

Young People, Community Radio and Urban Life

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Abstract

Young people are living in an era where their daily routines are saturated with different media platforms, competing for their attention. One such platform is community radio. However, community radio has not gained as significant scholarly attention as other media outputs. Although there is not a wealth of extant literature on the topic of young people and community radio, much of the available literature provides colourful accounts of young people, community radio and urban life – typically through detailed case studies. Collating these case studies, my discussion is organised around two central themes: first, community radio as a platform for youth voice; and second, social inclusion of young people through youth media participation. I situate these lively exchanges and debates within the wider literature of youth media, the arts and creative industries. I suggest that community radio stations, both traditional FM and on-line community stations, are crucial spaces of development for young people's identities, and a space of creative learning outside of a more formal environment of school. However, I wish this to be more than a whistle-stop tour of key literature; usefully, this paper critically assesses key conversations and highlights areas for urban geographers to devote future research interest.

Introduction

This paper examines the nexus between youth, community radio and progressive outcomes for young people within extant scholarship. Before doing so, however, it is important to have a clear understanding of what, precisely, is meant by 'community radio'. Community radio, like its prefix community, is variously contested and difficult to define. When searching for a definition, one would assume that the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC by its French acronym) is a promising point of departure. However, AMARC (n.d.) returns the task of defining community radio to its members, providing an assemblage of different definitions which acknowledge the fluidity of this term. Rather than providing a definition, Ofcom (2004) offer an 'eligibility criteria', which they adopt from the 'characteristics of a community radio service' set out in the Community Radio Order. According to this document, to be eligible for a community radio licence, a station must be provided mainly for the good of community members, rather than for commercial reasons; serve one or more communities; not be provided with the intention of making a financial profit, and use any profit wholly to improve the future provision of the service or for the delivery of social gain to members of the target community; provide community members with opportunities to participate in the operation and management of the service; and be accountable to the target community.

Recently, Dahal (2013, p. 47) defines community radio as having the following characteristics: 'community ownership, control and participation; non-profit orientation; and development-centred activities'. The author adds that a key function of community radio is to enable people to have a say in the decisions which affect their lives. Community radio, told in this way, can be seen as a panacea for segregation and exclusion. Myers (2011, p. 5) provides a comprehensive definition of community radio as 'radio by and for the community, be it a physical community or a community of interest, with an emphasis on community ownership

and management on a non-for-profit basis'. Certainly, who this community refers to is contested. According to Ofcom (2004), communities served by community radio stations include people who live, work or undergo education or training in a particular locality, or people who have one or more common interests. As can be seen then, the communities served by community stations can be geographic, ethnic, cultural, social or other communities of interest.

Though, owing to restricted bandwidth of FM frequencies, the reach of community stations is typically limited, there is increasing recognition (Cordeiro 2012; Keough 2010; Leal 2009; Myers 2011) that the use of Internet technologies for online simulcasting is expanding this reach. Further, owing to the fact that some online radio stations have no physical location, online community radio provides a redefinition of the word community (Tacchi 2000). Coyer (2005), too, agrees that Internet broadcasting offers a redefinition of community, away from geographical restrictions, to transnational broadcasting. As Sujoko (2011, p. 17) optimistically puts it, discussing Indonesian community radio, due to technological advances in mobile and Internet:

Community radio is no longer broadcasting 'outwards' and downwards, from a central source of information. Instead, the messages exchanged are multi-sourced, constantly adjusting to and recognising their location(s), and so producing a consistent adaptability and negotiability, even as they rework the existing cultural perspectives of their community.

However, the opportunities offered by the Internet, as envisioned by authors such as Sujoko (2011), have been met with some sharp critique. To illustrate, Dunaway (1998) questions whether community radio's locally distinctive identity is being demolished. Within this paper, examples from both FM community radio and online community radio are integrated throughout, exploring the potential of these broadcast mediums. For, as Tacchi (2000) tells, young people approach online radio with a different attitude – they see the Internet as offering a challenge, there is room for innovation and conventions have not yet been established. However, as Baker (2012) makes clear, although a growing body of scholarly work is exploring the Internet radio phenomenon, incredibly scant attention has been paid to its usage by young people specifically. As such, throughout this paper, reference to traditional FM stations will naturally dominate discussion.

Indeed, to borrow from Johnson and Foote (2000, p. 285), radio in general within academic research 'struggles to find voice and definition'. This paper is structured as follows. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of the literature on young people to contextualise and frame this paper. Then, in seeking to give community radio voice, this paper corrals the literature into two key themes. In the succeeding section, attention is devoted to the first of these themes, that of youth voice. Next, I consider the second theme: social inclusion as a result of media participation for young people. It is acknowledged that each community station is embedded in distinct regulatory paradigms relating to the host country (Cammaerts 2009). As Tacchi (2000) tells, radio in one country or locality is not the same as it is elsewhere – it is used differently in different places at different times, and has different locally specific meanings associated with it. As such, within each of these substantive sections, case studies from various countries are provided for a holistic overview of the value of community radio for urban young people. Finally, the paper is then drawn to a conclusion, summing the literature and debates contained herein.

Young People: A Brief Overview

Youth has for some time been regarded as a liminal period of transition, characterised by ambiguity of being located in between childhood and adulthood (Sibley 1995). Young

people themselves are variously presented within the literature, for instance, as either actively deviant or passively at risk, and on occasion as both concurrently (Griffin 1997). Certainly, there are a number of different constructions of young people, including the perception of them as both vulnerable and incompetent (Pilcher 1995), and Hebdige's (1983) more positive conceptualisation of young people as fun. Though certain authors (e.g. Jenks 1996) position young people as little devils, for Valentine (1996) teenagers are both 'angels' and 'devils' that sit somewhat uncomfortably between childhood and adulthood. Jeffrey and McDowell (2004) assert that, for young people, ambivalence in the transition to adulthood results in lengthening processes of these youthful transitions; for instance, extended time in formal education and delays in young people living independently or sustaining long-term relationships. Indeed, many youth affiliations are partial, insecure and transitory (Hodkinson and Lincoln 2008). Although young people are spending more time in formal education, such institutions have been criticised for the production of overt national, religious, gendered and class identities and beliefs (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004). Certainly, community radio has been described as a site of more informal education (Chávez and Soep 2005; Glevarec and Choquet 2003; Walker and Romero 2008), successful in creating a productive educational space for urban young people, or what Akom et al. (2008:1) term a 'Youthtopia', outside of the more formalised school environment.

As Matthews et al. (1998) make clear, with an over-emphasis on children aged 5 to 11 years old, little research has explicitly studied the place use of what they classify 'young teenagers', particularly within the UK (see also Weller 2006a). Operationalising Van Vliet's (1983) concept of the 'fourth environment', Matthews et al. (1998) consider how young people come into contact with a range of places beyond the three key spaces of their home, school, and playground. The thrust of their article is that a place, and its significance, is a product of young people's active creations. Importantly, they conclude that the worlds of teenagers are 'not just appendages of the adult world, but are special places, created by themselves and invested with their own values' (Matthews et al. 1998, p. 193). Interestingly, the authors note that young people are capable of developing lifestyles that increasingly connect them to the world beyond their home. Crucially, through reaching this conclusion, Matthews et al. (1998, p. 193) argue that teenagers are not simply 'adults in waiting', rather they are agentic cultural producers. Other authors (Evans 2008; Fine et al. 1997; Holloway and Valentine 2000; Morrow 2000; Skelton and Valentine 1998; Vanderbeck and Johnson 2000), too, have positioned children as social and spatial actors in their own right.

To sum then, in line with Sefton-Green (2000a), young people are often conceived to be in a stage of becoming, and education is seen as a social investment that shapes the maturation process. However, it should be realised that not all out-of-school organisations for urban young people help them 'stretch and grow' (Halpern et al. 2000, p. 502). For Halpern et al. (2000), some programmes can limit sense of young urbanites own possibilities, for instance, through providing lack of encouragement for young people to achieve their future aspirations. Notably, community-based organisations are undertaking a considerable amount of pedagogic and emotionally supportive work carried out by formal educational institutions (Dimitriadis 2001). Developing this, it is argued herein that community radio, in both its traditional FM and online incarnations, is a place of urban young people's agentic creations and a place where young people can grow, while experiencing conflicting feelings of concern over what Halpern et al. (2000, p. 470) describe as 'who and what' they may become.

Though urban spaces have received relatively more attention from geographers than rural spaces (Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003), there is still work to be done in exploring the crevices of urban young people's active participations as regards community radio. While previously suggested that underprivileged urban young people, in the lack of safe outdoor spaces, become

'prisoners of their homes' (Katz 1998, p. 135), urban geographers have since started to pay attention to community organisations as important sites for young people to volunteer their time. More recently, Katz (2008, p. 5) referred to contemporary childhood as a 'site of accumulation', positing that responsibility for social production is now placed on the young person's family. Heeding Katz (2008), as a result of this gained responsibility, there has been an increased material and emotional investment in children by parents and a new urgency to ensure young people succeed. This paper considers urban young people as both the producers and consumers of community radio, and synthesises literature on how the space of community radio leads to progressive outcomes for these young people.

Youth Voice and Community Radio

Perhaps the most prevalent theme in the discussion of community radio and urban young people is that of youth voice. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss pirate radio, the story of pirate radio in the 1960's and the emergence of a new youth culture in an era of Cultural Revolution (Marwick 1998) is a great example of how radio has been used by young people for expression and communication (Theodosiadou 2010). In a climate with few channels for media communication and in an age of heavy government censorship to media output, such pirate stations 'challenged norms of acceptability' (Peters 2011, p. 282). Boyd (1986, p. 85) tells that: 'pirate radio, by its very nature, is anti-establishment and so may engender sympathy and support among the dissatisfied and rebellious'. The pirate era spanned a period that frequently saw the young generation rebelling against bureaucratic restraints. Participating in domestic pirate broadcasting and listening to the offshore stations were acts of resistance (Theodosiadou 2010). Yet, the desire to become known to, and popular with, the young public was another motive for engaging in pirate radio. Through pirate radio, people claimed the right to be heard instead of spoken to, as was typical in traditional mass media broadcasting (Deuze 2006). In summary, human communication was one of the most fundamental motives for radio pirates; they desired to find and define themselves through radio (Theodosiadou 2010). Such an example is valuable and informs some of the discussion here, but the key focus of this section is how contemporary community radio is used by young people for the exploration and exhibition of youth voice.

Indeed, community radio stations have a history of giving voice to economically, linguistically or politically marginalised populations (Marchi 2009). Marchi (2009) analyses a youth organisation's struggle to start a low-watt community radio station. The project was envisioned as a way to encourage at-risk young people to become active media producers, gain technical skills, and to communicate about important social and political issues affecting the station's predominantly low-income and minority population. The majority of the studies within the literature focussing on youth voice do so in relation to such disenfranchised or disadvantaged members of the community. A further potent exemplar of this is Podkalicka and Staley's (2009) discussion of Youthworx Media in Melbourne. The authors tell how this youth community media organisation provides an opportunity for 'at risk' young people – who typically have very low levels of literacy – not only to have a voice, but also to be listened to. In essence, community radio provides marginalised young people with a platform to vocalise matters of importance for them and their community, and in this process they gain experiential knowledge.

Indeed, in the view of Wagg (2004), through the production of a radio show, young people become active agents in the creation of their own texts, thus giving them a voice they are often deprived of in the school and family settings. Wagg (2004) uses the case of CKUT Campus-Community Radio, which aims to create air space for marginalised communities, finding that

young people are empowered through their participation in alternative media production. Although not writing on the topic of community radio, Brown (2002) makes a similar finding in researching ARTzone, a project that aimed to transform an underused beachside park into an environmental art installation through collaborate activism. For Brown (2002), providing disenfranchised young people with the opportunity to participate in mainstream cultural activities is integral to their empowerment and in finding their voices. This vein of thinking relates to that of Sefton-Green (2000b, p. 226–227), who argues that ‘those teachers and arts educators who ascribe value to creative activities are, in effect, valuing their students as people who have something to say’. In other words, community radio, as with certain other creative activities, has the potential to empower and give voice to disenfranchised young people.

Returning to the review of Wagg (2004, p. 275), the author explicitly counsels that ‘the air space of the radio medium affirms a worthy sense of self in the power derived from the vocalisation of personal words, ideas, thoughts, and opinions’. This very closely corresponds to Weller’s (2006b, p. 304) articulation that radio phone-ins foster ‘participatory spaces’, which permit formerly unheard young people to present their opinions to the listening audience. She tells that radio phone-ins are effective in adding prominence to the voices of young people, through allocating space for issues which are important to them. All this relates to Kranich and Patterson’s (2008, p. 27) statement that ‘youth media fills an important step in truly amplifying youth voice by connecting the many voices that have never had the opportunity to connect with compassionate teenagers’. Glevarec and Choquet (2003), too, aver that young people locate a space on radio to express their own concerns and to learn about others’ experiences. This reveals much about the potential of the auditory space of the airwaves to act as a catalyst in the projection and reception of youth voice.

Discussing local radio, Algan (2005) considers the construction of a youth community in the Turkish city of Sanliurfa. Examining young people’s attempts to overcome traditional restrictions and social norms through talk radio, she considers how such alternative media cross the boundary between ‘media’ and ‘ordinary’ worlds to create a space for young people. The author notes how some young people in Sanliurfa pursue romantic relationships via song and message exchanges on the local radio. Algan (2005, p. 86) makes the following valuable observation:

Radio not only entertains and occupies them with numerous love stories, family situations and young people’s heroic protests and resistances, but also informs them about the lives of others, about which they have no way of knowing in a big city like Sanliurfa.

To expand, by being a member of this listening community, young people come to hear familiar voices and find out about local events. More than this, young people can listen to discussions by their peers about how they resist the social restraints erected for them by their families and the wider society. In this scenario, radio functions as an alternative space for those young urbanites who have limited public spaces to meet and share stories about their social and cultural interests, and to pursue romantic relationships. In a similar vein, Baker (2010, p. 129) describes online radio as a ‘global square’, where young people meet to communicate and exchange information beyond the spatial boundaries of traditional radio. As can be seen, through using their voice on the personal space of the radio, young people are – at various scales – responding to the complexities of youth.

Exploring youth voice from a language and literacy perspective, Green (2013) considers learning in relation to youth media production and civic engagement. The article’s focus is on community radio station Youth Voices. Notably, the author describes the context of particular literacy events in an out-of-school setting, analysing how literacy was learned and then developed. Green (2013, p. 324) tells that the literacy objectives of Youth Voices

are to 'educate, validate, and empower'. However, she finds that instituting an all-encompassing space for young people presents many difficulties. To be clear, in contributing to discussions, the young participants offered an array of viewpoints and held diverse individualities and socioeconomic backgrounds. It is noteworthy that, in a school setting, owing to the power and status distinctions among students, teachers and administrators (Mitra 2009), it would be less likely to see these young people learning and interacting together (Green 2013). In this case then, community radio welcomes tensions that resultantly permit self-development and subsequent opportunities. This is in opposition to formalised school settings, which, as Green (2013, p. 324) says, 'silence or limit' young people's opportunities to engage civically.

Thus far, perhaps with the exception of Green's (2013) abovementioned study, the notion of youth voice has been painted as a rosy conception. Certainly, media producers working with marginalised young people often presume that all self-expression is emancipatory (Trend 1997). However, for Soep (2006), there is a need to go *beyond* voice in youth media production. Offering a critical contribution, she acknowledges that the notion of youth voice is often championed by scholars believing it evokes excitement and connotes free expression. Soep (2006) is wary of this celebratory approach, forwarding a compelling argument that young people may occasionally regulate, amplify and experiment with an array of real and illusory voices, even within a single sentence. To this end, young people instinctively establish and develop their identity, creating a carefully crafted presentation of self through their verbal representation. Further, Soep (2006) tells that often there are conflicting voices and interests existent within youth media outcomes. A case in point is Ames' (2003) analysis of the representation of local voices within a regional radio station. The author alludes to how, in competing to be the most 'local' station within the region, radio stations resultantly focus on communication with young listeners during peak times. Undesirably, the upshot of this is the projection of *certain* youth voices within that locale, resultantly muting others. Indeed, such work is illuminating in warning not to be deceived by the romanticised notion of youth voice, and represents a notable departure from work that perceives youth voice as such. A picture emerges, then, of youth voice as a less than ideal conception. This paper now turns to consider the inclusionary potential of community radio for young people.

Social Inclusion of Young People Through Youth Media Participation

Community radio has been heralded for its ability to empower young people (Marchi 2009; Podkalicka and Staley 2009; Wagg 2004) and to position young people within dominant societal discourses, from which they were previously detached (Baker 2007). Hart (1992, p. 5) defines participation in society, as regards young people, as 'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives'. There is increasing trepidation about the exclusion of youth, chiefly urban youth, from civic life (Rubin et al. 2009). To paraphrase Keating et al. (2009), education has often been regarded as central to prevailing over social disadvantage, and thereby social exclusion. As community radio stations have been acknowledged herein as sites of informal education, this section seeks to determine the extent to which young people at risk of social exclusion are using youth media to participate in society. Indeed, a consistent thread within the diverse literature of community radio is that of community radio as a means to social inclusion (Barnard 2000). A particularly salient example is Baker's (2007, p. 587) finding that participation in youth radio can enable young people to 'locate themselves more fully in the social and cultural fabric' of their geographic locale and neighbouring areas.

Underpinned by the acknowledgement that popular music is culturally central to 'at risk' young people, Baker (2007) writes about the production of a weekly community radio show,

Guerrilla Radio, by a group of young Australians. The author finds that, through involvement in Guerrilla Radio, the marginalised radio crew were subsequently able to build other productive networks. In sum, then, for young people, community radio is a means of establishing agency and of negotiating marginalisation. Bloustien (2007), too, acknowledges that young people can discover new forms of agency, networking, collaboration and trust through the use of convergent media forms. Drawing on research from an international project *Playing for Life*, Bloustien (2007) compellingly argues that participation in such media practices makes possible a greater sense of inclusion to social and familial networks, while offering opportunities to create new experiential communities centred on music, arts and cultural activities. Similarly, Tacchi et al.'s (2004) study into youth Internet radio found that, through the Internet, young people carve out a space to produce creative content that subverts and challenges mainstream media. Baker (2012), too, argues that online radio can function as a channel for young people's social struggles, powered by resistance to traditional radio formats. The author argues that, markedly, young people's reason for listening to online radio is to hear music, news and language from their homelands – content that is seldom heard on traditional radio in their country of residence. From these readings, it can be deduced that, just as with traditional FM radio, online radio has the ability to strengthen young people's cultural identities, facilitating their inclusion into a familiar – albeit not tangible – social world.

As can be seen from the above, through youth media, young people are able to place themselves within dominant societal discourses from which they have previously felt disenfranchised. To echo Bloustien (2007), a further upshot is that young people are producing and developing new communities and founding new ways of belonging. This coincides with a point made by Halleck (2002), who tells that active participation in community media can function as a source of empowerment for young people to proactively represent themselves. In an auto-ethnographic account of listening to Y!Music, an online radio station, Kibby (2006) found that she was able to communicate with other listeners using instant messaging, permitting an exchange of experiences between users, product managers and developers. Kibby (2006, p. 90) tells that 'the interactive nature of Y!Music did lead to a flow state where I was fully involved in "My Station"'. Certainly, the author can be seen to be experiencing a sense of belonging to this online auditory space. In sum, though perhaps obvious, through inclusionary outcomes, community radio can be seen to be addressing the problem of social exclusion; this is especially important when considering young people's somewhat shifting place in the world.

Writing on the case of Youthworx Media, Podkalicka and Staley (2009) tell how this organisation uses media and non-institutionalised learning to engage marginalised and 'at risk' young people, in a process of participation and development that aims to reconnect them to education and society. In turn, they report increased stocks of both social and cultural capital through acquiring media skills, improved social or familial relationships and augmented self-confidence (see also Podkalicka 2009). Akom et al. (2008, p. 11, emphasis in original) use the previously mentioned notion of Youthtopias to conceptualise the production and distribution of social and cultural capital among young people, finding that 'through individual and organizational processes young people create Youthtopias and thus comprehend the full, humanistic potential of their agency – *the ability to create social change*'. Community radio can be seen as such a Youthtopia, permitting the negotiation of young people's individual and collective identities, as well as their agentic potential. Writing more recently, Podkalicka (2011) goes further to highlight ways in which Youthworx is crucially important as an access point for these young people, not only to creative digital media-based experiences and the related development of skills, but also to increased geographical mobility and involvement within the city. Thus to explain, Podkalicka (2011) believes that Youthworx offers a concrete means for young people to begin

exploring the city beyond the constraints of their local suburbs. This imagining of social mobility is related to a more general notion of social inclusion, whereby urban young people come to realise greater opportunities within the city.

Writing too on Youthworx, Hopkins (2011) more explicitly tells how the media organisation endeavours to offer young people, who have withdrawn from formal education, skill-building in the arts through media and multi-media training. As such, the project aims to assist estranged young people into more socially productive pathways, making 'personal, pro-social connections with the world around them' (Hopkins 2011, p. 196). More pointedly, this work exemplifies how, through gaining these valuable media skills, young people become empowered as active citizens, now both competent and eager to contribute to decision-making in society. Such findings mirror Wallace's (2008) writing on a Massachusetts college radio station, MWUA. Wallace (2008) tells how, aside from their own entertainment, young people use the station to acquire experience on air and to build their curriculum vitae. Certainly, for some, MWUA is a stepping stone towards another destination. Community radio's role, then, in the lives of young people can be seen of particular value when considering the abolition of youth employment in the late 1980s and young people's resulting difficult (Thompson 2011), and increasingly risky (Bessant 2002; Bynner 2001), transition from school to adult communities.

Reviewed thus far are more obvious cases of social inclusion. In turning to a more subtle example, it is fruitful to look at Ezra and Mchakulu's (2007) study of young people's participation in radio listening clubs in Malawi. The authors find that community radio, coupled with listening clubs, creates a public sphere for the local community. This comprises an inclusionary space in which young people can talk through solutions to local socio-economic issues. Seen in this way, community radio is a crucial space for the construction of a collective youth identity, that is a youth community. For other authors (Freire 2007; Potter 2002), the Internet holds further potential as an outlet where listeners can learn about, and interact with, station disc jockeys, find out about upcoming station events and obtain local news bulletins. Certainly, to paraphrase Kranich and Patterson (2008), when young people are able to interact with community members, produce their own media and represent their collective identities, progressive outcomes are almost inevitable.

In their seminal work *youth radio and the pedagogy of collegiality*, Chávez and Soep (2005) are concerned with the specificities of the learning environment engendered by youth media participation. The authors introduce the concept of 'pedagogy of collegiality' to describe the process whereby young people at Youth Radio work alongside peers and adults with a shared purpose. Chávez and Soep (2005) acknowledge the complexity, and also necessity, in such power dynamics; the authors devote attention to how adults in this partnership spur the young producers to develop and grow. It is in this vein that the authors believe that youth media functions as a tool for expanding democratic participation. The same conclusion is drawn in Soep and Chávez's (2010) classic text *Drop That Knowledge*. However, as Mitra (2003) affirms, young people's ability to participate in youth-adult partnerships is associated with the extent to which they feel both heard and understood in this partnership (see also Ross and Obdam 2008). If such partnerships are successfully conducted, for instance connecting young people to their peers, and to adults and community members, young people then have the ability to create their own depictions of their culture and identities (Kranich and Patterson 2008). The over-arching perception that emerges is that, through collegial pedagogy, crucial learning opportunities can be provided for young people. For as Kranich and Patterson (2008) aver, constructive relationships between young people and adults, resulting from participation in media projects, can bring about authentic opportunities for greater leadership roles for young people, community-wide. This dovetails neatly with scholarship (Bloustien et al. 2008) which finds that, through engaging

in media creation, young people may resultantly re-enter mainstream education or find employment.

This paper was oriented around two main themes in the under-represented and under-theorised literature on young people and community radio (Green 2013; Walker and Romero 2008). These themes were youth voice and social inclusion of young people through participation in both FM community radio and online radio. In canvassing these topics, it can be seen that community radio is an invaluable medium for urban young people, both producers and consumers of this media, as a site of informal education outside of the more formal setting of school. This paper is now drawn to a conclusion.

Conclusions

I began this paper by discussing youth voice on the airwaves. Heeding to the work of Wagg (2004), it was considered that, in producing a radio show, young people become agentic in the construction of their own texts, resultantly giving them a voice they are often deprived of in school and family settings. Certainly, through reviewing the literature, it was clear to see that community radio was particularly championed as giving a voice to young people who are disenfranchised. A related point that emerged, too, was community radio's role in empowering marginalised young people (Wagg 2004). However, in acknowledging that not all self-expression is emancipatory (Trend 1997), this paper turned briefly to consider the need to think *beyond* voice in youth media production. It was recognised that young people can experiment with a range of real and illusory voices, thereby creating a carefully crafted exhibition of self within media outcomes (Soep 2006). Such examples illustrate that community radio as a space has an important practical and indeed symbolic use by young people, though the implications of this have not been widely explored in the literature.

The paper then moved on to consider social inclusion through youth media participation. Literature was reviewed which exposed community radio's potential for young people to embed themselves, both socially and culturally (Baker 2007), as well as the ability of community radio, more generally, to enable young people to produce and develop new communities, subsequently founding new ways of belonging (Bloustien 2007). Thus, as argued herein, community radio, both in its traditional FM and online incarnations, is a means of agency for young people and of negotiating marginalisation, and as such is affectively central to disenfranchised urban young people in attaining civic participation. To sum then, community radio provides contemporary young people with valuable opportunities for social inclusion, at a time when this period of their life is arguably complex, insecure and uncertain.

This paper has discussed the genuine potential for community radio stations to provide young people with a space for the exploration and exhibition of voice, and a space that has inclusionary potential. The cultural appeal and flexibility of this space is clear. What remains as of yet largely unexplored by contemporary urban geographers is the potential of community radio, particularly Internet radio, as a pedagogical space which actively engages in youth identity construction and development. Another important aspect to consider is the myriad ways in which urban young people utilise their agency to make, shape and transform these spaces. Encouragingly, recent years have witnessed an epistemological shift from visual to aural within geographical research; for instance, the rise of a minor literature on sonic geographies (Boland 2010; Matless 2005), the studies of soundscapes (Smith 1994) and the (sound) world (Smith 2000). Clearly, there is scope for creating new conversations around community radio and urban young people; Soep's (2006) critical interrogation of youth voice, highlighting the conflicting voices and interests at play within youth media

outcomes, points us in the right direction. What is required is for urban geographers to further consider the potential of the aural as a space, thereby revitalising the community radio research agenda.

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Short Biography

Catherine Wilkinson studied at the University of Central Lancashire where she received a BA in Fashion Brand Management and an MSc in Marketing Management, before commencing her doctorate study in Human Geography at the University of Liverpool. Using a participatory methodology, Catherine is researching how community youth-led radio organisations can create bonding and bridging social capital for community members. Her current research interests centre on community radio, youth voice and young people. Past research interests relate to spokes-characters and brand reputation. Catherine is a teaching assistant at both the University of Liverpool and the University of Manchester.

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