

TECH1502-18 Introduction to Community Media

Lecture Eight: Voices & Self-Expression

Introduction:

1 Social Change & Development

“Societal groups that are represented one-sidedly, disadvantaged, stigmatised, or even repressed can especially benefit from using the channels of communication opened by alternative media, to strengthen their internal identity, manifest this identity to the outside world, and this enable social change and/or development” (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpenter, 2008, p. 14).

1.1 Content/Process/Relations

“Rather than attempt to define alternative media solely by content I propose a theoretical and a methodological framework that incorporates content as one element in an alternative media culture that is equally interested in the processes and relations that form around alternative media production” (Atton, 2002, p. 3).

1.2 Flying Fish

“This is a personal website containing a few articles and links, focused around the issues of the mass media, information, power, democracy and quality of life. It is dedicated to the resistance against news and image management, against the systematic distortion and trivialisation of reality that mainstream culture spews forth. To the extent that we know and understand what's going on around us, we are empowered to make informed and wise decisions about how we live and act. Most of us know or understand next to nothing about the world around us; therefore, our 'freedom of choice' and our votes are next to worthless. It is against the interests of big business corporations, and of most politicians, that we be empowered. The less informed and aware we are, the more they are able to sell us their images, news, ideas and products. None of these necessarily improve the quality of our lives; indeed, they impoverish our lives, since a quality life is an empowered life, and this is precisely what the corporate political establishment strives to reserve for itself” <http://www.flyingfish.org.uk/links/>

2 Alternative Media

“Socially marginalised or dissenting groups, subcultures, ethnic minorities, and others who inhabit liminal spaces in mainstream cultures may be most likely to seek out alternative media, and to create their own if it is not found. In a world where the mass media exists less to inform or entertain than to sell audiences to advertisers, these people's desires are unlikely to be met in the mainstream marketplace” (Waltz, 2005, p. 8).

“The story of pop music through fans' memories and memorabilia from 1976-1985, when punk hit Britain and rival tribes exploded onto the high street.” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b07ycbr8/the-peoples-history-of-pop-3-19761985-tribal-gatherings>

<https://youtu.be/gli35e5m3Rk>

3 Participatory Communities

“There is no single vision of participatory community as community, but its advocates emphasise the importance of people deciding together, face to face, conversing with and respecting each other in a setting which is as equal as possible” (Robert Fowler Booth in Etzioni, 1995, p. 88).

3.1 Facilitating Participation

“Alternative media not only allow but also facilitate the participation (in its more radical meaning) if its members (or the community) in both the produced content and the content producing organisation” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 13).

3.2 Representation

“Representation in this political context becomes a ‘struggle for meaning’ and is an important source of social knowledge production – a ‘system, connected in more intimate ways with social practices and questions of power’ (Hall 1997: 42). Reality and its meanings are constructed within language, discourse, and representation within a specific history and culture. In discursive terms this means that representation not so much distorts reality as productively provides the means by which reality is actively constructed (Hall: 1997)” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 17).

“ Our world is strange and often fake and corrupt. But we think it’s normal because we can’t see anything else. Hyper-Normalisation - the story of how we got here.” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p04b183c/adam-curtis-hyper-normalisation>

“We live in a time of great uncertainty and confusion. Events keep happening that seem inexplicable and out of control. Donald Trump, Brexit, the War in Syria, the endless migrant crisis, random bomb attacks. And those who are supposed to be in power are paralysed - they have no idea what to do. This film is the epic story of how we got to this strange place. It explains not only why these chaotic events are happening - but also why we, and our politicians, cannot understand them. It shows that what has happened is that all of us in the West - not just the politicians and the journalists and the experts, but we ourselves - have retreated into a simplified, and often completely fake version of the world. But because it is all around us we accept it as normal.”

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/adamcurtis/entries/02d9ed3c-d71b-4232-ae17-67da423b5df5>

4 HyperNormalisation trailer (by Adam Curtis)

<https://youtu.be/nz6u7xRznjY>

4.1 Alternative Outlets

“In this regard, the creation of alternative media outlets and alternative media texts, like radio broadcasts or newspaper articles, also contribute to the empowerment of people participating in such processes. Individuals involved in the production of alternative media outlets and texts regain their voice in societies, speak for themselves and do not delegate their narratives to any external media professionals” (Porta & Mattoni, 2013, p. 176).

4.2 AlterNet's Mission

“AlterNet is an award-winning news magazine and online community that creates original journalism and amplifies the best of hundreds of other independent media sources. AlterNet’s aim is to inspire action and advocacy on the environment, human rights and civil liberties, social justice, media, health care issues, and more. Since its inception in 1998, AlterNet.org has grown dramatically to keep pace with the public demand for independent news. We provide free online content to millions of readers, serving as a reliable filter, keeping our vast audience well-informed and engaged, helping them to navigate a culture of information overload and providing an alternative to the commercial media onslaught. Our aim is to stimulate, inform, and instigate.”

<http://www.alternet.org/>

4.3 Cultural Context

“Alternative media – like any forms of cultural production – and their creators are positioned, ‘enunciated’: we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific’ (Hall, 1990: 222)” (Atton, 2002, p. 22).

4.4 Dialogue/Debate/Deliberation

“Both consensus- and conflict-oriented models stress the need for citizens and/or civil society to participate in these processes of dialogue, debate, and deliberation. From both perspectives, an argument can be made in favour of encouraging participation and participatory media” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 154).

4.5 Activist Media

“Activist media, as the term implies, encourages readers to get actively involved in social change. They may espouse any political philosophy, from far left to far right – indeed, a broad definition of ‘activist’ would include media that advocate absolutely mainstream actions, such as voting for the politician of your choice or volunteering for charity” (Waltz, 2005, p. 3).

4.6 This is Not a Coup – 6pm 23rd November Clepham Building 2.13

“Infowar productions, creator of the documentaries Debtocracy (2011), Catastroika (2012) and Fascism Inc. (2014) is preparing its fourth project on the role of the EU, and particularly ECB, in undermining democracy in Europe. The new documentary describes ECB’s financial interventions in states like Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus and Greece. Featuring well known academics, politicians and journalists, it analyses the relation of EU institutions with big corporations and banks. In order to guarantee full independence from private companies and interests, the project is financed through crowdfunding – namely donations from citizens, trade unions and independent organizations and foundations across the globe.” <http://thisisnotacoup.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1208086889253413/>

5 Grassroots Participation

“We aim to help all our audiences better understand the shift from a culture shaped by the logics of broadcasting toward one fostering greater grassroots participation” (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013, p. xiv).

5.1 Popular Resistance

“Grassroots media facilitate community organising and are instrumental in mobilising local people and resources. By the same token, community media are, in and of themselves, valuable resources that help nurture and support social, political, and aesthetic expressions of popular resistance” (Howley, 2010, p. 237).

<http://www.eavafm.com/>

5.2 Experience Above Content

“Collective productions have been a particular characteristic of [community] media organisations since the participatory model is recognised as an empowering experience above and beyond the content of what is broadcast” (Kate Lacey in Crisell, 2004, p. 151).

“Panj Pani Radio 95.1 FM is on air now from 26th May to 22nd June 2014 (28 days RSL). This is to raise awareness about mental health and well-being of the community and to provide training to homeless people in Leicester. We also provide training to people with mental health problems. We will jointly talk about mental health issues and other issues facing the local community. Join us to talk about it. This radio may be listen to 24/7 on 95.1FM and on line on www.panjpaniradio.co.uk” <http://www.panjpaniradio.co.uk/>

5.3 Bottom-Up/Top-Down?

“The problem of how to understand the relationship between the individual and society has resolved around the issues of the direction of influence: do individuals determine society (i.e. bottom-up), or does society determine individuals (top-down)?” (Burr, 1995, p. 96).

5.4 Counterpower

“Against these forms of power is the power from below – counterpower. Idea counterpower can be used by those who reject dominant values and spread different ideas through word of mouth, the media – or the internet. Physical counterpower is seen when people literally get in the way of the powerful” (Hill, 2013, p. 27).

5.5 Tools of Production

“Other visions exist that are predicated on giving all people access to the tools they need to access, create, and distribute their own media. A grassroots revolutions in communication could open up a new, globalised public sphere in which information rather than cash is the currency of choice” (Waltz, 2005, p. 132).

5.6 Active Democracy

“Participatory models of democracy emphasise the importance of ‘real’ citizens’ participation and their more active involvement in democracy (Barber 1984). As such they criticise the radical separation of citizens from power, the elites and democratic institutions through representations” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 4).

5.7 Deliberation

“Deliberative democracy affords all citizens an effective opportunity to participate in the political processes that shape their collective future. It is committed to what I call conscious social reproduction” (Amy Gutmann in Etzioni, 1995, p. 161).

5.8 De-Professionalism

“Participation in the media deals with the participation of non-professionals in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media decision making (structural participation). Firstly, these forms of media participation allow citizens to be active in one of the many (micro-) spheres relevant to daily life and to put into practice their right to communicate... Secondly, these forms of micro-participation are considered to be important because they allow people to learn and adopt a democratic and/or civic attitude, this strengthening (the possible forms) of macro-participation, as well as the civic culture” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 11).

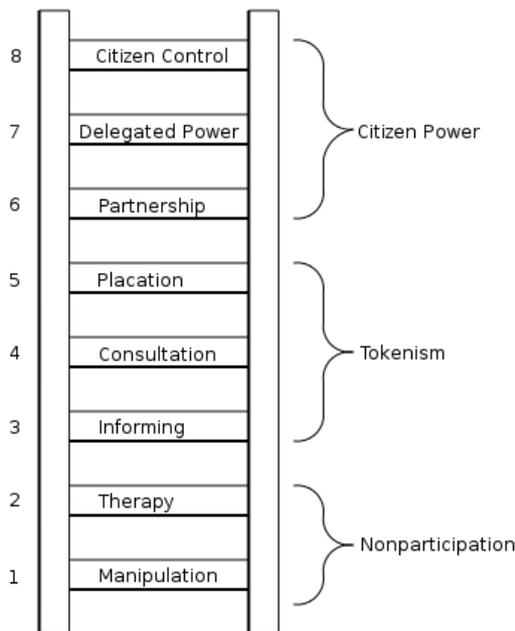
5.9 Outcomes

“Participation, following Pateman(1970: 71), can thus be seen as a process in which the individual members (of a community) have a certain degree of power to influence or determine the outcome of that process. She defines partial participation as ‘a process in which two or more parties influence each other in the making of decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only’ (Pateman 1970: 70), whereas full participation is seen as ‘a process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decision’ (Pateman 1970: 71)” (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 13).

6 Citizen Power

“Citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-nots citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programmes are operated, and benefits like contacts and patronage are parcelled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216).

6.1 False Fronts



“Arnstein’s analysis looked very much like a cautionary tale, that systematic participatory reforms could easily be ‘façades’ used by the political elites to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, climbing up the participation ladder, they could also induce meaningful changes in the balance of power and control over public policy” (Ferro & Molinari, 2010, p. 3).

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the

topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power. <http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>

6.2 Empty Rituals

“There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

6.3 Divergent View-Points

“The ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with the powerful in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them. In actuality, neither the have-nots nor the power-holders are homogenous blocs. Each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 218).

6.4 Distorted Views

“Instead of genuine citizen participation, the bottom rung of the ladder signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by power-holders” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 219).

“High-sounding rhetoric like ‘grassroots participation’” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 219).

6.5 Shifting Ground

“The advent of user-generated content is leading to a shift in the relationship between mainstream media organisations and the people formerly known as the audience (Gillmor, 2004)” (Hermida & Thurman, 2007, p. 4).

<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publication/rise-social-media-and-its-impact-mainstream-journalism>

6.6 De-Professionalisation

“The boom in free-flowing self-expression is largely taking place outside of established notions of professionalism. It signals a desire by the public to take advantage of tools that allow for creative expression. This paper suggests that established news organisations are shifting towards the retention of a traditional gatekeeping role with regard to UGC as a way of integrating user media into a professional journalistic framework” (Hermida & Thurman, 2007, p. 24).

6.7 Low Barriers to Expression

“In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, Jenkins and his colleagues explain that participatory cultures are characterised by ‘relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some types of information membership whereby what it know by the most experienced is passed along to novices (p.7). ‘A participatory culture’ they add, ‘is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at least they care about what other people think about what they have created)’ (p.7)” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 3).

6.8 Social Connections

“Working inductively from a rich collection of case studies and local ethnographies, researchers have demonstrated that participatory cultures are characterised by commitment to access, expression, sharing, mentorship, the need to make a difference, and the desire for social connections” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 11).

6.9 Participatory Cultures

“What is participation like today? How has it become newly important with respect to yesterday? Are participatory democracy, audience participation, user-generated content, peer production, participant observation, crowdsourcing all the same phenomena? If they are different, what characterises the difference” (Kelty, 2013, p. 23).

“If there are indeed different ‘participatory cultures’ then the work of explaining their differences must be done by thinking concretely about the practices, tools, ideologies, and technologies that make them up. Participation is about power, and, no matter how ‘open’ a platform is, participation will reach a limit circumscribing power and its distribution. Understanding those limits requires carefully describing the structures of participation, the processes of governance and inclusion, the infrastructure of software, protocols and networks, as well as the rhetoric and expectations of individuals” (Kelty, 2013, p. 29).

“Yes, ‘anti-political politics’ is possible. Politics ‘from below’. Politics of man, not of the apparatus. Politics growing from the heart, not from a thesis. It is not an accident that this hopeful experience has to be lived just here, on this grim battlement. Under the ‘rule of everydayness’ we have to descend to the very bottom of a well before we can see the stars” (Havel, 1987, p. 157).

7 References

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