleagues throughout the Americas. It was followed in 1999 by a second research project entitled
“Globalización/Regionalización. Industrias culturales y políticas de comunicación : el caso del sector audiovisual en los países del TLCAN / NAFTA /ALENA,” which was directed by Enrique Sánchez Ruiz (Universidad de Guadalajara), Joseph Straubhaar (University of Texas at Austin), and myself. The project was funded by the Comité Técnico del Programa Interinstitucional de Estudios sobre la Región de América del Norte.

In 1997, the members of Project Monarch joined forces with American colleagues and researchers from the Southern Cone during the first conference on culture and communication industries in the contexts of NAFTA and MERCOSUR, organized by Professor José Marques de Melo in the city Santos, in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The proceedings were published in 1998 (Marques de Melo & Nava, 1998). The second NAFTA-MERCOSUR conference took place in Austin, Texas, in 1999, organized by Professor Joseph Straubhaar. This second event was an important opportunity to broaden the participation of researchers throughout the ensemble of the Americas. A network progressively took form.

The first pan-American conference was set to take place in Montréal from September 17 to 19, 2001, with the financial support of the Canadian and Québec governments. The theme, “Culture industries and the dialogue among civilizations in the Americas,” was inspired by the resolution made by the UN General Assembly declaring 2001 the “Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations.” The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon forced the cancellation of this conference.

That was not the final word on the matter, though. After digital consultation with the participants, organizers, and their partners, it was decided to reprogram the event, and the first PANAM conference took place in Montréal from April 22 to 24, 2002, with more than 200 participants from 15 countries across the Americas. The 50 papers presented during roundtables and workshops were simultaneously translated into English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. The proceedings, entitled *Industries culturelles et dialogue des civilisations dans les Amériques*, were published in 2003 (Tremblay, 2003).

Future meetings would result from the same organizational structure and its marked flexibility. The second PANAM conference took place in Zacatecas, Mexico, from September 10 to 12, 2003. It was organized by Professor Delia Druetta Crovi on the theme “Hacia la sociedad de la información y el conocimiento” (Druetta Crovi, 2004). The third took place in Buenos Aires from July 12 to 16, 2005. Organized by Professor Guillermo Mastrini at the Universidad de Buenos Aires on the theme “Integración comercial o diálogo cultural ante el desafío de la Sociedad de la Información” (Loreti, Mastrini, & Baranchuk, 2007), it attracted the most participants of all. The fourth PANAM conference, organized under the guidance of Professor Lucía Castellón of the Universidad Mayor from October 22 to 24, 2008, in Santiago, Chile, had as its theme “Industrias de la Creatividad. Creatividad, Industrias Culturales y Desafíos para los Comunicadores.” The fifth conference was celebrated in Brasilia, Brazil, from December 1 to 3, 2010, thanks to the work of Professor Cosette Castro of the Universidad Católica, on the theme “Industria de Contenidos Digitales, Redes Sociales y el Desarrollo Sustentable.” Finally, the most recent conference, PANAM VI, organized by Professor Susana Morales of the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba and Professor Carmen Rico from UQAM, took place in Córdoba, Argentina, from June 5 to 7,
2013, on the theme “Industrias culturales, medios y públicos: de la recepción a la apropiación en los contextos socio-políticos contemporaneos.”

Critical analysis of the so-called Information Society has never ceased to attract the attention of GRICIS researchers since the research group’s debut. The original acronym for the group, among other things, directly linked the development of culture industries to processes qualified, following the Nora and Minc report (1978), as “social informatization.” An invitation from the Canadian Communication Association to give the 1995 Southam Lecture, subsequently published in English and French, was an exceptional occasion for me to share my hypotheses concerning these ongoing transformations (Tremblay, 1995). Entitled “The information society: From Fordism to Gatesism,” my address advanced a reflection on the changing form of regulation, a vast project that until now I have never had the courage nor the time to follow through to term.

In 1997, Jean-Guy Lacroix and I published a “trend report” in the journal Current Sociology entitled “The Information Society and the Cultural Industries Theory” (Lacroix & Tremblay, 1997). Here we updated our work and our thoughts in the subject. Unfortunately, this text was never published in French.

The two Montréal conferences—the first PANAM and 2001 Bugs in March 2002—certainly represent an impressive moment in my university career. These two events resulted from a happy synergy between political and academic interests. With the new millennium, québécois and Canadian political systems had become heavily invested in the promotion of cultural diversity and an international instrument capable of giving it legitimacy and legality in the face of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). While this theme certainly did not leave university researchers indifferent, many more among them focused their attentions to the sociocultural aspects of new information and communication technologies (NICTs). In hitching one issue to another, we facilitated the public funding of the operation and assured a high level of participation from the research community. The idea to have these two events, one after the other during the same week, surely increased the workload. However, it also permitted us to invite, at a much lower cost than having the two events at different times, a greater number of foreign researchers whose travel was then doubly motivated.

The two conferences in Montréal in 2002 solidified the convergence of two research subjects that I hold dear: public policy and communication; and ICTs and the Information Society. In addition, these events were an occasion to make a real juncture between two networks within which I had been working for many years and which had not yet overlapped: the first mostly American (in the precise sense of the word, i.e., not only the United States) and the second mostly European. Ultimately, the exceptional resources we were able to assemble allowed us to realize an event rarely dreamed of in academic circles: simultaneous translation in the four primary languages of the Americas (English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese) and the publication of the proceedings in five thematic volumes by the Presses de l’Université Laval. Something this wonderful surely happens only once in a lifetime.

The past 10 years
Jean-Guy Lacroix and I were trained according to a relatively old pattern in sociology, a model in which the professor-researcher pursued personal research that he rendered
into published articles and books upon which his reputation was largely founded. In creating GRICIS, we attempted to adapt to significant changes that occurred throughout the 1980s to both Canadian and québécois social sciences, as well as humanities public research funding. Funding politics have changed as often as its application forms, but the general trend was clear: facilitate the constitution and consolidation of groups and networks of researchers.

During the 20 years that we directed the GRICIS, we have attempted at times to broaden the work of the group by submitting, unsuccessfully, applications for major funding programs. However, we have always resisted the increasing pressures to merge with other research groups. We have preferred instead the coherence of the theoretical orientations of our small group to the financial and administrative advantages found in larger entities. This choice has also been that of researchers who themselves refuse to dedicate the majority of their time to the hunt for funding and the management of personnel.

It became apparent, however, that this orientation could not be indefinitely maintained in the context of the 2000s. Knowing we would be retiring in the somewhat near future, Jean-Guy and I understood that we needed to renew our operation or disappear. UQAM’s opportune hiring at the École des médias of Marc Ménard and Éric George, respectively, both of whom had previously worked at GRICIS, gave us the chance for a fresh start. In 2006, they accepted the challenge of taking up the baton as co-directors of GRICIS. Thanks to the efforts of Éric George in particular, the enlarged group was officially recognized as a research centre at UQAM in 2011. To my great satisfaction, some of my most brilliant doctoral students are now researchers at GRICIS, having contributed greatly to its development as research assistants: France Aubin, professor at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières; Aimé-Jules Bizimana, professor at the Université du Québec en Outaouais; Oumar Kane, professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal; and, of course, Éric George. Over the years, they forged further bonds of cooperation and friendship—among others with older collaborators such as Michel Sénécal and more recent collaborators, such as Normand Landry—and they have played an important role in the expansion of the group and its ascent to its newfound status as a research centre.

Since 2006, I have undertaken work within the vast program on media governance for which GRICIS received research group funding from the Fonds québécois de recherche en sciences de la société (FQRSC). Two interrelated themes have stirred my energies: 1) the renewal of public service media in the context of network expansion; and 2) creative industries and creative economy (Tremblay, 2008, 2011; and see Moeglin & Tremblay, 2012). I continue to collaborate with my French colleagues, in particular with Pierre Moeglin, Philippe Bouquillon, Bernard Miège, and Yolande Combès.

To celebrate the retirement of my close friend Jean-Guy Lacroix, I organized a 2008 colloquium on a theme that meant much to him and inspired him throughout the entirety of his career—emancipation. This event brought together several of his past collaborators, including many from France. The proceedings were assembled in a collection published in Jean-Guy’s honour by the Presses de l’Université du Québec (Tremblay, 2009).
In 2004, UQAM presented me with a new challenge: the direction of the Centre d’études et de recherche sur le Brésil (CERB). I saw this as an occasion to further develop my cooperation with researchers in South America and to engage in a new experience of interdisciplinary work. Among other things, during the four years that I coordinated a team of researchers at seven universities—four in Brazil and three in Québec—I looked at the role of universities in local development. The results have been published in a collection in French by the Presses de l’Université du Québec (Tremblay & Freire Vieira, 2012a) and in Portuguese by APED e SECCO (Tremblay & Freire Vieira, 2012b). I also organized two Brazil-Canada colloquia on the field of communication.

I was introduced to Brazil in 1997 thanks to an invitation by José Marques de Melo to give a doctoral seminar at the Universidade Metodista de São Bernardo. Since then, several Brazilian researchers have become loyal collaborators, such as Edgard Rebouças, Giovandro Ferreira, Antônio Hohlfeldt, César Bolaño, Luis Martino, and Efendy Maldonado. Our collaboration has been a good step toward institutionalization, developing regular exchanges between our joint doctoral program and the Universidade Federal de Salvador de Bahia, the Universidade Federal de Brasília, and the Universidade Católica de Porto Alegre.

My links with the luso-hispanophone world have also led to my active participation in certain associations such as the Unión latina de economía política de la información, de la comunicación y de la cultura (ULEPICC), where I have found colleagues and friends with whom I share a world vision, theoretical universe, and research interests.

And now what?
A researcher’s journey is always more or less the result of a junction between a personal research program and solicitations from the community within which he is evolving, individual choices, and socio-historical constraints. So how have things turned out for me?

Generally, my path over the course of the past four decades can be characterized by three traits in particular: the diversity of my interests, collaborative work, and international comparative analysis. My general interest in communications has leaned toward various projects, at times touching on communication policy, the use of ICTs in education, culture and media industries, identity and cultural diversity, the Information Society, creative industries, and the creative economy. Some people may call it dispersion; certainly nobody can accuse me of overspecialization! Perhaps this is the result of my sociological training, always seeking to analyze social phenomena in their totality. I will never “totally” get there, but it will be close.

I quite often worked collaboratively throughout my career, and this is something I am proud of. Like any other social actor, a researcher is part of certain social groups; taking part in a scientific community was incredibly important to me. Here I found my peers and judges who would, evidently, guarantee the quality of my workmanship. I also found friends with whom it was a pleasure to work. International collaboration gave me the chance to explore the dimensions of this community in the Americas, Europe, and a bit in Asia thanks to Indrajit Banerjee, former GRICIS postdoctoral researcher, who introduced me there.12

One of the anonymous reviewers of this text—who, incidentally, I would like to thank for their judicious comments—asked me why the international dimension has
been so important to my journey as a researcher. As is often the case, the motives appear to be many, some with origins in desire, others in reason, and yet others in chance. From an early age, I had a taste for the world. As a child of a working-class family, I had few books at home, apart from the Bible, of course, which nobody read because the Catholic clergy never really asked us to. My parents had bought the encyclopedia *Grolier Pays et nations, le monde en couleurs*, which I was often delighted by. I also remember writing to embassies to ask them for tourist pamphlets, from which I would cut photos to paste into my scrapbook with my accompanying personal commentary. Then, seminary classes had me dreaming of ancient Greece and Rome, the Mediterranean, France ….

Exposure to sociology and anthropology at the Université Laval further incited my curiosity in cultures around the world—African, Latin American, Asian—a desire that is constantly afire and has yet to be satiated.

The rational motives come from what is a natural penchant for a communications researcher. Globalization, it should be noted, did not begin yesterday, and communication has always played a major role in it. My interest in the political economy of culture and media industries necessarily implies taking the international dimension into account. The music market, audiovisual products, computing—to mention only a few—have long spilled over international borders. Comparative analysis, I think, can only be strongly instructive. And for good measure, add to this the stimulation of reading McLuhan, Innis, Mumford, and many others.

Desire and reason have been well served by chance. Since my doctoral studies in Strasbourg, I have had numerous opportunities to discover other realities, to come into contact with colleagues, to create networks, and to develop collaborative projects. Participation in conferences, invitations to give classes, fortuitous meetings in Montréal and elsewhere—I have taken advantage of all of this as best I could, gradually establishing a solid network of relations and friendships. To reinforce collaboration, I perfected my English and I learned Spanish and Portuguese. Even if my mastery of these languages is not perfect, knowing another language allows for a better understanding of the culture, sending a clear message of genuine interest, one that is often well appreciated. Multilingualism, to me, seems to be a fundamental requirement for engaging in international cooperation. In a globalized world where exterior exchanges are increasingly frequent, it is the only alternative to linguistic uniformity, above all for the people of small nations. To avoid systematically resorting to the lingua franca of the day, there is no better alternative than to address another person in his own language. All the better to encourage him to answer in yours!

Finally, my journey has been that of a professor-researcher who has sought to balance the three components of the task: teaching, research, and community service. If I have not spoken much about my teaching, this is not due to a lack of interest but more because it was not the subject of the text, given certain space constraints.

I have also sought to maintain a certain life-work balance, as we say these days. I was helped greatly by being able to share my life with a woman who is also a researcher, with whom I have been able to share and nourish similar interests and ambitions. My visceral need for sports activities has also been highly beneficial, and this practice has always been essential to my health, both mental and physical. And finally, my love of
the profession. “Choose a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life,” said Confucius. However, I am worried by the increasingly difficult conditions that my young colleagues are subjected to. Bureaucratic administration has reached the point where it has become counter-productive. Budgetary constraints are leading to the progressive deterioration of healthy conditions for teaching and mentorship. Today, the requirements for publishing have inflated to the point where we expect that the CV of a candidate for a doctoral grant will have already published one or two articles. Just imagine the funding competitions of the future! If the situation does not improve, I fear the profession will increasingly cast off its better elements, disturbing the equilibrium between personal and private lives.

I consider myself lucky to have reached retirement age. From now on, I do not need to do anything but do research and write—and take up a few invitations to teach abroad. The desire to learn and to participate in a stimulating scientific community, the desire to accompany my youngest colleagues in their efforts to further develop research in the domain of communication has motivated me to continue my journey as a researcher. The journey is everything.

Notes
1. Readers will understand, I hope, that the choice to use solely masculine pronouns in this text is purely stylistic.
2. CEGEP is the acronym for Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel, known officially in English as “General and Vocational College,” which typically entailed a two-year program between high school and university in the province of Québec.
3. “In ’67 everything was great / It was the year of love, it was the year of the Expo…” Translated lyrics from “Le Blues d’la Métropole,” by the band Beau Dommage.
4. Hautepierre became unfortunately well known due to the violent riots that took place there early in the 2000s. At the time of my research, residents still lived in a vast and peaceful site that was under construction.
5. Jean-Paul Lafrance, Serge Proulx, Marquita Riel, and Normand Wener.
6. The acronym was simply formed from the first letters of the first names of the three people involved: Gaëtan, Pierre, Bernard.
11. Cultural Industries, Media, and Publics: from Reception to Appropriation in Contemporary Socio-political Contexts.
12. Indrajit Banerjee is currently director of the UNESCO Knowledge Societies Division.

References


