'It's Not Just Radio'

Models of Community Broadcasting in Britain and the United States

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I declare that the work presented in the thesis is my own.

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Abstract

Necessary and important focus has been given to the future of digital, satellite and Internet radio as a means of increasing flows of information and culture irrespective of geographic boundaries. At the same time, radio is primarily a local experience. This research examines the phenomenon of community radio through case studies in Britain and the United States. The contested site of audio broadcasting lies beyond the national framework via new technologies and, at the same time, is rooted locally. The political impetus for this project emerges out of the current media reform movements in both countries for the expansion of low power community radio and their connection to broader concerns around media democracy and pluralism.

The research seeks to explore the phenomenon of community radio and how its characteristics are challenged in practice; the extent to which there exists both continuity and difference in the development of community radio sectors in both Britain and the United States; how radio is both de-linked from geography and rooted in localities; and whether or not the medium of radio itself embodies potential as a more participatory and democratic means of communication.

This research is situated in both radio studies and alternative media studies. In order to investigate these questions, the research considers content production and internal organisational structure among its case studies, representing different models of community radio; examines the impact of technology on radio as a local space; and considers questions of media and democracy raised by community radio projects.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

Introduction & Methodology

'Why did I get involved in radio? I didn't know how to spell.'
(Frank Stoltz, reporter for NPR affiliate station KPCC, former News Director Pacifica Radio station KPFK)

Introduction

An increased level of attention has been paid recently to the future of digital, satellite and Internet radio as a means for circulating information and culture irrespective of geographic boundaries and as a means of subverting the dilemma of scarcity within the limited analogue bandwidth. At the same time, terrestrial radio itself exists within the regulatory parameters of national broadcast policy. What is interesting is that while the Internet and, to a lesser extent, other digital means of delivery, address the problem of scarcity, there has been an increasing amount of grassroots pressure and regulatory progress made towards the development of low power community radio sectors around the globe. Analogue radio remains the primary means of news and broadcast entertainment for large parts of the world and radio itself remains largely a local experience.

As this research will suggest, community radio is more than just radio. It is a means of social organising and representation coalesced around "communities of interest" and/or small-scale geographic locales. While key media policy debates centre around ownership, spectrum allocation and the lack of localism in programming and management, community broadcasting offers one important response to an increasingly globalised world that is not a contradiction, but instead, an alternative. As Martín-Barbero asserts: '[t]he contradictory movement of globalization and the fragmentation of culture simultaneously involves the revitalization and worldwide extension of the local' (2002: 236). How we conceptualise community radio is about how we conceptualise both radio and the social environments within which

broadcasting occurs. In many ways, then, community radio says more about
the space of social engagement and collectivity then it does about
broadcasting. While transnational broadcasting challenges geographic barriers
of access, analogue, terrestrial radio exists within national regulatory contexts.
It is this place where policy meets practice that my research enquiry began.

An examination of community radio legislation around the world finds a sector
dominated by a lack of cohesive policy. There are countries with well-
established community radio sectors and those where community radio is still
not recognised. Where there is not licensed community radio, there often exist
thriving landscapes of unlicensed, micro-radio stations, and such "pirate radio"
operate even if there is legal community broadcasting owing to the fact that
there will always be needs and interests not met by any regulatory system as
well as those wishing to operate outside state infrastructure, either for
ideological or practical reasons.

By contrast, some community radio stations operate under threat of harassment
in highly volatile and sometimes dangerous conditions, some continuing to
broadcast at constant risk of harassment and closure. Deregulation of media
industries has brought mixed results for community radio. In some instances,
the weakening of state broadcast monopolies has resulted in the launch of new
community radio stations, but in most instances, unless specific safeguards to
ensure community ownership or frequency set-asides have been made,
deregulation has largely resulted in increased privatisation owing to excessive
market pressures. Regulatory changes encouraging private ownership and
consolidation have weakened the status of community radio in Chile, Brazil
and Argentina, for example. Community radio is, however, making its way
into more and more broadcast policies and is at times a microcosm for larger
national tensions. Further, '[t]he growing popular interest in community media
across the globe indicates profound dissatisfaction with media industries
preoccupied with increasing market share and profitability at the expense of
public accountability and social value' (Howley 2005: 2).

Political organising around community radio has also played an important role in the movements for media reform and democracy. In the United States, the successful lawsuit to block implementation of cross-platform media ownership was filed against the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) by the Prometheus Radio Project (*Prometheus v FCC*), itself a non-profit organisation otherwise at the forefront of the movement for low power FM (LPFM) radio. Among international NGOs, the World Association of Community Radio (AMARC), the campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) and others have signed a declaration calling on governments to ensure non-discriminatory legal frameworks for community media, equitable and sufficient allocation of frequencies by transparent accountable mechanisms, and targets for opening up spectrum and licensing procedures and are fighting to have support for community media included in policy statements emerging from the European Union, United Nations, and elsewhere.

In Britain, following twenty years of pressure from the Community Media Association (CMA) and the success of a fifteen-station pilot project, communications regulator Ofcom is now in the process of issuing five-year renewable licenses for local non-profit organisations in a newly created sector for community radio. The legislation as set forth in the 2003 Communications Act has more to say about social policy then it does broadcasting. The application itself is heavily weighted to questions about social gain criteria, community service and participant training over queries about antenna placement and transmitters.

The legislation takes an expansive view of community radio, providing for both communities of interest and of geography. It has been argued that many of the stations could in fact be national formats (stations serving African Caribbeans, Asians), some of which would likely not be financially profitable though of national interest (stations serving gays and lesbians, blind and partially sighted people). Whilst geographically broad in appeal, these "community of interest" stations remain situated within the context of their local areas. The newly established sector in Britain is proving that low power community radio is a viable and vibrant alternative to incumbent radio that can

co-exist in the same space and, in the case of some regional BBC sites, work together. It also demonstrates that media policy can have a social agenda based around neighbourhood investment in a way that it is not top-down or centralised but where power is indeed located inside neighbourhoods and grassroots organisations.

In the United States, the service for low power FM (LPFM) radio was established in 2000, but was curtailed almost immediately by Congress at the behest of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and National Public Radio (NPR). Against findings in two separate engineering studies, Congress passed a restrictive law ("Preservation of Broadcasting Act", itself an oxymoron) limiting LPFM stations to the less populated areas of the country based on disproven claims of broadcast interference. Since then, while 590 LPFM stations have gone on air, many thousands more have been denied or barred from applying under the arcane rules, some having yet to receive official acknowledgement of their application from the FCC though they applied in 2000-01, during the only period in which filing windows were opened. In 2005, bipartisan legislation was introduced in Congress to overturn this law.

Not all low power stations are community radio stations. Unlike the British model, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) does not license based on content or objective. Rather, their mandate is limited to availability, non-commercial funding, ownership, and a vaguely worded preference for local origination of content. An estimated one-third of the licenses go to religious enterprises and churches.

At the time of writing, LPFM rules are under review by the FCC for the first time since its introduction. Media reform groups are pushing for LPFM to be granted primary status as currently, they are considered secondary to incumbent broadcasters and could be displaced should a neighbouring high-power station gain approval to boost their reach. Another key area of debate surrounds the legislative preference for local programme origination. LPFM activists argue local origination is broadly indicative of a connection to the

community and thus, a greater emphasis on locally-oriented news and public affairs. Opponents claim local origination does not necessarily make better local service.

The question of localism in American radio is a highly politicised issue. In *Prometheus v FCC*, plaintiffs argued: '[c]ivic participation and democracy depend on citizen's ability to find out what is going on in their home towns and cities' (Media Access Project 2003). The Federal Appeals Court ruled the FCC had failed to use adequate methods in assessing what constituted local value. In particular, the court cited the FCC's flawed methodology in calculating that '[the Dutchess County community access television station] is fifty percent more valuable for media diversity than the *New York Times* and equal weight with, and just as valuable as the local *ABC* television affiliate' (ibid). The FCC has since held a number of 'Town Hall' style public hearings around localism across the country, although the resulting public support for local ownership and content has failed to impact on policy. As Carmen Sammut argues: '[l]ocal context remains an important influence on the production, dissemination and reception of news, in spite of the convergence of global media ownership' (2004: 7).

It is my interest in media policy and support for various legislative initiatives that initially encouraged me to undertake this research. Thus, there is a strong policy imperative although it is not a policy project. It is useful to overview this contemporary context in order to properly situate the combined cultural, social and political approach taken throughout the research - Chapter 3 is dedicated to tracing the historical roots of policy in both Britain and the US that has led to the status of low power radio in both countries. The current political context of localism is also situated within this discussion.

Another area of interest informing this project is a curiosity around the reasons why people come together to organise media projects outside the established paradigm. While the concept and problematisation of "alternative media" will be discussed at length in Chapter 2, it is a very particular form of organising that is the focus of this research, that of community media. This thesis is,

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however, a study about radio. It is this site of production and organisation in an urban context that I am interested in. I am also interested in the normativity of community as a practical concept whilst cultural theorists remind us of the need to problematise it. This dichotomy between theory and practice – how we conceptualise phenomenon and how it is experienced – is also at the root of my inquiry. Most community-based projects, it seems, exist because there is a collective interest within a particular group of people and a desire to organise around it, be they people who live in close proximity to each other (geographic communities) or those who are interested in similar areas (communities of interest). In terms of broadcasting, while the mission or content of a particular project may or may not be political in nature, access to broadcasting as small-scale media came about as a result of lengthy political struggle and remains a counterpoint to established media. It is precisely, then, this intersection between politics, culture, and media democracy that also interests me throughout this research.

Research Questions

This research examines the phenomenon of community radio through case studies in London and Los Angeles. The contested site of audio broadcasting lies both beyond the national framework via new technologies and is at the same time rooted in locally. The political impetus for this project emerges out of the current media reform movements in the U.S. and U.K. for the expansion of low power community radio and their connection to broader concerns and actions around media democracy.

My research questions are as follows:

- What are the core features of community radio? Can community radio be considered a distinct phenomenon? How are these characteristics challenged in practice?

- To what extent is there both continuity and difference in the development of community radio sectors in Britain and the United States? How is a comparative analysis between the two systems useful to the larger field of study?

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- Why does local radio matter? How is radio both de-linked from geography and rooted in locality, even when produced for a global or transnational audience?

- Does community radio embody potential as a participatory and democratic means of communication?

The research is situated in both radio studies and alternative media studies. In order to investigate these questions, the research considers both content production and internal organisational structure among selected stations, representing different models of community radio; examines the impact of technology on radio as a local space; and considers questions of media and democracy raised by community radio projects. What this thesis attempts to do, then, is to explore some specific models of community radio in practice to examine the kinds of issues arising out of them and explore what it means to talk about community broadcasting.

Methodology

The question now turns to the methodological issues involved in researching community radio models in a local context. One initial concern of mine is that Media and Communications as an academic discourse feels, at times, too rooted in its internal debate between the rigours of cultural studies versus political economy. But that binary contest is not representative of how we as individuals and collective actors experience the media, communicate ourselves, and collectively organise in the creation of independent media projects. Consequently, a rigid approach to categories is not the basis on which I seek to examine community radio.

One of the difficulties I had when beginning was selecting what stations to focus on. One approach I could have taken was to compare the system of low power FM radio in the US with that of community radio in the UK. It would have been a very interesting study as the key distinguishing features between two different systems of licensing non-profit radio would have been exposed, and comparisons would be made across very recognizables lines. Such a study would be very useful in providing necessary empirical data in support of the

sector, in furthering the area of study around Anglo-American media systems, and in providing useful analysis for community activists and practitioners in the field. I purposely chose not to take that route in this study because my interest here lies in the wider conception of community radio through examples that exist across legislative criteria for community radio. This involves evaluating a variety of models that actually represent different approaches to community broadcasting based on different forms of delivery and sometimes contrasting objectives. I have chosen to explore different models of community radio in an attempt to better unpack the nuances, fluidity and discrepancies around definitions of community radio within so many distinctive technological, legislative, organisational and programming contexts.

The four models being explored are: the three low power, neighbourhood-based community FM/AM stations in London, themselves very distinctive from each other, that are still in their infancy; a single "high power" community radio serving the entirety of a major metropolitan area in Los Angeles; diasporic broadcasting in a local context among Persians in Los Angeles; and online community radio projects produced in London and Los Angeles emerging from the Independent Media Centres that are both locally organised and part of a growing global collaboration of audio producers. On the one hand, the models are organised around their different mediums of delivery: low power FM/AM; high-power FM; side-band FM, shortwave and satellite; and Internet radio. Of course, even these categories are not fixed because all the stations broadcast online, thus cross over from the local to the global. While there are no "right wing" radio stations in the study, the case of a commercial Iranian broadcasting outlet offers a useful counterbalance to the kinds of projects typically associated with community radio. However, what is useful in looking at different models across delivery platforms is that key constructs can emerge that are independent of any one means of delivery and comparisons can be made horizontally rather then just vertically, thus avoiding a technologically deterministic approach.

Another problem is that there exists no standard methodology from which to approach the study of community radio, though there are useful comparative

studies to draw on. As both alternative media and radio have historically been under-theorised areas, the area of community media has itself, not surprisingly, hardly been recognized within mainstream academic studies of the media, and most research in this area are specialist studies. Radio is itself an under-studied area (Lewis 2000), there is a need for methods that connect the "old" and "new" radio technology within such studies, and there lacks a common agenda for research in community radio (Scifo 2005). It is a failure of media studies that the points of reference have expanded at the cost of leaving out "old" broadcast mediums, especially when their relevance to the digital arena is apparent, as is the case with "podcasting" and other contemporary trends. One problem this "secondary status" creates is that researchers like myself must first more carefully justify their area of study and position it in creative ways. The hope, however, is that thoughtful methodologies will emerge because they come from a variety of places and are less-steeped in their own academic traditions then other subject areas.

My methodology is rooted in a qualitative approach, relying heavily on first-person accounts gathered in detailed interviews. 'One of the outstanding strengths of qualitative social research is precisely its ability to generate theory: and in particular to generate theory which is grounded in, and which seeks to explain, social process, to understand the density of lived relations' (Lindlof and Meyer in Silverstone 1994: 21). Maintaining writing that is grounded in the social emerging out of the research instead of imposed by it, is a fundamental aspect of this project. In other words, 'epistemological prescriptions may look splendid when compared with other epistemological prescriptions...but who can guarantee that they are the best way to discover, not just a few isolated "facts," but also some deep-lying secrets of human nature?' (Feyerabend in Lazar 2000: 11). This is not to say I seek to source the root of human nature in my research (!). It is instead an important acknowledgement that I am not taking a prescriptive approach. I am not trying to "prove" some scientific fact about a form of media. Rather, I am attempting to offer an analysis, through narratives and case studies, of various models of engagement and, in turn, to offer a thoughtful way in which to problematise fluid categories of what is considered community radio. Kevin Howley

(2005), in outlining his methods and theoretical framework, also notes that he too had difficulty in his own research coming to terms with the problematic nature of community. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's (1991) conception of imagined communities, Howley positions his usage of such concepts in the symbolic construction of community and the 'ritual practice' of community (2005: 4) therein.

Comparative Study

This is a comparative study of two national broadcasting systems whose case studies are located in two key urban cities. Comparative studies are 'useful in addressing problems at both the macro and micro levels' (Llobera 1998: 80) and are 'valuable in understanding what lies behind the everyday social experience, the social structures and cultural institutions that dominate everyday life' (ibid). This is a comparative study across national regulatory systems, urban contexts, community-based models and theoretical approaches. While the national frameworks are useful for my purposes here, the use of such 'does not negate the value of "un-national", international, transnational, comparative, and/or non-Western approaches to communication research (Hamilton and Atton 2001: 119). The extensive comparative historical context provided in Chapter 3 is useful because 'differences in scholarly interpretations of a situation or event reveal the ways in which interpretations are shaped by historical events. Thus, investigating historical contexts is crucial for understanding interpretive frameworks' (ibid). Further, an historical perspective in studying alternative media is crucial 'is the need to take account of the formative power of historic conditions' (Gibbs and Hamilton 2001: 117).

The reason for the comparison between the US and UK is two-fold. First, there is a necessity for comparative studies and a utility that comes from examining two distinct systems side-by-side. The national context of broadcasting legislation on the limited, analogue dial necessitates a country-specific focus within a comparative context, and there exist many important studies situated in such a model, notably, Girard (2001), Jankowski (1992), and

Price-Davies and Tacchi (2001), An upcoming conference on European community radio will be taking place in Ireland in November 2005 and the relatively new International Radio Research Network demonstrates the increased interest in comparative studies.

The second reason for the comparative approach is a practical one. These particular systems are ones that I know and the ones to which I have had research access. They are fundamentally different systems, one developed around the value of public service broadcasting, the other a wholly commercial enterprise, yet where, ironically, within the commercial system, the spectrum was opened up to community voices long before the public service system was. Even so, both systems face growing concerns around concentration of ownership, albeit on relative scales, and recent attacks on their public broadcasters. Both countries have recently begun licensing low power radio stations in newly created sectors and campaigns are still underway to shape the process and, in the case of the United States, to re-open the system to new applicants and metropolitan areas in the country which have previously been excluded from participation. The process and the licensing itself are quite distinctive in each country. However, the utility of the national context and comparative structure within an Anglo-American framework is a worthy point of departure and provides a context within which we can see emergent transnational processes, while at the same time bearing in mind that 'hundreds of years of scholarship and commentary done in the two countries comprises a dauntingly varied and contradictory body of work, the complexity of which must always be kept squarely in view' (Hamilton and Atton 2001: 129).

At the same time, it is also necessary to move beyond the national paradigm even within these case studies and look at the wider phenomenon of radio broadcast models across national contexts. One of the concerns with such an approach is that the structure of the nation-state can be taken for granted as the sole influence on policy, something that is increasingly contested. Aside from the impact different systems have on each other, most especially the pressures of the American system internationally and the proliferation of the public service model, there also exist transnational and supra-national structures

affecting media policy, especially in the area of satellite broadcasting and copyright. There is concern that if, for example, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) should involve itself in protecting market rights in media and communications industries, such policy could be used to prohibit individual national laws that provide state money to fund public broadcasting sectors or require quotas on national content as anti-competitive.[1] Broadcasting within Europe itself has always been subject to regional decisions owing to the close proximity of its countries.

What is also interesting from a methodological standpoint is that this was an unintentional benefit for my research, as even the access pilot project for low power community radio had yet to begin in Britain and I, like others, had no idea it would actually emerge during this period. Nor was I aware of the extent to which an organised movement was underway in the United States to help build more low power radio stations, a movement led by a Philadelphia-based non-profit organisation Prometheus Radio Project. As a result of these developments, the shape of the research adapted, in particular, the structure of Chapter 3, an historical context which necessitated a more specific policy focus as a result, and in Chapter 4, an examination of community radio in London led to a focused case study of the Access Pilot stations in London, rather then an overview of the numerous small-scale or short-term radio projects that pre-dated the emergence of the sector. As a result of this shift in focus, a fair amount of research I conducted does not appear in this thesis. I spent the better part of one year focussed on a much broader area of local non-profit radio. This led me to interview numerous people involved in public broadcasting and college radio in Los Angeles, BBC Radio London, and organisers with a number of short-term, Restricted Service License (RSL) stations and neighbourhood radio projects in London, each of whom would make fascinating case studies themselves, especially considering the breadth of radio activity at a time when there was no permanent broadcast outlet. While it is extremely difficult to leave behind so many interesting narratives and personal experiences, the benefit of having each case study more tightly

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[1] See Freedman (2003a).

defined lends itself to a more useful context for comparison, though I have tried to incorporate elements of these interviews where appropriate. Further, it is not local radio *per se* that is the focus of my study. With regards to the exclusion of public broadcasters, while localism is a policy framework informing the study and local spaces are my primary interest, this is an investigation of community media, which, as will be explored, is not the same as public media, though both are necessary in a pluralistic media environment.

In terms of the choice to centre my research in London and Los Angeles, there are again, the practical reasons of personal access. I am in my own way living between two worlds as both a PhD student in London and a working professional with long-established ties to Los Angeles, the city I am from. I am in neither one place nor the other and it is at times difficult to establish roots and commitments when living within multiple spaces. On the other hand, within an international university such as Goldsmiths, one is not alone in this geographic polarization between "home" and "university". Of course, my personal needs are not enough to justify a legitimate academic context, but in actuality, I have found these places to be strikingly worthwhile places of comparison.

Both cities are geographically disparate territories spanning large distances and encompassing an incredible diversity of ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic communities both segregated and interwoven into the fabric of the city. London and Los Angeles are cosmopolitan cities, media and entertainment centres, and places with both internationally recognisable landmarks and areas of invisibility to the outside world. They are also locales with tremendous economic disparity, extremities of wealth and poverty highlighted by conspicuous consumption. They are both areas defined by massive geographic mobility from within outside their respective countries and also from within. They are both cities whose flexible identities and changing populations sometimes come up against conservative ideologies resistant to accepting change. The front-page political issues are what you would expect to find in large, metropolitan cities – education, crime, health care, pollution

and transportation – however, behind each of these issues lie tensions around race, ethnicity and religion.

Conceptually, there are interesting differences between the "new" and the "old" of Los Angeles and London. There exists a familiarity surrounding London's landmarks that inspires a sense of history and grandeur, and of a time past. Yet London cannot truly "be known" until getting past the identifiable veneer of Big Ben, Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral. It is far more then the sum of its icons. Los Angeles, by contrast, is often referred to as "history-less city". Though its landmarks recognizable, they are "pop icons" – the Hollywood Sign, Mann's Chinese Theatre, the Venice Beach boardwalk. The cultural history is there, but a city whose suburbs and skyline often substitute in television and films as "Anywhere USA" is difficult to know. While London has Iain Sinclair (1991, 1997, 2002) and his love affair with its subtleties and nuances – even when exposing its distopian elements – among its chroniclers, Los Angeles has Mike Davis (1990, 1999, 2003) and his painstakingly researched critique of "fortress LA".[2]

Within both these cities lie very different solutions to the problem of participatory access to broadcasting that are governed by the different national systems of licensing, which in turn, determine the amount of available space on the radio dial. London can expect up to six new licensed community radio stations, whereas for Los Angeles, even if the legislation were to be expanded to allow LPFM stations into the metropolises, there is little hope that cities with the radio density of Los Angeles and New York will ever have access to the low power service. Thus, a study across low power community radio in the US and UK would necessitate looking beyond these two cities and outside of an urban context.

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[2] Davis now lives in San Diego.

Interviews

'When History is written, our words – words of people out there actually doing it – will be in black and white and cyberspace for the academics, historians, and analysts to pick over the bones with and come up with amazing theories.' (SchNEWS editorial quoted in McKay 1998: 11)

I have at times struggled with my research due to a feeling that what I am saying is too obvious, that it is not profound or *significant* enough. It is an anxiety that arises from the difficulty of developing a new theoretical lens through which to examine under-theorised forms of media. I imagine I am not the first PhD student to have such concerns. However, the thesis makes an original contribution to our understanding of community radio in particular through the prominence of in-depth personal interviews, which form the primary source material for the case studies. Rather than impose too narrow a theoretical framework through which to examine the stations, I take my cue throughout the research from the interviews themselves. Thus, my case studies are driven by the field research and first-hand accounts from practitioners and organisers in the field. My intention is that this approach to the topic will best illuminate the nuances and objectives behind each of the projects, and offer a useful lens through which to evaluate the various organising models. 'Like this [new social] movement, we relish intimacy, subjectivity, and diversity, and we think that personal stories have as much (if not more) to teach us as any manifesto' (Notes from Nowhere 2003: 5). First-hand accounts of the experience of radio production and community-organising thus allow us to 'find out about things that cannot be seen or heard, such as the interviewees' inner state – the reasoning behind their actions, and their feelings' (Seale 1998: 202). What is striking about researching alternative media projects is the high degree of self-reflexivity among its participants. Though not everyone within a community radio station approaches the experience with the same degree of interest in thinking through their mission, and some interviewees were not interested in expressing anything but positive stories, most were in fact quite open about many difficulties they had faced and how they would like to see their station grow.

However, one of the obvious methodological difficulties in research so reliant on interviews is that I can only examine the version being told to me (Seale 1998: 203). Further, as the interviewer, I wield power over the direction the interview is to take and what questions are being asked. In this research, I found it was not the "factualness" of the interview data that posed a real dilemma, or the hierarchy of the interview structure as most interviews were conducted quite conversationally. Rather, the primary concern surrounding my approach to this research is the danger of an 'automatic guarantee of the analytic status of the data that emerge' (ibid: 209). Seale goes on to discuss the importance of trust in the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, one best established in this research by the nature of my involvement with various projects and interest in the subject itself. This was particularly the case with the studies of Pacifica Radio, Indymedia and *Resonance FM*, each of which I had been a participant with at various times. In terms of *Sound Radio* and *Desi Radio,* a certain amount of trust was established by my involvement with the Community Media Association, with which organisers at each station were also very involved. Where this issue revealed itself was in conducting interviews at the Iranian radio stations, the case study where I experienced the least amount of access and least unfettered responses. I attempted to overcome this by looking at three different radio stations broadcasting in Farsi, at one of which I interviewed five people involved with a variety of roles at the station, from the General Manager, web designer, Programme Director and two programme hosts, in addition to interviews with the wider Iranian American population. Further, I chose to focus my interviews around key organisers and programmers at each station. The flaw in this approach is the disparity between intentions and practice, or, what the theoretical and organisational aims of the station are as compared with the experience and opinions of those working within but who do not have the power to make decisions.

To counter potential methodological problems concerning access and evidence, I have raised questions throughout the thesis regarding particularly controversial aspects and claims that might seem "too good to be true". Furthermore, my analysis is based on the motivation and mission of the selected stations rather then an empirical study of the day-to-day operations at

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each station. Such research would be very useful, but that is not the objective of this project, nor would it be realistic to cover the cross-section of radio projects with such methods.

In terms of verifying information or checking the authenticity of particular claims, I have attempted wherever possible to use relevant documents and sources. For example, information in relation to the Access Pilot stations in London was cross-referenced with data on their application to Ofcom for permanent licenses. Pacifica's struggles have been well documented in the popular and political press, and the number of personal homepages, blogs and listserves dedicated to the network is extensive, as is also the case with Indymedia. The objective transparency of each organisation makes for useful and "knowable" access to internal discussions and processes. The case study where this was most difficult, was with the Iranian radio stations in Los Angeles where language was a more significant barrier and there was less public information to reference, though there were numerous local newspaper articles sourced for background and context.

Field Research and Ethnography

'[Ethnography is] a particular method or set of methods which in its most characteristic form…involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.' (Hammersley and Atkinson quoted in Walsh 1998: 217)

Fortier (1998) sees "fieldwork" as synonymous with "ethnography" and "participant observation" as one method among many involved in ethnographic studies. In this research, I conducted both participant observation and 'complete observation' (Walsh 1998: 222) where no active participation was involved, depending on the level of access and needs of the station. I did, however, undertake extensive participant observation in the wider field of community radio building and production, conducting numerous workshops for the Prometheus Radio Project and the Community Media Association (CMA) and helping to build a number of community radio stations in the US

as well as two stations in Tanzania and one in Mexico.[3] With an extensive background in both commercial and community radio begun at the campus radio station KSDT the first week at university as an undergraduate some twenty years ago, I have a personal context within which to examine the structure and day-to-day operations of radio production. While field research drew on my experience, the observation and analysis of the various stations was informed by but not limited to it. That said, the over-riding difficulty in undertaking a project in an area in which I have so much personal investment is the need to avoid methodological bias. While I think it is crucial for researchers to share a passion for their topic, it is equally important not to get caught up in a romantic euphoria, and to maintain enough critical distance for worthwhile evaluation. At the same time, as feminist methodologies assert, 'if we accept that social research is informed by personal systems of values, beliefs, politics and histories...then we need to find ways of making use of them (Fortier 1998: 57). In other words, 'this is about conceiving ways of thinking the social through ourselves' (ibid paraphrasing Probyn 1993: 3). Further, as Joan Scott asks, 'how can we historicize experience? How can we write about identity without essentialising it?' (1992:33).

In terms of ethnography itself, while to a certain extent I employ an ethnographic methodology, the process and first-hand experiences were not themselves the subject of inquiry, nor was there an even-ness of participation across each case study, thus forcing me to question the extent to which I would claim status as an ethnographer. Had I spent extended periods of observation in each station, I might feel otherwise, but the breadth of territory I wished to cover did not allow for such. However, I would say that the reflexive character involved with fieldwork research very much informed the research and write-up. In particular, there is an awareness of my position as an outsider that was evident at the stations where I did not speak the primary language, and as a white person occasionally entering into spaces where I was the minority, especially with regards to question of identity.

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[3] For accounts of the project in Mexico, see Coyer 2004 and in Tanzania, see Coyer 2005b.

Implicit in the construction of or organising around community is debate focused on identity or "modes of identification". The conception of identity as something that is not fixed, but socially constructed and historically specific (Hall 1992) is a widely held understanding within cultural studies and social sciences. However, there are many research projects based on ethnic or national media that take the construction of identity as normative and unproblematic. At times, I struggle with this myself. However, I aim to think beyond the ideological *cul de sac* of normative identity construction and community building while at the same time seeking to most accurately represent the ways in which practitioners themselves conceptualise and organise their own work.

Project Outline

In my review of the literature, I seek to outline the relevant theoretical issues in three core areas of study that inform the basis for my exploration of local radio. They are: the medium of radio, alternative media, and the context of localism. My research begins with an overview of the limitations of dominant media paradigms and asserts the value of constructing a more inclusive approach. I explore what is particular about the medium of radio, relying particularly on Hendy's (2003) work to provide useful radio models that are based on motivation rather then medium. I place key theories of alternative media production (Downing [2001], Atton [2002], Rodriguez [2001]) in context with community radio, and in doing so, overview the variety of linguistic contexts used among practitioners and academics to describe these practices, e.g. "alternative", "community", "independent", and "citizen's" media. Lastly, I raise concerns over concepts of community and locality as they relate to radio, looking at a variety of legislative definitions of community radio and justify radio as a useful place to investigate the city.

Chapter 3 is in many ways a review of the historical literature around radio as it attempts to reconstruct the history of community radio as it evolved out of campaigns for local radio in Britain, and its evolution from movements to de-commercialise the airwaves in the United States. In doing so, I pay special

attention to the historical development of community, non-commercial, and pirate stations, the crucial role amateurs play in forging innovation in the field, the ethos of public service broadcasting and where that model continues to exist today, how technology has shaped policy, and how radio functions both outside of and within various physical and *psychographic* borders. Chapter 4, the first of my case studies, is an evaluation of the three community radio stations currently on air in London (*Resonance FM, Sound Radio*, and *Desi Radio)* first licensed in 2002 as part of a nation-wide pilot project called "Access Radio", the success of which led to the creation of a new tier of broadcasting. Each represents very different styles, content and approaches to community radio.

Chapter 5 takes us to Los Angeles and the case study of Pacifica Radio station KPFK. Pacifica Radio represents both progressive community radio at its grandest, and most broad-reaching, as well as a long-standing exercise in contentious leftwing politics and infighting whose colourful and fractious history has been well recounted by Lasar (2000) and Land (1999). KPFK itself is a community-run radio station but one which boasts the most powerful transmitter signal west of the Mississippi River, thus with the capacity to reach a large percentage of the population of Southern California. How community radio operates on such a large scale is of interest. Though there has been much written about the Pacifica Network of stations and programmes, most work focuses on its flagship station in Berkeley. This chapter examines the contemporary struggles within KPFK, specifically around community representation, racial diversity and organisational structure, while also considering the wider national campaign to save Pacifica.

In Los Angeles, few of the over one hundred languages spoken in the city are represented on the traditional radio dial. However, there exists a thriving and diverse number of low-powered foreign language AM stations in Los Angeles in addition to side-band radio stations – stations that require special receivers in order to be heard. This case study is, then, a look at Iranian radio in LA. In particular I examine side-band FM radio stations, one of whom broadcasts both

locally and via shortwave into Iran and helped organise demonstrations on the streets of Tehran on air from its Beverly Hills studio. I also look at *Radio Iran*, an AM commercial station broadcasting music and talk programming that served as a community resource when local Iranians were detained by federal agents and listeners spontaneously called in to the station to report their experiences. One of these stations sees itself as "political" while the other does not. They operate as commercial radio, community outreach forum, and transnational broadcaster blurring the lines of what we traditionally think of as community radio. In Chapter 7, the paradigm is flipped as I consider the case study of radio projects emerging out of a global alternative media network, *Indymedia*. Though there has been academic attention paid to *Indymedia* itself, here, I am interested in both local radio projects and their relationship to online networks and shared resources that exist to support the multiplicity of "amateur" web radio projects. The focus is on London and Los Angeles, though secondarily, I draw on examples in Seattle and regional organising across Europe. In short, these two chapters allow for closer examination of global and local media flows, each with differing points of reference.

I will then bring the topic back to broader questions of media and democracy and consider the link between movements for community radio and the broader media reform movements and sites of contestation over media power. In concluding, I bring together the findings from each of the four case studies and consider the possibilities of community radio as a participatory medium. I also return to questions of locality and representation and examine the connection between music programming and political content, considering if it is indeed organisational structure that represents the values rather then simply the programming, and how both relate to motivation and mission. Finally, I look at the media activism around the future of radio and spectrum allocation, and consider the impact of the Internet and digital mediums on community radio.

Chapter 2

Literature Review
*Mapping the Theoretical Landscape of Radio Studies,
Alternative Media and Community Broadcasting*

Introduction

In this review of academic literature, I will focus primarily on two bodies of
work, that of radio studies and alternative media, emphasising the texts most
relevant to my field of research. These are two areas that have been neglected
in the past, though both are enjoying much deserved attention of late. I will
also consider the context of community broadcasting, looking at both
theoretical and legislative criteria and categorisations, and in doing so,
examine the interconnectedness of community broadcasting with the field of
radio studies and alternative media. I will also place the city and the site of
localism in context with debates surrounding transnational media and shifts
away from the normativity of the nationstate as related to my research inquiry.
This is by no means an exhaustive review of these very broad and theoretically
rich contexts. Rather, I seek to position my inquiry inside each of these bodies
of work, thus focussing the literature review around the transitions and criteria
that best inform it. An historical approach to the field of community and local
radio development follows in Chapter 3.

Radio Studies

Radio is a dramatically under-studied media (Lewis 2000 and 2002, Hendy
2003). The study of radio itself remains far too often ghettoised, neglected or
simply left out of policy and cultural debates and when included, it is often
without adequate consideration of the distinct characteristics of how radio is
experienced. Radio has undergone profound changes both in terms of
reception and production, and with the future of digital radio and the
exponential growth of Internet radio, the traditional national framework of
radio has been opened up to new global and transnational producers and
audiences, and a blurring of the lines between them. For many, radio is

consumed as background noise while for others, radio is the primary means of receiving or transmitting news, information and entertainment.

David Hendy re-asserts the value in studying radio: '[i]t is a medium through which we can explore issues of policy, technology, identity, ideology and culture, just as fruitfully as by studying the other media - TV, cinema or the press' (Hendy 2003: 5). Yet radio is inadvertently given second-class status within media studies literature. Most historical accounts of the media leave behind the medium of radio in the post-war era as soon as the introduction of television takes hold. Further, 'because [radio] is a medium that can be used while doing other things – whether driving a car or reading a book – it is widely regarded as a secondary medium which implies it is somehow less important than other media or lacking in some way' (Fleming 2002: 2). It is a medium that is taken for granted both in studies and in our daily lives. Perhaps there is a connection between radio's lack of interest in the academic world and its previous lack of interest in the corporate and policy-making worlds. Until the mid-1990s, when policy changes brought about increased privatisation and consolidation of ownership in the United States and Britain, radio was not a highly profitable area for large media concerns and thus, radio was not placed inside important debates over the place of media in society and radical critiques of the concentration of media power. Radio has thus remained somewhat under the radar until recently.

Peter Lewis addresses other reasons why this might be the case, especially the historic lack of an established sector for community radio broadcasting in the UK until recently, as well as areas such as insufficient funding, inaccessibility to radio archives in the UK (especially as compared with the extensive research in the US around NBC radio due largely to the availability and extensiveness of their archives), and the demise of the BBC's weekly radio magazine *The Listener*. Significantly, Lewis also argues that the aural tradition itself is undervalued within academia: '[p]art of the reason for [the lack of radio studies] might be the strong literary tradition that, since the invention of printing and spread of literacy, has put a value on visual rather than aural

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skills' (Lewis 2002: 50).[4] Perhaps it is also the temporality and fleeting nature of radio in its reception. In a pre-digital era, before online archiving, downloadable audio, and the emergence of sites for shared content, while particular songs or news bulletins repeat, the actual programmes themselves usually do not.[5] Lewis further argues that 'the lack of a publicly shared history has policy consequences. The significant changes that have been taking place in both commercial radio and the BBC have been tracked by no academic studies that might have informed the debate' (ibid: 51). This is an important assertion of the value of scholarly studies outside academia, and exposes the consequences of the failure of media studies to adequately support the field of radio scholarship.

A brief history of radio studies, as Lewis describes, demonstrates that in the mid 1980s there were few theoretical pieces among media studies output dedicated to radio. He cites the creation of the Radio Studies Network in 1999 (which itself emerged out of the Radio Research Project in 1997) as a turning point within the Britain.[6] He further notes there was a field of radio studies in the 1930s and 40s, especially of early effects analysis stemming from Orson Welles' famous *War of the Worlds* broadcast and Herta Herzog's audience survey of "uses and gratifications" among soap opera listeners (2002: 49). Nevertheless, it is telling that media studies has neglected such a field of study owing to the continued popularity and significance of radio, especially within non-western countries, itself further evidence to the need to "de-westernise" media studies.[7]

Lewis does, however, assert that despite the lack of adequate radio studies in general, there exists a more extensive body of community radio history due to the association of community media with struggles for social change and subsequent attractiveness of the field to students (2002: 52). Lewis further states: '[f]or example, the origins of community radio, one might also say its

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[4] See also Lewis (2000).
[5] These sites will be explored in Chapter 7. One exception is stations like community radio station *Resonance FM*, that re-broadcasts a selection of programmes during the overnight hours.
[6] See Radio Studies Network (2005) for website link.

mythology, are rooted in a tacit acceptance of a political economy perspective: the assumption is that ownership by "the people" resulting in "the people's voice" is its own justification, and this has somehow excused analysis of the text' (ibid: 55). Lewis also argues that the role of the audience warrants increased prominence (ibid: 57).[8] He reminds us there has historically been a massive gap in the ways audiences use community radio because of lack of funding and resources into such research.

There also exists the need for a common approach to research around community radio (Scifo 2005). Such research would be of practical use for the sector as well as theoretically relevant to media and cultural studies. In the United States, the Prometheus Radio Project and Free Press have each embarked on missions to encourage academic research among students and faculty that could have direct consequence in the promotion of legislation to expand the sector as well as be of use to stations themselves. Similarly, in Britain, there is a growing movement to establish some common goals and methodologies for practical and theoretical purposes, efforts within the Radio Studies Network (RSN) to develop collaborative funding proposals for such research, collaborations between RSN members and the Community Media Association, and potential for further development within the International Radio Research Network (IREN).[9]

Radio the Medium

What must be avoided is an essentialising of the medium of radio. There can be no grand universal narratives about radio per se, as radio is a phenomenon with its own parameters, forms of address and modes of operation and organisation that simultaneously exists within larger media systems and forms of social, political, economic and cultural organising. In *Radio and the Global Age* (2000), Hendy offers a thorough assessment of contemporary radio

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[7] See Curran and Park, Eds (2000).
[8] See also Downing (2003) for discussion of the need for audience studies within alternative media.
[9] In the name of full disclosure, I am on the Steering Committee for the Network.

organisation addressing questions of industry, production, audience, and culture. He reiterates that one cannot attempt to create grand theories around radio, that the range is too huge and that it changes too quickly for us to "see it properly". Andrew Crisell, in *Understanding Radio* (1994), offers this basic criterion for how we can examine radio:

> [t]he first is to determine the distinctive characteristics of the radio medium. This is attempted by locating radio among other modes of communication, individual and collective, literary and visual, by examining the historical development of British radio institutions, and by developing a theory of the signs, codes and conventions by which the medium conveys its messages...The second purpose is to explore the significance of radio's characteristics for its users – the journalist, the advertiser, the dramatist and, not least, the listener – and to examine the potentialities of radio as a medium of information, culture and entertainment for both broadcasters and audience (1994: xv).

It is important to talk about radio as radio. Much of what is written about radio finds that at its best, it can be defined by its immediacy and intimacy. It is primarily a live medium. Even syndicated programmes are largely broadcast live from their place of origin. Intimacy may arise out of physical proximity or more likely, from the ways in which radio is consumed. Radio is often consumed as white noise, the need to fill an audible space with no particular programme in mind. At the same time, radio is as often consumed as if inviting a friend inside your space, the familiarity of a particular voice or song filling a void or providing comfort or companionship as an "undemanding friend" (Lewis 2002, Fleming 2002).[10] Radio is 'emotionally evocative and reassuring' (Tacchi 2000: 291). As the spaces in which we listen to radio change (from car stereos to iPods), the patterns of listening change as well (from live drive-time news and entertainment to on-demand audio and music). The regulation of radio is largely a project of nations, but the reception is increasingly transcending such borders and boundaries. As Barnard comments: '[r]adio's characteristic accessibility and intimacy - its presence in private or solitary moments, its subtle inclusion into parts of our lives that other media do not reach - give this "composite of opposites" a very particular and fascinating role to play in the life of each listener' (2000: 1). Douglas also

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[10] See also Andrea Hargrave's (2000) research on listening habits as cited in Fleming (2002).

reminds us of the importance in distinguishing between listening and hearing — what we are actively paying attention to and what we take in by virtue of our surroundings (1999: 27).

Radio Models

The task of organising radio stations into particular models is more useful when we move beyond technological or regulatory categories. Although such distinctions remain necessary from a policy perspective, alone, they do not convey the full context of what is going on. In *The Radio Handbook,* Fleming (2002) outlines the different forms of radio in the UK as digital, Internet, satellite and cable, hospital, pirate, community, and Restricted Service Licenses (RSLs).[11] She discusses commercial and public service broadcasting elsewhere. What inadvertently occurs with such categorisations is a mismatched methodology of conjoining forms that fails to distinguish between how audiences receive radio and the organisational or operating structure and mission. Curran and Seaton assert that 'broadcasting - the transmitting of programmes to be heard simultaneously by an indefinitely large number of people – is a social invention, not a technological one' (2003: 111). Radio is better served when organised by mission, or as Hendy puts it, their "motivation". 'Motivation in this sense means discerning the goals of the broadcasters at an institutional level, goals which may be broadly economic, political or cultural in character' (Hendy 2003: 14). Whether the motivation of the station operators is to turn a profit, serve the public, or serve more localised interests of those participating in its production is a more useful question since each of these motivations exists across each technology. Access and participation, for example, are a large part of what make community radio a more public model of broadcasting. 'What is important about citizen's media is not what these citizens do with them, but how participation in these media experiments affects citizens and their communities' (Rodriguez 2001: 160).

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[11] RSLs discussed at length in Chapter 3.

Hendy (2000) offers five models of radio: state, underground, community, public service, and commercial. Within these models lie various broadcast technologies and regulatory frameworks: AM/FM broadcasting, micro or low-powered broadcasting, digital, satellite & cable broadcasting, or Internet broadcasting – which could be a simulcast of an analogue station or streaming Internet-only radio. Commercial, public service and community radio can broadcast over multiple technologies, but what is more interesting is to consider their organisational mission, motivation and structure as distinguishable from each other. For example, a community radio organiser in Los Angeles comments that pirate stations operating as the lone project of individuals are less interesting to him than stations run on a collective model, and subsequently have more in common with licensed community radio than they do with other pirate broadcasters. Nor is strictly examining funding sources a sufficient way to distinguish models of radio. Community radio in the US and UK operate under very different funding structures. While British legislation allows community stations to derive a percentage of income from advertising, the American system does not. However, in both cases, it is the not-for-profit status that is at the heart of their being. Lewis and Booth examine public, commercial and community radio together and assert the push and pull between the systems:

> [t]hese three models are more than an analytical system of differences: politically and economically, [these three models] are engaged in mutual struggle. The logic of the commercial system is to swallow up new markets and extend its frontiers to compete with, even undermine the public service domain. The logic of public service is to defend national territories, industries and identities against such invasion. The logic of community radio is to defend human rights against the intrusions of both state and capital (1989: 10).

Further, as we will see with the case of Radio Iran, there are commercially run, for-profit stations that because of the nature of their programming and mission to provide resources to underserved ethnic minority communities, actual evoke the sensibility of being community-run though they are not.

Scannell (1996) also argues the significance of the social aspect of broadcasting institutions in his analysis of the BBC's move from radio to television as a shift not about a technology, but as the continuity of the institution and ethos of the BBC simply within a different medium. In the US, the same could be said of the system of private ownership that was well established at the time of the advent of television and continued in the new broadcast medium. Further, the trend in podcasting and downloadable audio on demand both blur these technological distinctions, and ask us to rethink the "liveliness" of radio in different ways. It is thus important not to remain mired in a technology-driven analysis, which is certainly a temptation given the rapid changes occurring in the industry, which in turn provide new methods of access and production for those outside the mainstream.

Theorising Alternative Media[12]

There are key texts that a review of academic literature around alternative media would not be complete without considering: Chris Atton's *Alternative Media* (2002) and *An Alternative Internet* (2004), John Downing's revised edition of *Radical Media* (2001b), and Clemencia Rodriguez' *Fissures in the Mediascape* (2001). Nick Couldry and James Curran's introduction in the edited collection *Contesting Media Power* (2004) and Kevin Howley's *Community Media: People, Places and Communication Technologies* (2005) also offer very useful analysis of key debates and texts. Each of these texts firmly assert the necessity of studying alternative media and offer both a theoretical context for doing so and are the focus of this section. However, what is most interesting in a review of this literature is the nuanced tensions and differences that emerge across various key typologies, demonstrating that the level of analysis has been raised far beyond a mere assertion of the need to study alternative, independent, radical and/or citizen's media, to one that places alternative media in the middle of key social tensions, struggles and conceptions of democracy, democratic process, representation and participation.

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[12] See Atton (2002) for thorough contextualisation of alternative media within the history of cultural studies literature.

Roger Silverstone asserts that such media 'have created new spaces for alternative voices that provide the focus both for specific community interests as well as for the contrary and the subversive' (quoted in Atton 2002: 76). Patricia Gibbs and James Hamilton, in their introduction to a special edition of the journal *Media History* devoted to alternative media, assert:

> [t]he topic of alternative media has never been as important as in these times of industry deregulation and the concomitant acceleration of media conglomeration. These conditions suggest to scholars the vital importance of the ongoing need for thoughtful and thorough investigations that are inventive in their use of materials and clearly informed by useful theoretical debates (2001).

In terms of framing and (re)framing the academic debates, there exists the need to move beyond the question of how to place alternative media within the pre-existing framework of media studies. Rather, it would be more useful to support development of new frameworks that include alternative, independent and community media alongside that of conventional media to reflect the extent to which the lines have been blurred around how people access news, information, cultural programming and production. Atton notes his surprise there has not been space made within the dominant media studies paradigms to properly consider alternatives, because there is clearly room for it (2002). Rodriguez points to a failure within cultural studies to properly consider media alternatives, citing Douglas Kellner:

> [t]he failure of cultural studies today to engage the issue of alternative media is more puzzling and less excusable since there are today a variety of venues for alternative film and video production, community radio, computer bulletin boards and discussion forums, and other forms of communications in which citizens and activists can readily intervene (Kellner quoted in Rodriguez 2001: 4).

A more holistic approach to media studies is necessary (Sammutt 2004).

Atton uses the term "alternative media" to mean 'a range of media projects, interventions and network that work against, or seek to develop different forms of, the dominant, expected (and broadly accepted) ways of "doing" media' (2004: ix). This is a usefully broad typology as it considers projects outside of a narrow definition of media, and allows space for consideration of the

'communitarianism' of open source and anti-copyright movements that are aligned with many alternative media projects. Atton (2002) asserts that a theory of alternative media must not be limited to political or "resistance media", but must include cultural forms such as zines and 'hybrid forms of electronic communication' (ibid), including media such as pirate radio stations. Atton goes back to Marx, the Gramscian model, and the Frankfurt School to find the space for inclusion of alternative media, in particular as a model of anti-capitalist production, "counter-hegemonic" projects, and a move back to small-scale media. Drawing on Raymond Williams (1963), Atton states:

> [t]he model presented here goes further than the textual, however, finding heterogeneity, experimentation and transformation in the principles of organisation, production and social relations within and across these media by considering the means of communication as socially and materially produced (Williams 1980). This approaches Raymond Williams' earlier notion of democratic communication, the origins of which are "genuinely multiple...(where) all sources have access to the common channels...(and where those involved are able) to communicate, to achieve...(a)ctive reception and living response" ([Williams 1963: 304] quoted in Atton 2002: 9).

Atton makes it clear that the language of alternative media must encompass all cultural forms of independent production. His typology of alternative and radical media is that which meets the following criteria (Atton 2002: 27):

1. Radical content, be it political or cultural

2. Strong aesthetic form

3. Employs 'reproductive innovations/adaptations' (ibid) / taking full advantage of the available and cutting-edge technology

4. Alternative means of distribution and anti-copyright ethos

5. Transformation of social roles and relations into collective organisations and de-professionalisation

6. Transformation of communications processes – 'horizontal linkages' (ibid).

This speaks to the dual nature of the role of alternative media – to provide content (cultural or political) that differs from that in the dominant media, to

offer examples of alternate modes of production that are more democratic and participatory, and to do so in a cutting-edge fashion. Citing Melucci, Atton also points out that new social movements themselves constitute forms of media and 'as sites of media cultures produced not simply by, but *through and within*, social movement actors' (Atton 2004:4). He also reminds us it is important to consider the historical relationship of this media to forms of resistance.

The political nature of alternative media is often irrespective of content and located in the mere act of producing. Perhaps it is the false presumption of an overly uniform criteria that keeps independent media on the outskirts of media studies – a presumption that "alternative media" is a fixed, defined category rather than the site of interesting theoretical and practical inquiries. There are, in fact, interesting debates surrounding the ways in which this phenomenon is best expressed. Downing, in his case for the concept of "radical media", emphasises the emergence of media from political and social movements. He is most interested in forms of media that are radical in content. At the same time, Downing rejects the notion of defining "mainstream" and "alternative" media practices in a way which creates rigid distinctions between them, arguing such binarism fails to account for areas of overlap.

Downing expresses concern with the term "alternative media", pointing out that '[a]lternative media is almost oxymoronic. Everything is, at some point, alternative to something else' (2001b: ix). Downing also takes a broad approach to what he considers radical media, including forms such as dance and graffiti, and defines "radical" or "citizen's" media as 'small-scale media of many technical and genre formats that have no allegiance to corporate, religious or governmental authority, but rather set out to suborn the status quo and propose defenses and alternatives to it' (2001a: 2-3). He further notes that radical media typically operate as an 'alternative public sphere' (ibid). Atton also addresses the ambiguities of the term *alternative media* and notes that the looseness of the term has led some to argue there cannot be a meaningful definition anymore. Though Atton offers a critique of the language of alternative media, he sums up his use of the term as follows:

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[a]s a blanket term, its strength lies in the fact that it can encompass far more then radical, or 'social change publishing' can; it can also include alternative lifestyle magazines, and extremely diverse range of zine publishing and small presses of poetry and fiction publishers. To deploy 'alternative' as an analytic term, however, might afford us little more specificity than saying 'non-mainstream.' Some commentators appear to confuse the two terms (Atton 2002: 9).

Couldry and Curran define alternative media as 'media production that challenges, at least implicitly, actual concentrations of media power, whatever form those concentrations may take in different locations' (2004: 7). Atton also argues that '[a]lternative media can be understood as those media produced outside the forces of market economics and the state' (2004: 1). Couldry and Curran state that, for their purposes, the language of alternative media is most useful:

> '"alternative media" remains the more flexible *comparative* term since it involves no judgements about the empowering effects of the media practices analyzed. What we bring together here may or may not be media practice that is politically radical or socially empowering; but in every case whether indirectly or directly, media power is part of what is at stake' (2003: 7).

It is important to address both the diversity of cultural forms of alternative media, and situate alternative media inside political economic questions, and see the role of alternative media as forms of production and distribution outside corporate and state structures as contestations to the sites of media power.

The Case for Citizens Media

Clemencia Rodriguez critiques the traditional theoretical context around alternative media. She recounts a profound experience of hers from the 1980s, when she produced a video documentary on grassroots organisations in a rural area the Colombian Andes. As she tells it, a group gathered around to view her raw footage, people never having seen themselves on camera, watching their own reflections and analysis of their lives and struggles. Rodriguez reflects at the start of her book:

[a]s I tried to conceptualise all these experiences, I found myself in a vacuum. I realised that the theoretical framework and concepts that we communication scholars have used to explore and understand alternative communication and media are in a different realm. Our theorising uses categories too narrow to encompass the lived experiences of those involved with alternative media (2001: 1).

She cites the origins of academics and media activists as seeing alternative media as a

hopeful option to counterbalance the unequal distribution of communication resources that came with the growth of big media corporations. This origin has located the debate within rigid categories of power and binary conceptions of domination and subordination that elude the fluidity and complexity of alternative media as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. It's like trying to capture the beauty of a dancer's movements with one photograph (Rodriguez 2001: 3-4).

Rodriguez, drawing on Jesús Martín-Barbero, positions herself as someone who is searching for a 'nocturnal map' to navigate and negotiate meaning in her research into community media. She states she seeks to 'discern how democratic communication happens in the real lives of real people' (2001: 83). She shares Castell's claim that 'what we need now are not trans-historical theories of society but rather theorized histories of social phenomenon' (ibid). It is in seeking a theoretical model for new ways of looking at "old things" that she arises at a shift in language towards "citizens media".

In arguing for a shift from the language of alternative media to citizens media, Rodriguez uses Chantal Mouffe's recasting of the concept of citizen and citizenship away from legal definitions centred on civic functions that leave out migrants and undocumented people, towards a form of identification, 'a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given' (2001: 18-19). She further cites Sheldon Wolin's assessment that: [citizenship] is about the capacity to generate power, for that is the only way that things get established in the world. And it is about the capacity to share in power, to corporate in it, for that is how institutions and practices are sustained' (2001: 250). Citizenship in this light is thus not about voting and protesting and a rights-based system, but about expressing citizenship in a multiplicity of

forms, such as a transformation of symbolic codes and traditional social relations and hierarchies (2001: 19-20).

Rodriguez relies on Mouffe's theory of radical democracy as a theoretical basis for abandoning the language of "alternative media" for "citizens media" because of its inherent binarism, stating such language 'predetermines the type of oppositional thinking that limits the potential of these media to their ability to resist the alienating powers of mainstream media. This approach blinds our understanding of all other instances of change and transformation brought about by these media (2001: 20). Rodriguez offers that citizens media

> implies first that a collectivity is *enacting* its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; second, that these media are contesting social codes, legitimized identities, and institutionalized social relations; and third, that these community practices are empowering the community involved, to the point where these transformations and changes are possible (ibid).

She adds: 'what is important about citizen's media is not what these citizens do with them, but how participation in these media experiments affect citizens and their communities' (ibid: 160).

It is the participatory nature and the accessibility to people, or citizens, that interests her and informs her definition. 'It is perhaps addressing radical questions of citizenship in the public sphere that alternative media are most powerful' (Atton 2004: 3). From a methodological standpoint, how she considers new forms of expressing the social impetus for collective broadcasting is important. In summary, Rodriguez argues:

> [c]itizens media are vital social phenomena. As such, I suggest that our attempts to understand them should be more dynamic and should be able to follow the subject of study in its historical movements, rather then remaining trapped in static formulas that freeze citizens media, blinding us from their mobility through time, space and the live texture of culture and power (2001: 165).

In recasting the debates around alternative media with that of citizenship, Rodriguez exposes interesting tensions around issues of identity and re-inserts the participants themselves in the linguistic dialogue.[13]

The Case for Autonomous Media

Among these conceptual frameworks is the question of how broadly one wishes to define alternative media. Downing expresses concern that the catchment of alternative media risks being so broad that it becomes meaningless. Langlois and Dubois (2005) use the concept of *autonomous media* to describe the practices they, like Downing, are most interested in – that of social movements and activist media producers. They see social movement actors uses of media creation as 'attempts to subvert the social order by reclaiming the means of communication' (2005: 9), arguing that what defines these projects as a particularised form of alternative media, 'is that they, first and foremost, undertake to amplify the voices of people and groups normally without access to the media' (ibid). For them, 'autonomous media therefore produce communication that is not one-way, from media-makers to media consumers, but instead involves a bilateral participation of people as producers and recipients of information' (ibid). Thus, an articulation of the primacy of radical production processes and access is at the heart of their interest, and is expressed in a way that connects some of the theoretical discrepancies as to how best conceptualise the breadth of "alternative media".

With regards to content, Langlois and Dubois see autonomous media as that which supports social movements - is 'part of the activist toolkit' (2005: 9). But in the positioning of social movement media as autonomous, the role of process is as important as the content itself: '[t]rue alternative discourses can only be fostered through a media organization that remains open, transparent, and non-hierarchical. For that reason, autonomous media move beyond the issues of content and into those of organization, participation, and empowerment' (ibid). This is an important positioning of alternative media

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[13] Questions of identity will be considered later in this chapter as related to community organising, and again in Chapter 8.

production as one of the key organising tools of activists – that these media makers are not ancillary participants in social movements, but are primary sites of social action and of critical use to the building of movements.

While much of their conception of autonomous media overlaps with the many understandings of alternative media, it is, nevertheless, a useful lens through which to consider alternative media practice that is more narrowly defined around both radical practice *and* radical content. The lens of autonomous media also provides us with a way to differentiate political activist-oriented alternative media practice without undervaluing alternative media that is not necessarily collectively constructed and/or politically motivated. This sensibility around autonomous media offers an interesting way to consider the concerns that Downing (2003) expresses regarding what he views as the meaninglessness of the broad usage of 'alternative media' when used solely in opposition to the mainstream. There is, of course, a risk that by inserting new linguistic frameworks such as 'autonomous media' into the debate, hairs are merely being split. However, the utility of distinguishing between autonomous media and alternative media seems a useful one. It is one that offers the space to consider this activist media as one of many forms of alternative media, while recognising that the qualities of radical content and collective production are traits not exclusive to autonomous media.

An Alternative Media Taxonomy?

What is most useful about Atton's (2002) typology of alternative media is that it firmly asserts the value of cultural production as an important form of alternative media – a necessary decentralising away from exclusive concentration on radical political content. On the other hand, there are some aspirational aspects to his criteria that are not always rooted in the actual practice of every media project that might be considered alternative in some sense. For example, there are many underground music zines that may be a project of a few close friends, producing cutting-edge content in an aesthetically creative format, but that is not intended to create any transformative social roles, short of individualised DiY production. There are

also politically radical productions that are not necessarily the most aesthetically pleasing. In short, the discrepancy that exists around criteria of how to define alternative media is one of how to balance the values of production processes and content along with the need to recognise the multiplicity of forms of alternative media. The interest in this debate for my purposes is the fact that there exists a reassertion of the value of structure and organisation in the context of alternative media practice, however it is best articulated.

In the end, each of these concepts remains self-defining terms. Practical usage and academic theorising is, of course, not always the same. In thinking through the criteria for each form of media, the following characteristics can be charted as thus:

Media Form	Participatory process?	Politically Radical?	Non-Mainstream?
Alternative	not necessarily	not necessarily	yes
Community	yes	not necessarily	not necessarily
Radical	not necessarily	yes	yes
Citizen	yes	not necessarily	yes
Autonomous	yes	yes	yes

It is this multiplicity – the idea that different processes result in many different forms of media, many of which might be overlapping – that helps clarify the different terminology, concepts and self-identifying forms of media practice, each of which in some way counter the dominance of private, state and public media ownership. Thus, what emerges could be seen as a kind of 'alternative media pluralism'. This pluralism has resulted in more dynamic media sectors as well as a useful way to engage in productive debate about the role of 'outsiders' to the system.

What is most interesting in this potential linguistic sand trap, is that there is a real dynamic quality to the value and virtues of alternative media, and that it is a platform from which to build on theoretically as we think through the different pushes against the pulls of media practice and scholarship. It is also a testament to the increasing impact of alternative media that there exists such lively discourse around these concepts. Despite my interest in the more specific forms of alternative media such as 'citizen's media', 'radical media' and 'autonomous media', for the purposes of this research, I go back to Curran and Couldy's (2004) broad articulation of alternative media as sites where media power and concentration are contested through independent media production. By virtue of their creation and emergence outside the mainstream – no matter how far outside – such media offer challenges to mainstream media power and encourage participation in the creation of this media.

Community Radio as Alternative Media

Atton asserts that '[t]aken together, community/micro-radio and pirate radio best demonstrate the notions of alternative media' (Atton 2004: 115). He goes on to link the ethos of such radio production with that of alternative media:

> [t]hey are based on the production and dissemination of material for specific communities (whether geographic or communities of interest, or both) that is located and created within those communities. In what we may now consider as a classic formulation of alternative media, they involve amateur, activist producers whose positioning within the communities prompts the creation of content that seeks to explore issues and perspectives (cultural, political, social) that are of direct relevance to those communities...Arguably, they are not about consumption at all; instead they are about participation, development, and mobilisation (Atton 2004: 116).

Community broadcasting is one form of alternative media, and shares many of the same fundamental attributes and motivation. However, an alternative media project is not necessarily a community-organised undertaking. Further, community radio is itself both a cultural phenomenon and a sector of broadcasting regulated by national governments. Thus, it is important to consider its distinctive characteristics and contexts, as well as problematise the

normativity of the rubric of "community". In terms of the case studies in this research, while each station very much sees themselves as an alternative to mainstream fare, the nature of the radio as a medium precludes a more communitarian motivation and structure. In community media projects, the line between producer and recipient is blurred by design and the listener reinstated as a "subject-participant" (Lewis and Booth 1989).

An interesting example of the intersection between community media and alternative media can be seen at present in Venezuela.[14] One response of the Chavez government in addressing the aggressive partisanship of the privately owned media in his country has been to offer radio licences to community groups in hopes of decentralising access to the airwaves and ensuring that alternatives to private media exist. In doing so, the Chavez government has created two different tiers of broadcasting and prioritized each differently in terms of their commitment to community service. For Venezuelan media policy, the term "alternative radio" is used to describe groups that operate stations representing musical styles, or political groupings, or so-called communities of interest. "Community radio", on the other hand, refers to stations that are required to operate in conjunction with established, local grassroots organisations like neighbourhood assemblies whose doors must remain open to community members – "geographic communities".

In Venezuela, community radio receives preferential legislative treatment over alternative radio because the community stations have a legal obligation for broad neighbourhood representation. In their license applications, community stations must describe specific social problems impacting their area and outline how they will use their portion of the airwaves to help address them. What is telling in the example of Venezuelan policy is that while both alternative and community media are intended to be independent of incumbent media interests, there is a more broadly defined role for alternative radio than that of community radio. Though community radio stations may represent diverse perspectives and interest, they are required to fulfil much more narrowly defined objective in return for legislative preference because of the local role

the stations play, thus highlighting the grassroots and participatory aspect that continues to emerge as a defining characteristic of community radio.

Theoretical and Legislative Concepts of Community Radio

There is no one definition of community radio, though a review of the literature conveys certain common values and themes, themselves reflective of how many practitioners describe the phenomenon as well. Community broadcasting is generally understood to include both geographic communities and communities of interest.[15] Hendy (2003: 16) describes the characteristics of community radio as follows:

- Small scale productions, especially in comparison to other local, mainstream radio, that 'are seen to be "closer" to its listening community than other forms of radio';

- Participatory organisations that are staffed primarily by volunteers 'from the listening community' as opposed to full-time professionals; and

- 'Run for the benefit of the local community rather than specifically to make a profit for shareholders'.

Community radio is a participatory medium: '[t]he essence of community radio lies in participation' (Partridge 1982: 2), or 'the defining characteristic of a community radio station is the participatory nature of the relationship between it and the community' (Girard 2001: 9). It is a source of local, neighbourhood-based news and information. It is media without intermediaries, a counterbalance to the world of corporatism. It is radio run for its own sake, for the benefit of the community, rather then for the profit of station owners. Kevin Howley positions community media as sites of 'critical interventions' for local groups to create media systems that are relevant to their everyday lives (2005: 2). He describes community media as 'grassroots or locally oriented media across initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the

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[14] Detail of Venezuela policy from Tridish 2006.
[15] This dichotomy will be explored in Chapter 4.

principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity' (ibid). Peter Lewis offers an expansive take on community radio that privileges the social role: '[c]ommunity radio is as much a form of community development as it is a form of broadcasting' (Lewis 2002: 58).

In terms of social function, Girard describes community radio as 'a type of radio made to serve people; radio that encourages expression and participation and that values local culture. Its purpose is to give a voice to those without voices, the marginalised groups and communities far from large urban centers, where the population is too small to attract commercial or large –scale state radio' (Girard quoted in Jankowski et al 1992: ix). He goes on to explain that community radio 'aims not only to participate in the life of the community, but also to allow the community to participate in the life of the station. This participation can take place at the level of ownership, programming, management, direction and financing' (ibid: 7).

Girard (2001) defines community media as that which meets the following criteria:

- *Objectives* – to provide news and information relevant to the needs of the community members, to engage these members in public communication via the community medium; to "empower" the politically disenfranchised;

- *Ownership and control* – often shared by community residents, local government, and community-based organizations;

- *Content* – locally oriented and produced;

- *Media production* - involving non-professionals and volunteers;

- *Distribution* - via the ether, cable television infrastructure, or other electronic networks;

- *Audience* – predominantly located within a relatively small, clearly defined geographic region, although some community networks attract large and physically dispersed audience;

- *Financing* – essentially non-commercial, although the overall budget may involve corporate sponsorship, advertising and government subsidies.

Girard's assessment addresses key practical elements of community radio. It is also interesting that the distinction between alternative media and community media here hinges on the primacy of the participatory practice and the more narrowly defined scale of audience in community-based projects. However, what some of the practical definitions of community media fail to do is properly situate community media as a site through which corporate, state and public media power is contested, i.e., to position community media as a form of alternative media.

There also exist country-specific definitions that have legislative policy imperatives behind them. While radio services that fall under the institutional framework of community broadcasting in Canada, for example, include community, campus, native and ethnic radio, the legal definition of community radio as per the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission is outlined in primarily programmatic terms:

> [a] community radio station is owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organisation, the structure of which provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large. Programming should reflect the diversity of the market that the station is licensed to serve (Tacchi and Price-Davies 2001: 23).

A similar definition is used by the Independent Radio and Television Commission in Ireland:

> [a] community radio station is characterised by its ownership and programming and the community it is authorised to serve. It is owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organisation whose structure provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large. Its programming should be based on community access and should reflect the special interests and needs of the listenership it is licensed to serve (Tacchi and Price-Davies 2001: 41).

I could include here a number of other legal definitions but as to be expected, a similar trend emerges among regulators in South Africa, Holland and France,

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the six countries studied under Tacchi and Price-Davies' (2001) research conducted at the behest of the Community Media Association (CMA). It is worth noting that, while Ireland's definition has greater emphasis on access, all address in some way the participatory nature, non-profit status, ownership and management reflective of the community, and community-based and community-relevant programming are key tenants of each.

In terms of how the concept of community media is expressed in different sectors, Jankowski et al (1992) highlight important linguistic distinctions used to describe this phenomenon, each conveying a sense of what the sector serves as an alternative to in its respective wider broadcast environment. Whereas the US, UK, Canada and Australia use the term "community radio", in Latin America, such stations are called "popular" or "educational radio". In Africa, the same kinds of stations are often known as "rural" or "bush radio". Prehn (1992) also points out that the language of "community media" is not uniform in the European context. By comparison, whereas Spain emphasises *radio municipals* or "municipal radio", in the Netherlands the language is *locale omroep*, or "local broadcasting"; in Denmark it is *naerradio* or "close radio", and in France, *radio libres* or "free radio" (ibid: 256).

There also exist definitions of community media concomitant with international organisations. UNESCO defines community radio as stations that are 'operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community'; and that '[w]hat distinguishes community radio from other media is the high level of people's participation' (UNESCO 2002). The characteristics of community radio laid out by UNESCO are more specific than what Girard outlines, and include: serves a recognisable community; encourages participatory democracy; offers opportunity for programme initiation; uses technology appropriate to the economic capacity of the people being served; is motivated by community well being; and improves and promotes problem solving (ibid). Further, Van Ejik (1992) sites the values espoused in the European Convention on Human Rights, and others site the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948), both of which seek to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression.

From a practitioners perspective, the World Association of Community Radio (AMARC), in their attempt to define community radio, offer a diversity of responses from member stations, rather then any broad typology. Following is a selection from their website to convey a sense of this spirit:

> When radio fosters the participation of citizens and defends their interests; when it reflects the tastes of the majority and makes good humour and hope its main purpose; when it truly informs; when it helps resolve the thousand and one problems of daily life; when all ideas are debated in its programs and all opinions are respected; when cultural diversity is stimulated over commercial homogeneity; when women are main players in communication and not simply a pretty voice or a publicity gimmick; when no type of dictatorship is tolerated, not even the musical dictatorship of the big recording studios; when everyone's words fly without discrimination or censorship, that is community radio...The purpose - whence the name - is to build community life (*"Manual urgente para Radialistas Apasionados"*, José Ignacio Lòpez Vigil, 1997).

> It should be made clear that community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself, i.e. owning and controlling its own means of communication ("What is Community Radio? A resource guide", AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa,1998).

> Community and civic radio incorporates new languages, new formats, other sounds, types of music, voices. It brings other ways of talking, new relationships with listeners, ways of asking and answering questions, ways of making demands and pressuring the authorities (*"Gestiòn de la radio comunitaria y ciudadana"*, Claudia Villamayor y Ernesto Lamas, AMARC y Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1998).

Further, a brief survey of a few of the responses offered by practitioners interviewed for this project when asked how they define community radio is as follows:

> [Community radio] is accessible to local people. You don't have to be from a particular background or education to fit in. It is, if you like, a mirror of the local neighbourhood (Tim Hamilton [2005], Deptford Community Radio).

> [Community radio] is a focal point for communities to break down social barriers and empower people (Shane Carey [2004], Eclectic Productions / Radio Peckham).

> [Community radio] is a place where people can come and contribute to. It's not just the output, it's the process of creating that output and how that

benefits communities. And I think that's political – it's just the old-fashioned access or control over the means of production (Rosie Parklyn [2004], Radio Wano / Riverside Radio / Life FM).

Thus, there are both regulatory definitions and broader, theoretical understandings. Interestingly, there is not a tremendous amount of difference between them in terms of key values represented. Although there are working definitions of community media from a practical and theoretical perspective that are largely identifiable and agreed upon in different contexts, the notion of *community* itself remains a largely contested one. As Lewis states:

> [w]hatever sociological baggage "community" brings in its train, its meaning when associated as a prefix with media or radio is determined by a set of political and bureaucratic definitions that place the resultant medium in an oppositional or at least contrasting position in relation to mainstream media. This guarantees it a position in the margins where life is hard, funding is precarious, and keeping the radio station on air and supplied with programming is the over-riding concern (2001: 52).

This speaks to the heart of the complexity of bringing together theoretical constructs and everyday practice.

Radio Communities?

Hendy asks:

> [d]oes radio connect us with wider 'imagined' communities in a way that somehow frees us from the geography of where we live, or does it take away the 'shared experiences' once regarded as a central feature of broadcasting and that once seemed to bring us together? Does radio in the global age give us a larger window on the world, or expose us dreadfully to the homogenised and banal output of a few multi-national media chains and record companies? Is radio as a whole defined by these conflicts, or are we talking of different kinds of radio? We may not be able to answer all of these questions but asking them is start (2003: 7).

Hendy goes on to discuss the role of radio within popular culture as a question of media and democracy; the role of radio as a medium of information and discussion; how radio shapes trends in popular music; and radio's role in the project of community building. He further asks whether or not radio reinforces cultural differences or erodes them. It is this albatross of the language of

community – for both the necessary and unhelpful ways it is used – that remains a complex narrative intertwining notions of cultural identity, the project of identification, and the logic of spatial boundaries. It is difficult not to default to the notion of radio audiences as communities, but this is a slippery slope that can lead to an essentialising of the nature of listeners.

Hollander and Stappers position the term "community communication" as contradictory to "mass media", as a way to describe 'small scale forms of public communication, i.e. public communication within a neighbourhood, a village, a town or suburb' (1992: 19) that may have no desire to reach a mass audience, but nevertheless are of value to group of people with some common interest and/or intersection. They further assert that, as members of the same community, producers and recipients have shared interests in the double meaning of the word "community" specifically because they share a common background (ibid). It is the presumption of shared values that is cause for concern regarding the normativity of "community".[16]

Mass media play a fundamental role in the shaping of national cultures and identities (Morley and Robins 1995: 181). In unpacking the concept of community around the project of community-building on the European level, Morley and Robins point out that while community is about social integration, coherence and cohesion within a group of people, it remains a contested space, owing to tensions between communities from above and below, particularised and localised conceptions of community, and 'a sense of community created from the inside, with its more ethical and human relations, and the more abstract and transcendent sense of community associated with system integration across the extended territory of modern societies' (ibid: 182). Within urban regeneration fields, the project of community building is used as a means by which to invoke a sense of agency whereby the community shifts from being the recipient of services to an actor responsible for its own well-being (Koutrulikou 2005).

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[16] This tension will be explored, in particular, in Chapter 6 through the case study of commercial Iranian radio as a means through which traditional concepts of community radio are challenged.

Perhaps what is often spoken as community membership is instead a form of self-identification. Touraine fears we are headed for identity "islandisation" - a fragmentation of communities of difference that shut down possible avenues of communication between groups, and that 'our new battles will be battles for diversity rather than unity, for freedom rather than participation' (Touraine 2000: 304). He suggests that we must lose the category of identity all together: '[w]hen we are together, we have almost nothing in common, and when we do share beliefs and a history, we reject those who are different from us...We can live together only if we loose our identity' (ibid: 3). Stuart Hall asks us to think beyond fixed notions of identity and instead think in terms of fluid "modes of identification" (Hall 2003).

Raymond Williams (1996) points out that historically, "community" has always been used to connote something positive. In reflecting on concerns within cultural studies regarding the historic focus on community and the normativity of the project of community building, Morley suggests 'rather than abandon the idea of community altogether, what we need to do is to abandon the reification of any particular idea of it' 2000: 234). It can also be said that 'anti-essentialist arguments attacking the false construction of "culture" or "community" fail to recognise the importance for participants...of an imaginative belief in the reality of such achieved solidarities' (Werbner 1996 quoted in Morley 2000: 237).

In terms of radio, mainstream stations often try to evoke the feeling of belonging to a community, of "being one of us", through marketing schemes and "lifestyle-oriented" promotions both on air and in the proverbial street. Radio stations, unlike television or other broadcast mediums, in fact actively promote themselves in public and try to break down the invisible barrier between listener and producer by bringing the station "to the people". The cynic will note that these are primarily advertiser-driven events as "added value" for commercial spots purchased, though they sometimes take the form of stations associating themselves with a particular concert or event, further reinforcing the stations own identity to the listener. It is necessary, then, to

question the empowerment implicit in how radio often seeks to build a sense of community.

It is useful to consider whether or not listeners constitute audiences or publics (Dayan 2001). Though he is speaking of television, the discussion can, nevertheless, be extrapolated into radio. Dayan speaks of the 'collective exercise' we take part in even if we are watching (listening) alone. 'One cannot be a spectator without reference to a public' (Dayan 2001: 744). He then asks:

> [b]ut beyond the subjective experience that links watching television (listening to the radio) to the imaginary community of those who are also believed to be watching, how do we understand the notion of television (radio) publics? (ibid)

and

> [t]he problem of the mass media is precisely that of determining whether they attract merely invisible listeners and viewers whose obscure activities require elucidation. Do the mass media have only audiences and are their 'publics' little more than artificial constructions put together by sociologists and marketing researchers? (ibid: 745)

Dayan notes that *the public* is always used as a favourable form of audience, while *audience* itself tends to engender negative connotations for its typically commercial usage. Are social networks creations of ones own self-prescribed affiliations or are there publics or communities we are inadvertently a part of by virtue of our actions or listening habits? Dayan seems to rely on an active/passive listener model in adding that the broadcast public need not be an 'amorphous mass' (2001: 745) but that 'it is possible for such a public to be proactive, self-aware, now dismissive of other publics, now defensive under their gaze. This public is not condemned to silence' (ibid). For community radio, the notion of an imagined collectivity is one that can be challenged, though possibly not overcome.

Is Radio Itself an Alternative?

> There is, then, a vigorous tradition of radio as an "alternative" medium of expression. What counts, of course, is whether or not these channels of communication are always entirely convincing examples of grassroots democracy rather then covert political action, and whether they even achieve their aim of a more widely drawn and more participatory public sphere of debate. The evidence is rather mixed (Hendy 2003: 198).

Hendy (2003) goes back to Hochheimer (1993) in addressing three issues regarding control and power that can disrupt the otherwise good-intentions of practitioners, which are as follows (2003: 199):

1. The lack of an established sense of 'who is serving whom'. While it is easy for a station in a small, homogenous area to have a role in the community, those in large, culturally diverse areas 'make it difficult to identify and serve all sections of the community fairly (begging the question): which are the legitimate voices to be heard and how much gatekeeping does there need to be?'

2. The natural process in volunteer projects for a tyranny of the minority to take over. There are always varying levels of involvement and commitment among individuals in volunteer projects, and those with less time involved 'can become marginalised'.[17]

3. The process of sorting out organisational matters often over-takes and exhausts the actual process of producing radio, including 'emotional, economic, and cultural restraints on the collective enterprise' (ibid).

These are not atypical obstacles experienced by those involved in voluntary projects of all sorts. Hendy goes on to state that as a result, 'it comes as no surprise that the story of many community-led, participatory or "alternative" radio stations is the story of steady professionalisation – and with it a real or perceived loss of legitimacy [among both participants and listeners] (2003: 205).[18] He offers that 'participatory radio – whether of the open community-kind or the more clandestine-kind – is very often not quite as "alternative" as it might first appear' (ibid). However, if the definition of alternative is one more loosely drawn around a means of subverting traditional media power, such a distinction is less necessary. Hendy concludes by offering that the phenomenon

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[17] See Jo Freeman (1972), "Tyranny of Structurelessness', and work on Indymedia as cited in Chapter 7.
[18] The question of professionalism will be returned to in the case studies, Chapter 4-7, and is considered in an historic context in Chapter 3.

does have some cultural impact inside its sphere of influence, and that 'radio, of course, does not have to be "participatory" in order to claim its democratic credentials' (2003: 205). This speaks to the need to conceptualise radio models by their motivation.

Another issue is that in mainstream radio, the participatory practice of radio often translates simply to call-in shows. Although this mode opens up the space of broadcasting beyond the announcer's booth, it remains a limited and mediated forum for real participation. Further, if we take the most broad definition of community radio as simply small-scale productions with non-profit status that rely primarily on volunteer support, it follows that the content of such stations is not always progressive, politically radical, or political at all. In *Waves of Rancor: Tuning in the Radical Right*, Hilliard and Keith (1999) detail radical right wing radio in the US, some of which matches this criteria. Their existence shares a common ideology with other independent stations that typically come to mind, which is the desire to fill an apparent gap in the market, the desire to produce radio programming, and more often then not, the desire to make a statement (spoken or unspoken) in support of freedom of the airwaves. A participatory ethos, as Atton (2002) describes, while a goal and operating principle of many independent stations, cannot be a criteria in and of itself. In his study of alternative media and the Internet, Atton argues that many of the same issues and uses of the media as a means of contesting the sites of media power exist within right wing media as they do in left or anarchist media, and that its exclusion from analysis is not based on solid methodological grounds. As will be explored in the next chapter, the movement for low power radio in the states is strong, in part, because support exists across the political spectrum.

Radio and the Everyday

Scannell (1996) speaks of the "temporality of broadcasting", the power broadcasting has to set our clocks and mark the passage of time on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. He asks of dominant media with respect to dailiness:

[i]s there a particular meaningfulness to be found in the activities of radio and television? Is there a specific care structure that is manifest in each and every programme and in the totality of output? Is there an organising principle that can account for the parts and the whole – that indeed produces a sense of the whole and the parts? (1996: 148).

His answer is that dailiness is the one unifying structure. However, dailiness is not assured in community media productions, or even regularity. It could also be argued that there exists a vitality in the unknown, the irregular, the "de-professionalised", even if it is the result of a lack of resources and not some over-arching dogma. This is an issue that will emerge throughout the case studies as different models of scheduling and programming structure are considered.

Scannell, however, puts forth a remarkably conservative view of "quality" as he defines quality by a mark of "professionalism". Together, they are then 'the defining characteristic of anything well-done. A well-done thing is pleasing because what it effortlessly gives off about itself (without ever drawing attention to its efforts) is precisely that care that has gone into it – that it is replete with human thought and effort down to the smallest detail – and that it honours those who made it and for whom it is made' (Scannell 1996: 146). However, alternative media projects ask us to rethink what "professionalism" is. To say a project is de-professionalised does not translate to poorly done or low quality, rather, it refers to an embracing of an alternative means of production - the fact there might be another mode of presentation emerging from unestablished and unfamiliar communicative ethos. De-professionalism is an important defining characteristic of alternative media (Atton 2002). Hendy goes on to assert that inevitably, independent radio projects lead towards a professionalisation. What is at issue, it seems, is differing notions of professionalism. For Hendy and Atton, professionalism implies a kind of organising principle involving power and hierarchy. Scannell, however, relates professionalism with more of an aesthetic quality. This is a distinction not lost on the producers of independent media who may struggle internally with maintaining open access and an anti-authoritarian ethos, while at the same, strive to produce higher quality programming. It is, in fact, an aesthetic

notion of professionalism and quality that practitioners seek to work against. This is an issue that will re-emerge in the case studies.

There are other aspects of Scannell's framework that raise problems. Morley offers a critique of elements of Scannell's work regarding broadcastings' *sociability*, questioning his exclusive focus on the inculcation of sociability through broadcasting. As Morley points out, Scannell is arguing against understanding broadcasting as any

> ...form of social control...cultural standardisation or ideological
> misrepresentation...(but) as a public good that has unobtrusively
> contributed to the democratisation of everyday life most notably through its
> promotion of a 'communicative ethos' of more inclusive and extensive
> forms of sociability among its audience (Scannell quoted in Morley 2000:
> 110).

As Morley asserts, '[s]ociability is simply not the indivisible Good which Scannell assumes it to be' (Morley 2000: 111). Through the very essence of format genres and familiar signals, broadcast schedules are constructed around frameworks of inclusion and exclusion. 'Only a programme constructed within the terms of some form of cultural Esperanto could hope to appeal equally to all, without favour or division' (ibid). It is this notion of an equilateral space of broadcasting with the aim of unifying the mass public that must be challenged, especially if we are to make room within mainstream frameworks for the inclusion of alternative and community radio, media that is not necessarily constructed for a mass audience. While such ideals may invoke the mandate of John Reith's BBC, they fail to capture the complexity of our current media systems.

For alternative and community media projects, perhaps the most salient feature of Scannell's conceptualisation is around the question of authenticity. The legitimisation or authenticity of voice is paramount in the relationship between audience and producer. 'We no longer ask 'is it beautiful' but 'is it true'?' (Scannell 1996: 23). Here Scannell links the question of ordinariness and aesthetics to that of authenticity. He notes this shift involves moving from the *aesthetic* to that of the *moral*. Alternative media aspire to greater claims at

being closer to a more truthful or authentic representation, regardless of whether or not content is cultural or political, or "beautiful". Those who question the message will undoubtedly question its truthfulness, even if presented with aesthetically pleasing and professional graphics and interfaces, though of course, presentation does matter. This question of authenticity will be returned to explicitly in Chapter 8 and considered within the case studies.

Identity and Communities

Martín-Barbero asserts the resurgence of identity politics being experienced at present (2002). His articulation on why this is occurring is situated within the Latin American situation and offers a useful analysis in the Anglo-American context at a time when others eschew the category or dismiss it altogether. He re-politicises the project of multi-culturalism as the result of people's need to exercise control over their social and cultural environments in an increasingly globalised world (2002: 222).

> [p]erhaps the most central line of debate is that which - opposing one extreme to another – considers the emergence of identity fundamentalisms as the form in which collective subjects react to the threat which befalls them due to a globalization interested more kin 'basic instincts' – impulses of power and strategic calculations – than in identities. This is a globalisation that aspires to dissolve society as a community of meanings, replacing it with a world compromising markets, networks and flows of information. The form in which individuals and groups situated in peripheral nations feels this pressure is to be sought in the disconnection which more and more openly translates into social and cultural exclusion, into the majority's ever-decreasing standards of living, into the breaking of the social contract between work, capital and the state, and into the destruction of the solidarity that once made social security possible (Martín-Barbero 2002: 222).

Martín-Barbero returns to Castell's (1998) formulation of the network society and construction of identity as a simultaneous fury of resistance and quest for meaning (2002). The network society is thus not just about technology but of 'the systematic disjunction of the global and the local brought about by the fracturing of their respective temporal frameworks of experience and power' (2002: 222). This is not to take a deterministic view of globalisation that fails to account for the means by which it offers challenges to the system and forms

of "globalisation from below", as Robins warns us against (2001). Rather, with regards to community broadcasting, it helps situate the value and need for collective identity formation as an assertion of local identity within the global context.

Martín-Barbero also reasserts the often unfashionable notion that identity politics is in practice a form of resistance against social, cultural and political exclusion as well as a space of self-recognition and of memory, solidarity, history and narrative (2002: 223). In this influential essay, he also goes back to Beck (1998), Gidden (1995), Bauman (1991), Habermas (1975, 1989) and Postman (1994) with regards to the crisis of legitimisation of social systems *vis a vis* the project of modernity. He concludes that social movements offer forms of resistance based in identity politics rather then forms of governance. And asserts that this schism results in new identity formulations (Hall 1999), even if bound by an 'imaginary unity' (Martín-Barbero 2002).

The question then is what binds people together in this so-called imaginary unity? The conceptualisation may be fluid, created, self-identified, but the articulation has very real output; the creation of community radio stations being one such outgrowth. Martín-Barbero also cites Mouffe (1996) on new ways of thinking about identity that 'affirms the divided, decentred nature of the subject while at the same time refusing to accept an infinitely fluid and malleable conception of identity' (2002: 223).

Local identity is exploited in the marketplace for "local good" in the capitalist formation of globalisation. 'Local identity is thus compelled to transform itself into a marketable representation of difference' (2002: 226). In community media, the local speaks for itself, perhaps similar to how Spivak (1988) conceptualises the subaltern. Only in this instance, the previously voiceless may be a political or ethnic group, or it may be Joe or Jane on the street who have something unmediated to say about their neighbourhood or their knowledge of Ugandan music even if they have no personal connection with Uganda other then sheer interest. For the plurality of cultures to be accounted

for, the diversity of identities must be recounted, or narrated (2002: 228). Martín-Barbero recalls Bhabha (1994) in stating that because there is such a relationship between narration and identity, there can be no cultural identity that is not recounted (ibid). As Martín-Barbero argues, 'the national context is not absent from the site of collective memory as it is the place where history is mediated; however, this context must be conceived differently from nationalism' (ibid). Thus, as he argues, culture flowing in both directions, re-establishing the meaning of the word "frontiers," is a more useful framework (ibid).

Radio and the City

Radio is situated as a locally rooted medium. What happens, then, to radio when it is taken out of its local setting and broadcast and received in global or transnational environments? A key problem with setting the debate up as such is that it ignores radio history. Early pirate broadcasts were transnational, and contemporary national and international syndicated programmes and simulcasts, all speak to radio's mobility and flexibility as a medium. But increasingly, radio is moving further and further away from its local origins. Digital radio, internet radio, and in the US, especially in small to medium markets, the increase in syndicated programmes, simulcast stations complete with fake liners suggesting there is an actual live DJ in your town, all speak to a delocalisation of production and content. Locality suggested not only a closer, perceived or real, relationship between audience and producer, but the greater the likelihood that issues centred around your neighbourhood and that callers could actually get on air – the "democratic" aspect of radio. Hendy places the question this way:

> [w]hile being the local medium *par excellance*, radio is also able to reach across large spaces, potentially threatening place – specific cultures with its homogenised content, potentially forging new delocalised communities of interest; it has a history in which nation states often led the way in establishing services, but its oral code of communication allows it to tie itself to communities of language which ignore official borders; it betrays a commercial imperative to reach large, high-spending audiences, but it also has a cost structure which creates at least the possibility of a community

station surviving on the tiniest of audiences....It is , in short, the most adaptable of media in "finding its audiences" (2003: 215).

Not only does community radio offer a distinct lens through which to observe this, but in reversing the order through which media is usually examined, an urban perspective offers a useful way to explore how radio remains connected to its place of origin. How the global and the local are interconnected and feed off each other is certainly another aspect that must be addressed, along with further exploration of how notions of community inform ideas about locality and space. An urban approach helps bridge that theoretical and practical gap, and serves as a useful way to think outside the national perspective. Robins is 'concerned, then, with the limitations (which are both intellectual and imaginative) of the national vision - it is a way of thinking that tends to consider cultural complexity in terms of disorder and loss of coherence' (Robins 2001: 77). He goes on to site the Parekh Report entitled *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain* (2000), suggesting that 'it actually takes as its starting point what it regards as the problem of (imagined) singularity and homogeneity - the shared cultural meanings, the common national story, (that) weld a nation of individuals into a social unity' (Robins 2001: 84). He further states what the report 'then recognises is that contemporary global transformations are making this diversity both more apparent and more unmanageable' (ibid).

Robins is speaking of the extent to which a national framework should be avoided for it does not allow space for the 'disordering transformations associated with the process of globalisation' (ibid) and is largely constructed arbitrarily. Hendy speaks of bypassing the nation state in this way: '[t]his "desegregation" of locality and identity also points the way to a restructuring of radio audiences in which listeners are not defined geographically, tied en masse to one particular location, but in communities of interest linked around the globe by the technology which casts wide to get its catch' (Hendy 2003: 64-65). Though he slips into the unresolved debates surrounding otherwise imagined "radio communities", he nevertheless concludes that despite this rhetoric, radio speaks more of individuals then of "global scales" and "mass audiences". Be it niche audiences or particularistic formats, independent radio

and many Internet stations, increasingly target and speak to smaller and smaller groups of people, while at the same time, through transnational means of delivery, smaller communities are being reached in more places thus resulting in an aggregate of larger extended audiences.

'Space is the expression of society. Since our societies are undergoing structural transformation, it is a reasonable hypothesis to suggest that new spatial forms and processes are currently emerging' (Castells 1996: 410). While the nation state is the primary site of broadcast regulation and policy, and the subject of Chapter 3, it can – and should – be argued that radio must, at the same time, be observed through a de-nationalised perspective, as the boundaries are beginning to cross over more and more frequently, something most pronounced, and central to engaging, within the phenomenon of independent radio. As a mode of entry into the fray, the city can, then, function as a useful and engaging "cognitive model" and site for examining this phenomenon in large part because of the extent to which diversity of ethnicities and cultures and languages are present.

Conclusion

A few key tensions have emerged among the literature explored. There are both differing linguistic and conceptual frameworks that are at times overlapping and used interchangeably, though interesting distinctions lay beneath. The broadest concept is that of alternative media, a form of media that can embody both politically radical and culturally innovative content. However, though production processes that are participatory, non-hierarchical, and involve creative uses of technology or structure are desirable goals of many alternative media projects, the fact that they are values attributed to alternative media practice, does not necessarily mean they are the reality. Many projects with radical content are not collective endeavours, but instead, the output of one or two individuals, or organised using a traditional editorial structure. On the other hand, there are large-scale satellite television news channels such as *Al Jazeera* and *TeleSur* that have been considered forms of

alternative media on a global scale that hardly fit Atton's (2002) typology of alternative media as innovative visual form or aesthetics or collective organising. Rather, they are alternative media in the context presented by Couldry and Curran (2004) as media that challenge the concentration of media power and ownership.

The concept of autonomous media offers a way of distinguishing structural practices that is very useful, but offers too narrow a definition to encompass community radio as a whole. On the flip side, community media, by definition, is specifically about participation and access, but says nothing about the kind of content one might find, simply that the motivation of the project, as defined by Hendy (2000) is to involve its audience in its creation. Both forms of independent media production are concerned with strengthening democratic culture.

As Howley states, community media is an 'important although undervalued site to examine the dynamics of globalisation from the perspective of local communities' (2005: 39). Community media is both a response to and contradiction of globalising forces, as well as a useful space for the assertion of local cultures and local identities. The framework for understanding community radio that I will use is, at its most basic, media projects that are not-for-profit, participatory and accessible, "non-professional", offer content, style and aesthetic value not readily available elsewhere, and are run by and for the community, however it is so defined. Community radio is also a form of alternative media and offers a means by which potentially unaffiliated individuals can collectively offer a challenge to the stricture of dominant media. Community media is a site of the expression of difference as well as commonality (Howley 2005). Kletter also notes:

> Community media should not be judged by the same criteria of success as institutional media. Their advantage is their low cost, flexibility and ease of operation. Their use is likely to be dictated by the exigencies of the moment – rather then by carefully plotted schedules. The enthusiasm which produces a penetrating commentary on a community problem may not sustain an ongoing series of investigative programmes. But access should be considered an opportunity to use the media when there is a need

to do so, rather then an obligation to full time slots (Kletter et al 1977 quoted in Rodriguez 2001: 159).

The difficulty in a review of the literature in these areas is the selectivity involved, especially the selective approach to the many issues that emerge out of a study of community radio and alternative media. Because of the need to establish a theoretical foundation for the various movements and understandings within frameworks of community radio – the subject of my research - there is not the space here to consider all the connected concepts and related areas that arise in such an overview. For the purposes of this research, it is the both the policy framework and theoretical understandings that are useful in terms of situating the case studies of community radio in a wider context of alternative media and radio studies. In examining the phenomenon of community radio, I am seeking to overcome some of the structural difficulties and ambiguities that so often plague a project of alternatives. Questions of everyday practice, authenticity, presentation, access, technology, and the regulatory framework, all underpin the discussion of community radio that lies ahead. However, in the following chapter, I will outline an historical approach, and then move into the four case studies drawing on interviews and field work in London and Los Angeles, and return in the final chapter to broader questions of media democracy, media power and the positioning of community-based media within these debates.

Chapter 3

The Context of Community Radio Broadcasting
National Policy and Reform Movements in the UK and US

*'The history of broadcasting is that dynamics have always been driven by
people outside the system.'* (Lawrie Hallett, Ofcom)

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the necessary foundation in community radio that
will serve as the broader context for the following case study chapters. This
chapter will be broken up into two main sections: the first focussing on the
UK and the second, on the US. Each will begin with a recap of key historical
moments and legislation relevant to the development of community radio and
will then switch from an historical overview to offer a more detailed and
current account of the contemporary movements for low power radio in both
countries. To begin, I will offer some comparative analysis between the two
systems and the issues raised by the development of radio in each country.

This context is useful because much of the impetus for this project emerges
from a policy imperative. Since I began my research, both countries have
created new tiers of licensing for community-based low power radio. This
community licensing structure is something Britain has never had before, and
in the US, low power broadcasting was virtually abandoned in 1978. These
new tiers of licensing are not accidental but are the fruition of decades of
campaigns – both overt and incidental - from media reformers, grassroots
activists and pirate broadcasters to expand community radio. As a result, in
2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the United States
created a new tier of licensing for low power FM radio (LPFM). In 2004, the
British government created an official third tier of broadcasting for community
radio alongside the BBC and commercial broadcasting, for which the

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allocation of permanent licenses is underway at the time of writing with 48 new licenses having been issued so far. This section will also pay careful attention to the work of two key organizations involved in lobbying efforts in support of low power community radio, the Community Media Association in the UK and the Prometheus Radio Project in the United States.

However, the two systems of low power licensing are very distinctive from each other. Whilst both systems license only low power radio stations that are not-for-profit, the British system allows for some commercial funding and station sponsorship. British legislation has more to say about social policy then it does broadcasting. The application itself is heavily weighted to questions about social gain criteria, community service and participant training over queries about antenna placement and transmitters and the legislation takes an expansive view of community radio, providing for both communities of interest and of geography. In the American system, not all low power stations are actually community radio stations because, unlike the British model, the FCC does not license based on content or objective. Rather, their mandate is limited to availability, non-commercial funding, ownership, and a vaguely worded preference for local origination of content. An estimated one-third of the licenses go to religious enterprises and churches, a controversial area discussed later in this chapter. Both systems have encountered opposition from incumbent broadcasters, however, the BBC has made a public about-face in support of the sector, while National Public Radio (NPR) says it will not fight the service, though continues to actively lobby against certain protections for LPFMs. Moreover, it is the opposition of commercial broadcasters that is strongest in both countries. In Britain, commercial lobbyists won concessions limited the amount of advertising community stations could take and eliminating such funding from some smaller areas, while in the US, commercial broadcasters continue to fight against the very existence of the sector and actively pursue efforts to block expansion of it.

There are interesting technical differences as well, perhaps befitting of the ideology driving each system. In the US, the onus is on stations themselves to present evidence of frequency availability and non-interference, which means

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the potential for hefty up-front engineering costs for surveys etc. but no application fee. In Britain, applicants pay a non-refundable fee of £600 to apply but incure no prior technical surveys, though stations may elect to hire professional services to aid in their application. Significantly, Ofcom elected to let would-be stations request a particular service area and their engineers would, in effect, see if there was room. One of Ofcom's community radio regulators, Lawrie Hallett explains that rather then tell stations where they had to go, they would let stations tell them whom they would like to reach (2005). More significantly, LPFM stations in the US have no protection from potential encroachment by full-power stations. Media reform groups are pushing for LPFM to be granted primary status as currently, they are considered secondary to incumbent broadcasters and could be displaced should a neighbouring high-power station gain approval to boost their reach. Another key area of debate surrounds the legislative preference for local programme origination. LPFM activists argue local origination is broadly indicative of a connection to the community and thus, a greater emphasis on locally-oriented news and public affairs whilst opponents claim local origination does not necessarily make better local service. In Britain, local programming and orientation is not only a requirement, but a stated goal of the service, though a small percentage of syndicated programming is allowed.

There is an inherent difficulty in writing a chapter rooted in the history radio broadcasting, and that is the extent to which the history of public service and commercial radio has been well documented with an extensive range of rich and colourful accounts from which to draw on. This includes the studies of Britain, Asa Briggs' commanding work (1961, 1965, 1970, 1979, 1995), Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff (1991), James Curran and Jean Seaton (2000), Andrew Crisell (1997) and Stephen Barnard (1989); of the United States, Erik Barnouw's eminently readable chronology (1966, 1968, 1970), Robert McChesney (1993), Susan Douglas (1987, 1999), Michele Hilmes (1997); and of both countries, Peter Lewis and Jerry Booth (1989).[19] Because of the

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[19] See also Mitchell, Ed. (2000) for work on women and radio.

volume of historical work available, I will focus on the issues key to my research: localism, access and participation, and community-based structures.

It is thus important to take a holistic approach to the history of broadcasting. One of the defining distinctions is of course the very nature of the systems established in each country. The chaos of the American commercial system was not lost on the British and the BBC system was, in part, created in direct opposition to that and institutionalised the ethos of public service broadcasting from the start. In the early 1970s, just after the US had finally established a public broadcasting network, licensed commercial radio was created in the UK. A body to govern radio licensing in the United States was created not to develop a kind of programming model in the name of the public, but instead, for purely economic reasons. The American model sought to fill up all available space on the dial wherever possible 'rather then find reasons to deny its use' (Lewis and Booth 1989: 22). In Britain, 'the onus is on the citizen to show cause why s/he should use the frequency spectrum at all' (ibid). Despite this, local community radio had long been established in the US and is just now in 2005 being implemented in Britain. The reasons why will be explored throughout this chapter.

Themes that are relevant to the emergence of community radio in both the US and UK include:

- *Incremental progress.* There exists a constant push and pull among industry, government and activists. At the same time, changes in media policy tend to sneak up and that the historic problem is that so much change goes unnoticed until it's too late (Lewis and Booth [1989], Curran and Seaton [2000]), as evidenced by the lack of progressive uproar in the lead-up to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in the US. In both contexts, it has largely been the work of a few small group(s) of activists to stay on top of pending changes, and media policy is the domain of 'media wonks' and left off the larger progressive agendas, something right-wing groups have been far more proactive in rallying their base of support around, especially in terms of content issues like indecency.[20] Change has been incremental and has occurred under all

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[20] In examining the FCC's website, a disproportionate number of obscenity complaints were filed by a single organisation, the Media Research Center, yet much recent conservative policy shifts have occurred as a result of the ensuing moral panics.

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major political parties and both the Democratic and Labour parties have been responsible for pro-commercial legislation and failed to act quickly (or at all) when given the chance to support community broadcasting.

- *The importance of amateurs.* Amateurs have rightly been credited with playing an instrumental role in the development of early technology but have been left out of most written history since the earliest days (Walker 2001). So-called "amateurs" are having a renaissance as it were with low power, neighbourhood-based radio, as well as with open source technology, "shareware", and community wireless networks. In terms of the technological developments, the invention of radio came about by putting together a lot of pieces from various engineers and inventors to transmit without wires. It is a fallacy to claim any one individual as the creator of radio.[21] The technological progression of radio and wireless communication continues in many ways to flourish as a de-facto collaboration among grassroots and activist groups and individuals, and many resources for sharing technical knowledge exist.[22]

Significantly, one aspect of early patent law was the protection of the rights of amateurs to develop equipment they would otherwise not have had access to because of commercial patents. This is a crucial validation of the role of those enthusiasts without industry or government affiliation, and the loss of that official recognition serves as a harbinger of the discounting of citizen's role in the development and production of media. Further, amateurs were responsible not only for building the first receivers and means of wireless transmission but for setting up some of the first radio stations as well.

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[21] This point comes as result of extensive reading into the history of wireless technology, but most especially Barnouw (1966), Walker (2001), Lewis and Booth (1989). Though the need exists for concision in the telling of histories, I would argue against this tendency for over-valuing individual achievement over collective enterprise in the name of ascribing authorship to inventions as a shorthand for denoting key moments of achievement and progress. This is not to say that particular individuals do not deserve full recognition for their contribution, from ideologically and practically it seems less useful to continue the tendency of attributing ownership of invention of entire enterprises like radio. I would make the same argument against the tendency for some to credit Tim Berners-Lee with the invention of the Internet. Specifically, the emphasis on Marconi's landmark contributions (such as conducting the first transatlantic signal), has left some fascinating people out of the history, most especially Nathan B. Stubblefield who invented the first actual receiver, or "black box". He died of starvation alone in his shack in a small town in Kentucky (Milam 1975). Other noteworthy individuals include Nora Blatch, Lee de Forest, Reginald Fessenden and Professor Amos Dolbear. Milam remarks on the exceptional quality of the names of these inventors (1975: 1) whilst the Prometheus Radio Project has enshrined these forefathers and foremothers by naming their computer hard drives in the office after them, as well as workshop spaces at their radio barnraisings.

[22] Not unlike movements for open source and free software, there exist numerous DiY outposts and resources for building transmitters and neighbourhood wireless networks, including Free Radio Berkeley and the Bay Area Wireless Users Group. In terms of content creation and production, there are also numerous resources for training and distribution that will be discussed in Chapter 7, including OneWorld Radio, Radio4All, and radio.indymedia.

- *The importance of pirates and "supra-national broadcasters".*
  Broadcasts from mainland Europe from the 1930's onwards and the off-shore and land-based pirates of the 1960's onwards offered a very significant form of competition and in doing so, challenged the BBC, and by its popularity and voracity, pushed the BBC to respond to popular interests, as well as playing a significant role in both countries in terms of legislative pressure to expand legal alternatives for community-based or amateur broadcasters. Likewise in the US, the pirates have continually shown there exists both the need and the space for low power and community radio. In both contexts, a movement of pirate broadcasters has exerted key pressure and played significant roles towards policy changes and the implementation of local and community radio.

- *Systems developed as a matter of choice and not by accident.* The BBC makes sense in the context of the mixed economy of Britain around the turn of the last century, which valued the role of government or government-backed institutions to organize utilities deemed in the public interest.[23] Likewise, the American model makes sense historically in the context of capitalism and corporatism. At the same time, it is crucial to not take as normative the development of either system as specific choices were made and paths followed. None were accidental. There existed opposition and viable alternatives in operation and subsequently rejected by regulators in both contexts that must be accounted and not left out of the histories that is so often the case.

UK

Early History and the BBC

There exists a "parallel history" of broadcasting in the UK (Hallett 2005). On one hand, the story of broadcast history is one that focuses on the development of the BBC and commercial radio. However, there exists a history of community, "amateur," and non-professional radio that runs sides alongside that of traditional accounts of broadcast history but unfortunately, is either not given adequate attention or is virtually ignored. The history of broadcasting in the UK, in most accounts, begins with the birth of the BBC and addresses the central tensions within the BBC, for example, independence from government, its response to popular tastes and music, and its centralised structures, paternalism and its relationship to local voices. This history tells the story of

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an institution whose ability to respond to these central tensions ebbed and flowed with the times and to varying degrees of success. This history addresses the impact of outside broadcasting forces, from *Radio Luxembourg* in the 1930's to *Radio Caroline* and the offshore pirates in the 1960s as responses to the inability of the BBC to meet the needs of the radio audience and subsequently resulting in the growth of commercial broadcasting.

But there still exists the need for an account of British radio history whose narrative is focussed on the needs and interests of amateurs and enthusiasts rather than institutions. Community radio is a phenomenon that has been charted in virtually every country, regardless of its primary system of broadcast – state, public service, or commercial. The desire for community media in the UK is more then just as a reaction against flaws within the BBC or the commercial system. If it is accepted that community radio is a different model of broadcasting, one revolving around participation and access rather than profit, the movement for neighbourhood-based radio would exist regardless of what kind of broadcast system was in place because the impulse is more then just a reaction against something. It is the issues and tensions of the movement, then, that require examination vis-á-vis the BBC and, subsequently, the IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority). The parallel history of radio in the UK is one of both commercial institutions and individuals seeking to profit from the lack of diversity on the British airwaves and a desire for amateur broadcasters to gain access. In the course of the long awaited development of community radio in Britain, the central historic tensions surround commercialism, pop music, and localism.

However, while there exists a rich history of the BBC and commercial radio, there is far less to draw on that links the history of community radio and amateur broadcast activity with that of mainstream radio, Jesse Walker (2001) a notable exception as its purpose is to reconcile that gap. In particular, with regards to the history of British local radio, Lewis and Booth observe: '[i]t is not an easy history to uncover. Partly, this is because there is no account,

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[23] See Curran and Seaton (2000).

official or otherwise, that foregrounds radio, includes both BBC and Independent Local Radio (ILR), and charts the succession of opportunities, promises and disappointments surrounding the medium' (Lewis and Booth 1989: 89). In their footnote to this quote, they cite the flaw in Crisell's assumption of providing a single perspective to ILR, community radio and pirates as if they were the same. They cite a few other examples, but it was not until their work that the complex relationship between movements for local radio and community radio began to be revealed.

In its earliest incarnation, wireless transmission was not envisioned as broadcasting, per se, but as a means of point-to-point communication useful for naval and shipping industries.[24] But like all new forms of media, there were numerous tensions and attempts to limit the influence and reach of broadcasting. The BBC was initially prohibited from developing a news department, owing to pressure from the newspaper industry.[25] In the United States, news agencies like AP and UPI stopped offering their services to stations when radio's popularity flourished out of competitive fears, pushing NBC and CBS to create their own news departments.[26] The BBC was also radically limited in the amount of recorded music they could play as a result of lobbying from the theatre industry and the Musicians Union representing live performers (the so-called "needle time agreements").[27] This is important for two reasons. First, because it is part of the larger anxieties about media and new technology permeating the development of every new medium – "no one will listen to the radio if they can watch pictures on television", "no one will go to the movies if people can rent video at home", "no one will watch terrestrial television if they can find it on cable", or "no one will buy music if they can make a cassette tape off their friend". Media industries, like any other, must learn to adapt in order to survive, and they do, for better or worse. This is a point I will return to when criticising the force of resistance from

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[24] Though most historical accounts spend some time recounting the early history of the technology, the most extensive accounts can be found in Barnouw (1966) and Briggs (1961). Lewis and Booth (1989) also offer a useful condensed account, as does Walker (2001).
[25] See Curran and Seaton (2000) for more on relationship between BBC and the press.
[26] Some stations were owned by the AP and were allowed to pay for a very limited version of their news wire services (Barnouw 1966).

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commercial broadcasters towards low power radio in the US, as well as the force of resistance from the recording industry around music downloading and peer-to-peer networks. Secondly, and more to the point in this section, because these tensions shaped the development of the BBC and at the same time, impacted how BBC programming was allowed to develop.

The first incarnation of the BBC as the British Broadcasting *Company* was formed as a consortium of equipment manufacturers *and* amateur radio enthusiasts. 'The role of amateur radio enthusiasts was important since it was they who were most vociferously opposed to the state monopoly of radio and were largely responsible for jolting corporate concentrations of the uses of the medium' (Lewis and Booth 1989: 19). As early as 1913, the Wireless Society of London was founded, which included engineers who made tangible contributions to radio (ibid). These groups enjoyed the support of the Post Office specifically because they were *not* directly related to the commercial manufacturing companies. Further, it was the wireless societies who pushed for the lifting of the ban on broadcasting after WWI.

But the inclusion of amateurs in the history of UK broadcasting falls off quickly. In most historical accounts, non-BBC radio before the 1960's is confined to that of the European pirates, commercial operations who also shared little with the amateurs who made radio possible. Hind and Mosco (1985) make the case that the first pirate was actually Marconi who transmitted the first transatlantic signal, itself an unlicensed broadcast. By 1922 he had obtained the permission of government, but was only allowed fifteen minutes of airtime per week, which was hardly in keeping with the enthusiasm for the new technology. Moreover, in the 1920s, it has been estimated upwards of 250,000 people were involved in amateur radio in some fashion. While the BBC was brought to life under John Reith's vision, European-based stations broadcasting into Britain began to offer alternatives from early on. *Radio Normandie*, launched in 1925, was the first of such stations and broadcast to the Southwest of England each evening.

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[27] See Barnard (1989) for history of British music radio.

With regards to the issue of localism, the BBC actually began as local radio. The first broadcast operations were set up in London, Manchester and Birmingham prior to the formation of the BBC, but this early local precedent did not last long. Scannell and Cardiff reveal that under the BBC, 'the values and attitudes that began to emerge in the local stations between 1923 and 1927 were quite deliberately eradicated by the policy of centralisation …(and) remained repressed for many years until the late sixties and the rediscovery of local radio broadcasting by the BBC in the wake of the Pilkington Report' (Scannell and Cardiff 1991: 304). Though as we will see in the next section, the "rediscovery" of local radio predates the 1962 Pilkington Report.

John Reith, as the first director General of the BBC and the individual rightfully identified as having shaped the organisation and ethos of public service broadcasting itself, had always envisioned the BBC as a national service and his first task was thus extending coverage to the rest of the country. Six additional stations situated across the country were added during this period and these nine in total "Main Stations" operated independent of centralised control and broadcast up to six hours a day of local programming.[28] Since the transmitters of these initial Main Stations were weak – broadcasting only about a radius of fifteen to twenty miles – a number of "Relay Stations" were set up to reach more areas. Except rather then link these stations up to the nearest Main Station, they were each linked to London. Scannell and Cardiff explain:

> [t]his was not the original intention. It seemed absurd to Reith that
> Swansea, for instance, should relay programmes from London rather then
> Cardiff, but he had not reckoned on inter-civic jealousy. When plans were
> being drawn up for the first relay station, it seemed natural to propose that
> it should be linked to Manchester, but Sheffield thought otherwise. They
> wanted first their own programmes and then the pick of the London
> programmes. What they got was the reverse: a very limited amount of
> home-produced material and a very large amount of London's output.
> Subsequently, the other relay stations were one by one wired in to London.
> It appeared, Reith commented tartly, that no city that was deemed
> sufficiently important to have a relay station could listen to the

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[28] Newcastle, Cardiff, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Bouremouth, Belfast (Scannell and Cardiff 1991: 305)

programmes of any other station except London without loss of dignity (1991: 305).[29]

In 1929, a plan for six regional services to complement the national service was instituted, but the result of which was nevertheless a primarily centralised system. [30]

Radio Luxembourg

By 1933, *Radio Luxembourg* was on air. With their strong transmission, they offered the first high-powered, thus far-reaching alternative to the BBC by focussing on the popular music of the time. *Radio Luxembourg* proved particularly popular on Sundays in response to "Reith Sunday," reserved as a day where dance music on the BBC was disallowed in favour of religious programming.[31] Also significant was the International Broadcasting Company, which, by 1932, had set up an office directly behind the BBC through which the company bought airtime from overseas stations to broadcast programming aimed at a UK audience.[32] One of the far-reaching implications of the so-called pirate threat to the BBC was that their existence served to demonstrate the viability of commercial radio. It is a testament to the strength of the institution of the BBC that British commercial radio was staved off from introduction until decades later. That, and the reality that from a listener's perspective, it is the actual programming that matters most, not the institution behind it. It is worth reflecting further that, in addition to the public's desire for more popular entertainment, the BBC's style alienated many and in its early days profoundly failed to account for local tastes and interests. Further, the BBC under Reith had limited popular music and forms of jazz, and in particular had banned popular scat music.[33]

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[29] See also Lewis and Booth (1989).

[30] This stemmed from Eckersley's plan in 1924 (Lewis and Booth 1989). Eckersley himself was instrumental in the development of the BBC as well. See biography by his son Eckersley (1997).

[31] See Barnard (1989) for extensive history of music radio in Britain.

[32] The BBC set up their first listener research unit in 1936.

[33] It seems somewhat unfathomable that in his otherwise thoughtful analysis of this period of the BBC's musical programming, Barnard (1989) fails to mention race at all as one of the reasons the BBC might have banned such specific popular forms of jazz.

During WWII, *Radio Luxembourg* was forced to close down, like other broadcasters at the time.[34] It was revived after the war and continued in popularity, though it failed to achieve the same level of success it had prior to the war, in part because technical limitations meant that they could only broadcast while dark and suffered from poor transmission and broadcast quality. *Luxembourg*, however continued to broadcast until the early 1990's. *Luxembourg's* popularity also started to wane as a response to changes within the BBC itself. After the war, the BBC created a permanent new channel out of its *Forces Programme*, the popular station created during the war for the troops, renamed the *Light Programme* after the war, thus acknowledging that popular music and entertainment was necessary and worthy outside of combat. Though *Luxembourg* was not amateur radio in the hobbyist sense, its success represented the need to diversify the airwaves and served as an alternative that came from outside the established system.[35]

Local Radio Legislation 1951-1970

In Britain, the development of community radio is closely tied to the development of local radio, for there was no space allocated for neighbourhood broadcasting in the largely centralised regional and national system. The year 1951 brought the Beveridge Report, and in it, the recommendation that local radio should be set up "without delay". The impetus was social as well as technological. The advent of VHF and FM radio, opened up vast amounts of new spectrum for new broadcasters. Politically, the Beveridge Report notes the value and need to make possible a greater diversity of programmes and cites opportunities created via the new availability of space on FM:

> [t]he scheme for VHF development now in preparation in the BBC is designed first and foremost for this purpose: of completing satisfactory coverage of the United Kingdom...of the BBC. There is quite a different objective, which appears to us equally important – that of making possible a greater diversity and independent of programmes (Beveridge as quoted in Partridge 1982: 10 and Lewis and Booth 1989: 26).

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[34] It is ironic to note that during the war, *Radio Luxembourg's* signal, agreeably silenced in the name of the war effort was used by 'Lord Haw Haw' (William Joyce) and his pro-German propaganda aimed at Britain.

[35] See Radio Luxembourg (1955) as an example of their monthly programme magazine.

Beveridge 'contained more original ideas about the use of VHF than its successor, the Pilkington Report, a decade later' (Lewis and Booth 1989: 25). Beveridge called for experimentation and though considered local broadcasting run by institutions such as universities, local authorities or public service organisations, in the end advocated for local radio under the auspices of the BBC. However, with the excitement surrounding the proposal to create ITV, radio fell off the agenda for the next ten years.[36]

In 1962, the Pilkington Report recommendations again included the introduction of BBC local radio, but plans were put on hold in favour of television once again, this time the creation of BBC 2. Two important points to note here are first, the secondary status afforded to radio when it came to allocation of resources and focus on innovation. Second, as Barnard (1989) notes, even before the arrival of the offshore pirates, there was some impetus within the BBC backed by policy makers for such change.[37] Government, however, was not prepared to implement local radio until four years later, clearly pressured by the success and mass appeal of the pirates.

However, throughout this discussion of the need for local radio, there were expressed very different visions of what local radio should look like, the tensions between commercial radio, BBC local radio and community radio taking the foreground. In 1964, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall wrote a response echoing public service concerns called *Local Radio: Why It Must Not Be Commercial*.[38] They backed the BBC's vision of at least one hundred local stations under a loose federation under BBC. Another pamphlet (Rachel Powell's *Possibilities for Local Radio*) the following year is, according to Partridge, the first to explicitly call for community radio and utilise that term in

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[36] The impact of VHF for radio was thus reduced to simulcasting the three existing BBC services, though with improved sound quality and near total reach to the furthest corners of the nation.

[37] Barnard (1989) minimises the impact of the pirates claiming it was just a matter of time before the BBC would change to populist demands. Though it is crucial to recognise how much groundwork was laid for the creation of local radio and programme diversity for the BBC prior to the arrival of the pirates, it seems overly dismissive and wrong to claim the pirates did not play a crucial role in demonstrating the viability of an alternative.

[38] Hoggart was also a member of the Pilkington Committee (Partridge 1982)

a British context. And as expected, there were market forces lobbying hard for private commercial radio.

Finally, in 1966, the BBC was allowed to set up an experiment of nine stations that were on air by the end of 1967.[39] These stations were distinctive from what later became BBC Local Radio, in that these stations were funded by their local authorities, broadcast on VHF only, and were governed by local broadcasting councils appointed by the Postmaster General in consultation with the BBC, rather then BBC-run stations. At the end of the pilot scheme, it was determined local funding was not sustainable and a license fee increase was instead proposed and approval was granted for forty stations to go on air.[40]

Offshore Pirates

During this time, however, one of the most intriguing phenomena in European radio history was to occur out in the English Channel and the North Atlantic seas: offshore pirate radio[41]. Stations like *Radio Caroline, Radio Invicta, Radio 390, Radio Scotland, Radio Essex, Radio London*, and fort-based *Radio City*, continue to hold an iconic and celebrated place in British history. They were the sound of a generation the BBC simply left behind in their rejection of the popular music of the day.[42] For example, in 1962, BBC's *Light Programme* aired less than four hours a week featuring pop music, which consisted primarily of established artists (Leonard (2004)). Other music programmes existed on the BBC but many featured live musicians playing cover versions of popular songs due to the restrictions on 'needle time'. The BBC had historically been substantially limited by the number of hours of recorded music they were allowed to play under pressure from the Musicians Union, dating back to the early days of the BBC and anxiety from existing entertainment industries that radio would wipe them all out. In 1964, as a first response to the new offshore pirate competition, the BBC negotiated more

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[39] Eight of the nine stations were actually set up: Leicester, Sheffield, Liverpool, then Nottingham, Stoke on Trent, Brighton, Leeds and Durham.
[40] It should also be noted that historically, with regards to radio in Britain, there has been a series of pilot projects rather then full-implementation of new tiers.
[41] For extensive history focussed on the offshore pirates see Leonard (2004).

"needle time" from the record industry, an increase from the paltry twenty fours hours per week total across all three BBC national stations. Like *Radio Luxembourg* in the 1930's, the sixties pirates provided a necessary alternative. However, the big pirates of the sixties also demonstrated the viability of American-style commercial radio, an industry that was breaking new music and represented the zeitgeist of an era, but was also a highly corruptible for-profit industry in many cases.

Radio Caroline, the most revered and referenced of the offshore pirates, had its telling start when, as the legend goes, in 1962, a twenty-two year old Irish businessman, Ronan O'Rahilly, was trying to promote a new pop singer and found no luck.[43] As he couldn't get a record pressed owing to the fact that four record companies, EMI and Decca, and Pye and Phillips secondarily, controlled 99% of the market share, he set up his own label. When he attempted to get his artist played on *Radio Luxembourg*, he found virtually all station programming consisted of sponsored shows paid for by the major record companies. In response, he raised the money and started his own commercial station on the legendary ship in international waters. It should also be noted that there were a number of unsuccessful attempts prior to *Caroline* to launch an offshore station aimed at the UK, and competition was fierce and at times ruthless.[44]

The birth of the offshore pirates is fascinating not only because of the level of interweaving narratives among countries, and quite literally among ownership of the actual broadcast ships, but also serves as a telling example of the number of individuals associated with this phenomenon, thus taking the level of amateur participation to a new – and albeit very expensive – heights. The fact that so much money was involved (£250,000 in start up funds raised for *Caroline* alone), demonstrates the viability of alternatives to the BBC and with it, the attention of free marketers and commercial industries. It also blurs the

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[42] See Barnard (1989) for detailed history of music radio in Britain.
[43] For extensive history of *Radio Caroline*, see Moore (2004), and also Leonard (2004) and (Henry (1984).
[44] See Leonard (2004).

line between national and transnational broadcasting, and demonstrates how interlinked both are in this arena.

In 1964, Labour came to power with a slim majority and neither Labour nor Conservatives wanted to clamp down on the open sea broadcasters who had such popular support, thus the pirates were nary mentioned in either parties' election campaigns. The previous Conservative government had shown little interest in banning the pirates as '[they] saw the off-shore stations as a way of breaking the BBC monopoly' (Gordon 2000: 7). Lewis and Booth (1989) point out that actions taken by some of the pirates helped bring about the eventual crackdown: competitive behaviour among pirates that had resulted in a few public scandals, including a death; the acceptance of political advertising by pirates, including anti-Labour ads; and the appointment of Post Master General Edward Short (1966-68) who opposed commercial radio, be it pirate or licensed.[45] Others note it was the desire for a European-wide consensus in response to the popularity of pirates that held off their closure. But in 1965, the UK had ratified the European-wide Strasbourg Convention that included provisions to outlaw the offshore pirates and yet it was two years later in 1967 that British government passed the Marine etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Act that made such broadcasting illegal. The success of the offshore pirates, in effect, allowed them to flourish for three years.

During this period of legal crisis and subsequent closures, some organisations were founded to fight for what was being called "free radio".[46] The Commercial Radio Listeners Association (CRLA) that soon after its creation merged with another group to become the Free Radio Association. Its petition signed by thousands of supporters stated:

> [t]he Free Radio Association is fighting for free speech, free enterprise and free choice. The Government is trying to crush all competition over the air by silencing the commercial stations - thereby preserving the monopoly of

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[45] Previous Postmaster General Tony Benn was also outspoken in his opposition to the pirate broadcasters.
[46] "Free radio" is also the term, along with "micro radio", favoured by famous US unlicensed radio broadcaster Stephen Dunifer, discussed later in this chapter.

the BBC and depriving the freedom to listen to the stations of our choice. This is a step towards dictatorship (Leonard 2004: 68).

As well, there were a number of print publications in support of the stations whose focus became that of fighting passage of the 1967 legislation. Labour would pay politically for this legislation in the next election. One of the reasons given for Labour's failure to return to power was their crackdown on the offshore pirates (Barnard 1989, Moore 2004). 1970 was the first year 18-21 year olds were allowed to vote - a key listening demographic of the offshore pop music stations. *Radio Caroline*'s O'Rahilly in particular took it upon himself to lambast Labour in every press interview as well as on *Caroline*'s dial.[47] The data compiled by *Radio London* just before passage of the Bill is telling: *Radio London's* survey revealed that a majority of Labour MPs wanted to close the offshore stations while 65% of Conservative MPs supported the stations.[48]

It should also be noted that while most of the offshore pirates shut down their operations when the Act took effect, *Radio Caroline* defied the legislation and continued to broadcast, though not without many dramatic ups and downs and interruptions, including a resurgence in the 1980's on a new ship, *Ross Revenge*, after the first went aground.[49] Other offshore pirates joined them in the 1980s. *Radio Caroline* the station, still broadcasts today on Sky Digital, satellite, and Internet from a studio outside London. Once a month, the public is invited to come aboard the *Ross Revenge* and *Caroline* broadcasts their digital and other feeds from the ship. Additionally, once yearly, however, they transmit for twenty-eight days via Restricted Service License (RSL), thus keeping alive the spirit at least in name of the early rebels.

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[47] By 1970, a new offshore stations *Radio NorthSea International* was broadcasting. Their signal was jammed by Government in the lead-up to the election, but one week prior, the station managed broadcast in *Caroline*'s name their anti-Labour campaign to the south east. A bus sponsored by O'Rahilly toured London urging people to vote Conservative. Though there is no conclusive proof the pirates swung the election, constituencies targeted by the pirates were taken by the Tories, which helped them reach their majority (Leonard (2004)).
[48] See Leonard (2004: 70) for data.
[49] For interesting history of the actual ship, Ross Revenge, see Weston (2002).

Hospital & student radio

During this period, some institutions did manage to gain access to the airwaves, albeit in limited form. In 1951, hospital radio was created for in-house broadcasting via cable lines. By the late eighties, nearly 80% of all hospitals had some form of radio services, run as low-budget operations relying primarily by volunteers.[50] Hospital radio has proved to be an underrated though significant space for volunteers and independent producers to gain valuable production, programming and operational experience. Likewise, student radio began to take hold around 1967 when some unlicensed experimental broadcasts took place. The first college to embark on licensed student radio was York University, where broadcasting was set up via induction loop, which limited range to that of the campus itself. By 1972, the National Association of Student Broadcasters was created, thus establishing the beginnings of an organised network that would later help campaign for community media and support greater campus-based involvement in radio.

It is necessary to mention these two institutional forms of local broadcasting because emerging out of them were people active in producing community-based radio and active politically in lobbying for a community media sector. It is also important to establish that there were non-commercial and non-BBC radio stations broadcasting. These stations also serve to demonstrate how incremental and piecemeal the opening of the airwaves in Britain has been.

The Seventies and the Creation of a Local Commercial Radio Sector

The story of local radio is often eclipsed in the run-up to *Radio 1* and eventual commercialisation of the airwaves. While the creation of *Radio 1* was an important step towards diversifying programming and responding to popular demand in a way that did not privatise spectrum and preserved the BBC as an institution, it was the impetus for local radio that resonated to those seeking systematic reform beyond content. Local radio was thus more then just

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[50] See Partridge (1982) for more on Hospital Radio.

diversifying content. It was about decentralisation and diversifying ownership
as well.

The 1970 General Election saw the Tories unexpectedly return to power and
with them, a shift in focus away from BBC local radio towards private local
radio. The 1971 White Paper authorised local commercial radio and halted the
BBC from adding more, limiting it to the twenty local stations already up and
running.[51] This remained the situation until after the 1977 Annan Report and
subsequent White Paper the following year that allowed both the BBC and
IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority), the authority under which
commercial radio would be regulated by).[52] Annan suggested that
development of local radio should be taken away from both the BBC and the
IBA and be placed under a new governing body to be called the Local
Broadcasting Authority.[53] Though the White Paper elected not to take that
route, Lewis observes that 'like the rest of the Report, Annan's general tone in
the chapter on local broadcasting is as important as – some would say more
important than – the actual schemes recommended' owing to Annan's support
for local broadcasting (Lewis 1979: 80). Significantly, the Report made the
case that local radio left to the BBC and the IBA was flawed because the
emphasis on national broadcasting would always take precedence and the
logistics of spectrum allocation among two competing bodies would inevitably
be problematic (ibid). Both the BBC and the IBA were, not surprisingly,
against this plan.

The commercial success of the ILR stations took its toll on the community
aspect of BBC Local Radio. 'Faced with [the success of commercial ILR

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[51] The BBC had planned on developing 95 stations in total, which would have been a
combination of local and smaller opt-out stations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
[52] See Lewis (1978), *Whose Media? The Annan Report and After: A citizen's Guide to Radio
and Television* for in depth analysis of the Annan and post-Annan debates, as well as for his
thorough discussion of the techno political policy of spectrum allocation.
[53] Another aspect of the development of independent radio is the ownership of transmitters.
Under Annan's plan to create the LBA, transmitters would continue to be owned by the
government and leased to stations. Though resoundingly criticised by commercial station
owners, government's reluctance to turn all aspects of broadcasting over to private hands
represents a fundamental and distinct attitude towards preservation of at least some public
sense of ownership of the airwaves, as well as retention of a funding stream, though eventually
eliminated.

stations], the BBC also pulled away from its original commitment to community development and its local programming policies began to converge competitively with those of the ILR stations' (Everitt 2003: 16). The ILR stations, many themselves begun with community-minded intentions, quickly gave in to commercial imperatives and most abandoned their original missions. Thus, the creation of local radio in Britain did little to advance the cause of community broadcasting and access.

Throughout the decade, however, interest in community broadcasting had begun to flourish. In 1973, a group called Cambridge Community Broadcasting prepared to bid for an IBA license that would be commercially funded but run as a community-minded station. Also, the Community Communications Group (COMCOM) formed in 1977, that itself emerged out of a conference of community media supporters, including those involved with student and hospital radio. COMCOM set out to respond to Annan, backing the LBA 'as one means of breaking rigidity of the present duopoly (the BBC and IBA) and giving local services the chance to develop in a variety of ways'[54] (Partridge 1982: 14). In short, they argued for a third tier in British broadcasting: community radio. In the end, the Labour government chose to expand the duopoly of the BBC/IBA and granted more local licenses under those two bodies and did nothing for community groups. Despite this, by 1979, 'the term community radio had gained currency and was being widely used and abused by both the BBC and IBA' (ibid). In order to be clear on the principles espoused by media and grassroots activists, COMCOM drew a Community Broadcasting Charter.[55]

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[54] COMCOM was, however, highly critical of Annan's recommendation that funding for LBA stations should come solely from advertising. This debate will be taken up in Chapter 4 with regards to the new Community Radio legislation.
[55] For text of charter, see Lewis and Booth (1989) or Partridge (1989: 14)

The Twenty-Year Campaign[56]

So how was it that after twenty years of organizing and lobbying, licensed community radio finally came about? In the immediate history, the success of the pilot project for Access Radio was the single most important factor in the development of a permanent tier. But prior to that, there is a long campaign history of numerous ups and downs and minor successes along the way.

Building on the earlier background of the establishment of local radio and the inroads made by community radio projects along the way (namely hospital radio, the limited number of student stations and few cable access stations), the story now comes to the focussed push for local *community* radio.[57] With the extension of local station ownership to the private sector, the de-monopolising of the airwaves by the BBC was in place. But what resulted was a duopoly of control by the BBC and IBA stations. Though local radio was in place by both institutions by the mid 1970s, no space was allocated for community broadcasting. In opening up the spectrum to non-BBC entities, the decision was made time and time again to advance the commercial sector rather then ensure access for neighbourhoods, grassroots organisations and educational institutions.

Beginning in the mid 1970s and throughout the eighties, there was a rapid growth in community radio around the world.[58] The development of solid-state technology made it even easier to put together low cost transmitters. In terms of political structures, some interesting developments transpired across Europe that inspired many in Britain as elsewhere. For example, Sweden began a three-year experimental project in 1979. In 1976, the Italian Constitutional Court declared the government monopoly of broadcasting to be invalid. Moreover, the ruling did not set up anything in its place, the court

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[56] During the 1970s and 80s, a number of studies were conducted into various aspects of community radio feasibility and case studies, including: Lewis (1976, 1977), Local Radio Workshop (1979, 1980, 1981, 1982), Wright (1979-80), Baehr and Ryan (1984), Broadcasting Research Unit (1985), Gray (1988), Greater London Arts (1989), Lewis, J. (1985), and Partridge et al (1980).
[57] See the Hospital Broadcasting Service (2005) for more history of hospital radio.
[58] See Lewis and Booth (1989) for more of this history.

simply ruled the current state system was not valid. As a consequence, unlicensed broadcasters were thrown into a system where they were quasi-legalized without any regulatory structure to consider them otherwise. In a short space of time, there were over 2,000 local radio stations on air in Italy, including some very radical, socialist and/or community-based ones, as well as many commercially-oriented music stations, and stations linked with the political right.[59] It should also be noted that out of that deregulatory environment many private commercial broadcasters came to the air, including the emergence of Silvio Berlusconi who gradually took control of regional television services and eventually controlling a major national private broadcast network before becoming Prime Minister with additional authority over state broadcaster, RAI.

In France, there were also a number of unlicensed stations broadcasting in the run up to the 1981 elections that brought the Socialist Party to power. During the campaign season, electoral candidate Françoise Mitterrand was convinced to participate in a broadcast on unlicensed trade union radio station. The broadcast was condemned by the government and subsequently shut down but the ensuing media attention inadvertently ensured a Socialist Party commitment to create new licensing structures. Mitterrand's government eventually engaged in a process of re-regulation to establish new broadcast categories and creation of '*Radio Associatives*', or radios which were constituted by associations, or, non-profit organisations. Now, there are approximately 600 *Radio Associatives* in France, about two-thirds of which are Catholic "confessional radios". Community radio in Australia was authorised in 1974 by their Labour Party government, support that was built on the success of early educational experiments in the 1970s. Australian community radio is especially known for their broadcasting of indigenous and minority programming – including stations run by aboriginal groups, classical music, political views, and educational material.[60]

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[59] For more on Italian and French pirates, and the European "free radio" movement, see Lewis and Booth (1989) and Downing (2000).
[60] There is in fact no classical music station on either public or commercial radio. See report on Australian community radio by Forde, Meadows and Foxwell (2002) for extensive analysis

These are just a few examples of community radio emerging in other national contexts. In Britain, with the birth of COMCOM, community radio began to emerge with a vocal, organised face. The years 1980-81 were a time of civil unrest across Britain. Pressure was growing for government to provide, among other things, low power radio stations for disadvantaged communities. It was during this time Margaret Thatcher's Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, acknowledged community radio before Parliament, promising to look into the matter further. Citizen's band (CB) radio became legal later this same year. In 1983, the first short term, special event radio license was issued for broadcasting from a Christian music festival, "Green Belt '83".[61] But even this scant and hard fought acknowledgement came as a result of four long years of lobbying spearheaded by the COMCOM and student, hospital and experimental cable radio advocates.

Community Media Association (CMA)

One of the organisations at the centre of this movement for community FM is the Community Media Association. Founded in 1983, the CMA's mission is 'to enable people to establish and develop community based communications media for community development and empowerment, cultural expression, information and entertainment' (CMA 2005). The CMA began life as the Community Radio Association with the decided purpose of lobbying for and supporting the establishment of a third tier of community radio, alongside commercial broadcasting and the BBC. It thus emerged out of a series of conferences and coalitions among community radio advocates, community activists, academics, and unlicensed radio producers and organisers. It is a non-profit, membership-based organisation that receives funding from primarily European Social Fund grants and UK Lottery fund grants.

The CMA's board of directors is elected from its members annually. Though individuals may be voting members of the CMA, the weight of power is with organisations rather then the individuals. For example, an individual has one

and history of Australian community radio. See also Price-Davies and Tacchi's (2001) comparative study of community radio in six countries, including the UK and Australia.

vote whereas each member organisation has ten votes. The CMA currently has a network of 700 members, and a regional offshoot in Scotland started by CMA member Babs McCool. The small, roughly ten person staff central office in Sheffield provides talking points, sample press releases, briefing papers and actionable steps members are encouraged to take in support of CMA campaigns and help ensure members are talking with their local MPs. They also co-host a number of events in the UK, such as the *Community FM* conference and the *Community Media Festival*. In a conscious move to ensure members play a strong leadership role in the organisation, much of the long-term decision making takes place at the hands of the board members, thus creating much more of a representative democracy then many organisations. The power and role of governing bodies will be returned to in Chapter 5 regarding the Pacifica Network, so it is worth making the point here about the CMA's structure of governance that seems to have served them well over the years. The CMA has term limits and most decision-making is consensual.

One of the most controversial issues debated within the CMA was in 1997 when the organisation voted to change their name from the Community Radio Association to the Community Media Association. Radio advocates feared their cause would get lost in the shift towards television, video and new media. The process itself was seen as a positive and important one for the group to redefine its mission and it was a decision that came as the result of a yearlong consultative process. The possibility of community television and the burgeoning on-line world necessitated the decision to support the name change for most members and opponents were assured radio would remain a priority.

Former long-time CMA director Steve Buckley has since created a consultancy for community media (Community Media Solutions) and is President of the World Association of Community Broadcasters (which goes by its French acronym AMARC). He has been credited as one of the driving forces behind the new legislation. Buckley became involved in radio in the early 1980s, working with a small pirate station, Cambridge Community Radio, in South

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[61] See Gordon (2000) for extensive history of RSLs.

East England, broadcasting on weekends. There, as Buckley puts it, they would head to the top of the hill in town with coat hangers for aerials, a little black box with the transmitter and a cassette player to play tapes with 120 minutes of pre-recorded audio programming. They were on air nearly three years, were eventually raided, and through the experience, Buckley got involved in campaigning for legalization. This is a similar trajectory to the one taken by Pete Tridish and the founders of the Prometheus Radio Project, the US non-profit engaged in advocating on behalf of low power community radio, who had previously run pirate station *Radio Mutiny* in West Philadelphia. It is also the trajectory of Lawrie Hallett, who currently serves as the Ofcom regulator overseeing community radio licensing. He too started in radio as a pirate, including the now-legal commercial station *KISS* in London, went on to work for the CMA, and now with Ofcom he is instrumental in helping applicants negotiate the application process and advocating on behalf of the sector within Ofcom.[62]

The CMA works with pirate broadcasters but finds there are not many who need its services. The CMA's approach to pirate broadcasting is that they do not encourage people to broadcast illegally, but that pirate stations are welcome to join the CMA and they have provided advice regarding the legal situation. Buckley comments:

> I've spent a lot of time over the years having pirates coming into the office and saying we're broadcasting illegally but we want to do it legally, how can we do it? I spend an hour explaining to them how they can do it. First there's the aerial height limit, you'll have to grind that down. Pull your power down to 10 watts, you can only broadcast for twenty-eight days, and you'll have to pay twenty five hundred pounds for the privilege. And a lot of them walk out of room and say "sorry I think I'll stick to what I'm doing". Fair enough. I respect the choices of people to do it that way because legislation pushes them to it (2003).[63]

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[62] It is difficult to imagine a former pirate would ever find employment as a regulator in the more staid FCC.

[63] See also the zine *Radio is My Bomb* (Various 1987).

1985 Pilot Project Aborted

In 1985, the government agreed to undertake a limited pilot project to issue temporary licenses for community radio stations. The Conservative government had gone so far as to advertise community licenses that would be directly regulated by government on an experimental basis. But the project was cancelled before it ever took hold, though controversially, not before the application process had already begun.

In response to announcement of the scheme, the government had received 266 applications in twenty-one locations identified as areas where licenses would be issued.[64] Two thirds of applications were for the five licenses being offered in London. The plan allowed for stations reaching "communities of interest" to broadcast up to a ten kilometre radius, and neighbourhood-based stations, or "geographic communities" to broadcast up to five kilometres in radius. Community radio stations would be subject to minimum regulation, which was a departure from the more paternalistic nature of broadcast policy at the time, even regarding the commercial Independent Local Radio (ILR) stations. This move to "light- touch regulation" would play a key part of Government's later plans to commercialise more of the spectrum and eliminate the regulation of public service requirements from commercial radio. The bulk of the backlash against community radio came from the Tory backbench, members who alleged some of the stations were supported by what they felt to be left wing controlled local authorities and by ethnic minority groups, neither of whom fared well under Home Office policy. It should be noted Hurd advocated going forward with the plan but was blocked. The Tories went back to the drawing board to attempt to come up with an alternative plan but other serious events took precedence such as the Miner's Strike, and community radio was pushed back to the consultative stage.

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[64] See Home Office (1987: 13) for detail of Green Paper.

From Green to White: 1987 to 2000

In 1987, the radio landscape in Britain looked quite a bit different then it does today and offers a useful contemporary point of comparison. Then, broadcasting was overseen by two authorities: the BBC and the IBA. The changes in radio that occurred in the sixties and early seventies still dominate what radio looks like today. Along with the pre-existing four BBC national channels and regional services for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, the 1967 establishment of BBC local radio resulted in thirty local BBC stations reaching 85% of the population. There were also eight BBC regional stations that could opt-out of the regional programming for up to three hours a day in favour of local content. In 1973, the creation of Independent Local Radio (ILR) stations resulted in fifty local, commercial stations on air by 1987, again reaching 85% of the population. At this time, there were also nineteen university stations and a few hospital radios broadcasting via induction loop system licensed under the 1949 Wireless Telegraphy Act. By 1987, only two community cable radio stations remained on air: Milton Keynes and Thamesmead.[65] National commercial radio had yet to begin, but more strikingly, AM/FM simulcasting had yet to end. Some argued it was necessary to ensure universal access to the BBC, others felt it was a waste of a precious resource.

Community radio was featured in the 1987 Home Office Green Paper on radio entitled *Radio: Choices and Opportunities*. The report concluded, among other things, that the present structure of radio needed an overhaul, both at the national level in terms of adding commercial competition to the BBC and at the local level with a move to "light touch" regulation of ILRs, thus reducing their existing public service requirements. In its conclusion, however, the Home Office supported the creation of a tier of community broadcasting:

> [f]requencies will be available for a new tier of community services, and the interest and demand for such services is evident. The Government welcomes the prospect of a rich variety of services which will be capable

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[65] See Gray (1988) for report on *Radio Thamesmead*.

of meeting a wide range of consumer tastes, including those of ethnic minorities (Green Paper 1987: 39).

The Home Office also included community radio as one of the local services that would operate with the aforementioned "light touch" regulation.

The rationale offered in the Green Paper as to why the experiment in community radio was cancelled before it began was the fear that the existing regulatory framework did not make it possible, an argument dismissed by the CMA. Interestingly, there were two concessions granted to the CMA by the Home Office in 1986, after the licensing experiment was cancelled. First, an experiment to create temporary, short-term licenses for events, sports and festivals was established. Secondly, the CRA was given ten thousand pounds towards establishing themselves as an institution. Thus, in 1988, twenty-one "incremental" radio stations went on air – in effect, the pilot project for temporary licenses intended a few years prior.

Communication Act of 1990

The lasting legacy of the 1990 Communications Act is the establishment of national commercial radio, elimination of many public service requirements and the fight to save the BBC. The Act emerged out of the recommendations of the Peacock Committee in 1987, which suggested, among other things, the selling off of BBC 1 and 2 – a debate which continued in various forms for the next ten years. Further, consolidation of ownership was permitted under the Act. Commercial radio was enacted with no requirements of public service broadcasting nor the creation of year-round community radio stations to counter balance the new commercial focus of the spectrum.

Eryl-Price and Tacchi make the case against the 1990 Act with regards to community radio:

> [i]ts emphasis on broadening choice and improving opportunities was heralded as an invitation to aspirant independent local broadcasters. However, no separate tier of community radio was established or legislated for, and what the CMA would define as 'community' groups were required

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to bid against commercial applicants for commercial licenses. Those few community groups that succeeded in obtaining a license to broadcast were then, with one or two exceptions, exposed to the threat of commercial take over within a very short space of time. There existed no legislative protection for such services in a commercial radio market. The terms of their licenses offered them no protection for their community focussed objectives (2001: 7).

One positive development – media activists would perhaps argue the only positive development - out of the 1990 Act was the creation of temporary community and event licenses, or Restricted Service Licenses (RSLs), in effect an extension of the pilot scheme commenced in the mid 1980s.

Restricted Service Licenses (RSLs)

RSLs are temporary broadcast licenses groups can obtain for twenty-eight days, concurrently.[66] RSLs can be applied for every six months or once a year in London. Their broadcast power is about 10-20 watts and the range is about three miles in radius. Stations run the gamut from special events like sport and music festivals; religious periods such as Ramadan and Christmas; charity events; student groups; and other neighbourhood organisations. About one fifth of the RSLs in 1999 were sought by primarily-commercial groups testing the waters before applying for a full-time commercial license. Since 1991 when the first RSL went on air, there have been almost 3,000 licenses issued, averaging about 350 per year. Canada and Ireland, in particular, both have similar kinds of allowances for temporary low powered broadcasting. During the experimental phase (1984-1991), RSL licensing tended to disproportionately favour sporting events, but the 1991 legislation relaxed the emphasis on event-based broadcasts and increasingly, more cultural, ethnic and community groups were going on air, even if just for one month out of the year.

The RSLs were crucial in opening up the airwaves for community groups and 'amateurs', even if in such a limited capacity. They also played an important

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[66] See Gordon (2000) for history of RSLs and case study of her station, Luton FM, as well as practical information for those participating in RSLs.

role in developing political support for community radio and served as a training ground for people to learn broadcasting and journalistic skills. Gordon takes issue with the concerns that RSLs actually held off the creation of community radio by focussing attention on radio with little value (2000: 11). She argues:

> RSLs encourage accessibility and access to the airwaves and provide a method for people to understand more about how the media works and following their involvement they may learn and understand some of the debates concerning the media and its influences. However radio implies that there is an audience for what is broadcast, reception as well as transmission. The RSL broadcaster and the RSL listener know that there can be alternatives to mainstream radio (Gordon 2000: 11).

Everitt states: '[a]s well as building skills and experience, RSLs have enabled the sector to develop its' thinking and refine its priorities' (2003: 17).

It should also be noted that this was a period of exceptional land-based pirate radio activity, as well as some offshore pirates in the 1980s.[67] The land-based pirates, however, proved to offer a more diverse portrait of the kinds of neighbourhood radio that could exist. Many were commercial enterprises, though on a much smaller scale as low power operations. But others were in fact community endeavours, finally offering the chance for anyone with an interest but not necessarily the money or experience to get involved in radio. The movement for land-based pirates, or micro-broadcasters, took off in the 1980s largely due to the prevalence of low cost transmitters, kits and antennas that made it feasible and opened up the airwaves to those who could not necessarily raise a quarter of a million pounds, but could scrape together several thousand pounds. Unlicensed broadcasters have continued to impact the debate since, proving time and again there is a need, an audience, an interest, and the space on the dial for more diverse radio. Even with the development of community radio, there will still be a gap pirates will continue to fill. In my neighbourhood in South East London it will no doubt be the lack of African-Caribbean, reggae or garage music, a need not likely to be met

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[67] See Hind and Mosco (1985) for extensive history of the land-based pirates.

solely via community radio given the few frequencies to be issued in London and the club-based commercial activity surrounding many of the stations.

Radio Authority and Access Radio Pilot[68]

After the lack of action following the 1987 Green Paper towards creation of a permanent sector, the CMA and others had maintained their active lobbying pressure throughout the nineties and helped support groups applying for RSLs, but some institutional changes also benefited the cause along the way. Among them, leadership changes at the Radio Authority (RA), then the governing body of radio policy, changes that played a substantial role in shifting the tide of support. The Radio Authority itself actually had a relatively short life span. It was created under the Broadcast Act of 1990 when the Independent Broadcasting Authority (itself in existence since 1955 a year after commercial television was introduced – its name changed to "Broadcasting" from "Television" in 1972 under the terms of the Sound Broadcasting Act) was split into separate radio and television entities. The position of Chair of the Radio Authority came up for renewal in 2000. Previous chairs had been appointed under Thatcher, whose broadcast policy had been focussed on the expansion of commercial radio and unsuccessful attempts to privatise the BBC, and whose first RA Chair, Lord Chalfont, with a background in the military industrial complex, established a group to examine what he perceived as a left wing bias in the media.

As recently as 1999, however, the Radio Authority had rejected a request from the CMA to develop a sector of community radio and implement a pilot project on the grounds it would 'breach the terms of the 1990 Broadcasting Act' (Everitt 2003: 17). Behind the scenes, however, plans were being drawn to rethink past opposition, influenced in part by the incoming chair Richard Hooper, who took over in 2000. Hooper proved to be a much more hands-on chair. One of the first things Hooper did in his post was to create new guidelines for transparency within the organisation. He also invited people to come in and share their concerns about the Radio Authority and what they

would like to see different. The CMA took advantage of this open door, along with other groups. In June of 2000, the RA put forth its plans to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), its sponsoring government body, for a pilot project for community radio, except they pointedly chose to call the project "Access Radio".

Access Radio v Community Radio

The decision to call community radio "Access Radio" was a controversial and politically charged one. According to Steve Buckley: 'The Radio Authority invented this term "Access Radio" and said this is not the same as community radio, it's not a self styled doctrinaire thing called community radio, it is going to be much broader and much more open then that' (2003). This new terminology was a face-saving measure attributable to the fact there were so many in the RA and in Parliament who had been resisting community radio for so long: '[t]hey came up with this device whereby the RA got to claim they invented the whole concept of neighbourhood-based participatory access broadcasting which they couldn't call community radio' (Buckley 2003) .

Hallett also supports the view that the name Access Radio was indeed a political decision whereby the RA could both claim to create something new and not look as though they were giving the CMA what they had been asking for. The CMA was pleased that community radio was moving forward, but unhappy with the change of language and thus dismissal of any recognition of the role the CMA had in its creation. 'They gave us what we wanted but wouldn't call it what it was. It's kind of a bizarre move' (Buckley 2003). The term Access Radio does have some historic roots, but in a manner which denotes something different from the ethos of community radio advocated by the CMA. According to Hallett: 'internationally, the term Access Radio means something specific. It means you can knock on the door of the station and say I want to make a radio programme about this. It's where the community station serves to facilitate publishing. A community station can be that but it doesn't have to' (2005). This is to say that access is defined by having an open

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[68] Greater detail of the legislation and the sector as a whole is further discussed in Chapter 4.

door for any type of content rather then having an open door for content relevant to the stations' mission.[69] The CMA maintained it should be called community radio, but opted to support Access Radio and continued applying pressure to encourage a name change before final legislation.

2000 Communications White Paper Makes Access Pilot a Reality

The 2000 Communications White Paper focussed on digital media, ownership rules and the creation of Ofcom, and has been criticised by many for its emphasis on market liberalisation. With regards to community media, however, it outlined the proposed plans to create Access Radio. Specifically, in Chapter Four, under "Maintaining Diversity and Plurality," subsection 4.4 entitled 'Community Broadcasting,' the DCMS outlined their request for comments on their plan to create "Access Radio" aimed at 'extending the diversity of radio services' (DCMS 2000). The White Paper states clearly the impact of the success of the RSLs and the need to establish greater permanency in such programming:

> [i]n the case of radio services for ethnic minority communities, small-scale radio restricted service licences (RSLs) allow the provision of very local and very niche services. But the constraints on access to non-commercial funding for permanent services have inhibited the growth of a strong community tier of radio. We would therefore like views on whether the benefits of community radio would justify greater public intervention. Some possible benefits are that:
>
> * very local community based radio can help increase active community involvement, and local educational and social inclusion projects;
>
> * small radio stations can provide a nursery for the next generation of broadcasters - providing hands-on training and experience;
>
> * such stations can also satisfy the demand for access to broadcasting resources from specific communities, whether based on locality, ethnic or cultural background or other common interests (DCMS 2000).

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[69] The Access Radio stations in London are the subject of Chapter 4 and will be discussed at length there., including further analysis and detail of the sector as a whole.

The CMA was instrumental in lobbying hard for the inclusion of this section. The push for them now was to garner formal endorsement for inclusion in the forthcoming Communications Act. Between 2000 and 2003, the CMA was able to rally140 signatures from individual MPs and an All-Party Parliamentary group was created on the issue with over 100 MPs signed up. Buckley comments: '[t]here was a lively debate in the House of Lords on community media and in the last stages, senior communications figures spoke out in their own language - not just using the CMA's language' (2003). Cross-party support was growing and proved important in both the creation of a pilot project for community radio and eventual creation of a new sector of community media. Also, in 2001 the CMA published its Community Media Manifesto, outlining their recommendations (CMA 2001).

Full Implementation or Pilot Scheme?

Aside from the name "Access Radio", there were questions as to the status of Access Radio as a pilot project rather then full implementation of a third tier. Government initially wanted to wait until legislation in the 2003 Communications Bill before issuing any licenses, while the CMA and others sought to take full advantage of the momentum and move forward with a pilot project prior to legislation in order that it might inform the legislation. Further issues were over finance. In February 2001, the Radio Authority convened an Access Radio Seminar with representation across the radio sector. According to the report summary, there was general consensus in support of the sector but little agreement on the desired model of funding (Everitt 2003), the most vehement opposition coming from local commercial broadcasters concerned about competition from advertisers should the Access Stations be allowed to take commercial revenue. Despite this opposition, by the next month, the green light was given by government for the Access Radio Pilot scheme, and in May, the public announcement was made and request for proposals issued, with letters of intent due by the end of June, with the intention that stations would be on the air by the end of the year. The formal announcement was made by government in November 2001:

> [w]e recommend that, as a matter of urgency, the Radio Authority identify
> pilot schemes for expanding community radio projects for launch in
> advance of the introduction of legislation to give effect to the proposals in
> the White Paper (DCMS 2001: 10).

The document further outlined support for the need to create a permanent sector of community radio and their support of the establishment of a fund for community radio to help cover costs for stations. The Access Radio Pilot scheme was thus "fast-tracked" to avoid waiting until the upcoming Communications Act with the support of key individuals inside Government who recognised that the establishment of an official tier of community radio would have a better chance if there was a pilot project to demonstrate its viability. Formal evaluation of the pilot project was written into the legislation and was conducted throughout the experiment by Anthony Everitt. The Access Radio stations in London, are the subject of the next chapter.

What is fascinating is that after all the long and seemingly never-ending battles endured by community radio advocates, the first full pilot project for long-term licenses was in effect, thrown together rather quickly. It is amazing how fast things can actually move when there is public support, sympathetic officials and momentum. Interested parties were asked only to submit very brief letters of intent. This was all possible, of course, because there was a network among the CMA and former RSL stations and word of the scheme travelled fast. In all, 192 groups applied for Access radio licenses. Everitt notes that 'almost all of them had practical knowledge of broadcasting having operated RSLs; some were experienced hospital, student or military radio stations' (2003: 4). He went on to note there were some unexpected geographic gaps, especially in Wales as well as a disproportionately low number of African-Caribbean applicants, owing in part to the existence of so many pirates serving Black neighbourhoods.[70]

In short, fifteen stations were granted one year, low power community licenses, each with very different content and missions and representing a cross section of geographic communities and communities of interest. The pilot

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[70] Everitt's report findings and evaluation are taken up the Chapter 4.

projects experimented with a variety of funding models, some advertiser driven. The intention was to 'encourage social inclusion and facilitate greater public participation in broadcasting' (from ARS Report quoted in Everitt 2003: 18). The pilot project was deemed such a success that stations were given automatic renewal of their one year licenses for another twelve month period.

Communications Act 2003 and Community Radio Order 2004

Again, the goal for the fast-track pilot project was the expressed desire to have a complete evaluation of the scheme prepared in time for discussions leading up to the next Communications Act, expected in 2002 but actually issued in 2003. It was felt this would offer the best chance of success for the creation of a new tier for community radio. They were right.

The Communications Act 2003 provides for the licensing of community radio and television, and considers the possibility of a Community Radio Fund to be administered by the newly created Ofcom. The Community Media Association hailed the legislation: '[t]he Community Radio Order legalised a new tier of not-for profit radio stations, enabling communities throughout the UK to use the medium of radio to create new opportunities for regeneration, employment, learning, social cohesion and inclusion as well as cultural and creative expression' (CMA 2003). At the same time, they expressed concerns about funding limitations imposed at the behest of commercial broadcasters, a subject to be considered in the next chapter.

Following on the Act, on 20 July of the following year, the Community Radio Order 2004 was approved by Parliament, and on 1 September, 2004, Ofcom announced the start of the licensing process and availability of the application, details of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

BBC and Community Radio

Compared with the US, the UK analogue radio dial is not as crowded, and frequency allocation has been much more planned then the frenetic licensing

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that took place in the 1930s in the United States. This is partly due to the allocation of large portions of spectrum to the BBC. About half of the available FM spectrum is allocated to the BBC, including the four national services, Nations and Regions, and local BBC stations. The rationale for allocating so much space for BBC services is, in theory, just: the promise and value of ensuring universal access to a publicly funded media is well warranted and consistent with the value of public service broadcasting. However, after many years of simulcasting on AM and FM, the refusal of the BBC to share unneeded spectrum with community-based organisations is increasingly problematic.[71]

Neither was the BBC supportive early on of Access Radio, though it has since changed its stance. Andy Griffee, Controller of BBC English Regions commented in his keynote address at the CMA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November, 2004:

> [t]he knee jerk response of some was to see these new smaller stations as competition, eating into our audience and compromising Aunty's splendid virginity! A more considered response recognised common goals and shared values. And that is our firm policy - a policy which has been warmly endorsed by the BBC's Board of Governors (Airflash 2004: 10).

Ofcom's Lawrie Hallett echoes a note of caution as to whether or not BBC has really changed its mind regarding sharing spectrum with the new community radio stations: 'I'm not entirely convinced that it did. I think it saw [supporting community radio] as a political necessity especially during the period of charter renewal. Although they said in principle they will allow and consider community radio operating within their fiefdom on the FM band, I would say the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I'll believe it when it happens. I suspect they will find reasons to resist as much as they can' (2005).

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[71] Recently, however, the BBC has promised to allow community radio to use BBC spectrum, antenna towers and other technical infrastructure resources (Access station *Resonance FM* in central London currently broadcasts from a BBC antenna tower). Nevertheless, many in the CMA are taking a "we'll believe it when we see it" attitude.

Buckley elaborates on the BBC's earlier forays into community media and how he would characterise their attitude in the past: 'the BBC's attitude to Access Radio is they feel it's something they should have done but they don't know how to' (2003). When the BBC last went through the process of renewing the license fee, they announced they were going to open media centres in the heart of local communities around the country, supporting community media and citizens education. According to Buckley, the BBC was asked to come up with new projects they were going to spend the increase in funding on, placing pressure within the BBC to create new ideas:

> [s]ome BBC chap had been to a conference in the Netherlands and had heard all about community media centres, something we had been working very closely with some Dutch colleagues on. This BBC guy came back from the conference with this idea not realising we'd already been talking about it here. So suddenly the BBC was talking about this but we found it very strange because they didn't actually know what they were doing (Buckley 2003).

The end result was that the CMA and their member organisations were competing with the BBC for public funds for projects to set up mobile buses and build centres with the BBC. Buckley (2003) feels the BBC did not have the local knowledge, infrastructure and grassroots support that the local groups had been building for some time, despite the pre-existence of BBC local radio. As *Sound Radio's* Lol Gellor puts it: '[t]he BBC [is like] an overly enthusiastic puppy' (2005) which gets very excited about creating new projects as their own rather then supporting existing projects. The same people who otherwise support the BBC were concerned that the BBC attempted to supplant their work rather then support it.

There are, of course, a number of examples of BBC local radio working with community FM's in providing advice, training and skills development (*Bradford Community Radio, Unity 24*/Southhampton), paid work placement for community station volunteers with the BBC (*Radio Faza*/Nottingham), programme exchange (*Forest of Dean Community Radio*), and providing BBC news bulletins to community stations (*Wythenshawe FM*/Manchester). Another example is the collaboration between *BBC Radio WM* (West

Midlands) and the Aston Community Association. A staff member at BBC Radio WM worked with a group of young people through the Aston group, whose radio skills and enthusiasm resulted in the group producing a regular weekly programme on WM, which in turn resulted in the group applying for and producing a successful RSL station. The young people also produced a section of the BBC Birmingham website as part of the BBC's *Where I Live* site. Griffee cites this as 'a real glimpse of the future. When existing terrestrial distribution is so inefficient at delivering content to local communities; we can work together to utilise new digital technology too produce and deliver the right content to the right people' (2004: 11).

But others take issue with what they perceive as the BBC's often one-sided interpretation of collaboration. Phil Korbel of *Radio Regen* in Manchester asserts that the value of the collaboration must go both ways and that 'real collaboration takes trust' (2004) and that he felt the BBC was far too protective and did not allow community radio stations access to produce programme content on BBC local radios that were not under direct supervision of the BBC, or replicated the style of BBC. He hopes the BBC will recognize that 'the value of Access Radio is to create new and different kinds of programmes' (ibid) that may have cause and occasion to work with the BBC, but that offer a fundamentally different service that should be regarded in its own right.

This speaks to the longstanding issue of centralised control surrounding the BBC. 'A consequence of this indirect method of [centralised] control, was that all BBC programmes came to reflect a corporate BBC identity, a house-style - safe, reliable, measured, and middlebrow in nature' (Barnard 1989: 15). Griffee acknowledges the BBC's paternal past:

> Aunty Beeb hasn't always been the most engaging and willing of partners during her distinguished life span. A passionate and unswerving commitment to editorial independence somehow created a parallel culture which didn't mix easily with other organisations and institutions. At one stage, even the national driving test wasn't good enough for us - we had to have our own. We had our own hymnbook! And any new piece of technology needed to be taken apart and reassembled before it was stamped – 'BBC approved'! (Airflash 2004).

According to Hallett, the BBC has yet to fully engage with what community radio really means: 'the BBC is a top down monolith despite it pretending not to be. And community radio, if done right, is a ground-up grassroots organisation. There are things they can do together, but they are in fact, different. The problem is, the BBC still doesn't recognise the fundamental difference' (2005).

Community media makers want the BBC to adjust its approach towards community media from a "what we can do for you" attitude to "how we can help each other." There is appreciation that the BBC has backed down from its initial concerns regarding community radio and has not only come to support the initiative but has offered to help. But the overall feeling was that the BBC needed to recognise that community radio could benefit the BBC as well, and not just in terms of a "feel good" approach towards training. It was widely vocalised that community radio offered the BBC a chance for a deeper reflection of what was going on in local neighbourhoods and villages and an opportunity for BBC Local Radio to become more relevant to the communities it served by providing access to not just facilities but to the airwaves.

Buckley argues that 'I think they need us more then we need them' and feels what is actually happening on the ground is that the BBC has come to the local stations looking for trainers and people who understand community outreach (2003). 'When BBC people come to work for community media they have to unlearn some of what they've learned institutionally and to learn how to engage with people and communicate in a different way' (ibid). This speaks to the institutional culture of the BBC and of community radio and how they differ. It speaks to the questions of professionalism permeating the backdrop of such discussions as to what community radio should look and sound like. Can the BBC let go of some of its top-down control and make way for new voices on the air? Or, rather, should it be accepted that there are fundamental differences between the models of broadcasting and neither should try to impose its own standards and modus operandi on the other and that the best broadcast system is a pluralistic one, consisting of a three-tiered plurality

rather then a two-tiered one? Griffee ended his talk at the CMA meeting on a
hopeful note stating '…we can and should do better and I believe working in
constructive partnerships with Community Media projects could be an
immensely valuable way forward for both the BBC and Community Media
(2004: 11).

A Political Report Card

By way of concluding this section of British policy towards community radio,
it is useful to compare developments in community radio policy under each
party. In recent times, community media policy has fared far better under
Labour. Buckley (2003) and Hallett (2005) both cite the change in government
in 1997 as key to the creation of the community radio sector, though Prime
Minister Tony Blair himself has never taken a position. But it was also a
Labour government that shut down the pirates and failed to replace them with
anything more than BBC local radio. Though both parties have shown clear
and often indistinguishable favouritism towards the expansion of commercial
broadcasting of late, the creation of both local and then later national
commercial broadcasting occurred under Conservative Governments. By
comparison, virtually all major television policy, and the creation of new
channels including Channel 4, occurred under the Conservatives and
significantly, that developing television policy was not on Labour's agenda
(Freedman 2004). [72]

US

Early History of Commercial Radio

At the turn of the 19th century, the US led the world in industrial production,
and traditional broadcast historians have thus registered little surprise that it
was in fact a privately-owned, commercial broadcast system that developed.

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[72] As Freedman (2004) states, it should also be noted that Labour was in power only fifteen of
the fifty years under discussion.

However, revisionist historians have since demonstrated it is a fallacy to see the primacy of American commercial broadcasting as "natural," rather that it was a particular policy choice undertaken in the face of other alternatives presented but dismissed by lawmakers (McChesney 1993, Walker 2001). Further, to use the analogy offered by Laurie Hallett with respect to British broadcasting, there exists a parallel history of community and "amateur" radio in the United States as well. Although the commercial network system has remained the dominant structure, there have consistently been pressures from outside and various inroads made at particular junctures to reopen some of the airwaves to non-commercial voices.

Independent Radio

It is important to make a few distinctions here. One significant distinction between community radio in the US and the UK is the use of the concept of "independent" and the emphasis on non-commercial space. "Independent" in a British context primarily refers to independence from government, or in the case of broadcasting, independence from the BBC. The first commercial radio stations were themselves called Independent Local Radio (ILR). In the US, the language of independent media means free from government but also, free from corporate influence and commercial constraints. Whilst some early community radio stations dabbled with the idea of taking on board advertising, the support for community radio, indeed public concern over the lack of quality broadcasting, had everything to do with the thrust of commercialism and public reaction against its worst impulses (Barnouw 1966, Walker 2001). At its worst, the network radio stations aired up to seventeen commercials an hour. In 2004, concerns over the excessive number of ads on the radio intensified. The largest corporate owner of radio stations, Clear Channel, responded to its critics and subsequently announced it would reduce the number of commercials on its stations.

What defined the structure in the US was the patent system - who owned what and who had access to what technology. Marconi himself was notoriously ruthless when it came to enforcing and purchasing patent rights (Barnouw

1966). The deals were complicated and served as a harbinger of the oligopoly to follow. The key companies involved at the very start of American broadcasting (General Electric, Westinghouse) who divested during the last century, have since again become station owners on a much larger scale and are poised to benefit tremendously should limits on media ownership be loosened. The ABC and CBS networks are comprised of both individual stations in addition to operation of a news and syndication network (CBS is now owned by Westinghouse, ABC by Disney), whilst the NBC radio network now exists only as a brand name under which news and sports programming is syndicated (NBC radio was sold-off from its television counterpart by General Electric in 1988 to Westwood One, itself partially owned and wholly controlled by Westinghouse).[73]

Amateur Wireless Clubs

In 1909, the first known amateur radio society in the world was founded in New York City. Called the Junior Wireless Club, LTD, the group of five boys was headquartered at Hotel Anson and then later at one of the member's homes. Within a year, the then-twelve year olds were busy lobbying against the Wireless Bill in the Senate that would have restricted amateur radio activity. This amateur society created an early radio station of their own that went on air in either 1911 or 1913, depending on the source. In this year, 'two members of the New York club established one of the world's first broadcast stations, a crude, homemade apparatus whose arc chamber sometimes threatened to explode...its audience was in the Hudson River, aboard anchored battleships' (Walker 2001: 13).[74]

Assessing the impulse of groups such as the young Wireless Club, Walker notes that:

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[73] NBC radio was purchased by Westwood One Companies, my former employer. The purchase was deemed a financial failure for Westwood and nearly brought the previously successful company to bankruptcy because of its high price tag and low economic returns.
[74] Walker (2001) goes on to recount the extensive role of amateurs in the early development of wireless technology in Chapter 2.

[s]uch groups were formed for mutual education and aid, not to advance an ideology. As apolitical as any other hobby clubs, they espoused, often inchoately, only one political idea: that the airwaves should be open to the public, not monopolized by a powerful few. Not everyone shared this vision. By the end of the 1920's, three nationally based advertising-supported networks- two of them owned by RCA, itself a direct creation of the government-dominated American broadcasting. The amateurs had been shunted aside to their own band, more than adequate for their own purposes but irrelevant to the casual listener. The only political challenge to the status quo came from a loose movement whose chief interest was public uplift, not public access. And, upon failing to prevent Congress from passing the Communications Act of 1934, even this opposition would wither away (2001: 13-14).

Thus, in the first part of the twentieth century, amateur radio clubs sprung up across the country, and ad hoc stations began to emerge – 150 stations in 1905 quickly grew to over 10,000 in 1914. Radio columns and periodicals devoted to the amateur enthusiasts launched. Fiction serials for young adults, such as *The Radio Girls*, by Margaret Penrose, captured the amateur, adventurist zeitgeist for youth: "Every Man a Scientist – or, in the 1910 version, Every Boy an Engineer" (Walker 2001: 16).

Radio Act of 1912

It was a lawless era with all the accompanying romantic iconography, a period unencumbered with legislation and rules. A vast number of amateur, educational and community-oriented radio enthusiasts took to the air. Following the Titanic disaster, in which radio played a key role in disseminating emergency information alongside false reports that flooded the ether during the tragedy, the Radio Act of 1912 brought the first legislation requiring licensing of all stations. It was reasonable for government to step in and bring some organisation to the limited spectrum, and the Radio Act mandated all stations wishing to operate legally must be licensed by the Department of Commerce. However, the end result was that the majority of frequency was reserved for the government and the rest given to corporations. Amateurs were limited to one kilowatt of power and consigned off the public band.

The 1912 Radio Act offered limited authority to government though. They could assign frequencies and set hours of operation but had no power to refuse a license. Thus, the American era of filling up available space was ushered in with no regulation protecting airwaves for amateur purposes or ensuring any public interest obligations met. More than half of the amateurs refused to get licenses thus making them early pirates as others flouted the wattage limits. Barnouw recounts the sentiment from the chief engineer at WWJ, Detroit, Edgar S. Love who comments that among his friends, 'nobody...knew anything about licensing' (1966: 151). Later, the Department of Commerce would acknowledge that had there been resources for enforcement, the amateurs would have become extinct before the war. As happened in Britain, government reclaimed all airwaves during World War One, both commercial and amateur. But the Navy found they needed the amateur's expertise, thus, in 1921, it declared its public support for the amateurs.

The Twenties and Thirties: Monopoly and Legislation[75]

In 1920, KDKA in Pittsburgh was the first professional station, along with WWJ, owned by the Detroit News. The immediate post-war era was defined by the slow emergence of new radio stations for the next two years, marked by a dramatic increase in the number of licenses sought, many of which were launched by newspapers, department stores, small businesses and colleges. Walker notes that 'the change was not immediately obvious. The amateurs might have been pushed off the air, but look who was taking their place! If a marble factory or a chiropractic school could have its own station, how could anyone claim that broadcasting was becoming less open?' (2001: 30).

However, at the same time, the rise of the commercial network model was taking hold. In 1919, RCA was created under the auspices of the federal government as a wholly American owned company, in part to compete with Marconi. RCA was originally owned by General Electric and Westinghouse and existed to bring together otherwise competing interests. AT&T's WEAF,

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[75] For detailed history on this period, see McChesney (1993), Barnouw (1966) and to a lesser extent, Walker (2001).

New York, was the first station to inaugurate "toll broadcasting", or the selling of slots of airtime (rather then individual advertisements) to commercial interests on a regular basis as a way to pay the bills. In 1926, RCA, which by then owned AT&T, created two national networks under the banner of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Called the Red and Blue networks, Blue would later be spun off as ABC (American Broadcasting Company) following antitrust legislation a decade later. The second network, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), was created in 1927. Over time, most of the smaller stations – both small commercial and educational - were sold to the larger companies as the cost of producing a full course of programming and the competition from the big budget syndicated network programs made broadcasting prohibitive for most, especially cash-strapped universities and local governments who had been early adopters of radio. Even New York City eventually sold its radio station owing to the cost of operation.

In summarising this era, McChesney points to three key factors broadcast historians agree on regarding the 1920s: that radio communication was dominated by a handful of large corporations like RCA; the role of Hoover and his resolute belief in the supremacy of developing radio as a private enterprise; and the cohesion of much of the public in support for government intervention due to the unlistenability and interference resulting from the chaos on air, to which Hoover famously remarked that radio was 'one of the few instances that I know of when the whole industry and country is praying for more regulation' (McChesney 1993: 12-13).[76]

McChesney argues that there is little evidence to suggest that, despite this, there was any sense that the private control espoused by Hoover begot the creation of a commercial media oligopoly. In fact, in the mid 1920's, a significant number of stations were owned by not-for-profit organisations such as churches, labour unions, civic groups, schools and universities. Even the stations owned by newspapers and department stores operated for publicity and promotional purposes and not to turn a profit themselves. Significantly,

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[76] See Vaillant (2002) for radio during the progressive era, especially WHA, Wisconsin.

revisionist histories have countered the myth that the development of network commercial radio was inevitable. Rather, they argue it was the outgrowth of very specific policy choices (McChesney 1993, Smulyan 1994, Walker 2001). Walker goes on to state this claim of inevitability sometimes leaves out the practicalities involved for some such as paying the bills. Advertising was in fact sought after by some of the early amateurs and community-based endeavours that still functioned as non-profits. The problem was the extent to which adverts eventually began to flood the early airwaves to popular outcry, and the sheer fact that no alternative was offered. Even RCA's David Sarnoff at one time espoused the view that 'broadcasting should be seen in the same light as libraries, museums and educational institutions' (Lewis and Booth 1989: 38).

By the time the Radio Act of 1927 was issued, the airwaves had broken down into near complete chaos and Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, had held a series of radio conferences prior to discuss options for reining in the unruly spectrum. Hoover could have chosen to allocate more space on the radio dial, but he instead opted for more regulation and the assignment of frequencies among the limited spectrum available. Legislation was influenced by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), itself created to help negotiate better rates for stations with the musicians union, and commercial broadcasters. Educators and non-profit broadcasters were largely left out of discussions. Lastly, as McChesney points out, the bill was intended to protect broadcasting 'as a public domain' and prevent a network 'monopoly on air' (1993: 17). However, the legislation failed to engage with any fundamental discussion of broadcast strategy and policy, and rather, served as a stopgap measure to deal with the immediate issue of space allocation and the criteria for granting licenses was set as the stations that best served the vaguely worded 'public interest, convenience, or necessity' (ibid: 18). One Department of Commerce representative commented that 'the success of radio broadcasting lay in doing away with small and unimportant stations' (McChesney, 1993: 19 as quoted from Federal Radio Commission [FRC] hearings in 1927). Not surprisingly, the few advocates of non-commercial radio present argued

against this, questioning whether profit-motivated broadcasting could fulfil the public service mission of the 1927 Act.

General Order 40

What followed in 1928 was the announcement by the Federal Radio Commission (FRC created in the 1927 legislation and which became the Federal Communications Commission in the 1934 Act) of General Order 40 which reallocated spectrum, greatly reduced the number of stations on air and rid airwaves of the non-profit stations by favouring 'general public service' (Walker 2001: 35) stations over what they called 'propaganda' stations (ibid), whereas propaganda was defined as broadcasters 'more interested in spreading their particular viewpoint then in reaching the broadest possible audience with whatever programming was most attractive' (McChesney 1993: 27). Thus, during the time that John Reith positioned the BBC's public service broadcasting ethos as "giving people want they need, not necessarily what they want," a paternalistic notion of high cultural, educational and citizen-oriented programming, the United States positioned "public service" in purely populist terms as that which served the most number of people.[77] The Order also created a system whereby stations could challenge the license of other stations, thus favouring commercial broadcasters with deeper pockets to spend on legal fees then the non-profit broadcasters. According to McChesney, '[i]t was General Order 40, far more then the Radio Act of 1927, that specifically laid the foundations for the network-dominated, advertising-supported US broadcast system' (ibid 1993: 254).

Further, it is these specific forms of 'propaganda' and 'niche programming' that have been at the heart of the longstanding desire for low power local radio, community radio and Internet broadcasting. The FRC argued: 'There is not room in the broadcast band for every school of thought, religious, political, social, and economic, each to have its separate broadcast station, its mouthpiece in the ether' (McChesney 1993: 27). Thus, any broadcaster not

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[77] It should be noted that in 1931 FRC Commissioners travelled to Britain to meet with Reith and learn about the BBC model, which they later rejected (Lewis and Booth 1989).

motivated by profit was deemed "propaganda" and no such broadcasters were granted licenses. The network system also brought with it the virtual disappearance of local talent due to demand for the high quality national talent on the networks. The Internet, and to a far lesser extent satellite broadcasting, has opened the door for everyone interested to actually have their space in the ether, or in this case, bandwidth. Low Power FM radio allows some specialist voices to have access, and for many, is about bringing communities together. The questions become more complex as high and low power issues around access, resources and audience converge.

Reform Movement Efforts

Over the next few years, the FRC had to clarify and make sense of what exactly it meant by "broadcasting in the public service" and why only commercial enterprises fit such a bill. The FRC had to justify its favouritism of commercial radio in an era during which the public was increasingly frustrated with the number of advertisements flooding the airwaves. During this period, socially significant and successful non-profit, "propaganda" stations like WCFL, *Voice of Labor Radio* in Chicago and WHA, University of Wisconsin, had to fight to maintain their transmitting power and broadcast time.[78] There were active reform movements fighting against what the FRC pursued and the consumer movement was also at the heart of this battle for control.[79]

There were a variety of groups active during the 1930s in promoting non-profit radio. In 1930, Carnegie funded the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education (NACRE) that called for more educational programming on air. NACRE was criticised for not challenging the structure of the commercial radio system and seeking instead institutional change from within. There was also the competing and more radical National Committee on Education by

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[78] See (Godfried 1997) on WCFL Radio.
[79] See McChesney (1993) and chapters in Hilmes and Loviglio, ed (2002) for more on Progressive Era media reform movements.

Radio (NCER) who argued for the reservation of non-commercial spectrum.[80] Some reformers looked to the BBC as an example. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) advocated for more minority voices. But the crux of the reform movement was about liberal not radical change and was comprised of elites not populists.

As to be expected, some of the most exciting forms of opposition came via stations themselves. In addition to stations like WHA and WCFL, WBKY in Beattyville, Kentucky was radio for the "hill people." Broadcasting out of the University of Kentucky, the station was on air only nine short months in 1940 due to few listeners because of poor reception owing to the technical difficulties of the hilly terrain. Nevertheless, the station operated as a community model station run by the local college and had resonance as a model for other communities even if their own efforts were not successful over the long haul. As Walker notes: '[s]uch localism was rare' (2001: 43).

It is worth mentioning these stations because though small in numbers, they offered a vision of what could have been. They also demonstrate that forms of resistance did occur, despite the sheer dominance and power in the hands of commercial broadcasters. Further, these stations and supporters show the impetus and practice of community radio extend back as far as the technology itself. Lastly, these stations show the rise of the tensions between local and network programming were only to be exacerbated and that form the key debate for the new FCC Chair who is soon to take office. And in the end, the system 'made the salesman the trustee of the public interest, with minimal supervision by a commission' (Barnouw quoted in Lewis and Booth 1989: 42).

Communications Act of 1934 and Aftermath

The 1934 Communications Act crystalised the commercial network system that was already in practice and gave the commercial lobby everything they wanted in exchange for a nominal concession to study the notion of reserving

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[80] See McChesney (1993) chapter 3 regarding Payne Fund and the creation of the NCER and chapter 4 for extensive overview of other groups and individuals efforts against the FRC.

some spectrum for non-commercial radio. What was vague and non-specific in the 1927 Act and General Order 40 was now solidified in favour of the corporate oligopolies. Though we will see in the following decades that many individual stations emerged in opposition to the system and as alternatives to it, it was not until 1948 and the development of FM radio that any preservation of spectrum came to fruition.

As McChesney states, it is important to think about this era not only with regards to the system that was imposed and emerged victorious, but to 'discredit the notion that the American people went along with the establishment of the status quo without a glimmer of dissent' (1993: 252). He further derides previous scholarship that failed to account for the extent to which there was an active non-profit sector during the 1920s. And as Walker and McChesney point out, there were numerous examples of stations operating outside the commercial model that were punished via this legislation.[81] 'It was these non-profit broadcasters who formed the backbone of the emerging broadcast reform movement of the 1930s, to be joined by intellectuals, civic activists, elements of the labor movement, and elements pf the press' (McChesney 1993: 255). Further, 'this broadcast reform movement generated a thorough and compelling critique of the limitations of a regulated capitalist broadcasting set-up for a democratic society' (ibid: 256). The reform movement failed, according to McChesney, because of 'political incompetence' (ibid: 261) and elitist sympathies rendering key organisers unable or uninterested in garnering the kind of broad public support and grassroots activism necessary to counter the force and financial strength of the commercial network lobby. He goes on to qualify that the Depression Era complicates the analysis because it was in part to blame for the failure of reformers – the viability of a self-sustaining commercial industry was attractive in light of the economic crisis. On the other hand, the Depression legitimated the kind of anti-corporatism espoused by reformers and the New Deal era validated government participation in industry.

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Other legislative efforts came close to being enacted but Congress chose to back industry over public interest. In 1931, government almost created a national non-profit 50,000 watt labour station operated by the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) based on their successful Chicago station, but this was eliminated at the behest of industry via closed door meeting with congressional leaders. The Wagner-Hatfield Amendment to the 1934 Act would have required twenty-five percent of broadcast channels be reserved for non-profit use. It failed in the end after pressure from the commercial broadcast lobby, a recurring blockade to regulatory change in the years to come. McChesney summarises the prevailing ideology espoused by industry to nullify reformers: 'The corporate media have encouraged the belief that even the consideration of alternatives was tantamount to a call for totalitarianism' (1993: 265).

Introduction of FM and New Radio Spaces: Pacifica and Class D Licenses

In the post-war 1940s, there were reinvigorated efforts that would transform community radio, the left-wing movement and the FM dial. The Pacifica Foundation was created in 1946 by Lewis Hill, a pacifist and war-resister.[82] While serving out his sentence for refusing the draft in a labour camp, he had become a ham operator. The early prospectus of the Pacifica Foundation emphasised fairness and public service in response to a ruling by the FCC that stations must not advocate for a particular viewpoint and must allow the airing of more then one point of view. This Mayflower Decision was the precursor to the Fairness Doctrine, enacted in 1949, which was controversially abolished under Reagan in the 1980s.[83] Hill thus played down his political ideology in

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[81] See Hilmes and Loviglio (2002) for chapters on many early American radio programmes and movements.

[82] For extensive history of the birth of Pacifica, see Lasar (2000). NB, ideological background into Pacifica and its mission will be covered in Chapter 5, where the Los Angeles Pacifica station KPFK is the case study.

[83] See Lasar (2000: 46-47) for detail of the case. The repercussions of this decision can be felt in the resulting domination of AM radio by right wing talk, the strongly biased Fox television network, and the disproportionate number of conservative voices virtually unchallenged on the air. Liberal talk show network Air America also emerged from this tradition.

his application for a license and emphasised the rights of diverse viewpoints to be heard on air.

The Pacifica Foundation's first applications for an AM license were denied on the grounds there was no room on the dial in the Bay Area. Hill controversially, and as a last-ditch effort to get on air, and in deference to the numerous financial backers who had been funding his lobbying and application efforts, decided to apply for an FM license knowing few people actually owned FM receivers at the time. Hill relocated his station plans from location in a working class neighbourhood to Berkeley, where there existed a better chance of acquiring a license and where there lived more people likely to have the means to afford an FM receiver. Berkeley was then, and is still, a dichotomous and polarised city with both working class and minority citizens and an affluent educated class associated with the university. Hill's application was still politically controversial and nothing of this sort of community station had been granted full license in a major city since the pre-1934 era.

In the early days of FM, however, no one at the FCC thought the spectrum would be of any use to the public because it required people to buy new receivers and stations to undergo expensive changes to make the switch. However, FM offered much better audio quality and new stations were far less expensive to build technically. Between an un-interest in FM and the focus of attention on the new medium of television, KPFA was granted its license in Berkeley, California. A station in Los Angeles, KPFK, would follow in ten years time and then stations in New York, Washington DC and eventually Houston would complete the five station network, which also currently syndicates, among other shows, two widely respected and popular programmes: progressive news (*Free Speech Radio News*) and a morning public affairs show (*Democracy Now!*). Aside from the community-oriented ethos and diverse and politically oriented programming on KPFA, the stations also pioneered the non-commercial funding model of listener-sponsorship, an area that will be taken up in Chapter 5.

Class D Licenses and Set-Aside Spectrum

In 1948, the government agreed to set aside a small portion of the new FM dial for non-commercial usage. Though its impact would not be felt until the 1960s when FM became popular, were it not for the lack of governmental and commercial vision over the new technology, it is unlikely such a set-aside would have been granted. 1948 also brought about the establishment of ten watt, low-power non-commercial radio licenses for educational use by community organisations, high schools and colleges. Full-power stations were required to broadcast at a minimum of 250 watts. Ironically, these non-commercial FM licenses were not opposed by incumbent broadcasters when first issued because, again, of the perceived unpopularity of the FM band in an era in which AM reigned and the television era was on the horizon.

In 1940, the FCC made its first allocation of reserved channels for non-profit use. Such allotments were increased in 1945, and the system codified a few years later with the creation of the Class D license. There was a slow but steady increase over the next decades of Class D and by the time they were effectively eliminated at the behest of National Public Radio in 1978, there were 384 FM and 28 AM low power educational broadcasters across the country. The stations were relatively inexpensive to operate and not too technically demanding to get started.

By the end of the 1930s, there were only a few dozen community radio stations left, most of which were low power stations broadcasting during the day only. In the 1940s, the commercial broadcast networks were under pressure to divest, the FM dial was being reassigned to make room for television, and simulcasting was legitimised for AM operators with no requirements for any original programming on the new frequencies.[84]

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[84] Ironically, this is what is happening today with the forthcoming digital switchover. Unlike the UK, where room has been made for five times as many stations on the digital dial, the US, under intense pressure from incumbent broadcasters, has created a system that explicitly limits the possibilities - the digital spectrum will mirror the existing dial thus improving sound quality and reception but eliminates the possibility for new stations to go on air even though the technology allows room for new stations as evidenced by the UK example.

Significantly, the opening up of the airwaves brought about via FM resulted in a number of "black music" stations going on air. Because at the time, many African Americans could not afford televisions, radio remained a well-utilised and profitable medium for traditionally underserved minority groups. Radio serving minority communities flourished during the late forties and fifties and developed as an important part of the fabric of many communities, and radio aimed at African Americans also made money, making it a popular format for station owners as well as audiences.[85] However, few stations were owned by non-whites, exploitation was rampant and profit the bottom line for most operations: '[e]veryone's money was the same colour' (Rothenbuhler and McCourt 2002: 373). Despite this, the stations were a source of pride for many of the neighbourhoods they served.

Another alternative existed in the form of border radio stations, also known as "Border Blasters". Not unlike the offshore and continental pirates transmitting into Britain, numerous stations have set up operations over the years in Mexico where there is a higher limit on the amount of power a stations can operate, thus affording stations to transmit from across the border to reach large portions of the south west. Stations were given call letters beginning with "XE", the standard in Mexico but something that added to their mystique in the US (Fowler and Crawford 2002: 9). As the title of Fowler and Crawford's book suggests, *Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics and other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves*, such stations ran the programming gamut. The stations began in the thirties, many carried on during the war, continued in popularity during the FM hey-day of the sixties and seventies, and even today some commercial stations transmit out of Mexico.[86] The beloved Wolfman Jack, one of the strongest personalities associated with 1960's radio, made his mark on a border station, as did many evangelists, some nefarious.

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[85] See Barlow (1999).
[86] There still exists legal border radio stations, most noticeably in San Diego, California where there is only one non-commercial station on air in the frequency reserved for public radio because that space is filled with two popular commercial stations serving San Diegans. Even the college stations in the region have no space on the dial.

Sex and Broadcasting: Enter the Entrepreneurs of the Free Love Era

Between the advent of FM and the creation of national public radio, there were full-power community radio stations licensed in addition to the Pacifica stations. *Sex and Broadcasting*, Lorenzo Milam's (1988) infamous book chronicling the days of his sojourn into non-commercial radio development, was so called, as Milam puts it, because his great aunt thought he'd sell more books with "sex" in the title. First written in 1975 and reprinted since, it features a chaotic collection of essays and excerpts from various programme guides of stations he put on air meant as part "How To" for community radio and part autobiography.

As Milam himself points out, the term "community radio" as a format was not to take hold until the seventies. What Milam, his radio partner Jeremy Lansman and others put on air were, in Milam's own words 'stations for the elite - those who wanted vigorous discussion, strong commentaries, shit-kicking interviews, and rich and controversial musical programming' (Walker 2001: 70). As Walker puts it: '[i]f Lew Hill [of Pacifica] fathered the movement, Lorenzo Milam reared it' (ibid). The wacky sensibility of the stations that emerged during this time can be found in the call letters themselves: KRAB, KFAT, KCHU, WAIF, WORT, KDNA, KTAO, KUSP, etc. In 1974, Milam, himself white, handed the license of a station he had helped start to black programmers in response to racial tensions. The station, KPOO-San Francisco, became the first black-owned and operated non-commercial radio station in the country and is still on air today.

Milam's particular network of local stations became known as the KRAB Nebula. Milam operated in an unorthodox manner, occasionally selling a profitable station to start two new ones. What his era represents most of all is the return of non-professional broadcasters on air and the focus on local programming and a local texture to the stations, despite the presence and ownership of a non-permanent local figure. The best of Milam's vision is epitomised here:

[l]ocal, *live* programming! Used to be the bell-weather [sic] on FCC renewal forms. Local and live. The best that you can offer your community. They deserve it: their own voice. If you are broadcasting some flute and guitar and poetry reading live in your front studio, or if you are interviewing some codger on the history of your community – and it doesn't have the smooth-and-silky of that tape you heard from the British Broadcasting Corporation last year: remember that you are only trying to compensate for 40 years of American broadcasting hurt by government inattention, and commercial exploitation – an exploitation as deep as the exploitation of the land, air, and water (Milam 1988: 73).

Thus, on an individual basis, high-powered alternatives to the commercial model began to emerge on the FM dial, in addition to university-owned stations. Some, at the behest of charismatic people with a vision like Lewis and Milam, others out of a grassroots impulse inspired by the community-minded, local stations birthed elsewhere.[87] Most non-commercial stations were low power, Class D educational stations in need of resources.

1970s: Corporation for Public Broadcasting and National Public Radio

In 1950, the Kellogg Foundation funded a five-year pilot scheme to develop a tape-sharing programme by which non-commercial stations could exchange material. Foundations had also funded various conferences and boards for educational radio, but by the mid-1950s, educational television was taking precedence for these resources.[88] In fact, the earliest incarnation of what would become the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 was initially envisioned to serve just television. "Broadcasting" replaced "television" only after the National Educational Radio (NER), and offshoot of the NAEB (National Association of Educational Broadcasters), went on the offensive. Commercial broadcasting executive Herman W. Land wrote a commissioned piece called *The Hidden Medium*, documented educational radio's status and future potential.[89]

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[87] The crisis that was to impact Pacifica during the seventies will be briefly discussed in Chapter 5. See also Lasar (2000) and Engleman (1996).
[88] See also Engleman (1996) for history CPB and Public Radio.
[89] See Engleman (1996) for his account of the efforts of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) throughout the post-war era, in addition to McChesney 1993).

Radio was thus inserted as a last minute addition. One of the creations of the 1967 Act was the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) that distributes government funds to non-commercial, educational broadcasters. The legislation required the presidentially appointed, 15-member board to be bi-partisan and forbade the CPB from owning or operating stations or distributing or producing programming. As a result, two separate entities were created to serve as broadcast networks, first, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) for television, then three years later, National Public Radio (NPR).[90] At long last, a sector was created for non-commercial, public radio, funding for non-profit radio granted, and a non-governmental agency created to administer and oversee.[91]

NPR's first director, William Siemering felt public radio needed to distinguish itself from both the existing educational and commercial radio models. NPR had populist roots and made a name for itself in the early 1970s with their thought-provoking coverage of the Vietnam War, protests and student movements. It developed a model whereby individual stations became affiliates and NPR a programme distributor and network organiser, unlike PBS, which was not allowed to produce programmes, only distribute them. NPR itself does not own radio stations, however. Despite its early intentions, the NPR network, under financial and political pressure, developed in a way that eventually moved further away from its more diverse, innovative and progressive roots and it increasingly took on a more corporate model and content. The emphasis on listener funding begat pressure to sustain the largest and most financially solvent audience and serious threats that began in the 1980s under the Reagan administration to cut off funding to the CPB, not unlike Thatcher's desire to privatise the BBC, and continues today. This pressure looms large in the internal decision-making structure.

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[90] See Looker (1995) and Engelman (1996) for accounts of the birth of NPR, especially the role of its first head, William Siemering. He grew up in the shadows of one of the earliest educational stations, WHA, Wisconsin, and valued the role educational radio could play in a community.
[91] The Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, somewhat independent entity though largely controlled by the White House under Johnson, was key to the decision-making and development of the structure of the CPB (Walker 2001: 134). See Engelman (1996) for detail.

When the CPB was first created, some community stations were not interested in taking their money for fear of becoming dependent on a federal funding structure that favoured large stations becoming larger with little vision for the smaller stations. In 1974, the National Alternative Radio Konvention (NARK) – out of which later emerged the National Association of Community Broadcasters - convened with about 25 people representing a number of non-profit radio stations. There, a decision was taken to organise under the collective concept of "community radio". The coalition included among others, Native American stations launched in the early 1970s, Hispanic stations, rural stations, the KRAB Nebula stations and a new wave of college radio stations. Closer ties developed between the CPB and community stations with many college stations became NPR affiliates. Public Radio International (PRI) and Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) both developed into alternative program providers for NPR affiliate and non-affiliate stations.

The concerns regarding CPB also materialised as funding requirements sought to homogenise the sound and structure of the stations via centralisation and "professionalisation", tensions that would develop into full scale conflict and crisis over the future of community radio and would result in the emergence of the Grassroots Radio Network (GRN), and play an equally large role in the crisis at Pacifica radio.[92] The lack of racial representation, the support for diversity and conflicts at individual stations around race were also important issues at the centre of tensions surrounding CPB's increasingly commercially-minded pressures placed onto stations seeking funding. It is important to also note that there was opposition and concern around the CPB, and that many stations organised around the creation of an alternative ideology to counter the more homogenised national vision being promoted.

From 1978 to Present: NPR and Class D Revisited

As discussed, a system of low power educational licenses was authorised in 1948. However, these Class D licenses were eliminated in 1978 at the behest

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[92] As discussed in Chapter 5.

of National Public Radio.[93] As NPR planned its expansion throughout the United States, they were concerned these small stations would be in the way as they began to build a national network into yet un-served regions. The FCC offered Class D stations the chance to upgrade or go off air. Forty percent received upgrades, and those that did not were rejected on the basis of interference with incumbents or other engineering issues.[94] Although NPR argued that they did not wish for stations to close, that is what resulted.

What is especially interesting is that some broadcasters argued their low power status allowed them to better serve their community and that such stations were cheaper to run and required less technical skills and fundraising. Thus, there was less pressure to adhere to a more formulaic model. A system with large non-profit radio stations meant it was easier for NPR to bring national programming to more areas and consolidate its membership. A system in which both models could co-exist would have been ideal, but did not happen at this time. Today, in the US, there are only approximately 200 community radio stations in existence, out of about 12,000 total stations nationwide.[95]

College Radio

College radio has also been an important space for non-commercial broadcasting. Today there are in effect two discrete strands of stations licensed to colleges. There exist college stations run by students that are primarily music-based and are important sites for the development of new music and alternative formats as well as for students to participate in the management and programming of their own station. There are also a vast number of NPR affiliate stations whose license is held by universities and community colleges, something that has caused tensions of late owing to the fact that most NPR stations with university-held licenses offer limited access and opportunity for

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[93] See text of FCC docket No. 20735 (FCC 1978) ruling to change rules related to non-commercial broadcasting: "[t]his proceeding was…stimulated by a petition from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting".
[94] See Riismandel (2002) for discussion of the elimination of Class D licenses.
[95] By contrast, NPR affiliates benefited the most from the obscure rules- almost the entire US population has access to a signal that carries NPR programming, and many towns have several stations that carry NPR but no community station carrying local news.

student participation and hardly any (if any at all) access to programming and station operation.

Free Radio Berkeley and the Pirate Movement

In 1986, housing rights activist Mbanna Kantako set up a radio station to serve the African-American community of Springfield, Illinois. The station, WTRA, Radio of the Tenants' Rights Association, began as a community organizing tool for the housing project. The station was ignored by authorities for several years, until it broke a story about what ended up being a high profile police brutality case. When agents came to shut down the station, Kantako went downtown to the federal building and the police station and dared officials to arrest him. When authorities realized such a course of action could backfire in the increasingly tense situation, they left him alone for many years, spurring many to realize the FCC was not always ready to enforce its own regulations. WTRA is now known as Human Rights Radio and continues to broadcast without a license, even after a raid of its equipment in 1999.[96]

Inspired by Kantako and others, a movement of pirate radio broadcasters emerged in the 1990s that directly challenged the government's policy of ignoring low power and community radio concerns. Micro-broadcasters achieved some surprising victories in the courts, which threw into doubt the validity of the licensing system itself.[97] Of significance was the case put forward by micro-broadcaster Stephen Dunifer of Free Radio Berkeley, whose case compelled the court to strongly consider whether, as he claimed, under the stewardship of the FCC the public airwaves had become 'a concession stand for corporate America' (Dunifer 2004). Though Dunifer's case was ultimately lost in the courts, a great deal of momentum was created and many otherwise law-abiding citizens were taking to the airwaves without a license as a form of protest against corporate domination of media.

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[96] Human Rights Radio can be found online at www.humanrightsradio.net/

Dunifer is an electrical engineer from Berkeley, California who became frustrated with the pro-Pentagon tenor of mainstream reporting during the first Gulf War in 1991. In response, he built a transmitter from scratch and carried it in a backpack up to the hills above Berkeley and began broadcasting. In time, the station began serving as community station, open to programmers who contacted Dunifer and wanted to get involved. After a few years of covert broadcasting, Dunifer was caught by the FCC and fined $20,000. He vowed to continue broadcasting and publicly refused to pay the fine. The FCC then took him to court seeking an injunction against him.[98]

His 1993 case was a turning point for the free radio movement. The National Lawyers Guild took his case, arguing the regulations were unconstitutional on the basis of the First Amendment right to free speech. They argued that the United States' model of telecommunication regulations allows only a wealth-based broadcasting system and that the dominance of media by corporate interests is not accidental but is inherent in the design of the current regulatory framework. Dunifer made the claim that microradio is the "leaflet of the Nineties" and that to disallow it is tantamount to censorship. Free Radio Berkeley won an important Ninth Federal District Court decision in 1995 in which Judge Claudia Wilken refused to grant an injunction against Dunifer pending review of the constitutionality of current FCC licensing practices.[99] It took four years for the case to make its way back through the system and in the meantime, Dunifer continued broadcasting in a quasi "not legal but not illegal" state. Dunifer eventually lost the case on technical grounds, as, since he had never actually applied for an FCC license, he was thus never officially denied one, according to the court's ultimate decision.

During the time his case was pending, however, hundreds of people across the country took advantage of the apparent lapse in the FCC's authority to regulate the airwaves and began their own unlicensed broadcasting. Accurate numbers

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[97] "Microradio" is the term favoured by Dunifer. He is strongly against the term "pirate radio", arguing it is the commercial broadcasters who have stolen the airwaves.
[98] See Dunifer (2004) for website of Free Radio Berkeley for detail.
[99] For more detail on the case, see National Lawyers Guild (2004) for recap and links to legal documents online.

are difficult to come by, but it seems upwards of 1,000 pirate radio stations were in operation across the country in the early 90s, echoing Dunifer's call to see "a thousand transmitters bloom". 'Many of these pirates saw their broadcasts as acts of civil disobedience against a corporate-based broadcast system that ignored the needs and interests of local communities while many others just took advantage of the grey regulatory area to have fun on air' (Tridish and Coyer 2004: 293). Riismandel cites an organiser with Iowa City Free Radio as an example of the disparity in rationale for those who took to the air during this period: 'I didn't appreciate the assumptions that "we're all here to promote revolution" and to "fuck the FCC"' (2002: 427). There were also conservative religious and politically right-wing stations that emerged, including some stations run by white supremacists. Riismandel goes on to state: '[w]hat unites these microbroadcasters [sic] is the systematic exclusion of them and their audiences - who frequently are also participants - from their local media, be it commercial or public, radio or television' (ibid).[100]

That said, there were indeed a vast number of politically left-wing pirates who organised en masse to send a message to the government. Spearheaded by Dunifer and *Free Radio Berkeley* on the West Coast and organiser Pete Tridish and *Radio Mutiny* based in West Philadelphia on the East Coast, they began to mobilise. When *Radio Mutiny's* studio transmitter was seized by FCC agents, the group responded by demonstrating outside the Liberty Bell in downtown Philadelphia. Activists with *Mutiny* organised a conference of micro-broadcasters and the "Showdown at the FCC" in which 150 pirates gathered in Washington, DC, in October 1998.[101] The highlight of the demonstration was a pirate radio broadcast on the steps of the national headquarters of the FCC.

By the late 1990s, the FCC had begun a serious crackdown on pirates across the country. But the sheer number of new pirate operators, and the community support many enjoyed, put the new FCC Chairman William Kennard in an awkward position. 'As the chief guardian of an orderly spectrum, he could not

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[100] See also Opel (2004).
[101] Photos and more on the demonstration can be found at Prometheus (2004) and Flugennock (2004).

allow open rebellion against the FCC's allocation system' (Tridish and Coyer 2005). Kennard admitted, however, that the pirates had some legitimate concerns regarding the concentration of media ownership and lack of community access to the airwaves: '[the pirates] demonstrated that diverse voices weren't being heard on conventional radio' (Markels 2000). The FCC Chairman announced he would prioritize creation of legitimate opportunities for new voices on the radio dial. Robert McChesney put it this way, stating: '[the pirates] showed the FCC that low-power broadcasting is here whether you like it or not. And that they're going to have to deal with it' (quoted in ibid).

This movement of pirate radio activism took hold in the period prior to and around the passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, a time during which corporate influence suffused commercial radio, and public radio became increasingly national in focus and "beige" in sound. Many large community radio stations experienced internal conflicts between guiding principles of community access versus encroaching corporatism.[102]

Kennard and the FCC under Clinton

True to his word, Kennard had the FCC respond by examining their allocation rules. Kennard, the first African-American FCC Chair, was particularly troubled by the effects of media consolidation on minority ownership of media, which had dramatically dwindled - from already proportionally low figures - since passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, which removed limitations on the number of stations a single company could own nationally, and increased the number of stations a company could own in a single market, thus making radio a significantly more financially viable medium for corporations to profitably exploit. Kennard also stated publicly his interest in studying the possibility of creating a new service of low power FM radio, to finally replace the Class D licenses that had been abolished in 1978.

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[102] Some of which will be taken up in Chapter 5.

When the FCC opened up their window for public comments on the proposed LPFM service, a record was set for public participation. There were over 3,500 formal comments on FCC docket 99-25, overwhelmingly in favour of the new service.[103] The FCC normally receives tens of thousands of informal inquiries each year from individuals and non-profit organizations and churches interested in starting a local radio station. 'The formal comments were often dozens and sometimes hundreds of pages long, with elaborate engineering schemes, a variety of suggested allocation methods and documentation of enormous support for the concept' (Tridish and Coyer 2005: 297). The FCC staff was excited at the prospect of such 'invigorated citizen participation' (ibid) and promised to make every effort to build the LPFM service if the FCC's engineers found it to be technically feasible, which they subsequently did.

Earlier low-power Class D licenses had been assigned to the portion of the FM bandwidth reserved for non-commercial broadcast, namely, the far-left hand side of the dial between 87.7 and 91.9. This is where most National Public Radio, Pacifica, college and other non-commercial radio stations are located to this day. Significantly, what the FCC was now considering was a rethinking of the radio dial as a whole. The FCC proposed to make available unused dial space situated *between* existing channels *across* the dial, space the pirate broadcasters had demonstrated was accessible without causing interference to existing stations. And on January 26th, 2000, the bipartisan Federal Communications Commission voted to approve the creation a new low power FM service.[104]

Prometheus Radio Project

The Prometheus Radio Project provides legal, technical and organizational support for Low Power FM (LPFM) broadcasters and community groups

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[103] See FCC (1999) for text of docket 99-25.

[104] By law, the composition of the FCC includes three members from the party of the President and two from the opposition party, thus the FCC is assured to be bipartisan with the majority in

interested in starting their own station. Prometheus was instrumental in campaign efforts to create the original low power radio service in 2000 and remains a key organisation at the centre of current efforts to expand the service. Significantly, they were also the lead plaintiff in the successful lawsuit filed in 2003 against the FCC (*Prometheus Radio Project v FCC*) that blocked attempts at rule changes to allow further consolidation of media ownership.[105]

In addition to extensive touring and public speaking on behalf of LPFM and community media (including community wireless networks), Prometheus hosts semi-regular "Radio Barnraisings". Evoking the tradition of neighbours coming together to build a barn, the Radio Barnraisings bring radio practitioners, enthusiasts, engineers, producers and technical geeks together over the course of a long weekend to literally build a radio station from the ground up. At the end of the weekend, the switch is ceremonially flipped and the station goes live on air in front of an enthusiastic crowd. Prometheus has held seven such barnraisings and average approximately 100-200 participants including members of the local community and dozens of people who travel in from around the country.

Prometheus was founded in 1998 by Pete Tridish and other Philadelphia-based media activists.[106] Tridish, his pirate radio name, had been an organiser with a neighbourhood-based community radio station he also helped found, West Philadelphia's *Radio Mutiny*.[107] Though his roots are in the pirate radio movement and he supports pirate radio as a necessary alternative to the current closed system, Prometheus' focus is on promoting licensed low power radio (Tridish 2004). Tridish argues broadcasting 'shouldn't just be for the reckless' (2004). In qualifying that, he tells a story of a woman in his neighbourhood from Eritrea who wanted to present a programme for recent African immigrants on *Radio Mutiny*: '[t]he day before she was going to start her

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the Presidents' favour. All FCC commissioners are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.
[105] See Chapter 1.
[106] Pete Tridish's real name is Dylan Wrynn.
[107] *Radio Mutiny*'s studio was located inside the home Tridish shares with other activists.

show, she called and said she couldn't do it because she was scared. She didn't have US citizenship and would have been risking possible deportation if she was there when the FCC came to seize the station. There were a number of cases like that, and it broke our hearts that the station we built could not benefit all members of the community' (Tridish 2004).

Prometheus is both an effective advocate and policy expert group working within government circles and the liberal funding and media reform world; and an activist organisation working with grassroots supporters and radio practitioners embodying a strong DIY ethos and tongue-in-cheek spirit, as evidenced in their self-description on their webpage (Prometheus 2005):

> [t]he Prometheus Radio Project draws its name from the mythological Greek character who stole fire from the gods in order to share it with humans. We are a not-for-profit association dedicated to the democratization of the airwaves through the proliferation of non-commercial, community based, micropower radio stations. It is our belief that access to communications for all citizens is at the heart of a democratic society.
>
> By the way, the gods were not exactly pleased with Prometheus so they chained him to the side of a mountain and then conspired with an eagle to ensure that the bird would visit Prometheus every day and rip out his liver. The liver would regenerate over night because of Prometheus' immortality.
>
> Go figure...

It is worth paying special attention to the work of Prometheus at this stage because of the role they have played since 1998, and continue to play, in the movement for LPFM, community-based media and media reform.[108] Also, it is important to note the significance key organisations and individuals have played in both the UK and US towards establishment and growth of low power community radio.

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[108] Prometheus is itself the subject of a PhD study by Christina Dunbar-Hester at Cornell University (2003, 2007 forthcoming).

The NAB and "Oceans of Interference"[109]

Incumbent broadcasters argued against LPFM, claiming that any new stations, no matter how low their power, would dramatically increase interference and result in a loss of service area for their stations. In its written public statement in response to the FCC's announced creation of the LPFM service, the NAB made it's position clear: "[t]he FCC has violated its most sacred trust to the American consumer. It has turned its back on spectrum integrity. The plan to cram in hundreds, if not thousands, of low power FM stations will create unacceptable interference across the radio dial'.[110] LPFM proponents, including FCC engineers, claimed the amount of interference that could be caused by the new stations was so small it would make virtually no difference to the overall radio environment.[111] The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) tried to counter the extensive engineering studies the FCC had undertaken to support their approval of the new service stating: "any interference is unacceptable interference", and claiming LPFMs would result in an "ocean of interference".[112] Ironically, broadcasters themselves would not be able to live up to that standard. There exists a certain amount of interference a full power station creates as a matter of routine practice which surpasses the interference 100 watt LPFM stations would create, including that from side-band radio stations, low power stations operating at a different frequency on spectrum to the left and right of existing channels in the US (Tridish and Coyer 2005).[113] Additionally, digital radio, which began rolling out in 2004 and which the broadcast lobby has been aggressively pushing for, creates demonstrably more interference to existing FM signals than low power FM could. More importantly, Kennard saw through the claims of interference: '[t]he FM service isn't rocket science...it's 50-year-old

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[109] See Prometheus (2005) for detail on engineering issues.
[110] Statement online found in Fritts (2000).
[111] Text of argumentation from the National Association of Broadcasters found online in NAB (2000).
[112] It should be noted that arguments surrounding questions of interference have been criticised as flawed from the start by groups like Prometheus. Standards for interference date back to 1962, well before modern noise filters and digital program buttons on receivers were introduced.
[113] There are a number of foreign language stations on side band FM. Specifically, Iranian side band stations are discussed in Chapter 5.

technology that we've studied exhaustively. This is not about technical interference, it's about incumbents trying to hoard their piece of the broadcasting pie' (Markels 2000).

In their fight to pressure Congress to block the FCC's plan for LPFM, the NAB distributed a compact disc to Members of Congress that purported to show what two radio stations close on the dial would sound like competing to be heard on the radio, but what was presented was actually the sound of two audio tracks laid on top of each other produced in a studio using a mixing board and not off the radio. The FCC Chiefs of the Office of Engineering and Technology and the Mass Media Bureau, Dale Hatfield and Roy Stewart respectively, responded strongly: '[t]his CD demonstration is misleading and is simply wrong' (FCC 2000). The NAB eventually pulled the recording off their website, claiming they had clearly stated it was a simulation from the start.[114] What remains on their site as of January, 2005 is other apparently misleading examples of manufactured "white noise" distortion, over both a recording of Mozart's Symphony 25 and a Johnny Cash song. The NAB states these recordings demonstrate 'the effects that noise and hiss would have on audio quality'.[115]

Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act

As a result of the extensive pressure from the NAB and NPR, the Preservation Act was passed by Congress after it was attached to a "must-pass" spending bill in late 2000. At the same time, Congress authorised another engineering study to be conducted by the Mitre Corporation, a company often commissioned by Congress to conduct a variety of studies into uses of government funds and resources.[116] The Act created a "third adjacency" requirement on LPFMs. Basically, the FCC engineers found that a 100 watt LPFM station could go on air at, for example, 103.9 so long as there were no

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[114] See NAB (2000a).
[115] Bogus noise distortion over Mozart and Cash remain up on the NAB's website, see NAB (2000b)

licensed stations two dial positions in either direction, for example, so long as there were no stations on air at 103.7, 103.5, 104.1 or 104.3. This is known as "second adjacency". The Congressional Act requires there also be no station located at 103.3 and 104.5, or three dial positions away in either direction, or, operating on a third adjacent channel. The third adjacency requirement means there are literally no frequencies available in any major or medium-sized metropolitan area in the country. Specifically, this legislation eliminated 75% of possible LPFM's (which translates to thousands of stations) the FCC had found room on the dial for, thus eliminating LPFM's from any city in the top 50 markets in the US where the radio dial is most full. [117] Subsequently, the largest cities where an LPFM license has been granted under the third adjacency requirement are, for example, Richmond, Virginia and Spokane, Washington.[118] More often, the LPFM's licensed are in very small towns like Oroville, California and Immokalee, Florida.

What surprised many community media activists, and Kennard himself, was the opposition to LPFM from public radio. In 2000, it was not the expansion of the network at stake for NPR, but competitive concerns over finance and the impact new non-commercial stations would have on local fundraising efforts. There are few public examples of personnel at an individual NPR affiliate station opposing LPFM, rather, opposition has come primarily from NPR's national network executives and lobbyists. Kennard himself criticised the public radio network for their lack of support for neighbourhood-based community radio: 'I can only conclude that NPR is motivated by the same interests as the commercial groups – to protect their own incumbency...that these people see LPFM as a threat is sad. They've done much in the past to promote opportunity and a diversity of voices' (quoted in Markels 2000). NPR President Kevin Klose testified before Congress in support of the Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act.

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[116] The most famous Mitre study was one that uncovered the infamous "thousand dollar toilet seats" and "hundred dollar screws" used by the military at the cost of taxpayers.

[117] See NPR (2004) for online text.

[118] Community groups in Nashville, TN have managed to receive a license but only by placing their transmitter well outside the city limits, thus allowing them to broadcast into parts of the city centre but not obtaining universal coverage.

Powell and the FCC under Bush

In April 2000, the FCC started opening up a series of four filing windows of five days each. Each window covered different regions around the country and has a 30-60 day advance notice. Windows were held roughly every four months, with no area receiving more then one opportunity to apply. Prometheus had spent the better part of the previous year touring around the country meeting with community groups to spread word of the impending licenses. Even today, the FCC receives hundreds of requests per year from would be applicants wanting to know when they can apply, a date yet to be confirmed still. Soon, the FCC began issuing licenses to second adjacent applicants and groups like the Prometheus Radio Project began helping build some of the stations. The FCC soon changed hands under Bush in 2001, who appointed Michael Powell, son of then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, as the FCC Chairman. Although low power radio was not a priority for Powell, licenses continued to slowly roll out, though many applicants waited two to three years to even hear if their application was received and as of 2005, 10% have still never heard a word (Tridish 2005). From the start of Powell's tenure, it was clear his interest lie in a pro-market approach to the industry and further deregulation. In particular, his focus was on changing the rules to allow for cross-platform media ownership (e.g. joint newspaper and broadcast ownership). Under Reagan, the limits on ownership that stood since 1934 were slightly increased to allow duopolies (ownership of 2 FMs and 1 AM in any market). Under Clinton, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was passed which changed the law to allow a single company to own up to 50% of the stations in any one market and the national cap on the number of stations a single company could own were lifted completely.

Powell had expressed his interest in the supremacy of the private sector in decidedly religious overtones, commenting to the NAB: '[t]he market is my religion' (Powell 1998).[119] In the same speech, he further espoused: '[t]he night after I was sworn in, I waited for a visit from the angel of the public

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[119] Quote from Powell found in the text of a speech to the American Bar Association, April 5, 1998. See Powell (1998) for full text of speech and Media Tank (2004).

interest. I waited all night, but she did not come' (ibid). Groups like Prometheus and Indymedia subsequently held a demonstration against Powell: '[s]ince he had trouble seeing one Angel that dreadful night, on March 22nd, 2001, we shall descend upon him in droves. Dressed as Angels [of Public Interest] with cardboard wings and robes with tinsel on them, protesters were turned away from the FCC by police menacing with riot batons' (Tarleton 2002).

The mobilisation against ownership rules impacted the movement for LPFM because it brought together community media advocates around a common issue, and more importantly, it brought together a bipartisan coalition and unlikely bedfellows. Brent Bozell of the morally conservative Parents Television Council commented sagely: '[w]hen all of us are united on an issue, then one of two things has happened. Either the earth has spun off its axis and we have all lost our minds or there is universal support for a concept' (Markels 2000). Right-wing groups like the National Rifle Association (NRA) and fundamentalist Christian organisations, along with left-wing activists, political economists and media reformers all lobbied heavily against further consolidation, but unsuccessfully. A new record for public comments filed on the subject - over 500,000 in total. The rules were set, but in response, the Prometheus Radio Project, represented by the Media Access Project, on behalf of other media activist groups took the unprecedented step of suing the FCC, a case they eventually won in the Federal Court of Appeals.

In January 2005, Powell stepped down and at the time of writing, his replacement has yet to be named. In October, 2005, media giant Clear Channel has stepped up its public pressure to push the FCC to draft new rules to allow cross-platform media consolidation. Though the court ruled in favour of Prometheus, the door was left open for the FCC to consider allowing further consolidation of ownership so long as an appropriate methodology was employed to justify the need. The case itself was argued on technical and methodological grounds, and around the importance of localism, specifically, the negative impact further media consolidation would have on *local* journalism and *local* news reporting. This emphasis on the value of localism

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in broadcasting has important implications for the movement for neighbourhood-based radio on many levels. For one thing, following the court decision, the FCC stepped up its licensing of LPFM stations. Also, the FCC was put on the defensive and began conducting a series of Town Hall-style hearings on localism in small cities around the country. Finally, it coalesced a movement and brought the political organising of the right and left together in support of low power radio. Powell was negatively impacted by the public outrage over further consolidation of media ownership, unlike in 1996 when few public interest groups were organised in opposition to the legislation until it was too late, thus, he was pressured to respond somehow.

Localism is not only a concern for commercial media. By comparison, a typical National Public Radio (NPR) local affiliate station broadcasts overwhelmingly national news and public affairs, and depending on the station, most likely features nominal non-music local programming. For example, NPR affiliate KCRW in Los Angeles, arguably one of the most high-profile and well-funded public stations in the country, produces only thirteen hours total of in-house public affairs programming a week, of which only three hours per week are dedicated to local issues, in addition to broadcasts of the weekly Santa Monica City Council meetings. Conversely, KCRW produces eighty-three hours of music programming a week and broadcasts roughly eighty-seven hours of nationally syndicated public affairs and talk. Given that music is far cheaper and easier to program then resource-laden public affairs production, and often provides a welcome alternative to corporate radio music programming, the disparity in these figures nevertheless resonates a growing move away from local public affairs and news content, and mirrors public radio around the country.

Progress in 2005

In late 2003, the Mitre Study was released and found there to be no interference to full-power broadcasters by LPFM stations. The study recommended Congress lift the third adjacency requirement. The study's authors also took the unprecedented step of choosing not to implement other

parts of the study such as an economic impact study and subjective listening tests claiming them to be unnecessary since no interference was proven. After two years and the public expenditure of over $2,000,000 to conduct yet another engineering study, broadcasters' concerns were demonstrated to be unsubstantiated. However, it took the FCC another eighteen months to formally asked Congress for its authority back to oversee LPFM, thus asking Congress to repeal the Broadcasting Preservation Act.[120] In passing the Radio Preservation of Broadcasting Act, Congress took an unprecedented step in telling the FCC how to engineer. Never before had Congress legislated such a level of technical detail overriding FCC engineers in the process.

Following the FCC's action, in February of 2005, on the 5th Birthday of creation of the Low Power FM (LPFM) radio service in America, Senators John McCain (R-Arizona), Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), and Maria Cantwell (D-Washington) introduced Senate Bill 312, the Local Community Radio Act of 2005. This legislation would repeal the Preservation Act. Significantly, the McCain/Leahy/Cantwell bill acknowledges there has been too much consolidation of media ownership and that the current system offers community groups little opportunity to get on air. Their bill further states: '[a] commitment to localism--local operations, local research, local management, locally-originated programming, local artists, and local news and events-- would bolster radio listening' (McCain et al 2005). Also around the LPFM anniversary, the FCC held a "Low Power FM Radio Day", inviting Prometheus and representatives from LPFM stations to speak to FCC Commissioners and staff. Since then, similar legislation has been introduced into the House of Representatives by Rep Louise Slaughter (D-New York).[121]

One of the persistent arguments as to why new community radio licenses can not be granted has historically been the issue of frequency scarcity. Incumbent broadcasters, be they public or private, continue to argue there is no room. What has been demonstrated is that in fact, the opposite is true. When there has been the will for government to make space, the way has been found.

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[120] See McCain et al (2005) for complete text of bill.

Today, the dial is of course very full and there is no room for full-power stations in the most populous regions within the existing allocated spectrum. As in the 1920s and 1930s, government had the chance with the new technology to open up new space for broadcasters, and as they did in the past, they choose to favour the commercial lobby over public access. However, with the support of an FCC chair during the late 1990s, space was found for non-profit low power radio and a new era of reformers were to take the case to Washington, only this time they also took their case to the streets and on unlicensed airwaves. Riismandel offers this context:

> [i]t might seem odd that in the era of the Internet anything regarding the oldest of broadcast media would arose the type of passion that this seemingly innocuous technology has in the last few years. But what LPFM has come to represent is a battle over the very nature of US broadcasting, the likes of which have barely been seen since the late 1920s and early 1930s when, as McChesney documents, the seeds of the American commercial broadcasting system, were just being sown (2002: 424).

Christian Broadcasting & Translator Licenses

In the US, support for low power FM radio has come from an unlikely coalition of former pirate radio operators, grassroots organisers, media reformers, Christian community broadcasters and unhappy radio listeners. These same groups have been key people involved in the fight against further consolidation of media ownership. With regards to LPFM, the Prometheus Radio Project, for example, formed a key alliance with the Christian Community Broadcast Association, a group whose policy outlook on issues such as censorship and morality in the media is opposed by Prometheus and most of the activist coalition that is the backbone of LPFM supporters. About thirty percent of the current LPFM stations are run by church groups, and most of those are conservative Christian. Further, Tridish explains a sense of irony he feels at working so closely with a group he usually finds himself personally at odds with:

> [i]t's ironic for me as a lifelong atheist to be working so closely with Christian groups whose political views on just about every other issue are

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[121] See Slaughter (2005) for text.

about as far away from mine as you can get. But it dawned on us that we were doing all the legislative work and they were getting a lot of the stations. So it made sense to enlist them in the congressional lobbying work. [Conservative Republican Senator] Trent Lott is going to listen to them before he listens to us (2005).

Prometheus produced a series of Public Service Announcements for Christian radio promoting the congressional bill to expand low power radio. Tridish clarifies that Prometheus does not help build or support conservative Christian radio stations: '[t]here are other groups that do that [Christian Community Broadcasters, for example] and we refer those people to them. We only help build stations we support politically' (2005). Prometheus is not opposed to legitimate local church groups operating LPFM stations and notes one of the first stations they helped build in Opelousas, Louisiana run by the Southern Development Foundation was largely a project of a predominantly black, southern, Catholic church. Tridish also notes that many of the stations they support are also secular neighbourhood-based stations.

The other concern Prometheus has is with the number of LPFM stations and translator licenses (allowing stations to repeat their signal on additional, low power frequencies to fill in gaps in licensed coverage areas) being wrongfully granted to national religious institutions under the guise of local church groups. To that end, the Media Access Project, on behalf of a coalition including Prometheus, the United Church of Christ, National Federation of Community Broadcasters, Free Press and the Future of Music Coalition, petitioned the FCC in April, 2005 to stop issuing translator licenses, which the FCC has agreed to do temporarily, with a final decision to be made in 2006 pending public comment on the issue. The petition refers to "non-commercial license trafficking", the claim that three groups have obtained over 4,000 non-commercial radio translators free of charge that they have been then selling for a profit; and discovery that over 50% of the 13,000 received in March, 2005 were filed by only15 different organisations (Prometheus 2005c). The petition further cites the fact that the Radio Assist Ministries has submitted 2454 applications for translators – twice the number of licenses Clear Channel owns – as evidence of systematic abuse of the intent of the law (ibid). To clarify,

"translator licenses" are granted to existing stations to allow for the rebroadcast of the original, local signal in areas where geographic contours prevented a station from reaching its full community of license. For example, if there is a hill in the middle of the city of license, a translator allows the signal from one side of town to be rebroadcast into and over the hilly part of town. Also, in 2004, a number of LPFM applications were rejected by the FCC after they were found to have been illegitimately submitted by Calvary Chapel, a national conservative Christian church with large radio holdings and programme distribution, via local religious groups. Many such licenses have been granted, however.

It is worth mentioning this issue here because the involvement of some of the national religious institutions speaks to the link between the fight for LPFM and the issue of media ownership, which is supported by activists on both the left and the right. It also addresses the contentious nature of what it means to call for local broadcasting. In the case of the Calvary stations, the actual license holder may be the local community church group, but programming is national. Ownership does not tell the full story in this instance.

In the US, over ten percent of all radio stations are religious in nature, approximately 1600 in total (Everitt 2003: 22). It is a three billion dollar industry (ibid). By comparison in the UK, up until the 1990 Broadcasting Act, religious institutions were disallowed from owning any radio station. The Act allowed religious groups to own local commercial radio stations as well as satellite and cable licenses. From the earliest days of the BBC, there were requirements for religious programming. Requirements were extended to ITV, to BBC local radio and to the local commercial radio (ILR) stations. All stations were also required to employ a religious advisor. Interestingly, the largest established Christian churches in the country (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist) opposed allowing religious groups to own national radio stations 'fearful of televangelists and cults, and concerned not to push into a religious ghetto and off mainstream channels' (Churches Advisory Council for Local Broadcasting 2003).

Conclusion

On one hand, a comparative history of broadcasting between Britain and America can be seen as a history of difference. The UK system developed as a form of public service broadcasting as early as 1922 while the US was created as and remains dominated by commercial industry. Yet both systems are currently undergoing profound changes in the recognition of the need for local community broadcasting and have thus created new sectors for low power broadcasting, though with decidedly different orientations that will be discussed in the following chapters.

What is most significant is that in this era of digital media and podcasting, the most rudimentary and earliest of broadcast media is having a renaissance, and with it, amateur activity and a non-formal ethos is set to change the way we listen and what we expect from radio. It is also changing the concept and practice of interactivity, participation and access that so defines community radio. Not all these stations in the United States are what we call community radio, and what communities are being served is a fundamental question at the heart of these stations, but the resurgence of small-scale radio as an alternative to existing systems brings with it tremendous hope and excitement, and a vision of DIY and collective practice in direct contradiction to the media systems currently in place.

Chapter 4

Low Power Community Radio: from RSLs to Access
Case Study of London Access Pilot Stations

Introduction

Writing about the community radio sector in Britain at this moment in time is a
bit like taking a snapshot of a landscape that will soon become dramatically
altered. Over the coming months, the UK's broadcasting regulator, Ofcom,
will grant upwards of 80-100 new five-year community radio licenses,
including several in the Greater London area. In addition to the sixteen already
issued at the time of writing, these next few years mark the birth of an
established legal sector of community radio – a third sector to stand alongside
commercial and public service broadcasting. The new stations should be on air
within the next two years, and those that gain fulltime licenses that are already
on air as part of the pilot project for Access Radio will simply carry on with
the broadcasting they are already engaged in.

This chapter focuses on the background, structure and mission of the three
Pilot Access Community Radio stations in London as a model of low power
community radio. These stations were first granted permits by the Radio
Authority in 2002 after authorisation of a pilot scheme to issue one-year
licences to fifteen groups across the UK to launch a local community radio
station.[122] Nearly all of the stations have been subsequently granted extensions
that have allowed them to continue broadcasting without interruption during
the legislation and regulatory process, and continue to broadcast through
autumn of 2005 whilst the permanent licences are being issued.[123] None of the
Access Pilots are guaranteed Community Radio licences, however, and each
had to apply along with newcomers to the sector. This uncertainty with regard
to their future has created other difficulties for the Access Pilot stations such as
long-term planning and fundraising.

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[122] Historical background into Access Pilot scheme discussed in Chapter 3.
[123] One station was only ever intended to be a temporary broadcast thus the time extension did
not apply to it.

November 2004 marked the application deadline for the new five-year community licenses. Ofcom, the newly created Office of Communications, that merged the Radio Authority, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) and other telecoms regulators, received 192 applications for the unknown number of licenses to be granted. [124] The reason the total number of licenses is unknown is because Ofcom opted for a unique approach in that, rather then spend lengthy human resource hours having engineers create a map of all the possible spectrum availability, they decided to let applicants themselves tell the regulators where they would like to reach. This way, as Senior Associate Radio Planning and Licensing Team member Lawrie Hallett, who is one of two people overseeing the community radio licensing process, explains, under this system, licenses can be better organised to suit the needs of individual communities rather then what "faceless" engineering figures would allow for.[125] The expected rollout has just begun, though the process is already behind its' initial overly optimistic release schedule.

The first fulltime community license was issued to *Forest of Dean Community Radio* (*FDCR*) in April, 2005. There is a symbolic and practical reason why the Forest of Dean was chosen. First, it was one of the successful fifteen pilot projects whose mission is to serve a community of interest defined by geography – i.e. those living within the Forest, itself, a remote and somewhat isolated region in western England with a powerful sense of local identity. Secondly, *FDCR* is not in an area where any competing applications were submitted, thus by selecting *FDCR*, no other group was subsequently excluded and enthusiastic national press recognition and a place in broadcast history has been extended to a small, rural area in Britain. Access stations have been granted priority for consideration of the five-year licenses for just reasons as they are on air operating in a state of long-term limbo. The fate of the three Access stations in London, for example, hinges on decisions regarding the

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[124] This is the official number quoted in all press material but Ofcom subsequently accepted two additional applications that had been previously unaccounted for in the process, but were determined to have been submitted in time.

[125] For London, however, due to the number of applicants, Ofcom engineers have worked to create a map with multiple variables and found the most number of stations that can fit inside the M25 are six. Even this is not a perfect measure as stations applying in Slough, just outside the motorway also had to be factored in to this equation.

whole of London since the granting of any license in an area with limited spectrum availability impacts on space available for others. Therefore, all licenses within any one area are being decided simultaneously. Not surprisingly, the most hotly contested area is in fact London where 35 groups have applied for what is likely to be only a handful of stations, estimated at six by Ofcom at the time of writing.[126] In such a geographically and culturally diverse city, difficult decisions will be made that inadvertently position ethnic groups in competition with each other for the limited licences, especially in East London from where a disproportionate number of applications came. Thus, the three stations examined here, by the end of 2005, will either be heading for a more secure future or preparing to sign-off air. These stations include: *Desi Radio* in Southall, West London, a Panjabi station broadcasting Panjabi music, news, cultural and talk programming; *Sound Radio* in Hackney providing access to numerous cultural and ethnic groups from the area to broadcast music, news and speech in a variety of languages; and *Resonance FM* in Central London broadcasting experimental sound, music and arts programming.

This chapter builds on the history previously outlined and takes community radio in Britain to this long-awaited moment campaigners have fought for over twenty years to realise. Though the focus is on the fulltime community licensees, it is critical not to lose sight of the fact that other community-oriented radio projects have been in existence and many will continue to operate in an era of full-time community radio. It is these projects, such as Restricted Service License (RSL) stations, former induction-loop cable stations, and ad hoc audio projects, where many radio practitioners gained experience.[127] And it is the experience gained through years of limited access to the analogue dial that have served as the backbone of the community broadcasting sector and the, at times uncanny, networks of people and projects that have emerged. Tellingly, it is often programmers rather then key organisers that emerged out of this tradition. For many community radio

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[126] Ofcom received 35 applications from London proper and 10 from areas just outside London (e.g. Gravesend) that are considered close enough and will be determined alongside those within London.

projects, though, the primary reason the stations came to fruition was because of the vision of people with an interest in communicating broader ideas. For them, radio is a tool rather then a calling.

This chapter will first address the supportive findings in Anthony Everitt's influential evaluation report of the Access Pilot Project (2003) before turning to the three London pilot stations. Each of these stations are both models of neighbourhood-based low power community radio and examples of how community radio reaches beyond such low power technology either online or in organising around communities of interest not just geography. The key issues arising out of the case study are that of: funding and sustainability, the project of community building, training and social gain objectives, participation and programming.

Radio in London

First, it is necessary to consider a brief overview of local radio in London to provide some context for how the community radio stations fit into the wider radio landscape. All told, there are approximately 35 BBC, national and local commercial radio stations that can be heard somewhere in London, though about half of those actually licensed in the city. There are BBC local radio stations like BBC Radio London, in addition to other BBC and ILR stations licensed outside London but heard in parts of the capital like *BBC Radio Kent* and *Mercury FM* in East Hertfordshire and West Essex. [128] There are local commercial stations with ethnic-based programming such as *London Greek Radio* in north London, *Sunrise Radio* operating separate stations in both east and west London and *Choice FM* dance / reggae music in Brixton in south London. What is deceiving about these figures is how many of the local independent stations are in fact owned by groups with major radio and media holdings, groups such as Chrysalis, Capital, GWR, SMG and The Wireless Group. Further, there are over 200 short-term RSL stations that broadcast, including colleges, festivals, arts groups, cultural organisations, etc. During

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[127] See Gordon (2000) for study of RSLs, as discussed in Chapter 3.

the month of Ramadan there are special licensing opportunities to bring an increased number of RSL stations on air across the country, including London. Additionally, there are the pirate stations, both commercial and the few community-based stations still thriving. In the New Cross/Peckham area of South East London on a typical Sunday evening, for example, no less then ten pirate stations can be heard at any one time.

In terms of the history of community radio in London, there are a number of key stations that have played a role akin to "ground zero", owing to the number of people and projects that have emerged out of them, such as *Radio Thamesmead*, and *First Love Community Radio*. *Radio Thamesmead* began as an induction loop cable community radio station located on the Thamesmead Estate. Reception was so poor on the estate that even national television had to be fed via cable, thus providing the impetus for the creation of a low power radio station. In 1990, the station received a commercial ILR license on FM when a new frequency for South East London was authorised in 1998 and has since been bought by commercial interests to become *Millennium Radio*, and then *Time FM*, which in 2004 was bought by *Sunrise*. A trajectory of community-to-commercial ownership that is not dissimilar to many early community stations in Britain licensed as ILR stations rather then community stations.

Today, there exist numerous community-based RSLs and radio projects. A snapshot includes: projects operating outside any station structure like the *Deptford Community Radio Project*, who continue to make programmes but whose access to doing so is dependent on the interest of a particular station in broadcasting it; youth-oriented RSLs like *Riverside FM* in Hammersmith and *Life FM* based on an estate in north London whose mission is centred around training and broad participation; diasporic, Internet-based community radio projects like *Voice of Africa*; student radio, usually RSLs, like *Wired Radio* at Goldsmiths College that runs as a project of the student union; and stations, Internet or RSL, that are the project of one or two individuals whose interests

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[128] See Chapter 3 for discussion of sell-off of early community stations to commercial stations

centre around the pleasure of making radio rather then a larger social mission like Newham-based *Nu Sound Radio.* There are community-run pirate stations, though they are the exception in an arena dominated by commercial enterprises often associated with club promotion. There are also new employment opportunities for individuals like Shane Carey who started Eclectic Production in New Cross, a not-for-profit company to support the emerging sector and help build stations and run training programmes and RSLs after having started *Wired* while a student, and Rosie Parklyn, who has been working freelance for a number of community radio RSLs and projects; and prison stations like *Radio Wano* that force a rethinking of "community" around spaces that are temporal and involuntary. Together, these examples offer a microcosm of what community radio looks like.

It is telling how many are vying for the six meagre licenses available in London. One application, for *Radio Peckham,* was submitted by Eclectic Productions and would be funded by Southwark Council, whose interest came at the behest of government targets for neighbourhood renewal. The council has services to promote and the stated goal of reducing people's fear of crime in particular. This, and the large schism between old and young in the area in need of redress, beget the council's enthusiasm to promote a cross-generational and cross-cultural philosophy through radio. For the RSL, *Eclectic* developed the structure and technical aspects of the station, conducted most of the trainings, and worked closely with a community outreach volunteer. They boast that 82 local community groups were involved in 'some meaningful way' (Carey 2005) in the broadcast. If their bid for a fulltime license is successful, the plan is for *Eclectic* to facilitate the process, train people to take over their management role and over time, phase themselves out of the project so it will be fully community run. Because the infrastructure is already in place following the RSL, Carey feels *Radio Peckham* could be on air within 3-6 months after receipt of a license. These various models of community radio and varied personal experiences of participation in the field demonstrate the resilience of the sector and the multifarious forms it takes.

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under ILR licensing.

Access Radio London

The majority of the Access stations have themselves run RSLs prior. These
were thus obvious groups to be involved in an experiment to grant longer term,
one-year licenses, and they were also the easiest groups for the Radio
Authority (RA) and the Community Media Association (CMA) to reach out to
when the pilot project was announced, given the very short lead-up time and
need to get on air and get organised quickly. Before focussing on the London
access stations, it is necessary to offer an overview of the Access Pilot Project
itself and to outline the different structural and programming models that were
part of the pilot commenced in 2002 to see the wider context within which
London's Access stations *Resonance, Sound* and *Desi* were a part.[129]

Access Radio Pilot Evaluation Report

Anthony Everitt's report released in 2003, *New Voices: An Evaluation of 15
Access Radio Projects* was key to ensuring the establishment of the sector. His
report was commissioned by the Radio Authority (RA) as part of the pilot
project from the start. Though Everitt himself is not a decision maker for the
regulator, his report was highly influential in gaining the necessary support
within the RA, solidifying support within government and in developing
criteria by which the success of community radio stations and the sector as a
whole would be judged. In allocating the original Access licenses, decisions
were made quickly to ensure the project would be underway and properly
evaluated in time for the forthcoming Communications Bill the following year.
However, careful attention was given to ensuring both geographic diversity,
programming diversity, variety in non-profit funding schemes, and different
models of governance.

'The reasons for engagement with community broadcasting are as various as
the number of those taking part' (Everitt 2003: 37). Everitt identified three
strands of original motivation among those successful participants: those with

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[129] Completed applications for permanent community radio licenses for each of these stations
can be found online (Ofcom 2004).

a passion for the medium of radio and a background in broadcasting (Tony Smith of *Angel Radio* and Graham Coley of *Takeover Radio*); those for whom radio was come to by chance and is a means of 'promoting larger causes (Christian activists starting *Shine FM*, Cultural Partnerships multicultural arts promotion agency behind *Sound FM*); and those for whom radio is a primary means of personal empowerment and self development. It is also worth noting that some of the stations had stronger institutional affinities then others, for example *New Style Radio* in Winston Green, Birmingham is run by the Afro-Caribbean Resources Centre (ACRC), itself formed in the 1970s as a cooperative for black youth that has grown into a major community resource centre. ACRC has been successful in attracting substantial funding (Millennium Commission, Arts Council and city council) for an impressive new multi-media facility with production studios, public access computers and Internet, employment resources and neighbourhood meeting spaces.

The Everitt report also highlighted the rationale behind licensing both communities of interest and geographic communities. Everitt cites the shift from the 1960's and 1970's community development model which defined community as the recognized relationship between people within their physical space, be it a work or living space, to a more contemporary context that acknowledges geography may not be how people envision their own social or individual identities. 'The growth of individualisation and "active consumption" means that we tend to make opportunistic use of multiple communities to construct a confident, customised sense of ourselves, as distinct from defining ourselves in terms of a fixed community of which we are full paid up members (Everitt 1997 quoted in Everitt 2003: 30).' Given the complex historical and ideological issues surrounding definitions of "community," it is thus significant that the legislation provides a broad remit for community radio and allowed the space for groups themselves to determine how they wished to define their communities – either by local place or interest within the broadcast radius. In terms of arguments against licensing for communities of interest, Everitt points to the fact that some of the stations, such as *Takeover Radio* for children or *Cross Rhythms* Christian radio, could potentially be a national format. In a sense, community radio licensing has

exposed a gap in national service. Others opposed to licensing for communities of interest argued stations should each focus on the social needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods across Britain and thus make a 'unique contribution' (Everitt 2003: 31) to areas in real need.

Everitt argued against limiting the community radio licenses to only geographic communities:

> ...[t]he Radio Authority is not a social services agency. Its primary remit relates to radio and to the assurance of maximum access to the medium. In that light, targeting social deprivation cannot be the only purpose of Access Radio. There are other groupings in society which are to a greater or lesser extent excluded from access to radio - for example older people or children – to which the Radio Authority properly owes a duty. The reason for promoting Asian or African-Caribbean broadcasting is partly because of economic disadvantage, but also to counter cultural and social exclusion (although the issues are interrelated). If it did not acknowledge the claims of communities of interest, the Radio Authority could reasonably be charged with a failure to fulfil its obligations (2003: 31).

The criteria for Access stations included evidence of social gain and/or public service broadcasting; not-for-profit status; accessibility for people living within the area; training and community participation; and engagement with disadvantaged and underserved people and communities. Specifically, Ofcom outlined four required elements for consideration of long term community radio licensing: social gain and access, programming, evaluation and measurement, and finance and ownership (Ofcom 2004). In terms of prior radio experience, some applicants had affiliations with pirates, many but not all had previously run RSLs, and some individuals had worked for the BBC, and some of the applicants had applied for local commercial licenses. Internet broadcasting was not deemed to be a priority, and fears of obsolescence in the age of digital radio was recognised to be far enough in the future owing to lack of public interest in buying new sets, especially among the more economically disadvantaged who would likely be the last to gain universal access to new technologies.

The project experimented with radio partnerships, hoping two groups could work out different ways of sharing a single frequency and station. They also experimented with models of governance. On one end of the management spectrum is *Forest of Dean Community Radio* that runs five studios in different parts of the forest that are linked to one central location. Broadcasting rotates among the five, each run by fairly autonomous local working groups. Technically, it was not feasible to operate one single transmitter to cover the region, but the other benefits of decentralisation have been well-received. Overall, management is a multi-tiered membership open to any station volunteer to join. On the other end of the spectrum is *Cross Rhythms*, a station run by a paid executive management with a leadership team that is paid staff and where volunteers are not allowed to participate in management.

One of the biggest areas of controversy regarding Access Radio has been and continues to be opposition from commercial broadcasters. Initially, the BBC was unsupportive but has since come around. The Commercial Radio Companies Association (CRCA) has been consistent in their opposition towards any allowance of advertising revenue for community radio, although Everitt notes during an early consultative stage on this issue, only fourteen responses from commercial broadcasters were received (2003: 121).[130] Concerns continue to be expressed related to fears of competition for the commercial Independent Local Radio (ILR) stations. Though there is no competition with regards to the mandate for community participation, commercial broadcasters claim their provision of news and locally relevant information and support of local events could be deemed in competition with a community station. The legislation reflects this commercial broadcast pressure.

There is a complex set of regulations that exclude or place limitations on stations in less-populated areas. If there is an existing local commercial radio station on air, no community station may be licensed in a listening area with fewer then 50,000 adults over the age of 15 if there is greater than 50% of

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[130] See CRCA (2004) for response to Community Radio Order.

overlap of potential listening audience, irrespective of content and target audience.[131] A station may shift the location of its antenna to adjust its reach to less than a 50% overlap, but the onus is on the community applicant. In an area of 50,001 – 100,000 adults, a community license can be granted if there exists a local commercial station, but that community station is prohibited from generating any revenue from advertising or commercial sponsorship. Further, the 1990 Communications Act sets the regulator with a general duty to protect the interests of existing services, a mandate that could be used against would-be community applicants by incumbent broadcasters. This kind of legislative protectionism is similar in intent to that enacted in the United States, but on a much different scale. While incumbent broadcasters in the US eliminated stations in any major and medium sized cities, the UK commercial industry places restrictions on stations in much less-populated parts of the country. However small the impacted regions, these restrictions were fought against by the CMA and advocates of the sector for restricting a necessary service in selective areas, and for supporting the false assumption that community stations should be seen as competition in a market increasingly dominated by commercial interests.

Further, community stations are not allowed to receive more then 50% of their income from any one source, and funding from on-air advertising and programme sponsorship must be accounted for in total, assuring a station could not be 100% commercially funded. The CRCA is not the only organisation interested in capping the amount of commercial revenue. Many advocates of the sector feel it is important stations limit commercial sponsorship to avoid stations becoming beholden to advertiser's interests over that of fulfilling their mission and community objectives, and to ensure no one sponsor has majority investment in the station.

Everitt's report concluded in strong support for the value Access radio stations offered and was instrumental in swaying policy makers and in situating community radio in the context of social policy as well as media. Some of the

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[131] See Ofcom (2004b) for detail and further requirements.

report's specific conclusions that have been taken on board: allowance of advertising with some restrictions in smaller markets with competing ILR stations; exclusion of ownership by chains and commercial entities; that a community media fund be established (now set at a relatively low figure of 500,000 pounds); the importance of station evaluation; and continuation of short term RSL licensing alongside the five year licenses.

Community Radio London

Given the careful selection of stations to serve as the pilot stations for community radio, it is not accidental that the three Access Pilot stations in London represent not only three very different communities, but three very different approaches to community radio in general. Despite the many similarities and issues all such stations face such as sustainability, funding, volunteer organising, training and production, audience building, outreach and promotion, their differences are largely informed by the key personalities involved and the specific community's vision and needs. This section is not intended to serve as a quantitative evaluation of the success of each station nor an assessment of which model is the "best". Its intention is to demonstrate that there are many different models and to explore the relationship between the "how" and the "why" for each station. Each of the three stations offers interesting insights into low power community radio, and despite the inevitable pitfalls being negotiated, each has been very successful in achieving its formal and informal outcomes and objectives. *Desi Radio* is an example of a community of interest station started for a political and cultural purpose and sought to build a community around it. *Resonance FM* is also a community of interest station, though it draws significant interest and participation from all across London being the only experimental sound and arts station of its kind in the UK, a mandate that makes it unique among community radio in general. *Sound Radio* is a very geographically defined station seeking to provide access to ethnic groups in East London, many otherwise disconnected. The remainder of the chapter will be focussed on examining these three stations individually and will conclude with a comparative look at central issues arising out of their examples.

Desi Radio, Southall

Desi Radio is a Panjabi station located in Southall, West London, whose mission is to promote the Panjabi language and culture. It is run by the Panjabi Centre, a local charity with a similar mission. The station was started by brother and sister Ajit Khera and Amarjit Khera, who became involved with radio as a community project, not because of a particular interest in wanting to run a radio station: 'the radio was just our tool. The whole idea of community came first – the radio came afterwards' (Ajit Khera 2005).

Beginnings

The station was started in many ways by accident. In 1998, the Panjabi Centre, itself created in 1988, had been searching for a platform. They were considering starting a newspaper when someone suggested radio. No one at the Centre had ever heard of an RSL license before, though they had been in existence for seven years. They applied for a 28-day license (the maximum length of time such licenses are awarded for), but received a one-week license instead. At first they were upset, but in the end they were relieved as seven days proved challenging enough for a group with no previous radio background, team of volunteers or studio. According to Ajit Khera:

> [w]e approached two girls from Birmingham who used to work for the BBC's Asian Network. They came, and as soon as they saw us sitting in this room above a shop they had to walk down a back alley to get to, us with our long beards and turbans, they thought we were some kind of fundamentalists trying to do an illegal radio and wanted to run away. I quickly started speaking to them in English and showed them this letter from the Radio Authority to show them we weren't illegal, but our appearance and our set up appeared to them to be very dodgy. That's the beginning of our community radio (2005).

Organisers worked tirelessly over the seven days, eventually building up a respectable audience by the last days, a pattern not unsimilar to many RSLs, which grow stronger as word of the broadcast spreads:

> [f]or three days the phone didn't ring. Silence, like. For communities that didn't have a voice, ours is an exceptional story because although there are 150-160,000 Panjabis, we've never had a radio. Now, here was 24/7

Panjabi. The fourth day, people started pouring in. It was unbelievable. An eruption (Ajit Khera).

Since 1998, there are now seven commercial Panjabi stations on satellite and more online. Other RSLs have served the area previously, but none were exclusively in Panjabi.

The Khera's are Panjabi Sikhs who grew up in Malaysia and moved to London as adults. Amarjit was brought into the station by Ajit on the second day of the RSL to help out and answer phones but by the end of the week, she was on air presenting as well. Amarjit had just retired as a senior lecturer at a local college and the family had recently suffered the loss of a brother: '[a]fter my brother died, I was very upset and didn't want to work anymore. I lost interest in most things. I took it very hard. So it was an important time for me to get involved with this radio. I took to it like a duck to water' (2005).

The following year, the Panjabi Centre ran another RSL, this time for the full 28 days. Amarjit was involved from the start and by the end of that experience, realising how much demand there was from the community and how much of a learning process it was, she enrolled herself in a number of training courses offered by the CMA and Thames Valley University on areas like setting up a radio station, managing budgets and sourcing funds. Today, Amarjit oversees primarily the business and fundraising aspect of the station and Ajit oversees programming.

Vision

The Panjab is a region that is partitioned between India and Pakistan. Panjabis share a common language but come from various religious backgrounds: Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian. The word "panjab" itself means Five Rivers, which is how the region is politically defined. *Desi Radio* calls itself "The sound of the Five Rivers". *Desi Radio* was created with the project of community building its explicit objective. 'When we came to Southall we recreated a new community. The community was there, but it was not conscious of itself. That is our defining aim. It's not that the community was

there and we were trying to serve it. No. We had to create a Panjabi community' (Ajit Khera 2005). This is not to say the local Asian population wasn't aware of itself. In terms of radio, ILR station *Sunrise Radio* is a popular Asian radio station broadcasting music and news in English and Panjabi and encompasses music and news from India and Pakistan as well. *Desi's* interest is the more narrowly defined geography of the Panjabi region.

'Through *Desi Radio*, we've recreated the homeland' (Ajit Khera 2005) and *Desi*'s programming has been created with this framework in mind. With regards to their news programming:

> [w]hen we give news, we talk about East Panjab and West Panjab. We don't talk about the political states. We're giving news across the border as if the borders don't exist. We talk about Panjab. Can you imagine? This is very radical and very subversive with a little "s". Subversion not through AK47s, but through media, through communications (ibid 2005).

The parameters for music presenters, which forms the majority of programming, is that music must be sung in the Panjabi language, whether the music is Bangra, spirituals, or ballads. For example, the morning show is a spiritual programme presented by different individuals each day. However, what is unique in this programming is the approach to spirituality and religion. Rather than divide the programme schedule around different religions, the morning programme features spirituals from each of the religions of the Panjab. The response the station received from many listeners was not favourable at first:

> [p]eople said: "what are you doing?" Take a poem, what we call a hymn, one that is identified as a Sikh thing, as a religious thing, and we will play it on the air and say simply "namaste", "as salam" – addressing it to all Panjabi communities irrespective of religion. People would ring back and say why are you saying "namaste", you are addressing Muslims as well. Well why not this also for Muslims? But this is religion. This is ours, they would say. We would say no, it is not just yours. It's a common heritage to all the Panjabi (Ajit Khera).

It can be argued this is a form of social engineering. It is programming in a decidedly self-conscious manner that is not the so-called natural, or familiar context in which music, cultural or religious programming is typically

presented, nor is it how their listeners would necessarily engage with such music and religion in their own personal lives. What is interesting about *Desi Radio* is that they are seeking to create a sense of "oneness" within a typically religiously divided community under the construct of creating a *new* kind of community around the Panjab. This is very different from *representing* existing community interests, although it could be argued that the interests are there but that *Desi* just mixes them up differently.

Ajit comments it could only be possible in a non-visual medium like radio:

> [w]hen you hear the same language, the same music, this whole religious identification disappears. If you look at my image with my turban, maybe somebody would look at me and think this is some sort of orthodox Bin Laden type of fundamentalist, an Ayatollah. Fortunately, on radio, they never see you. They don't see your colour or your caste.

That said, he and others at the station are aware that many Muslims have been slow to support the station, but that their numbers are increasing.

Another aspect of their linguistic practice of speaking and playing music in the Panjabi language is the question of "linguistic authenticity". There were listeners initially who felt some presenters did not speak "proper Panjabi", raising the question of who is the arbiter of any notion of propriety. Ajit speaks of the colonialist dimension of the lines along which people from the region are typically categorised and the Orientalist discourse around that. Though many presenters and listeners are attracted to the station for less overtly politicised reasons, and may not be consciously aware of the discourse around the mission of the station, Ajit feels it is imperative to be 'theoretically clear about what you are doing. You have to have some sort of theoretical framework' (2005). As a result, he spends time with callers who are critical of the station's mission, hoping to turn their reticence or hostility into, if not support, at least tacit acceptance.

Programming

More so then any other aspect of the station, it is, however, the music that is the cohesion, and especially the folk music of the region. Listeners have brought in what has amounted to box loads of music that has never been housed in one place before, building a remarkable library of all varieties of Panjabi music, voices that risked being lost. 'Folk music is our saviour' (Ajit Khera 2005).

The programme scheduling of *Desi* is not atypical. It broadcasts primarily music in addition to news briefs throughout the day and an assortment of public affairs programmes focussed on health and local issues, resources and events. The station is organised primarily around "block programming" formatting, whereby similar styles of programming are on offer at the same time each day even though presented by different people. They feel this engenders familiarity, is immediately recognisable and knowable to their audiences thus helping them better build audience, and reinforces the sensibility of the station as a singular entity rather then a collection of many.

Its morning show is the spiritual music programming described earlier; afternoon music is more upbeat, with a mix including *Bhangra*, ballads and "oldie goldies". *Desi* has listeners of all ages and caters to them differently. Ideas for talk shows often come via word of mouth - people come by station to propose an idea or tell other presenters. The same goes for local event coverage and promotion – individuals, organisations and local officials seek to involve the station in their events and news. Given the already controversial approach of the station, they have been careful not to press too fast with some issues. 'We haven't talked about homosexuality yet. You have to be slow and gentle. My motto is "a little is more". Don't go too fast or be too radical' (Ajit Khera 2005).

One unexpected dimension *Desi* has encountered is the different cultural subtext of radio people were familiar with: 'They wanted the radio to tell them' (ibid). In particular, presenters had difficulty encouraging listeners to share

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their opinions on air. 'At first, there was very little response [to our call-in shows]. Then listeners started by saying "okay, I don't want to go on air but this is my opinion". So we'd write it down and say on air "this is what so and so thinks". Eventually people would go on air and say for themselves what they think' (ibid). *Desi* also found it difficult at times to get people to rethink the difference between sharing an opinion and preaching, which speaks to the nature of hierarchy within the culture, according to Ajit. 'We speak the same language but our scripts are different' (Ajit Khera 2005).

There is a sign inside the live on air studio that asks guests not to thank individual presenters or producers by name but to thank only *Desi Radio*. This might seem insignificant, but it is quite telling about the role station organisers see for themselves and the presenters, each of whom are the most recognizable icons of the station. Amarjit Khera:

> [w]e are all volunteers. It is the listeners who are important' (2005). This is a very collective impulse and is a means by which *Desi* addresses the disproportionate attention afforded those most visible and the lack of recognition for the behind-the-scenes people who keep the stations running. Such a policy also serves to reinforce the focus on the station as a collective entity, rather than the project of individuals.

Desi's rules for programmers are fairly straightforward: don't speak about religion, don't speak over the words or verses going out on air, don't swear or make political or defamatory remarks; don't make libellous or slanderous remarks. The difficulty of course is in the lines around religious or political speech. Ajit counters that the nature of the project which seeks to bring together people of different religions and political perspectives is one which requires firmer lines to be drawn so as not to alienate or infuriate listeners but to instead use music, language and news around the "imaginary homeland" to bring people together.

Volunteers

Desi Radio currently has 70 volunteers on air and have not yet had to tell someone that they couldn't make room for them on air, though they recognise that could become a problem later as more people are trained and request air-

time. Presenters are not required to do other voluntary work around the station and Amarjit admits it is difficult to get people to commit to the necessary busy work. The paid, part-time positions include a bookkeeper, receptionist and cleaner.

Many of the volunteers are not so steeped in the political aspect of the project, but are aware of the station's mission and generally supportive of it. A weekly afternoon music presenter read about the station's need for Panjabi speakers in her local paper in Croydon, phoned up the station, and was put on air the first time in the studio. She felt she needed more experience so she enrolled on a course at Morley College and joined a hospital radio station as well. She wishes she could get paid a bit, but says she wouldn't go anywhere else except the BBC. She is married with three children, holds a part-time job and is responsible for the housework. She takes great pride and pleasure in her work at the station and enjoys the local limelight being a DJ has afforded her, as well as the opportunity to interview popular Panjabi singers. Amarjit notes that while station personalities have received offers from other commercial satellite or Internet Asian stations, most do not leave.

Manjinder Chahal is the news department. He writes, researches and presents updates throughout the day. Six days a week, he wakes up at 4AM to prepare for the morning news, goes home at midday for a break and is back by the afternoon. He eventually moved to the flat above the station. He is paid part-time though he works more then forty hours per week. To prepare for the news, he utilises Panjabi papers online, mixed with local news from Southall and London. He values the information they give to the community, and emphasises the cost to government agencies to disseminate information to minority communities and notes there is good "value for the dollar" in the kind of local news the station brings to air.

In terms of training, the station has two tracks and offers the most extensive training of the three London Access stations. One is a short-term course all new on air producers must attend. The other is a lengthier, 18-week course funded by the European Social Fund. People come to the extended course

largely for very personal reasons, either to get out of the house or to combat depression. *Desi* sees this training as a social service. However, as is typical for social service sector, the dropout rate for this course is 40-50%.

For many participants, however, building confidence is a crucial benefit of their station experience. Some people freeze when they go on air for the first time. Ajit explains that many people when on air for the first time 'can't speak they are so scared. And they are mostly female. That is challenging. Here's a human being who has not raised their voice. Who has not expressed themselves' (2005). One female volunteer has been hired as the part-time cleaner. She suffers from a speech disability and when she began at *Desi*, she was just beginning to recover from years of abuse at the hands of her husband. Amarjit took her under her wing and now she is one of the most dedicated volunteers and is part of the station's all-women traditional dance troupe that performs as part of station fundraisers.

For *Desi*, that is a primary purpose of the station, to help people find their voice and use it on air. They feel it is far more difficult for many people – especially many women – to accomplish this outside the security of an environment created especially for the Panjabi community. Ajit sees this as something only community radio can offer in a broadcast environment. 'As long as you have the commitment, we'll give you the opportunity. At community radio, you need that kind of commitment or what's the point?' (2005).

Gender

Overall, one of the most positive outcomes of the station is how it has challenged some of the patriarchal gender norms among their community, according to the Khera's. There was initial resistance from some husbands: '[s]ome were very nervous about their wives, saying they can't be at the station at night. But we stood our ground and said you can't tell women when they can be on the air' (Ajit Khera 2005). Amarjit says that in her experience, she has found men to be 'pretty inhibited' (2005) about coming to volunteer at the

station, because working at the radio station requires undergoing some training in radio production. '[The men] always think they know how something should be but when you say "look, this is not quite right", they do not always want to hear that' (ibid 2005). In fact, *Desi* is dominated by female presenters and volunteers.

Another aspect of the gender distinction is that the station has brought many women out of the home into the public realm and boosted self-esteem among many of its participants. Part of this has to do with the training programmes the station has developed. Another piece is the process of participation and the family feeling one gets inside the station. There is always home cooked food being shared and people meeting and conversing in the front room of the station. 'Here, the women have a name and are more confident. Back home, there is a bit of difference between the genders. Here, there is equality' (Amarjit Khera 2005). Additionally, the station has a strict policy of addressing everyone by their first names – 'an important innovation in the context of the familial hierarchies of Panjabi families' (Everitt 2003: 50).

Station Management

In terms of management structure, the station is governed by a nine-member board comprised of four representatives from the Panjabi Centre and five members from the community. Station management is not allowed to present a programme in order to avoid conflict of interest and the ego of being on air attached to someone with decision-making power. They are concerned, however, about having the project hijacked by people with other agendas or commercial interests. In the beginning there were many struggles: '[m]any people just could not understand that this was not commercial radio even though we run advertisements' (Ajit Khera 2005). Somehow, the Panjabi Centre got through the growing pains and early power struggles to maintain clarity over vision.

Funding

Desi Radio's annual budget is approximately £90,000 per year, about average among the Access stations. Like other Access Pilots, their funding comes from a combination of grants such as the European Social Fund, as well as other local and national grants; local advertising up to the maximum allowed by the license; and individual contributions and monies raised from fundraising events and programmes. *Desi* would have no problem attracting more income from advertisers but are limited by law to take in only as much advertising funds as they do grant money.

In terms of other creative ways to raise revenue, the station has adopted two interesting practices. One is its programme to raise small, individual donations from listeners in the form of "sponsoring" an on air dedication or greeting to a loved one during the morning spiritual programmes. Amarjit is quick to point out that the mention is offered without the requirement for anyone to pay for it, but it has become a means by which individuals have chosen to support the station through small contributions that total around £10,000 each year. Another means is through the women's folk song and dance performances. A group of women who volunteer at the station have formed an informal troupe that performs at small gatherings for a sliding scale fee, averaging £150 to £350. The purpose of the performances is in part station fundraising, but more significantly, to provide an outlet for this group of women to come together and bond and to build confidence by doing so, according to Amarjit. The women's events contribute £6-7,000 a year in revenue. Social events and an annual dinner/dance bring in an additional £14-15,000 each year. The station does not undertake on air fund-drives.

Amarjit cites that the most difficult aspect of running the station is in fact the fundraising, especially since they do not yet know their long-term fate. Like all community stations, they are volunteer-run, but they wish they could pay expenses for people travelling to Southall from other parts of London. The Khera's do not themselves accept any travel expenses from the station and their salary derives from their jobs as directors of the Panjabi Center.

Audience

Building up a listenership did not come easily to *Desi*, according to Ajit. Nearby shops were, he felt, 'too afraid' (2005) to broadcast because of the station's approach to religion, and non-religious identification. A 2005 survey commissioned by *Desi* indicates 85% of Panjabi speakers in their licensing area listen to the station.

As a transnational broadcaster, they have a growing base of satellite listeners from across Europe where Panjabis have settled or are settling, and a smaller number of Internet listeners coming from most parts of the world, including Sri Lanka, Singapore, West Africa, California, Australia. 'Many speak English, in addition to Panjabi, but don't yet speak the local language of where they have moved to. They have no Panjabi radio in these places' (Amarjit Khera 2005). He goes on to add: '[i]t took us fifty years in this country to get to a place where we could have our own radio station. And now we are 24/7 Panjabi – the first in the country' (2005). Critics say it is exclusionary for a license to be awarded for one ethnic community when resources are so scarce, but for *Desi*, the community aspect of the station exists because of its intimate nature to one language and region.[132]

Sound Radio, Hackney

Sound had previously run four RSLs and is based on the Nightingale housing estate in Hackney, East London, an estate with the reputation as one of the more volatile in London that has also been home to a number of pirate radio stations over the years. The station, like *Desi*, opted for an AM transmission that meant nearly double start-up costs and higher yearly transmitter fees but provides wider transmission coverage and may be quite useful in its efforts to achieve a five-year license since there is more available space on medium wave and far fewer applicants. *Sound's* mission is to serve the many multi-cultural communities in East London. With so many new expatriate communities participating and broadcasting news from the various homelands,

Station Manager Lol Gellor describes *Sound* as 'a local world service' (Everitt 2003: 39). The station's slogan is 'A Positive Voice for East London'. 'I know it sounds like a crass throwaway line, but actually, I think that's what the station should be and is' (Gellor 2005).

The station was started by Lol Gellor, himself a musician and filmmaker, and not someone who was ever involved or particularly interested in radio prior.[133] He became involved because he felt 'radio is probably the most effective catalyst for community development' (Gellor 2005). He describes himself as a 'small "l" liberal, secular, white British boy' (ibid), who grew up on the Nightingale Estate, something which no doubt affords him a fair amount of credibility within the station. The station is the closest approximation of an "Access" station in the European context in that different groups, usually ethnic groups, are each granted shows. Subsequently, there are over fifteen languages being broadcast on *Sound* in any given week. The station is for everyone but not necessarily at the same time. Gellor describes the station's approach as a "broad church" - that there's room for just about everybody: '[b]ut the thing about being a broad church is that it sometimes frustrates people because people want to relate to single models that are easily identifiable. Community radio offers the stuff that's in the gaps and that's absolutely what it should be. And I think that makes it tough for a lot of people – that it's not easily defined' (2005).

Content and Audience

Sound is an excellent example of a station whereby the traditional evaluative lines between examining audience and content as distinctive categories begins to fall apart. Rather then reach across to a strategically defined audience, the station appeals to an extremely wide scope of people who may only listen to selected shows each week. It is a very different kind of programming model then *Desi*, for example, and one that requires a higher level of audience activity

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[132] The station has been working with a local Somali group to help them get involved in radio and prepare for an RSL broadcast.
[133] If it seems this case study focuses disproportionately on controversy, it is unintentional and due to the openness with which Gellor speaks.

and investment to know when a particular show appealing to their interest or broadcast in their language might air.

The station acknowledges that it 'may or may not' have much cross-over between shows, especially with the diversity of languages. Gellor elaborates: 'I suppose maybe 80% of the stuff that goes out is not stuff I would choose to put out but that's not my issue. My job is to provide a platform for those who don't otherwise have one' (2005). This model differs from that of *Desi Radio*, which is focussed on creating a community space for people with a shared cultural and linguistic heritage while also creating the sense of that shared culture as unifying force. *Sound*, on the other hand, is not aiming to create a unifying sound to the station, rather to represent the reality of the diversity of the area of Hackney by providing access to whoever seeks it, and through it, offers a vision of geographic unity through its difference.

Gellor discusses the importance, as station manager, of putting diversity ahead of his own personal views: '[w]e have Orthodox Jews, committed Christians, Muslims, and other faith groups all on air.[134] They have a view of the world I might not subscribe to, but I vehemently support their right to have their platform. It's not about being Radio Lol' (2005). The station draws the boundaries of free speech as broadly as possible in its efforts not to interfere with content, while attempting to ensure people have 'the right to reply' (Everitt 2003). As an example, during an earlier RSL, the station juxtaposed two programmes back to back: *Yids with Attitude* and *Talk Black* featuring a spokesman from the Nation of Islam. Rather then limit who has access, *Sound* chose to juxtapose different perspectives with the hopes that anyone might potentially have their own views challenged. Gellor connects this approach not just to his programming style, but to the wider role of community radio in a social context, especially in terms of how ethnic minority groups are often approached in the media: 'There are still big inconsistencies about how groups are treated based on whose message is considered more "acceptable" to the

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[134] Gellor explains his use of the phrase 'committed' to distinguish religious sensibilities that would otherwise be called 'fundamentalist', but in light of the problematic connotations associated with fundamentalism and presumption of Islam, he chooses the term 'committed'.

larger white audience' (2005). It should also be made clear that *Sound* makes a distinction between freedom of speech and programming that makes claims to religious or ethnic supremacy. 'It's a platform for people to take a positive view of their culture – not all fluffy fluffy – but people need to talk about their histories and the rest of it. If everything is predicated on oppression, then you kinda have to ask what culture have you got' (Gellor 2005). It is thus a platform for people to engage with issues but not in a way that promotes cultural turf warfare: 'One thing we won't tolerate is people propping up their religion or culture as better than someone else's' (ibid). *Sound* is interested in a model where listeners can get insight into someone else's reality by hearing music, commentary or news from people with direct experience of the culture.[135]

Programmes often embody both a global and local relevance and there is often a strong connection between individual programmes and home countries. The Ugandan music, for example, is rebroadcast in Kampala. Gellor tells the story of local listener in Stanford Hill phoning in to the station during the Brazilian music show, whose voice on air was heard by her mother listening via Internet in Sao Paolo. There is also another dimension to their transnational reach. Recently, a photo appeared in a number of Turkish and Kurdish papers featuring the producers of the programme dedicated to issues around and music from Kurdistan and Gellor. Later that week, the Turkish government announced the right of the Kurds to start a legal radio station.

Sound Radio is not a place where presenters all know each other, but Gellor's hope is that they will see that being part of the same station, and being invested in the success of the same station, gives people something very tangible and functional in common, and that such mutual interest benefits individuals as well as helps bridge some of the cultural divides in Hackney:

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[135] There are many interesting Internet radio examples of this approach, including NGO-driven OneWorld Radio, Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE), Women's International News Gathering Service (WINGS) and content distribution facilitated by the World Association of Community Radio (AMARC).

I would say this is quite a seductive process. The vast majority who come through the door want to do radio for very personal reasons or to do something for their community, whatever they perceive it to be. So what you get is people with self-interest. I don't mean that in a nasty way, it's just how it is. What interests me may not interest them, but hopefully at some time it will. What interests me is that disparate groups of people who wouldn't normally meet have proximity to each other. After awhile, some of those people get quite into the idea – they buy into it and like being a part of something that is – and not the United Colours of Benneton thing – the reality is they are part of something (2005).

Gellor feels it is not his place to force the issue of interconnecting groups, that it has to come organically from the volunteers themselves: 'I'm as close to being a dodgy missionary as you can get' (2005).

Sound is very much concerned with social inclusion. To that end, Gellor asserts that to ban sexist and homophobic speech or lyrics is not something that is done through a top-down approach, especially if inclusion is the mission:

[l]et's be generous without being patronising. How are you ever going to engage with someone in conversation about that particular issue without becoming engaged with them? If you just stop people from coming in the door, they remain excluded. Are you doing a social inclusion project, or are you just kidding yourself? (Gellor 2005).

A programmatic example of this is a show that aired featuring popular rap music where the young, male presenter played songs with controversial lyrics and themes, and commented on their wider implications whilst unpacking some of the issues in a manner that provided context for both understanding why they might hold appeal and why they were worthy of criticism.

Volunteers

Sound provides training for volunteers and youth. The philosophy at *Sound*, however, is that the real learning takes place on-air. It strives to provide programming that is interesting and produce good quality audio, but are not afraid to have people make mistakes as they go. 'So you get it wrong this time. Big deal. How'd you learn?' (Gellor 2005). *Sound's* approach to training is to focus on the technical skills, but that decisions on how to put together a programme need to come from the producers, and significantly, that

new possibilities for what radio can sound like will only emerge through such an approach. Gellor is also clear to point out that this approach is not in conflict with aspiring towards high technical standards like being "on mic" and not sounding "distorted" or "hissy". But *Sound* is also careful to give newcomers the space to grow into their on-air presence: '[s]ome people are really nervous, say, and need more time to get comfortable being on air. You just have to let them. You can practice and practice but live radio is live radio. The only way to get on with doing it is to do it. At least through our version of community radio' (Gellor 2005).

Gellor asserts that community radio is different from commercial radio and the BBC explicitly because there are multiple approaches all converging on any one station: 'I don't think it's for me to tell the Bangladeshis what kind of content they should put out and how it should be structured. The whole point is that they're going to do it in a different way' (Gellor 2005). This seems to be the essence of *Sound's* hands off approach and freedom offered to their programmers and to the communities to be able to speak for themselves rather then conform to a particular kind of sound or style. In essence, the programs should sound like who they are being made by and for. 'We do stuff with young people and their idea of radio is a pirate thing. At the same time, we'll get very well-educated white middle class people - probably – and they'll come in and do something that sounds like *Radio Four*. Sometimes you get things that sound in-between. The Colombians do a sports programme and it's like GOOOOOOOOOAL!' (ibid).

Station Management

Programming decisions are primarily left to Gellor. 'This is kind of a dodgy area for me' (2005). He acknowledges many of decisions amount to him 'playing God' (ibid) in terms of how he decides who gets what airtime, but explains that it is far more complex then that: '[y]ou're trying to interpret a whole range of subtexts. The world being the world, people have different views of each other. Trying to create a balance that is perceived to be equitable – it's not all that easy. You also have to be functional – who's ready,

who has the time' (ibid). He notes one difficulty is trying to maintain balance linguistically. Gellor feels that being in London, it would be 'inappropriate' (ibid) to not maintain at least some English language content. *Sound* has no quota system for how much airtime any community gets, but tries to be representative. Another management issue is the fact that Gellor – or anyone else at the station – can not understand the spoken language of much of what is going out on air. However, Gellor's experience is that people are vested in the station enough to tell him when there is a problem or someone crosses a line on air. This confidence and sense of collective ownership combined with individual responsibility is echoed by others at the station.

Another management issue Gellor faces is challenging people's traditional experience of their relationship with management and hierarchical institutions. Through his style and openness, he hopes to challenge people's idea of "the boss". 'I say I'm Lol. Yes Mister Lol. Na, na, it's just Lol. Yes Mister Lol. You suddenly realise some people are uncomfortable and want to have a particular relationship to you and want to be able to define it in their cultural terms' (Gellor 2005). Gellor is not trying to generalise about workplace relationships in cultural terms, but his point about people's need to define relationships in their own terms seems realistic considering the "broad church" of backgrounds and experiences participants bring to *Sound*. It is not dissimilar to concerns at *Desi* towards breaking down similar hierarchical tendencies.

The success of *Sound* has resulted in the inability to offer every group all the air-time they would like. It has also resulted in a number of competing applications for the five year license in East London, some of whom started there. Because of the diversity of the participants and personal contacts and gregarious nature of Gellor himself, *Sound* has been visited by Minister of Culture Media and Sport Tessa Jowell as well as been the subject of features on the BBC. Despite the competition for an East London license, Gellor feels optimistic they will receive their permit, in part because with such market scarcity, they provide space for more voices then a single-issue or single-community of interest station could.

Gellor is very open about the difficulty and complexity of what they are trying to achieve, and the inadvertent pitfalls associated. Deciding how airtime is balanced between interests and what group gets to "represent" or "speak for" their particular community, is inherently problematic, for their exists no one single "voice" for any group of people. There is a growing Latin American community in East London and *Sound* is one of the first stations to include Spanish language programming. Three new Colombian groups are now producing programmes on the station following the success of the sports programme. One of those shows, "Voice of the Kidnapped", is a programme clandestinely delivered to 109 community stations in Latin America. *Sound* has also had the presidents of Venezuela and Colombia broadcast live via telephone. With this success, there are an increasing number of Latino groups asking for programme slots, citing demographic data on the proportionate number of Spanish-speakers in the area as evidence of the need. Gellor comments *Sound* has potentially exposed is the need for more local commercial stations in London to reach the growing underserved populations and languages.

Funding

Lol Gellor is one of the most outspoken advocates for creative commercial funding schemes within the community media movement. Like others, he is very concerned about the long-term financial sustainability of the new sector. At *Sound*, he would like to develop a funding model whereby communities who produce programmes take on some responsibility for raising operating funds for the station as a means of increased ownership and shared responsibility. 'Do you really think it's healthy if I fund money for your community's voice to be heard? Psychologically, is that the best way to do things?' (Gellor 2005). Individual ethnic communities may have access to different grants and a different base of local advertisers and individual donors. The fear with this model is that it could result in a "pay-to-play" approach if access should become tied to fundraising, though theoretically, it makes sense to spread the financial burden in an institution with limited resources.

Sound's additional revenue sources include phone and text messaging services, in addition to events and merchandising. Gellor is concerned about the commercial sector's opposition towards community radio advertising and feels it is often misplaced, especially with regards to the reality of who sponsors commercial radio. 'It's probably a little easier for us to justify advertising because how many Spanish language adverts does Capital Radio do? How much Brazilian advertising does Chrysalis group do? Fuck off, you don't do any' (2005). When asked why are there not more stations who engage with so many groups like *Sound* does, Gellor replied: '[t]hey're probably not masochists' (ibid).

Resonance FM, Central London

Resonance FM is a project of the London Musicians' Collective (LMC), which has run numerous RSLs over the past decade. The LMC is itself a networking organisation founded 27 years ago and run by musicians whose mission is to 'promote and facilitate "improvisation and other adventurous musical activity" through concerts, publications (including *Resonance* magazine), and workshops' (Everitt 2003: 46). The station's studios are located off of the Charing Cross Road in Central London and its antenna is atop St Thomas/Guy's Hospital on the Thames River across from Houses of Parliament, thus affording them a more broad base of listeners across London on both sides of the river, a catchment that is reflected in the geographic distribution of its programmers. Chris Atton describes the ethos of *Resonance*:

> [t]he bulk of *Resonance* FM's programming is concerned with music that is out of the ordinary, avant-garde and experimental, popularly considered "difficult"; for many lovers of music, it may not even be heard as music. Such music – contemporary "art music" – experimental electronic music, free jazz and improvised music, musique concrete as well as "pure", untampered field recordings – have popularly been considered as having the status of elite, "high" art, at least with regard to their minority audience reach (2004: 129).

Resonance thus revels in the unpredictable and often challenges its listeners to rethink the medium of radio. Along the way, it is occasionally unlistenable and it can be easy to feel alienated by some of its more challenging noise-based programming. However, the station retains a strong base of support, and many feel so connected to the station's sensibility that they might listen through something they might not otherwise. Avid *Resonance* listener and musician Stuart Tilley tells of such an occasion: '[t]he other day I found myself listening to 45 minutes of three notes being played over and over. The only change was a slight alteration of frequency that you didn't notice right away – it just kind of crept up on you. I almost turned it off but something kept me listening. I think I was curious to hear where it was all going. But, I mean, where else would you hear a piece of music that makes you think about the subtleties of sound like that?' (2005).

In his evaluation report, Everitt describes *Resonance* as such: '[unlike other community radio stations], Resonance…is not concerned to address disadvantaged communities in the ordinary sense; rather its aim is to enable people to engage in culture in the most practical and successful ways. Its community comprises "artists, disaffected critics and other cultural workers"' (ibid). Resonance is thus a space for a kind of experimental music and art that has no other place on the radio dial. Most of those involved with Resonance are disadvantaged in the sense of their exclusion from mainstream media, not necessarily from their socioeconomic status.

That said, *Resonance* continues to confound stereotype in that they broadcast a number of programmes from diasporic communities, including Serbian, Brazilian and Congolese. Other one-off or short term shows have been presented in Russian, French, Spanish, Japanese, and others. *Resonance* also features some more traditionally programmed music shows and a number of speech based programmes. One distinction is that music shows are rarely presented without context, explanation or at the very least, detail of the music being played. 'In *Resonance* we see two simultaneous movements: towards specialisation in its adventurous music programming and experiments with

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format; and towards inclusiveness through its various community programme strands' (Atton 2004: 132).

Resonance asks us to rethink radio in creative and sometimes challenging ways. At the same time, they embrace and have brought renewed life to some of the oldest radio art forms such as radio drama that sound decidedly un-*Radio Four*. For example, it recently broadcast a self-mocking play in which the evil station director tried to take control of the radio universe and blast into outer space anyone in his way. In his evaluation report on Access Radio, Everitt cites text from the LMC's brochure printed during its first RSL in 1998:

> [t]he question of "what is radio art?" or perhaps "when is radio art" is not one that has a single answer. The concepts of narrative, the cave of the imagination, the sound diary, soundscape, intimacy, the seemingly banal, radio as a distributive medium, improvised story-telling, noise, silence and experimental documentary, hint at some of the many approaches...(Why isn't there a museum of modern art for sound in the same way as there is for the visual arts? The most suitable gallery space for the audio arts is the sound-only medium of radio. And one of the great things about radio is that everybody has one) [sic] (quoted in Everitt 2003: 21)

Thus, rather than a mission that narrowly defines its content, the ethos of *Resonance* is about asking probing theoretical questions and challenging then through the unexpected.

Station Management

Chris Weaver is the station manager at *Resonance*. He started volunteering at the station two and a half years ago and in his own words, 'made myself a pest' (2005), started fixing things that were broken, engineering for other programmers, and became an invaluable asset around the station. When the job became available in December 2004, he was a natural replacement for Knut Aufermann, who had been with the station since its inception, and who served as a guiding – if at times intimidating – force behind establishing the station's vision who left to return to his own artistic practice. Assistant station manager Richard Thomas started in 2004 on work experience as required for his social security benefits. The station has had a number of New Deal work

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placements and 80% of its volunteers are on low incomes. Weaver is uncomfortable with the label "station manager" because of the hierarchy implicit in the language and because 'in a tiny radio station, everyone does everything. I'll clean the toilets if need be. Whatever needs to get done' (2005). In short, Weaver and Thomas are the only two paid staff at the station, though the LMC has two additional paid staff, one of who oversees fundraising and press for the station, its founder, Ed Baxter.

On the one hand, *Resonance* has a well-articulated sense of self in a cultural and experimental context, and along with *Sound*, has one of the most open and diverse approaches to content, so long as their remit for "creativity" is upheld. That said, *Resonance* is in the process of rebuilding a more cooperative style of decision-making. At present, all decisions are, in effect, made by Weaver and Thomas. 'Our working methods are haphazard and sporadic...We programme very quickly. People come in and we say: "yeah that's a great idea let's do it" and they're on next week' (Weaver 2005). Initially, there existed a steering committee, which was abolished after the paid staff at the time felt the committee generated more paperwork then decisions. 'When I took over, I was not comfortable with that aspect of our process because it's not very democratic...I feel from my own personal view that we need to make the station more reflexive not responsive' (ibid). Weaver cites the ethos of IndyMedia as part of his inspiration to better democratise.[136] Now the station holds programmers meetings and is working on redeveloping a better decision-making structure. Producers have expressed a desire to have more say in station operations, but the practicality of facilitating that process with two paid staff is not easy. 'Because we are the only two people here each day, we simply have more information than programmers who might come in for regular meetings...so on the outside, it might sound like a good idea, in reality it's a tough one' laments Weaver (ibid). *Resonance* is interested in seeing how other stations structure decision-making, something that speaks to the

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[136] IndyMedia radio projects, including one that airs on *Resonance*, are the subject of Chapter 7.

importance of having a sector where ideas, successes and failures can be shared and learnt from.[137]

Weaver and Thomas want people involved to feel part of something. In addition to the programmers' meetings, there are numerous *Resonance* sponsored music and sound events and opportunities for social engagement among producers and listeners, whilst at the same time acknowledging that it is not always possible with people's schedules and other commitments. That said, 'we want to create some social mutations. You want to take the lid off the Petri dish and let things really flourish' (Thomas 2005). Like each of the other London access stations, programmers are not required to volunteer additional hours at the station or provide general office help, though some have made the station their second home. There are always plenty of volunteers when needed for special events like the station's recent 3rd birthday party. Weaver notes the difficulty in practice of effectively organising volunteers on a day-to-day basis without a volunteer coordinator.

Content[138]

One place where the station's mission comes into practice on a daily basis is the *"Clear Spot."* For ninety minutes each day, Monday through Friday, a space is reserved for one-off or short-term programmes. Thus, the number of producers who have produced programming for *Resonance* is much higher then any other community station on average. The success of the *Clear Spots* varies widely, and there is no shortage of "misses" along the way. 'Ultimately, the *Clear Spot* is the clearest way to programme without administration and editorialising. I like to think of it as a conduit straight to air' (Weaver 2005). This harkens back to the necessity of debunking what it means to be "professional" that each community station works out in its own way. For *Resonance*, it is giving virtually anyone with an interesting idea room to try it out.

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[137] Events such as the Community FM seminars in Manchester hosted by *Radio Regen* and the CMA are one such space for these exchanges.

The station receives numerous requests for *Clear Spots* from individuals who have 'a great record collection' (Weaver 2005) they want to play from. This is not the kind of creative programming *Resonance* is looking for, however. Content needs to have a theme or a reason beyond personal taste and interest. The music needs a strong narrative. However, the station does have a slot called *"Burning Decks"* for those interested in "just" doing a DJ slot. When asked about a memorable *Clear Spot*, Weaver described one from the previous week that was conceived around an abstract idea of human noise, which he felt was successful because of how the show was constructed, linking sounds with everyday experiences, a topic that could have been fallen flat if not given the right treatment. Other *Clear Spots* have included a feature on a top band from Mozambique called Massukos and their work using music to promote awareness of HIV/AIDs in rural communities, an auditory tour of the international Schmiede Festival in Austria, and a feature on London's fringe theatre scene.

The station takes some syndicated public affairs programmes from the United States, specifically Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now!* and David Barsamian's *Alternative Radio*. Weaver feels it is important the station broadcast some news-based programmes in line with the political leanings of the vast majority of programmers: '[t]o be honest, we're a station stuffed with lefties' (2005). *Resonance* also broadcasts the *Indy News Hour*, a news programme produced by IndyMedia London focussing on under-reported global events and local activist news. Additionally, shows like *Middleast Panorama* and *London Na Biso* also feature news and public affairs relevant to their specific focus. Other atypical, or non-music or arts based talk shows include *Bike* ('delving into the art, science, politics and transcendental pleasures of cycling, in London and beyond'), *Midnight Sex Talk* ('we talk about sex - and you email us and tell us what you think!...or talk live on air'), *Speaker's Corner* (recorded live at London's famous free speech locale), and a programme on animals.[139] Another popular programme is *Calling All*

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[138] See also Atton (2004) for further discussion of content and programming on *Resonance FM*.
[139] For further content information, see schedule and programme descriptions at Resonance (2005).

Pensioners featuring colourful commentaries by pensioner Harry Haward, known for his sexually off-colour jokes and enthusiastic rants against the likes of Tony Blair, the NHS and the Royal Family.[140]

Resonance also boasts some quirky character-driven talk shows like *Headroom with Rob Simone* who explores 'unexplained phenomena' which often includes X Files type stories and the 'disturbed-but-brilliant' (Tilley 2005) poetry of *Rodney Finkleton's Epistaxis Time*. There is also the "guy who talks backwards" on his show *Xollob Park*, which is "Bollox Krap" spelt backwards and where everything is done backwards, including records and sound collages played in a manner which 'thwarts any attempt to consider the programme as a serious exploration of sonic creativity' (Atton 2004: 131), thus making its own mark on sonic creativity in the process. Much of the stations speech output is of course also to do with the arts and specialist music and many interviews with musicians and sound creators can be heard, in addition to radio plays. Another oft-mentioned programmer at *Resonance* is Dan Wilson, a performer who distributes his music by leaving tapes on buses or cellophaned to train windows. The station is involved in many local, national and international arts and music festivals as well. It hosts a bi-monthly music show in Camberwell in addition to other one-off events and have set up their own radio orchestra, its take on a Soviet orchestra playing on Russian radio with people who play laptops and other objects. Last year, the orchestra performed *Death of Nero* and an operetta about a dada boxer.

Just a few shows are run as collectives. Thematic-based speech programme *Slow Small Peasants* is one of them, another is the magazine style show *gLASSsHRiMP* presented by the Egghole Collective. *Open Air* is a world music show produced by a rotating group of students at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), themselves planning to embark on their own RSL by the end of 2005. Also, there is *Mining for Gold*, a show boasting a musical playlist of "lost gems and hidden treasures" that began as the project of one

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[140] Though there are few public service programmes explicitly produced for pensioners, it should also be noted one of the Access stations is itself aimed towards elderly people, Angel Radio in Havant, Hampshire. The station's motto is 'Snap, Crackle, but NO POP.'

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individual, but others kept getting involved in the programme because they appeared one week and kept returning. It was a 'magnetic thing...I love it when that happens' (Weaver 2005). Another collective production is the two programmes produced by the *Deptford Community Radio Project (DCRP)*. DCRP was formed by Goldsmiths College students in 1984 to lobby the college for a campus-based low power radio station.[141] Though they were unsuccessful in convincing the college, the project has remained in existence producing material for a number of RSL and stations like *Radio Thamesmead* over the years. Today, the project is funded by the Healthy Communities Fund, the South East London Community Foundation, Lewisham Borough funds, and New Cross Gate New Deal for Communities scheme. Under the direction of project coordinator Tim Hamilton, a regular series of free trainings takes place, through which two programmes are produced, "Healthy Radio" with features on alternative health care and local health schemes and "Our History", a local history show focussed on the New Cross area.

With regards to multi-lingual programming, *Resonance* has no specific requirements and leaves it to individual show producers to decide, though most broadcast in English. The general attitude is that it is important for people to have access to broadcasting in different languages but that 'a little translation doesn't hurt so more people can engage with the show' (Thomas 2005). The Iranian speech-based show is in Farsi, whereas the Congolese show presenters broadcast in Ingala but is primarily a music programme so the amount of speech is limited by design. It is difficult territory to negotiate. For *Sound,* the diversity of language is crucial to their mission and important for both listeners and producers to share and maintain their language whilst living in an English speaking country. At the same time, since the vast majority of listeners to *Resonance* speak English, Thomas feels it would also be useful for the Iranian show to broadcast some in English to 'counter all the misinformation we get about Iran in the mainstream press' (ibid). Either way, it is a balancing act between needs and interests of producers, of listeners and of the collective community organised around the station itself. In terms of programme

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[141] Archives of materials and correspondence generated with Student Union President Wayne

philosophy, the station does not seek out programmers to fill gaps –they don't assess their station in such a way typically, although Weaver feels the nearby Chinese neighbourhood in Soho / Chinatown is massively underserved and seems an obvious gap in their schedule given the geographic proximity to the station.

Each Access station commented on the difficulty of running a station whose future and timetable are uncertain – especially regarding funding – but there is also a difficulty in negotiating the steady progression into hopeful permanency with shows that might have only been envisioned for a one-year period. Three years on, some of the concepts have run their course. Recently, *Resonance* took the step to cancel some shows that have been on air for three years. They feared programmers would be irate, and were surprised when most agreed it was time to take a rest. Even more significantly, *Resonance* has recently given notice that most shows will be renegotiated on revolving fixed-term slots. In other words, most programmes will operate 6-12 weeks on, take a break, and then come back to air again for another fixed term if they so choose, which producers are encouraged to do. The idea is that it gives programmers a chance to revive shows, keep concepts fresh and avoid burnout, and build a system where there is always room on air for the ever-increasing number of people seeking to produce shows. They hope people will come back time and again with new ideas, and with renewed energy and excitement over the prospect of limited-run engagements.

This is very significant. As will be seen in the next chapter, one of the difficulties for long-time community radio stations in the United States has been the difficulty in keeping programme schedules lively and maintaining room for newcomers. Programmers have a tendency to take on a sense of ownership over their time slots and mobility is often a contentious issue. That *Resonance* has in its structure room for new voices at all times and an unfixed nature to its schedule also plays against mainstream programming ethos. As Atton states, *Resonance's* programming 'displays transgressive approaches to

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Bennett and faculty member Peter Lewis, can be found with Tim Hamilton of the DCRP.

broadcasting at the same time as it deploys transformed notions of programme-making and scheduling based on mainstream models' (2004: 125).

Training

Training is conducted on an as-needed basis, which is to say most people are expected to acquire the skills they need on their own or at least ask for what they don't know. For example, *Clear Spot* producers are given guidelines and an engineer to work with and it is up to them to best fulfil the mission of the project they pitched. There exists a high level of trust placed on those producing one-off shows. Most people invest a great deal of time and energy into their programmes and take it upon themselves to seek it out, however, there also exist producers who fail to live up to such trust and some poor-quality audio is occasionally heard on air. Though there is ample room for newcomers to radio, the explicit mission of *Resonance* is not centred around the personal experience of the programme producer necessarily and their focus thus quite different in that respect from *Desi*, for example. Though confidence and self-esteem may be welcome outgrowths of people's experience, *Resonance* is more focussed on the content, style, access and creativity then with social gain on an inter-personal level for the sake of itself.

Funding

Resonance operates on one of the smallest budgets of the Access Pilots in London. On one hand, this is surprising because the station itself is located off Charing Cross Road in central London, though its studio is very small. On the other hand, the station runs a skeletal overhead staff with two paid positions and operates a very decentralised model of production – most programme pre-production takes place outside the limited facilities of *Resonance*. Also, *Resonance* does not run extensive, long-running training programmes like other stations - such training is often externally funded through various grants obtained explicitly for running training courses, as *Desi Radio* does.

Most of *Resonance's* funding comes from the Arts Council - about £40,000 annually of their £60,000 budget. They also receive additional Arts Council funding for publicly archiving shows because of the Council's current focus on digital archiving. They sell t-shirts which provides them with cash to buy tea bags, loo roll, CDRs and other small day-to-day items, around £400-500 a month. Other funding comes from small grants, individual donations and station-run fundraisers. *Resonance* has experimented with an on-air fund-drive in the form of an on-air auction. Weaver comments if they had more money, he would like to hire more people.

Resonance is also the least commercially-minded of the London Access Pilots. At present, they do not air commercials, though they are entitled to under the terms of their license. They have worked in partnership with commercial arts events, such as the *Frieze Magazine* Arts Faire where they broadcast live from the "art market" throughout the week of the event. *Frieze* paid the cost of the live broadcast and the station received promotion in the magazine that they could not otherwise afford. Recently, the station ran a paid promotion with the School of Sound to promote an event being held at Queen Elizabeth Hall. In the future, Thomas comments he could envisage certain opportunities that might make sense for *Resonance* to promote on an advertising basis, such as with institutions relevant to their mission like Tate Modern or the National Film Theatre. At present, many of these events might already be promoted on an unpaid basis by individual show presenters who are of course free to talk about events they might be interested in or relate in some way to their show. Overall, their attitude is one of 'doing things on our terms. If people come to us with sums of cash we would see beyond that and see what they are asking for. The bottom line is not our bottom line' (Weaver 2005). At the same time, 'I want to stress this – we don't allow ourselves to be bound by our resources. Doing things like *Frieze* at the same time we organised a radio art conference at the station while at the same time covering the European Social Forum - we didn't get any extra funding, we just sweated a lot more then usual' (ibid). Weaver explains:

> [w]hen it comes to taking on big events], we don't think "oh we wouldn't be able to do that. We haven't got four sound engineers on site". Fuck that. We just bring a lot of leads and do the best we can with the resources we've got...It doesn't have to be airtight. In fact it's important in a way that it's not. It just makes you seem more human, alongside the mechanised stuff. If something goes down, we play CD's from the studio until we sort it out (2005).

Their lack of formalism offers a sense of freedom in allowing them to be adventurous and experimental without the pressures of being perfect.

Audience

The station acknowledges it is not for everybody, 'nor should it be' (Weaver 2005). No one station is for everybody. Though they employ a non-traditional approach to scheduling, they are very conscious of what show follows what and making those linkages, in addition to thinking about the time of day:

> [w]hat would you have for a drive time show? Pumping stuff, news traffic, possibly a double-header, cut over to someone in a weather balloon or whatever but it's an onslaught. Radio is a musical thing – it's about composition...and you do make some assumptions...And at the end of the day, you want to break stuff with people, you want people to engage with it so you think about where you place things...At the same time, you don't want to impose your arrogance (Thomas 2005).

One of the stereotypes from the earliest days of *Resonance* that still persists is that it is the station that airs six hours of dripping taps. 'We do put things out there that are tough to listen to but it's stuff that hasn't been done on a radio, not just cos it's tough to listen to. You know, at the end of the day, you have this box you can secretly transmit into people's homes and you should really examine this from all artistic angles' (Weaver 2005). Thomas describes the ethos of transitioning from one programme to the next that he appreciates about *Radio Four* and sees it as an example of the kind of approach *Resonance* takes to its flow of programmes and the relationship of the audience to it: '[s]ome mornings, I get up, turn on the radio, listen to *Today*, and start making a cuppa. I go back in my bedroom to get changed and it's a documentary about bats. And I haven't even noticed. I'm still thinking it's *Today* and

suddenly I go, wot?' (2005). Thus, *Resonance* tries for "cross pollination" approach to its programmes.

Resonance asks us to rethink the traditional notion of the industry concept of "day-parting" and the ways listeners have been conditioned to conceptualise their radio time. 'Resonance has dispensed with, or disregarded, a number of scheduling features common to both commercial and public service broadcasters' (Atton 2004: 125). Thomas goes on to challenge the notion of "breakfast time" in a city like London where one person's breakfast is another's bedtime. Yet when it comes to the weekend, Thomas feels BBC radio programming on Sundays is 'nostalgic codswallop' (2005). The station is keenly aware of this and takes advantage to experiment with things assuming people might be more willing to give it a try with limited other options. Overall, Thomas and Weaver both feel most listeners listen for the station rather than individual programmers: '[t]hey love the brand!' (2005). The irregularity of scheduling goes against the notion of "dailiness" Scannell (1996) speaks of, and against the ideas of "lazy listening" early BBC radio programmed against.

Atton (2004) also describes how such conventions operate against expectations. His case study of *Resonance*, though focussed on their online presence, examines these characteristics concluding such conventions establish 'discrete programme spaces within which the listener becomes immersed on the programme's own terms' (ibid: 126), whilst noting such relationship is not unique to *Resonance*. Atton (2004) further draws on Hendy (2000) to explore the positioning of the listener, who argues radio works as a tension between first, the dichotomy between a station's goal for a mass audience while the act of listening itself for any one individual is a personal experience. And secondly, as Atton (2004) describes, the tension between radio as a passive activity whereby listeners are at the mercy of programmers choices yet can actively create their own meaning, engaging with the "imaginative potential of the aural domain" (Hendy quoted in Atton 2004: 126).

Transnational Broadcasting

The focus and energy for Thomas and Weaver is on the role *Resonance* has to play in the local area and broader London creative movements, but the station also has a very strong Internet presence, with some programmes gaining substantial international reputations and listenerships. As mentioned, *Resonance's* programming is unique among the world of community radio, but also among radio projects online as well, thus, the Internet allows them to reach the 'globally fragmented, minority audience for such music' (Atton 2004: 124). Thus, like all low power stations streaming online, they are able to reach beyond their analogue limitations within licensed spectrum. These are values and aesthetics that transcend locality and are of interest outside of a narrowly defined geographic London-centric area. *Resonance* programming needs to be seen both within the context of London as a cosmopolitan city where there is access to cultural events and producers from everywhere, locally-oriented speech content and where diversity is an accurate representation, and outside its place of origin owing to the breadth and broad appeal of their mandate.

Access Radio London: Key Issues

As Atton reminds us, it is important to see alternative projects, in this case, community radio, as means to move away from a strictly socioeconomic paradigm of radical media into thinking about these radio spaces as a means by which 'consumers of artistic products (records, films, books) become critics and even creators themselves, developing critical approaches to creativity that are avant-garde or experimental in their relation to dominant forms of criticism and creation' (Atton 2004: 116). One of the most striking features of community radio in Britain is the sheer number of people who have been involved well before there was official establishment of the sector. While the BBC remains the prime training resource for those working in commercial or public service radio today, institutions like hospital radio, temporary restricted service licenses (RSLs), and the handful of local educational stations have provided fertile training grounds for many of those making independent radio.

And a shift is underway as community radio seeks to redefine what local radio can be. At the same time, new tensions emerge as the sector deals with the practicalities of sustaining 50-100 new radio stations and the political power that comes with it.

Volunteers and sustainability

One of the key concerns raised by each station was the need to have more key workers, yet in no way did any of the stations or community radio participants feel limited personnel deterred them from pursuing station goals. Training is a key part of the government's vision, and certainly a quantifiably measured area of success achieved from each Access Pilot according to the Everitt Report and the stations' own application forms for the full-time license (Ofcom 2005). There are questions to be raised about whether or not there will be enough paid employment in the sector for those who seek it, and if such training will allow those otherwise left out of the BBC track due to their lack of formal education to break through, despite the fact that most stations would increase paid staff with increased funds.

Also, as Atton points out, the 'self-exploitation' of volunteer labour indeed runs rampant in community radio as is to be expected. There exists concern that over time, the need to compensate for this overworked core of volunteers often leads to the professionalisation of labour and output as the project may change to meet the needs and interests of the funding agencies. Moreover, this shift may be counter to the original mission, practice and sensibility of the project. At the same time, 'if someone walks through the door and asks how can they get involved, you have to know what to do with them' (Parklyn 2005).

Another aspect surrounding volunteerism is the so-called "grunt work". None of the London Access Radio stations require volunteer programmers to commit to any general volunteer hours helping with the mundane tasks such as stuffing envelopes and taking out the proverbial trash. Stations feel it is too difficult to manage without a volunteer coordinator; that programmers contribute many

hours into show preparation and can not reasonably be asked to do more; and that other non-airtime volunteer contributions account for some of that labour. For example, some hospital radio stations require presenters to contribute certain hours of volunteer work on the hospital ward before they are given air time.

Funding is the other core aspect of sustainability. The operating budget for *Riverside Radio* in Hammersmith was £50,000 to run for a one-month RSL. This is nearly the yearly operating budget of *Resonance*. RSLs are an important part of the radio landscape and not all are as costly. *Riverside Radio* involved an extensive training programme for youth beyond the kind of training *Resonance* offers and had two months lead-up time of preparation. Nevertheless, it highlights the financial cost of having to recreate stations on a temporary basis each year as a significant portion of the funding went to equipment hire and training staff. Thus, long-term community radio stations may negatively impact funding opportunities for short-term RSL stations in the nationally competitive environment of scarce financial resources, though RSLs continue to offer important access and opportunity, especially in areas like London where the number of full-time community licenses available will never match the interest. Ofcom has set up a Community Radio Fund of £500,000 for fulltime licensees, but spread across the number of new stations, that will not go far.

The scarcity of financial resources will result in stiff competition for the Fund and other forms of national and European funding, however, the diversity of the station remits make it possible for new funding sources to be tapped that otherwise might not be involved with supporting radio projects. For example, *Desi* has access to European funds in support of language preservation that *Resonance* does not as a station, though an individual programme might. By contrast, *Sound* is moving towards a model whereby individual programmes take on greater responsibility for raising funds thus enabling the station to tap, for example, funds supporting Brazilian news and culture but on a smaller scale than as support for the entire station. This decentralisation of support might prove very useful in spreading the financial burden, on the other hand, it

might also increase decision-making based on what show was best funded rather than serving community needs.

From an American perspective, the concept of community stations airing commercials is very paradoxical. However, solid arguments are made regarding the sheer necessity of the funds and the value of recognising local businesses as an important part of the community. That said, limitations imposed by Ofcom capping single-source revenue at 50% (including sponsorship or grant) seem wise. On the other hand, other restrictions imposed that forbid community stations in small areas with an ILR station in the market seem misguided and punish the emerging sector whose money earned must be reinvested in the station. As Lawrie Hallett suggests: '[m]y concern is if we do too much to protect the incumbent' (2005). The American model of listener-sponsorship addressed in the following chapter is useful in a large urban environment like Los Angeles for stations with the reach of full-power stations, but is limited in low-power sectors, and in low-income communities, though the potential for some exploration of it in Britain is possible.

Scheduling

There is a mixed response to existing notions of scheduling. Most Access stations adopt a more "traditional" approach to scheduling and may even have a morning show, drive-time slot, or "block programming" model. However, none of the stations featured the same presenter during these slots so although the structure may be familiar, it remains driven by the station not the personalities. While Resonance FM takes the least traditional approach to scheduling and purposely plays with expectations, it still thinks about where people are likely to be at certain times of the day. Sound defies expectations by including programmes in over fifteen languages on air in a given week. None of the Access stations engage with traffic and weather reports and only Desi features regular daily newscasts.

Broadcasting reach

Each of the three Access stations, and many RSLs and pirates, employ digital technology to reach global audiences online or via satellite to bypass frequency limitations imposed by the nature of their licensed service. Additionally, because each of the stations has regional reach outside of their narrowly defined geographies, many listeners in other parts of London, as well as across the UK listen online. Many Access stations could in fact be national formats, however, the lack of profitability makes it highly unlikely for most, but not all. Atton argues that Internet broadcasting allows for a particular kind of inclusion in an "imagined community" of radio listeners around the globe that is specific to the medium of radio, or at least, sound, itself (2004: 133). Each Access station described their online reach as secondary to their local commitment. However, as *Desi* and *Resonance* programme to "communities of interest", and with the linguistic variations on *Sound* appealing to so many diasporic communities, their content has wide appeal, though by virtue of production centred within London, they remain rooted in their place of origin simultaneously.

De-professionalism

This is perhaps one of the most interesting and recurrent themes from each station with regards to their station philosophy, and one that connects with earlier debates highlighted regarding the role of alternative media in changing the broader media landscape. Community radio asks us to rethink our expectations as a listener, allows a more expansive and potentially more creative approach for producers by not imposing a set structure on them, and redefines "professionalism" in a way that allows for more creative approaches whilst at the same time appreciating and striving for a level of technical "listenability" and clarity and quality of sound. It seems perhaps a more useful way to shift away from discussions around "professionalism" to that of "formalism". As *Radio Wano* Project Manager Rosie Parklyn puts it: '[n]on-professional just means not getting paid' (2005). "Formalism" may be more accurate an aesthetic that seems to better describe the concerns alternative

media practitioners seek to produce in opposition to, rather than the language of "professionalism" that implies a value judgement on process over style. Further, it is the human element that is embraced by community radio practitioners and that which they see as sometimes antithetical to the perfected sound of the BBC and commercial radio in its own way.

Participation

Community radio offers forms of alternative communication not only based on content but by the level of participation implicit in the project's aims. It is striking to note the distinction between low power community radio in the United States and Britain. The fact that British government is licensing community radio on the merits of social gain provision is significant. It is thus about the role the radio station plays in the larger project of community building and representation. There is also a wide variety of reasons why individuals get involved and the extent to which they do. Some volunteers enjoy the pleasure in being on air or participating and may not be as steeped in the station's mission. This does not mean they oppose it, but they may have more personal or individual reasons for participation. The individual nature of the programming sits alongside the sense that most listeners generally tune to community radio for the station first and for individual programmes second, however, with a multi-lingual station like *Sound*, that paradigm is shifted.

Management

This is an area around which each station has its own issues, and an area two of the three station managers sheepishly acknowledged as a potentially problematic area for them. All three of the London access stations were started by and are led by the vision of strong individual leaders. Democratic decision-making exists but ultimately rests with the leaders. At the same time, there is a sense that the stations are better off for it. Each station aims to preserve both clarity of vision alongside the expressed desire for open, democratic and transparent structures. There are important distinctions to be made between "strong leadership" and "control" as the two are decidedly not the same thing.

This is an area to be revisited after the following case study that highlights the extent to which discrepancy over process and content can nearly tear apart an institution.

Audience

'...As the central purpose of Access Radio is to contribute to community development and individual empowerment, ratings are not the most appropriate primary measure' (Everitt 2003: 24). Rather, the key issues are social gain and sustainability and if both achieved, a reasonable listener base can be assumed (ibid). Station organisers are interested to know who is listening and will likely be required to offer measurable data to that effect to ensure funding in a nationally competitive sector for limited resources. However, given the social mandate of the sector, methods of audience measurement need to change. For commercial and public service broadcasters, audience figures are derived from quantifiable measurements determined by the number of listeners clocked at fifteen-minute intervals. For commercial stations, this information is used to set rates for advertisers. For community radio, while there is interest in counting heads, there are other forms of value that must be factored in when assessing the success of the station beyond audience figures. Southwark Council, in their support of the bid for *Radio Peckham*, is interested in bridging the gap between residents and their involvement with the Council and participation in Council programmes and schemes. It is not just numbers of listeners they are looking for, but a connection between listeners and participation in and awareness of Council schemes and social information. Thus, they will have to do more then count listeners to determine if the cost of running a station merits the results. For neighbourhoods where English is the second language, the ability to broadcast in another language carries important cultural and social value that cannot be measured strictly in numbers. In short, these community stations ask us to rethink how we quantify "success" within and beyond the traditional context of audience. While there was no funding made available for Access stations to conduct audience research, some stations, such as *Desi,* obtained their own

funding to do so. However, station evaluation has been a big part of the pilot project and also built into the new five-year licenses issued by Ofcom.

Community

Resonance is both community radio and experimental arts station, and that combination is important to station organisers: '[q]uite a lot of community radio stations are homogenised, ghettoised. It's the Congolese station, it's the Spanish station or whatever. We don't do that. We force thing to rub shoulders with each other...We live in a multi-cultural place, not an area with mono-cultures dotted around it. Surely the more integrated things become the better' (Thomas 2005). However, the primacy of English on *Resonance* is one criticism that could be levied, as well as concerns regarding "elitism" when certain programmes are left out because they are not embedded with sufficient cultural capital. Yet the value of establishing a space for experimental audio and arts is unique and the breadth of participants and fans of the station speak volumes for its efficacy.

Sound, it could be said, is much less interested in specific content and much more concerned with access and ensuring as many voices get on air, and that minority groups represented. What they risk, however, is narrowing forms of representation to a particular group that other community members feel do not speak for them, for example who has access to speak on behalf of Colombians, if speaking on behalf of any group is what presenters are engaged in. The problem again arises of how "community" is defined, and the problematic nature of attempting to define a project around such. That said, there is strong value in a programme model like *Sound* for a neighbourhood as diverse yet divided as Hackney where people of different cultures, languages and ethnic origins come together to make a radio station. And there is value for *Resonance* in their aesthetically-defined use of "community of interest" that is situated outside their licensed area, but nevertheless is very much a part of central London's arts network.

Desi Radio, then, is an entirely different model that is focussed on a very particular community of interest as defined by a geographic region, language and a psycho-political embodiment of the homeland. *Desi* is the kind of "ghettoised" station some have been critical of. While this model limits who has access by creating a very narrow remit (Panjabi speakers, in the case of *Desi)*, the station plays a powerful role in their neighbourhood and seeks to bring people together by what they share rather then how they differ, thus creating a strong sense of unity. There is also a stronger non-programmer volunteer base and *Desi* boasts the most well-established training programme in London as well.

The project of multi-culturalism and cultural production are not without complexities in various contexts. Issues of race and class representation are indeed imbedded in these debates. For *AMP FM,* an RSL based in a predominantly black housing estate, reaching beyond the tower blocks was important for drawing in from other parts of the area. As one of the only white people on the project, station organisers told volunteer Rosie Parklyn they hoped her presence would make others outside the estate feel more comfortable participating, even though at times she felt 'very self-conscious as an outsider coming up to fourteen year old kids asking if they needed help editing their piece on Dizzee Rascal' (Parklyn 2005).

Conclusion

These findings and issues raised will be revisited in the final chapter because each are relevant in different ways through each case study. There is clearly no single model of community radio – each has their strengths and limitations, and each serves a specific purpose in their own context that meets an otherwise unmet need. Low power community radio is a viable form of alternative media and at the same time helps redefine some of the criteria around it. The role of the community radio station is as varied as the kinds of stations and content that can be found. How stations define their own notion of "community" impacts their approach.

The almost clichéd idea of the community radio station as being a positive voice for the community nevertheless resonates with the mission and experience for many. Rosie Parklyn tells the story of being at *AMP FM* on the housing estate where the station was located when a story appeared in the *Evening Standard* written by a journalist who claimed to have lived on the estate for a week. His story described his awful experience and the terrible conditions people lived in. Parklyn speaks of how different it was bearing witness to the reaction from the inside: '[it] had a really detrimental effect on the people living there. If you tell people they come from the worst hell-hole on earth, then, you know, that sort of informs their behaviour in the future' (2005). It is thus the value in self-representation for neighbourhoods and people with collective interests and/or tastes, especially in low-income and minority areas often portrayed in limited fashion, that lies at the heart of community radio.

Chapter 5

"High Power" Community Radio
Case Study of KPFK and the Pacifica Radio Network

Introduction

The last chapter explored the newly created sector of low power community radio in Britain through a case study of three London-based stations. The stations are each neighbourhood radio, and radio serving under-represented groups and interests. A sector of low power radio is emerging in small towns and cities across the United States, but due to legislative restrictions, the service does not extend to the metropolises. However, there exists a fifty-year history of full power community radio in the US that began with Pacifica Radio in Berkeley, California. This case study offers an example of a single community radio station covering a broad urban area. It is local radio on a large scale. At the same time, this is also a case study about local community radio within a network context (Pacifica Radio Network), specifically, how the national and the local bodies inform each other in an often contentious environment.

Pacifica Radio Network (Pacifica) station KPFK, Los Angeles faces many of the same issues low power community stations encounter – practical issues of funding, scheduling, structure, etc – but due to its very size and reach, it also faces some very different challenges to those of the low power community stations in Britain and the United States. KPFK is a full power station boasting a 112,000 watt transmitter, reaching a 100 mile radius covering most of Southern California from San Diego to the south, Santa Barbara to the north, and Riverside County to the east, which translates to a potential audience of over sixteen million people. KPFK operates the most powerful transmitter in the United States west of the Mississippi River. This equates to a tremendous difference in capacity compared with the low power stations broadcasting at 100 watts or less, reaching roughly six kilometre radius. Significantly, the first Pacifica station, KPFA in Berkeley, is located in the commercial bandwidth, which means it can be sold commercially at market rate, as is

Pacifica's WBAI, New York. KPFK is in the portion of the band reserved for non-commercial, non-profit broadcasting so it cannot be sold to commercial interests. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, American non-profit radio, like KPFK, has no strict legislative requirement to provide a community service, be it communities of interest or geographic communities as do the new community stations being licensed in the UK. KPFK, like many of the full-power, non-profit community radio stations in the US that obtained licenses in the 1960s and 70s, does, however, have to meet the needs of an exceptionally diverse population of people and work within a geographically disparate region.

As part of the Pacifica Radio Network, a network of five radio stations (Berkeley, Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC, Houston), KPFK is more then a community radio station located in Los Angeles. The station must adhere to and operate within the mission of the national Pacifica network, which is: to serve educational purposes as a self-sustaining not-for-profit entity committed to providing an outlet for and promotion of creative activities in the community; to distribute public information; to offer 'sources of news not commonly brought together in the same medium' that is accurate, objective, comprehensive and relevant to the community; and to promote a lasting understanding and dialogue among people and natures irrespective of race and ethnicity (KPFK 2005). This last, and most fundamental aspect of the mission has been the source of significant debates surrounding the form such mission should take in practice (Lasar 2000 and Land 1999). In total, the five Pacifica stations have the capacity to reach one in five American homes (Adelson 2003).

What defines the network in a contemporary context is its recent struggle for survival. Pacifica was nearly destroyed by a concentrated effort of liberal reformers who sought to turn the network into something more financially profitable, standardised, and more akin to National Public Radio (NPR) against the wishes of the vast majority of programmers, volunteers, supporters and listeners. The means by which Pacifica's national board sought to implement these changes were through intimidation, censorship, insider corruption and at

times, outright violence, to the extent that the board was forced to defend its processes in federal court, a battle they eventually lost.[142] The story of Pacifica itself is the story of the efficacy of the progressive movement to react to crisis, in this case, to work collectively in refusing defeat despite debilitating obstacles and at times fractious, contemptuous internal relations. It is also the story of infighting, power struggles and racial politics. Many of the issues Pacifica stations face stem from their mandate to serve progressive interests across such wide terrain, while some of the issues stem from the complexities of trying to maintain a democratic structure when operating multi-million dollar stations. The stakes are much higher, the assets much more valuable,

This chapter will begin with the history of the Pacifica network and the chaos and upheaval that have surrounded it since 1999. It is necessary to provide this background first because it is difficult to talk about KPFK without a wider conceptualisation of the larger Pacifica story. This history is important because tensions surrounding the intent and value Pacifica's founder Lew Hill placed on debate rather then polemics as a means for advocacy has become the measure by which decisions are based against for long-term Pacifica supporters (Lasar 2000 and Land 1999). I will then look at the history and struggles around KPFK itself, before taking a more focussed look at the specific structure, content, scheduling, funding and organisational issues.

Non-Commercial Radio in Los Angeles

The Los Angeles media market includes a number of alternatives to commercial radio on air. There are four medium-to-full power public radio stations, three of which are NPR member stations: a jazz station licensed to Long Beach State University (KKJZ), the only all-jazz station in Southern California; a classical music station licensed to the University of Southern California (KUSC), one of two classical stations in the region but considered the "least commercial" and most informed between the two; an all-talk, news and public affairs station licensed to Pasadena City College and owned by

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[142] See Save Pacifica Campaign (2002) for detail of lawsuit and plaintiff's account of the process.

Minnesota Public Radio (KPCC); and a hybrid station of news, talk and music licensed to Santa Monica City College (KCRW). While each of these stations is licensed to a college or university, none could be considered "college radio" by American standards, which refers to student-run stations rather then professionalized models, and often, refers to a specific genre of new and independent music favoured by many college stations around the country. The public radio stations in Los Angeles are each highly successful, well-respected and well-listened to stations of their genres. However, the lack of public – or student – access highlights the tensions discussed earlier with regards to professionalized stations taking the place of community stations. [143]

Los Angeles also has a number of student-run college stations, however, only one of them is actually on the FM dial, due to scarcity in the LA market. UCLA, for example, has a station heard via cable on campus and on the Internet. Loyola Marymount University boasts one of the most well-regarded "college radio" stations in the country, KXLU, a station with a reputation for introducing new, independent artists. [144] One long-running show is *Demolisten*, hosted by college alumnus Fred Kiko and others, it is a programme devoted entirely to musicians without a record contract who submit homemade CDs and cassette tapes for consideration in the show. In the evenings, however, the station broadcasts an eclectic mix of speciality programmes, including folk, classical, opera, film soundtracks, and West Indian music. One difference is that even the classical music programmes feature less-serious names such as "Classical Fiasco" and "KlassikMusyk" (albeit the latter is a pun that translates better in text). On weekend days, the station broadcasts the first and longest running Spanish language programme in the area, *Alma Del Barrio* (Soul of the Neighbourhood). The stations programmers are limited to students and alumni of the college.

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[143] It should be noted I do not wish to dismiss the value of public radio and NPR, but it is useful to point to these tensions in order to highlight the necessity of sectors for both public and community radio. See also Chapter 3.
[144] KXLU is also in the midst of a fight to regain coverage area on account of interference from a translator station that has boosted its broadcast power without authorisation (Kiko 2002). See Chapter 3 for discussion of translators.

Beyond public and college radio, the only licensed community station is KPFK. There exists a history of pirate radio stations, some playing independent rock and punk rock music such as KBLT, as well as Latino pirate stations, and inland from downtown, a number of conservative Christian and right wing pirate, satellite and shortwave broadcasters.[145] Further, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, there are also a number of ethnic and minority radio stations serving interests ignored by commercial and public radio. There are, thus, a plethora of non-commercial and non-corporate radio offerings in the city, but few means for citizen access and participation. This background is useful to place in context the importance of these issues for KPFK as it struggles to remain both open and representative within its mandate.

The Pacifist Movement and the Project of Pacifica

Pacifica was founded in the aftermath of World War II 'by a persistent and idealistic group of pacifists...Their plan was to use radio as a way to resolve conflicts by bringing people of diverse beliefs together' (KPFK 1999: 2). They were inspired by principles of non-violence, many of whom spent time in government work camps as conscientious objectors at a time when the vast majority of the country was mobilised in support of the war.[146] The founder of Pacifica, Lew Hill, himself a previously interned war resister, worked for NBC affiliate radio station WINX in 1944. He was struck by the falseness he saw in news reporters reading text they had not written for themselves; the inhumanity of the 'grim political theatre' (Lasar 2000: 25) in the cover up of President Roosevelt's declining physical condition and confinement to a wheelchair; and the station's job application process during which applicants were given a page of text containing sentences with the correct syntax but did not make any sense – the page had to be read with both a serious voice and then a comical one. Hill lasted only one year at the job. However, it was during his time in the camps that he conceptualised the idea of a pacifist radio station. His experience at WINX only confirmed his concern that, like many social

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[145] See Chapter 7 for discussion of KILL Radio and other pirates in Los Angeles. See also Carpenter (2004) for her personal account of running pirate station KBLT.
[146] See Lasar (2000) for discussion of the misrepresentation of Pacifica organisers' political affiliations, especially pages 3-4.

movements, pacifism could have no real impact when pacifists themselves were seen as outsiders by mainstream America and their views not adequately conveyed. This combination of frustration with vying for accuracy and attention in mainstream media, and a need to develop a vehicle for self-representation, is a key impulse informing the creation of many alternative media projects (Coyer 2004a).

It is interesting to note that Hill's early organising to raise funds and interest in Pacifica occurred on the national level, both in terms of funding support and to coalesce the movement for non-violence in the quest to speak to wider audiences in general.[147] The *1946 Prospectus* Hill wrote went on to become 'the most important single document in the organisation's history' (Lasar 2000: 44). In particular, Article II laid out the five purposes of Pacifica, the most significant of which being to

> engage in any activity that shall contribute a lasting understanding between nations and between individuals of all nations, races, creeds and colors; to gather and disseminate information on the causes of conflict between any and all such groups; and through any and all means available to this society, to promote the study of political and economic problems, and the causes of religious, philosophical and racial antagonisms (Pacifica Foundation Radio Prospectus, July 1946, vii, quoted in Lasar 2000: 44).

Lasar argues that 'in the 1950s and 60s, McCarthyism forced the Pacifica radio network to define itself less as an institution in search of humanist dialogue – the goal of its founders - and more as a defender of the right of the individual to speak' (2000: xi). The vision of what Lew Hill and Pacifica's founders sought to create has been the subject of later conflicts over mission and vision. Whereas early Pacifica programming centred on open debate among at times adversarial political voices, it sought to use dialogue to widen the socio-political debates and expose conservative views to liberal scrutiny. There were also persistent questions of elitism with regards to the affluent and educated class bias prevalent on air. Lasar (2000) concludes that Pacifica became a fervent voice of opposition against the tyranny of the state as a necessary, if at

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[147] See Ibrahim (2000) for discussion of concerns associated with funding support reliant on foundations.

times messy, response to government censorship and repression. The result was an inextricable change to the face of Pacifica from debate to advocacy. It is no coincidence today that supporters seeking to push Pacifica programming away from its tendency towards the rhetorical and back towards debate and investigation cite Lew Hill's philosophy espoused in the 1946 Prospectus as its rationale much in the same way constitutional rights advocates refer back to the intentions of the founding fathers.[148]

Hill was pragmatic enough to know he needed to balance his political aims with the practicalities of obtaining a license from the FCC. The FCC's *Mayflower Decision* in 1941 was instrumental in shaping the Pacifica mission towards dialogue because it required stations to offer equal time to differing opinions and forbad stations from operating as "advocates" for a particular position.[149] In 1947, Pacifica thus issued a new prospectus called *The Promise of Radio* which introduced the Pacifica project as an alternative for listeners 'who are becoming increasingly critical of the calibre of radio advertising and the quality of programs which are occasionally inserted between the commercials' (*The Promise of Radio* 1947, quoted in Lasar 2000: 48). In *The Promise,* Pacifica also advocated a public service model based around fairness. It is significant that the current public dissatisfaction with commercial radio mirrors that from the post-war era, which was also a common complaint amongst consumer advocates and others in the 1920s.[150]

Pacifica was initially denied an AM license for Richmond (a working class suburb of San Francisco) on a technicality, with the FCC claiming potential interference. When it became clear Pacifica's only chance of gaining a license in the area would be on the new but limited access FM bandwidth, the decision

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[148] It is interesting to consider methodological approaches to textual analysis in this political context in terms of readings of authorship and intentionality, in this case of Pacifica's "author" Lew Hill.

[149] The *Mayflower Decision* was the precursor to the *Fairness Doctrine* that required equal time for opposing views and was abolished in the 1980s under Reagan. So named because Boston-based Mayflower Broadcasting Company challenged the license of local station WAAB for not giving airtime to views that differed from that of the conservative station owner.

[150] See Lasar (2000: 50-51) for discussion of FCC criticism of commercialism. See also McChesney (1993), history of which is discussed in Chapter 3.

was made to move the station four miles south to Berkeley, a city that included an affluent base thanks to the University of California, thus, a greater likelihood people would be able to afford a new receiver to enable them to listen to FM radio. A new prospectus was issued and plans for music geared towards a working class audience were dropped in favour of the classical interests of new locale. Against the odds, KPFA went on air in Berkeley in 1949.

There exists numerous fascinating and well-documented accounts of KPFA's early years, chief among them Lasar (2000) and Land (1999). What is significant towards the case study of KPFK, Los Angeles, and the network as a whole, is the tensions from the start between differing visions and practices of making radio. The mid-1950s saw turmoil and tension build against founder Lewis Hill, for whom the pressure and frustration had taken its toll on his failing health. Chaos, firings and crisis were omnipresent at the same time as the station continued to increase its listenership and support within the community. In 1957, Hill committed suicide. Though family and close friends believe it was a result of his debilitating and painful illness and mind-altering side effects from medication, 'to the larger Pacifica community, Hill's death became a metaphor for the sacrifice and not infrequent insanity associated with leadership at a community radio station' (Lasar 2000: 164). Lasar explains the conflict between vision and the day-to-day reality of Pacifica:

> [f]or its creators, KPFA represented an experiment in dialogue and reconciliation. The staff would provide programming that advocated and demonstrated the viability of a pacific world in the present. Rather than simply lecturing about pacifist politics, KPFA would ingratiate itself within the community by offering a "familiar and satisfying" array of cultural programs. Pacifist thought and peaceable process would function as an integral part of the daily life of listeners...But like all significant movements for change, the organizers of this experiment planned their revolution in one way while the objects of their reform experienced it in another. Most of KPFA's first listeners had not spent years in CPS [Civilian Public Service] camps. Although many admired Ghandi, they did not necessarily subscribe to anarchist/pacifist ideas or want to change the world. Most remembered the humiliations they and their families experienced during the Depression...The KPFA community certainly wouldn't have turned down a "pacific world" in their time, but short of that, they'd settle for a good time, for economic security, a chance to

engage in personal exploration, and the good things in life – classical and "international" music, fine literature, different cultures, stimulating ideas (2000: 85).

This conflict permeates the experience at each of the Pacifica stations.

KPFK's Early History[151]

In terms of the contemporary conflict, it is first necessary to maintain a sense of chronology and shift from the background of the formation of Pacifica and its manifestation in Berkeley at KPFA in 1947 to that of the second Pacifica station, KPFK Los Angeles in 1959, the focus of the case study. KPFK's early history outlines some of the programmatic achievements and support among Los Angeles' literati and progressive celebrities, some significant legal moments which shaped national broadcast policy and positions the station at the centre of many key moments of the day, at the same as it exposes KPFK to scrutiny for early tensions and lack of racial diversity and what was done in the past to redress these important concerns. It is important to provide this context so the recent crisis and its implications for the station's current structure and programming make sense historically. Because so much of the current climate is about conflict and rebuilding, it is worth offering a snapshot of the influence the station had and the positive role KPFK has played in shaping and responding to local politics and local activism around the issues of the day, from anti-McCarthyism, the Watts uprising, Vietnam war protests and Nixon's impeachment trial, while at the same time accepting there was conflict and divisions along the way as well.

When KPFK went on the air in 1959, there were some low power non-commercial, educational radio stations on air, but NPR had yet to be created and the only other community-run FM radio station on air was sister station KPFA. The press and public took notice, and the FBI opened up a file on the Pacifica Foundation when they announced the new station in Los Angeles. KPFK would battle with the FBI over the coming years. The attitude espoused

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[151] History compiled by KPFK 40th anniversary booklet (1999), Land (1999), Lazar (1999), and various press articles where noted.

by KPFK's first station manager, Terry Drinkwater, articulated the station's vision: '[w]e will do what other stations cannot and will not do...KPFK doesn't have to appeal to the largest possible audience. It doesn't have to provide the least-likely-to-offend points of view of the commercial press' (quoted in KPFK 1999). There are some very Reithian elements to the vision expressed.[152] KPFK was thus created as an alternative to the available on-air offerings.

KPFK built itself on the foundation of the listener-supported model begun by sister-station KPFA.[153] Before going on air, KPFK had already signed up 2,000 charter supporters and its original council of advisors included local luminaries such as novelist Aldous Huxley, actors James Mason and Vincent Price, architect Richard Neutra and comedian Mort Sahl. The programming sensibility can best be summarised as such:

> [w]hile in those early days KPFK refused to urge its listeners to "buy soap," Drinkwater did call for "good taste, tolerance and a sense of humor" from the station's listeners. The call for "good taste" reflected KPFK's erudite aspirations. "tolerance" reflected the station's commitment to diverse points of view, and a "sense of humor" came in handy when listeners got an earful of botched broadcasts, the result of novice hosts and inexperienced engineers ministering over ailing equipment (quoted in KPFK 1999).

Early Programming

In terms of the stations "erudite aspirations", its earliest programming schedule included twelve hours of classical music and academic lectures, including those by nationally celebrated figures. The station also sought out controversial viewpoints across the political spectrum, from Communist party organiser Dorothy Healey to conservative Howard Jarvis. KPFK also began a daily half hour news programme early on, which was Los Angeles' first half hour evening newscast on the radio. Within four months, the station had doubled its subscribers - rates were $12 per year. The station's first studios

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[152] See Chapter 3 for discussion of BBC.
[153] Model of listener funding to be discussed later in the chapter.

were small and dilapidated, complete with leaky roofs in the rain and sweltering heat in the summer - the bathroom served as the announcer's booth. By early 1961, the station moved to a larger studio, where it remains today. That same year, celebrities such as Bette Davis, Steve Allen and Jack Lemmon pitched on air during the fund drive.

In these early days and throughout its history, KPFK has won numerous journalistic awards and recognition for community service, including the prestigious Peabody Award. In the early sixties, KPFK's programming broadened to include more public affairs and more diverse music, arts and cultural programming including folk, jazz, radio drama, poetry and lessons in French and Russian. KPFK was recognized for its reporting of the 1965 Watts riots, a seminal moment for Los Angeles, African-Americans and opponents of police racism and brutality in the inner city. After the uprising, the station sought to improve its coverage of south Los Angeles and began by setting up a training centre and news bureau in Watts and teaching production skills to community members.

Another turning point for KPFK was its gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Watergate hearings in 1973, programming that brought scores of new listeners and won accolades from the public and journalists alike. Behind the scenes, the coverage brought to light growing tensions between the newly created National Public Radio (NPR) network and the Pacifica stations. The Pacifica stations had refused to join the NPR network when it was created and animosity resulted. When Pacifica stations first sought to broadcast the Watergate hearings, they asked NPR national if they could use its AM-quality feed from Washington, a request that was denied. KPFK then obtained permission from a local NPR affiliate, KUSC (from the University of Southern California), who was forced to end its arrangement at the behest of NPR when realised. KPFK eventually worked out an agreement with a local commercial radio station KABC (and the ABC network), an agreement that allowed them

to provide continuous, full coverage of the hearings, unlike that being offered by NPR.

During these decades, KPFK was also continually attacked for being 'unselfconsciously white and elite' (KPFK 1999: 8) and its programming reflected this homogeneity. Eventually the station did bring in more diverse voices and music and by the 1980's included programming created by and for Spanish speakers, African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Native-Americans, among other underrepresented groups. The station introduced its on air "Report to the Listener" and developed an extensive training programme for new volunteers. KPFK is also home of the Pacifica archives, itself an invaluable resource of over 40,000 tapes produced by Pacifica and independent producers since 1949. The archives is the oldest collection of non-commercial radio programming in the US that includes recordings from Martin Luther King, Jr., Anais Nin, Kurt Vonnegut, Carl Sagan, Woody Guthrie, Noam Chomsky, Edward Said and others.

The FCC and the FBI

Some aspects of KPFK's programming (as did KPFA's) fell under scrutiny by the FBI. By 1962, the US Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and FBI Director Herbert Hoover began investigating 'reports of possible Communist infiltration' (KPFK 1999: 4). During this time, the station's license renewal was delayed by the FCC. Pacifica's victory in finally obtaining license renewals for its stations in Berkeley, Los Angeles, and New York, was seen as a remarkable victory for First Amendment rights advocates. In its decision, the FCC stated: 'such provocative programming as here involved may offend some listeners. But this does not mean they have the right, through the commissions licensing power, to rule such programming off the airwaves. Were this the case, only the wholly inoffensive, the bland, could gain access to the radio, microphone or TV camera' (ibid). Then FCC Chairman E. William

Hunt also criticised commercial broadcasters for failing to stand up for Pacifica in the face of the Senate Subcommittee hearings, stating:

> [w]hen you [commercial broadcasters] display more interest in defending your freedom to suffocate the public with commercials than in upholding your freedom to provide provocative variety, when you cry "censorship" and call for faith in the founding father's wisdom only to protect your balance sheet, when you remain silent in the face of a threat which could shake the First Amendment's proud oak to its very roots, you tarnish the ideals enshrined in the Constitution and invite an attitude of suspicion. You join the forces of crass complacency - in an industry and at a time in the history of this nation when complacency of any sort is both misplaced and dangerous (quoted in KPFK 1999: 4)

In this statement, Hunt is making the connection between Pacifica and the wider so-called community of broadcasters, arguing that, despite their radical content, broadcasters should in fact have a shared interest in the fate of each other when issues of free speech and unwelcomed government intervention are at stake. It is telling, especially given the historic opposition the public broadcasting establishment has levied against Pacifica and other community radio formats, such as Class D educational stations and the low power FM service.[154] Their victory was only partial, however, because as a result, the Pacifica Board – while they refused to sign the loyalty oath sought by the government – did agree to an alternative document affirming the Board's commitment to the US Constitution. KPFK's then-manager resigned in protest.

KPFK also came under the gaze of the FCC at various times. In 1971, a programme aired featuring two college professors and a clinical psychologist discussing a controversy involving the firing of a local college professor. The professor had discussed in class a poem entitled "Jehovah's Child" that described Jesus receiving oral sex on the cross. During the programme, the offending poem was read on air. Despite complaints from several US Senators, the FCC declined to take action against the station. The station

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[154] See Chapter 3.

continued to push the boundaries of radio by including gay and lesbian programming and representation of a variety of people and positions not heard in the mainstream.

However, in 1986 the station was not so lucky in its efforts to thwart attention from government regulators. During a show featuring information and news about the gay and lesbian community entitled IMRU (that is still on air today), the station broadcast a play called *The Jerker*, a narrative account of a man dying of AIDS that included graphic sexual language. As the FCC pressed ahead with legal action against the station, it became clear that the language the FCC deemed most "offensive" actually came from James Joyce's classic literary work *Ulysses*. Though KPFK incurred costly legal expenses, they won a victory for its programming, and even more importantly, the case led to the emergence of new FCC guidelines that reconsidered its indecency standard to one that emphasised merit and context.

The most dramatic public event in the station's history occurred in 1974 when the station received a phone call from the Weather Underground that a three-page letter had been left in a phone booth nearby.[155] The station read the letter on air. A few days later, KPFK received a phone call informing them a tape had been left in the alley behind the station. The tape turned out to contain a message from the Symbionese Liberation Army [SLA] that began with a greeting from kidnapped heiress Patty Hearst.[156] KPFK held a press conference and released copies to the Los Angeles Police Department [LAPD] and the FBI, as they had done with the previous letter from the Weather Underground. The FBI sought the originals, which station manager Will

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[155] The Weather Underground (WU) was a radical faction within the student-led anti-Vietnam War and anti-racist movements of the late 1960s. The WU advocated direct action and violent response to state institutions in support of a worldwide communist revolution. They took their name from the Bob Dylan song "Subterranean Homesick Blues", featuring the lyrics: "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows".

[156] The SLA was a self-proclaimed "revolutionary vanguard army" in support of radical left-wing ideology, active from 1973-75. The group, numbering no more then 13 members, was accused of committing violent acts such as murder, bank robberies and the infamous kidnapping of media heiress Patty Hearst that brought international notoriety and press attention to the organisation.

Lewis had placed in a bank safety deposit box. Lewis refused to comply, citing California's law protecting journalists from revealing their sources and, as a result, Lewis was jailed for sixteen days.

The station continued to receive communiqués from the SLA, which they discriminately broadcast portions from and continued to provide to law enforcement. After a communiqué was aired following a bomb explosion in a restroom at a hotel near Los Angeles' main airport, the LAPD arrived at the station with a warrant and searched the station for over eight hours straight, which KPFK broadcast live on air. What is significant is the extent to which the local press expressed outrage at the police actions, with the *Los Angeles Times* in particular condemned the presence of police in an American newsroom stating: '[i]t was an excess of authority that seemed calculated more to intimidate than to locate a document' (KPFK 1999: 7).

This is not to over play a sense of unity in the history of KPFK, but it is important to highlight these seminal moments and achievements of one community radio station that have much to do with its substantial geographic reach and recognized local significance in the region. The station has been at the forefront of defining political and social moments in its time.

Crisis at Pacifica

As noted earlier, tensions over vision and practice were nothing new to Pacifica. However, the tenor they took on in the 1990s left the network nearly ruined, in massive debt and its stations battered and still recovering, five years after the 2000 victory over the "renegade" board of directors. The crisis also served as a galvanising force among progressives in the US who came to speak out in support of the network and locally at individual stations as part of larger social movements.

Deregulation of Sub-carrier Frequencies

The precursor to the crisis ensued in the early 1980s when the Reagan administration moved to deregulate public broadcasting so that non-commercial radio stations could lease their sub-carrier frequencies to commercial entities. What this means in lay terms is that alongside an FM frequency, 90.7 for example [KPFK's frequency], exists a separate right and left channels. Previously, these sub-carrier frequencies were used for civic-minded functions such as reading services for the blind, which KPFK had been recognized for its contribution in providing. Under the new rules, these valuable sub-carrier - or side-band - frequencies could be leased to commercial interests.[157] For Pacifica stations, this suddenly meant a large funding stream for the national board, the body that holds each of the five Pacifica licenses. Prior to this, the national board operated with only one full-time administrative staff person, and its limited funding to the national board came directly from the local stations. Thus, the local stations and their local boards held the balance of power and the responsibility for funding and the national board was advisory in its day-to-day function rather then as a body that issued policy directives. Suddenly, the power relation switched dramatically when the national Pacifica board began collecting fees for its station's side-bands that provided income in the millions and the network structure between the local and national was irrevocably altered.

Healthy Station Project and Centralisation

As Jesse Walker (2001) argues, much of what destroyed the spontaneity, openness and community sensibility of many radio stations is the creation through regulatory mechanisms of artificial scarcity that made real estate so valuable that many stations felt they could no longer afford to be experimental or to talk to a more narrow set of interests, even if those interests were part of the station's mission and were interests excluded from representation in

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[157] Chapter 6 is a case study of Iranian radio stations in Los Angeles, three of which broadcast on sub-carrier frequencies, which will be discussed further there.

mainstream media.[158] Thus, what began in the 1980s to erode Pacifica was manifest across the country. This trend eventually manifested in the National Federation of Community Broadcasters' (NFCB) support of a controversial initiative called the Healthy Station Project (HSP).

The HSP was developed as a means to help community radio stations that were not a part of the National Public Radio (NPR) network, and community stations struggling financially, apply for federal funding via the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The HSP sought to aggressively pursue a more centralised, homogenised model of community radio that emphasised "professionalism" and saw achieving the largest audience as its primary goal and measure of success. This is one reason why the concept of "professionalism" remains so problematic for many community radio advocates in the US, who make a strong distinction between aspiring towards high quality broadcasts that are technically proficient, compelling and factually accurate versus notions of "professionalism" centred around production by paid staff, which in the case of the HSP, translated to characteristics of centrally controlled and heavily mediated radio in the name of "quality".[159] The ability to relinquish control over individual producer's content on a daily basis is, it seems, a primary trait of community radio – to allow individuals to speak for themselves. More difficult to negotiate is whether it is valuable (or possible) to disengage those voices from a notion that they speak for the whole of the station – or that there is "one voice" of the station. It is this presumption of a kind of heterogeneity and the misleading notion that there must be uniformity of political perspective across all programming that is at the heart of tensions within Pacifica.

The Healthy Station Project aimed to assist community stations adhere to a somewhat strict set of guidelines about maximising audience share by eliminating programmes that lacked mass appeal, focussing the station's image and content around a particular target market to increase listenership, and using the commercial standard ratings board Arbitron to measure listeners.

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[158] See Chapter 3.

Additionally, stations were encouraged to structure their schedules around block format programming; massively limit the number of volunteers on air and rely primarily on paid, professionalized presenters; and to evaluate programmes based on market research. Market-driven models, the model utilised by public radio, were used to assess the "health" of a community radio station. KPFK supporter and activist David Adelson summarises the attitude as one which promoted the view that station volunteers were radio personnel first, and community media practitioners second: '[y]ou're a radio person. You're not a community member going on the radio to communicate with other sectors of the community. What we got was not unmediated voices where people could speak for themselves, but a mediated voice delivering you to your community' (2003). The result of the NFCB's Healthy Station Project was to tie CPB funding to stations who 'fell in line with their model' (ibid). Significantly, the initiator of the HSP, Lynn Chadwick, was to become Pacifica's Executive Director following her tenure at the NFCB.

One response to the encroaching shift away from open and fluid forms of community radio was the emergence of the Grassroots Radio Coalition, which offered stations, programmers and supporters of a less restrictive and more locally-oriented model of community radio the opportunity to come together and organise.[160] However, in 1994, the full impact of the Healthy Station Project reached KPFK and Pacifica. In that year, members of Pacifica's national board announced that dramatic changes were to take place inside Pacifica and those not willing to support the changes were asked or forced to resign. What ensued at the hands of the board were a few years of dramatic firings on and off air, lock-outs at individual stations and arrests of protestors challenging the decisions. Purges and gag orders were put in place against personnel who went on air to denounce what supporters called a "coup". 'A climate of fear was created' (Gerry 2001: 2). Gerry elaborates on what took

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[159] See also discussion in Chapter 4.
[160] The Grassroots Radio Coalition held its 10th anniversary conference in August, 2005. The event was also a radio barnraising hosted by the Prometheus Radio Project for Valley Free Radio, a new LPFM station in Northampton, MA built during the course of the weekend as part of the conference.

place at KPFK during the time she was a volunteer, before being forcibly removed from the station:

> [m]ost of the programmes with an overtly radical perspective were removed, programs in languages other than English were removed, programmes geared toward particular ethnic communities and the poor were targeted. Many of these programmes enjoyed strong community support. Dissident groups formed in Berkeley, Los Angeles, New York and Houston...At KPFK, programmers have been told to gear their message to a more mainstream audience, and forbidden from encouraging listeners to attend anti-war demonstrations. Newscasters were ordered not to pronounce Spanish names with a Spanish accent and music programmers were told not to use expressions that would "alienate" an older audience...KPFK manager Mark Schubb, speaking at a 1995 meeting of a listener group unhappy with the program changes, told the 50 people in attendance that they could be replaced with 5,000 new listeners by changing the programming (ibid).

During this period, a memorandum from the national board was issued requiring each station to reformulate its programming schedule and guidelines by which it was to be done. Stations managers who challenged the dictate were replaced with those sympathetic to the new creed. This kind of top-down control had never been enforced within the network and the initial shock eventually became rage, which led to organised action (Adelson 2003). It was also telling that the structure of the relationship between the board and the local stations was such that this was possible. The push and pull between centralising and decentralising forces resulted, for Pacifica, in a scenario in which new individual station managers were installed to support the network agenda. Though many purges and firings occurred on the local level, station listener-activists assert that these were not local decisions.

Most controversial was the plan being considered to sell the original Pacifica station, KPFA in Berkeley in order to buy a larger number of smaller stations. Outrage was massive when the memo to this effect was accidentally sent to the wrong person who quickly spread the word.[161] The plan was eventually dismissed. By way of comparison, Gerry juxtaposed Pacifica founder Lewis

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[161] See Save Pacifica Campaign (2002).

Hill and his philosophy of radio against the widely publicised confidential memo that angered so many Pacifica supporters.

From Pacifica Founder Lewis Hill, from "The Theory of Listener-Sponsored Radio", 1951:

> There are innumerable ways of wasting time and generating nonsense, and there are also uncounted ways of making money, many of which may be pursued in broad daylight. But the elaborate machinery and the peculiar intimacy of the radio medium have better and more basic uses. The theory I want to discuss rests on two particular assumptions: first, that radio can and should be used for significant communication and art; and second, that since broadcasting is an act of communication, it ought to be subject to the same aesthetic and ethical principles as we apply to any communicative act, including the most personal.

As compared with this from Pacifica Foundation Director Michael Palmer, in a confidential memo to Pacifica Chair Mary F. Berry, on the possible sale of the nation's first listener sponsored radio station, KPFA-FM in Berkeley, July 12, 1999:

> The primary signal would lend itself to a quiet marketing scenario of discreet presentation to logical and qualified buyers. This is the best radio market in history and while public companies may see a dilutive effect from a sale (due to the approximate 12 month repositioning effort needed), they would still be aggressive for such a signal. Private media companies would be the most aggressive in terms of price, which he [a radio broker] thinks could be in the $65-75m range depending on various aspects of a deal (quoted in Gerry 2000).

In the end, listeners were successful in reclaiming the network. The resistance took three forms: a lawsuit, a financial boycott, and direct action. The legal aspect was a lawsuit filed by KPFK's David Adelson and others on behalf of listeners who claimed the National Board had acted outside its remit and against the legally binding by-laws of Pacifica. A US Federal Court agreed, and a working democratic structure of Pacifica was re-establishment and overseen by the courts, to the extent that station ratification of new by-laws had to be conducted in accordance with the settlement of the suit. The boycott was, in effect, a way to starve money from the stations and the network. Because of the extensive publicity the crisis received, it was possible for

activists to avert the gag rule and ask Pacifica supporters to withhold their contributions and support during fund-drive. The boycotts were successful in stemming the tide of public support, though the stations were left in near-financial ruin with all but WBAI, New York financially recovered today. Another aspect of developing the political climate came, ironically, in the form of Pacifica's nationally syndicated flagship programme *Democracy Now!*, whose outspoken and widely respected host Amy Goodman famously refused the gag order and when locked out of her host station WBAI, New York, began broadcasting from a community television centre "in exile", as she declared on air.[162] The five Pacifica affiliates were barred by the national board from carrying the now-rogue show, but many other stations across the country did broadcast and helped spread the word of what was taking place at America's only progressive radio network. Goodman's co-host Juan Gonzales's decision to take leave from *Democracy Now!* and become a full-time organiser in the fight proved crucial as well. When the lawsuit was won and the Board was ousted, KPFK set a record for its fund-drive. The final aspect of the resistance was in the form of direct action. Listeners literally took to the streets. 10,000 people in Berkeley demonstrated when their popular general manager Nicole Sawaya was fired without cause during the crisis. Others, in smaller groups, were arrested when they staged sit-ins at the station, or individuals refused to leave the premise when fired. During this time, Pacifica national spent over $300,000 on armed security guards for stations. For Pacifica station KPFT Houston, having survived two bombings of their transmitter during their first year on-air at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, it was especially paradoxical to find such armed enforcement of unwelcome, unpopular and illegal national policy.

Ursula Rudenberg, who now coordinates Pacifica's Affiliate Programme and was then a key organiser at WBAI against the national board, sees the events in this context:

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[162] The online networking that helped facilitate this process, along with the creation by Lyn Gerry of a free, open source content distribution site called Radio4All.net, is discussed in Chapter 7.

I think this struggle is going to go down as a major event in the struggle to reform media in this country. Its an old story - grassroots organisation with mission starts to grow, acquires property, gains value, gains some sort of influence, and at that point it gets transformed into a commodity. This institution demonstrated we have the political will and the understanding to analyse not only what was happening but how to fight a battle. It is a real testament to the fifty years of indoctrination on Pacifica. This institution is fortunate. It made its constituencies into warriors and activists and when the time came, we did in fact come through (2003).

KPFK Today

The relevance of the crisis to the case study of KPFK is two-fold. First, it is a crisis – a coup – that took place at the station itself. In 2002, controversial Station Manager Mark Schubb, under whose management the firings and gag rules occurred, was replaced by interim manager Steven Starr. Starr is a documentary filmmaker and fundraiser who was one of the founding members of the Los Angeles Independent Media Center [sic], whose radio programming is the subject of Chapter 7. The current manager is former South African radio activist and programmer Eva Georgia. It took KPFK three years to rebuild itself and the scars are still present. It took the station and its local board almost two years to hire a permanent programme director after two searches led to a deadlock among the board elected to oversee the hiring. The Local Advisory Board went through some difficult times trying to coalesce over the new rules and guidelines and was at the helm of some exceptionally hostile public meetings where charges of racism and personal attacks were at times screamed across the auditorium. While there are still differences to be worked out – as there always will be – the LAB seems to be functioning and is accepted as the decision-making body of the station.

Interim period under Steven Starr

Steven Starr came to his post at KPFK knowing it would be temporary and desiring it so. He describes his first day on the job:

> [w]ell, I walked into the building and introduced myself to a bunch of people who were surprised to meet me. Up until that very morning they

had been working with Mark Schubb as their boss. We [post-coup, newly installed Pacifica national board members] spent about an hour and a half dealing with some very hostile opinions about what was going on. They [the new board members] were on the side of the people in the parking lot picketing the station and all of a sudden they were inside the building. What you really have is a scenario where the movement, the campaign, the people who were engaged in trying to reclaim the network, were now reclaiming the network. And this is what it looked like on the ground at KPFK (Starr 2003).

After explaining to staff that he was there on a temporary basis to assist in the transition towards a democratically elected manager, he made it clear he was not himself interested in the job. Many at the station were pleased to see his presence and the low-key means by which he came in as an individual rather then as an associate of controversial figures on either side. Others were not happy with the change in leadership and let it be known, with some departing the station as a result. Significantly, one of the first things Starr had to do was find some money to pay the bills: 'when I walked into the station, the utility bills hadn't been paid, Internet access had been shut off, the phone bill hadn't been paid...the station was $250,000 in debt to local vendors alone' (Starr 2003). An emergency fund-drive was organised and a then record-breaking $915,000 was raised on air in ten days. The word had spread that sustainable changes were taking place within Pacifica. 'I honestly feel that during my brief, 68 day tenure, we turned KPFK back into a community radio station' (Starr 2003).

Programming

'What's funny is what gets fought over is who's gonna get airtime, but not over the larger structure of how we should organise our airtime' (Adelson 2003). Starr advocates a "user-generated" model, where there is more active involvement from listeners and there exists an identifiable means by which new voices can get on air. He argues against a personality-driven model whereby airtime is organised around strong individuals. Aside from the question of access, another concern of the more individualised style of programming is that people come to feel they "own" their air slot. Even under

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the best of circumstances, it is difficult to replace someone on-air without hostility. Balancing the need for familiarity with the mission of inclusion is a difficult task, especially with such high financial stakes. The programmes that raise the most money during fund-drive are the morning show, *Uprising*, with Sonali Kohlhatkar and Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now!*. 'With great affection for Sonali, I still think that having the same person on-air five days a week in one time slot is anti-community radio. We're not looking for the highest ratings, we're not looking for advertisers, and we're not trying to build familiarity with a personality. We're trying to build familiarity with ideas. So if you start with that premise, that this is not about rock stars, then we don't get to a situation where people identify Pacifica solely with Amy Goodman, as much of an admirer of her work as I am' (Starr 2003). The difficulty is that KPFK must balance this sentiment with the reality that personalities raise the profile of the station, bring in a substantial amount of revenue during the bi-annual on-air fund-drive, and reflect the familiarity that listeners are accustomed to when engaging with radio.

Another example of a different sort is Ian Masters long-running, Sunday morning programme, *Background Briefing*. Some people feel he is a CIA infiltrator because he has access to people within the intelligence community who are regular guests of his long-running programme. Others appreciate the unique perspective and insights this insider knowledge brings. His show is well regarded by many long-time loyal fans. 'The question is, are the only people who should be on air "untainted people"? My main argument is: do you live inside the contradiction [between values and practice]? There are some people who think KPFK should live inside some utopian world where there is no contradiction and nobody involved should either' (Starr 2003).

Collectives

In line with his background in Indymedia, Starr set out to further develop the collective model at the radio station. The perennial issue KPFK faces is the difficulty in making democratic programming decisions with limited time

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resources. At the time, there were few collectively organised programmes on air at KPFK, *Feminist Magazine* and *IMRU,* being among the longest running of them. In starting collectives, Starr sought to offer access to a wider group of people then would be possible by offering a particular time slot to any one person, to de-individualise the station from its association with a few "star" presenters, and to create a more democratic structure that would also serve to further decentralise programming decisions. Starr reflects on the process regarding the first collective set up under his tenure, *Radio Intifada,* a Middle Eastern focussed show produced by individuals from numerous ethnic and national backgrounds:

> I made them go through a process. I said "you have to do a mission statement". They said "why?" I said "look around the room. You have Turks, Afghanis, Palestinians, Israelis". While it was obvious that while there was a deep reservoir of intellectual skill sets in the room, there was a lot of disagreement around everything else. The geopolitics of the entire region were represented in the KPFK conference room. They fought me on it, but begrudgingly agreed. This is where Indymedia started to bleed into KPFK. The emphasis on process is important...It was a great moment - giving them criteria that would democratise their own experience with each other. It worked out very well (Starr 2003).

The contrast to collectives is a system by which individuals are the voice of the station and the scarce resource of airtime is divided among fewer people then otherwise possible with some collective structures in place.

Open Time

Adelson argues that 'our job is to increase the audience FOR diverse programming' (2003). There exists a juxtaposition between the role of serving the audience, versus serving the community. The issue of representation then becomes a paramount concern and speaks to the efficacy of de-individualising programming to establish some collectives who might self-regulate better than a top-down structure. 'The problem was you'd have somebody broadcasting on behalf of some community that it turned out people felt weren't representing their particular sector of this community, they were representing

theirs.'[163] Former KPFK News Director Frank Stoltz comments that 'it sometimes felt like there was a lot of pandering to minority and oppressed communities' through what he saw as segregated and disempowering forms of representation on air rather than real collaboration and inclusion (2004). Adelson further asks if programming to do with race need always be along racial or ethnic lines, such as a programme on environmental justice might be hosted by a representative from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) one week, and local union organisers Justice for Janitors the next.

In response to these concerns, KPFK, through its Programme Council, has instituted a policy whereby three hours per week are set-aside for new people to get on air, not unlike the *Clear Spot* timeslots on *Resonance FM* discussed in the previous chapter. These timeslots can be filled either by short-run programmes (up to 8 weeks total) or around thematic issues with changing perspectives each week. Adelson argues this structure is a useful way to engage new volunteers: '[e]ight weeks is a good amount of time. It's just enough to get them to feel the seductive power of being on air, which in turn forces the station to integrate them into the regular schedule or loose them as volunteers' (2005). Further, Adelson and others have been pressuring the national board to institute a similar policy requiring each station to reserve 5% of all airtime for new voices, but the board has so far been resistant to the suggestion.

In short, Adelson feels that another contradiction the station operates within is regards to the explicit mission of the station as open, democratic and accountable, versus what he describes as a 'low level feudal war of land [airtime] allocation all the time' (2005).

The significance of this debate is that there clearly exists the need to create means for greater access to new voices on air. "Ownership" of time slots leads to inflexibility and stagnation and is a barrier to entry for new voices to participate. While it may be important to ensure some continuity and

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[163] As discussed in Chapter 4 with regards to *Sound Radio* in London.

familiarity, perhaps it is the "mixed model" approach begun that is the most interesting. This is not an issue exclusive to Pacifica. Community radio station WORT in Madison, WI has few openings for new people to gain a regular programme, but organises its award-winning news department as a collective, involving a continually rotating set of producers, reporters and anchors.

Scheduling

KPFK's programming is primarily organised in a traditional block format. The morning show, *Uprising!*, is presented by full-time staffer Sonali Kohlhatkar, airs weekday mornings from 8-9am. The show owes much of its popularity and success to the connection listeners feel with Kohlhatkar, the public speaking engagements she participates in, and the respect she earned for her role in the struggle to save Pacifica. Following the local public affairs show is nationally syndicated *Democracy Now!* and then a block of world music presented by a different programmer each day. Afternoons feature different talk programmes covering a range of progressive topics, followed by spoken word artist Jerry Quickley who is on each weekday afternoon drive-time slot. At 6pm is the news. Evenings feature more speech programming and late nights are for music. Late night, from midnight – 4am, four days a week, the slot is filled by "Roy of Hollywood". The weekends are where more eclectic content and music are on, including the long-running *Folkscene*, a popular show presented for over twenty years by the volunteer, husband and wife team of Howard and Roz Larman, brought back on air under Starr's tenure after being controversially taken off air for refusing to sign a release that gave the station sole rights to the show name.

There is nothing unique in this aspect of KPFK's approach to scheduling and it mirrors many community radio stations around the country, as it feels in keeping with a set of audience expectations around providing familiar content across the same time slots across the week. In fact, in terms of a mix of music and public affairs, and the timing of each across each day, KPFK programmes

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very similarly to NPR affiliate KCRW. What is interesting about KPFK's programme schedule, however, is that, while the station is programmed in blocks, when a horizontal cross-section is taken across the blocks during time slots when there is not the same host (Kohlhatkar, Goodman, Quickley), the content varies dramatically, and there is little uniformity in terms of target audience across lines such as gender, race and age. In looking at the 7-8pm time slot between Monday and Friday, that time is filled, on consecutive days, with an elderly white, Jewish woman self-described as a "pink diaper baby"; a middle-aged Afro Caribbean woman; a young, queer Asian woman; a middle aged Latin American Political Science professor; and a middle aged white man. This structure exemplifies an attempt to challenge presumptions about familiarity in terms of content and approach, but with the familiar milieu, broadly speaking, of a public affairs-oriented talk show airing at the same time each day.

It was suggested to me that KPFK cannot be properly understood without paying due attention to the racial politics within the city itself. Further, it is important for a historic understanding of how people of colour have been excluded from KPFK in the past. Today, the station manager and programme director are both people of colour, as is the drive-time programme host in the mornings and evenings as well as one of two News Directors. However, race remains a dividing line for many involved with the station. In a city where over 50% of its residents are Spanish speakers, a key issue is the request from Latinos for more Spanish language programming. Concerns are raised regarding the financial sustainability of a shift towards increased non-English language content when the listeners remain overwhelmingly English speakers. Those in support comment that the only way to bring new listeners in to the station is to increase bilingual and multi-lingual programming. Over the past two years, KPFK has increased the number of Spanish language programming from three hours per week to eleven. These tensions continue to inform many of the debates around the station.

Listener-Supported Radio

It should come as no surprise that Pacifica, like the low power community radio stations, faces tremendous pressures and uncertainties when it comes to raising enough funds to stay on air. The difference in scale, however, is massive. For KPFK, a single pledge drive, such as that taking place in October 2005, aims to bring in $950,000. The total annual operating cost of the station is $3.5 million, as compared with £60-100,000 per year for a community station in Britain.

In 1949, the first Pacifica station, KPFA, went on air with only 115 Berkeley residents signed up as members at the cost of $10 a subscription. Though these funds were in addition to capital income Lew Hill had raised from outside supporters, the station soon found itself in debt. At one point, in the early 1950s, the station was forced to go off air for a number of months due to their financial woes. It was in part a gambit to see if listeners would rally to their defence, which they did. Significantly, in 1947, Hill even supported on-air advertising for a limited five-year period to help the station with start-up costs. For the first five years on air, KPFA was in fact more "benefactor-supported" than listener supported, owing to the difficulty of raising individual subscriptions (Lasar 2000: 72). However, the question of commercials resolved itself on its own because virtually no one was interested in advertising on the station, so the plans were quickly dropped.

Listener-supported radio is now the standard public and community radio model in the United States. National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate stations receive an (increasingly reduced and controversial) amount of government funds administered through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), but the primary source of income remains (increasingly enlarged and controversial) corporate underwriting and most significantly, listener-support. [164] Listener-support means the cost of running the station comes from

[164] The CPB has recently aroused controversy around its decision to launch an internal investigation into "perceived bias" in the programmes it funds on NPR and public television (PBS), including PBS' marquee public affairs programming by respected journalist Bill

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donations made directly by listeners to the station, similar to a magazine subscription, with the difference being that with radio, you can still receive the content without paying for it or borrowing a copy from a friend or the library. Listener-supported radio first began in 1949 with Pacifica's KPFA and the model has since proliferated across the United States. In the early days, listeners literally subscribed to the station on an ad hoc basis. Today, most listener-support is obtained through twice yearly on-air fund-drives where programming comes to a semi-standstill while programmers and station volunteers go on air for roughly ten days each fund-drive asking people to become station members and donate money.

One of the primary benefits of listener-supported radio is that individual investment in the station is institutionalised and necessary. This model reifies the importance of the listener in sustaining the station and demands people "put their money where their mouth is" in order to sustain what it is they listen to. Though there is a financial insecurity when relying on listeners, at the same time, advocates argue it is an important quantifiable measurement of audience relevancy and it offers a direct means of listener protest, as was the case during the recent crisis when the listener boycott of Pacifica drove home the message of anger at the corruption taking place at the station and the national board.[165]

The downside is that only 10% of all listeners to Pacifica stations (the number is slightly higher for NPR affiliate stations) ever subscribe. Stations are asking people to pay for something they can get for free. While quantifying value based on donations is useful, it can also be used against specialist programming that may be important for the station's mission but not necessarily the most profitable. For example, Spanish language programming or news from Kurdistan may not bring in as many members or donations as *Democracy Now!* or *Folkscene*, but has a value that must be accounted for

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Moyers. The move is seen by Democrats and progressives as partisan attacks on media outlets that challenge policies of the Bush administration. At the same time, Congress is considering cutting off all federal funding for public broadcasting. Similar attempts to do the same in the early 1990's failed. Non-profit organisation Free Press continues to amass an extensive collective of news articles on many of these issues. See Chapter 8 for a return to these tensions.

[165] See also postscript in Lasar (2000).

differently. There is also a distinction to be made between "members" and "donations". Donations are the total amount of money raised, whereas members are the total number of people who have pledged support. In other words, a programme may only bring in $2,000 but that might be from 200 people pledging the low-income rate of $10, rather then a show appealing to higher income demographic which brings in $2,000 from 40 people who pledge the standard $50. To many listeners, on-air fund-drives are tedious listening, and a significant amount of station resources of time and energy are put towards processing membership. One of the incentives for subscribing is that listeners are offered various "premiums" for their contributions in the form of books, DVDs, CDs, restaurant vouchers, etc. As KPFK's Station Manager Eva Georgia recently noted, the station would like to move away from the focus on external premiums because of the time involved in soliciting and processing so many premium donations, but also because it is her hope people will support the station in and of itself (KPFK 2005). Additionally, Georgia commented she would like to see an increasing number of premiums produced in-house, such as CDs from noteworthy programming.

In short, listener-sponsorship offers quantifiable measures of public support but must be used appropriately so as not to overvalue strictly profitable shows above shows with a wider social value to the station, and its efforts to bring in new listeners and serve a wider community. While there are issues associated with listener-sponsorship such as the staff burden and "listenability" of the actual on-air fund-drives, the alternative of corporate contributions in the form of underwriting or sponsorship go against the mission of Pacifica, concerns that are at the crux of much of the criticism levied against the conservative trend of NPR's national programming and local NPR affiliate programming decisions.

Organisational Structure

Here, then, it is important to outline the working structure of KPFK, and how it has coped with the battles that almost destroyed Pacifica and its own local standing. Given his scientific background as research fellow at UCLA

Medical Centre, Adelson uses the analogy of the importance of complex ecologies, versus the problems that arise with monocultures, to describe the transformative process taking place at the station. He uses the example of an oceanographic study in population ecology:

> [t]here's a rock that sticks out above the water in the inner tidal area so there's waves crashing on it all the time. In that environment, there's enough nutrients for survival. One thing there's not is an abundance of space on the rock [airtime]. So what determines your success is your ability to cement yourself on that rock and displace anybody that was there first and resist anybody trying to knock you off. Remember, you don't have to be the most efficient or productive thing on the rock, you just have to be good at holding on [staying on air]. So periodically there's a catastrophe – a log hits the rock and everyone gets knocked off. In the near-term after that, you get a very diverse population cos it's comprised of whoever gets there and can stick well enough to stay in the interim, not just whoever is strong enough to hold on and displace others over time. So unless you move that rock out of the tidal zone and into a lagoon or nice sandy beach [change the bylaws / structure of Pacifica stations], the environmental features, this process of successful encrusters displacing all the earlier colonisers will continue until the next cataclysmic event…A rock full of crusty barnacles may be attractive to some people, but to most, it looks uninhabitable. You've got to change the ecology to ensure diversity and washing that rock clean, it wears people out.

This explains the value of collectives and maintaining a structure that facilitates the widest variety of voices having access to the airwaves as possible,

Stemming from this is another key area of conflict within Pacifica around process. Even in the earliest days of Pacifica, while there was a mission, there was never a democratic structure in place to help adjudicate conflict. While the lawsuit established some criteria, it is nevertheless up to individual stations to enact their own process. How the board handles the growing tensions will be a true test of the solvency of its mandate. 'When you create an environment that is participatory, where the democratic process is actually real, people can taste it' (Starr 2003). Progressive organising is often maligned because it may in fact be tedious in practice: '[d]emocracy is a pain in the ass' (Burnett 2003).

Starr argues there are two things to consider, the first being an approach that privileges above all else what is on air, and if the station is able to transform people's world views through its programming, then they are doing their job. Starr argues against this approach:

> I believe the process that unfolds around it is even more important then what ends up coming through the microphone and that to assume otherwise is to alienate the community from their own radio station, if in fact you believe that Pacifica is community radio, which I do. You can have radical content but it's not community radio unless listeners have direct access to decision-making about what goes out on air (2003).

However, balancing the primacy of process and structure while operating a radio station in an environment of scarcity of resources is tricky and complicated. It also hinges on the concept of "community" the station aspires towards. While there exists a "community of listeners", language invoked by every radio station included in this thesis, there also exists a functional "community" within the structure of the station itself – the programmers, volunteers and paid staff, as well as the local boards. Each experiences KPFK in a very different way, with those on the "inside" privy to more of the internal politics and debate than the average listener.

Trust and transparency

It is interesting to note that emergent from an era of distrust and corruption, systems have been set up to allow the airing of grievances, although such public discussion of internal matters has a long history at the station. In 1967, for example, then-station manager Paul Dallas caused a stir when he attempted to intervene with the external planning of KPFK's key fundraiser, the annual Renaissance Pleasure Faire. As a result of the controversy, host Elliot Mintz dedicated a show to the issue with call-ins from listeners and aggrieved parties participating. The debate spiralled into over six hours of programming on the subject in one week and finally ended when the Pacifica Foundation director stepped in. Dallas later recounted his KPFK experience and frustrations in his book *Dallas In Wonderland* (1967).

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The role of trust is an interesting one. Because so much change occurred before the wider community of listeners were aware, there is suspicion surrounding all management decisions and changes it seems. This is, however, difficult to bear witness to in practice. As a response to the gag rule imposed at the station, National Board meetings were broadcast on air. Some argued it does not make good radio and should be abolished (Osborne 2003), while others felt it was necessary to regain and maintain the trust of the listeners. The downside is that the airing of too much dirty laundry in an era of rebuilding can disempower listeners who may not be as steeped in knowledge of the recent past, and those who are in fact 'just' looking for quality programming. However actualised, transparency of process is vital in re-establishing trust.

Localism

Few at the centre of the fight for Pacifica would argue ownership does not matter, nor would most listeners, many of whom are active in the movement to reform media ownership laws in the United States. However, there exists a disparity when talking about KPFK as community-owned because technically, there is a national network structure that owns the license, even if it is a community-based structure the station operates within. What the power struggle did prove is that decentralisation is key to Pacifica station's survival and structural and programmatic independence is crucial and can only be achieved through local control and local decision-making. Further, such control must not rest within the hands of a few key personnel at a particular station, but must rest with a further decentralised local advisory board comprised of listeners, station volunteers and station employees.

In attempting to transform Pacifica into a more profitable network, the board acted in a way that supported a market-based economy of radio, even within a public sector in a non-commercial environment. As was the case with British local radio in its earliest incarnation, market forces superseded community interests when financially valuable assets are at stake like FM frequencies.[166]

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[166] See Chapter 3.

In order to ensure a space for a more open common that is publicly accessible, sectors of the commons must be preserved for community voices.

In an effort to preserve local autonomy and ensure community participation, one of the key changes that occurred during the period of restructuring at KPFK following the crisis, was the creation of three local bodies involved in station decision-making, the Local Station Board (LSB), the Community Advisory Board (CAB), and the Programme Council. The LSB is comprised of community representatives elected by the listeners at public general meetings, in addition to one paid and one unpaid staff member, and the station General Manager. The Board has extensive decision-making power, responsibility for ultimate hiring (and firing) of key staff, and minutes of its meeting are posted to the KPFK website (2005). The CAB is an advisory board with little actual power but whose presence seeks to address the need for greater means of public input into the station, while the Programme Council serves a more hands-on role in shaping the programme schedule. The significance is that KPFK has attempted to create a fluid and transparent regulatory framework that ensures local autonomy.

One key area of local import is the news. KPFK has increased the amount of airtime dedicated to locally produced news. The station's evening news cast features local stories as well as national and international news from nationally syndicated Free Speech Radio News (FSRN), which is discussed at greater length in Chapter 7. Former News Director Frank Stoltz saw the difficulty between the aspirational value of quality local journalism and practice of negotiating this with a volunteer and often untrained news staff:

> I think it creates a dynamic newsroom – not one full of Ivy League graduates from certain socio-economic backgrounds, which is a fundamental problem in many newsrooms - even at KPCC. But the downside is they don't understand principles of journalism, sound recording, interviewing skills, writing skills, storytelling skills.

One proposal to address this is a system just going into effect in fall 2005 whereby the station will facilitate a system of local reporters, or stringers, across the Southland, who are paid a stipend of $60 each for their reports. This

method would provide modest financial incentive to volunteers, allow low income volunteers to cover the cost of purchasing necessary recording equipment, and allow the station to air news from neighbourhoods and communities they would not otherwise have the means to cover. 'Not all the stories will be good enough to air, not right away, but we can use the website to post everything that is produced so people can see the outcome of their efforts, and in the meantime, build up a really strong and diverse base of contributors' (Adelson 2005). KPFK has budgeted $30,000 per year, which covers three stories per day.

Paid Versus Unpaid Labour

It is significant that KPFK distinguishes between paid programmers and volunteer programmers in its efforts to ensure greater democratic representation. It is often the case in community radio, as with other non-profit entities, that because paid employees have different things at stake and may have personal needs (such as job security) that could compete with the best interests of the station in ways that volunteers might not. Further, it is an important effort for KPFK to raise the value of volunteer labour by preserving seats on its advisory councils for them.

Full-time station employees are often the most-heard voices on the station and naturally become the so-called face of the station, be it the station manager, news anchor or morning show host. Each of the daily, drive-time hosts are paid programmers at KPFK. This inadvertently creates a shift in the balance of power between those on air and in the station itself every day, versus those who produce one show a week, or as part of a collective, may only produce one programme each month. Moreover, KPFK is run by many non-air volunteers, in particular those in fundraising, production and administrative roles. 'Institutionalising a role that acknowledges the contributions of volunteers is crucial' (Starr 2005). Adelson comments that there exists a growing cadre of "professional community radio personnel". What is interesting is that this source of employment is seen as a positive within the emerging community radio sector in Britain to the extent that the government

itself openly supports life-long learning and training initiatives as part of station objectives.[167] Many low power radio stations in the US would be delighted to afford a few additional (if any) paid staff. However, it must be noted that the dynamics do in fact change in such a system, and extra measures need to be taken to balance a community aesthetic and participatory ethos with the demands of operating a full power radio station in a region the size of Southern California.

Pacifica Network Affiliates

What emerged after the crisis was, in effect, a wider, nationally-situated "Pacifica community" extending to the five station cities, and across the country to those recently connected to Pacifica through *Democracy Now!*. In the mid-1990s, prior to the crisis, Pacifica had sixty affiliates and by the time listener-activists got the network back, there were thirteen. Today there are over 100 stations across the country that take programming produced or distributed by Pacifica. Stations pay from $250 for some low power FM stations to an average of $2500-3000 for a medium-sized community radio station with the highest rate at $7000 per annum. Many more non-profit stations - whether licensed community, pirate, or Internet stations - carry *Democracy Now!* but do not pay because they cannot afford to.

Another significant aspect of the affiliates programme is the carrying of live specials such as congressional hearings and national coverage of anti-war marches. What Pacifica is hoping to do, however, is to create more collaboration among affiliates so, rather than simply broadcasting a centrally produced programme, the programme itself would be produced in a more decentralised fashion rather then a top-down network special. 'We are moving towards a concept of the whole network of stations being an identity, rather then just the five stations licensed as Pacifica radio' (Rudenberg 2003). Since the lawsuit ended, there have been two new seats created on the national board for representatives of Pacifica affiliates.

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[167] See Chapter 4.

This is significant because in this local/national nexus, there can exist an impulse to syndicate an increasing number of programmes. Pacifica appears to be interested in coalition building among community broadcasters rather than a single-minded effort to extend syndicated programming. However, tensions remain between the national board and the five Pacifica stations over the question of local autonomy. The national board ahs resisted implementing measures that would provide financial support to local initiatives such as training, and continues to resist requiring stations provide airtime for new programmers. Moreover, the pressure for local stations to adhere to the Healthy Station Project initiatives remains. In particular, the pressure for stations to carry syndicated programming remains enshrined in the Corporation for Public Broadcasting regulations. Stations receive CPB funding as a percentage of their listener contributions, a figure currently set at 17%. For KPFK, this translates to CPB funding of just over $500,000 per year, 17% of the $3 million dollars per year received in listener contributions in 2004 (KPFK 2005). The CPB contributions are restricted funds to be used for the purchase of nationally syndicated programming, which, for KPFK, supports their broadcasts of *Democracy Now!* and *Free Speech Radio News*. Whist they are both popular and valuable programming for KPFK, Adelson questions the merits of national funding requirements that favour syndication over local production.

Conclusion

Pacifica calls itself "Free Speech Radio". Lasar asks: '[w]ho would be authorised to ensure quality in a place where the rhetoric of free speech, identity politics, and worker's rights armoured individual programmers with multiple layers of institutional autonomy?' (2000: 223). He goes on to cite past programmer's concerns that freedom of speech must mean more than the absolute right to speak (ibid). Lasar offers that Pacifica is in many ways a victim of its own success. Over four decades, KPFK has amassed a strong base of supporters, programmes with standing in the community, and some volunteers who have been with the station for over 20 years. The increase in

scarcity brought on by the lack of local content has increased to the need – and subsequent pressures – for Pacifica stations.

At the local level, KPFK at times struggles with concerns that it preaches to the proverbial choir, that too few voices fill the airwaves, that there lacks enough reflexivity and dialogue on the air, and that subsequently, the station fails to engage in debate. On the other hand, the station must delicately balance those concerns with the need for their broadly defined listening community of Southern California progressives to feel they have a space they can trust and be free of the conservative approach heard on most other analogue radio outlets. As Lasar comments: '[i]n the torturous course of this transition [from dialogue to defender of free speech], "alternative radio" was born, along with a difficult question: could listener-sponsored radio live by dissent alone?' (2000: 223).

KPFK is also a station that seeks to engage on the local level and provide a space for under-represented people and views in the region. It is this tension between national and local identities and affiliations that KPFK must also negotiate, a dichotomy at the heart of how it defines its own sense of community. Community radio in the US is a sector that has emerged organically and functions based on the motivation and mission of individual stations and people committed to its ideal, though there exist both formal and informal support structures to facilitate the process and exchange information, practices and resources, including conferences and listserves. Through Pacifica, there also exists a formal network structure for its five stations and a growing affiliates programme for community stations seeking access to national progressive programming and infrastructure. 'Community radio needs to find a place at the table in American media landscape and the only way to do that is if we all start working together' (Rudenberg 2003).

The last decade has seen increased public concern over "civic participation" - questions over whether or not enough Americans actively taking part in aspects of community involvement both socially and politically. Robert Putnam's book *Bowling Alone* (2001) epitomised these concerns when he argued that the declining numbers of people involved with neighbourhood-based groups such

as bowling leagues was evidence of American's eroding sense of belonging. Putnam's analysis was limited and did not account for changing forms of social inclusion and volunteerism, however. It nonetheless resonates with similar concerns that have emerged at other historic moments. As Lasar points out, in 1952, Pacifica's founder Lewis Hill spoke out against what he referred to as "The Private Room," the increasingly individualised spaces created by suburbanisation and consumerism (2000: xiv). Pacifica was thus invented through ideals and practice rather than a legislative imperative based on decades of experimentation. In essence, they were the drawing board.

A case study of KPFK offers a comparative contrast to the issues facing the low power community stations in London, by virtue of difference in size, scope and reach; the broadness of its mandate; its legislative imperative in a national context; the historical framework by which decisions are judged against; and the positioning of a local station within a network structure. At the same time, operational issues such as participant involvement, training, funding, scheduling, and management are encountered regardless of the size of a community station, however different the circumstances may be. These case studies together offer evidence of the dynamic nature of community radio, and from an historical perspective, an interesting comparison between an emergent and an established sector within an urban context. Although KPFK is not neighbourhood radio as are the low power stations in London, such neighbourhood-based orientation is in fact an area the station seeks to improve upon. On the larger local level, the station was able to mobilise its listeners around an institutional battle with both local and national consequences, thus reinforcing the notion of a "community of listeners". By turning its listeners into activists, the network was returned to its progressive roots, and as a result, the role of the listener has been better integrated into the very structure of KPFK and Pacifica stations.

Chapter 6

Transnational Broadcasting in a Local Context
Case Study of Iranian Radio in Los Angeles

Introduction

I first learned about *Radio Iran* in December, 2002, when the U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) arrested and detained over 700 Iranian men in one day, in Los Angeles alone.[168] Men who came from predominantly Muslim countries and were living in the U.S. on visas were asked to register with the government agency by certain deadlines, as part of post-September 11th security measures. Iranians were among the first group called up. On the last day of the deadline, thousands of Iranians reported to the Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles to register, most of whom waited in line for hours with queues stretching around the block. Of those arrested, some had expired visas and some had previously lapsed visas but had since been granted legal status during various amnesty periods. Most were simply caught in a bureaucratic quagmire.

Government did a poor job of getting the word out – no one contacted any Iranian radio stations to broadcast public service announcements, nor placed ads in local community newspapers. The only notice came through an obscure listing in the little-read Federal Registry. By all accounts, the INS was clearly unprepared for the onslaught of people who came to register, who found out through word of mouth. As a result, *Radio Iran* was thus thrust into the role of 'accidental activist' by its listeners who spontaneously began calling the station, some not knowing where else to turn, others simply wanting to let people know what was happening. The station took the decision to give its microphone over to its listeners for the remainder of the afternoon, against station policy. Hussein Hedjazi, Program Director at KIRN, Radio Iran, tells the story of a call he took while on air during this time:

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[168] Sources for information regarding the INS detention and protests from Hedjazi (2003), KPFK (2003), Mena (2002a) and (2002b), Miller (2002).

[a] gentleman called, he went to the INS with his teenage son. These people were law-abiding citizens. They go to register according to what they are told. So [this man and his son], they go there, they put handcuff on the eighteen year old son and they send him to jail. And the son was crying and screaming at his father because he did not want to go to immigration office. He said dad, they are going to keep me there. He told him, son, you must obey the law. Nothing is going to happen. I'm going to be with you...The guy was crying and saying what am I going to tell my son? I lied to him (quoted in KPFK 2002).

By the end of that afternoon, the station had organised a demonstration on-air for the next day in front of the Federal Building. Thousands showed up to protest.

When I began my field research, my presumptions about what constituted community radio were challenged from the start. The more you get to know stations, the more blurred such lines become, and thus, the more interesting a course of study it is. This paper is not a study of Iranian politics and the diasporic and exiled community in Los Angeles. It draws only loosely on the extensive and useful body of work on exile media or minority media, though a thorough and discrete examination of such would be a worthwhile contribution. There are many layers of debate and evidence to substantiate content analysis that would enliven such a study. However, this is a study of local radio in context, and I approach the topic as such.

The Persian stations discussed here are commercially funded, privately owned enterprises, but they also function in a way that resonates as community radio for those who work at the station – most had little radio experience before coming to the station and could be considered so-called "amateurs" in an industrial sense - as well as for the listeners. It became apparent that, often, how we talk about radio is not necessarily reflective of how people actually experience it. This case study adds further layers of complexity to the flexible and fluid notions of "community radio" and "alternative media". The last two chapters have explored community radio from a localised position both with respect to low-power community broadcasters in London and within the well-established and hi-power (frequency-wise) Pacifica community radio station in

Los Angeles. In this chapter, I remain in Los Angeles and address local radio stations that do not fit the traditional community radio model nor the traditional commercial model. At the same time, these local radio stations cross boundaries between global and local spaces and offer interesting examples of transnationalism and transnational broadcasting. The structure of this chapter, then, will be first to outline the theoretical construct for the discussion which centres around Aksoy and Robins' rethinking of migration and media, and then to provide some necessary background into the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles. The main focus of the chapter, then, shifts to discuss three Persian stations in particular and the broadcast spaces in which they occupy.

Aksoy, Robins and Diasporic Media

Aksoy and Robins, in their study of Turkish satellite television, argue against the prevailing framework of 'global diasporic cultures' and 'transnational imagined communities' because of its fixity within a 'national imaginary,' as well as its emphasis on 'the experience of separation' and living 'between cultures' (Aksoy and Robins 2000: 3). 'Our fundamental problem with diasporic cultural studies is that, in the end, it remains caught up in the mentality of imagined communities, cultures and identities - which is grounded essentially in the national mentality' (ibid p5). They argue that transnational media allow for migrants to live within multiple spaces and that an interest in what is happening in one's home country does not need always reflect a sadness and melancholy. Aksoy and Robins take on Sara Ahmed and Seda Sengun (2000) and their focus on loss and longing in the narrative of migration. 'Ahmed makes it clear that there are ways to redeem the sense of alienation, ways of creating new communities to substitute for the lost community. But it seems that this kind of redemption can only ever be partial, and that the original home will continue to function as a key point of reference' (Aksoy and Robins 2000: 4). Aksoy and Robins are thus concerned with what they see as an over-mythologising of the homeland in these articulations and the notion of identity in crisis.

Ahmed describes migration as 'a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home....it involves a process of transition, of movement from one register to another' (2000: 5). In response, Aksoy and Robins seek to examine ways in which new practices reveal alternative and more complex reflections of the migrant experience. They further argue that through cultural and/or business practices, 'migrants routinely...establish transnational communities that exist across two, or more, cultural spaces' (2000: 6). In overviewing the trend in diasporic cultural studies, they state:

> [h]ere it is being argued that new media technologies are making it possible to transcend the distances that have separated "diasporic communities" around the world from their "communities of origin". "Diasporic media" are said to be providing new means to promote transnational bonding, and thereby sustain (ethnic, national or religious) identities and cultures at-a-distance. They are being thought about in terms of possibilities they offer for dislocated belonging among migrant communities anxious to maintain their identification with the 'homeland' (and the basic premise is that this kind of belonging must be the primary aspiration of any and every such 'community') (ibid: 7).

While acknowledging a truth to these anxieties, Aksoy and Robins are concerned with the fact that most studies end there, rather then exploring what is new about transnational broadcasting. They further conclude that the problem lies within the limitations of the field of study that sees migrants only in terms of their "diasporic forms of behaviour". They instead seek to understand migrants' relationship to media in terms of 'how they think, rather than how they belong' (ibid). In concluding, they assert:

> [o]ur objection has been to what we regard as a fundamental wrong assumption made by [exponents of diasporic cultural studies]: that the people who watch transnational satellite television do so merely as ciphers of the 'imagined communities' to which they are said to 'belong'. What we think has to be called into question is the idea that migrants function principally in terms of the categories of collective attachment and identification (ibid: 20).

This also resonates with Steve Vertovec's theorising on "cosmopolitanism" as a way in which individuals articulate: 'complex affiliations, meaningful attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, people, places, and traditions

that lie beyond the boundaries of their resident nation-state' (2000: 2). Further, it connects with Tomlinson's assertion that 'globalisation promotes much more physical mobility then ever before, but that the key is in the transformation of localities themselves' (1999: 29). There is expression of a need to theorise forms of collectivity, community and identity away from that of national belonging. Insomuch as Castell's (1996, 1997) eloquently defines the "network society" and new forms of global flows and spatiality, it is precisely within this context that the Iranian radio stations operate, for such radio serves multiple functions including: political mobilisation, cultural expression, and as local resource centre. Such radio also asks us to rethink radio across spaces and the flows between stations and listeners.

These stations, not unlike *Desi Radio* in London, are consciously and undeniably organised around "modes of identification" (Hall 2003). They exist to connect people to another place, and to – at the very least - a part of their identity, whether or not a sense of longing or estrangement informs the broadcast or reception. It is also not unlike the many diasporic programmes heard on most community stations and transmitted outside local area online, including *Sound* and *Resonance FM*. It is thus important to both assert the positive examples of 'globalisation from below' (Portes 1997) and transnational mobilities. What individuals bring to their listening and participation in diasporic media is, at the very least, the claiming of media space for a language, culture, news and information typically left out of the mainstream. It is media cultivated, organised and run by the community itself, and a connection to another place, be it emotional or pragmatic or both (especially in how the medium of radio itself is used).

Returning to Aksoy and Robins, although their study was of Turkish satellite television viewing among the Turkish population of London, theirs is a useful theoretical framework. There is a fundamental optimism in their desire to move beyond loss and longing that is equally reflected among many of the Iranian radio producers' spoke with for this case study. At the same time, the *feelings* of loss and isolation associated with migration are reflected in the calls the station receives from the newest Iranians in Los Angeles and older

generations less immersed in the new culture and social situation. The newly relocated people have a very different relationship to the place left behind and they express very different needs from diasporic media to that of long-time Angelinos and those of the second-generation. The expressed desire to maintain the Persian language and culture and provide that exposure to their children through the radio is strongly evident, as well as the need for news and information from Iran. However, what is distinctive about the Iranian radio example is the multiple levels of intersection across global and local spaces, despite the fact that it is primarily being produced within the community for a local audience.

It should be noted that shortwave radio has long been a space for accessing news and information across national boundaries well before satellite broadcasting existed, and though limited in scope, shortwave listening has nonetheless long been a form of "staying connected to the homeland". It is thus important that studies into diasporic media do not leave this history of radio listening behind (the book edited by Russell King and Nancy Wood (2001), *Media & Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, offers no chapters on radio at all).

Los Angeles and Iran

The diversity of the population of Angelinos is undisputed. 'Los Angeles is the second largest Mexican, Armenian, Korean, Filipino, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan city in the world, the third largest Canadian city, and has the largest Japanese, Iranian, Cambodian and Gypsy communities in the United States, as well as more Samoans than American Samoa' (Pearlstone 1990 quoted in Naficy 1993: 34). As of 1990, people from over one hundred and forty countries live in Los Angeles and over ninety-six languages are counted as first languages within the school district. L.A. is also very much a world city as defined by the polarisation of wealth and poverty, especially where economics connect with race and immigration. In Los Angeles, 'social polarisation has increased almost as rapidly as population' (Davis 1990 quoted in Naficy 1993:4). The city has come to be described by Davis, Naficy and

others as "fortress Los Angeles", a city characterised by its own siege mentality, fear, and oppressive and increasingly closed spaces.

Southern California has the largest Iranian population outside of Iran.[169] The generally accepted estimate is that there are around 600,000 Iranians in the region, most of whom reside in Los Angeles and neighbouring Orange County to the south. Some claim there are upwards of one and a half million Iranians, while official state sources list the figure at only around 200,000, as Iranians are listed as "other" on census forms. There are neighbourhood pockets around Beverly Hills and the wealthier west side of Los Angeles referred to as *Little Tehran,* or *Tehrangeles.* In general, the Iranian population in Southern California has established itself as largely affluent and highly educated. There is an 848 page published Iranian yellow Pages with over 1,600 Iranian businesses and professionals listed. Nearly every Iranian adult I spoke with made it a point to tell me about all the famous Iranians living in the states and their well-respected positions. Approximately 25% of students at Beverly Hills High School are Iranian.

The economic strength of the Iranian population outside Iran must be underlined as a key factor in their ability to produce such a volume of media. In the U.S., Iranians are the wealthiest immigrant group ever with an average household income higher then that of whites, blacks, Hispanics and Asians. Most of the media is privately owned and is well supported by local Persian businesses and professionals eager to advertise their services within their community. The sales packet for closed-circuit Iranian broadcast station KRSI describes their listeners as part of a 'well-to-do consumer oriented society' that is 'quality conscious,' 'brand loyal' and as 'a large group with money to spend, who will spend in your business of you speak to them in their language' (KRSI). Naficy addresses the economic dualism of migrants thus: 'If poor immigrants are to be shunned, rich immigrants are embraced as revitalizers of culture and economy – although they are often marginalised as junior partners

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[169] Sources for background into Los Angeles' Iranian populations are newspaper articles from the *Los Angeles Times* and *Orange County Register:* Watanabe (2003), Shaffrey (2000),

and in the end appropriated as "diversity" by a culture industry that capitalises on harmless difference' (1993:7).

This is not the language used to describe most community radio listening audiences, but it speaks to the blurred lines between geographic communities and communities of interest, especially when that interest is narrowed by language. It is similar to the ways in which public radio stations promote themselves and their listeners to garner underwriting and high profile donations for fund-drive premiums, at least within large, wealthy urban cities such as Los Angeles. NPR affiliate KCRW regularly promotes giveaways for listener-subscribers featuring Jaguars and holidays to exotic locales. For a number of years, the station organised a yearly Father's Day fundraiser and would urge listeners on air to "donate wine from their cellar". The target audience for that promotion is clearly defined by the type of object, in this case cellar wine, being sought.

Most Iranian migrants left or were forced out of Iran after the Islamic Revolution in 1979.[170] Few living outside Iran support the current regime, yet as to be expected, there are differing opinions on how change should occur and what kind of leadership should prevail. Organised opposition has become more public and vocal. Massive student demonstrations in Tehran in 2003 were in support of a referendum to allow the people to choose what kind of government they would like, and it is a broad movement with relatively far-reaching support among Iranians outside Iran. Demonstrations took place in Los Angeles that same year to coincide with the anniversary of the student uprisings in 1999 in Tehran, during which government forces came down hard on protestors, killing one of the student protesters.[171]

Among government opposition groups, there exists a tense and growing divide among those who wish to see a return of the former ousted monarchy and

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O'Conner (1999), Nelson (2002), Nelson (2000), Manzano (2000), Kotkin (1999), Calvo (2000) and Allen (2003).
[170] See Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1994) for analysis "small media" played in the Iranian Revolution.
[171] See Watanabe (2003) and Fang (2003) for background on the protests in Los Angeles.

support the Shah's son, Reza Pahlavi, and those who support open elections and new, democratic leadership. This polarisation of political vision can be seen quite sharply along age lines. Older Iranians, those who came to the United States as exiles in the immediate period following 1979, tend to form the base of Pahlavi's support, whereas young people are far less likely to and are themselves at the forefront of the referendum movement, both inside and outside of Iran. When I've mentioned my research into Persian radio to some Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles and other non-Persian progressives knowledgeable about the region, I have been criticised for "buying into the pro-monarchist propaganda machine", which is in fact understood to be the politics at two of the stations in this case study, KRSI and KSMI. From my perspective, this serves as evidence as to why such radio is important to discuss and contextualise, especially when station organisers resonate with the language of community-based programming and themselves operate outside the typical framework of commercial and public radio. It raises the question of who the audience is for such programming and brings to light conflicts around the desire to promote consensus versus debate, as seen in the Pacifica example.

Though the majority of Iranians are Muslim, it is a religiously diverse country with populations of Jews, Baha'i's and Christians. It is also an ethnically diverse country with Armenians, Syrians, and Kurds. I should note here a "warning" issued from the Program Director at KIRN, *Radio Iran*, a sentiment repeated to me in different ways by a variety of people throughout my research. He said: 'We have a very, very picky and very, very diverse Iranian community here which is very, very difficult for an outsider even to evaluate how diverse they are' (Hedjazi 2003). I offer that quote in an attempt to lay bare the difficulty of finding both the language and context for community radio, specifically exile and minority radio, as an "outsider", as well as the many polarities and subsequent rivalries that emerge, and are made visible, through this particular case study of Iranian radio in Los Angeles.

Iranian Broadcasting

As Naficy describes, the affluence and size of the community has afforded it the opportunity to be active producers of popular culture, stating: 'their televisual output in the period [of 1980-1991] topped, with the exception of Spanish-language programming, all other locally produced ethnic programs in Southern California' (Naficy 1993: xvii). There exists numerous satellite and cable access television programs and 24-hour channels, as well as newspapers, magazines, and websites. In terms of radio, there is a history of regularly scheduled Farsi-language radio programs. From 1980 – 1992 there were at least eighteen different programmes on in Los Angeles, the majority of which aired via time purchased on other commercial stations paid for with local advertising from within the Iranian community as well as through the support of wealthy benefactors (ibid: 38). Given the size of its Iranian population, Los Angeles is also home to the majority of Persian media outside of Iran, including that which is produced for illegal consumption inside Iran.

At present, there are three twenty-four hour terrestrial radio stations serving the Iranian community in Los Angeles, in addition to numerous internet-only radio stations. Of these three stations, one is an AM station, KIRN 670 *Radio Iran* (which will be examined in depth later in the chapter), and two are closed-circuit or side-band FM (also called sub-carrier, or side-carrier) radio stations, KRSI Radio Sedaye Iran (*Voice of Iran*), and KSMI Radio Melli Sedaye Iran (*National Voice of Iran Radio*). It became clear quite quickly that tensions exist among the programmers, as many came from one station and moved on to another. All the men I spoke with had gossip and stories about men who had switched to another station, though the women I spoke with did not share such accounts. They were relatively new to radio, most with little or no previous experience, and decidedly not a part of what often felt like an "old boys" club shaped along political lines.

KRSI was the first Iranian broadcast station in the region and has been on air since the early 1990's. Their mission is expressly one in opposition to the current regime in Iran:

KRSI strongly supports the struggle of the people of Iran for freedom, human rights and democracy in Iran. KRSI condemns the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for terrorism, its efforts for acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and its opposition to the peace process in the Middle East. KRSI demands the removal of the current dictatorship of the Islamic Republic and seeks establishment of a democratic and modern system based on separation of religion from the state in Iran (KRSI 2003).

KSMI shares a similar ideology and program schedule. KSMI began in September, 2000 when programmers from KRSI left that station to begin their own side-band FM. There is a history of contentious politics between the two stations and personalities involved. The practical question, though, is: '...how much appetite there is among advertisers and listeners for two local Iranian stations with talk radio formats is unclear. The two all-talk stations have jabbed at each other over the air, revealing an uneasiness at an increasingly crowded Iranian radio market' (Nelson, YEAR). Furthermore, each station uses a tagline that is quite didactic ("Voice of...", "National Voice of..."), and constructed in such as way as to situate themselves as the "official" representative by, in a sense, claiming to "speak for" the Iranian people.

Side-band FM stations themselves serve as a fascinating study, as they require a level of active audience, and active engagement on the part of the listener to even be able to receive the stations, never mind actually listening to them. What this means is that every licensed FM station has two side-band frequencies – a left and right channel. The FCC allows stations themselves to sub-license these side-band frequencies. Initially, these side-bands were licensed for public services such as reading services for the blind. Watchmaker Seiko was the first to change that system when it offered a lucrative sum of money to Pacifica station KPFA in Berkeley to use the bandwidth in support of a new watch they sold boasting atomic accuracy. When digital spectrum became available for such wireless needs, most companies found it much cheaper and easier to abandon leasing space on the side-bands. Now, many side-band frequencies are sub-licensed by private individuals and small companies who use the signals to broadcast small-scale radio stations. As a result, what exists in Los Angeles is a fascinating hidden world of small radio stations broadcasting primarily in foreign languages like

Filipino, Italian and Russian. It is an underground network of sorts, totally invisible to Angelinos without cause to know of them. The most significant aspect of side-band radio from a listener standpoint is that in order to hear the station, you must have a separate receiver fitted with special adaptors programmed only to that station, so there can be no casual listener stumbling across it while scanning the dial, even though such an activity is itself less common with digital tuners and dial presets. These receivers cost about twenty-five dollars and can be bought directly from the stations. For example, listeners wishing to receive both Iranian sub-carrier stations must have two separate receivers. The cost of operating a side-band station is much less expensive – roughly 250,000 dollars per year versus approximately forty million dollars to buy and launch an AM station in Los Angeles.

In broad terms, these Iranian radio stations reach essentially four geographically discrete (roughly speaking as of course anyone with access can listen to online programming) audiences utilising a mixture of available technologies.

1. The local area Via AM, side-band FM, or the Internet

These stations serve as examples of "hyper-local" broadcasting to a language-specific and culturally specific audience, who in many cases have bought special receivers to enable them to partake, itself evidence of the level of interest and commitment of the station's listeners to have access to the programming. The side-band FM stations are largely associated with support of the former monarchy. This alienates listeners who don't share their view, but forms a space to bring together those that do. On the other hand, it seems that a growing awareness of the potential polarisation of this stand within their community and a desire not to be seen as a "single viewpoint" station to the wider-public, leads to downplaying the political support for the Shah's family in interviews - although the flag and photo of the Shah in the lobby of KSMI might suggest otherwise. Yet AM station KIRN is criticised by the side-band FM stations and others for being apolitical, for not engaging in issue-oriented debate on air and for

presenting itself more as 'entertainment' radio, a critique the station fully embraces as its mission. This is also one of the reasons it was such a significant shift in practice for KIRN to organise a demonstration, and thus inviting listeners to criticise U.S. government action on air.

2. Local audiences in other U.S. cities with large Iranian populations like New York and Chicago via separate side-band FM stations

In such cities, KRSI simulcasts their programming from Los Angeles onto other side-band stations they have set up in a handful of cities across the country. The cost of running the stations is paid for with local advertising from the cities themselves. In order to facilitate this, KRSI employs a salesperson in some cities, and works with an advertising firm on contract to secure to the sponsorship in others. This is an interesting example of radio syndication on a very small scale where both the content and stations are owned by the same entity.

3. Diasporic Iranians around the world via the Internet and satellite television

Payem-e-Doost is a Baha'i radio programme now broadcasting on line and on "Telstar 5", the satellite that carries most Persian radio programmes in North America. On KIRN AM, Shahrzad Ardalan hosts *Life is Beautiful*, a daily, late morning, human-interest programme. Once a week, she opens up the phone lines to help put lost friends in touch with each other. She gets calls from around the world. She tells the story of a caller from Australia who found the person they were looking for in Luxembourg, because a cousin of that old friend happened to be listening and called in. She tells a heartbreaking story of a mother who was forced to give her child up for adoption twenty-one years ago, who calls in, trying to find her child through a radio show. Ardalan says she got the idea for the feature from listening to the radio as a child:

> I remember as a child I used to listen to the radio in Iran and in small villages people would call and look for their loved ones in the military. So they would say mister so and so, please contact your family, they

are worried about you. You know, do you have to listen to the radio for you to contact your family? You have to be told? (2003).

Here the space between the hyper local and hyper global is brought together through technology, but used towards very personal social ends.

4. Iran via the Internet, satellite and shortwave

Out of 66 million people in Iran, it is estimated that only around 420,000 have Internet access. On the other hand, an estimated 7 million have illegal satellite dishes, which have become increasingly problematic due to increased efforts from current regime to block these transmissions that are illegal to listen to inside Iran. In terms of shortwave radio, *Payem-e-Doost* for example, broadcasts two hours per day on shortwave into Iran, as does KRSI. Even the United States government has employed this strategy with Radio Farda (*Radio Now*), its own twenty-four hour Persian language 'youth-oriented' radio broadcast into Iran and run from Prague, and Voice of America (VOA) has also begun a nightly one-hour news program sent via satelllite.[172] The impact of these private broadcasts has not been lost on the U.S. government. According to an article in the *Washington Post*, '[t]he U.S. government's satellite newscast builds on the efforts of exiles in Los Angeles who are trying to promote rebellion in Tehran and Iranian cities by beaming private radio and television programmes into the country by satellite'(Allen 2003). The article goes on to state that the Pentagon and U.S. government does not have any formal relationship or support for the private broadcasters, but it is clear there is unofficial approval for broadcasts opposed to the current Islamic regime.

For many supporters of Iranian democracy this is an uneasy alliance between the Bush administration and their cause. Others cite the importance of official United States support for the overthrow of the current Iranian leadership, claiming any such support is necessary

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[172] Radio Farda and the VOA programming is part of a larger governmental plan to use media, and especially radio, to promote their vision of 'American values' and 'western democracy.' Such programming is highly controversial and is an example of entertainment and culture masking as propaganda. See Grace (2002) for more.

regardless of where it comes from. This speaks to the broader political tensions among people who agree on the need for regime change in their home country, but disagree on how change should take place. The focus here is how these tensions are made bare through local radio in Los Angeles, and how these tensions underscore the differing missions of the Persian radio stations located in the region.

One of the ongoing problems broadcasters, both private and governmental, face in trying to reach listeners inside Iran is increased Iranian government efforts to block transmissions. KRSI spends $350 per hour, or $180,000 per year on this shortwave broadcast alone (Ghaemmaghami 2003). They have been on shortwave for four years now, in addition to satellite television, and online via the station's action-oriented website with many links for news and information. Their shortwave time is bought through an international broker and uplinked via satellite to the Czech Republic for broadcast since it is illegal in Iran. KRSI, *Voice of Iran,* has been broadcasting since 1988. It is a political radio station. 'Our [role] is to affect change over there' (ibid). Its most popular and significant program is *Good Morning Iran* hosted by Saeed Ghaemmaghami, a long-time radio personality and director of *Radio Tehran* under the Shah, as well as a popular and respected news programmer. He was jailed after the revolution and had his hands broken while imprisoned, and has been in the U.S. since 1990. He says he is not interested in reaching Iranians in Los Angeles. He says:

> I don't care about Iranians in Los Angeles. They are ok. For twenty-two hours we are talking to them. For that two hours, my audience is there [in Iran]. I even ask them don't call me from U.S., from Europe. This is window just for Iranians. People here can listen and find out what is going on there, and we can become a bridge between them and the Iranians inside of Iran (2003).

This is a popular programme in Iran and for audiences outside the country precisely because it is a forum for Iranians to speak openly. There is no history of call-in programmes in Iran, so even the structure of the show itself sets it apart from traditional radio inside the country.

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Ghaemmaghami speaks of this as the first radio for Iranians in Iran to participate in and compares it with the pop music radio of his youth when listeners were invited to request a song, but their voices never heard on air.

A telling example of the role Ghaemmaghami has played in terms of the mobilisation of government opposition in Tehran came during the anniversary protests this spring. People called in to the studio in Los Angeles from the streets in Tehran to report up-to-date information as to the location of street protests and the security of certain areas. Throughout the week of protests, demonstrations sparked up across the city, but information on their whereabouts was difficult to obtain within Iran. Thus, people were using the airwaves in Los Angeles to organise street demonstrations in Tehran. Iman Samiizadeh, a student leader who was jailed in 1999 for his role in the uprisings addresses the impact the radio broadcasts had on the protests: 'During the urban rioting four years ago, students took over cities for two days, but no one in the rest of the world knew about it...now we have these new communication methods at our disposal, so we can show our movement to the outside world' (Fang 2003). Ghaemmaghami further describes the role of the stations: 'We connect groups-street to street...we gather information about prisoners, persuade people to come out and join the fight...it's not a normal radio programme and I'm not a normal radio DJ. I'm like Cicero in Rome, like a commander on the battlefield' (ibid).

Broadcasting on shortwave was a turning point for the stations, and for Ghaemmaghami especially, and solidified the stations' political focus in terms of content: 'They [The people who called up] were far more interested in solutions for Iran. We were getting calls about people dying in Iran, and they were saying: "Who cares about Democrats and Republicans?"' (2003). The intense and passionate nature of debate can be felt in this loosely translated recounting of a caller from the morning's programme from Ghaemmaghami:

[t]his guy call me and say why you ask Iranian people to go to the street, without dagger, without machine gun, why let them kill our women, beat our woman, let us have machine guns, let us have daggers. Let us have like they do and fight with them. Don't think that the United States will support us, don't think they are looking out for our benefit. They will sacrifice us like they have many times before. You have to fight with this government. Don't talk about civilised challenge. Don't talk about peaceful demonstrations. You are deceiving people...[The caller] liked me, but he said don't be so human at this moment (2003).

Other times, Ghaemmeghami has urged his listeners in Iran: '[d]on't pay your bills--try as much as you can to stop the regime's economy, so they can't carry on!...Make a mess! Ruin the tomb of Khomeini! All the 25 years of madness, repression, depression--let it out!' (quoted in Fang 2003). He ends his show each morning by saying: "We are victorious...because we are right".

The impact of radio in sowing the seeds of uprising, revolt and revolution is not something new. *Radio Venceremos* in El Salvador (Vigil 19991) and *Radio B92* in Belgrade (Collins 2001) are two powerful examples of the impact of radio during times of civil war. The history of right wing radio in the U.S. as well as that of left wing Pacifica highlights the significant roles that both played in promoting action in the name of their beliefs. What is particular about the Persian stations is their use of transnational broadcasting technology in reaching inside a country whose national policies do not allow such transmissions. What is also distinctive here is both the direct level of involvement the stations have had and the mutual reinforcement provided by the global and local broadcasting. This is only possible because the stations are privately owned and broadcast on a frequency that is decidedly under the radar for most Angelinos by the nature of being situated on side-band FM channels that requires special receivers to listen. In a post-September 11th era, it is difficult to imagine there would not be some level of public concern if average listeners could tune into Persian language broadcasting and hear the passionate and angry tone evident in the broadcasts such as Ghaemmaghami's.

In terms of mutual reinforcement of the political mission, the broadcasts on a global level serve as tactical aid for organisers in Iran and a vital source of news and information regarding the support from outside Iran and among the diasporic community. At the same time, the broadcasts have provided a new visability for the student demonstrators outside of Iran and been a factor in the resurgence of protest outside Iran against the regime. There are those who feel the stations take too much credit for their role in the uprisings, that 'the students do not need anyone in Beverly Hills telling them to go out into the streets and demonstrate' (Anonymous 2003). It does seem that, even if exaggerated by programmers themselves, the stations have played an important role for both those inside and outside Iran.

KIRN AM, Los Angeles

The side-band FM stations and KIRN AM have very different missions from each other, though both use the language of serving the community. Even the manner of delivery in KIRN is of a very different and more relaxed style than the side-band stations and their policy is to pointedly avoid discussing politics on air. KIRN *Radio Iran* is a 5,000 watt AM station in the Los Angeles area and on the internet around the world. The station is owned by Howard Kalmenson, and his company Lotus Communications is the largest independent owner of radio stations in the United States. He owns around twenty-five stations, mostly in the west and southwest, and allegedly enjoys turning down offers from the likes of Clear Channel to buy his stations, clearly relishing the autonomy with which he operates.

The station itself flipped from Spanish to Farsi without any public warning at 5pm one Friday afternoon in 2001. Over the weekend, the station ran three promotional announcements in Farsi: one for potential advertisers, one for potential employees, one for listener comments. By Monday morning, the station had received over 1,500 phone calls (Paley 2003). They had no staff, a general manager and owner who spoke no Farsi, and they decided to make the switch for financial reasons after some informal market research into the

affluence and expression of desire among Iranians for such a station. KIRN is a commercial station with competitive rates for advertising.

They broadcast a mix of talk, music and entertainment programming, with news on the hour. When the station first went on air they played only Persian music, but now the station is about 70% talk and news and 30% music. The schedule itself follows a somewhat traditional format. The station has a morning show called *Morning Waves (Moje Bamdadi)*, which is a mixture of light talk with some music and two hosts whose aim is to strike a relaxing tone for listeners who are just starting their day. The show has a mixed audience of men and women, though it has a twenty-five minute programme on sports news during the middle of the show. Talk show *Life is Beautiful (Zendegi Zibast)* follows in the late morning time slot. In the late afternoon, their most popular show airs, a call-in advice program called *Needs and Mysteries (Razha va Niazha)* with Dr. Farhang Holakouee. Evenings feature various cultural and entertainment programmes, including classical Persian music, variety, and dance music on Saturday nights. What is significant is the number of daytime hours broadcasting so-called "Professional Hours", which are basically infomercials, time slots paid for by local businesses and individuals advertising their services and hosted by various station programmers. This subject will be returned to later in the chapter regarding the dilemmas inherent in such a funding scheme.

Further reinforcing the economic significance of Iranians living in Los Angeles, in 2002, the station broadcast Lakers basketball games in Farsi. Aside from English and Spanish, it is the only other language any NBA (National Basketball Association) game has been broadcast in, with the exception of a low powered station in Arizona broadcasting games in a local Native American language. The broadcasts received significant mainstream press attention and placed KIRN and the Iranian community in the public gaze. Interestingly, the broadcasts came about because of the structure of ownership and the language diversity of the Los Angeles radio audiences. Lotus Communications owns a top-rated Spanish language station in the city that holds the contracts to broadcast both the Lakers' and the Dodgers' baseball

games in Spanish. There was a scheduling conflict during the NBA playoffs, which are at the very start of the baseball season, so that both teams had games under contract to be broadcast taking place at the same time. Kalmenson instructed KIRN to broadcast a Lakers game in Spanish, much to the resentment of station staff. The station was deluged with listener complaints and callers echoing the theme: "[d]o not insult us by broadcasting the Lakers in Spanish. If you are going to broadcast Lakers games, do it in Farsi!" The next season, KIRN decided to do just that, however, the station claims to have lost too much money on the broadcasts due to the high fees charged by the Lakers organisation and lack of NBA support for bringing in sponsorship so the broadcasts were not renewed the following year.

As mentioned, the most popular programme on KIRN is the advice show hosted by Dr. Halakouee. His is a call-in show where he offers advice on family issues and help to Iranians who recently moved to the area looking for support to adjust to life and culture in Los Angeles and the United States. He fields mostly calls from parents, new residents, and older Iranians and may spend as long as thirty minutes with a single caller. 'It is difficult enough to adopt to the new situation, the new language, the new laws, the "do's" and "don't's". It's totally different from where we've been from' (Ardalan 2003). Like other Persian radio stations, the station quickly became a clearinghouse of information, from legal, financial and medical advice, business information, cultural events information, and other personal needs - KRSI, for example, broadcasts daily English language instruction. In particular, the stations become clearinghouses for service providers who speak Farsi. KIRN General Manager John Paley expresses it this way: 'we are in a major market but the Iranian community is a small town and we are the meeting place' (2003). When asked why people call the radio station with their problems, the most common response was that 'they don't have anywhere else to go' (Ardalan 2003).

Recent research commissioned by the station and roughly supported by a random sampling of non-radio personnel at Persian restaurants and bookstores in Westwood, (an upper income neighbourhoods that is home to a significant

percentage of Persian-owned businesses) shows 95% of Iranians in Los Angeles listen to *Radio Iran* at least some of the time, though this figure cannot be considered representative of younger people (KIRN 2003). The reported average listening time is two hours per day. This number is quite high compared with other listening figures for radio, and it is a potentially artificially high number that could be attributed to the bias often found in research that is self-reporting, stemming from a sense of pride in having such a station, the desire to please the questioner, or the desire to support the station in general. Regardless, this figure speaks at the very least to the high name recognition the station has within the Persian community.

Political Content

In a robust media network, there is space for diversity. Communities of interest, geography and/or language who rely on only one radio station, must look for diversity within programmes. But, if such a radio station is the product of a wealthy benefactor or has an explicit political mission, it is unlikely the views of their programme hosts will differ much from that of the owners, as is the case with the staunchly political side-band stations, such as KRSI and KSMI, with clearly defined political objectives. On the other hand, everyone interviewed at *Radio Iran* spoke almost defiantly about how the station is "not political", to the extent where call-in shows are discouraged from raising topics to do with Iranian politics, Middle Eastern politics, and partisan politics in general. This speaks to the intensity and personalisation of political debate among Iranians and the fear that opening up such a dialogue would turn off listeners who did not agree with the speaker. There is a sense the station is trying to be all things to all people, to offer as broad appeal as possible within the context of Persian radio. And in a commercial radio environment, alienating or upsetting listeners is unlikely to be encouraged. However, it seems difficult, and anachronistic, to imagine KIRN not getting involved on some level such as was the case with the demonstrations against the INS detentions, a policy so widely criticised it was not terribly controversial for the station to take a stand. On one visit to the station, there were posters for an upcoming student demonstration. It was quickly explained

to me the posters were controversial to have around, should not really be there, but that it was necessary to support. This seems to be the contradiction within which KIRN operates.

There is also, it seems, a form of paternalism at play. Voices are controlled and it is by no means free-form radio. The one with the most on-air freedom is the program director. At KIRN, Program Director Hussein is the only programmer who covers public affairs with a level of commentary and is the only show that takes calls from listeners on such topics directly. Suzan Khatami, programmer of weekly entertainment show *Live From Hollywood* says: '[i]f you open the lines it goes to politics. So I never do that' (2003). Clearly there is a balancing act constantly being negotiated within these stations as programmers find or refine their voice and the voice of the station.

Why then, did the station organise a demonstration against the INS on-air if it is so vocally non-political? The answer seems to be that the need came from the listeners themselves, those calling the station on the day of the detentions to share outrage, discuss concerns and seek advice. It was a spontaneous decision to an emotional and deeply troubling set of circumstances. In the end, it also helped promote the station as it generated extensive publicity for the station and placed KIRN at the heart of the Iranian community.

Language & Culture

The cultural significance of each of the Iranian stations cannot be undervalued, though the linguistic role is vocalised as a much more instrumental one for KIRN station. Ardalan speaks to this: 'I personally don't want my son who was born in Los Angeles to forget his heritage. I want him to be a good citizen yet know about his background' (2003). Khatami expands on this common, yet profound sentiment:

> I really don't need to listen to an Iranian station to get my news, but especially when you are at my age, you need to listen to your own language sometimes, even if it is for fun. It is important to keep the mother tongue strong. Otherwise, we all speak English. And before you know it, you would eventually stop speaking Farsi and your children won't speak it (2003).

This wider cultural role is an important aspect of KIRN. As the only Persian station that can be tuned in on car radios – a listening space not to be taken lightly in auto-centric Los Angeles – it is the entertainment programming that parents find they can moderately impose on their teenagers and younger children. Parents spoke of playing KIRN in the car so their children could be exposed to at least some of the language and music of Iran. Young people who would not necessarily be interested in the older-skewing talk programmes are more willing to 'tolerate the radio station on in the car if it is music or entertainment' (Khatami 2003).

Funding

KIRN is a commercial station that is part of an independently owned network of over twenty radio stations around the country. Its parent company is the largest independently owned radio network in the United States, which says more about the status of consolidated ownership in then it does about Persian radio. The two sub-carrier stations KRSI and KSMI, though carriers of advertising, are primarily backed with large amounts of personal cash, though KRSI now holds public radio-style on-air fund-drives twice a year, a practice learned from the time they spent on a sub-carrier frequency of National Public Radio affiliate station KPCC.

Funding is an area of intense debate and necessity when it comes to most community media projects. In the United Kingdom, limited commercial funding is allowed while in the United States, direct on-air advertising support is it forbidden. There are important arguments regarding the impact and challenges of relying on advertising, distinctive to the area of community broadcasting, yet not unrelated to questions of media and power. These stations, and the abundance of Persian media, exist in large part because of the affluence of wealthy benefactors, as well as the affluence of a portion of the audience who run businesses, and of those who purchase their goods and services.

KIRN now makes a profit for its owner Howard Kalmenson. In 2002, the station grossed four million dollars and it can be presumed a significant portion of that comes from funds raised through broadcasting the "Professional Hours". It is this issue of funding where KIRN is very much a commercial radio station operating within company parameters (albeit an independent company) as a for-profit, money-making business, whose profits are not proportionally reinvested in the station, or, in fact, the Iranian community. Ownership matters.

On KIRN, as with other radio stations, the commercials themselves are reflective of the particular style and cultural mode of address. For example, Farzad Fadai opens his commercial for his Honda dealership with a poem 'because it's very deep in our culture, and they like it' (quoted in Nelson 2002). Ardalan as well begins each of her shows with a poem. Fadai was one of the first people to find KIRN after it switched to Persian and he has been advertising with them since the beginning. He mentions another dimension to the public-ness of advertising his business within such a tight-knit community. He says:

> I get three or four calls a week from people who think I'm Farzad Fadai who went to high school in Tehran, but I'm not...I went to Price Club and presented my [Price Club membership] card, and the woman asked me if I was the one who lived here or [the one who lived] in Montreal. So, now, when people call, I tell them he lives in Montreal. It's a small world (ibid).

To further problematise the issue of funding on small, commercial stations, KIRN broadcasts the aforementioned "Professional Hours" and "Interviews with Experts", which are basically infomercials paid for by clients and companies offering personal services such as legal and financial planning. A significant portion of their airtime is devoted to such paid content, a total of twenty to thirty hours per week. Programme hosts such as Ardalan often host "Professional Hours" as well, thus blurring the line in very traditional ways between advertising and editorial content, and it could easily be argued, threatening the credibility of its programmers. The station doesn't see it this way and instead hosts describe the importance of providing services as a media

outlet to local businesses, in addition to listeners wanting to support Persian businesses, and/or needing to support businesses where people speak Farsi. However true that may be, it is a slippery slope to be on.

"All Things to All People?"

For both KIRN and the lower powered, side-band FM stations, the people they reach are local audiences in Los Angeles, listeners in Iran, as well as the larger and less-specifically rooted, diasporic Iranians around the world. Their audience is defined by language, ethnicity, culture and a diverse yet presumed community of interest based on such language, ethnicity, and culture. 'I have to try to please everybody and that is exactly what I do' (Khatami 2003). At its most successful, this paradigm would result in a broad selection of programming within a cultural and linguistic context. The sheer significance of such cultural and communicative spaces for exiled and minority groups in the United States is reinforced by Naficy who decries how mainstream culture in America co-opts "difference" by selectively incorporating just enough alternative viewpoints into general discourse as means of neutralising their potency: '[w]hatever exilic opposition or antagonism might have existed is ultimately mapped out as mere difference, as "style" which then feeds the pluralistic, multicultural ethnic diversity trends now in vogue in the United States' (Naficy 1993: 34). Without getting involved in critiques of the project of multi-culturalism here, the point here is that it is often difficult for stations to negotiate their multi-layered audience demands and expectations, as both the claims and expectations are of "representation" and who speaks for whom.

Relatedly, there is also a high level of investment among these radio audiences, and listeners are especially vocal with their opinions about the stations, especially with regards to representation of "the community". Everyone had stories about funny exchanges and complaints they had received. Khatami in particular mentions a caller who was very unhappy she had a guest on who spoke English.

She explains:

I tried to explain to him what the book was about [that the English-speaking author was discussing] and he asked:

Is it about Iran?

No.

Is it about Iranians?

No.

Then why the hell are you doing this? (2003)

After trying to make her case, Khatami ended the call by telling the man she would be off the air in fifteen minutes and the news in Farsi would be on next, a perfect example of the "if you don't like what you're hearing, it will change before you know it" style of programming at the core of most community-modeled stations.

Another issue is the lack of youth audience and older-skewing tenor to the station's content, both musically and in terms of speech. This is by no means a problem limited to Iranian radio as it is an often -repeated sentiment throughout community radio; and an element of which that is always striking is that community programmers lamenting a lack of youth audience fail to respond by putting actual young people on air. KIRN has however just begun a new programme entitled *The Youth of 670: Voice of a New Generation* 'hosted by *Live From Hollywood's* Suzi Khatami and co-hosted by youths Kam, Kasra and Siamak' (KIRN 2003). Certainly an important step, though even just the informality in presentation of the young people's names itself reflects a somewhat paternalistic attitude towards young people.

Community Representation

These stations ask us to think through questions of authenticity, its relationship to "professionalism", and whether or not authenticity is the same as grassroots.

The quest for authenticity is at the heart of "realness", truth and credibility.[173] Authenticity is aspirational as a form of accuracy, and as a form of representation closest to the so-called real, or a shared perception of what is real. In terms of news, the question becomes: does authenticity mean better information or more trusted sources? Further, the relationship between professionalism and accuracy is an interesting one. As has been discussed in the two previous case studies, while professionalism in accuracy and technical proficiency is a goal, a programming structure that devalues the learning process and leaves out those less-trained voices is contradictory to the ethos of community radio. KIRN operates in the commercial world yet because there is little training ground for Farsi-speaking presenters, there is a non-professionalised community aesthetic in terms of the learning curve, meaning, and production quality is valued and aspired to but achieved through hands-on experience rather then formal training. How these debates impact current modes of re-conceptualising journalism is also important.

In terms of Persian radio in Los Angeles, programmers at KIRN spoke of their desire for the station to better train and encourage a higher quality of on-air presentation. This was not something mentioned at KRSI, which offered a somewhat "rougher" sound overall. As KIRN is staunchly non-political, it is befitting that, when asked about their news coverage, everyone interviewed from the station repeated such sentiments such as: "our job is to provide news", "we don't take sides", "our job is to inform not influence" or "our job is to be a resource to the community". They are both praised and criticised for this approach to news. Some like the "official" nature of the top of the hour newscasts culled from recognised sources such as like CNN and BBC. Others cite the need for news from inside of Iran that is not covered by the mainstream press. Of course this opens the subject of journalistic bias and subjectivity in general, however, what is interesting with regards to this case study is how the station positions itself and speaks about its programming decisions and philosophy.

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[173] This is a discussion relevant to most case studies of alternative media. See Coyer (2004c)

As another means of positioning itself as a centralising space for information of interest to its listeners, KIRN's homepage is primarily dedicated to news, usually reports from the Associated Press, Reuters, and other news gathering services. Reflecting their news priority, the list of subject headings is, in order: "Iran News", "World News", "Technology & Internet" (the presence of which likely reflecting the interests of the webmaster), "Sports Report" (with focus on sport in Iran and Iranian athletes around the world in particular those playing for European football clubs), "Entertainment" (reflecting primarily mainstream Hollywood entertainment news, likely a product of being situated in Los Angeles), "Business & Economy", "Variety", and "Latest Technology News". Noticeably absent is a feature on regional or local news, though it is included in their on-air newscasts, perhaps in recognition of the differing audiences for their website and local radio. The content is almost exclusively in English, though a number of the online advertisements are in Farsi or bilingual.

Voice of Iran Radio, KRSI operates quite differently politically, as mentioned before. In particular, it organises petition drives on air and through its website, which also serves as an extensive source of news and information. The homepage is largely in English, but when delving deeper into the site, there are many pages that are in Farsi, usually those that are most controversial or oriented towards political action. Like KIRN, the site also focuses on news, though exclusively on news surrounding Iranians, Iran or the Middle East from a variety of news services and sites. Though most stories are from mainstream sources, on 3 October, 2005, a feature published in alternative newspaper *LA Weekly* was reprinted on the site detailing a horrific story of a gay Iranian arrested and tortured by Iran's "morality police" in a massive Internet entrapment campaign targeting gays (KRSI 2005). Under "Community Pages", there are links to various "Special Manifestos", such as calls for support of the Iranian student uprisings and calls for support of a Senate bill to create an Iran democracy foundation to provide support for Iranian American activities to encourage democracy inside Iran (KRSI 2003b. The station's website also

for discussion as related to IndyMedia.

features a controversial section called "Special Pages" where can be found links to "National Songs of Iran", "Special Stories" listed only in Farsi, and a section that can be clicked on to view "Execution Pictures" that contains photos of hanged men and text detailing atrocities committed inside Iran KRSI 2003c). In this section, you can also view "Interrogation Videos" from inside Iran. It is difficult and powerful viewing, and certainly not what you expect to see on a traditional radio station website. It is also highly sensationalist and makes clear the political viewpoint of the station with regards to the current regime.

Both KRSI and KIRN claim to be speaking for the people of Iran. Those I interviewed either made it a point to say they spoke for the people of Iran, or they told me to be aware that people will claim to speak for people of Iran. I was warned that many Iranians like to speak in "absolutes". Authenticity, then, is as much a product of individual voices as it is of the larger "voice of the station". KIRN is at times a victim of its own success. It gets calls from listeners asking for help with things it is not in the position to help people with, such as the callers asking for help finding a job. 'They think we can solve all their problems. But we can't' (Ardalan 2003). There is no resource centre for Persians in Los Angeles, like those that many predominantly low income ethnic groups rely on for support, which itself seems to be a product of the affluence and presumptions there of. These stations, at their core, are community resources and cultural signifiers for a vast and growing, yet relatively speaking tightly knit, and for some, insular ethnic community: 'it's not just radio' (Ardalan 2003).

Conclusion

Radio at its best can be defined by its intimacy and its immediacy. It is primarily a live medium and it is that sort of programming and texture we as listeners come to expect from it. KIRN received significant publicity in local and national press surrounding its role in publicising the INS detentions. During the ensuing protest organised by the station, people were in the street tuned to their radio, and when the station went on air on behalf of local police

asking marchers not to move into the street, the crowd responded accordingly. The use of radio as a means of tactical communication as one anti-global capital organisers have experimented with through temporary pirated signals, so for some it is ironic that it was used in Los Angeles by a commercial station for crowd control. On the other hand, the example no doubt speaks to both the power of radio as a live and local medium, and to how important it is for communities to have access to this particular format of public communication, however they choose to employ it.

KIRN is a for-profit, commercial radio station and a financial success story for its non-Iranian owners. At the same time, it is described by programmers, listeners and journalists as a kind of town hall: '[KIRN] has become a clearinghouse of information…a meeting place for the Iranian community' (Mena 2002). This is in contrast to the more direct role of political advocate and intermediary the side-band stations play, though organising the protest against the INS detentions 'marked a coming of age for Hollywood-based KIRN, proving that a small, low-wattage station could be a powerful conduit to an ethnic community searching for answers and a forum' (ibid). At the end of the day, the stations are commercial radio but nevertheless blur the line between commercial and community broadcasting in a way that is particular to their role as diasporic media and community-specific local broadcasting. Additionally, none of the stations, including KIRN, have the kind of polished or slick sound found on typical commercial radio.

In broad terms, these themes of ethnic communities relying on independent media for information, and radio as a neighbourhood resource, are not unfamiliar. Robins (2001) eloquently makes the case for the need to move beyond the national framework and its categories of community, identity and belonging. He emphasises transnational media as representing new forms of connecting to the homeland across spaces of geography. Further, there are important critiques to be made of an over-reliance on the national context of broadcasting even if national policy is a driving force, at the same as it is crucial to not loose site of the legislative importance of the national

framework. Though the nation state remains the site of most broadcast policy, clearly, there are divergent listening patterns and publics that have emerged and, situated alongside the national and the transnational perspectives, is the space to re-imagine local and community radio.

Chapter 7

Where the "Hyper Local" and "Hyper Global" Meet
Case Study of Indymedia Radio

'Some people want to build counter institutions, some just want to play their music.' (Amoshaun Toft, *Indymedia* Radio)

Introduction

For some producers, the act of broadcasting itself is a political one, though content may be almost exclusively music rather then speech radio. The project of reclaiming the airwaves is one I will return to in the final chapter. What is of particular interest here is the way in which both content and structure within *Indymedia* radio projects has revolved around changing forms of interaction between local collectives and the global network within the space of audio.

In the previous chapter, I examined a particularised case of Iranian radio stations in Los Angeles that exemplifies the often-blurred relationship between local and global broadcast spaces. It is a narrative of stations that began as local radio with a mission of reaching a diasporic community, but ultimately served a global audience on multiple levels, thus intersecting with locality in a variety of ways. In this chapter, I will flip the paradigm and consider the case study of a global, alternative media network, *Indymedia*, the local radio projects that have emerged from it, and the flow of content and distribution between them. These radio producers are part of a growing network of independent media makers, but more specifically, they are part of a growing network of independent audio producers through which new means of sharing content and streaming have been developed. I will focus on London and Los Angeles in particular, though additionally, I will draw on examples in Seattle. The main themes include the relationship between producer and audience, decentralisation, shifting organisational forms and strategies, emerging tensions and the connection to the broad issues around webcasting, peer-to-

peer (P2P) filesharing, and the movement for free and open source software.[174]
I will begin by considering the impact of the Internet and digital technologies
on community radio and localism, a theme that will be more fully addressed in
the final chapter when the question is raised with regards to future prospects
for a more democratic media.

Digitopia in an Analogue World or 'Anatopia' in a Digital World?

The experimental nature of content and production among alternative projects
online necessitates a non-essentialist view of the Internet and suggests that
these projects 'invite us to consider the Internet as existing in a complex of
features and pressures which are at once technological, historical, social,
cultural, economic and political' (Atton 2004: 1).[175] Such a holistic view also
helps us avoid a techno-romantic seduction of the Internet as either wholly new
or wholly discreet from existing structures and impulses (ibid). For John Perry
Barlow, '[t]he raw materials of the Internet are the cultures. People become so
obsessed with the tools that they forget the reason why they are using them'
(Barlow 2001). Howard Rheingold (2001) asks us to think about how we
would use our tools differently if community came first while Siva
Vaidhyanathan (2003) asserts that '[i]t is about whether the network is open or
closed, whether it is run in their interests or by democratically accountable
governments in the interests of us all'. The relationship between technology
and social change is thus one in which new technologies make possible certain
kinds of communication, but it is the impulse and motivation for such uses
where social change occurs. While there exists a push and pull between social
needs and technological possibilities, it is the motivation and agency of the
actors involved that tells a richer story of the uses and interactions between the
why and the how. 'There is a window of opportunity right now with Internet
broadcasting and audio accessibility and we must seize the moment as people
are' (Toft 2003).

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[174] See Freedman (2003b).
[175] See Atton for discussion of the Internet as an alternative space (2004).

New technologies have expanded the capacity for individual production and made it possible for amateur enthusiasts to programme their own Internet radio station, "podcast", or audio stream. Previously, broadcasting required some kind of social infrastructure to support even the actual production of radio or television. Despite the technical capacity for individualised projects, people are nevertheless engaged in devising ways to make broadcasting collective. While Internet radio transforms public access to information and entertainment, the technology alone does not address the social or political reasons why people might wish to make their own media in the first place. In other words, the desire to organise as a collective, to create a community media project, transcends the technological means of distribution and production. The potential for endless possibilities within the digital arena cannot serve as a panacea to the issue of scarcity on the traditional dial.

The traditional analogue broadcasting bandwidth is regulated because of scarcity, because governments have allocated only a certain amount of bandwidth for radio and television. This paradigm of scarcity is transformed in the digital arena and especially online. Internet broadcasting is one venue available to gain access to the otherwise limited analogue broadcast spectrum. On the one hand, the limitless space available to broadcast on-line addresses the problem of scarcity and there certainly is room for everyone who has something to say or a record to spin. However, there are limitations to the prospects and hype surrounding Internet radio at present. Although Internet broadcasting offers many useful avenues, its limitations include both technical questions (the digital divide and insufficient band-width for quality transmission among those with dial-up phone connections) and social issues (community access and the inherently more intimate format traditional radio offers). Online spaces have a unique and often complementary relationship to traditional broadcast spaces. Most analogue radio broadcasters simulcast online or make content available as downloads or podcasts. Again, taking a technology first approach to the digital world of radio fails both to address the reason why people come to engage in such projects and to highlight the new avenues of distribution that have emerged between the online and analogue realms.

Jo Tacchi (2000), however, makes the case for the need to connect old and new technologies within radio studies and argues that 'new evolutions of "radiogenic" technologies should not be dismissed as being different from "radio"' (ibid: 289). Indeed, the earliest wave of Internet radio listening emerged as a response to the constricted playlists and homogenised output of commercial radio. Online radio offered diverse and varied listening possibilities for musical tastes not catered to on the FM dial. On the other hand, this style of "narrow" listening only furthers forms of hyper-individualism. As one Internet radio producer states: '[i]f I'm going to listen to a piped-in newscaster sitting in some bunker in Pennsylvania, I may as well hire my own' (Spencer 2002). Of course it is also true that Internet broadcasting offers a further redefinition of "community", away from geographical limitations and across transnational boundaries. A case study of the radio projects emerging from the *Indymedia* network demonstrates the complex and interconnected relationship between global and local broadcast spaces that, while dependent on technology to achieve its goals, exists as well because of the social organising needs and interests of the people producing and listening to such programming.

Digital Millennium Copyright Act & Performance Royalties

If radio is, at its best, a local medium, how is that sense of locality, the intimacy of space, displaced or altered in an on-line environment? In order to investigate this, it is necessary to outline some of the background regarding Internet radio. There exists both the cultural and social imperative for the creation of such projects as well as a policy perspective, launched by the Digital Millenium Copyright Act (DMCA) and its effect on the rights of anyone to broadcast music online.

The DMCA passed into U.S. law in 1998 although this legislation has global repercussions because it affects anyone doing business with US companies, or in the case of music, anyone broadcasting music licensed by US corporations, which covers a significant portion of mainstream music played on commercial radio around the world. In terms of its impact on webcasting, much attention

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has been given to the successful lawsuit against the music-file sharing website Napster brought by the Recording Industry of America (RIAA) on behalf of record labels (and ostensibly music artists). Napster spent most of its short life in litigation, and in the end, was purchased by music giant BMI (Claude 2002). Other free music-sharing sites have emerged in the ashes of Napster, sites such as Gnutella and Lime Wire. What makes these websites different from Napster is they rely on a decentralised means of distribution whereby song files being shared are stored on the hard drives of participating individuals, rather then a centralised server like Napster (ibid).

The question of music file-sharing itself is about both "copyability" and "information control" and Claude (2002) links the debate to Walter Benjamin's conception of 'the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (Benjamin 1969) and the value of the original. In terms of music files, technically speaking, there remains a physical original in the form of the first-generation tape (analogue or digital) the music itself was recorded on to, or the master copy of a completed album. The arguments in "digitopia" centre around the high quality of digital reproductability, whereby duplication results in copies that sound nearly identical to the original. In terms of music, the comparison would be between the loss of audio quality when copying a CD or record album to cassette, versus high quality copy made when burning a song downloaded from the Internet onto CD.

It should be noted, however, that music files are highly compressed by the time they reach listeners' ears in any medium, and compression in any form leads to a reduction of sound quality. Music is compressed when burned onto CD in the first instance in the factory and that same CD is further compressed when it is broadcast on the radio. When music files are digitised to go up online, they are also compressed, although it is just as unlikely that many listeners would notice as it is that they would notice sound compression on traditional FM radio. Most music found on file sharing sites, or broadcast on Interner radio stations, is compressed into the standard MP3 (Music Player 3), or comparable file format. This technical background is significant as the quality of reproduction is the foci of the actual legal arguments surrounding attacks on

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file-sharing and industry pressure to charge Internet broadcasters – even non-profit stations - hefty fees (Claude 2002).

In terms of webcasting, the greatest impact of the DMCA was the arrival of music performance royalties. When the announcement was made, few webcasters worried, as it was presumed that the fees would be similar to what was already paid in music publishing royalties. Few were prepared, however, for the exorbitant fees initially proposed, especially for non-commercial, non-profit public, college and community broadcasters. This royalty fee would serve as compensation to be split equally between artists and record labels. One problem with these payments is that traditional radio is not required to pay such fees. An FM or AM station pays fees to the person who owns the *song* via music publishers, but has never been required to pay the performer or label who owns the song *recording*. The accepted wisdom was always that radio airplay sells records by providing exposure to artists. The question then, was why Internet broadcasters were not afforded the same benefits.

The answer could also be presumed to lie somewhere in the changing world of broadcasting, as alternative and independent outlets began garnering significant listenerships without relying on the traditional music industry structure of distribution and access. For example, Soma FM is a San Francisco-based community webcast station that averages 2,000 individual listeners a day. They play primarily ambient electronica and began, like many, as a pirate station — in their case in 1996 at the annual counter-cultural *Burning Man Festival*. Their costs average one thousand dollars per month, which comes from voluntary contributions from listeners (Mieszkowski 2002). Soma, like many independent Internet broadcasters, utilise free and open source software, such as *Shoutcast* or *Icecast*. Station organiser Rusty Hodges makes a clear distinction between webcasting and music sharing sites:

> [t]he problem with Napster is that people think that Internet radio is just
> another way to get music for free. And, you know, in some ways it is.
> Some people who listen to the radio never, ever buy music, but I probably
> get like 20 emails a day from people trying to track down records that are
> hard to find. And I've gotten other emails from people who say, "Oh my
> God! Since I've listened to your station, I've bought like 60 records. It's

all new stuff I never knew existed before. Thank you for introducing me to it.".. .the core of our audience is people who are looking to discover new music (quoted in Salon 2002).

He makes the point, backed by independent webcasters, that Internet streaming is not a form of music distribution any different from traditional radio and should be treated as such.

The RIAA misjudged public support for non-commercial webcasters. RIAA President Hilary Rosen's initial response to the fee concerns of 'mom and pop' operations was telling: '[i]f you don't have a business model that sustains your costs, it sounds harsh, but that's real life. If a grocery store can't afford to pay for the vegetables, they can't keep their doors open' (quoted in Graham 2002). This attack did not resonate with many music fans and only added to the public backlash against the RIAA's seeming inability to accurately gauge public opinion.

In the end, as a result of pressure from non-profit and community broadcasters, college radio programmers and National Public Radio, and after almost two years of bitter wrangling, significant alterations were made to the structure for non-commercial broadcasters, capping fees at a few hundred dollars a year per station. On the European level, The 2001 European Union Copyright Directive (EUCD) establishes a number of changes that are intended to bring European copyright in line with the provisions of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) although it still remains up to individual nations to implement the Directive.

This context is important because the issue of copyright and music royalties can make Internet broadcasting prohibitive to so-called amateurs or community groups. It is also interesting to note the disparity between policies for Internet stations versus analogue radio. It is not accidental that the royalty system was set up in way to discourage citizen participation whereby non-commercial stations with large listenerships are in effect punished financially though they make no profit from their efforts. In fact, the greater the audience an Internet station has, the more money it costs in hosting the listeners on their site. It is,

thus, fear of competition - in particular, competition from sources who provide opportunities for radio listening free of advertising – that is driving these measures.

The Indymedia Network

Since 2002, there has been a semi-explosion of articles and chapters written about the *Indymedia* phenomenon. I myself have contributed to this bibliography (2005) as have writers such as John Downing (2001), Chris Atton (2004), Dorothy Kidd (2002, 2003), Nick Couldry (2003b), Graham Meikle (2002) and DeeDee Hallick (2002). This chapter is not an analysis of the *Indymedia* network but an examination of particular forms of community radio in a networked environment which focuses on *Indymedia*. Some background into the network is necessary as it informs the structure and principles behind the audio collectives and collaborations.

Indymedia itself is both a global online network and over 160 autonomous local organisations providing politically progressive news and information in a non-corporate, grassroots environment. It is a project based on the philosophy that the structure of an organisation must represent its values. Local *Indymedia* centres can be found across Europe, including the UK, as well as Israel, Palestine, South Africa, Indonesia, Nigeria, Australia, Russia, Brazil, Cyprus, Croatia, India and Colombia. Over one third of the IMCs (Independent Media Centres) are located in the US and Canada. *Indymedia* has effectively established a model that has been replicated many times around the globe by media activists who want to cover their own local demonstrations and issues, and serves as a means to create media centres to cover large-scale global protests, such as the temporary, autonomous space in Edinburgh, Scotland July of 2005 where *Indymedia* created a multi-media facility for independent media makers during the G8 meetings and protests.

Born out of the need to provide a space for alternative voices and independent journalists during the massive anti-WTO demonstrations in 1999 in Seattle, *Indymedia* has continued to grow exponentially since, both in size and scope.

In Britain, the roots of *Indymedia* UK can be found in the organising around the *Carnival Against Capitalism* in June, 1999. One London-based activist sums up *Indymedia*'s sensibility this way:

> [i]t is impossible to calculate how many people are involved, as participation in the volunteer-run group runs the gamut from those who work full-time to keep the infrastructure running, to those who post a single story during a specific event. The IMC has no world headquarters, but if it can be said to be located anywhere, that location is at the convergence of several critical trends: the rebirth of activism, the maturation of the Internet and the crystalization of what participants see as a new evil in the form of out-of-control corporatism (Sky Covell, quoted in Notes from Nowhere 2003).

One of the key features of both the *Indymedia* site and its philosophy is that of open publishing, whereby the process of creating news is transparent to anyone visiting the site. This means that anyone can post a print article, photo, video or audio piece directly onto the website under the "newswire" section.

Open publishing is the practice most often cited in analysis of *Indymedia* as the heart of the participatory, democratic nature of the project. As Dorothy Kidd explains:

> [t]he Network has begun to move away from the reactive mode of much of "alternative media" which focuses only on countering the hegemonic messages of the corporate and state media. Instead the IMCs' emphasis on the direct witness of "open publishing," and on the self-rule of local sites, begins to prefigure autonomous communications centred in the dreams, realities and communications needs of each locale (2003).

For the London collective, open publishing has 'allowed the streets to enter cyberspace [and] brought technology to the streets' (Sam and Annie 2003) in the form of public access terminals located along protest routes so people could literally post their stories right onto the site directly from the street.

In short, the *Indymedia* project, and its associated radio efforts, are about collective responses to technological and social needs of both listeners who are visitors to the sites and increasingly, local community and *Indymedia* radio producers in search of content from worldwide sources. In addition to the

online presence, local *Indymedia*'s have regular meetings and working groups and produce their own websites focussed on local and regional content, as well as being a part of the grassroots activist movement in their locales. One criticism of the local sites is their failure to move beyond their ability to successfully cover large protests and days of mass action, and to provide coverage of more local news and issues on a less-reactive basis. This is a critique Indymedia activists levy on themselves, the theme of which ties directly back into the value of localism in community media and its decline within the commercial media sector. Even when it is not always achieved, it is at least aspired to.

It is worth mentioning that, with respect to the reporting model advocated here, there are also concerns that it promotes a kind of journalism that favours the less-grounded personal narrative over the facts of the story. These concerns are raised within *Indymedia* collectives as well. However, most of the centre column features tend towards stories with a strong factual base, and are what comprise the bulk of the audio news programmes produced by *Indymedia*. In response to mainstream critiques that *Indymedia* is not a "legitimate" source of news, Atton (2004) argues:

> "[a]mateur" here has everything to say about commitment to radical intellectual and social practices; it has nothing to do with the common notion of the amateur as the ignorant, self-deceived dabbler. These amateur journalists – explicitly partisan – report from the "front line", from the grassroots, from within the movements and communities they thus come to represent. At this more specific level of journalistic practice, the principles of self-management, organisational and ideological independence, and prefigurative politics are played out in what we can think of as "native reporting".[176]

Although much has been written about the *Indymedia* network, little has focussed explicitly on the impact and organising structure of the radio projects, which have emerged as a vibrant component of the *Indymedia* phenomenon.

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[176] See Traber (1985) quoted in Atton (2004: 35) for concept of "native reporting".

Indymedia Radio

The *Indymedia* radio project operates on both global and local levels, each reinforcing the other, both in terms of production and reception. In terms of radio broadcasting, there exists a global radio stream broadcasting local content from around the world in addition to neighbourhood-based stations, both FM micro-radio and Internet stations, broadcasting their own locally generated content as well as news and information from other individual communities around the globe. This exchange is largely facilitated through the *Indymedia* network. Through these projects, then, the lines between global and local spaces are blurred. For example, a global *Indymedia* feature on nuclear waste is linked with an article from the rural northern village of Gorleben in Germany where an annual demonstration keeps trucks carrying atomic waste at bay. A story from Melbourne details coverage of a videotape broadcast on Australian SBS TV documenting the burning of villages, churches and schools in West Papau, Indonesia by local armed forces. A collaborative piece on asylum seekers in Britain includes a report from Scotland's Dungavel Detention Centre. In essence, this is where the "hyper global" and "hyper local" meet (Toft 2003).

In this way, 'what is more important – and more relevant – is to consider the use of Internet as radio in terms of an emphasis on its 'radiogenic' qualities, to emphasise connection not uniqueness' (Atton 2004: 121). Thus, the Internet has radio-like qualities that are not new or unique to the online medium, per se, but are qualities about the aural medium of radio itself. We know from the science of radio waves that radio itself transcends geographic and cultural boundaries. Radio may be licensed nationally but, as with the example of *Radio Luxembourg* or the "Border Blasters", radio signals do not need a passport to cross national boundaries, only the signal strength to carry them. In terms of community organising, what is interesting when looking at the *Indymedia* radio projects, for example, are the ways in which activist groups support each other's endeavours and seek ways in which to access local information and promote local sensibilities. These projects speak to this blurring of lines

and reshaping of local and global divides taking place among a wide swathe of projects online.

The audio collective is one of many working groups as part of the Independent Media Centre. Like everything else within *Indymedia*, organising takes place on both the global and the local level. In most cites and/or regions with *Indymedia* organisations, there exists some kind of on-line audio content, and in some cases, local collectives produce a weekly radio show for their community radio station. As will be explored in the case of Seattle and Los Angeles, fully-fledged Internet radio stations have also emerged. Additionally, it should be noted that in some cities, *Indymedia* audio collectives help organise radio production workshops and training at community radio stations. For example, *Indymedia* DC is involved with training at their local Pacifica radio station WPFW.

Radio4all.net and the Movement for Content Sharing Sites

Out of the larger *Indymedia* project, active audio collectives and radio programming has emerged. In this section, I will describe in detail a number of these projects and discuss their significance within the context of local radio.

The working concept of online resource centres for the exchange of open-published progressive content has its roots with the *A-Infos Radio Project*, an anarchist collective created in 1996 by Lyn Gerry and other grassroots broadcasters, journalists and activists 'to provide ourselves with the means to share our radio programs via the Internet...our goal is to support and expand the movement for democratic communications worldwide' (Radio4All 2004). The site describes the project as a "producers' cooperative" to serve as a means of distributing broadcast quality audio for the sharing of content, and to provide stations free access to news and reporting from all over the world, especially those who could not afford the cost of satellite fees for real-time transmission, nor the hosting fees for carrying an archival history of audio files, never mind the cost of coordinating or paying for reports from around the

globe. The project is run by volunteers, and content can be found at *radio4all.net*, a site which has served as the gateway to progressive programming for both low power and full power non-commercial radio stations and individuals seeking to listen online.

The impetus for the site came from Gerry who was famously fired from Pacifica's KPFK in 1995 during one of many purges at the station. In 2000, the site would serve as an integral piece in the *Save Pacifica* campaign because it provided a means of distributing Pacifica Radio's flagship show, *Democracy Now!,* to a wider audience when Pacifica's National Board ousted the programme from its New York studios, thus eliminating its access to its primary means of distribution via satellite uplink.[177] The program was broadcast "in exile" from a local public access television studio and was made available for stations to download from the *Radio4All* site. This was significant for radio activists trying to save Pacifica from looming corporatism because it enabled small-scale FM and Internet community stations, that had not previously had access to the programme due to high costs of satellite reception, access to Pacifica programming through an independent mechanism. It also allowed Pacifica's marquee programmer to operate outside the network structure and expand the base of listenership. *Democracy Now!* became a key outlet for news about the crisis itself, connecting listeners across the Pacifica network and coalescing broader, nation-wide support behind the *Save Pacifica* campaign, and in doing so, demonstrated the strength of the grassroots movement to reclaim Pacifica.

This distribution further gave evidence to the need within the progressive community for more content-sharing mechanisms. For example, today, most producers of local *Indymedia* shows garner content from multiple sources, as do many community radio stations. Lastly, it demonstrates the inter-connections and convergences within the wider micro-radio community, exhibits the vibrancy of the radio activity, and offers new opportunities for distribution of independently-produced audio. Sites like *Radio4All* and

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[177] As discussed in Chapter 5.

Indymedia are not rivals with each other, but rather, link back and forth, thus building an inclusive movement rather then one based around competition. 'Individual responses to social problems are what's typical in American society. Why not have a collective response?' (Burnett 2001). Other free content-sharing sites include PRX (Public Radio Exchange), OneWorld Radio, and feminist radio networks such as FIRE (Feminist Radio International) and WINGS (Women's International News Gathering Service), though none of which are self-publishing sites.

Radio.indymedia and Global Collaboration

The global *Indymedia* radio site is a 'collaborative website serving the global *Indymedia* network intended to help create and distribute radical radio programming' (Radio.indymedia 2004). The site was set up about three years ago and launched around the demonstrations at the meeting of the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) in Quebec in 2000. It was the first site to attempt global co-ordination of the audio efforts among *Indymedia* projects. Through the example of radio.indymedia, we see the literal convergence of local content within the global site and how software has been developed to foster that process.

The site is accessed directly from the global *Indymedia* home page and local *Indymedia* audio pages. The site itself is home to an array of community radio resources and audio programming whose look and structure loosely follows that of the *Indymedia* sites. It has undergone a few developmental changes and is in the process of undergoing further restructuring to improve utility and clarity. Specifically, the site includes links to other sites where free audio content and programmes are available for download or rebroadcast on not-for-profit stations such as *Radio4All*, as well as an ever-expanding list of local community radio and syndicated programming available, webcasting stations, and community radio stations. Additionally, there are audio archives from special event programming such as coverage from the massive anti-war demonstrations and audio-related postings.

There are two key features on the global *Indymedia* radio site that require particular consideration. First, in the summer 2003, the global radio collective launched a continuous radio stream to allow listeners to hear twenty-four hour a day audio from various local *Indymedia* sites in real time. The globally coordinated stream runs on software that takes audio streams from individual sites and automatically switches from one to the next as the programme schedule dictates. This was an extensive undertaking as specific software had to be tweaked and its operation required a higher level of maintenance. One of the intentions in creating the stream was to make it easier for community radio stations around the world to simulcast any portion of the stream as interest in the schedule dictates, as well as to offer local *Indymedia* producers a place to broadcast their content to a wider audience. As one activist describes it: '[b]y mixing the content from many local cities around the world we can hopefully show how the world is reacting, as it happens, from the ground. Breaking new ground here in global radio collaboration!' (Quinine 2003).

The second significant site feature is the global newswire, which is an automated syndication newswire that mirrors (or duplicates) audio from other local *Indymedia* sites so that audio files can be found in one centralised location. The software was written by Alan Bushnell who explains that:

> [y]ou have all this audio from over a hundred local *Indymedia* sites
> hosted on about thirty servers around the world and lots of people
> constantly searching these sites on a weekly basis trying to find audio
> for their local radio programs. There had to be an easier way (2003).

Due to the decentralised structure of the *Indymedia* network, only about half the servers are currently set up to send audio posts to the audio newswire as it requires that additional steps be taken by local *Indymedia* tech people. It is not a flawless system, but even so, the impetus for the creation of such a service is to facilitate ongoing collaboration between independent producers in a decentralised system that is transparent and easy to use. The site is also set up so that anyone can post audio and radio-related news directly to the site, thus subverting the problem of local sites not yet linked to the automated service.

Radio X and Neighbourhood Broadcasting

Audio streaming and production has been a part of the *Indymedia* project from the start. In Seattle, 1999, during the massive anti-WTO demonstrations, the birth of the IMC radio was an integral piece of the media landscape along with text, photo, and video. Studio X was set up to broadcast twenty-four hours a day during the week both online and on FM via a pirated signal. The station broadcast the sounds and voices from the street in the form of interviews, call-ins, live reports and updates, in addition to music, produced in-depth pieces, and interviews from eye-witnesses on the street and analysts. An example of the potency of live coverage from *Indymedia* is that while mainstream broadcasters were reporting police were not firing plastic bullets, there was already footage up on the *Indymedia* site of people on the street with large welts on their bodies holding up plastic bullets and audio broadcasts from witnesses (Pearlstein quoted in Notes from Nowhere 2003: 240).

The Seattle IMC heartily encourages the expansion of legal, low powered FM stations and micro, or pirate broadcasting but has no legal relationship with the stations in Seattle who engage in micro-radio, such as *Seattle Radical Radio* and others. In a clever move that is mirrored in other cities, Radio X itself broadcasts only online, which is legal. Their broadcast, however, is carried on a number of neighbourhood micro-radio stations. This results in a decentralised means of operation whereby content production is separated from distribution. Should an unlicensed micro FM broadcaster get caught, they would only lose transmission equipment and nominal production gear rather than a full broadcast studio of more expensive and plentiful production equipment. This is a model of shared responsibility only possible through a decentralised network of community activists.

'Micro-radio fits nicely into that neighbourhood model' (Toft 2003). As a result of the collaboration, the number of 3-4 watt micro-radio stations has increased, and includes stations like Rif Raf Radio serving the community of Maple Leaf Hill. Most micro FM stations in Seattle simulcast Radio X live for a majority of the day, and might also include their own neighbourhood

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information and music programming. To further break down this space where the hyper local and hyper global meet, about 80% of programming on Radio X itself comes from news and public affairs shows culled from other *Indymedia* and community radio webcasts from around the U.S. and other parts of the English-speaking world. For example, a typical day might include the morning news from community station KBOO in Portland, Democracy Now! from Pacifica Radio in New York, Radio Keyser from Amsterdam, San Francisco Liberation Radio news hour, "random micro-radio.net station" simulcast, *@gitdrop Radio* from *KILL* Radio and the Indy Radio news show from Los Angeles. Most of these shows themselves pull from an international array of original audio and stories from stations and *Indymedia* sites around the world. The remaining 20% of program schedule for Radio X is produced in-house of which 80% is music. Radio X thus participates in an ad hoc network model run collectively in a decentralised fashion utilising free and non-proprietary content and software shared through a global exchange facilitated in part by the *Indymedia* project. It should also be noted that the local decentralisation among micro broadcasters may also be necessary due to the proximity of the FCC. There are only four FCC offices throughout the country and one happens to be across the lake from Seattle. 'Smaller signals are harder to find' (Toft 2003).

It is useful to return to the notion of a form of radio whereby the listener is reinstated as a "subject-participant" in the sharing of political and creative power (Lewis and Booth 1989). What is particular in this example from Seattle is the profoundly neighbourhood-like aspect of community radio. This model brings together communities of geography and communities of interest, but is nevertheless largely defined by location and proximity since the frequency range is limited. There exists no legal means of gaining a license to start a new community radio station in large and medium sized cities in the U.S. until new legislation is passed in Congress to expand low power radio. The Seattle *Indymedia* radio project is one example of how a group is working around that impasse by creating a network of smaller micro stations less likely to be seized by government regulators, which at the same time uses both analogue and digital technologies in tandem. The FM broadcasts provide a

neighbourhood-based access to local listening and different opportunities for production, while at the same time, the Internet station is able to reach beyond the local area and participate in global radio streams as well.

KILL Radio, Los Angeles

KILL Radio, tag line *KILL* Corporate Radio, emerged out of the local Los Angeles Independent Media Centre following the Democratic National Convention protests in August, 2000. *KILL* is run by a volunteer group of around fifty activists, journalists and DJs and operates as a non-hierarchical community radio station and a successful example of a station based wholly on the consensus model of decision-making.

> I feel the main reason *KILL* is important is because it's a collective, with a shared mission and vision ... At *KILL*, it's your station. If you don't want the social responsibility to the group, fine. Go do your own thing because that's not what *KILL* is about ... If you agree with the project, the power is there to be shared. (Burnett 2003).

The value and effectiveness of decision-making by consensus is shared throughout the *KILL* collective and training in the consensus process is required. 'People come to defend the process' (ibid).

KILL Radio is an online station that is also unofficially simulcast by a separate entity on an unlicensed frequency — a frequency that not coincidently has been home to many of Los Angeles' pirate stations due to its unique location on an immensely crowded bandwidth that does not interfere with any near-by licensed station signals. The station was housed in a small, rented office space but was evicted when the landlord found out what they were doing. They have since moved into a new space along with the LA IMC and now those involved say there is a new energy surrounding both projects.

KILL broadcasts primarily music and, and unlike *Radio X*, relies very little on syndicated content. 'Music speaks to people in a way no other medium does. It's not a coincidence that more people are attracted to pirate radio because of the music, and that more kids are interested in music than in media production

or public affairs. *KILL* is the power of that expression' (Burnett 2003). There is a news programme from 6-7pm and a few other public affairs shows on air, though some DJ's blend a mixture of music and spoken word or political speech within their program. Overall, programmers are left to programme what they want. '*KILL* radio's market is in the diversity of the programming of not knowing what you'll get when you turn it on' (ibid).

KILL's notion of freeform radio is best illustrated through a sampling of show titles and descriptions. The musical offerings are diverse and quirky and the public affairs programming covers a variety of areas (homelessness, animal rights, arts and culture, anarchist politics, media democracy). Other programmes include comedy (*Shiny Things That Take Their Pants Off*), radio drama, show tunes and religious programmes. The show descriptions themselves are often reflective of both a tongue-and-cheek attitude — 'provocative, outstanding, and very intensely interesting because Nicholas Richert is a very interesting person' — and rage (*Lying Media Bastards With Jake: Music. Anger. News*).

Some lengthier titles further reflect this combination:

Rumble City Inspector with Reverend Mo
A psychotic mish mash of useless dada and strange international musics. rod mckuen to bappi lahiri, los mutantes to los dandys, el gran silencio to merle haggard, fela kuti to yoko ono, pere ubu to the banana splits to the slits...[sic]

Geriatric Profanity Disorder
"I pledge no allegiance to your fucking flag. I have nothing but contempt for what you call a life. Ashamed to be American, born into disgrace. In the belly of the beast, I hate what I see." –plagiarized

SouLbrOsO w/David BoNobo
In an unending persuit of the unifying Holy Grail of tribal beats, David BoNobo tears down the borders between nations and genres to bring you a delicious mix of Hip-Hop, Afro-Funk, Rare Groove, Latin Soul, Samba, Reggae, and Fusion peppered with words of consciousness and other delights....

The Debt with Ultra Red

Ultrared is composed of sound artists, visual artists, organizers and activists who work with various community based groups on projects that cover topics such as queer issues, immigration, public spaces, and housing. Ultrared's current project, Debt Radio, will be broadcast over the next 9 weeks. This project discusses and analyzes public housing in Los Angeles and public housing in Dublin, Ireland. It contrasts the differences in ideology regarding social housing between the two countries. It analyzes the effects of redevelopment and it and reveals residents perspectives on the changes taking place in both communities. The DJ's are Ultrared Pablo Garcia, Leonardo Vilchis, Elizabeth Blaney.

The Science of Popular Music: The Top 20 Countdown Show was formed as an alternative to "underground" music by Arbitron, Inc. in association with executives of the RIAA and Clear Channel Communications, and FCC bureaucrats. Rather than relying on subjective human criteria to compile our weekly playlists, show consultants instead merge advanced polling data, sales figures, payola and computerized inventories of what every other station is playing at a given time. Chris and Rick are your hosts.

Theme Party w/ Ross Lincoln

An Oscar Wilde/Oscar Peterson fighting game! Proclaiming the gospel of eclecticism, Ross and the Theme Party scientists try vainly to engineer a solid musical theme party. Is it witty, or just a poorly planned vanity project? Marvel each week at how Ross forces Scott Walker and Hall and Oats into every show. My promise: I will never rock you. Very much (KILL 2003).

If traditional FM is about narrowly defined music tastes, the eclecticism of *KILL*'s schedule is representative of community-oriented, collective programming whereby individual show producers have free reign over what they broadcast. Many of *KILL* Radio's shows bring together music and politics —'positive vibes & dance party fun, brought to you by Amanda & Shannon, community-style politics, art, multilingual love & shit'. It should also be noted that its schedule reflects its FM broadcast in subtle ways, for example in terms of programming geared towards Los Angeles' large homeless population (*Radio Skid Row With Joe*), where it can be presumed that few homeless people have access to the Internet, even in the space of public libraries with free high speed Internet access, as there is little capacity for online listening in that environment.

Burnett expresses strong views about the nature of community radio, even among pirate broadcasters. He cites an example of an individual, young pirate broadcasting only older punk rock music each night: '[h]e was the antithesis of community radio. It was all about him. His taste ... He got drunk on air. It was entertainment, nothing wrong with that, but it's a waste of a resource if you don't cast a wider net and seek wider participation and viewpoints' (Burnett 2003). This critique is based on valuing certain organising principles and structural models over others, for example, communitarianism versus individualism. As discussed in Chapter 2, motivation is thus a more useful way of discerning the goals of a project than whether or not it is Internet or analogue based (Hendy 2003). Burnett argues that even among those whose mission is to reclaim the airwaves, there is a decidedly different approach between community-based broadcasters and individual broadcasters, even within the world of pirate radio.

This also addresses the question of scarcity on the FM dial, especially among micro-radio broadcasters in a city the size of Los Angeles with very little open space for a pirate to slide into without interfering with another station's signal. Does it matter if someone prefers to "do their own thing" when broadcasting online where there is virtually limitless space? While Internet radio is a valuable and useful site for broadcasting and content sharing, and offers the space for both the profane and profound, access to the FM or AM bandwidth for community organisations remains a vital step towards ensuring a more democratic media in all its forms. Just because something is online does not mean anyone is listening.

Burnett has been working towards the establishment of a network of micro-radio projects across the country each broadcasting the same, shared content, which would originate from an Internet stream and itself be a mixture of a variety of neighbourhood sources. The project is called *Critical Mass Radio* and he has experimented with a few such broadcasts around the G8 protests in Scotland, for example. The structure is similar to the Seattle micro-radio broadcast model of decentralisation but on a national scale. It is an ambitious idea, but the impetus for such a project speaks to the extent to which collective

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organizing around issues of broadcasting are taking place. What is interesting is that it offers yet another way for hyper local spaces to connect with each other in a collaborative way.

Indymedia On Air

In addition to the community radio projects emergent from two local *Indymedia* collectives, both broadcasting online and being independently simulcast on neighbourhood micro-radio stations on FM, there are also collectively produced *Indymedia* news programmes. Such programmes are on air in many cities, and air on a variety of micro and well-established community radio stations. Here, the study turns to the *Indymedia* news programmes produced in Los Angeles and London for a local, FM audience.

The LA *Indymedia* audio collective produces two radio shows, one for *KILL Radio* and one for local Pacifica radio station *KPFK* with an expansive listening audience that reaches most of Southern California.[178] *Indymedia On Air* is described as 'a weekly digest of independently produced news, documentary and commentary audio from around the world' (KPFK 2003), which features progressive news and local interviews with grassroots activists and organisations. The show began when *KILL* approached the local *Indymedia* group about producing a show culled from the many *Indymedia* websites. Not long after, Calloway was also approached by *KPFK*'s then-Interim General Manager Steven Starr, who wanted to broadcast a similar program to what was airing on *KILL*. At the start, the site was dominated by large, unedited audio files rather than short feature stories: 'one problem with *Indymedia* is that people will go out and record a lecture or event and upload it without any introduction or editing...If I pull something up and find it's two hours long you know no one is really going to listen to it. Myself included' (Calloway 2002). Since then, the usability has improved as more people contribute.

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[178] See Chapter 5.

London Indymedia and Resonance FM

The London *Indymedia* radio collective produces a weekly programme called *Indymedia Newswire* self-described as 'news updates from the independent minded website crew'. In London, the program airs on low-power community radio station *Resonance FM*, discussed at length in Chapter 4. There are few news-oriented current affair programmes on the station in light of its unique mandate for arts and culture programming.

The structure of *Indymedia Newswire* is not unlike other *Indymedia* radio programmes, and includes a combination of audio collected on *Indymedia* sites, newswire and feature stories read from *Indymedia* sites, and local audio produced from UK actions and demonstrations including both live on-air and taped interviews focussed on issues relevant to London. 'We use music to punctuate and to break up the flood of talk but it is usually political music …We have been criticised for using some of the same music over again so we are always looking for new suggestions' (Quinine 2003). The collective is not proprietary and welcomes people to read each other's scripts if they show up to the studio just prior to the live broadcast. 'The challenge is to make [the show] as inclusive as possible with the constraint that at the end there can only be a small number of people in the studio at a time' (Sam and Annie 2003). Atton describes the chaotic and unrehearsed nature of the broadcasts themselves, concluding that even with the informal presentation, mis-reads and enthusiastic communal delivery, the show manages to 'retain coherence and clarity in its content' (2004: 130). 'Given *Indymedia*'s interest in challenging hierarchies of media access and encouraging a range of voices as reporters, this is not an inappropriate model' (ibid). The collaborative process of organising the show takes place on a listserve, with the role of producer rotating amongst participants. Contributions are posted to the *radio.indymedia* site, thus allowing participation to vary depending on availability and amount of free time.

The London audio collective has also produced collaborative live webstreams during global actions, such as the G8 protests in Scotland in 2005, carried

throughout the progressive Internet radio network. Audio is also downloaded from the *radio.indymedia* site for inclusion in the global broadcast, and then often replayed on the same micro-radio station or locally-produced Internet radio station as where the producer is from. At the same time, live updates, phone-ins from activists on the street, and speeches and interviews with speakers and organisers are broadcast from the site of the action.

Quinine summarises the optimistic mood emerging from the radio projects: '[o]ut of this, more radio projects will evolve. If you put something on a legitimate channel and people get organised around it, it will continue even if the channel falls through...unlike television where if a station cancels your show, you're screwed. You can always find a way to broadcast radio' (2003).

Key Issues

Resources

There are a number of key issues that arise out of a study of the global radio *Indymedia* projects. First and foremost are the issues common to *Indymedia* in general that should ring familiar to almost anyone involved in volunteer projects: the need for greater resources, both technical and personal. With regards to audio specifically, even with the increase in high speed Internet connections, there are inefficiencies inherent in the process. Further, there is of course an even greater disparity of resources among *Indymedia*'s in less technologically developed countries.

In developing the global radio newswire, the complexity of trying to implement network-wide systems with such different technical standards across the IMCs became clear to programmers such as Bushnell. There also exist disparities among server capacity, in other words, the ability for a site to provide and a listener to access audio during a heavily trafficked period online. One solution that was created to provide server space for event broadcasting was D.R.O.P. – Distributed Radio Open Publishing. D.R.O.P. creates a robust webcasting network by enabling servers to mirror other servers thus expanding

capacity to allow more people to access audio without crashing the system. D.R.O.P. was used, for example, to provide the necessary additional bandwidth for webcasting during recent high-profile actions such as those around the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and the World Economic Forum in New York. It is an internal function that the end user would never notice, but is a significant network infrastructure improvement that is organised on an *ad hoc* level as needed.

Because there are a number of people individually producing radio programmes with similar formats on local broadcast community radio stations using content from *Indymedia*, the global newswire helps eliminate some of the time-consuming work of searching through all the local sites searching for audio content, but it is limited in that it covers only half the sites. And, in a world of limited voluntary resources and unlimited ideas and projects to be undertaken, there is a fair amount of repetitive work being done by those spending hours looking for audio, articles, and translations. Time is very much a key resource and a means of eliminating repetitive tasks among the network and for other independent media producers is at the foreground of project development.

There is a caveat to the free sharing of produced content. Free Speech Radio News (FSRN) is a daily syndicated progressive news programme airing on hundreds of FM and Internet radio stations across the US and elsewhere. There is concern that FSRN could set a dangerous anti-labour precedent if it started pulling free audio as it would take away from money it would pay a correspondent, particularly as it has an expressed commitment to pay for stories. Its commitment — and ability — to pay people for stories is an exception to the experience of most community radio producers, but is nevertheless worth mentioning as it speaks again to the broad question of resources and time for those involved.

Language

Further related to resource issues facing *Indymedia* projects is the question of language. For those broadcasting *Indymedia* programmes on local community radio stations in the US and UK, the need for translation of stories has severe limitations on the diversity of content that can be accessed. At present, it seems that this is being addressed on the local or regional level with individual producers trying to bring those with multiple language skills into the fold. In London, for example, there is genuine excitement around a new volunteer who speaks Russian, Czech, French, Spanish, and English and has been able to bring a whole new level of depth to the show by translating stories directly from non-English language sites.

Indymedia London radio activists are also involved in the creation of a regional audio stream across Europe that would bring together more multi-lingual programming. There is a website under construction to create such an audio stream portal. The site text describes the mission of the project:

> [t]he EuroRadio Website will link to free/alternative radio streams by European radio groups and media activists. We hope to initiate a network of regular programmes which you can access from this site...So, for example, on Monday night *Indymedia* Berlin would bring you the latest local and international news plus some of the latest tunes from the German capital. On Tuesday at the same time, IndyRadio Austria would stream live from Graz. On Wednesday there would be an hour-long show from London, on Thursday you would get the latest from Catalonia ...Check this space (EuroRadio 2005).

It could be argued from a listeners' standpoint that such multi-lingual programming is not enticing, however, given the recent increase in Spanish language content at Pacifica's KPFK, the successful structure at *Sound Radio* in East London, and other experiments across languages like *Radio MultiKulti* in Berlin (Vertovec 2000), it seems less likely. Further, such efforts within the network to move beyond the primacy of English are also about sharing access and information, and creating new programme models then obtaining the highest audience numbers. It also, however, speaks to the multi-lingual nature of many *Indymedia* participants, especially in a city such as London where a

significant percentage of the collective is comprised of people whose first language is Spanish, German, Portuguese, Russian or Italian.

Audience

The global audio site is for the casual listener who visits *Indymedia* to listen to feature stories or find webcast links, the local programme producer in search of locally-situated stories from *Indymedia*'s around the globe, and the local webcaster who is looking to carry the *Indymedia* global stream during a major event or portions thereof. Thus, the line between producer and audience is again blurred here. There are also multiple links being made within the *Indymedia* network as a result of both the global and local audio programmes, the number of connections being made outside the network to the greater world of community media is strong among audio collectives. The content sharing that exists is highly effective, despite some practical issues, and enables local micro-radio broadcasting to be both "hyper local" and "hyper-global" (Bushnell 2003) at the same time. A low-powered community radio station can include news on a neighbourhood level and at the same time pull grassroots news from other localities around the world.

There are ideas circulating regarding how to better share content and meet audience needs. One is to package audio content in a syndicated format not unlike *OneWorld Radio*, which compiles a syndicated programme from radio produced by local affiliates for community stations to broadcast. Another is to integrate *Indymedia* content into a file-sharing network similar to Napster whereby facilitating a more centralised point of exchange for audio. Further, some have suggested *Indymedia* host and facilitate an open access file-sharing network like Napster for independent music. 'As copyright protection interests crack down on non-copy written material, the door is opened for the free exchange of "unprotected" productions' (Bushnell 2003). Others have advocated expansion of the network model on a national scale through the creation of a countrywide string of micro-radio stations all broadcasting the same signal. Yet another is to create a more formal group of stations that say they want to be a part of a global broadcast network complete with a greater

detail of programming offered with the potential for web stations to eventually update their own online schedules.

Ogg v MP3

There is a commitment within the *Indymedia* network to use non-proprietary, or free software, and open source software. Many involved with *Indymedia* actively participate in local "hacklabs", community spaces established for the exchange of knowledge, resources and software. *Indymedia* activists are also involved with peer-to-peer movements, and in the UK, alongside European collectives as part of the campaign around the UN's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) via the Hub Project (hubproject.org) and others. The open source software movement 'has led to new ways of thinking about what it means to be a creator' (Atton 2004: 1) and new ways of thinking about alternative media production as going beyond content and including technical infrastructure.

With respect to audio, there is an internal debate at present as to the preferred format for audio files and streaming. This debate is not, however, simply about 'tech' people trying to 'out-tech' each other. The issue touches on the fundamental organisational and philosophical principles of the *Indymedia* network, namely that of decentralisation and local autonomy, as well as the support and promotion of open access software. Ogg Vorbis is a 'completely open, patent-free, professional audio encoding and streaming technology with all the benefits of Open Source'.[179] MP3 is patented technology run by a for-profit company. When it was just a small start up, MP3 offered very loose licensing agreements, but much of that has changed in the current environment. MP3 was originally intended only for playing saved audio files and not for

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[179] The derivation of the name Ogg Vortis should be noted. 'An "Ogg" is a tactical manoeuvre from the network game "Netrek" that has entered common usage in a wider sense. From the definition: To do anything forcefully, possibly without consideration of the drain on future resources. "I guess I'd better go ogg the problem set that's due tomorrow". "Whoops! I looked down at the map for a sec and almost ogged that oncoming car". Vorbis, on the other hand is named after the Terry Pratchett character from the book _Small Gods_. The name holds some significance, but it's an indirect, uninteresting story". See http://www.xiph.org/xiphname.html for a more detailed response to the query 'what does your name mean?'.

webcasting and it is clear that Ogg is not only politically more appealing but technologically superior with a higher quality of sound.

The problems of switching to Ogg again mirror broader network issues. The first and most basic being the fact it is a time-consuming and intensive process to reconstitute an audio site into a new format and with limited resources it is difficult to justify putting energy into something that works as it is. 'In Seattle, it's all we can do to maintain our MP3 stream. We can't put energy into changing systems' (Toft 2003). Further, and perhaps even more fundamental, is the fact that not all audio players support Ogg thus rendering it difficult for many end users to access the audio at all. While Winamp and QuickTime do, RealPlayer does not. Another serious obstacle is for those who stream audio from an array of community and webcast stations, most of whom broadcast and make audio available in the MP3 format. If *Indymedia* radio switches to the Ogg format, it creates additional work to move between formats for already resource-strapped producers trying to focus on obtaining quality content.

In terms of making a change to infrastructure, especially the technological backbone, within a decentralised network, there is a practical argument for putting off such a transition. At the same time, there are those who say *Indymedia* should take a more proactive stance to the evolutionary dilemma of 'the chicken and egg problem' (Bushnell 2003) and that something will not happen unless more people use Ogg and *Indymedia* should encourage such a transition. Perhaps such a process can be facilitated by providing more links for listeners to learn more about the benefits of particular open access software and assist in accessing audio players that support such software. In the meantime, plans for a coordinated global stream to broadcast during the 2004 day of global anti-war demonstrations failed in part because of an inability to achieve consensus on the technical format. An opportunity was lost over the inability to resolve the structural debate in time. This is a useful example to showcase the levels on which ideology permeates structural decision-making

within the IMC. Regardless of the immediate outcome, the right questions are at least being asked.

Conclusion

Though much has been written about the *Indymedia* network, little has focussed explicitly on the impact and organising structure of the radio projects.[180] At the start of this chapter, in outlining the mission and philosophy of the *Indymedia* project as whole, I described a local and global network in which the structure and practice reflects its values, one of which is a commitment to anti-corporatism and open access to both software and information. This is an area with a large impact on the audio collectives. First of all, many within the global audio group have strong technical backgrounds and software development experience. Secondly, the site of Internet broadcasting is a contested space, both in terms of the back-end technology and broadcast content.

At a time when the music industry has waged war over performance royalty fees exclusively for Internet broadcasters and movements for low powered community media flourish, the free forum of Internet audio has been dramatically altered. The early potential of radio was realised through the efforts of amateurs and non-licensed hobbyists. Although new technology makes possible this convergence of on-line and traditional broadcast mediums, the future may be shaped by the new pirates of the digital age. Calls for the music industry to rethink its strategy hinge on questions of localism, as well as support for small and medium-scale artists, local artists and music scenes, rather then the current approach which consists of industry resources supporting a handful of "superstar" performers, rather then spread amongst a diverse mix of artists.[181]

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[180] An exception to this is Atton (2004).

[181] Future of Music Coalition (FMC) is one organisation fighting the music industry to better support local musicians. As one part of their efforts, FMC is a key supporter of low power radio, arguing it is an important outlet for local and regional artists.

The core issue for *Indymedia* is about building networks of communication among the global and local entities. What is interesting in the *Indymedia* radio projects is the creation of a "hyper global" site to share and disseminate "hyper local" news that is not just a one-way flow of local-to-local listening. Rather, through *Indymedia*, local communities retain access to self-representation and reporting and benefit from access to the same in other neighbourhoods and towns. *Indymedia*'s commitment to anti-corporatism and open access is about both software and information. The project of reclaiming the airwaves is one that transcends material output.

Indymedia radio projects are community radio in that they are collectively organised in a non-profit environment and seek to provide a space for under-represented people, news and music. They are community projects on the local level and also, the evolution of a global community facilitated through the various open-publishing sites. Within *Indymedia*, there exist radio projects operating on multiple levels and often interacting with each other and there are a variety of connections between micro-radio broadcasters, licensed FM radio stations, *Indymedia* webcasters and audio collectives – some official and some unofficial. The site of programme origination matters in this "hyper local" environment. While the focus of this study has been community radio in a local context, it is important to look expansively at the character of Internet radio as both a local and a global site. Online spaces have a unique, and often reinforcing relationship to traditional broadcast spaces, as evidenced by the range *Indymedia* radio projects, but cannot be used as an excuse to keep the FM frequencies closed off to greater public access and participation.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

'Community radio is 10% radio and 90% community'.
(Zane Ibrahim, Bush Radio, South Africa)

In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, a group of radio activists led by the Prometheus Radio Project, Pacifica radio station KPFT-Houston, and the local Independent Media Center, launched a Low Power FM radio station at the Houston Astrodome, where thousands of displaced people had been taken. The station, *Katrina Aftermath Media Project,* or KAMP, was issued a licence from the FCC within two hours over a holiday weekend, a turn-around time virtually unheard of. Local officials in Houston and with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) controversially delayed the station's launch for over one week, during which time most evacuees had been moved to other locations. Three weeks later, another temporary LPFM station has gone on air in Houma, Louisiana (the station can not be licensed in New Orleans, the target area, pending repeal of the Preservation of Broadcasting Act that limits access to the low power radio service to small towns and cities), providing much-needed vital information into the disaster zone from city, state and federal representatives and acting as a public space for the airing of personal narratives, frustrations and needs. These projects have helped spotlight the value of neighbourhood-based radio to serve community interests in ways commercial and public radio do not (Clark 2005).

In the London borough of Hackney, community station *Sound Radio*, was able to respond to the bombings that occurred in London during summer 2005 in a manner that reflected their multi-cultural programming and transnational reach. Muslim programmers quickly organised guests to counter inferences in the popular press they felt did not accurately represent their faith. Station organiser Lol Gellor asserts the value for people to have an opportunity 'to

articulate the reality of their lives in a healthy and challenging environment, with a good heart and a clarity of purpose' (quoted in Airflash 2005).

Since I began this research, British government has created a third tier of broadcasting for community radio, and in the United States, there exists a new sector for low power radio stations, opening the door for community organisations to broadcast. New stations are being licensed and going on air each week, generating renewed interest in local broadcasting and analogue radio as a useful, neighbourhood-based source of news, information and entertainment. As a result, an area that seemed to attract limited mainstream interest over the past decades, has suddenly been placed on the legislative agenda and offered media reform activists a vibrant success story for their years of pursuit of greater citizen access to the airwaves.

Whilst community radio as a sector is coming into its own in Britain, and incremental legislative progress made in the US, concerns continue to mount in both countries around the state of commercial and public service broadcasting. In Britain, apprehension surrounds the trend towards increasing privatisation, concentration of ownership, and fears of an encroaching "Americanisation". The lasting impact of the Hutton Inquiry, current public outcry in response to the proposed license fee increase, and increasing pressures within the BBC to achieve the highest possible audience ratings and revenue from export of programme formats to foreign broadcasters, have left many concerned about the eventual fate of public service broadcasting.

In the US, a system created as a wholly commercial enterprise, concern also centres on concentration of ownership among cable, telephone, broadband and satellite service providers. Spectrum allocation is on the agenda at many think tanks and media reform groups, but it is proving difficult to evolve a mass movement out of something seemingly so abstract. Recent rulings around the country that forbid local governments from providing affordable, wireless broadband connectivity are an example of state protection of corporate interests at the detriment of its citizens. The rulings claim it is inappropriate for government to compete with commercial companies in this area, while

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local municipalities claim that Internet access is a public utility and that it is their duty to ensure universal access, which at current market prices and conditions, there is not.

In terms of terrestrial radio, Clear Channel, a company that owns an unprecedented 1200 stations across the US (its nearest competitor has approximately 300 stations nationwide), stands out as the so-called poster child for institutional flaws in the American broadcast system (Kidd 2004). Worth noting are the "Rallies for America" hosted by Clear Channel stations in support of the Bush war in Iraq as well as the company's decision to ban country rock band, the Dixie Chicks, from their stations' airwaves after a member of the group stated her embarrassment with being from the same state as Bush in an interview with the British press. Clear Channel stations (and others) subsequently held record burning parties where listeners were encouraged to join others in station parking lots and incinerate their CDs.

There also exist mounting concerns about the future of public broadcasting in America. In 2005, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was attacked for exhibiting a 'liberal bias' and lack of fairness and balance in its public broadcast news programs, even though public perception of the PBS and NPR ranks the networks as an extraordinarily trustworthy source of news and information. At a time when the White House is under attack for allowing reporters for overtly partisan and marginal news outlets prime position and access to Presidential press conferences, it seems incongruous that public broadcasting should be so suspect. With regards to the state of American public broadcasting, the tensions can be seen in this exchange from a recent interview with Ken Ferree, the recently departed Chief Executive for the CPB published in the *New York Times Magazine* earlier in 2005. When asked about PBS' marquee news programme, *NewsHour With Jim Lehrer*, Feree responded:

> [y]es, Lehrer is good, but I don't watch a lot of broadcast news. The
> problem for me is that I do the Internet news stuff all day long, so by the
> time I get to the Lehrer thing...it's slow. I don't always want to sit down
> and read Shakespeare, and Lehrer is akin to Shakespeare. Sometimes I

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really just want a *People* magazine, and often that is in the evening, after a hard day (Solomon 2005).

He further commented in the same interview that he did not listen to public radio because he commutes via motorcycle and listening on headphones would be a nuisance (ibid). It is difficult to imagine the Director General of the BBC openly acknowledging a disinterest in its own programming or reducing the listenability of *Radio 4* to that of drive-time entertainment. Broadcast history and the contemporary situation reminds us that media institutions were not created by accident and are the result of conscious policy decisions (McChesney 1993). This is the context in which American public radio finds itself and a background against which many community radio stations try to define themselves.

A key finding of this study is that there exists no single academic, regulatory or grassroots definition of precisely what is community radio. While the basic premise of such broadcast institutions centres around radio that is not for profit, participatory, and made for and by a local audience, it remains a fluid definition. In the American context, stations licensed as community radio are necessarily defined as non-commercial, while in Britain, legislation (with the exception of a few small markets) allows for limited commercial funding. Moreover, there is the example of advertiser-driven, commercial radio broadcasting in Farsi for Iranian Americans living in Los Angeles. As this study indicates, these Persian stations operate on a traditional, hierarchical closed model and actual community participation is primarily limited to call-in programmes, events listing, and opportunities for promotion of small businesses and commercial services. While one station is on the AM dial, three others operate on closed networks of side-band, analogue radio, a little-known space for FM broadcasting that can only be heard on special receivers that are tuned to the side channels. Although Iranian radio in Los Angeles cannot technically be defined as community radio, it *feels* like community broadcasting for both listeners and station personnel precisely because it fulfils neighbourhood-based, community-oriented objectives beyond simply offering a niche-market format, and in turn, position commercial, ethnic radio as a

means by which groups can contest the space of traditional media power. What is defined as community broadcasting is in many ways contingent on what community is being asked the question. Ownership, in this case, fails to tell the complete story.

Within the British regulatory context of community radio, there has also emerged very different kinds of radio stations, even though they work within the same legal criteria and in the case of this study, operate within the same city. *Desi Radio* broadcasts for the Panjabi community in West London, a community organisers have radically defined as the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, geographic space of the Panjab, rather than around any one particular religion or ethnicity residing within. In doing so, organisers are attempting to recreate a more inclusive and geo-political framework of "the homeland" with hopes of bringing together the wider Panjab community typically divided along religious and ethnic divisions, even in West London. The station refuses to organise its schedule around such traditional categories and controversially plays spiritual songs from all religions of the Panjab in its morning programme. *Desi* broadcasts music, news and informational talk shows in the Panjabi language and promotes many local events and services. In East London, *Sound Radio* broadcasts programmes in eighteen different languages, presented and organised by different ethnic groups and communities of interest. With studios located in an estate in Hackney, *Sound* seeks to be a positive voice for the area and aims to allow access to as many different under-represented groups as possible. Each show is produced and in a very decentralised manner, with autonomy resting with individual programmers and collectives. While *Desi* offers horizontal listening opportunities across its schedule, and provides continuous listening opportunities for the Panjabi community, *Sound* is not likely to be for everyone all the time, though they inevitably draw a much broader listenership across its schedule each week. In Central London, *Resonance FM* presents a more loosely defined mission as a "radio art station", offering experimental sound, audio art, multi-ethnic and indigenous music, public affairs, and other creative approaches to sound and music programming. However, closer examination reveals that a broad interpretation of what constitutes art is not at the expense of a strong aesthetic

and a profound desire to avoid replicating what is already available. The station seeks broad participation within its flexible conceptualisation of radio art.

Thus, just as there is no one universalising model of community radio, there is no one model even within a particular national context. The stations look to situate themselves based on perceptions of what is best for their listeners, participants and the wider community, however they choose to define it. Broadly speaking, they share in common issues with regards to funding, scheduling, volunteerism, management, etc, but also embody interesting differences in approach that should be appreciated and recognised as strengths of a regulatory and cultural system out of which such diversity can emerge within an otherwise narrowly-defined sector.

Community radio in Britain licenses for neighbourhood based, low power stations, each with a broadcast range of roughly six kilometres. In the US, while low power FM presents an opportunity for new groups to get on air, there exists a strong history of full-power community radio dating back to the first Pacifica radio station in 1949 and the advent of FM. Pacifica station KPFK, Los Angeles went on air ten years later and embodies the complexities of operating as a full power community station with a broad mandate to serve the politically progressive community in the region. The station broadcasts to the entire Southern California region of roughly 16 million people, thus making community access and inclusion difficult– a task that is made more complex by the pre-existing tensions within a racially divided city. KPFK and Pacifica ask us to reconceptualise community radio on a large scale, while rethinking organisational and programmatic structures to enable such a project.

KPFK, like the four other stations in the Pacifica Network, underwent a difficult period over the past decade. While the individual stations were under threat of losing their autonomy to the national board, Pacifica's national board was moving dramatically away from its progressive mission, pushing the network to compete with established public radio. Pacifica represents the tensions over democratic principles of community-run organising when

valuable assets and centralised control take hold. The resilience and continued relevance of the network, and KPFK, after years of crisis are recognized as evidence of the ability of community radio to thrive within a large environment and the efficacy of non-profit, progressive radio.

While Pacifica stations must negotiate principles of community radio in a networked environment within the domain of scarce and valuable analogue spectrum, the paradigm of community broadcasting is further complicated in the online environment where scarcity (and to a lesser extent regulation) are not at issue. Thus, as this study demonstrates, community radio as a phenomenon cannot be limited to a particular means of delivery, rather, it is a way of social organising. The radio projects that have emerged out of Indymedia offer an example of how the hyper-global space of the Internet and the hyper-local space of neighbourhood broadcasting can be complementary forces. There exists an extensive horizontal network of content sharing among stations and producers, and sites that support this activity like *www.radio.indymedia.org* and *www.radio4all*, itself created during the Pacifica crisis in the 90s as a means for free, open source distribution and sharing of content among progressive radio producers outside the framework of Pacifica. It is thus possible for new spaces of open access, and freely distributed broadcast-quality programme sharing to exist in a cooperative and decentralised environment.

In terms of the online environment itself, each radio station in the case study streams content and boasts strong transnational listenerships. *Voice of Iran*, KRSI in Los Angeles simulcasts its local broadcast into Iran via shortwave radio and has played an instrumental role helping protestors organise on the streets of Tehran, for whom non-terrestrial radio was the only way for protesters to communicate with each other. Another programmer at *Radio Iran*, KIRN-AM speaks about how she helps connect old friends and family members living across the globe listening online and via satellite. *Desi Radio* organisers offer similar stories of online listening among the Panjabi diaspora, while *Sound Radio* has a global listenership as diverse as the programmes it airs. With its unique style and programming, *Resonance FM* has established

itself as a premier Internet station around the world for radio art, itself an underrepresented programming mission. KPFK has the strongest Internet listenership of the Pacifica stations, many of whom live elsewhere in the United States, rather then in other countries. In re-asserting the value of studying local spaces, even in a global, online environment, the context is problematised by the ever-changing relationship between the global and the local and the blurring of the lines between fixed categories of both reception and production.

Community radio offers a useful site for investigating theoretical questions of social organising, modes of identification, and problematising the normativity of "community" as a unifying set of codes. Throughout this study, there emerged evidence of the necessity for an approach that, as Ien Ang, drawing on Stuart Hall, puts it, 'highlights the inadequacy of conventional conceptions of "identity", but simultaneously affirms its irreducible political and cultural significance' (Ang 2000: 2). This suggests a conceptualisation of identity that bridges the gap between cultural theory and lived experience. Furthermore, according to Ang:

> [n]o matter how convinced we are, theoretically, that identities are constructed not "natural", invented not given, always in process and not fixed, at the level of experience and common sense identities are generally expressed (and mobilized politically) precisely because they *feel* natural and essential (ibid).

Tensions within the community at large are played out within each radio station. It is these contradictions around identity through which community radio can be seen as an important space for generating and enacting flexible modes of identification.

This study finds that community radio is a distinctive phenomenon with its own set of conventions, practices and ideological import. At the same time, it is not a singular designation, but a complex, divergent group of ideas and practices: a political movement in support of a broadcasting sector; an argument for, and example of, media democracy; a reassertion of the value of local communication and ways of organising; a social service and provider of

training; a forum for new and diverse kinds of music, sound, news, information and discussion; a means of facilitating transnational and diasporic communication; and a physical place for people in a neighbourhood to come together. At the same time, as this study demonstrates, presumptions of heterogeneity and normativity of "community" itself, remain problematic because it continues to be one of the most fluid and over-utilised organising concepts, a tension organisers at stations with somewhat broad programming mandates like *Pacifica, Sound* and *Resonance*, openly acknowledge. Alain Touraine argues that 'our new battles will be battles with diversity rather then unity, for freedom rather then participation' (2000: 304). Community radio remains a space that is necessarily contested, both practically and theoretically.

Community radio is a form of alternative media when taken at its most broad definition, that of 'media produced outside mainstream media institutions and networks' (Atton and Couldry 2003). However, the "community context" of alternative media matters (ibid, Jankowski and Prehn 2001, Rodriguez 2001), and is a useful site for examining the intimate relationship between producer and audience. Further, another finding of this study is around the way in which community radio organisers define "non-professional" as related to access by un-paid, volunteer labour – citizen access – rather than in relation to quality of production or content. This distinction also serves to challenge institutional elitism along class, gendered and racial lines that do persist within public broadcast organisations such as the BBC and NPR. This dichotomy speaks to the need for redefined criteria and measurements for success and research methodologies that take into account the different structures and motivations of community broadcasting and how different objectives necessitate new methods and criteria.

This research began by outlining a theoretical framework through which to examine both radio and alternative media. There are insightful, contemporary debates surrounding what it means to talk about alternative media in a broad context. A review of the relevant literature in this area finds that there are differences that emerge over what it means to talk about alternative media that

centre upon distinctions around radical, citizens and autonomous media. The question of what attributes of alternative media one wishes to privilege depends on one's focus on either a participatory ethos, radical content, the relationship to mainstream and/or corporate media, or a combination of the above. Out of the vibrancy of this dialogue, and how it connects with the intersection of media production, political activism, and aesthetic style, has emerged a kind of "alternative media pluralism". Such pluralism can only result in stronger, less centralised forms of production and mass communication.

The case studies in this research both illuminate and confound the debates around alternative media. When taking the broadest definition of alternative radio as that which challenges the dominant structure and place of media power, community radio can certainly be viewed as an active form of alternative media. As a broadcast media that is primarily locally oriented, run by voluntary labour, not for profit, and run with the motivation of providing content and access to underserved people and interests, community radio meets most of the specific attributes of alternative media outlined by Atton (2002). In community media projects especially, the line between producer and recipient is blurred by design and the listener reinstated as a "subject-participant" (Lewis and Booth 1989), another quality often ascribed to alternative media. At its best, the promise of community radio is the potential to enhance or revivify local democratic discourse and the cultural life of communities.

At the same time, these case studies in community radio challenge fixed definitions of alternative media just as they challenge traditional notions of what constitutes "community". Stations like the commercially driven Iranian radio stations offer an alternative to mainstream programming, but, for example, do not operate in a non-hierarchical fashion. These stations are community-oriented, not what we would typically consider as community radio, yet they fall outside the realm of conventional broadcast outlets. The multiplicity of forms of community radio, as demonstrated through the case

studies, is not unlike the differences within forms of alternative media. For example, projects like Indy Media radio could be considered autonomous media, radical media or citizen's media, whereas projects like Pacifica with its tensions around infrastructure might not fall under the rubrik of autonomous media, but is certainly radical. What the case studies in this research demonstrate is that, while particular attributes and aspirations can be identified and valued, there are no finite definitions of either community radio or alternative media. Furthermore, the debates on alternative media are themselves enriched by considering the diversity and multiplicity of forms of DiY media production.

In terms of community radio, a recurring issue remains the lack of a common research agenda around community radio (Lewis 2000, Scifo 2005). However, there is now a renewed focus on collaboration and comparative analyses between researchers, practitioners and activists within academia with the aim of finding some common methodological approaches to studying community media with practical application in support of the sector, and to better situate community broadcasting within wider media studies inquiries. Underlying this is the expressed desire for academic research better connected to the needs of under-researched and under-funded movements. Further, as John Downing (2003) argues there exists a strong need for audience studies and user-centred research in the broad field of alternative media, so too for community radio.

Finally, scarcity of frequency, competition for financial resources, state paternalism and unsubstantiated commercial fears are each reasons why historically, community radio has had to struggle for its existence since the inception of broadcasting over 100 years ago. There are citizen movements flourishing in Britain and the United States struggling for a small piece of the broadcast pie, while simultaneously advocating for open access to digital and wireless networks and infrastructure. Although technological determinism is seen as a negative impulse for its overly simplistic causal relationship between technology and change, a "soft" techno-determinism, whereby complexity, agency and negotiation are all accounted for, can be useful (Dubber 2005). 'In

other words, "[w]e shape our tools and they, in turn, shape us"" (McLuhen and Zingrone 1995 in ibid: 9).

Community radio, whether programming factual or entertainment-based content, offers a useful site for the contestation of media power that is increasingly consolidated and situated further away from the public. The movement for a return to more locally based news, information and cultural programming is a marked reaction against the perceived homogenisation of contemporary radio and the reassertion of the value of *place* in society. In terms of the political power of community radio as a pressure point driving debates around legislation or social mobilisation, Alain Touraine (2000) argues that as people identify and organise along increasingly narrow lines, they become disconnected from each other through a process of "islandisation". It may be the case, however, that the "islands of community broadcasters" stationed in a sea of mainstream, incumbent radio, actually form important "island chains" that might not rise to the level of significant outside their geographic locale or area of interest, but together, become viable political and social movements. This process can be seen through the successful campaigns led by the Prometheus Radio Project and the Community Media Association, themselves organisations through which small-scale projects connect to each other.

Whether or not a radio station reaches a transnational audience, the point of origin and place of production matters. At the same time as the practice of "podcasting" is thrust into our popular vernacular, there exists an interest for a return to a neighbourhood base of information. Some of the most popular podcasts, while not necessarily providing location-specific information, feel local because they feel *personal*. It is no accident that we are simultaneously experiencing a growth in neighbourhood-based broadcasting at the same time as our global options expand. As Jo Tacchi argues, there are the 'radiogenic' (2003) qualities of radio that should be emphasised whether "old" or "new" technologies employed.

It seems appropriate, then, to conclude by reflecting on a question being asked in many academic and popular pieces: will podcasting [or Real Audio, or the Internet itself] kill the radio star (Berry 2005)? In terms of the global space for community radio, this research demonstrates that community broadcasting is about ways of social organising regardless of platform. How we rethink radio in the digital age is about both technology and structure. To distinguish between analogue and digital radio is complicated because the technologies utilised co-exist across mediums. At the same time that technology has opened up new avenues for broadcast communication, community broadcasting remains a social institution. What kind of media landscape we wish to see in the digital world has to be envisioned with values not defined by their medium, but by a vision transcendent of the precise means of delivery, production and reception.

This study began by re-asserting the importance of amateur broadcasters in demonstrating the viability and necessity for citizen access to the airwaves, actively fighting for such space, and in developing new technologies and methods of utilisation. Out of this emerged networks of organisers, producers, and collaborations. Community broadcasting is one of many possible expressions of alternative media production. 'Taken together, community/micro-radio and pirate radio best demonstrate the notions of alternative media' (Atton 2004: 115). Without over-essentialising the medium of radio itself, this study finds that there is in fact something particular about the space of radio in terms of its immediacy, aural intimacy, "liveliness", and opportunity for participation across cultural, linguistic and political divisions. At the same time, as shown by the case studies, community radio is itself a flexible medium, offering multiple and dissimilar means of collaboration and collectivity that allows for flexible modes of identification and organisation. This study finds that radio remains a local medium, and that local broadcast spaces remain important and vital means of communication, while at the same time asserting the pre-eminence of the social aspect of community radio. The residual power of community radio lies in both its legislative rebirth and the possibilities for political and social organising. The resilience of radio as a space for community participation deserves further exploration.

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[182] Sam and Annie are volunteers who have worked on Indymedia UK since its' inception. They are opposed to the notion of spokespeople for Indymedia and write as an anonymous entity to reflect this philosophy.

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