Social Broadcasting – Reclaiming Conviviality in Radio

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Introduction

I began to describe my radio practice as *social broadcasting*[1] in 2014 after becoming frustrated with the constraints of both terrestrial and digital community radio. Embracing the tools and platforms made available through the popularity of podcasting, I felt restricted by the narrowing of the genre. I did not wish to adhere to the conventions of oral history recording as my practice included an element of active participation more aligned with participative art practice. The production process, however, involved everything one would associate with more conventional radio making, from recording to editing and sound design. It was clear that I needed a new definition for this work. As I developed my practice, I came across other examples of radio making that could also be described in this way, notably Dave Isay's participatory radio documentary making and his *Story Booth* – a recording booth at Central station[2] that became the multi-award winning *StoryCorps* in the US, and inspired BBC's adaptation *The Listening Project*.[3]

In this article, I argue that *social broadcasting* has the scope to facilitate true conviviality: everyday conversations and narratives can create meaningful insights in hyper-local social contexts, bypassing propriety algorithm journalism to create something more meaningful through social interactions with audience engagement. Whist traditional radio is generally concerned with listenership and binds the audience through commonality of experience and values; *social broadcasting* can provide a

framework for communication between active participants. In 'Tools for Conviviality', Ivan Illich[4] made a plea for the need for people to participate actively in the processes of production that shaped their lives. "*I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value"(*p.24) It is precisely this interdependence, as a possible source of more meaningful living, that digital audio tools can contribute to today.

Ironically, the very technologies and changes in society that enable and democratise audio broadcasts also create the need for them as a means of human connectivity, as people are becoming more isolated, searching for human to human ways of communicating.[5] As Kate Lacey suggests in Listening in the Digital Age (p17): *This is because the proliferation of voices and sounds is not in and of itself a sign of a well-functioning democratic public space, for not only does proliferation not equate straightforwardly to plurality, but it might also erode and any sense of a collective public forum.*[6]

To support process and participation as the emphasis of *social broadcasting*, the platform and medium used to share and broadcast the audio are significant. The increasing mobility and universal access provided by online and mobile tools will be explored to support the argument that these audio transmissions and recordings can no longer be labelled as 'radio' but have become something distinct, with their own rules and set of values.

The function of *social broadcast*ing is to document and present real everyday experiences and conversations in relation to specific spaces, inviting reflexivity both

from participants in real-time and listeners in the future. Rather than recording interviews to tell a story through the traditional broadcast documentary format or radio 'show'/podcast as art, education or entertainment for a prescribed audience, these conversations are themselves are as much the purpose of the *social broadcast* as the final audio output.

I will first situate *social broadcasting* within existing radio and audio production formats looking at the similarities, differences and overlaps. I will then explore the scope of participants and audiences – the 'social' of broadcasting and explain the technical innovations that support this process – the 'broadcasting' of the social. In the third section, I emphasise how *social broadcasting* moves away from the single narrative that has become the staple of audio storytelling created from traditional interviews, and how it facilitates an engagement with multiple voices and perspectives. I illustrate my argument with examples from my own practice as well as from the work of Dave Isay.

Situating Social Broadcasting

Social broadcasting has emerged from an amalgam of contemporary radio making, community engagement and participatory art practice, setting it apart from local or community radio, oral history recording and what has become podcasting, although it does draw inspiration and has developed from these formats.

Figure 1: The development of broadcasting
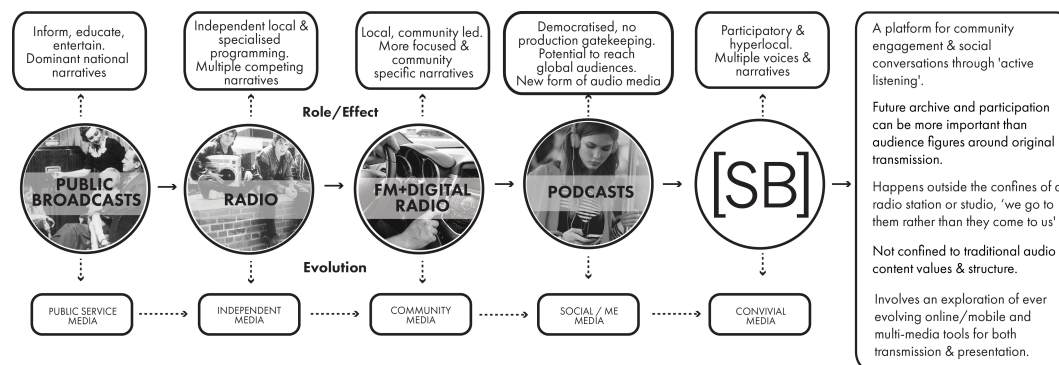
Not local and community radio but…

Community radio has been significantly important in democratising radio, enabling local people to become involved participants. It is still a vital part of the radio landscape. Whist I am aware of the continued importance of community radio globally, particularly amongst linguistic and cultural minorities[7], my focus here is on local and community radio in the UK. Historically, national and commercial radio stations have targeted more homogeneous audiences. The aim of these smaller independent community radio stations that emerged in the UK from the 1970's was to provide accessible platforms for airing the concerns and interests of specific groups about matters that directly concern them, topics that would perhaps hold no relevance to anyone outside the specifically targeted community.[8] The aim has been, and continues to be, a participatory space, lowering accessibility barriers to community members. In theory, anyone can participate. [9]

I would argue however, that this type of community and local radio in the UK has become formatted to studio-based-presenter-led programs, an 'Alan Partrige-ization'[10] of local and community radio becoming the norm. Community participation

is often limited to 'experts' or (local) celebrities interviewed in the studio, or public participation via the phone-in. When community members are recorded in the field, there is usually a meta-narrative guiding the production with a presenter or narrator using these recordings as voiced illustrations of a topic. In contrast, s*ocial broadcasting,* whist conversations are guided, involves a co-creation process to facilitate open-ended conversations rather than what is traditionally described as an 'interview'.

Community radio aims to promote direct participation, encouraging a sense of belonging and a shared sense of place. Conviviality is implied and assumed uncritically on this basis. In this sense community is an illusory construct. In contrast, in today's very diversified communities, conviviality has multiple forms that require different tools. I expand the community radio model based on the idea of a set (location, faith group, identity group) to constellations of social interfaces that constitute community even on an ephemeral basis, that is to say people coming together through real life social networks. The focus is on micro-communities as spaces of encounters rather than categories of people in a place. The encounters themselves produce the narrative. There is no reliance on a presenter or narrator's meta-narratives. Interactions in the field inform the narrative rather than confirming a predetermined agenda.

Rather than inviting community members into the studio, radio is taken out of the studio into spaces of encounters. Recording and broadcasting tools become integrated in social encounters in their very making. This is in line with the definition of a network society given by the theorist of the concept, Manuel Castells in that it is 'a

society whose social structure is made up of networks powered by micro-electronics-based information and communications technologies.'[11]

Not oral histories but…

Social broadcasting overlaps with oral history recording as defined by the recording of voiced memories, experiences and opinions[12]. Even though interviews recorded as oral history are often based on personal interpretations, they are recoded as factual rather than exploratory documents. There is little space for conversation and no room for affect.

The final objective is not to interpret, but to record factual evidence and, thereby, to create primary documents from which historians can reconstruct the past.[13]

Social broadcasting gains from not needing to adhere to established conventions for creating historical documents. Oral history interviews are usually created as closed documents to be archived with minimal editing, as this would be 'tampering' with a historical document. These recordings, once archived are accessible in the sense that they are available to anyone who wants to access them, but often do not make for an easy listening experience. Their unedited 'pure' nature means that the listener has to filter through long non-curated interviews to find anything of interest. The listener is expected to be an historian or a researcher, searching for specific insights about a specific time or place, rather than an interested audience.

Social broadcasting does however borrow from this method of direct line of inquiry, leaving interpretation open to create authentic recordings that can then become part of an evolving living archive. An excellent example is *StoryCorps* that has become the largest archive of human voice recordings archived at the Library of Congress yet a selection of these recordings are edited and made available to a general audience as a NPR radio show and podcast[14] and an online archive with themed compilations made available for public listening. In The UK, the BBC version, *The Listening Project*'s edited recordings are featured on BBC Radio 4 and archived in their entirety at the British Library.[15]

These edited audio pieces, as *social broadcasts*, have more in common with radio feature making. To paraphrase John Biewen in his introduction to *Reality Radio*[16], to create something 'true' synthesising chaotic material into a cohesive idea allows something closer to the 'real' to come through. This is more akin to audio feature or documentary making than oral history recording that claim to be 'true' but rely on historians or researchers to create meaning for listeners. The montage of diverse voices around a theme inspires more open interpretation. Drawing inspiration more from Ursula Guin's *Carrier Bag Theory (of Fiction)*[17] than the traditional hero's journey narrative. We need multiple perspectives and stories to truly understand narratives in their social and historical context.

Not podcasting but…

Since Ben Hammersley[18] coined the term in 2004, a podcast describes all downloadable genres and styles of speech-based audio content. The majority of

podcasts produced today however, are a one-presenter monologue or conversational. This genre has now becoming synonymous with the term podcast. Due to the ease of access and low-cost nature of production I would argue that the majority of podcasts produced by non-broadcast professionals have become a substitute or companion to the 'blog', therefore becoming for many individuals, organisations and businesses the audio constituent of their social media outlet. A representation of who they are, what they represent and what they have to say. The podcast has become part of this 'me' media as the voiced expression of self that sits comfortably alongside other social media promulgation. Amateur podcasters are seemingly motivated to build communities through altruistic affective labour[19] with a focus on the personal (be it personal experience or expertise). Neatly labelled by Martin Spinelli (2019) as a 'chatcast'.[20]

The podcast format continues to evolve. In 2014 a wave of podcast producers were described as being part of a 'new golden age of radio', '*when most people think of podcasting they are much more likely to have in mind something produced by a virtuoso in Brooklyn than a GarageBand using amateur in Bolton*' (p.15) *in* the UK in 2019, perhaps not as the DIY amateur version Spinelli describes, 'chatcasts' have become the norm and dominate the Apple podcast charts.[21]

Social broadcasting adopts and uses the tools and platforms of podcasting to disseminate and share audio works and productions, but it moves beyond the conventions that have developed around podcasts over the last decade, experimenting with both form and content.

The 'social' of broadcasting

I first need to clarify how I am defining social in this context and differentiate the 'social' of social broadcasting from the 'social' of social media. In the latter, it has been argued that lived experience is mediated by projections of an ideal or by an activist agenda. [22] *Social broadcasting*, in contrast, follows social interactions at source, where they happen. This implies reflexive social elements, which invariably shed a light on the gaps and the margins in society. The social is made up of everyday encounters with all their complexities and contradictions enabling the representation of social exclusion in its lived reality as a social phenomenon. The social that I am considering here points to a more authentic version of a shared lived experience than social experiences as represented through social media.

Any space of social encounter is a nexus of relationships that can potentially expose social paradoxes and trends through lived experiences. Conversations in these spaces not only reveal present opinions and attitudes, but can also give hints to strategies of coping and adaptation to the social context, therefore acting as potential novel conduits for conviviality. Seemingly mundane or everyday conversations implicitly provide insights into wider society, as theorised by Erving Goffman in his study of "Encounters" as social arrangements, which involve 'a mutual and preferential openness to verbal communication' (p.17)[23]

Here are some of the devices that I have developed or adapted for recording in social spaces of encounter:

- Recording in a predefined space as a place of interaction (a train station, a church a bus stop, a mall), the encounters are random and I encourage this even though research has been done beforehand about the 'place'.
- Creating a dedicated place for conversations as an installation or mobile radio studio. Here I am creating the space as a set (a social stage) where people will interact, there is still an element of randomness but they are invited to enter this created space.
- Giving participants the tools to record each other in their own private space.[24]

Whether accessing a defined space of interaction or creating a 'stage' for a space of interaction, taking the recording process out of the conventional radio studio invariably shifts the power dynamic. This shift gives ownership and agency to participants, having a profound impact on what is said and how it is said.

Case study: King's Cross Connections
Accessing a space

This is a montage piece comprised of conversations recorded over a day at King's Cross Station, London[25]. The train station as the space of encounter offers a live example of a spatial nexus. Here I interacted with people's involvement with the space as they were waiting (for a train or a person), using the station as a stage with a

predefined set of props (seats, signs, ticket barriers etc.) creating a catalyst for connection by encouraging conversations between strangers that inevitably established points of connection. By introducing themes in conversation around serendipity, luck and chance, connections between actants were made both directly and indirectly.

Woman1: So where are you travelling to today?

Woman2: I'm going to Leeds

Woman1: Is it the 1 o'clock Leeds?

Woman2: Its 12.35

Woman1: Ah so that'll be t'one before me, so I could tell that you were kind of from that way

Woman2: Really?

Woman1: Yeah

Woman2: I'm amazed actually

Woman1: I don't know I just kind of had a feeling because I thought, she's sat here waiting and I thought she would be going that way towards Leeds, do you know what I mean? I don't know

Woman2: Yeah well I'm only Yorkshire 'til I was 8, I mean I was born there

Woman1: I've been in Yorkshire all my life so...

In this case, the microphone and the facilitator initiate a conversation that may or may not have happened spontaneously. There is implicit reflexivity about social connection between two women sitting side by side in the waiting area. This is the

beginning of their realisation of shared experiences in their Yorkshire lives far from London.

Case study: Chrisp Street on Air[26]

Creating a space as a set

Here the set was a mobile radio station built to resemble a market stall to engage communities and enable discussion around the future of Chrisp Street Market (Poplar East London), an area struggling in the face of rapid urban regeneration. The installation, located in the market square, was central to a series of events encouraging unity and engagement amongst local businesses and residents in the area with local councilors, politicians and property developers. The radio 'stall' generated a space for candid and open discussion, providing insights rarely attainable through more linear platforms such as public forums and meetings.

Figure 2: Chrisp Street On Air

The parameters created by this prop - as a functioning radio studio without walls, are conducive to enabling nuanced and sophisticated group discussion between community members who perhaps in other spaces wouldn't engage in respectful and thoughtful conversation. It is these conscious and unconscious rules and conventions of the radio studio environment taken out of context and placed into another setting that encourage contributors to listen deeply to one another and feel listened to when they express themselves. The use of headphones and microphones locks and connects the contributors into an intimate space even if they are in a public setting. The prop-like feel of the mobile radio station (it looks like 'radio' but isn't as daunting) alleviates anxiety; the microphone becomes a tool for projecting the voice and the words that voice is articulating, creating a sense of empowerment. The 'rules' of radio and the role of the conversation 'facilitator' (rather than presenter or host) establish a fluid conversation where contributors are compelled to listen and respond.

There is also an element of spectacle, creating 'a show', yet unlike the traditional radio road show elevated on a stage with studio equipment hidden from view, the stage in this context is the radio studio itself. The more ephemeral nature of this type of mobile radio is more accessible to those who might be intimidated by the more formal radio studio and possibly never consider speaking on local or community radio, or radio road show. Here they feel more open and relaxed enough to participate.

Whether through accessing a space or creating a space, 'focal points' also become part of the space. In the above examples, the focal points at the train station are all related to travelling by train, the departure board, the clock, the seats and

announcements all punctuating and focusing the conversation. In *Chrisp Street On Air*, the focal point is the radio 'stall' within the setting of a market place, with everything that this encompasses – stalls, market sellers, shoppers, produce. Even passive observers or listeners are drawn into interaction.

The social context of the space also plays a part in generating the radio form. Two elements influencing the form of the broadcast are the environmental soundscape and the timeframe, both of which create their own methodological challenges. Taking radio outside the studio invariably means that the environment can't be controlled and has to be integrated into the audio output. If the space is an actant, the soundscape is part of the space; the soundscape defines and draws in participants, either at the time of recording or the time listening, contextualizing the conversation. In *King's Cross Connections*, the station soundscape featuring constant speaker announcements becomes another character in the piece. The space also defines the timeframe - a more limited timeframe at a railway station compared to a conversation in a café where time restrictions are more personal. The timeframe can be open-ended or determined in advance (radio 'set' or created space). When it is predetermined, the time of interaction itself becomes a feature of the social nexus influencing the conversation.

As a nexus captured in a lived present moment that potentially becomes a contemporary archive, the 'social' of *social broadcasting* is by definition open ended. Understandings, interpretation and affective reactions are deferred to the listener.

The Broadcasting of the 'Social'

In this section, I discuss the process of broadcast production, the diffusion of the produced broadcast and how audiences 'engage' both during production and with the final audio output. I will first define how I understand broadcasting in this context.

When I use the term broadcaster, it is interchangeable with what is more traditionally understood as the 'radio producer' and the person or entity diffusing the broadcast. As with the term 'podcaster', it is defined by a variety of roles not just concerning the dissemination of the audio/radio output but also production and hosting.

A podcaster is one who podcasts. Someone who hosts and produces podcasts… Is anyone that participates in the production of a podcast a podcaster? Is a podcast editor a podcaster if they don't host a show? What about a producer or promoter? [27]

This debate about the definition of podcaster sheds light on the issues surrounding the definition of *social broadcaster.* As it is a new term, it seems appropriate to define a *social broadcaster* in my own terms.

In the context of *social broadcasting*, a 'broadcaster' assumes multiple roles beyond the narrow definition of a conventional radio broadcaster. Similarly to a 'podcaster' that could encompass all the roles identified with the creation and dissemination of a

podcast, the *social broadcaster* includes the roles of researcher, creative director, radio producer, community facilitator, editor, sound designer… These roles could be shared across a team, but assuming these roles (with some assistance), has helped me to fully comprehend the scope of *social broadcasting*.

The advancement and accessibility of high-quality, low-cost light and digital portable recording equipment, easily accessible editing software and the accessibility of digital platforms have largely enabled the professionalization of DIY radio and podcasting. Similarly, *social broadcasting* could not exist without these new technologies. These enable active participation of actants in their own space (taking radio out of the studio) and allow for a co-creation process where participants can play an active role in recording and production. The recording process outside the traditional radio-studio environment – either 'in the field' or in a constructed recording space, of course does impact sound quality. Production requires consideration of the constraints and soundscape of these environments. However, the interactions in these spaces of social encounters override the need for pristine studio sound. This is not to say that sound quality isn't important, it is. This means adopting more creative approaches to recording and editing to obtain work that doesn't sound amateur, adhering to high production standards, as poor quality sound would alienate potential audiences.

Techniques used in *social broadcastin*g, as described above, draw on conventional radio practices, yet cross into the realm of participatory art practice, as the recording equipment and setting become a stage to both initiate and record interactions. This offers scope for reaching multi-layered audiences in situ or through further broadcasts.

How do I define a *broadcast*? Taking the original definition of broadcast, before it became appropriated by the transmission of radio or television programmes, as the scattering of seeds (rather than planting them in rows), I propose a re-appropriation of the word. This encompasses the dissemination of audio works in multiple formats to multiple audiences in multiple ways as a *social broadcast*:

- Terrestrial radio transmission and digital radio transmission

- Simultaneous radio recording and transmission (live)

- Podcast

- Digital audio archive (dedicated website or archive site)

- Public listening experience – audio formats taken back to the space of interactions and played to the actants involved as a group listening experience or as an audio installation allowing for flexible listening.

Broadcasting from the mobile radio studio

Creating a 'radio studio' environment can initiate and facilitate local conversations, benefitting from understood social conventions of a radio studio environment. This enables a 'live' broadcast through localised speakers broadcasting to the near-environment. The audience comprises passers-by or an invited audience who can also participate. Because this 'set' emulates a radio experience, there is an expectation that the 'show' will also be 'broadcast' to a wider audience. This is made possible through web-based digital broadcast platforms, broadcasting on-line in real-time with potential reach to a non-localised audience anywhere. The broadcasts are also

recorded and made available online via a dedicated platform and as a podcasts for listening on demand. All these outlets confer value to people's participation in the initial broadcast as an event. As members of participants' social networks are invited to follow the conversations, participants can gain awareness of the potential value of this type of mobile radio studio as a tool to enable convivial encounters.

The recording booth

This is another mobile radio studio, designed to initiate private one-to-one conversation rather than open group discussion. Built to be mobile and soundproofed to some degree (in that it creates a separate space from the public space), it has been used for multiple participatory interventions to record personal narratives and voiced expressions around a given theme within the context of an immersive public experience. I will describe one of my installations entitled Beyond the Babble (Tate Modern, 2017) in more detail below.

The recording booth as an actual closed physical space was a prop used by Dave Isay when he and his team installed a *Story Booth* in New York's Grand Central Station in 2003. This enclosed booth was a mini-recording studio, where participants were encouraged to take the time to have a conversation together guided by with a trained facilitator (also the broadcaster).

So we open this booth in one of the busiest places in the world and invite people to have this incredibly intimate conversation with another human being. I had no idea if it would work, but from the very beginning, it did. People treated the experience with incredible respect, and amazing conversations happened inside. [28]

Initially created as an art installation, with the knowledge that in order to record multiple and diverse voices, this booth had to be in a neutral public space. Participants were invited to do something potentially outside their comfort zones, but as Isay often points out, there is a vital human need to connect in conversation so people are naturally drawn to engage with this space and what it enables. The edited recordings were then uploaded to a digital public archive. After the success of the Central Station *Story Booth*, several other installations of this type were placed in different locations around the US, leading to constitute *StoryCorps* as a non-profit organisation. Mobile booths and tool-kits were then made available across the US, creating a collection contemporary conversations and the largest digital archive of this kind. The 'booth' has now manifested as an app enabling anyone to record and upload meaningful conversations to the *StoryCorps* platform using their smart phone.[29]

The 'broadcasts' discussed above imply the use of *active listening*[30] as a central concept in both the creation of the broadcast as a creative process and the dissemination to involved and non-involved audiences. The open-ended character of the *social broadcasting* contrasts with the guided narrative and interpretive style that is dominant in radio and podcast feature and audio documentary making. Dave Isay's Ghetto Life[31] and The Sunshine Hotel[32] both very much professionally 'produced', provide pioneering examples of co-creation in the recording process and a more open interpretation by listeners.

The decision on whether the conversation facilitator features or not in the edited broadcast is an active choice rather than a set convention. The priority is always to allow actants to voice their own words rather than interpret them through narration or explanation. The voice of the conversation facilitator is only included when needed to contextualize the conversation or when the facilitator is also an actant (as in *King's*

Cross Connections, where the role of the conversation facilitator is part of the narrative).

Open-ended interpretation: *Cherry Tree Chronicles* [33]

When meeting Denise and Maxine there was no predefined idea of where the conversation would lead. The concept was to capture a moment in a social nexus of interactions represented by a shopping mall and document interactions throughout the day. Here the facilitated conversation between these two women over lunch in Jeanie's cafe was allowed to take its own course. The encounter produced the narrative.

Maxine*: Nese's sort of taught me that not everyone's looking at me, they're not really interested in what I'm thinking or doing. They've got their own problems... It's ok to be in a room full of people because we're all human and everybody's got worries and hurts and ok some people are really snotty but maybe they're snotty for a reason, doesn't mean you have to talk to them. She's given me a little bit more confidence in meself*

Facilitator*: Do you have to pull her out sometimes?*

Denise: *No you can't do that to a person, you've got to, I don't know mentally go down to their level and start bringing them up with you. She can do it. People can do it but they're scared. What did I say to you when you were scared? I said, see my arms, remember that day? And I said these arms will keep you safe. Not gonna hurt ya, 'cos I won't let it. And I wrapped me arms round you didn't I? And give yer a hug. She just went like jelly.*

There was no prescribed brief to investigate the rise in mental illness and isolation and the potential role of neighbours and the local community, yet this is what was discussed, revealing meaningful insights about a current social debate. The listener is able to make his or her own interpretations through this spontaneous, touching encounter.

Social broadcasting as a dialectic space of social participation and transformation: *Beyond the Babble (Tate Modern, London)* [34]

The participatory sound installation *Beyond the Babble* (an installation in the collective exhibition Who Are We? Tate Exchange, Tate Modern) was devised as three separate experiences: participatory self-reflection through the act of conversation via the constructed 'audio booth'; an onsite sound installation to encourage audiences to tune into each narrative through the 'babble' of noise created by the surrounding exhibition space; finally, taking the audio out of the exhibition space into the public realm through the sending of 'audio postcards' via Twitter (audio tweets).

Figure 3: Beyond the Babble (booth)

The booth – active participation

The recording booth structure was designed to explore notions of public and private space, self-reflection and what we choose to reveal about our identity and private self. The transparent structure where the recording booth was located was created as an enclosed space, inviting participants to enter it as a safe space, yet once inside the structure were completely visible to passers by, representing the false sense of security often created by online social media platforms. Participants were drawn into a private conversation in what appeared to be a private space, yet the experience was public and visible. The conversations couldn't be overheard as they were recorded, but become available for public listening afterwards. Once inside the structure, the participant was seated on one side of the booth facing a mirror. I as the facilitator I was seated on the other side of the structure so that we were not visible to each other. The conversation was transmitted and heard through microphones and headphones and the structure prevented eye contact. Participants were guided into a private, self-reflective conversation about notions of identity – 'who am I?' whilst hearing their own voices through headphones and watching themselves reflected back at them in

the mirror. This created a slightly uncomfortable, yet on the whole revelatory experience for the participant as most entered into a stream-of-consciousness monologue.

Who I am is a very fleeting notion ...what's mostly surprised me of who I am, is that I've decided who I've become, what I am just exists in my own perception ... and not of solid notions of identity ... I find it much easier to fleet through existence ... Felix (Participant)

As the participants were taken through this guided conversation, they were asked to reflect on notions of home, belonging, citizenship, their contribution to society and finally reflect who they are at this moment in time. The nature of the booth structure and the space given to the participants through *active listening* gave permission for free-form reflection through a monologue without the need for much intervention from the facilitator.

It's the first time I defined citizenship in terms of emotions. I haven't thought about citizenship like that before; I have thought about it before in terms of metaphors… Eugenia (Participant)

Edited versions of these conversations were then broadcast in three ways:

- The recordings were edited throughout the week of the exhibition to create an audio installation as a growing babble of noise, diffused through directional speakers located throughout the exhibition space. Here a wider exhibition audience could 'tune in' to each participant's self-reflective monologue.

- 24-second audio postcards or 'audio tweets' edited from the booth conversations were posted throughout the week as a 'live' representation and synthesis of the piece to reach an audience beyond the walls of the Tate Modern.

- The final manifestation of *Beyond the Babble* was the re-creation of the sound installation in digital form, emulating the act of being able to tune in and out of the noise and listen to edited versions of each participant's reflections synthesising what they had revealed in the 'booth'. [35]

This reached multiple audiences, ranging from the direct participants engaged in personal refection within the recording booth, visitors to the exhibition experiencing the onsite audio installation and audiences engaging with the audio postcards via Twitter during the week of the exhibition, to wider on-going audiences via the digital archive on the dedicated website.

The concluding impact can be defined both by the personal and the collective, at a moment in time as part of current debates and social transformations. As a *social broadcast, Beyond the Babble* created a multi-layered dialectic space of participation and transformation. There are of course constraints with this installation being located within the Tate Modern rather than a more accessible open civic space. There is scope to open this interrogation of self and national identity and reflexivity in other more inclusive public spaces of interaction.

A unique feature of *social broadcasting* is its ability to multiply participants and audiences through layered methods of engagement. This multiplicity also echoes the

emphasis on multiple voices, narratives and points of view that inevitably arise through spaces of encounters, whether they are random or engineered. In summary, the intersecting layers of audiences are as follows:

- First of all, directly involved participants who listen to themselves as well as to other participants.
- The on-site audience listening to the conversations as they happen (as is the case of the mobile radio station)
- A localized audience listening to an edited synthesized version in the form of an audio installation.
- Shared listening experiences in situ (where possible) of the finished audio output for participants as facilitated by the *social broadcaster*. Here people affected and included can commonly participate, leading to further conversation.
- Networked audience listening via a digital or terrestrial radio platform, broadening the scope yet limited to the audience of this platform.
- Wider audience, potentially global via podcasts or online archives. (Impact of *StoryCorps* reaching half a million people since 2013)

Conclusion – The Scope of *Social Broadcasting*

I have argued that whilst *social broadcasting* draws considerably from the conventions and practices of community radio, oral history recording, podcasting as well as radio feature making conventions, it has the potential to bring these together in

a new form. *Social broadcasting* tracks and records conviviality in the making as interactions happen, within spaces of encounters. Micro-communities are the local and social focus of *social broadcasting:* radio is taken into these communities as an adapted 'tool for conviviality.

In his introduction to Reality radio, John Beiwen describes empathy making as the prescribed goal of the new wave of audio producers.[36] Through giving access to shared experiences that include affective dimensions of social encounters, *social broadcasting* enables connectivity. The encounters are multiplied through the broadcasts. The power dynamics of host, interviewer and guest are truly bypassed, empowering both participants and listeners through multiple accounts of lived experiences. There is an authenticity that solicits listeners' empathy without making it an explicit goal of the broadcast. Far from manipulated empathy making, both participants and listeners are empowered to make their own judgements. Besides the direct participation impact, as people's perceptions are potentially changed through self-reflection, audiences are also potentially transformed through listening because of the recordings' authentic quality. Possibilities are open to contextualise the broadcast through shared listening or online listening later on.

You know, a lot of people talk about crying when they hear StoryCorps stories, and it's not because they're sad. Most of them aren't. I think it's because you're hearing something authentic and pure at this moment, when sometimes it's hard to tell what's real and what's an advertisement. It's kind of the anti-reality TV. [37]

Each *social broadcast* collapses space and time, documenting a slice of the present anchored in people's experience in specific spaces, inviting reflection into both present and

future. As the focus is on social interactions, broadcasts open windows into new social meanings and rules applicable to both real social contexts and virtual spaces of encounters.

So many of these are just everyday people talking about lives lived with kindness, courage, decency and dignity, and when you hear that kind of story, it can sometimes feel like you're walking on holy ground (Isay, 2015)

In this article I have outlined some of the distinctive features and parameters that contribute to defining *social broadcasting* as a valid form of audio creation and dissemination. I have argued that this form opens a new authentic interactive means of social engagement in micro-communities, adapting current tools of radio making. *Social broadcasting* is called for by the complex evolution of multicultural, multi-nuanced social encounters interweaving multiple voices and experiences across social networks as people come together either randomly or intentionally. This achieves different outcomes from most information-sharing and personal-broadcasting platforms. Whist current media tend to reinforce polarisation through personalised programming and newsfeeds, *social broadcasting* allows a much-needed space for personal and collective reflexivity. Surely, this is an absolute prerequisite for forging the conviviality that Ilich foresaw as a crucial need of post-industrial societies.

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