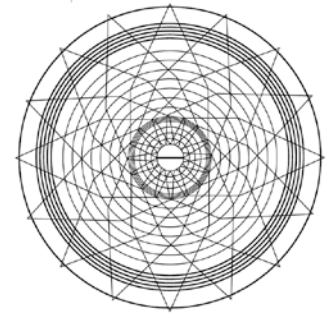


## [Interview]

with Jodi Dean,  
Author of 'The Communist Horizon'



## INTERVIEW WITH JODI DEAN, AUTHOR OF 'THE COMMUNIST HORIZON'

**Interviewer: Julia Chernenko**

Executive secretary of the academic journal "Communications. Media. Design"

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**Chernenko:** During your open lecture in Higher School of Economics You mentioned Donald Trump as a "Twitter president". As far as I know Donald Trump is famous as a post-truth politician.

**Dean:** Yes.

**Chernenko:** I would just ask if post-truth politics as a phenomenon is a result of communicative capitalism?

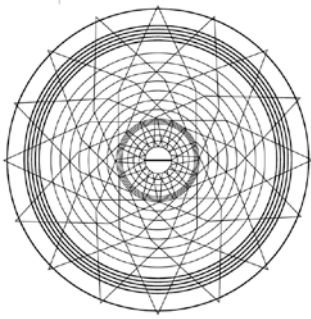
**Dean:** Exactly. Communicative capitalism arises the difference between truth and falsity because anything circulate. And it is super interesting as that my friend worked in Google – and what they discovered? This was during the election, I think it was Obama election, they discovered that lies circulated faster that truth. Pertyly because people who were refuting them would come in. So the truth people have to come in and refuting it, so that's the double effect of circulating lies. Lies, which a lot of people know this is terrible, they had to be corrected and many people responding to the correction. The terrible thing about communicative capitalism is the way that technology makes the case. The meaning doesn't matter anymore. Information and meaning is not the same thing. Yes, that's the post-truth environment. It's not unique to Donald Trump.

**Chernenko:** I agree with you that it's not unique to Donald Trump but he is, you know, is a bright example of it...

**Dean:** Best example.

**Chernenko:** And the other story about it – you also mentioned these big data during your lecture. As far as I understand, it opens big opportunities for manipulations because... like this story of Hillary leaks. There is a great leak of data and nobody is interested of what exactly is in these letters, but everybody can just interpret this data as he wants and share this on Facebook. If I am right to understand that this is the other effect of communicative capitalism?

**Dean:** Yes, couple of things are combined here. One - just the fact of dumping staff appears meaningful. But that's not even meaningful like people are transmitting (as to Hillary example) they are not transmitting any actual content, they are transmitting the



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fact of this. So it's like really communication becomes just metadata, like data about data. Rather than something more people actually pay attention to the details. And in fact nobody even knows what the details are, the details don't matter. So just the dumping of a massive information – that's all that matters. And all PR techniques which are actually interesting... Back in the 70s – there were couple of different companies, they had disasters and the higher PR professionals. And PR professionals said “Oh, I don't deny things. Say – yes, this is important, we will do the full investigation, the full investigation takes from 6 months to 2 years. And we will release everything, we will release 5 000 pages of material.” Nobody reads that, they might read a little summary and then they say “well, good, they have an investigation and they released this data”. But, of course, actual facts like that people die go away. So we have a PR-strategy now as a basic condition of regular communication. The other aspect of big data is the way that... Google, Amazon, Facebook – they accumulate lots of information about us, they then analyse, capture, store and sell. And this might be... for individuals it doesn't matter, but the particular patterns of, I don't know, “people of particular age group buy it” or “people who live in a particular region are worrying about it”. And they use that kind of information to figure particular strategy. So everything we do is now stored and used to give information to the statement capital.

**Chernenko:** For this notion I have two parallel questions. The first is about Julian Assange. He pretends to fight the government, the corporations and so on. But it looks like this is just a fake.

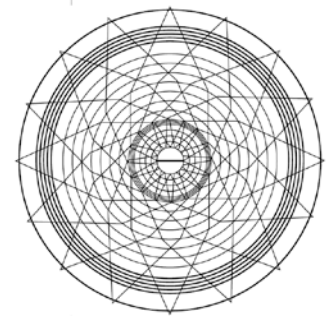
**Dean:** Yeah. I have never been the fan of Assange. From the very beginning I thought that... there is no conspiracy. He is such a macho guy. It's like guy who wants to know the secrets, and he imagine himself as important as big government officials. He is just only macho. So it's not surprise that there is a problem in the governments. But the other thing (more theoretical) is that he always acted like the problem is that people don't have enough information. But we know that there is inequality, we know that in the USA the police kill people, we know that lots companies pollute... We know a sort of horrible things and people don't act. So the problem is not missing information. It's like “oh God, inly we knew specifically how bad Donald Trump was, then we would rebel”. No, it's not the information problem. And Assange participated in ... you know “people need just more information”. That's not the problem.

**Chernenko:** The parallel question. You said about the participation to the certain group (like local group or preference group). I just wonder... As far as I know, there is a huge popularity for something called like “solidarities” and subcultures. It's like the high rise of subcultures today. So what is the first and what is the result. The desire of people to have their own community with people who share their beliefs. Or corporations who want people to cooperate in groups, solidarities, subcultures, because it is easier to collect information through these groups?

**Dean:** That's a good question. Maybe we should think about groups a little bit differently. So Mark Zuckerberg created the Facebook groups feature and I think that's clearly the way that the corporation wants to mind people social life. In the US

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we have these things work. You go to the store and they say “do you want membership card of our store?”. And if you buy like 10 things, you get a lot of discount. But you have to be a member, this is so stupid. I’m a customer, I’m not a member – but just customer. So this is corporate way. But I think this is a kind of fake group, and not like... solidarity economy which are reactions to increased inequality and the decline of state local production. I wouldn’t see them as a subculture, like a band. Well, capital will always find to capture it. But I don’t give capital the credit for generating it. I think we have features of resistance and desires for collectivity, but alternative ways of fighting the capital wants. Capital really likes a divorce specific individuals because they are more in secure.

**Chernenko:** Yes, I see. This leads to the other question: you said about the culture and that everything is memesized and it looks like the culture is a product for communicative capitalism, because, for example, if an artist wants to become famous, he just makes something that will be memetic. This is the case of Margriet van Breevoort. She is a sculpture artist and she made a sculpture of “homunculus loxodontus” and this become the meme in Russia. And she became famous.

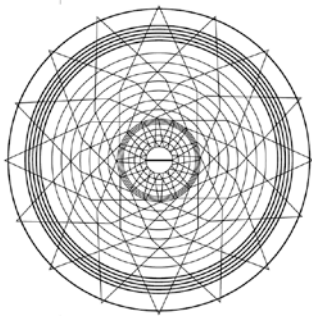
**Dean:** I don’t know anything about it. Do you have a picture?

**Chernenko:** Yes. I just want to ask you if it is the only way for the artist to become famous or there are some other ways. Today artists want to be famous. They desire followers, they desire likes, they desire to be like Catty Perry. What is your opinion about this?

**Dean:** Communicative capitalism honestly subjects all of us. So writers want to produce bestsellers or they want recognition for being a great genius. Authors need to survive. They need recognition or resent sees, attention to their works. They need to make the career. This is a kind of economic imperialism. I don’t think we should criticize anyone personally for trying to surviving in a system. Everyone is subjective to this kind of system. Do we know the great artist of our time as someone who refuse all of this? We don’t know. The people who do wonderful, beautiful work – we never ever see. But communicative capitalism would say, that they don’t matter. Anything they do does no’t matter in terms of communicative capitalism.

**Chernenko:** I see that this is a really big topic, but I don’t want to take a lot of your time. The next question is about China and what do you think about China usage of social media, because it is not a capitalist system – but communist system.

**Dean:** No, it is a capitalist system. I have spoken in two communication universities in China couple years ago. So the best examples are two platforms which names I can’t remember. But the platform is for novels – authors who write novels share it on the platform. So they got hundreds of thousands of novelists who write on this platform. What does it mean? It means the subjectivity of parallel distribution. People type 10 000 words a day and they get payed for like a 1 000 words to the time. But there are marks as bridging a physical labor because they have to work so many hours just to type these words. And they type more to become most popular and to their novels were used in TV mini serials. But that means that 10 000 of people are typing all day long just to get enough money to survive. So communicative capitalism is here an



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economical structure that produces words. Social media the biggest platform in China and there is really no difference from Facebook. They have something like Snapchat. The thing is that the western analysis of Chinese media always is illiberal free speech terms. But in fact their media has been... they still have the same network dinemax. there is a lot of marketization of the media ecology. Like magazine for young women, young women who like hair and so on. Things became more market as we speak about magazines. And the same to the TV and radiostations. And social media also. The censorship control makes a part of market.

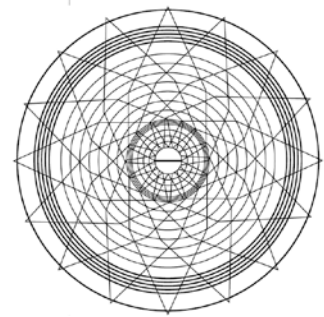
**Chernenko:** A see this is one more big topic. The last question I want to ask is about Russia, because everything you have spoken today had a huge reaction inside me as I understand this processes and I share your positive faith into crowd power. But looks like for power of crowd a crowd should be a little more educated than an ordinary Russian person. And I wanted to ask you if news management can reverse this power of crowd into aggression, attack. As for example there is Russian movie that tells about our last tsar – Nikolay II. And this was a huge campaign through social networks, digital activists and so on... They just ban the film, because it shows the relationships of Nikolay II with the dancer Mathilda-Marie Kschessinskaya and the ordinary Russian citizen does not want to think that the last tsar had any relationships before his marriage.

**Dean:** First, crowds don't have their own politics. We see crowds going in violent directions, we can see them going violent and progressive directions, and we can see them not violent, that become boring. It is also different crowds. Sometimes they can go really bad directions. I would not say that the direction the crowds go is a product of ignorance. I think it's a product of other things – what's the situation underground, why did they do it, did the police come in, is it against the law, how people responding... So I think it makes more sense than each individual level of knowledge. It is impossible to change the media ecology, it can be restricted. One of the interesting things – is that sometimes government prevent something from being shown and that's makes it important. On some books or films nobody pay attention, but in the case of ban... So in some ways censorship actually has its extra effect – people know that something is important.

**Chernenko:** Thank you.

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## ИНТЕРВЬЮ С ДЖОДИ ДИН, АВТОРОМ 'THE COMMUNIST HORIZON'

**Интервьюер: Черненко Ю. А.**

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### Abstract:

Джоди Дин – политический философ из США, профессор департамента политологии в Хобарт и Уилльям Смит Колледж в штате Нью-Йорк. Она также известна как автор книги "The Communist Horizon" и концепции коммуникативного капитализма.

Приуроченное к переводу тематического выступления Джоди Дин на русский язык интервью для журнала «Коммуникации. Медиа. Дизайн» посвящено вопросам взаимосвязей коммуникативного капитализма и таких явлений как политика пост-правды, big data, меметичная культура и деятели культуры. В интервью доктор Дин также делится своими взглядами на Дональда Трампа, историю с публикацией переписки Хиллари Клинтон, а также на деятельность основателя и главы Wikileaks Джулиана Ассанжа.