Tuning in to the Nature of Radio:  
A Normative Account of Speech and Voice in Community Radio

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Introduction

Dialogue will be genuine and real. Concrete solutions to concrete problems can be discovered together. A realistic model of society can be promoted, crafted by artisans. They will preserve the cultural identity of their audience and hand back to them their right to be heard.¹

You hear static, you turn the dial. You tune in and the voices become clearer. Listening to the voices of the broadcast, you imagine who might be speaking. Are they near or far? What do they do for a living? What are they telling you? They are telling a story, it might be a funny anecdote or a serious recounting of a tragic local event. You imagine what it might be like for you to encounter the same tragedy or you might distance yourself from the voice because these stranger’s emotions make you uncomfortable. But it is not a stranger’s voice, you’ve heard it before, it sounds familiar, yet unknown. The elements of the voice of the broadcast, riding along an intangible frequency, are varied and have a depth unique to that station and your community. You tune into the community radio, and those voices, whose ever they are, become clearer.

What is Community Radio?

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) published a primer for community radio broadcasters in 2002 titled How to do Community Radio, and in this text a community radio station is defined as one, “that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community.”² The “community” each station addresses varies: it can be geographical—a

township, village, or island—or it can be a group of people with common interests—women, fishermen or ethnic groups for example. Community radio offers a third model of radio broadcasting beyond commercial and public service. Community radio can act as a vehicle for the community and voluntary sector, such as NGOs or citizen organizations, and a way for citizens to work in partnership.

Community radio exists all over the world, though its form fluctuates depending on where it is broadcasting. While almost 4,000 stations are associated with AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters), the majority of stations are decentralized and operate independent of one another. Some stations are owned by not-for-profit groups or by cooperatives whose members are the listeners themselves. In Latin America alone, there are approximately one thousand radio stations that can be considered community, educational, grassroots or civic radio stations. Worldwide there are stations owned by students, universities, municipalities, churches or trade unions. There are stations financed by donations from listeners, by international development agencies, by advertising and by governments.

Community radio in many locations is used as a mode for development; however, in other locations, it has a distinctly different definition. Historically, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Ireland have been broadcasting community radio since the 1960s and these stations are considered to be of the not-for-profit sector. At the other end of the spectrum, states that are considered “developing” have introduced community radio (most often by an international NGO) as a mode for development but

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3 Claudia Villamayor y Ernesto Lamas "Gestiòn de la radio comunitaria y ciudadana" (Quito: AMARC y Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1998), 11.
not distinctly as not-for-profit. Most stations in developing countries are required to pay for their community radio license, even though they are making no profit. Therefore, as in most non-profit work, appropriating enough funds to continue the broadcast is a consistent issue among community radio stations, making their dependence on international funding a contentious issue.

Since the early 1990s, there has been what one might call a broadcasting (and microcasting) explosion in many West African countries, where democratization has made pluralism on the radio possible. Mali, Benin and Burkina Faso are often put forth as prime examples of this phenomenon. Stations in Latin America emerged earlier, in the 1940s with the efforts of Colombia's Radio Sutatenza and Bolivia's Radios Mineras, both being flagship stations from which others took their cue. In Asia, community radio has grown more recently and has a special legacy in India as it was one of the first developing countries to instate law regarding community radio, when in 1995 the state declares airways as “public space”. Large amounts of international aid go towards funding these projects, The Support Fund for Radio Expression, set up in France in 1982,  

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6 Ibid, 91

7 The Radios Mineros was originally funded by trade union dues and operated mainly at local and regional levels, there were more than 25 such radio stations during the period from about 1960 to 1985. Changes in government policy eliminated many unionized mining jobs after 1985 and some radios were sold or ceased to exist. In spite of many difficulties, five stations continue to broadcast. Karina M. Herrera Miller, “¿Del grito pionero...al silencio? Las radios sindicales mineras en la Bolivia de hoy”, UNRevista Vol. 1, n. 3: (July, 2006), 1-11.

for example, had provided $27 million to community radio development by 2004 by drawing a levy on advertising on broadcast media. This spread of community radio additionally puts pressure on governments and policymakers to open up space for the sector, as happened in Hungary, for example, after pirate stations emerged in the post-Soviet era. Currently, community radio accounts for 25 percent of radio broadcasting in the country.

**My Project**

There are obvious ways in which community radio serves as a mode for development in the third world. It engages the public in access towards the full democratization of the communication system. Citizen’s participation in community radio is allowed, ideally, at all levels – from planning to implementation and evaluation of the project. It involves the citizens in the decision-making process, including making decisions about the contents, duration and program schedule. These decisions about the contents ideally allow for the radio station to best serve the interests of the community, rather than a profit-oriented goal or ideological goals of the state. Additionally, the dissemination of information reaches more sectors of society, especially the illiterate or marginalized. A community or household can share radio sets, so one does not even have to own a radio to potentially gain from its broadcast. While these reasons for supporting community radio are all relevant to initiatives of development, they are not what I intend

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10 Ibid, 16.
11 In 1997, there was officially 44 radios per 1,000 people in Mali, and an average of 149 per 1,000 for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Myers, “Community Radio and Development”, 91.
to make the focus of this paper. Rather, I will be examining an aspect of community radio that is much more deeply involved in the political ramifications of voice. The recent explosion of community radio initiatives invites us to explore the more theoretical implications of the projection of these voices.

There is something powerful about the spread of voice—the voice of the community—that CR allows for. The potential of community radio to bring about social change is not a matter of mere observation but, as Population Media Center President William Ryerson demonstrated, an empirically proven fact based on quantifiable and statistically analyzed results.\(^\text{12}\) Focusing issues such as women’s rights promotion, HIV rates reduction, family planning, reproductive health issues, and child trafficking, the Center uses community radio to produce behavioral change among large audiences in 15 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, educating through entertainment, including soap operas and other creative radio programming.\(^\text{13}\) CR is touted as being a tool for development in that it is relatively easy to set up and generally accessible to many different groups in society. It is relatively inexpensive to establish a station and the rewards are tangible. Through this grassroots participation, individuals are more prone to hold their governments accountable, just as they are accountable for the information they disseminate to the public. Additionally, illiterate populations have access to information and news. There is ample literature on CR and its importance in development strategies. However, the analysis is narrow, more focused on instrumentalities and the functionality


\(^\text{13}\) The Population Media Center is one example of an international NGO whose work revolves around community media, more empirical data can be found on their website at: http://www.populationmedia.org.
In terms of the literature on CR, the two main bodies of work come from AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters) and UNESCO. AMARC is an international non-governmental organization serving the community radio movement, with almost 3,000 members and associates in 110 countries. Their website states that their goal is “to support and contribute to the development of community and participatory radio along the principals of solidarity and international cooperation.” AMARC has held conferences between 1998 to 2005 every other year and then consistently every year from 2005 to the present, the latest hosted in Dublin and named “Communicating Diversity.” ARMARC has participated in several events including the World Social Forum, Global Knowledge Conference, the Africa MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Conference, Voice without Frontiers, World Summit in Information in Society, and the World Congress on Communication for Development. At all of these events AMARC and their affiliates have published papers for presentation. This embodies a large portion of the literature on CR that exists today. Additionally, AMARC publishes AMARC-Link, a biannual publication that began in 2004. These feature cover recent passing of legislation concerning community radio, “good news for community radio” (these too mainly focus on legislation or the awarding of social communications awards), meetings, conferences, and trainings, upcoming activities, and resources.

The UNESCO publication, How to do Community Radio, which provides me a

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16 More information on AMARC’s participation in these events can be found on AMARC’s website, http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=calendar.
framework for the unique characteristics of CR is another primary work on CR. These characteristics listed in this handbook will provide a central structure to this project. The United Nations represents a renowned international governing body for which there is no equal. Its focus on setting standards for human rights is central to why I have chosen this organization’s work to be a fundamental part of this project. In defining community radio and its benefits for the community, UNESCO puts forth an important work into the literature of CR. I will evaluate the points that UNESCO makes about CR with a theoretical twist that is not regarded by other scholarship on CR.

How to do Community Radio provides a list of the qualities inherent to CR called “The Nature of Radio”, which puts forth its benefits while others describe its disadvantages. As I have previously noted, these characteristics are largely based in functionality and instrumentality. Of the key points that UNESCO makes I am choosing the following to build upon with political theory. UNESCO makes very general statements that they list as the “Nature of Radio”17, pulling the fairly obvious characteristics of radio into a sort of inventory of what makes radio the medium that it is. To begin, UNESCO makes note of the auditory quality of radio. The description of this quality invokes the concept of imagination in that listeners must imagine the objects, actions, and ideas that they hear because the radio, in essence, is a “blind” medium. The second point that I would like to focus on thanks to UNESCO is radio as a mass medium. This quality is distinctive because it lacks the essence of “face-to-face communication”, which (UNESCO believes) increases the chances of being misunderstood. Thirdly, radio is impermanent as messages cannot be read or re-read. The forth characteristic is similar

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17 Tabing, How to do Community Radio, 40.
to the first in that it involves imagination. “The listeners of radio supply the visual data for themselves.” The fifth feature of radio builds upon this in that not only must the listener imagine the scenery or the face of the speaker, but they are additionally able to conceptualize a more personal and intimate aspect of the speaker. The UNESCO handbook makes a poignant note:

Warmth, compassion, anger, pain, and laughter are conveyed more adequately in an audio medium. With accent, inflection, hesitation, pause, and a variety of emphasis and speed the voice report is able to convey far more than the printed speech. The fact that radio often reaches the listener during his/her situation of solitude and privacy adds to the intimate character of radio.

The sixth quality of radio is that listeners are often engaged in other activities while they are listening. They might be driving, taking care of the home, or countless other activities. However, this may also mean that some messages of the radio could be missed as the listeners full attention may be lost. Finally, the seventh quality appropriated from UNESCO that I plan to attend to in this paper is that of interference, “Intrusion of other station’s signals, atmospheric noise, distortions of sound, a fading signal all add to the infidelity of message.” Listed as is by UNESCO, these characteristics will serve as the very basic platform for developing a more coherent and theoretical framework to understanding community radio in the developing world. Additionally, while I agree with the outline of these characteristics, I believe some of them miss important themes within a particular quality or they oversimplify a deeper concept of voice.

What this literature neglects to discuss is one of the most basic features of CR—its projection of voice into public space. The ARMARC publications are focused on legislation concerning CR and effectiveness of various CR projects around the world. “The Nature of Radio” and the rest of the UNESCO publication focuses on participation
and the quality of the broadcast. Participation of women is also a common theme in CR literature. While funds are being allocated for the growth of CR and its democratic potentials are held in high regard, the importance of the most basic aspect of radio—voice—should not be left by the wayside.

In terms of case studies for this project, I will be defining developing in a certain context. States which will be considered developing are those in which civil society is in the process of either establishing or seeking to establish more complete democracies. As a democracy cements itself in a state, one key consideration is the protection of civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, newly associated with the structure of a democracy. While development of civil society grows along with political development, economic development too is a marker of more productive communities. My case studies will revolve primarily around political development thanks to community radio; however, the potential for economic growth should not be forgotten, though it will not be my primary focus.

While I will not be using one state or radio station as a case study for examining voice in CR, the examples that I will draw upon in the Interlude sections will be based within a very specific definition of CR in a particular political climate. I will only use examples that are from Community Radio in the strongest sense of “community”, my objective being to not use any examples of stations that have connection to state or commercial enterprises because I would like to explore initiatives that are “for the community and by the community”. While state objectives and commercial interests do not always clash with the goals of the community, it will be shown that market and state forces often act against the work of CR initiatives. CR stations are for the most part
funded by international NGOs, pull their own resources together for funding or receive funds from NGOs within their own state. I will not be directly addressing the issue of funding, but for the information of the reader I will provide what can be found about financial support because I think it is an important gauge of the international attention that pushes towards CR initiatives.

In the kinds of states I will be examining, I will be looking particularly at CR in developing democracies. The following states are going to serve as the settings for my primary examples of CR: Indonesia, Colombia, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and Peru. What I mean by “developing democracy” is a state in which democracy has either been newly established or in which there are on-going movements towards a more complete democratic system. Examples such as Mali, which became “democratic” after a coup that took place in 1991, and Colombia, which defines itself as democratic but experiences consistent struggles for increased freedom of speech and other democratic values, are key not only because they represent different populations but also because both have distinct marginalized populations; for example, both Mali and Colombia have indigenous populations whose language differs from that of the national language. The reason I have chosen these two core values (those of developing and democratizing) to highlight in my choices of case study radio stations is due to three main reasons: 1.) It provides a narrow definition of CR which allows for my argument about voice to be more specific; 2.) These CR stations are often cited as being the most useful for making democracy more participatory and I would like to examine why this is so through the medium of voice and; 3.) These stations are often cited as being the “purest” form of CR due to their grassroots nature.
Within my examples of CR, my inclusion of Indonesia as a more “prominent” case study will be evident. This past summer I worked with an Indonesian student to conduct research on CR in Bali, Indonesia. During my summer internship in Bali, I worked at and interviewed volunteers and staff at various community radio stations. At the time, I thought about the standard benefits that a community based initiative such as community radio would provide. I began the project believing that CR could enhance civil society and develop interest in politics, thus making strides towards a more transparent and participatory democracy. While I found that I was correct in this assumption, I found myself reflecting further upon the power of the voices broadcasted by the various community radio stations where my partner and I conducted interviews.

What I would like to stress concerning my use of these case studies is that I seek to uncover the potential of what these stations have to offer their communities. The majority of stations lack funding, have a difficult time retaining volunteers, and all run the risk of being micro-managed by only a few individuals in the community. However, while these are legitimate concerns for the longevity of these stations, they will not be the primary concern of this project. There is also the profound issues of dissemination of hate speech, commercial agendas, and state intentions. I would classify these issues as markers of “unsuccessful” CR stories. Rather than creating a radio broadcast for and by the community, these situations are part of larger enterprises that use the community as a tool for their own initiatives. Not all CR stations maintain the highest qualities of performance in these terms but they all the potential to work towards the betterment of

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18 To which I owe a hugely gracious thanks to the Haverford College Center for Peace and Global Citizenship.
19 I owe another thanks Uli Kozok, who translated the transcribed the interviews from Indonesia.
their community. By drawing out the potential of CR in the context of a developing and democratizing state, I hope to illustrate that these stations are unique spaces that have the potential to embody the normative concepts presented by the various theorists that I will be discussing in this paper.

**My Argument**

In this paper, I aim to explore the politics of voice, grounding my discussion in the work of Hannah Arendt. As one of the foremost political theorists of the 20th century, her scholarship opened up the terrain of the public sphere to other great thinkers. Her writings on the public sphere are rooted in concepts of speech, and CR draws out concepts that are integral to voice, such as imagination and plurality, which Arendt connects through her discussion of the “web of human affairs”. My first chapter will use Arendt to illustrate these aspects of speech. In this paper I will be defining speech in terms of its public quality. Speech defined as broadcasted and disseminating information will work in tandem with the concept of voice. Voice will be defined as having characteristics such as sincerity and emotion. I will be using the term voice to describe the emotive qualities of speech. In this paper, *speech* disseminates the characteristics of *voice* that are representative of the character and quality of the speaker.

I will then take pause from the discussion of voice in public and use an “Interlude” as a different medium to take these theories of speech and apply them to CR. Interlude 1 will focus on elements of Arendt’s composition of speech (plurality, imagination, and the web of human affairs) translated into case studies from CR. These seven primary qualities from UNESCO, and my criticisms and analyzes of them, will serve as the steps
towards my argument that CR provides a unique model for development in that it utilizes the power of voice in the political sphere. However, I would like to reframe these qualities such that they apply to the theories of speech in the public sphere that I will cover in chapters one and two.

In Chapter 2, I will examine other forms of voice, and I will focus more on the concept of “public sphere”, paying special attention to Jürgen Habermas whose work is prominent on the subject. After explaining the role of the public sphere with respect to voice, I will explore other forms of voice, especially the “ideal speech situation” (another concept put forth by Habermas). I will also look at theories of voices of dissent. Interlude 2 will serve the same function as Interlude 1, which is to relate these abstract and highly theoretical concepts to real-world examples from CR. Interlude 2 will focus on CR and the reshaping of the public sphere, different forms of voice in CR and their effectiveness. Finally, this will lead us to a reconsideration of the “ideal speech situation” put forth in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 will serve as the space where I cement my argument. My argument will be three-fold: 1) The speech in CR itself is rooted in plurality; 2) CR is a unique source of social and political imagination; and 3) CR does not provide the “ideal speech situation” but provides a platform from which we can re-envision what the ideal speech situation might be. CR can occupy this unique role because it is both a part and apart of the public sphere because it so closely connects to the private sphere and private issues. Using these conclusions I will reframe the UNESCO characteristics of the “Nature of Radio.” I will conclude that a fresh look at voice in the public sphere allows us to rethink the potential of Community Radio as a unique medium for manifesting a new sort of Ideal Speech
Situation.
Chapter 1

Arendt and Speech

*No other human performance requires speech to the same extent as action.*

- *Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (179)*

Arendt is among the foremost theorists to discuss speech in the public sphere. Her work on totalitarianism discusses the silencing of speech, while her work on political action puts speech at the pinnacle of human action. The way in which Arendt regards speech so highly prompts me to begin my discussion of speech in the public sphere with an examination of her conception of speech. Because the goal of my project is to draw out the theoretical implications of speech in the public sphere and then apply them to CR, I will begin with Arendt to create a basic framework for the functions and characteristics of speech. Arendt connects themes of plurality and imagination to what she defines as the “web of human affairs.” This chapter will explain the theory behind those concepts and the following Interlude will show their manifestations in CR.

Arendt’s conception of speech is couched in her notion of modernity, which she sets out to articulate in the prologue to *The Human Condition*. For Arendt, modernity is characterized by a move to a world in which speech has lost its power.²⁰ The public sphere, she argues, is beginning to be restricted in favor of a more private world of introspection and the private pursuit of economic interests. We are then confronted with

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the possibility of the age of mass society in which animal laborans\textsuperscript{21} wins the battle over homo faber.\textsuperscript{22} All the values characteristic of the world of fabrication — semi-permanence and durability — as well as those characteristic of the world of action and speech — freedom, plurality, political life — are sacrificed in favor of the values of life, productivity and abundance. For Arendt, this is a sad reality, given her exaltation of speech in the vita activa.\textsuperscript{23}

In this chapter, I will identify the major themes that run through Arendt’s concept of speech. Embedded within Arendt’s concept of speech are both plurality and imagination, drawn together by the web of human affairs. “Traditionally and up to the beginning of the modern age, the term vita activa never lost its negative connotation of ‘un-quiet,’…” The vita activa can only be comprehended through the “viewpoint of absolute quiet” because “every kind of activity, even the process of mere thought, must culminate in the absolute quiet of contemplation.”\textsuperscript{24} We can begin to see that even the very notion of the vita activa is rooted in the dichotomy between quiet and un-quiet. However (and I will return to this later), the connection between contemplation and privilege should not be lost on the reader. That is, who in the public sphere has the free time (a privilege) to engage in contemplation that will result in meaningful speech?

\textsuperscript{21} The term Animal Laborans is how Arendt distinguishes individuals whose lives are devoted to labor. Labor is never-ending and its efforts of quickly consumed by daily life so it produces nothing of permanence. Human existence, when it serves this end, is the closest to animals and, for Arendt, the least human.

\textsuperscript{22} Homo Faber would be when the human is performing Work. Work produces something durable and semi-permanent, which then serves to create a world distinct from what is given to man by nature.

\textsuperscript{23} Arendtian action is one of the fundamental categories of the human condition and constitutes the highest realization of the vita activa. Action is judged by its ability to disclose the identity of the agent, to affirm the reality of the world, and to actualize our capacity for freedom.

\textsuperscript{24} Arendt, Human Condition, 15.
**Action and Speech**

As Arendt moves into her description of the public and private realm, the connections between speech and action become more tangible. Political action (if violence is not involved because, according to Arendt, violence and action cannot co-exist) is transacted through words (the right words for the right moment). She references the Greek *polis* as making a strong delineation between action and speech; speech moved to a “means of persuasion rather than the specifically human way of answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever happened or was done.”

Precisely because persuasion differs from the “human way”, Arendt distinguishes speech as the highest form of human action in political spheres. Through this mode of speech, a rhetoric develops. This leads to a distinction between rhetoric, as the art of public speaking, and alectic, the art of philosophic speech. It is through rhetoric, Arendt argues, that we must understand the Greek peculiarity of speech. The ones outside of the *polis* (slaves and barbarians) are deprived of speech, it being the central concern of citizens.

However, since we now labor in public (because in the modern age, we are less inclined to engage in the *vita activa* and use our *homo faber*), our capacity of speech and action loses its former quality of publicness. Arendt emphasizes that we should not lose that quality, it being essential to the formation of true publics. The true public is one in which speech and persuasion, rather than violence and force are used to make decisions with one another, integral to the web of human interaction.

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26 Therefore, to be “political” or to “live in a *polis*”, decisions are make through words and persuasion rather than violence and force.
27 Returning to the notion that some are privileged to speak, while others are not.
In *The Human Condition* Arendt stresses repeatedly that action is primarily symbolic in character and that the web of human relationships is sustained by communicative interaction. The web of human interaction is essential to Arendt’s concept of speech because it involves two key concepts of speech itself: its boundless quality and its necessity to be performed in public. As action and speech go on between human beings, the “in-betweeness” is the web of human interactions. This metaphor of the “web” connecting the networks and contexts of human affairs thus constitutes the “horizon” or human affairs. Seyla Behabib describes the horizon as “ever present”; and though the horizon “receded into infinity; at any point in time, it is only some aspect of [the horizon], some part of it on which we focus our attention, and then this becomes present to us and reveals itself.”  

Such that the web of human relations allows the horizon to be revealed to us, speech reveals unique aspects of the speaker.

**Plurality**

Speech cannot be discussed without a discussion of action, and vice versa. Through language we can articulate the meaning of our actions and define ourselves as pluralities. Speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals. This type of plurality (only revealed in speech) is conversely rooted in human equality, this being the general equality of humans which allows them to understand one

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another. The distinctness of individuals, their “who-ness”, from one another is revealed in speech.

This “who-ness” is essentially separated from the “what” of an individual. The “what” refers to individual abilities and talents, as well as deficiencies and shortcomings, which are traits all human beings share. The “what” also addresses social location, poor or elite, and categories of identity, race or gender. Neither labor nor work enable individuals to disclose their identities, to reveal “who” they are as distinct from “what” they are. Speech is therefore also a form of action, as Arendt clarifies that most acts are performed through speech, but we need action to evaluate the sincerity of the speaker. Thus, just as action without speech runs the risk of being meaningless and would be impossible to coordinate with the actions of others, so speech without action would lack one of the means by which we may confirm the veracity of the speaker.

In terms of confirming different aspects of the speaker (such as veracity or sincerity), this cannot be done in private. Action and speech, going hand-in-hand, need the surrounding presence of others. Arendt equates this to how work functions and how work parallels with the public, “Fabrication is surrounded by and in constant contact with the world: action and speech are surrounded by and in constant contact with the web of the acts and words of other men.” Action cannot be performed alone (unlike work, which can) and this is in part connected to the “who-ness” revealed by the speaker. “Action without a name, a ‘who’ attached to it, is meaningless…” because the revelatory characteristic of speech is lost if the speaker is merely revealing himself to his own self.

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29 While we might assume that this “equality” in general human terms, we must not forget that some are more privileged to speak in public than others.
30 Arendt, Human Condition, 176.
31 Ibid, 188.
The actor serves as an agent for speech, and without doing this in public, it is “no less a means to an end than making a means to produce an object.”

It is now worth noting that Arendt’s conception of the public sphere is comprised by two distinct dimensions, which are nonetheless interrelated. The first is the space of appearance, a space of political freedom and equality, which comes into being whenever citizens act together through speech and the rhetoric of persuasion (this is where the web of human affairs is). The second is the common world, “a shared and public world of human artifacts”, created through both work and labor, which separates us from nature and provides a relatively permanent and durable context for our activities (such as speaking).

We see now then how action and speech are used in concert to reveal our identities in the public realm. It then falls on the public, the listener, to interpret those words. An essential aspect of speech is its boundlessness, in that the speaker does not know what will happen with those words after they have been said. Only retrospectively, that is, only through the stories that will arise from their deeds and performances, will their identity become fully manifest. Here the storyteller is introduced. As the “who” is disclosed through speech, it affects all of those who he comes into contact with. The web of existing human relationships is important here because it acts as a “medium, in which action alone is real”, the web of human relationships “‘produces’ stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things.”

The stories of the “who” may be recorded in documents, monuments, objects or artwork; they tell a story but by nature are essentially different from their subjects while simultaneously telling us more

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid, 184.
about them. Arendt puts it eloquently, “Although everybody started his life by inserting himself into the human world through action and speech, nobody is the author or producer of his own life story.”

The function of the storyteller is thus crucial not only for the preservation of the doings and sayings of actors, but also for the full disclosure of the identity of the actor. The actor may not be aware of what else his speech discloses about his identity, so “what the storyteller narrates must necessarily be hidden from the actor himself, at least as long as he is in the act or caught in its consequences.” The actor does not see the meaningfulness of his words in the story that follows. While the stories that the actor produces are the inevitable results of his or her action, the storyteller, through his or her perceptions is the true “maker” of the story. Storytelling, or the weaving of a narrative out of the actions and pronouncements of individuals, is partly constitutive of their meaning, because it enables the retrospective articulation of their significance and import, both for the actors themselves and for the storylisteners.

Imagination

Storytelling is part of the function of imagination that Arendt constructs. Arendt defines imagination as the faculty of representation in one’s mind of that which has already appeared to the senses. In this manner of imagination, the object is given the distance necessary for impartial judgment. Through this process an individual can then judge the true value of an object. Therefore, whatever is not an object of knowledge

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34 Ibid.
holds an occasion for using the faculty of judgment. Imagination, however, does not use recognition as a faculty but rather as a reproduction through temporal understanding. Imagination, in its freest form, “is not bound by the law of causality, but is productive and spontaneous, not merely reproductive of what is already known, but generative of new forms and figures.” This might remind us of Arendt’s notion of speech in that it is necessary to “materialize and memorialize… the ‘new things’ that appear and shine forth.” Just as speech is boundless, so is imagination. Additionally, just as speech is necessary for action, it is also necessary to preserve what is imagined. This memorialization of imagination could again lead to another speech act, leading us to yet another memorialization.

Thinking of Arendt’s storyteller is useful in this case, as the storyteller appropriates the speech of someone else, both altering and memorializing it. Only retrospectively—through stories that will arise from their deeds and speech—will the speaker’s identity become fully manifest. Additionally, imagination lends itself to Arendt’s notion of the function of the polis. The Greek polis was meant to make more stable the fragility of human affairs. To do so, frameworks of action and speech were constructed, and speech was recorded and transformed into stories. The polis created a space of remembrance, akin to memorialization, where human acts could be made more permanent. Imagination would involve appropriating those stories and reconceptualizing impermanence as permanent.

36 Linda Zerilli, “‘We Feel Our Freedom’: Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt”, Political Theory, (Vol. 33, No. 2), 163.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid, 204.
39 Some critics, such as Habermas, question this part of her conception of imagination in that the reproductive imagination is tied to understanding.
Connecting imagination to the previously mentioned web, each individual is contextualized within their own story by various storytellers. Benhabib gives a helpful example for explaining this connection:

Even before a child is born, members of its family construct a ‘web’ of stories and relationships into which it will be inserted. The mother may want a son who will become a great pianist she missed becoming because she started raising a family… the sibling in the house may with that a new child would never appear. We all begin life inserted into narratives, stories, and webs that were spun before us, and that will accompany us, and against which more often than not we will have to struggle.\(^{40}\)

While actors define their who-ness with what they say, they are also defined by the spectator. All actors become part of the web of human affairs because of the boundlessness of their speech and action. In this way, action cannot escape the medium of speech as speech can escape action. While action is defined by speech, speech itself spreads autonomously (metaphorically) in the in-between space, beginning where the speech starts and ending at the horizon of the individual.

It is important to note here that there is a risk associated with imagination to which I alluded above. Arendt seeks to keep imagination under the protection of rhetorical thought, lest it enters the hands of someone who disguises opinions as truths and thus expropriates an opinion, and through masquerading it as the truth, allows for others to imagine (reproduce) its false truthness. Here we must remember her distinctions between rhetorical speech and philosophic (or political) speech.\(^{41}\)

\(^{40}\) Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 113.

\(^{41}\) Political speech is composed not of truths dressed up in rhetorical form but of opinions. In contrast to this political speech, she writes, is the “philosophical form of speaking […] which is] concerned with knowledge and the finding of truth and therefore demands a process of compelling proof.” Linda Zerilli, “We Feel Our Freedom”, 166.
While Arendt believes a true faith in politics may have already come to an end, the fact that it existed allowed action to climb to the highest rank in the hierarchy of the vita activa and it served to “single out speech as the decisive action between human and animal life, both of which bestowed politics a dignity which even today has not altogether disappeared.”\textsuperscript{42} The height at which she holds speech is imitated by other thinkers after her, but their description of speech can not rival her revelatory qualities in so far as they laid down a framework for a greater realization of who-ness as intersubjective to the speaker and listener. Without speech, she argues, there would be no way to “materialize and memorialize… the ‘new things’ that appear and shine forth.”\textsuperscript{43} The relationship between the speaker and listener is manifested in concepts of both plurality and the imagination of the listener.

\textit{Animal laborans and Speech}

Labor, as mentioned above, is the lowest form of the \textit{vita activa}. Distinguished by its endless character, it involves the perpetual renewing of its efforts, which are quickly consumed. Those who engage in labor (and it must be regularly, as labor is distinguished by its regularity) are characterized by Arendt as human existing in the closest nature to animals, or \textit{animal laborans}. The laborer is unfree, in other words, a slave. Arendt goes so far as to exclude these people from all worldly affairs, “The \textit{animal laborans} does not flee the world but is ejected from it in so far that he is imprisoned in the privacy of his own body, caught in the fulfillment of needs in which nobody can share and which


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 204.
nobody can fully communicate.”

Since the animal laborans is ruled by his body, no other “lofty desires” (participating in action) have the same urgency as that which the body needs to survive. He can rarely use his homo faber because he is busy using his hands. In order to reach these “lofty desires”, the animal laborans must attain freedom, but herein lies the problem such that “man cannot be free if he does not know that he is subject to necessity, because his freedom is always won in his never wholly successful attempts to liberate himself from necessity.”

Being that the potential for animal laborans to participate in action and speech is tied up in their fruitless quest for freedom, it seems that their voices are permanently cut out of the political sphere. However, the desire for speech is still present. Fortunately, the polis is a space where action can occur and the polis is open to those who are present. These are public spaces that allow for the possibility of speech. “In other words, the polis understood as a space of appearance is performative, wherein what appears is the unexpected and unpredictable words of a self who is always in a web of relationships.”

That which is public about speech, and is in and of itself essential to the performative quality of speech, is inherently tied to the ability for an animal laborans to engage in action. By carving out the public spaces, one can perform speech acts, which can elevate the individual to a realization of their plurality (their uniqueness). In these carved out moments and spaces, freedom can exist for the animal laborans, though it is not a constant state. In the sense that anyone can enter these political and public spaces, they have the opportunity to engage in the political act of speech.

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44 Arendt, Human Condition, 118.
It has been my intention that this chapter to illustrate the complexities of Arendt’s conception of speech such that they might be analyzed and applied (or not) to the operation of CR in the developing world. The following section will demonstrate how the intricacies of plurality, imagination, the web of human affairs and anyone’s ability to act in tandem with these concepts are put into place in CR.
Interlude 1

Using Arendt’s work on speech as a platform for considering speech in public, I will identify themes that transcend to the broadcast of speech over the CR frequency. Interlude 1 will use case studies of CR to demonstrate the roles of plurality, imagination and the web of human affairs in CR and how they affect the surrounding community enveloped by the radius of the broadcast.

Radio and Plurality

Arendt describes speech as an avenue to express the “who-ness” of an individual as separate from their “what-ness”; therefore, speech allows for plurality to develop because speech defines individuals as distinct and unique from one another. Additionally, one’s “what-ness” is defined with respect to one’s social location and other factors such as race or ethnicity because those factors are not explicative of “who-ness”. As a manager of community radio, an individual will most likely be among those who Arendt would define as “laboring” or “working” on a daily basis, who hold the lofty desire for action but cannot normally partake in it. The management of a typical CR station is set up in the form of a council that usually has seven to 25 members who are representatives from the most important sectors for the community such as farmers, fishermen, women, youth, laborers, ethnic communities, educators, and religious denominations.47

47 Tabing, How to do Community Radio, 10.
There is no empirical data that illustrates the exact demographics of CR participants due mainly to the decentralization of CR initiatives. However, the grassroots natures of CR lends itself to the community who seeks to be heard and this would generally include more marginalized populations that make for a class difference between those who express themselves through CR and those who chose other forms of media.

UNESCO’s *How to do Community Radio* makes notes that radio listeners (and makers) do other things. They can be plowing in the field, traveling, driving, washing clothes or mending fishing nets. One drawback of this is that the audience may be only half listening, and much of the message could be missed, ignored or misunderstood. The radio speaker cannot command full attention from a housemaker who is attending to her children going to school, or who may be chatting with a neighbor.

During my research in Bali, Indonesia, the majority of CR stations broadcasted from isolated villages that had little to no access to other news media. Participants in the CR initiatives started their projects as a way of improving their communities because there is little state action to do so. Indonesia entered in 1998 the reforms era liberating itself from the repressive authoritarian New Order regime. Reforms have also occurred in the media sector resulting in the emergence of new media in the form of audio, print, and audiovisual. However, in reality most of these forms of media have not incorporated the voices of the community. CR stands as a way of incorporating the community as the producers of information rather than a tool to disseminate a certain agenda. In Indonesia, there are about 600 community radio stations.48

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During my research in Bali, those involved in the radio station were of a variety of working class backgrounds. In the radio station in Tabanan, the main announcer had a physical deformity that prevented him from holding other work (this adds to the effect that radio is blind, which will be addressed in Interlude 2). However, at the station, he is a lively host, reads the news aloud for the public to hear and participates in various campaigns initiated by station members. In another context, he noted in an interview that his life would be different had it not been for the establishment of the CR station. Due to his class status in Balinese society, which has a caste system similar to that of India, there were few other options for him other than to be supported by his family. His position at the station allowed him to express an element of who-ness that would have been lost had he not participated at all, or at the very least, achieving this level of public speech would have been more difficult to achieve. Others at the station held positions such as farmer, plumber, and electrician. The point here is that not every radio maker or listener labors constantly, but a fair amount do. In any case, those who might not normally get to express their who-ness publicly (such as the disabled Balinese man) or who might not get to listen to community dialogue (such as the homemaker).

However, the question remains whether community radio has been fully used by groups of people, including women, who remain marginalized in many contexts in Indonesia and beyond. The result of questionnaires distributed to a number of community radio stations in Indonesia has shown that women’s involvement in the management of community radio is still insufficient but present. The same situation can be found when it comes to programming; only a few programs are dedicated to women. In most cases, the programs are about recipes and health and beauty problems, rather than about issues
related to women’s rights. Nevertheless, groups of women taken the initiative to use radio as a medium to disseminate issues on women’s rights, among them are Women Voice Radio in Pariaman, West Sumatra and Women Journal Radio Program.

Radio Suara Perempuan (Women Voice Radio) in Pariaman, West Sumatra, was founded by Nurhayati Kahar. At the beginning, Kahar was concerned about the large number of cases of violence against women in her region. Therefore, she founded the Institution for Victims of Violent Acts to Women and Children, which was legally registered in 2002. The Institution chose the medium of community radio to spread their campaign ideals. Kahar thinks that violence against women is “hidden because the culture of shame is still very strong”. Women Voice Radio encourages women to “fight for justice”. Kahar insists that a case of violence against women should not be settled by “custom law” because they often disadvantage women; but rather these cases should be processed by criminal law. Women Voice Radio uses local language, namely Minang language. Its target audience is not only women but men too. It is very important for men to know about the laws about violence against women, and so that women are not thought of as “unintelligent”.49

This model of community radio is unique to the exploration of plurality due to the general model in which the elite of a developing nation control the media. Mario Murillo’s offers an insightful piece on Colombian community radio, which explains the shift in plurality that community radio offers.50 The Colombian case of CR is interesting

49 Ibid, 75.
because of the CR project implemented by Colombian and the U.S. governmental bodies. The project, implemented by the Colombian Ministry of Culture, is partly supported by the IOM (International Organization for Migration) through its USAID-funded Displaced and Vulnerable Groups Assistance Program, carried out in alliance with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF). According to Colombia's Minister of Culture, Elvira Cuervo de Jaramillo, the project's major achievement in the first two years was bringing people together and in giving “people of different cultures and backgrounds a space to express their opinions” through community media and especially CR. Some of the issues discussed include forced migration, recruitment of children into illegal armed groups, human trafficking, and HIV/AIDS.

In Colombia, as in many developing nations whose working class citizens itch for democracy, yet have yet to see its actualization, state and powerful private interests control the majority of information industries. These houses of “commercial mass information and cultural industries” continue to perpetuate myths about Colombian democracy and society both by embracing the institutional definitions used by the establishment to describe the fringes of society and by limiting the space whereby the voices of many cultural groups may be heard. Colombian mass media rarely represents “the complex organizational structures of Indigenous communities, characterized by consensus-building, grassroots participation, and leadership accountability.”\textsuperscript{51} The hegemony of the commercial and state sector is challenged through the radio and other alternative media sources.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, 151.
The voice of the politician, who usually gets to speak in public, is now coupled with the voices of the “laborer” or “worker”. Just as Arendt argues that public spaces are a place where performative speech can occur, the radio airwaves serve as a true “public space” where the who-ness of individuals can be manifest. Arendt presents us with strict divisions of labor; however, the previous descriptions of plurality in CR show that who-ness can be made explicit by those who labor outside of the station.

**Radio and Imagination**

One of the UNESCO points regarding the “nature of radio” states: “Radio lacks permanence. The audience may not read and re-read messages as in the print press. Radio is transient”. However, another point regards CR as stimulating imagination. While radio broadcasts cannot be re-read, they are generative thanks to their boundless generation of imagination. Remembering Arendt’s definition, imagination, in its freest form, “is not bound by the law of causality, but is productive and spontaneous, not merely reproductive of what is already known, but generative of new forms and figures.” This might remind us of Arendt’s notion of speech in that it is necessary to “materialize and memorialize… the ‘new things’ that appear and shine forth.” Just as speech is boundless, so is imagination. Radio stimulates imagination. The listeners of radio supply the visual data for themselves. They picture the messages suggested by

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53 Zerilli, “We Feel our Freedom”, 163.  
54 Ibid, 204.  
55 Some critics, such as Habermas, question this part of her conception of imagination in that the reproductive imagination is tied to understanding.
voices, words and sound effects. When one school in the Philippines was asked about television drama the response was “I prefer radio, the scenery is so much better.” This would mean that while the actual speech is not preserved on paper, it is boundless in its quality to impact the surrounding community because of its stimulation of the social imagination embedded within the web of human affairs.

One such discussion that an informant in Bali told my research partner and me about concerned water sanitation in the village. Many callers spoke about their personal experiences with dirty water. This, in the opinion of some community radio theorists, is one of the utmost goals of community radio, to stimulate discussion about community problems, “Dialogue will be genuine and real. Concrete solutions to concrete problems can be discovered together… They will preserve the cultural identity of their audience and hand back to them their right to be heard.”

The witness or witnesses tells of not only the event that happened to him or her (their child drinking dirty water) but the emotional impact of that event (I was mad at my neighbors for their unsanitary habits). Someone who hears this witness-account on the radio may relay it to another, an example of the boundless dissemination characteristic of voice. When another listener tells that story to another non-listener, it is from a second-hand perspective (I heard this on the radio about dirty water). However, the listener also feels a sense of entitlement to the emotions felt by the initial caller (I’m upset about her child drinking that dirty water). Through this mode of dissemination of voice, “first-hand knowledge such as that of the eye-witness is bound up, in talk, with the authenticity of experience, of emotion, and of the speaker as a legitimate teller of particular kinds of

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56 Tabing, How to do Community Radio, 40.
57 Querre, A Thousand and One Worlds, xi.
stories.” Through this chronology of the voice, a sense of credibility, legitimacy and authenticity is given to an experience.

In terms of relevancy, the initial act of calling would not take place had the listener not found the topic of water sanitation relevant to their life. Additionally, the second listener who relays the story must also find relevancy (and credibility) in order to feel compelled to share it with others (I will discuss this further with regard to Habermas’s notion of sincerity of the speaker in Interlude 2). In community radio theory terms, this is called “articulation” in that the broadcast should be suited to the particular needs of the community. While this may seem like an obvious aspect of community radio, the discussion is integral to the station itself leads to the opening up of space in a more physical sense (as we will see when we discuss the public sphere in Interlude 2).

Occurring within the same vein as imagination is Arendt’s worry that imagination can alter the truthness of the original speech. Arendt seeks to keep imagination under the protection of rhetorical thought, lest it enters the hands of someone who disguises opinions as truths and thus expropriates an opinion, and through masquerading it as the truth, allows for others to imagine (reproduce) its false truthness. Radio holds to this conception of speech in that it too can suffer from interference. While the printed page is received in exactly the form in which it left the press, radio is always subject to interference. What leaves the studio is not necessarily what is heard in the possibly noisy environment of the listener. Intrusion of other station’s signals, atmospheric noise,

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59 Ibid, 69.
distortions of sound, a fading signal all add to the infidelity of message.\textsuperscript{60} In addition to a muddling of the intended message, it can impact the credibility of the message.

While community radio is intended to be of the community and for the community, those in the community are responsible for the messages they send as the power of community radio to mobilize groups and bring change to societies is well recognized. This power can, however, also be manipulated and used to spread hate and violence, as was the case in Rwanda in 1994. Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) was the primary station involved in the movement of “hate radio” in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{61} It was widely listened to by the general population, gathering its support by broadcasting popular Western music and fueling the tension between Hutus and Tutsis with hateful speech. A November 2009 study estimated that the broadcasts explained an increase in violence that amounted to 45,000 Tutsi deaths, about 9% of the total.\textsuperscript{62} Clearly this is an extreme example, but an apt one for demonstrating why distortion of rhetoric matters. This is an example of distortion to the degree of severe manipulation but through it I seek to support Arendt’s argument that imagination has a dangerous component in that one idea can be reframed to such a degree that it does not resemble the original notion at all.

This project deals with the potentials for voice within CR, and therefore, it must also contend with the potential for voice to become distorted. In regard to violence and

\textsuperscript{60} Tabing, \textit{How to do Community Radio}, 40.

\textsuperscript{61} While RTLM received support from the government-controlled Radio Rwanda, which initially allowed it to transmit using their equipment, funds were additionally appropriated from the community. While this does not fit perfectly within the model of CR that I have set forth to use in this project, I believe the severity of the example serves to illustrate the risk associated with the reappropriation of speech that Arendt describes in her assessment of speech used in the political realm.

\textsuperscript{62} David Yanagizawa, "Propaganda and Conflict: Theory and Evidence From the Rwandan Genocide" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2010).
spoken word, verbal aggression is often followed by physical violence.\textsuperscript{63} The goal of dissemination of accurate information is a cornerstone of the desire to broadcast so while no CR station is obligated to be bipartisan, there is an element of journalistic integrity that follows Arendt’s argument supporting sincerity behind speech and not a distortion of truthness. A distinguishing element of CR is its rootedness in the community, broadcasting the voices of the community from within, rather than broadcasting voices of others to the community from outside the community. Because of this, it is important that the broadcast is not used as an instrument of ideology by the state or as a means of propagating commercial interests. If either state or commercial interests were to use the voice as an instrument to achieve their own successes, then the veracity of CR voice would be undermined because the community would essentially become a tool used in the construction of a larger project outside the immediate interests of the community.

This concept of distortion when coupled with sincerity becomes sticky because we might imagine a situation in which hate in sincere. While hate can be divisive between communities, it can also serve to strengthen the bonds within one community by pitting itself against the “other”. Even if professional staff may want to take a neutral line as hosts of discussion programs, callers unless handled professionally may not. Audience participation in both the commercial stations as well as in the community stations could be part of broadcasts that could fuel the violence.\textsuperscript{64} So while this might not be categorized as distortion, it is still using the broadcasted voice to set an agenda and because of the power of voice and increased access to radio in the developing world, these ideas can


\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
become easily spread because of CR if the orator is choosing to spread an ideology. However, because of the most common structure of CR stations, a collective or cooperative, and because most CR stations require a significant number of volunteers who are committed to the station, it seems less likely that speech would be distorted or that an individual would be able to successful push forward an ideological agenda. A study performed in Kenya before and after the violent round of elections in 2007, showed that among three different CR stations, when compared to state and commercial stations, all were not perceived as having taken sides in the violent conflict or fuelled the violence; rather, all were victims of violence.  

Radio and the Web of Human Affairs

Action (and therefore Speech) is unpredictable because it is a manifestation of freedom, of the capacity to innovate and to alter situations by engaging in them; but also, and primarily, because it takes place within the web of human relationships, within a context defined by plurality, so that no actor can control its final outcome. If one builds an artifact and is not satisfied with it, it can always be destroyed and recreated again. This is impossible where action is concerned, because action always takes place within an already existing web of human relationships, where every action becomes a reaction, every deed a source of future deeds, and none of these can be stopped or subsequently undone. The web of human interaction is essential to Arendt’s concept of speech because it involves two key concepts of speech itself, its boundless quality and its necessity to be performed in public.

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65 Ibid, 40.
Community radio stations often group themselves together in a sort of “club”, they come together to produce the programs, listen, discuss, and then move on to action. Generally they grow out of social or youth movements. The next case study is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where CR made its first appearance from 1992 to 1995 when a wind of democratic freedoms and demands blew across the continent. In the DRC, in particular, this period marked the chaotic end of the Sovereign National Conference, the institution of a multi-party system, the nearly anarchical opening of media space, and, importantly for the world of radio, the end of the state monopoly on radio and television.

The Ingaa radio club in The DRC (in the former region of Zaire) conducted a campaign to combat the lack of soy seeds. On air they reported:

*The Ingaa radio club is presently reproducing soy seeds, in an effort to share them with other radio clubs and the population during the rainy season. One soy field has already produced a good enough quantity for the next seeding period. Through all of this, we hope to intensify the production and consumption of soy in the Kakwa collective.*

It is through the discussion generated by the speech projected by the radio that the initiative can gain support to get off the ground. The web of human affairs allows these initiatives to be realized as a reaction to a previous speech action.

As with imagination, the speech performed over the radio frequency does not end where it begins but rather forms the nexus out of which future action can grow. Here is a transcript of a program produced in an unspecified region of the DRC:

*We are not planning to build a brick school. We have already built two churches from bricks. We hope to get a government loan to enable the association to send its produce to key centres. It’s difficult carrying sacks*

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weighing 100 kg on a donkey or one your head. We need carts, which cost 120,000 francs. We also want to send one young farmer to do a course in accounting, and another to do a first-aid course. We already have a first-aid kit. And next? We’re going to buy pipes to build two wells, one on either side of town. Then we will have clean drinking water.\(^{67}\)

This illustrates one of the key aims of CR which is to imagine “long-term action as the only way out [of poverty and dependence on international aid]”. It clearly distinguishes between the two aspects of development: the modest by sustainable benefits of communal work, carried out with traditional methods, and the impressive but temporary benefits of foreign aid.\(^{68}\)

The CR broadcast also *inspires* others to perform action that they might not have thought possible. An elderly man in the DRC voiced the following very poignant thoughts:

> We used to think that we lived in an unchangeable situation... Thanks to the radio, we've found out that there are many things that can change. Who would have thought ten years ago, that an elderly person could learn to read and write? The radio has led us to see and understand what's happening at our neighbors’ and elsewhere in our country and the world.

> The radio enables us to see beyond our small village. It's as if we were traveling all around to see how people live elsewhere. That's how we learn that many things can and should change here with us and that we can make them change ourselves by relying on our own abilities.

> Before, we didn't have the intention of expressing ourselves... Now, we've learned to speak and say what we think. The radio has steered us onto this new road by asking that we take part in programmes in our own language. We ourselves ask the questions on the radio.

> The radio has opened our eyes, ears, and mouths.\(^{69}\)

Through educational programs on his local CR station, this elderly man conceives of his who-ness as one entitled to perform action in the public sphere. He now sees “beyond [his] small village, reconceptualizing himself in space. The words voiced through the

\(^{67}\) Querre, *A Thousand and One Worlds*, 107.

\(^{68}\) Ibid, 106.

\(^{69}\) Aw, “Lessons from a Little-Known Experience”, 43.
radio proved to be boundless in their nature such that we cannot predict where this man’s inspiration will take him and what actions it will lead to.

The following chapter will build off of the conception of speech created by Arendt, which was articulated in the first chapter. Chapter 2 will examine other qualities of voice that we have yet to touch on, such as where it is performed and the forms that it takes. Additionally, I will examine Habermas’s concept of the “ideal speech situation”. All of these concepts will be ripe for analysis through the lens of CR in Interlude 2.
Chapter 2

Attributes of Speech: The Where and How

We attribute identical meanings to expressions, attach context-transcending significance to validity claims, and ascribe rationality or accountability to speakers.\footnote{Jürgen Habermas, \textit{Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics}, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2001), 55.}

\begin{quote}
- Jürgen Habermas, \textit{Justification and Application}
\end{quote}

This chapter will be an amalgamation of thinkers whose theories revolve around the concept of voice. Additionally, I will draw upon thinkers who have responded to Arendt’s concept of speech with criticism. The first section of this chapter will be an exploration of the public sphere (for reasons that I explain below), beginning with Jürgen Habermas and ending with critiques of his definition of the public sphere and speech within that sphere. This section will revisit the plurality of Arendt but through the lens of Habermas and with critiques from other thinkers. I will then discuss sincerity as a key concept in speech. Finally, I will explore dissenting speech and what that means for the political and public sphere. Overall, the following points will be emphasized: market forces are a threat to the “ideal speech situation”, sincerity is important to speech, and there is a need for acceptance of other forms of voice if we do truly desire a communicative democracy. Habermas’s “ideal speech situation” and criticisms of it will be a central themes of this chapter.
A Voice in the Public Sphere

The previous two sections focused on Arendt’s conception of speech as its different qualities applied to CR. In this chapter, I would like to focus on elements of speech not directly addressed by Arendt. However, to do so I would like to pay more attention to an analysis (albeit brief) of the public sphere according to Jürgen Habermas. We already know that under Arendt’s definition speech cannot be performed in private; thus, the public sphere then becomes that much more essential to voice as a political act. Additionally, to the extent that radio broadcasts are one of the most public forms of dissemination of information, it would be foolish to not address the constitution of the public sphere. I choose here to focus on Habermas (though I will address some of his critics) because he is among the primary thinkers to discuss the public sphere and his argument for the constitution of the public sphere arises out of recognition of the private. In Interlude 2, we will see that these boundaries of public and private have an interesting role with respect to community radio. Additionally, Habermas discusses the impact of the press on the public sphere, which is essential when we return to our theme of community radio as a medium for the free press of the people.

In Habermas’s Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, he describes the move from the private household to the public sphere. The public sphere is an area in social life, usually of a democracy but possibly not, where people, ideally of all backgrounds, can get together and freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action and decide upon modes of governance.\textsuperscript{71} This is the public sphere of rational-critical debate. Habermas presents the public sphere

\textsuperscript{71} While this is a Habermasian notion of the public sphere, I have appropriated some of the ideas of other thinkers (such as Young’s concepts of plurality) to form this definition.
as that of the late-seventeenth-century Great Britain and eighteenth-century France. Private people using their reason appropriated the state-governed public sphere.72 “The public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society.”73 A political consciousness developed in civil society that articulated the demand for general laws and eventually asserted itself as the only legitimate source of these laws. This is what Habermas defines as public opinion. The literary public sphere, a key structure in the constitution of this framework, acts as a bridge between representative publicity and the bourgeois public sphere. The literary public sphere allows for ordinary people to engage in political reflection by giving them the chance to discuss art and literature critically (“the training ground for a critical public reflection”)74. The political public sphere, where the public challenged and criticized state authority, developed from its literary predecessor.

Ideally, the discussion that occurs in the public sphere leads to a deliberative democracy. It is worth the time to note that within the public sphere occurs two types of speech: communication and deliberation. Deliberative democracy is a form of democracy in which public deliberation (in the public sphere) is central to governance. Deliberation, rather than voting, is the primary source of a law’s legitimacy. Inherent in deliberation is communicative rationality or discursive rationality.75 The modes of justification we use in our moral and political deliberations, and the ways we determine which claims of

72 Ibid, 30.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid. 29.
others are valid, are what matter most, and what determine whether we are being "rational". Hence the role that Habermas sees for communicative reason in formulating appropriate methods by which to conduct our moral and political discourse. Habermas's entire conceptual framework is based on his understanding of social interaction and communicative practices, and he ties rationality to the validity basis of everyday speech (which we will return to when we discuss sincerity).

As an important aside to our discussion, communication and deliberation would fall under Habermas’s catagorization as a “speech act”, which may or may not be part of an “ideal speech situation.” To begin the speech act can be broken down into pieces:

Locution refers to the content of a speech act, that about which there can be a truth-value. The illocutionary component of a speech act, on the other hand, the performative force with which the locution was uttered (‘I am telling you, I saw him!’). The perlocution aspect of a proposition is its effect on the hearer (e.g. to produce alertness or fear). This latter can associated with rhetoric. In this theory of communicative action Habermas tends to associate the illocutionary force of speech acts with a performative intention to communicate to reach understanding. Perlocutionary acts, on the other hand, he associates with the strategic action by which people manipulate others into serving their own ends. Aiming to produce specific effects of listeners, that is, according to this account, distorts the communicative interactions by introducing this instrumental element.76

However, not all of these forms of speech acts would apply to the ideal speech situation. In order for an ideal speech situation to occur the following must take place: 1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse; 2a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever; 2b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse; 2c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs and; 3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or

76 Iris Marion Young, Inclusion and Democracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 65.
external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (1) and (2). 77 This concept will come to be contested later by other thinkers. Speech acts are essential to the public sphere in that they allow for deliberation, but might also inhibit it. After laying down the ground work for speech in public, we will move on to one of the essential manifestations of speech: the press.

According to Habermas, one of the “transformations” that the public sphere has undergone is with reference to the press. The shift in function of the principle of publicity is based on a shift in the functions of the public sphere as a special realm. This shift can be seen clearly in its key institution - the press. The press became increasingly commercialized. Due to this shift, Habermas argues that the press has become corrupted as he urges that the private and public spheres remain separated to facilitate rational deliberation (in the public sphere). As the press developed, a political function was added to its economic one; papers became leaders and carriers of public opinion. The press began to shape critical debate, rather than transmitting it. As the press is affected by advertising, private people as owners of property affected private people as a public. 78

Habermas treats the press as a case study of the changes that occurred in the public sphere. His treatment of literary journalism shows how the economic and political functions of the press developed together. Making money and shaping or reflecting public opinion were related in complex ways—“As soon as the press developed from a business in pure news reporting to one involving ideologies and viewpoints, however, and the compiling of items of information encountered the competition of literary

78 Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. 181.
journalism, a new element—political in the broader sense—was joined to the economic one.”

Additionally, this part of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* serves to illustrate Habermas’s perceived threat of market forces and the corruption of the interests of the public sphere implied by this. “In the course of the shift from a journalism of private men of letters to the public services of the mass media, the sphere of the public was altered by the influx of private interests that received privileged exposure to it—although they were by no means *eo ipso* representative of the interests of private people as the public.” The press began as a key private institution of rational-critical debate; it provoked and transmitted this debate, but did not shape it. It was protected from state control because it was privately owned. However, advertising in the press changed this situation. Advertising is the representation of private interests to the public in an attempt to influence the public. It represents the blurring of private and public, and is a result of the dominance of private interests in the public sphere.

While Habermas argues that the public sphere (originally intended for debate of public opinion) has now become a platform for advertising, he does concede that deliberative speech can occur outside of the pressures of market forces. However, deliberative democracy must come first in order to create the space for speech to occur. This space is for “communicative presuppositions that allow the better arguments to

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79 Ibid. 182.
80 Ibid. 188.
81 Ibid. 181.
come into play in various forms of deliberation”.  

Throughout his work, Habermas creates a framework for how communicative exchanges can take place. At the center of this structure is the assumption that “language is the specific medium of reaching understanding” and the “other forms of social action—for example, conflict, competition, strategic action in general—are derivatives of action oriented toward reaching understanding.” This moves us towards a deliberative democratic process, taking place through speech acts that are oriented towards a mutual understanding, though this does not necessitate agreement. In this way he creates the idea of the public sphere as “widely expanded and differentiated public spheres as well as through legally institutionalized procedures of democratic deliberation and decision-making.”

Much criticism arises from Habermas’s notion to “communicative action”, which for Habermas is the center of the structure of the democratic ideal. Nicolas Garnham lists the general criticisms of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and in doing so includes arguments against Habermas’s model of communicative action. One such critique purports that Habermas’s model neglects “all those other forms of communicative action not directed toward consensus.” While ignoring that which is not geared toward consensus, the rhetorical and playful aspects of communicative action are lost as well. He is then missing the link between “information and entertainment” in

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84 Habermas, “Three normative models of democracy”, 28.
85 Nicholas Garnham, “Media in the Public Sphere”, in *Habermas and the Public Sphere* ed. Craig J. Calhoun et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999), 360.
which we lose the link between citizenship and theatricality.  

Some critics of Habermas disapprove of his notions of civic speaking because of the structural limits to the possibility of true plurality. Some members of society have more access to expression of their who-ness than do others. The others who are disengaged from the act of speech are then not given the opportunity to reveal their uniqueness (and thus they cannot engage in deliberative democratic politics). Nancy Fraser notes that Habermas fails to account for how citizenship is taken up differently between men and women in male-dominated societies. She notes that “citizenship, in his view, depends crucially on the capacities for consent and speech, the ability to participate on a par with others in dialogue. But these are capacities that are… in myriad ways denied to women.” Meanwhile, Iris Marion Young is concerned that any call for “reinstitution of a civic public in which citizens transcend their particular contexts, needs, and interests to address the common good” will result in “suppressing difference,” and will “tend to exclude some voices and perspectives from the public,’ because of their dominant positions in inegalitarian societies.”

Sayla Benhabib takes this position as well in response to some of Habermas’s

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86 Here we might be reminded of Rousseau’s notion of public festivals. Rousseau's theories about theater, theatricality, performance, and civic identity played a large role in French Revolutionary culture because they responded to the need for the education, edification, and construction of a new republican identity. Public festivals, Rousseau argues, allow the individual to represent himself through genuine gestures to the community—and interesting aside to speak of the public sphere and speech but too rooted in the physical and visual to be applicable to this discussion.

87 Many of these arguments are also made against Arendt’s work on plurality, in that not all individuals have equal access to participation.


essays in the mid-1960s\textsuperscript{90} that deal with ideals of a democratic culture. She preempts her argument by explaining the “ideal speech situation” according to Habermas, in which she claims that Habermas’s moral theory “inherits a number of dubious distinctions from the liberal social-contract tradition that are at odds with the more critical and political intentions of his theory of late-capitalist societies.”\textsuperscript{91} She then goes on to present the procedural constraints of the “ideal speech situation” which are the following:

Each participant must have an equal change to initiate and to continue communication; each must have an equal chance to make assertion, recommendations and explanations; all must have equal chances to express their wishes, desires, and feelings; and finally, within dialogue, speakers must be free to thematize those power relations that in ordinary contexts would constrain the wholly free articulation of opinions and positions.\textsuperscript{92}

Taken all together, Benhabib gives this the name of \textit{egalitarian reciprocity}. This matters so critical social and political theory because the general exclusion (or relegation to the “private sphere”) of women and other marginalized peoples from Western political thought is evidence of the “ideal speech situation” being contingent on too many social and political factors.

In Habermas’s work on the public sphere, there is a notable vein of plurality that runs throughout: all who consider themselves part of the conversation should be allowed to speak in the public sphere in order for deliberation concerning governance to occur. However, as we have seen through his definitions of speech acts and the ideal speech situation, there are inconsistencies in the practice of this theory. While several kinds of

\textsuperscript{91} Sayla Benhabib, “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas” in \textit{Habermas and the Public Sphere}, ed. Craig Calhoun et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999), 89.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
speech acts are delineated, only locution is deemed acceptable for the ideal speech situation. This means that the way in which someone presents their argument or speaks in public may not always be suitable for Habermas’s notion of public deliberation, which presents a problem for those who do not voice their thoughts in a certain fashion or those who do not have a voice at all. The following sections will explore the other forms of voice that are part of the public sphere, many of which express further plurality, though do not necessarily coincide with Habermas’s notion of speech in the public sphere.

**A Sincere Voice**

To support her definition of plurality as revealing the who-ness in each person through speech, Arendt identifies “uniqueness” as key in the revelatory quality of speech. Through this uniqueness, we identify our voice as our own and furthermore, the listener to the speaker adds ever more layers to our original who-ness (the who-ness they perceive of you is unique to their own who-ness). Together the speaker and the spectator may engage in the creation of *polis*, which expresses its concerns over their society.

In the way that Arendt expresses plurality, it can be seen in the public spheres of Habermas in that each person can speak, revealing themselves, and thus making themselves a clearer entity to understand. It is important to note that communication does not necessitate agreement, as each who-ness is additionally marked by the perspective of the listener, who inherently has their own who-ness to contend with before agreeing with the argument of another. Habermas creates a standard for successful interactions between and amongst individuals: they must “speak as though they are telling the truth of themselves in public” in order to engage in proper speaking and “have what they say be
valid.” Habermas writes, “The validity basis of speech is curtailed surreptitiously if at least one of the three universal validity claims—to intelligibility (of the expression), sincerity (of the intention expressed by the speaker), and normative rightness (of the expression relative to a normative background) is violated and communication nonetheless continues on the presumption of *communicative* (not strategic) action oriented toward reaching mutual understanding.” The element of sincerity is thus one of the central pillars to the validity of a speaker and more importantly the validity of the words that are spoken, and this too comes across in the work of Arendt.

When Arendt explains the connection between speech and action, she notes that action is often the means whereby we check the sincerity of the speaker. Habermas as well makes an argument for sincerity, as “a tacit condition of intersubjective participation”; part of this condition is that we must “be sincere in our desire for consensus, we must be sincere when speaking, and we must be sincere in our critical commitment to philosophical justification.” This sincerity builds upon what the speaker has already presented as part of his or her who and is passed as a judgment by the listener.

Seyla Benhabib takes an interesting standpoint in this conception of plurality by first rejecting Kant’s assumption that as moral individuals we are all some how “identical”, and then thinking of “enlarged thought as a condition of actual or simulated

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dialogue.” Enlarged thought also entails knowing how to listen to what the other is saying. Alternatively, in the case that the voices of others are absent, enlarged thought would necessitate imagining oneself as in “a conversation with the other as my dialogue partner.” Benhabib thus puts forth the notion that enlarged thought is best realized through dialogue or discussion. In this way, both speakers must reveal themselves within a dialogue in order to achieve enlarged thought, as a means of understanding wider civic causes. We can take this further in addressing the plurality evident in discussion, in that the uniqueness of each person becomes all the more evident through dialogue.

To cite a more modern and pragmatic notion of sincerity, Yonchai Benkler gives a description of communication in this context of dissemination and uses the Internet to illustrate how these steps to communication are becoming more fluid and, he believes, ultimately more democratic. He describes the components of communication in the following passage:

First, there is the initial utterance of a humanly meaningful statement. Writing an article or drawing a picture, whether done by a professional or an amateur, whether high quality or low, is such an action. Second, there is a separate function of mapping the initial utterances on a knowledge map. In particular, an utterance must be understood as ‘relevant’ in some sense, and ‘credible’… Finally there is the function of distribution, or how one takes an utterance produced by one person and distributes it to people who find it credible and relevant.  

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96 Arent and Benhabib are both borrowing from Kant’s “enlarged mentality”, a sort of wide manner of thinking, the ability to think in place of everybody else.
97 Sayla Benhabib, “Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt’s Thought”, Political Theory (Vol. 16, No. 1), 44.
This concept of communication makes an important addition to the concept of voice, which is that of the function of distribution and the listener’s subjectivity over credibility and relevance.

**Voice and Communication**

If we are to be truly communicative, or at least hold up communicative democracy as being the most effective form of civic decision-making, then we need to accept and understand other forms of communication, many of which are not covered by Habermas’s definition of the “ideal speech situation.” As we previously saw with Benhabib, the “ideal speech situation” is limited by social and political factors and therefore must be reconceived. Young repeats these worries in *Inclusion and Democracy*, where she writes, “Inequalities of power and resources frequently lead to outcomes such as these, where some citizens with formally equal rights to participate nevertheless have little or not real access to the fora and procedures through which they might influence decisions.”\(^99\) The definition of communication must be restructured because Habermas’s does not give an adequate representation of all the voices that interact in the true public sphere.

One of these alternative modes of communication stems from Young’s concept of rhetorical speech. She defines rhetorical speech as aiming “not to reach an understanding with others, but only to manipulate their thought and feeling in directions that serve the speaker’s own ends.”\(^100\) She is careful to note that rhetorical speech happens to some

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\(^99\) Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 54.
\(^100\) Ibid, 63.
degree in any form of discourse, so it is even more important to realize that deliberative democracy cannot be based in a form of speech that is “coolly and purely argumentative.” Rather one must understand the implications of distinguishing between how something is said versus what is said.\textsuperscript{101}

She goes on to argue that rhetoric is a positive aspect of communication for a number of reasons, which I will present in summary. To begin, rhetoric often is the push which turns an issue into a topic for discussion and deliberation.\textsuperscript{102} As rhetoric can begin the deliberation on an issues, it also allows for the issue to be framed as is most pertinent to a particular public in a particular situation. To this point Young writes, “Public utterance must be open to the possibility that anyone could be listening, and that anyone can question or challenge them.”\textsuperscript{103} This allows for the discussion to reach the “local public”, which Young describes as, “a collective of persons allied within the wider polity with respect to particular interests, opinions, and/or social positions.”\textsuperscript{104} This reminds us of arguments by Nancy Fraser, who discusses the need for a theory of deliberative democracy that recognizes the existence of many publics. Additionally, Fraser argues that disadvantaged and marginalized groups should form “subaltern counter-publics”, where they are freer to develop their own position (a sort of smaller scale ideal speech situation).

Finally, rhetoric serves a purpose for speech that speaks to the central issues that are met by the CR theory discussed in the following section, the position of “storytelling”.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid, 64.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, 66.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, 68.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 73.
as a function of rhetoric speech. Young describes the role of storytelling in speech in the following passage:

Storytelling is often an important means by which members of such collectives identify one another, and identify the basis of their affinity. The narrative exchanges give reflective voice to situated experiences and help affinity groupings give an account of their own individual identities in relation to their social positioning and their affinities with others. Once in formation, people in local publics often use narrative as a means of politicizing their situation, by reflecting on the extent to which they experience similar problems and what political remedy they might propose. Examples of such local publics emerging from reflective stories include the processes of ‘consciousness-raising’ in which some people in the women’s movement engaged, and which brought out problems of battering or sexual harassment which these were not yet recognized as problems.\(^{105}\)

Discussion of more examples of “consciousness-raising” will follow this section, but in the meantime I do not want to overlook the theoretical implications of what rhetorical speech means for the listener. During storytelling and the implementation of emotion to present a concept to an audience, social knowledge is produced which adds to the enlargement of thought of a local public. While the story may relate a personal experience of an individual, it also allows the interpretation of a relationship (between the listener and the idea) to be manifested in the local public. As the listener interprets their own relationship with that of the storyteller, they can then extrapolate this sentiment to their relationships with others and what others might perceive and think. From this we can return to the idea of “enlarged thought” from Benhabib. Finally, Young ends this part of her discussion with the pragmatic realization that these narratives serve to affect

\(^{105}\) Ibid, 73.
political argument by distributing social knowledge and informing the public on “the likely effect of policies and actions on people in different social locations.”  

Within rhetorical speech, we can make another categorization of dissenting speech. A paradox of democracy is present in the “blending of apparent contradictions.” To state this dilemma very simply: the citizen must express his point of view so that the political elites know and can be responsive to what he wants, but, on the other hand, these elites must be allowed to make decisions. The citizen must then be influential (through their politically active voice) and deferential. This influence can take different forms. In Albert Hirschman’s work on *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, he represents a speech situation that might occur within the setting of a factory or firm. However, his argument is not limited to these realms and the concept of a dissenting voice can be extrapolated into the public sphere.

Hirschman’s basic argument is that members of an organization (such as a business, nation, or other human group) have two options in terms of response when they are no longer satisfied with existing conditions: they can exit (withdraw from the relationship, emigrate, quit, etc.) or they can employ voice which he defines as, “as any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of action and protests, including those that are

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106 Ibid, 76.
meant to mobilize public opinion.”

Voice is therefore political in nature and usually confrontational. However, voice serves a purpose to inform the organization as the reasons for its decline, allowing for dialogue (much like Young’s concept of rhetoric) and reason for change by those in charge. If public deliberation is central to governance as Habermas argues, then public dissent in order to push forth a better model of governance of a firm, state or organization would also be key to deliberative speech.

Habermas’s public sphere is one in which deliberative democracy can take place through communicative action towards a common goal of governance. In his ideal egalitarian view, everyone should be able to voice his or her opinion in the public sphere for this communication to be most legitimate. However, as his said transformation occurs, we see how a threat, such as market forces, can displace this notion of plurality in favor of economic or political ends, as is evidenced by his example of the corruption of the free press. Habermas saw that desire for profit was effectively shaping public opinion, as opposed to communicative action being the force of legitimacy that allowed for the public sphere to be a place of deliberation.

An important part of why this money-making agenda threatens Habermas’s concept of communication and speech is because it diminishes the sincerity of what is being said. As the press sought to commercialize, news reporting increasingly involved ideologies and viewpoints, and thus this speech would be a rhetorical speech act or a perlocution. This points to Habermas’s argument (and that of several others) that sincerity matters. When someone speaks to us, because we are bound to extrapolate and

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“storytell” from that initial utterance, the sincerity of the statement will be reflected in how others perceive it and set the groundwork for what they will do with that information. However, because voice is not always sincere, what can be made of all the other speech acts that do not fall into that category? The other forms of speech acts that are locution still serve a purpose within the public sphere that works towards deliberation and decision-making.

Just as sincerity is (an albeit positive and useful) characteristic that voice can have, the other forms of voice, such as dissent and rhetorical speech, have value and should be acknowledged in not only the public sphere but also in the deliberation process. If we wish to open up the doors of communicative action to all, then a reinstitution of other forms of voice into the public sphere is an important factor in this positive transformation. Based upon these factors, the definition of the ideal speech situation as put forth by Habermas needs reworking. If we are to make the claim that the ideal speech situation is a concept of value and that it might be extrapolated out of its theoretical realm, then it must be modified. While the lofty goals of inclusion and pluralism should remain (it would not be the ideal speech situation without them), it might be added that communicative action necessitates a restructuring of the system in which measures are put forth so that all peoples, marginalized or not, might speak publicly if they choose to.

The following Interlude will model the relationship demonstrated by Chapter 1 and Interlude 1. I aim to draw connections between concepts such as the ideal speech situation, sincerity, and rhetorical forms of speech and the practice of CR in the developing world. As many of these concepts relate to speech being a tool towards a
deliberative process, it will be important to examine how CR plays a role in increasing participation and plurality among the marginalized.
Interlude 2

The previous chapter began with an explanation of the public sphere, due in part to its necessary existence in order for speech to occur in public (as mandated by Arendt’s concept of speech). However, the public sphere is formulated in contrast to the private sphere. Community radio involves both the public and private spheres and allows for a certain reformatting of the public sphere. Additionally, the market forces originating in the private spheres come to have impact on the dissemination of information to the public sphere, as addressed by Habermas’s discussion of the corruption of the free press. These topics will be covered with respect to CR in this first section of this Interlude. The following section of this interlude will discuss the sincerity of speech in CR and how it allows for greater feedback and effectiveness of public service announcements (PSAs). Finally, the third section of this interlude will discuss the other types of voice that do not fall under the category of sincere locution and will make use of the distinctions of voice that Young provided for us in Chapter 2.

Radio and the Public Sphere

While Habermas creates distinct lines between the public and private spheres, CR serves as a unique medium for blurring these distinctions and allowing for a reshaping of the public sphere. Radio is described by UNESCO as a “blind” medium, in that is had no visuals, and listeners cannot see the messages it aims to disseminate. However, as addressed in Interlude 1, this allows for more use of the imaginative quality of radio speech by its listeners. Additionally, as a medium of “mass communication” (again,
UNESCO provides this descriptive factor) it is less “personal” than face-to-face interaction and feedback thus becomes less immediate. However, in an examination of CR in several different parts of the world, this abstracted and distanced quality does not always hold true. Rather, the public sphere is reshaped, in both theory and practice, so that CR fits within both the private and public spheres in different ways; “The listener experiences the radio voice as both far away (in that it issues from some invisible location, a place not here) and very close (in that one can see the place from which the voice emanates).”

Additionally, this lack of face-to-face time can serve to make the qualities of voice on the radio more personal. The extent to which the frequency encompasses a geographic area reshares the community who tunes in. To begin, we will examine how CR operates in changing the shape of the public sphere.

CR is not always a “blind” medium, in that the “community” in “community radio” encourages more face-to-face time to occur in different settings. The spaces where the stations operate often become akin to community gathering spaces. In Colombia, the indigenous stations become their “communities’ public space” where members of the station can gather to “announce public events, celebrate birthdays, or alert people about the death of an elder.” Children regularly visit the studios, feeling at ease and send “greetings out to their families and friends.” Murillo writes that his informants express strong feelings about the stations, and the space in and around the station, as “belonging to them.”

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110 Murillo, “Weaving a Communication Quilt in Colombia”, 156.

111 Ibid.
In Bali, one of our informants originally broadcasted from his home. However, when the community began to feel more involved in the station, he moved the tower and equipment to a place where young people spent their free time in the neighborhood. He told us that his goal in this move was to “encourage participation by the youth.” Of the discussions that took place from this location, some were broadcasted and others were not. However, the engagement in dialogue about the community increased because the youth were interested in being part of something they viewed as exciting. Our informant would eventually like to see the station moved to the (Bali) banjar (community meeting place) to encourage further participation.\(^{112}\)

In both of these cases, the station became more than a place for one or two people to broadcast, but rather a place where people young and old felt comfortable gathering and participating in dialogue. While the speech acts they engaged in might not always have been broadcasted, there is a good chance that some were. Additionally, even if one could not be at the exact location of the station to be part of that essence of public sphere, they might still listen to the broadcast and be a latent part of the discussion in that way, or they could carry on the discussion in their own home, in their private sphere.

More often than not, the listener will not be at the station to engage in the discussion. The fact that radio often reaches the listener during his/her situation of solitude and privacy adds to the intimate character of radio. In this way, the private sphere is opened up to the public sphere; from within the private sphere one can hear the personal and intimate voices of another or a lively debate about a community issue, while allowing their own private sphere to remain private. The actual quality of the voice is a

\(^{112}\) This same station also proved innovative in that they used solar power to supply the radio station with energy.
factor in this discussion in that, as UNESCO’s description points out, “warmth, compassion, anger, pain and laughter are conveyed more adequately in an audio medium. With accent, inflection, hesitation, pause, and a variety of emphasis and speed the voice report is able to convey far more than printed speech.” This personal quality of voice will be discussed more in terms of sincerity, but it is worth noting that it is also a private quality (one of deeper more private emotions) that is broadcasted on a public medium—an interesting combination of private and public spheres. “Private”, as is evidenced, now holds many meanings within the realm of CR. There is the locution of the private elements of ones life, such as emotions or sexuality. Additionally, acting in the interest of profit is private, in that it only affects a few people and not the public. Finally, Habermas argues for his version of the private and public spheres.

In the same way that the public sphere was reshaped to include the radio station in Colombia and Bali, there are other forms that this reshaping might take, and these will involve the private more than the public realm. In 1993, several pirate radio stations began to broadcast in Bankass (a region of Mali). Mali’s situation is particular in that radio stations began to broadcast before an attempt was made to regulate the radio landscape by means of legislation. After the downfall of President Moussa Taorré’s regime in March 1991, radio broadcasters sprung up in large numbers without any kind of regulatory framework. A legal structure for radio was established in 2002 and laws for CR are outlined in article 3 Chapter 1 decree 02-227/P-RM where it states that 70% of their programming must be national and “they are responsible for promoting local

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113 Tabing, How to do Community Radio, 40.
Furthermore, articles 18 to 23 of Chapter II of Decree 02-227, which deal with the financing of CR stations stipulate that these stations must not receive donations, bequests, or monetary or in-kind subsidies from political parties; they must publicly disclose their fee structures and benefits as well as keep regular accounting records; and they also must pay their license fees and taxes. However, this is often a difficult task for these stations that are hard-pressed for funds and committed volunteers. As they work toward improving the access to information within their own public sphere, they now have the obligation of paying taxes towards a larger public sphere that does not directly serve their interests.

One of the stations in Mali, set up by an illiterate radio electrician, was noted by a local school headmaster as useful in that it allowed for the alleviation of the extra work because no one needed to travel from “house to house anymore to inform citizens on local developments or venues for meetings.” This is an example of the decrease in face-to-face time as an effect of the radio broadcast. While some might bemoan this effect, there are other ways in which this decrease is a positive factor. In one of the larger studies carried out by the U.S. Demographic Health Survey (1996), the survey found that “in Mali radio was the principle source of AIDS information for men (75% of the sample) and women (50% of the sample)... the radio outstripped other more usual

115 Ibid.
116 Another example of pluralism in the participation of many who labor regularly.
sources of health information such as friends, relatives and health workers.”

In situations where topics of sexual health could be embarrassing, the radio broadcast serves as a means for relieving the face-to-face interaction that might cause that embarrassment, allowing for the prerogatives of the PSA to reach their audience in private. This is relevant to CR as opposed to other forms of media because CR is designed by members of the community to best suit the needs of the immediate community (like improving dirty drinking water, and issue that could not be covered by national public radio) rather than having the goal of profit be the primary mission for what information is disseminated.

In the most general terms, it would be accurate to label radio as “blind”, it removes the most primary sense of sight. However, more than just restoring imagination of what it cannot provide, the speech on the radio can allow for plentitudes in the absence of physical presence, whether this is in the form of a new community center or the relief of the embarrassment caused by the taboos of social and health issues. Moreover, “the reception of pure sound… which comes to [the listener] through the loudspeaker,” is “purged of the materiality of its source.”

This purity of sound without image creates its own space of intimacy for the listener, in his or her own private space. The listener can experience, then, a closing of the distance between his or her self and the other speaker. As these boundaries become blurry, the listener has the comfort of being rooted in a (usually familiar) place. The almost ethereal presence of the voice of an unknown speaker (unknown in that they might not be an actual acquaintance) in such

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118 Ibid, 98.
119 Munich, “In the Radio Way”, 223.
territory allows for the meshing of public and private spheres that is rarely achieved by other forms of community media.

Habermas makes the argument that the interests of one’s own private sphere, such as the desire for personal profit, should not meddle in those of the public sphere with respect to the free press. This is a particularly relevant issue to CR in that often governments impose strict regulations on community radio. Habermas fears that the flux of private interests will corrupt the public service of the media. In many of the cases studies discussing the role of the government in CR, we find that it is often elite private shareholders who are calling the shots. To review the example of Colombia from Interlude 1, “Although not officially tied to the state, the intermingling of both state and powerful private interests with the people who control the major media makes an attempt at differentiation almost meaningless.”

The idea that CR can be completely removed from the impact of private interests would be naïve at best; however, the focus on community is a step in the right direction.

In a discussion about state licensing of CR stations in Bali, an informant said this about the process of receiving a license:

*Why should we (have a license)? (Even if we want to) have a license, if we follow the rules of the KPI (Komite Penyiaran Indonesia/Indonesian Committee of Broadcasting), there is too much bureaucracy. People will also (think) why (should we), because we don’t make a profit, we are not profit oriented. To apply for a license means that we have to spend time and energy dealing with them. Then, what about the ethics? (Do you think) there won’t be any cost? Also, why should we bother filling out forms, spending all our energy and time on that when we are already busy enough running the radio. It doesn’t match, there’s no balance.*

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120 Murillo, “Weaving a Communication Quilt in Colombia”, 151.
121 Interview with Mr. Yusef, July 30, 2010.
The informant is attempting to make the point that although the KPI does not mandate that the CR stations pay a fee for a license, there is just as much cost involved in not only deciphering the bureaucratic process but also money (for gas, etc.) to get the paperwork to the proper officials.

There are other issues that arise when the public and private spheres collide (albeit, they are interacting on two different planes, but nonetheless, they are still interacting). For example, it has been found that most “radio stations operating on community broadcasting licenses are urban-based commercial stations, oriented toward addressing market interests, rather than their audiences.”\textsuperscript{122} Because of the nature of broadcasting frequency, there are only so many “slots” or frequencies available for community, state, and commercial radio (these are often divided such that commercial radio is allocated the highest number of slots, and state and community rank second and third respectively). The radio stations operating upon community radio licenses are, more often than not, not meeting the mandatory access and participation requirements (set out by state law) to be defined as community radio. Additionally, “due to the increasing sustainability failure of community-owned models”, private ownership of a community broadcast station is sometimes the only avenue “through which a community can have access to quality, pro-empowerment, community-oriented programming.”\textsuperscript{123}

While CR (like Habermas’s definition of the press) was originally intended by those who fund development programs to be a source of debate over public opinion and community-building initiatives, it has in many cases gone astray to become a platform for


\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, 4.
advertising and profit-making. The speech acts on the radio ideally are oriented towards a mutual understanding, not a commercial goal. However, as a “mass media” there are sources of interference. While UNESCO describes these “interferences” as related to “atmospheric noise” or a “fading signal”, they can just as likely be attributed to the threat of market forces described by Habermas.

**Radio and Sincerity**

Now that we have covered the range of where speech occurs and disseminates (the public and private spheres), it is time to cover the speech act itself. As we know, Habermas bases the validity of the speech act on the intention expressed by the speaker, or the speaker’s “sincerity”. If the speaker intends to joke or manipulate, he or she is not being sincere and thus cannot truly participate in the communicative action that is oriented towards mutual understanding. Sincerity in the case of CR is still an important feature of the broadcasted voice, but because we cannot always know the intention of the speaker, the sincerity of the CR voice might better be judged by the sense that the listener gets from the speaker, in addition to the rationality behind it. On the other hand, one might be hard-pressed to find a type of CR voice that does not have an intention behind it, be it a good or malicious intent. Additionally, we might wonder whether those who produce and fund CR are able to be more sincere than a commercial or state broadcast thanks so an attempt to remove themselves from market forces.

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To begin with the sentiment behind voice, features such as “inflection, hesitation, pause, and a variety of emphasis and speed”\textsuperscript{125} allow for voice to convey much more than intent but rather a multiplicity of personalities and emotions. This allows voice to communicate more than printed word; beyond expressing an idea, it creates a vocal character that can then be judged by the listener. In this way the speaker is revealing his or her “who-ness” to be judged by the listener, which is essential to sincerity since sincerity involves “telling the truth [about oneself] in public.”\textsuperscript{126}

This revealing of the “who-ness” allows for the group or community to achieved an “enlarged thought”. At a radio station in the DRC (in the former region of Zaire), one of the weekly prepared shows receives its content, in whole or in part, from letters sent by radio clubs and the recordings from the mini-studios.\textsuperscript{127} One such recording is of a traditional doctor who discusses how he overcame his traditional beliefs and customs to bring the child to health by using new ways of medical aid. Another features a mother who explains how she cured her son from \textit{kwashiorkor}\textsuperscript{128} using soy products. She speaks over the radio as “she would to her friends, using the language and images of her community.”\textsuperscript{129} Listeners identify more readily with the concrete examples of their peers than with the theories, generalization and abstractions of “experts”. As a result, they are more likely to put their newfound knowledge into practice. In this example of a PSA, speakers reveal intimate (private) aspects of their who-ness by telling the listener about

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Panagia, “The Force of Political Argument”, 832.
\textsuperscript{127} CR sometimes takes this model of mini-studio and club, don’t forget to include this in the introduction—different models of CR.
\textsuperscript{128} An acute form of childhood protein-energy malnutrition, often characterized by the distended abdomen.
\textsuperscript{129} Aw, “Lessons from a Little-Known Experience”, 42.
healthy habits. Her words have intention behind them; however, the sentiment behind her words (caring for her child) is sincere in that she reveals an essential aspect of her mother-hood to the public. The fact that she speaks as though she were among friends adds to the sincere quality of her voice, and the effectiveness of CR PSAs demonstrate that though there is an intention behind these words, the listeners are able to abstract the relevant information and apply it to their lives and extend their thoughts about disease to more than their own personal experience but to one that they share in common with others and are more likely to unite a common front against it.

It might be that we cannot find examples of completely sincere voices in CR to match the definition of sincerity that Habermas and Arendt provide us with. This is due in part to the broadcast of the voice. In a discussion on radio behavior linguist Erving Goffman writes, “…there is no question of the subjects modifying their behavior because they know or suspect they are under study; for after all, announcers in any case are normally very careful to put their best foot forward. Their routine conduct on air is already wary and self-conscious.”130 In terms of sincerity and CR, it might be useful to reframe the concept of sincerity such that the intention is not geared towards profit making. However, there are situations in which sentiments can be sincere and negative, such as the hate mentioned in Interlude 1. How we choose to contend with elements of sincerity in CR is an important choice for producers and listeners of CR and those who fund it. Because truly sincere speech is in very small supply in CR, we will then look at the other forms of speech brought forth by critics of Habermas and their application to CR.

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Radio and Communication

As we explored in Chapter 2, there are many different ways of communicating, all of which find their niche in radio. One of the most intriguing concepts put forth by Young is the notion of “rhetorical speech”, which is speech that aims not for mutual understanding but rather to manipulate the thoughts and feelings in directions that serve the speakers own ends. Examples of this can be cited in various PSAs broadcasted by CR. They help to turn an issue into a topic for consideration and deliberation.

Peru dealt with considerable external debt, ever-growing inflation, a surge in drug trafficking, and massive political violence in the 1980s. Since then, under the presidency of Fujimori (1990-2000) the country started to recover; however, accusations of authoritarianism, corruption, and human rights violations forced his resignation after the controversial 2000 elections. Social groups in Peru seek a more transparent democracy to confront current allegations of internal corruption.

At a feminist radio collective in Peru. They aim to create PSAs that not only frame an issue as pertinent to a particular public in a particular situation. They push the boundaries as to what can or cannot be dicussed in the public sphere. One interesting question posed by one of the women in the collective was: “Where do women experience violence?” The answer was: “At home, at work, even in religious processions.”131 Using this personal (and private) experience they created PSAs that fit neatly within Young’s definition of consciousness-raising (as discussed at the end of Chapter 2). The following is a transcript of a PSA:

SOUND EFFECTS—Women singing in a religious procession

MAN—*(Pretending)* Pray for us sinners…
WOMAN—Hey, mister,… what’s the matter with you
MAN—Ave Maria, Ave Mariia…!
WOMAN—I said don’t push… You’re a real smartass, aren’t you? Well, we’ll see!
MAN—Oooooow! That Hurts..!
ANNOUNCER—The jerks are on the loose. Douse their flame where it causes pain!132

Not only is it amusing and provocative, it also strongly pushes forth a narrative of a women who confronts an issue head on. This version of a speech act is certainly not what Young would describe as “coolly and purely argumentative” but rather it pushes an issue (a woman’s issue) to the front of discourse in a manner that is certainly not sincere by Habermas’s definition. There is an emphasis here on how something is said rather than what is being said and it brings to life a private issue, making it public for further public deliberation.

Rhetorical speech is especially at use when issues are reframed to be pertinent to the community. In this manner, the ideas of the CR station are manipulated in such a way as to be amusing, even funny, for their listeners so that communication can grow from this new point of access. The same women’s radio collective wrote about a different instance of women’s issues, using the manipulation of humor to push forth an initiative, this time addressing men directly: “They also feel us up on the buses. So, since the lambada was really popular at the time, we hit on the idea of using the same music to warn the nuisances. The slogan was ‘Remember, men. You don’t dance the lambada on a minibus!’”133

132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
That the discussion of rhetoric for the purpose of consciousness-raising began with a discussion of women’s issues is no fluke precisely because this was the primary criticism that many thinkers raised with Habermas’s discussion of the “ideal speech situation” because it does not give an adequate representation of all the voices that interact in the true public sphere, namely that of women who have long been silenced from public deliberation. Alongside women are the voices of other marginalized groups who make up the population who engage in speech acts with less ease.

The Ghana Community Radio Network purposely writes in its manifesto that “community radio should have ‘strong linkages’ to its communities, which are specific and marginalized.” Similarly, in Burkina Faso, the Inter-African Center for Rural Broadcasting Studies of Ougadougou (Inter-Africain d’Etudes en Radio Rurale of Ouagadougou or CIERRO) puts forth its mission as “pro-poor, dynamic and open,” because “participation in this sort of radio can make a difference in the quality of lives of groups of marginalized peoples,” which includes women, the disabled, children, farmers or pastoralists. If we do truly want to uphold communicative action as an effective form of decision-making, then other voices and different forms of voice should be included in this dialogue.

Rhetorical speech is at times a dissenting form of speech, and there is no lack of examples to show the CR is a powerful tool for dissenting speech that illustrates what the community wishes to change about their existing conditions. In CR, dissent can take many forms, but is often pushing for the linguistic and cultural rights of marginalized

135 Ibid. 8.
groups that have few options as to venues for the projection of their dissenting sentiments. The following is a transcript from a broadcast in Juba, Sudan in 1987:

...brothers and sisters, I wish to tell you that we have been on the air for two years and those years we have spoken the truth, we have sung our songs, we have discussed our own traditional cultures and we have told our own folktales, we remind us of our origins... The Khartoum government does not want and is not willing to hear our languages on the national radio. In the past, many people have tried hard to introduce national languages on the national radio but failed. They were told that the introduction of such languages would demand high consumption of diesel and petrol [to run generators] and that there was not enough money. But that was not the reason. They just did not want us to speak our own languages. Moreover, they want us to forget out own language and speak only one language.  

This employment of voice expresses a desire to change the current state of affairs rather than escape from them. This sentiment is political and confrontational but also serves to inform the government as to why this portion of the population is dissenting.

Based upon the examples given above from CR in different parts of the world, there are certain connections that we might draw upon to make the linkages between theory of speech and the practice of CR clearer and more tangible. In Chapter 2, I discussed the creation of a new form of “ideal speech situation”, one that might include marginalized and often-unheard voices in the dialogue of deliberation. It seems that CR, with its many forms of speech, especially with the inclusion of Young’s definition of rhetoric and concepts of storytelling, would make use of a reformatted version of the ideal speech situation. While sincerity in the Habermasian sense may not play a large role in CR, both the strong case that Young and other thinkers make against it as well as

the new definition that I have given it with respect to CR. The version of Habermas’s sincerity that I would incorporate in an evaluation would be one that involves sincerity of character and emotion, rather than solely judging the intention behind the speech. PSAs and other forms of consciousness-raising are intended to put forth a certain agenda. However, rather than judging the speaker by their sincerity—sincerity being connected to intent—we should judge the value of those intentions with respect to the community. The Peruvian PSA involved elements of voice, such as humor and sarcasm, that strayed from the Habermasian notion of sincerity, yet the dialogue is effective in building consciousness-raising towards the empowerment of women.

We can now see sincerity as having an impact on the listener, though this does not mean that this speech can be deemed superior as juxtaposed with rhetoric. In addition, the clear usage of words to sway an audience (rhetorical speech) leaves us with plenty of examples from the practice of CR, making their role in the new definition of the ideal speech situation all the more important. Finally, we cannot forget about how the broadcasted speech of the radio serves to blur the lines of the public and private spheres—public announcements are brought into the private space of the home just as information about private matters like sexual health are broadcasted on a public mass medium. Not only are these spheres colliding on an individual level, but on the scale of private and public interests, the threat of market forces makes itself known to CR.
Chapter 3

Voice, Radio, and the “Nature of Radio”

While the literature on community radio and development is focused on the practicalities of participation and democratization, I believe that this form of community media reaches deeper into the politics of voice and holds a potential that other forms of media do not. Developed nations (predominantly France, Argentina, South Africa and Ireland) have created legal definitions for this sector of broadcasting, and much of the legislation includes phrases such as social benefit, social objective, or social gain as part of the definition. As developing nations begin to pigeonhole community radio into a legal definition complete with rules and regulations, I believe that it is necessary to delve into the theoretical implications of the power of the voice broadcasted by community radio.

In this chapter I will argue that the potential for speech acts in CR is three-fold: 1) The speech itself is rooted in plurality. 2) CR is a unique source of social and political imagination. And 3) CR is does not provide the “ideal speech situation” but provides a platform from which we can re-envision what the ideal speech situation might be. CR can occupy this unique role because it is both a part and apart of the public sphere because it so closely connects to the private sphere and private issues. Finally, this challenges the boundaries of who is privileged enough to engage in the political sphere namely because voice is inherently political and CR provides a distinctive medium for the dissemination of voice. Not only is the image of the type of person who participates in politics challenged but also the space in where politics can occur is reshaped by the broadcast of Community radio. The airwaves serve as an innovative, though not new, version of the
public sphere. Community radio deserves more analytical attention for this reason. This project contributes to an analysis of the politics of voice as it relates to community radio, which has been largely under-theorized and generally rooted in logistics and pragmatic solutions to development and participation. Based upon the theory that I have applied to CR I will rework the original points by UNESCO with this new framework in mind.

**Community Radio as Rooted in Plurality**

Plurality is intimately related to the public sphere, because ideally the public sphere incorporates the voices of the *polis* that allow for decision to be made within the web of human interaction. The web of human interaction involves two essential parts of speech its boundlessness and its need to be performed in public. In order for decisions to be made, these voices must not only be heard but they should be from the varied perspectives of those who wish to participate in the dialogue, as per the ideal speech situation that incorporated the work of Young. If action (speech) has no name of “who” associated with it, then it is meaningless because then speech loses its all-important revelatory quality. Even if the speaker is anonymous, their projected voices can reveals essential qualities about their who-ness. Additionally, if the speaker is reinventing him or herself, taking advantage of the “blind” quality of radio, their intentions can still be assessed as to their benefit for the community. However, if one is outside of the *polis* then they are not able to speak within it.

Community radio is oriented such that it is for the community, but this can only be so because it is *by* the community. Without the voices of the community it does not serve its function. In any other form of community media—print, television, internet
forums—certain qualities are necessary that are defined by the “what-ness” of the individual—literacy (determined by education), wealth (determined by status, wealth and education) or a combination of the two. While I have earlier chided the development community for focusing the pragmatics of community radio as a tool for development, it is this pragmatic aspect of radio (no need for literacy or technology) that allows for pluralism to occur. It has been shown through the various case studies that individuals from all backgrounds participate in community radio and even if they are not the ones whose voice is being broadcasted, they are still participating in the creation of the broadcast. Neither labor not work allows individuals to disclose their identities and reveal who they are as opposed to what they are, but community radio allows for an avenue to express the who-ness of a person who labors, lifting them out of their animal laborans status.

Just as Arendt argues that public spaces are a place where performative speech can occur, the radio airwaves serve as a true “public space” where the who-ness of an individual can be manifest. Plurality also introduces the storyteller, which serves as the link between plurality and imagination. Just as actors (speaking in public) define their who-ness by what they say, the listener defines them based on the imaginatory quality of the broadcasted voice.

**Community Radio as a Source of Social and Political Imagination**

Arendt describes imagination as reproductive and spontaneous, but not of what is already known. Rather, imagination is generative of new forms and figures in the
materialization of new things. The production of the “new” is evident through the social initiatives that arise out of CR, such as school or well building. Additionally, new social knowledge is produced through storytelling and reproduction by way of imagination. PSAs and other programs that exhibit human emotion and experience allow for “enlarged thought” through distribution of social knowledge.

William James presents another way of understanding Arendt’s argument on imagination, but his argument focuses on the imagination on the individual scale. He writes in his essay “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings” that each person is more real to himself than anyone else can be because he experiences his own consciousness in a way that no one else can. However, through imagination, another person can “at least be understood as real to herself as he is to himself… The inwardness of another is absent, that is, invisible, but it can be made present with a little bit of benign imagination.”

Through this cultivation of what George Kateb calls a “moral imagination” one can internalize that they are not the only reality. This way of thinking about “enlarged thought” allows for the speaker to play the role of initiator in a reenvisioning of reality that places themselves and their concerns at the center while simultaneously allowing the listener to remove themselves from that position of centrality even if for a short time.

CR is targeted towards a more specific audience than most forms of community media. The signal reaches within a certain range and the broadcasters are of the same geographical community. The PSAs or information about community initiatives or problems are directed at their audience, the listeners are gaining valuable social knowledge that is targeted toward their community. When a community initiative begins

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by informing the community through the broadcast, the original idea has the potential to become abstracted and an entirely new entity can grow out of that abstraction. Similarly, efforts to “consciousness raise” as we saw with the women’s collective in Peru (sexual harassment) and in the case of Mali (HIV/AIDS awareness), allow for the use of imagination in that the personal accounts of others can be made to appear closer and more “real” to the listener.

**Re-envisioning the Ideal Speech Situation**

Community radio changes the shape of the public sphere because it broadcasts private information into public and it broadcasts a public message into the private household. In this way the “ideal speech situation” that Habermas puts forth also shifts with respect to CR. Community radio is meant to help represent the voices of those who speak for and to their community, and because of its pluralistic nature (CR makers and listeners do other things and represent wider portions of society than other forms of media) the “ideal speech situation” can be recrafted to include these voices.

CR incorporated many forms of voice, many more than Habermas defines as applicable to his ideal speech situation. However, if we are to envision the ideal speech situation as one that incorporates the communicative structures of many (such that it represents the plurality of the community at hand), then these voices must be understood as legitimate to not only their listeners but to the broader community of the state. Hirshmann’s argument concerning dissenting voice is important because it allows CR to be contextualized as a way of critiquing the state or other governmental structures at large. While it seems though the CR broadcast is far from being recognized by the larger
community of the state, it makes strides in representing the voices of those that are either marginalized (such as indigenous populations) or do not normally have the opportunity to speak in public (those that the pluralistic nature of CR represents).

The forms of speech that are involved in CR are many: they are rhetorical, private, dissenting, and so on. However, they are effective in their mission. They raise consciousness, enlarge thought, and finally they represent a diverse set of voices that often seek to change the status quo. CR serves as a platform for thinking about how these voices can be best incorporated into a setting of deliberative democracy.

**UNESCO and (Re)defining Community Radio**

In the introduction of this project, I summarized a list of characteristics of community radio that UNESCO had devised and labeled as “The Nature of Radio.”\(^{138}\) I will now present each point as it is written in the UNESCO handbook “How to do Community Radio” and give my variation based upon the theoretical frameworks that I have explored throughout this project:

1. *Radio, a medium for hearing. The most striking attribute of radio is that it is an auditory medium. It has no visuals. It is blind. Listeners cannot see its messages.*

   *With radio, they can only hear and imagine objects, actions and ideas.*

While it is true that radio does not provide visuals for its listeners, to define it as “blind” neglects the very essence of community radio as building a community around the station. While not everyone may gather at the station to participate in discussion and the broadcast might give some reason not to attend community meetings, for others this

provides a rich opportunity for a gathering space that might not otherwise exist. The idea that face-to-face interaction might be increased by the presence of a community radio station is an exciting quality of community radio.

2. *Radio is a mass medium. It addresses many at the same time. With distance the contact becomes less personal than in face-to-face communication. The chance of being misunderstood is great. Also, feedback is not immediate.*

Through many case studies, it has been shown that more face-to-face communication might occur because of the presence of a community radio station. Additionally, the presence of a real voice in the privacy of one’s home is a personal act in a way that listening to a speech in a public square or reading the newspaper is not. Finally, feedback in the imagination of the listener is immediate and those thoughts and conversations may carry themselves to family members and friends of the listener who also may provide feedback, albeit a different version than calling into the station, which is also a possibility.

3. *Radio lacks permanence. The audience may not read and re-read messages as in the print press. Radio is transient.*

As in the point made above, radio broadcast is not transient but rather is it boundless. It may pass through the airwaves and leave no tangible mark of its existence but this is not necessary for the idea to reproduce itself in productive ways. Although the messages cannot be read and re-read, then instead can be re-imagined and memorialized by movements of activism in the community. The action of speech in public always takes place within the web of human relationships, where every action becomes a reaction.

4. *Radio stimulates imagination. The listeners of radio supply the visual data for*
themselves. They picture the messages suggested by voices, words and sound effects. When one school was asked about television drama the response was “I prefer radio, the scenery is so much better.”

Radio does stimulate the social and political imaginations of the body of the public who is able to listen to the broadcast.

5. Radio is personal and intimate. Real voices, insinuating personalities and emotions are passed on through radio impulses. Warmth, compassion, anger, pain, and laughter are conveyed more adequately in an audio medium. With accent, inflection, hesitation, pause, and a variety of emphasis and speed the voice report is able to convey far more than the printed speech. The fact that radio often reaches the listener during his/her situation of solitude and privacy adds to the intimate character of radio.

Radio does have a personal and intimate quality, especially because both private matters can be discussed and the listener will most often listen to them in the home. An unknown voice in a known place allows for the feeling of intimacy with the voice of the radio broadcaster. The tonality of the spoken voice reveals volumes as to the intention of the speaker as well as the impact of its emotive quality.

6. Radio listeners do other things. They can be plowing in the field, traveling, driving, washing clothes or mending fishing nets. One drawback of this is that the audience may be only half listening, and much of the message could be missed, ignored or misunderstood. The radio speaker cannot command full attention from a housemaker who is attending to her children going to school, or who may be chatting with a neighbor.
Not only do radio listeners do other things but the radio makers/ producers/ electricians/ guest speakers/ PSA-writers also do other things. Individuals are able to overcome the limits of mere labor and present themselves as unique entities by revealing their who-ness rather than the what-ness of their social or cultural status. Because many community radio stations run themselves as democratically-run clubs, the voices of many are able to be input into the single voice that projects from the broadcast.

7. Radio can suffer from interference. While the printed page is received in exactly the form in which it left the press, radio is always subject to interference. What leaves the studio is not necessarily what is heard in the possibly noisy environment of the listener. Intrusion of other station’s signals, atmospheric noise, distortions of sound, a fading signal all add to the infidelity of message.

While interference can occur in these forms it can also occur at a deeper leave such as in the form of government imposition or private for-profit interests, or people who want to spread hate or other misinformation to the listeners. This should not be confused with speakers who speak with an intention (rhetoric) towards a positive goal.

Community Radio is a form of media that serves a deeper purpose than an affordable and effective method of disseminating formation. Basing a concept of speech on the work of Arendt, I was able to show that speech in public is not as simple as a radio broadcast but rather that speech cannot help but become politicized when it is performed in public. Speech enters the political realm because its performance in the public sphere is the same space where deliberation occurs. The voices that are broadcasted by CR represent a plurality of speech that brings forth the “who-ness” of the speaker. Whatever is spoken then serves the community in an unlimited sense because of the boundless
quality of voice. And finally if we are to value all of the voices that are disseminated into the public sphere, the ideal speech situation needs to be reconsidered. Through an understanding of these theoretical frameworks, we are given a new way of thinking about UNESCO’s original points about the “Nature of Radio.”

I am using CR as a model for how a reconceived ideal speech situation can be realized. Habermas’s ideal speech situation is rooted in norms, not particular practices, which is why I am using CR as a model but this is not to say that it is ideal at all times. There are times when CR falters to include voices that seek to be part of deliberation. However, there are also times when CR allows for the unheard voices of a community to be launched into the public sphere of the radius of the broadcast. The voices of the other, the marginalized, the woman, now have a space to be publicly political.

Most important elements of development, such as participation, social and economic justice, and democracy building, have a normative framework that has been established by various thinkers. However, despite the amount of international funding and the popularity of CR initiatives, a theoretical framework for CR has yet to be developed by scholars. In this project I have shown that indeed there is a place for theory in CR and while the pragmatics of CR are real and deserve attention, the politics of speech and voice in the context of CR are also relevant. Through normative frameworks, like a model of a envisioned ideal speech situation, the potential that CR to be a catalyst for plurality and social and political imagination is clearer. It is this element of clarity, a tuning in, that I have sought to accomplish in this project. The potential for CR to be a model that kick-starts a more plural and imaginary society is real when we think past the pragmatics of its role as development tool.
**Conclusion**

In this project I have engaged in a critical exploration of Community Radio as a unique way of looking at voice as a political entity in the public sphere. The primary literature on Community Radio thinly describes it as a form of media in which people’s participation serves as the roadmap towards a more meaningful democratic process in the community. It allows for higher accountability of the government and allows the participants to also hold themselves accountable for the information they disseminate. However, this literature as a whole, and especially the UNESCO text *How to do Community Radio*, fails to acknowledge an integral aspect of radio—the voice itself. Using the UNESCO points of the “Nature of Radio” as a framework for the qualities of CR, I identified different ways of reconsidering these characteristics with a more complete understanding of voice disseminated by the CR broadcast.

I began with presenting aspects of voice that Arendt brings to the forefront—the revelatory quality of the who-ness of the speaker. When the who-ness of the speaker is projected to the listener, the true plurality of voice emerges in that we now experience the speaker for “who” they are, rather than their “what”, which applies to, among other things, their profession and social standing. I presented examples from CR to argue that plurality occurs in the making and listening aspects of CR.

From that plurality of voices, the imagination then gives us a platform for how to understand what happens to voice after it is disseminated into public (and speech can only be revelatory and therefore pluralistic in public). I argued through cases of CR that the ideas that were part of a speech act can then be transferred into tangible actions and results. Additionally, the imagination allows the listener to engage in a process of
“enlarged thought” and can therefore put the stories of the speakers into a larger context of an understanding of their community. Efforts of “consciousness-raising” make perfect sense when juxtaposed with an understanding of social and political imagination.

In order to realize the plurality that is inherent in voice, we must accept the many forms that voice can take and therefore, CR gives us a new way of understanding the “ideal speech situation”. CR utilizes forms of voice that are not always present in the moment of democratic deliberation. Through examples of CR I argued that these different forms of voice presented by Young and Fraser are evident in the broadcast and should be considered valid in the “ideal speech situation”.

Finally, I argued that the voice broadcasted by CR reshapes the public sphere. Private messages are transmitted onto public airspace. Public messages are transmitted into the private sphere of the home. Finally, CR stations become centers of community gathering and discussion. I argued that this aspect of CR is essential to allowing us to envision plurality, imagination, and a reframing of the “ideal speech situation” as vital aspects of CR and make available the analysis of voice in CR rather than the more common discussion of pragmatic logistics. Through an understanding of these theoretical frameworks, we are given a new way of thinking about UNESCO’s original points about the “Nature of Radio.”

Much of what is covered in How to do Community Radio is helpful and informative to the CR novice. It explains the mechanics and the benefits of a community radio station. However, when it comes to the nature of radio, there were improvements that could be made given a deeper understanding of the theoretical frameworks behind voice in the public sphere. Through a presentation of the theory behind speech in public and the
use of case studies of CR from the developing world, I have made my argument for a reworking of the UNESCO points on the “Nature of Radio” and have added my own voice to the fleshing out of these characteristics.

Radio takes a different emancipatory focus in different social and political contexts: as human and cultural expression, as social and political intervention, as community-building, as a tool of revolutionary struggle. There are many aspects of community radio that I did not apply to this project. Though I started my introduction with a nod to the amount of money put into CR initiatives by larger international NGOs, I chose to focus on the ramifications of voice that this funding allows for. However, an in depth study on the agents of funding and the effect that donor influence has on what CR stations broadcast would be not only interesting but useful to the future development of CR and it is not a theme that came across in my research.

I hope that this project has shed some light onto the politics of voice in the broadcast of a community radio station in a developing state. My argument was intended to explore a common theme in political theory, but with a grounding in real-world application. Through a reframing of the UNESCO points of the “Nature of Radio” we are better able to see the power disseminated by the community radio broadcast.

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