

Call for Papers  
European History(s) of the Auditory  
*medien & zeit* 3/2023

Editors: Gaby Falböck, Norbert Feldinger, Fritz Hausjell, Christina Krakovsky

The human hearing organ is passive, set to receive day and night, since the beginning of time immemorial and thus instinctively we listen for any threatening sounds. The potential of transmitting voices, messages and information, sounds and music, noises and atmospheres has been used for about a century and thus since the beginnings of radio. It can be used to reach many people – relatively without prerequisites, without the need for literacy and without a material carrier medium – and across large spaces. This is already implied by the etymological derivation of the English-language term for broadcasting – to broadcast – and thus scattering, also used for sowing seeds.

Initially, this transmission option was used for military purposes. The physicist Heinrich Hertz proved the existence of electromagnetic waves, but did not realise their potential. The military, on the other hand, was able to command far-flung military units in the First World War via radio. By the end of the war, at the latest, army equipment had become a communication instrument and radio had become broadcasting. Nevertheless, the spread of the radio in Austria and Germany took place with the intention of making the listeners obey. The National Socialists ensured the reception of Adolf Hitler's and Joseph Göbbels' propaganda messages with the affordable VE 301 device, commonly dubbed the Volksempfänger.

As early as the Austrian interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s, many hopes were pinned on radio as a cultural instrument. Quoting Jochen Hörisch, the German radio or broadcasting concept also testifies to precision: one broadcasts all around, in a radius and not specifically, linearly from A to B. Intellectual, inspiring and informative signals can be broadcast across borders and spaces: From workers' radio to cultural and educational radio in the early radio years to the role of radio as an entertainment medium and also as an informative leading medium in the 1950s. With the spread of television, audio-only radio was pushed back and became an accompanying medium. At the latest since the emergence of commercial radio switched on alongside, the mass medium increasingly transformed into an instrument of diversion.

Bert Brecht's radio essays from 1927 and 1929 – which are still quoted today and which Hans Magnus Enzensberger would later take up in his construction kit for a theory of the media - reveal another possibility of the distribution apparatus of radio: the sender becomes the receiver and vice versa. The medium experiences emancipatory use, opens up possibilities for social resistance (in authoritarian regimes) and critique (in democratic systems). Previous radio historiography has provided isolated examples of resistance stations, illegal radios, pirate radios of the 70s and 80s as a channel for alternative political and youth subcultures as well as stations for migrants.

The history of radio is characterised by developments that overlap in time but intend diametrically opposed applications. Radio served for propaganda and resistance, pursued educational emancipation and, as state radio, legitimised state power politics, offered space for shallow entertainment and musical background noise as well as for complex information, cultural avant-garde and weird subculture. It addresses the many, the prototypically defined few and gives minorities a sense of we and identity. Since its emergence 100 years ago, many expectations have been attached to the medium of radio. In any case, the history of this medium bears witness to unexpected and unpredictable developments such as the boom experienced in recent years by podcasts as a new source of words and information.

Radio's greatest deficit is at the same time its greatest potential, because radio means audio and thus sound, voice, noise – but not image. This entails two things: the eye cannot assure itself, but the eye also does not reshape the auditory image. The visual remains a vision and thus leaves open gaps and creative freedom.

The aim of this issue of *medien & zeit* 3/2023 is to show the historical significance of radio and to reflect on conceptual continuations. While the genesis of radio – once named the *first electronic mass medium* – in Austria and Germany is traced above, the issue of *medien & zeit* intends to also shed light on facets of this history in other European countries. We therefore invite original contributions on this topic, including theoretical as well as methodological considerations and case studies. Of interest, for example, are the following topics:

- Radio as a political instrument: The breakthrough of radio in Europe is closely interwoven with its National Socialist past. Radio served and still serves for the mass-media dissemination of propaganda within the authoritarian systems of European history. What communicative strategies can be identified? To what extent can international parallels be identified? What examples of radio as an instrument of resistance can be reconstructed? What lines of development can be traced? What breaks and continuities?
- Participation of citizens: What platforms for communities exist and what intentions and messages do they pursue? Within what structural framework are they operated? Case studies on pirate radio and political activism via radio and digital streaming are also in demand? What mobilisation potential and what developmental trajectories can be traced? To what extent are there documentations of pirate radio stations and what content was broadcast, by which actors were they operated? (Participatory radio: controversies and audience participation)
- Radio and culture: What was the role of radio as a mediator of popular, traditional or subcultural music? Who were the broadcasters and what knowledge was available about the audience?
- Radio as a knowledge agent: What efforts existed in history to convey knowledge, education and political information via radio? Who were the operators and providers of such services and how does this history present itself in the long-term perspective?

- Radio as Voice: Who was and is heard? Which voices found their way into radio culture? Which groups were excluded as broadcasters or broadcasted? What role did women\* play as speakers?
- Technologies and enabling of radio: With the development of technology, radio became affordable and also usable for individuals. Which milestones in the history of technology can be identified and what impact did they have on national radio providers?
- Economics of radio: Within European radio, we know of 3 pillars (public, commercial and non-commercial radio) for financing radio. To what extent are there additional alternative models for financing radio in Europe? What is the role of the state as a regulator in an increasingly fragmented radio and audio world? What opportunities are opened up by the digital distribution of content?

Submissions are welcome in English or German. Submitted abstracts (no more than 500 words and a meaningful title) outlining a prospective contribution will be reviewed by the issue editors. On this basis, authors will be invited to submit full papers (6,000 words including title, abstract, tables, figures and bibliography). All full papers will undergo a double-blind peer-review. In a possible revision phase after the review, authors can extend the length of the article to a maximum of 8,000 words, taking into account the suggestions of the reviewers and editors. *medien & zeit* is fully open access and does not charge its authors any fees for editing the articles.

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Please send submissions by email: [cfp@medienundzeit.at](mailto:cfp@medienundzeit.at)