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LGBT BBC radio programmes, 1992 – 2000**

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Queer in Your Ear: Connecting space, community and identity in LGBT BBC radio programmes, 1992 – 2000

Introduction

While research has focused on gay and lesbian media representation in print, television and film, little has been done to evaluate sexual identity on radio output in the UK, produced by and for a gay and lesbian audience. As Nye, Godwin and Hollowes point out, although other genres, like fictional novels and literature can command niche markets based on sexual identity, radio voices from minority groups have been diffuse, isolated and easily forgotten. (Nye S; Godwin N; Hollowes B: 1994: 147)

This article analyses two long-running gay and lesbian¹ radio programmes from the BBC from the 1990s to highlight different approaches to notions of identity and definition, based on items that focused on interactions with physical space, both public and private. The weekly programme *Gay and Lesbian London* broadcast in London on BBC Greater London Radio (GLR94.9) contained items that constructed a different relationship between gay identity and locations, compared to *Gaytalk* on BBC Greater Manchester Radio (GMR), and its relationship with Manchester.

The article begins by exploring the context of radio in the UK made by and for an LGBT audience. It then discusses the significance of gay and lesbian radio in relation to ideas around community, and how these contribute to the editorial narrative. This is further contextualized by referencing the fluidity of community and identity and the intersection of sexuality with spatial relationships. The subsequent analysis of the radio output in the two

¹ The programmes under consideration largely used the words gay, lesbians and bisexual, and occasionally trans (meaning either transgender or transsexual). The term queer was used sporadically and in a specific political context. This article uses LGBT as an acronym to cover the breadth of the relevant identities referenced.

programmes demonstrates how the programmes mediated the relationship between communities of listeners and their locations.

Gay and lesbian radio in the UK

The struggle to hear gay and lesbian voices on UK radio has been hard-fought, and achieved long after other minorities succeeded. Forty or fifty years ago it was the arena of news and current affairs programmes on radio that provided opportunities for emerging gay and lesbian involvement. (Beck 2003: 128) But this came at a price, the requirement for editorial balance, or as Watney puts it, ‘an answer from a homophobe’ to reassure the general public. (Watney 1997: 97) Often the resulting output was a discourse that framed the discussion in terms of legislative, ideological or moral dimensions, rather than from the perspective of the ordinary viewer or listener, from their social or sexual lives. Hear for example the phone-in programme *Platform* on Radio London in 1972, which featured a live studio audience, allegedly ‘packed’ with representatives from various different campaigning groups. (Scott-Presland 2015: 508)

This raises questions about the practicality and desirability of objectivity in gay and lesbian broadcasting. (Johnson & Keith 2001: 3). Johnson and Keith argue that personal viewpoints and biases are part of the dialogue, either as constructors or as the consumer/audience. Paul Graham (producer and co-presenter of the programme *Gaytalk* on BBC Greater Manchester Radio), suggests that mainstream broadcasters are not capable of adequately representing gay and lesbian perspectives. He goes so far as to argue that the production team needs to be gay as well. (Johnson & Keith 2001:165) What is being articulated is McQuail’s concept of a ‘democratic participant communications model’, which, merged with Atton’s idea of alternative media, produces a diversity of artistic and cultural forms. (Atton 2002:8)

Given the limitations (as illustrated by the examples above) imposed by mainstream broadcasters on positive reporting around gay issues, one solution lay in community-focused media, produced by and intended for a lesbian and gay audience. This had already emerged in print publications, from the 1960s onwards. Plummer described this as part of weaving gay and lesbian stories into the fabric of social and political movements, as witnessed in America (eg the Advocate) and the UK (Gay News). (Plummer 1995: 94).

In terms of radio, there were several early examples of community-produced output in the UK. *Gaywaves*, pioneered by gay rights activist Phillip Cox, ran as part of the unlicensed London station Our Radio in 1982/83, and featured satirical sketches and skits and interviews. (Mitchell 2000: 96). Our Radio described itself as an ‘open access pirate’, an example of ‘amateur activity’ in the history of radio, which existed outside of the margins of official recognition. (Hind and Mosco 1985; Coyer in Coyer, Dowmunt, Fountain eds 2007: 16)

A contrasting offering was *Gay 2 Gay* on Wear FM, a station in Sunderland (1990 – 1995), which featured music DJ ‘Mega Sal’ playing ‘hi energy’ dance mixes. Research into the audience, both locally and internationally, via Eurosat, suggests this programme had a significant impact as a focal point for visibility, diversity and entertainment. (Transnational Radio) Cox and others faced the dilemma that confronted many community media outlets. While the output was free from any dominant need for balance and could thus yield to imagination and creative flair, the production values had to be fashioned by the (limited) available resources and skills of the producers.

Moreover, like nearly all radio in the pre-internet days, the transience and ephemerality of the output posed limits on its impact with the audience, especially given the restricted nature of the small, (and in Our Radio’s case, illicit) transmission area. *Gay 2 Gay*, like *Gaywaves*, created a niche within a niche, and hoped to attract a small but loyal audience,

many of whom were familiar with the references and dialectic that constituted the audio codes of the output.

Gay and lesbian radio on the BBC

The biggest shift took place in the UK, when the BBC began the process of Charter renewal in 1996. The BBC Charter, under which it was first incorporated in 1927, enshrines the public service tenets of the Corporation, to inform, educate and entertain. (Starkey 2014:1) As Hendy highlights, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the BBC had less traction in reflecting social and cultural changes, due in part to production processes that were disconnected with the audience. (Hendy 2013:76,77) It was in this context that efforts were made to catch up with changing attitudes, and restate a public service agenda in key areas of output. So the 1992 policy paper, *Extending Choice*, identified a key objective for radio, ‘to assign priority to those networks and services that are truly distinctive and unlikely ever to be matched in the commercial marketplace.’ (BBC 1992: 45) As Nye, Godwin and Hollowes argue, this resulted in the rise of more diverse and innovative programme-making, which created a closer connection to its diverse audiences. (Nye; Godwin; Hollowes 1994: 158).

The resulting emancipation of gay and lesbian-produced output on BBC radio arrived in something of a deluge. BBC Radio 4 broadcast a two-hour gay and lesbian special on 14 February 1993 called *A Sunday Outing*, presented by Beatrix Campbell and Matthew Parris. The following month, a weekly, one-hour LGBT magazine show, *Gay and Lesbian London*, launched on BBC Greater London Radio (GLR94.9), which ran in one form or another for seven years.

In 1994, BBC Radio 5Live commissioned a weekly 25-minute topical news programme, aimed at a national audience, *Out This Week*, which featured a production team drawn from *A Sunday Outing*, and which ran, series-by-series, for five years. BBC Greater Manchester

Radio (GMR) also launched a weekly, 30-minute, gay and lesbian programme, *Gaytalk*, which ran until 2006.

The two programmes that provide the basis for this research, *Gay and Lesbian London* and *Gaytalk*, were both broadcast on BBC local radio, in London and Manchester respectively. This England-wide network of stations was created with a specific remit to provide output aimed at diverse communities in their areas, in an attempt to distance itself from the ‘cultural homogeneity’ that had previously dominated broadcast media. (Curran and Seaton 1997 (5th ed): 162) Starkey argues that local radio found this aspiration difficult to square, as resources and central editorial control were tightened throughout the 1970s and 80s (Starkey 2011: 149). But as illustrated above, a new-found enthusiasm emerged in the 1990s, as the BBC sought a revised definition for its public service commitments by concentrating on news, quality speech and targeting minority ethnic groups.

For example, BBC GMR’s then-managing editor, Karen Hanna, acknowledged that the size of the gay and lesbian community in the catchment area showed there was a need to bring in younger listeners, especially as the station’s core audience was over 40 years old. (*Gaytalk* 9.7.98). Meanwhile, BBC GLR94.9 was able to exploit its AM frequency (which broadcast parallel to the FM output in the evenings), to accommodate specialist programmes directed at minority ethnic groups, such as *Black London*, *Asian London* and *Jewish London*. This pattern of regional and local variations provided an opportunity for greater diversity and helped facilitate gay and lesbian voices on air. (Watney 1997: 97)

Methodology

Nye et al suggest that programmes like *Gay and Lesbian London* ‘highlight how lesbians and gay men living in inner cities form *geographical* audiences sharing common interests and so are ideally suited to local radio ‘special interest’ programming’. (Nye, Godwin, Hollowes 1994: 160). As this research will demonstrate, the perceived homogeneity

is a complex picture, when the output from Manchester and London is compared: there are differences as well as similarities. The methodology of the research is based on analyzing a range of broadcasts from both programmes. The surviving archive of *Gay and Lesbian London* is comprehensive, including 224 programmes from 1993 to 1997. This compares to 26 whole or partial programmes which survive from *Gaytalk*, and come from a slightly later period, 1997 to 2000. The content of each programme has been interrogated to identify specific items that focus on, deal with or otherwise involve specific geographic locations and spaces in London, Manchester or thereabouts.

Both programmes followed the format of a magazine show, with news, interviews (live and pre-recorded), features, and sometimes competitions. In some instances, the location is integral to the feature, it is part of the subject matter. In others, it appears as a tangent to the main topic. But in each case, it provides a significant contribution to the overall stance of the programme, in relation to the community audience and where they might identify themselves in the context of a spatial environment. These can be grouped under two areas: commercial space and domestic space.

Notions of community and lesbian and gay broadcasting

The following two sections explore academic work, to frame the discussion around two aspects related to debates and definitions around community. This first section examines the role of radio and broadcasting in representation, while the second reflects on physical boundaries and spatial interactions, and how that impacts on identity. It is also important to be clear about definitions of LGBT media. In this context, it is taken to mean media output (print or broadcast) which identifies as an LGBT product (so marketed using a name synonymous with the LGBT world), aimed at a primarily LGBT market, and produced by a team that consists of LGBT or LGBT-friendly media people, either professional or amateur. If we take LGBT radio as an example, how then is community constituted through this

medium and furthermore, how is the identity of the LGBT community represented by the content of this output?

Baym argues that there is no agreement on how to define community, but does suggest there are some recurring resonances, such as a sense of shared space, shared resources and support, common practices and shared identities and interpersonal relationships. (Baym 2010: 109; also Blackshaw 2010: 5). Common geography is not necessarily a pre-requisite, but where resources and knowledge are shared, social capital creates a bonding experience between participants, where previously there have been no strong relationships. The sharing of common identities and characteristics can provide all kinds of psychological and emotional support. (Baym 2010: 118-121)

Although Baym's reference point is online groups, I would argue that radio has the ability to link the listeners, as constituent parts of an audience, in a similar way. The act of solitary listening appeals to the imagination and creates bonds out of personal experience, which enhances affiliation to community and group identity. (Nye S; Godwin N; Hollowes B: 1994: 147).

Moreover, consumers of gay and lesbian media are not merely passive. Listeners to a gay radio programme could be in the closet, or not fully out to friends and family. The act of listening is therefore transgressive, despite often being conducted in private or alone, providing connection with other aspects of that diffuse community. The line between concealment and public acknowledgement is therefore blurred. Indeed, listeners to a gay and lesbian programme who define themselves as heterosexual, could be identified as spectators rather than participants.

So if radio listening can create a community of listeners, what, as Bauman might ask, is the function of this space that it has created? How does it contribute to notions of community identity? (Bauman 2008: 120) The challenge faced by any LGBT media that purports to

represent queer communities is articulating the degree to which identity is actively created, as opposed to merely reflected, through the content being made. As Phelan has argued, media has the ability to reflect the 'shared characteristics' of community, the notion of a multi-faceted existence, that is culturally specific, and which includes expressions of difference, diversity and shifting positions. (Phelan 1996: 890 - 893) The desire to reflect gay and lesbian lives in these terms emerges from a sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media. The means to achieve this is through participatory involvement in the process of broadcast or print production. (Howley K 2009: 2)

A key element that elevates the idea of participation in production is the use of individual's own stories and histories. For Pullen, this is the role of narrative in individual stories as part of the 'shifting political axis' of gay identity. As part of the concept of new storytelling, Pullen extrapolates a matrix of becoming and possibility, which includes, among other themes, the agency of media professionals and the potential of life stories and role models. (Pullen 2009 / 2012: 9).

Plummer similarly focuses on the power of 'sexual' stories and the individual narrative, but for him the axis relies more on the receptive nature of a community able to receive them, to weave them into a dynamic of history, politics and identity. (Plummer 1995: 17; 87) The important point is that radio is well-placed to provide a space for curating these stories, demonstrating the ways in which gay and lesbian media can contribute to the shared characteristics that affect a definition of LGBT identity, within the discourse of community. (Phelan 1996: 890-893).

Community, Identity and Spatial Interactions

Having established that radio can facilitate a community of listeners and that participation in production can help construct identity, how then is physical space part of the equation? Sexual identity has a deeply contextual relationship with a range of indices,

including those related to the urban environment. Queer identity emerges as a response to a place, and the origins of the modern homosexual category and community can be traced to the rise of urbanization. (Cook & Evans ed 2014: 7; Houlbrook in Gunn & Morris eds 2001: 165).

Cognitive mapping techniques have been employed to enable gay men, for instance, to enunciate their interaction with spaces, some of which they define as gay, or gay-friendly, others which pose a threat or signify danger. (Brown 2001). Another example is research in the 1980s and 90s that focused on the commercial sector of bars and clubs, which gay men and lesbians found protective and nurturing (Bell & Valentine 1995: 4).

In this context, the relationship between gays and lesbians and physical space has provided two distinct boundaries for defining culture and identity. First, the terrain provides space for the building and creation of community. The boundaries established by gay and lesbian spaces are part of this, such as the Soho commercial scene, located around a network of streets in central London. And second, the landscape signifies a symbolic representation of identity/community. So in terms of gay culture or media representation, Soho and the gay commercial area around Canal St in central Manchester known as the Gay Village transcended their physicality to represent something more embedded in the zeitgeist conscience.

However, while space is used here to denote the self-identification of belonging to a community (in real presence and symbolically), there is still the risk that this produces skewed or stereotypical impressions. Brown makes a strong case that the history of queer space is one of ‘the shifting dialectic between heterosexism and homophobia, and resistance to these oppressive and normative tendencies.’ (Brown 2001:51) The point is that identity here is fluid, diverse and evolving – therefore if it cannot be ascribed to what defines the community, perhaps it can be attributed to *where* that community is or chooses to be located.

The context for the research of this article focuses on the boundaries around the commercial gay and lesbian scene, which has carved out a real and symbolic presence in gay culture. In London and Manchester, the primary areas of commercial interaction were the bars and clubs in Soho and the neighbourhood around Canal Street. These spaces are concerned with economic, social and sub-cultural interactions, which have played a key role in the construction of queer identities, but as Binnie suggests, queer culture (which includes queer media) needs to be part of the equation. (Binnie in Bell & Valentine 1995: 185)

The representation by gay media of spaces heavily associated with these activities related to queer identity can be challenging, problematizing and provocative. As such it is part of a symbiotic interaction: the commercial gay scenes in Manchester and London reached significant milestones in their development, at the same time as the gay and lesbian radio in this study was evolving. For example, Hindle notes seven gay bars, three clubs and three cafes within 150m of each other in the Gay Village in the mid 1990s, catering for a diversity of identities and musical tastes. (Hindle in Whittle ed 1995: 17, 19). Therefore, the potential existed for the one to benefit from the other, in terms of editorial coverage and the opportunities offered for colourful and entertaining audio. At the same time, there was the existence of alternative spatial expressions of sexual identity, as the research reveals.

Identity and commercial space

The analysis of the programmes is arranged under two broad themes. The first looks at identity in relation to commercial spaces, and the second provides a contrast, by exploring domestic and private space. The central element featuring location-specific information on both programmes was a weekly ‘what’s on’ section, providing listeners with up-to-the-minute listings information about a range of entertainment. These included venues and club nights, alongside community, social and other activities. Many of the items mentioned were based in the gay heartlands of Soho and the Gay Village, but this was balanced by activities that were

more social and less commercial (for instance hosted at the Manchester Lesbian and Gay Centre off Oxford Road).

The inclusion of this listings format is not usually the most creative aspect of a radio broadcast, but it fulfilled a useful function to provide regular updates, especially in a commercial scene where transience of ownership and event promotions constantly shifted. (Hindle in Whittle ed 1995: 17, 19).

There was also scope for further breadth in representation too. Researchers have noted the lack of gender equality in commercial gay venues and the dominance and hierarchy of gay men in the Gay Village. (Hindle in Whittle ed 1995: 17, 19; Taylor, Evans, Fraser 1996) *Gaytalk* made something of a virtue of providing editorial coverage of women's club nights (Interview at Generation X for Club Climax Christmas 1997) and specific venues. (Interview at Vanilla, 24.12.98) The programme also addressed non-gender specific diversity too. For instance there was an awareness of different 'cultures within cultures' in LGBT life, eg the Sado-Masochism community and an Asian club night. (*Gaytalk* 23.4.98; 6.1.2000)

However, the success and growth of commercial gay spaces also brought to the surface social and economic tensions, which provided material on both programmes. The Gay Village had grown in part thanks to gentrification initiatives from the City Council and the Central Manchester Development Corporation, in partnership with gay entrepreneurs. (Hindle in Whittle ed 1995: 17, 19) While it provided a sanctuary for gay expression and acceptance on a social level, the shifts in economic power caused frictions. As the Village was marketed as a popular, must-see destination as part of Manchester's night-time economy, so other, non-gay, business interests saw opportunities. Manto, a bar in the heart of the Gay Village, was credited as pioneering the straight / gay mixed clientele approach. Owner Carol Ainscow attributed this to the fact that Manto was designed with a welcoming glass frontage, different from the usual 'dowdy' gay bars. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 19.3.93)

Gay and Lesbian London identified a pattern of 'hetero-incursion' into gay spaces, drawing parallels between the two cities, in March 1993. The Edge bar in Soho, started a mixed door policy and the Heaven nightclub began to admit men and women to their Saturday nights (moving away from men-only). The programme ran an item on this, with a vox pop where some speakers equated segregation with separatism, and others voiced anxiety about straight voyeurs. One speaker (female) pointed out that 'mixed' was a moveable term, depending on the income and lifestyle of the consumer and likely to be dominated by male cultural attitudes. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 19.3.93).

Prompted by the growth of the gay commercial scene, the higher disposable income available to gay men was christened in the press as 'the pink pound'. In July 1995, *Gay and Lesbian London* hosted a heated studio discussion on the impact of this phenomenon on bars and clubs. Bar owner Gary Henshaw, recalling the 'tacky seedy dumps with dirty filthy toilets' of his youth, defended commercialism as providing a better quality service and more diversity of choice. Club promoter Jo Purvis and editor of the newspaper *Capital Gay* Michael Mason countered that the pink pound was just a clever invention by advertising agencies, which resulted in a more monolithic gay scene for younger people. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 20.7.95)

While the capital's gay scene spread beyond the confines of Soho to the outer zones of London, diffusing some of these tensions, the situation in Manchester's Gay Village was more acute. Here, licensing regulations were relaxed, drawing straight men and women to gay venues, thus creating friction between the original 'occupants' and the new arrivals. (Taylor, Evans, Fraser 1996:191) This issue was raised and discussed frequently on *Gaytalk*.

In May 1998 the programme covered a meeting hosted by Healthy Gay Manchester about concerns of rising violence in the Village. (*Gaytalk* 28.5.98) The issues aired included the perceived influx of straight people into the Village ('it's like an invasion') and the

resulting infringement of gay sensibilities, acts of violence and harassment, health and safety in venues as they reach capacity, but the behaviour of some gay clientele was criticised too.

By focusing on specific items that involved the Gay Village, as the heartland of this new listenership, GMR was making an important intervention in the power dynamics of community – this was where the two spaces (on the radio airwaves and physical location) converged. However, convergence also gave voice to the tensions that existed in defining the physical boundaries of community space, especially in this commercial context. The Gay Village had established itself as an enclave where freedom and safety were enshrined, but when this was disrupted, the status of safe space was jeopardized by outsiders. LGBT media made a crucial contribution, as witnessed by the way *Gaytalk* articulated the dilemma, offering a platform for community concerns and a place for dialogue.

Domestic and private space

It's striking that over the five year period under review, *Gay and Lesbian London* did not devote nearly as much time to the Soho scene, as *Gaytalk* did to the Gay Village. Given the dispersed nature of the gay population across London, it's understandable that the scene in Soho was not regarded as the epi-centre, in the same fashion as the Gay Village. In contrast, the existence of the physical community space that Soho represented was juxtaposed with more symbolic notions of community, characterised by personal reflection, self-expression and contrasting approaches to lifestyle and domesticity.

The most significant example was a regular feature, broadcast between May 1995 and June 1996, which focused on the stories of individual contributors. These were usually a celebrity or personality from the LGBT community, interviewed about their neighbourhood: 'London through the eyes of lesbians and gays who live there'. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 25.5.95) The item was given the name 'Down Your Gay Way', and an analysis of each

instalment demonstrates the construction of a narrative in peoples' stories, that moves away from public commercial spaces, to private and domestic locations.

The interviews took 'queer history indoors' (Cook 2014:3) and highlighted several important points. It portrayed the development of attachments to neighbourhoods, the (re)gaying of spaces and how people chose to navigate their lives around the hetero-normative landscape. The contributors demonstrated Pullen's use of self-reflexive storytelling, as part of a larger political connectivity and identity. (Pullen 2012: 43; 44)

Within this, several fascinating themes emerged. One was the desire to revive childhood memories and re-create the familial, domestic setting. Club promoter Jo Purvis had grown up in Bow, and she enjoyed the genteel, suburban environment, the connections with her Jewish roots and what she described as 'provincial attitudes': big gardens, reading the local paper, knowing the neighbours. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 25.5.95)

Cartoonist David Shenton had effectively transplanted his childhood home from Ashton-Under-Lyne to Tottenham, north London, which he described as having a 'northern town feel'. He liked the datedness of the street (built in the 1880s but resonant of the 1930s and 40s), which evinced in him a pride in his home and neighbourhood. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 16.11.95)

That relationship with the locality and ensuing quasi-familial networks, was developed further by Liz Campion (in Becton) and Duncan Lustig-Preane (in Tottenham). Coincidentally, both had been serving in the Royal Navy, and were involved in high profile campaigns for equal rights for lesbians and gays in the military. Both interviews drew on the importance of neighbourhood and friends living close by, who helped with childcare and provided support when times were difficult. Tottenham, in this context, was described as a 'little gay village', with its own gay pub, the White Hart, which featured as a recording location in the interview. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 22.6.95; 9.10.95)

Another theme to emerge was the home in the domestic sphere, created as part of a relationship, which – in the days before civil partnership and marriage – became a visible symbol of same sex stability and intimacy. Gay police officer Tony Murphy referred to his way of life on an estate in Wandsworth, with his partner, as private and discreet, where there was no discrimination against them. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 22.7.95) Sam Hoy (lesbian erotica entrepreneur and founder of Sh!) described the environment she was creating with her girlfriend in Bethnal Green as ‘very homes and gardens’, a bit like Coronation Street, with a community that existed on the pavements and doorsteps. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 3.8.95) Personal stories like these revealed how identity was a complex representation, where sexuality might not be the sole defining factor, and which drew on other factors such as ethnicity, family networks, careers or suburban/provincial upbringing. The subjects personified a de-centralised and dispersed gay and lesbian community, rooted in physical spaces that existed less on the commercial heartlands, but more in a domestic (and to some extent, hetero-normalised) landscape.

However, testimonies from several contributors underlined the point that life in London was not automatically an idyll and there was still a need for safe spaces. Peter Tatchell, in a council flat at the Elephant and Castle, south London, described the bricks, bullets and arson attacks he had suffered, which put him under great stress and strain. He made it clear he did not enjoy living there and fantasised about living in a house with a garden in a safe neighbourhood. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 14.12.95) Safety and supportive neighbourhoods were central to Oscar Moore, the film journalist living with HIV, who described his maisonette in a 1930s block on the corner of Chapel St Market, north London, as ‘perfect for being unwell’ and how it became a ‘self sufficient environment’ through his illness. (*Gay and Lesbian London* 30.11.95) Tatchell and Moore both demonstrated that mutual respect and tolerance were also fundamental elements of physical location, in terms of identity and

community. It was in these alternative locations, rooted in domesticity, family and social networks, that an authenticity could be found, where the individual explored multiple facets of queer identity.

Conclusion: The radio space as community space

It is clear from the analysis that while *Gaytalk* in Manchester devoted a considerable amount of time to events and entertainment located in the commercial scene in the Gay Village, *Gay and Lesbian London* focused less on Soho, and more on individual stories situated in alternative spaces. In drawing interpretations about the interaction of community and spatial relationships, and how this might have made an impact on identity, it is important to recognize the role of radio in providing this space for participatory voices.

Meyrowitz proposes that the media alters the geographies of everyday life, by changing the boundaries between different spaces. In this context, the airtime provided by radio has a similar impact on identity and community. (Meyrowitz 1985: 143-144) This works in two ways. First, *Gay and Lesbian London* and *Gaytalk* become the territory of conversation and interaction. My analysis of the items in the programmes demonstrates the intrinsic value of the participatory process of production and the range and types of voices that are heard on air, set against the context of mediated access to the airways. This signifies the patronage of the BBC as the broadcaster, intent on creating and maintaining community involvement and participation, and in so doing, fostering closer links with their LGBT audience.

Second, these programmes play a symbolic role for the audience, representing the gay and lesbian communities, whose lives they are reflecting. Listening to these programmes becomes an act of belonging. Furthermore, these two facets interact, so the radio space re-draws the conversational space of community. The boundaries between the radio space and the community space were defined by editorial decisions, taken by programme producers, about how to reflect and represent their audience. This produced notions of community

through processes of representation of what that community is about and who belongs to it. The production teams in London and Manchester created a range of content, sometimes complementary but often divergent, despite having similar resources at their disposal. Using the examples of items themed around space and spatial interactions, the representations in the Manchester case study shows the centrality of a geographical location. However, the London example shows there are other forms of identity and spatial intertextuality, drawn from the domesticity and private spaces of their contributors.

As Pullen argues, there is no diaspora for gays and lesbians, as there is no single territory of origin, but gay and lesbian radio can provide connectedness, an interstitial engagement between broadcast stories and specific locations in the landscape. (Pullen 2009: 76) The examples of London and Manchester demonstrate that there is no uniformity in the experience, but each one is perfectly valid, as enfranchisement for these communities. In Manchester, *Gaytalk* chose to concentrate on a discursive arena that centred on one specific, and influential, geographical area, characterized by the commercial scene. *Gay and Lesbian London* pursued alternative avenues, some of which touched briefly on the easily-recognisable discourse of a commercial scene in Soho, while others foregrounded personal narratives that explored boundaries between public/private spaces, domesticity and intimacy and the outlying experience of urban living.

The advent of gay and lesbian radio in the public broadcasting sector in the UK was an important milestone in achieving visibility/audibility in the growing LGBT media of the 1990s. In this context, both *Gaytalk* and *Gay and Lesbian London* represent factual media spaces, where new forms of journalism are created, via content made for and by the diverse LGBT communities in their respective cities. It's worth noting that by the turn of the 21st century, LGBT minority programmes began to disappear from the UK airwaves. It was felt that the Labour government's agenda of equality legislation neutralized the campaigning

focus. At the same time, broadcasters argued that coverage for minorities was more readily available as part of mainstream output, and to continue specialist programmes was a form of ghettoization.

This suggestion is ironic when listening back to these programmes now, as they remind us how they highlighted the diversity of LGBT lives by foregrounding the geography of a wider urban sexual experience. This existence contextualized and indeed conflicted with the narrow definitions of enclaves, especially in terms of homo-geneity, as LGBT lives moved from commercial to domestic spaces. (Cook & Evans 2014: 7; Bell & Valentine 1995:8) LGBT radio did not build community, but it provided a significant marker on the onward journey of identity and becoming.

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