

**Radio beyond Voice:
Understanding Community Radio Stations in Ecuador
through Performance**

by

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Abstract

Situated in a context of media reform, this qualitative research follows a performance approach to explore some characteristics of community radio stations in Ecuador and their possible contributions to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives proposed by individuals, communities, and social movements. This work starts from the consideration that the main role of community media is not to “give voice to the voiceless”, as it has been previously argued, but to accompany the expressions of individuals and communities that have been historically deprived of their voices. Hence, it suggests that performance can offer a broader scope through which to understand this type of media by transcending the notion of voice and including in the scope of analysis both the verbal and non-verbal mechanisms that individuals and communities find and employ to express themselves.

Keywords: Community Radio; Community Media; Ecuador; Performance; Latin America

*To Pablo, who gives me love beyond words.
For your endless patience and unconditional support,
these words, my words, will always be for you.*

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¿Por qué necesitamos radios comunitarias? Hace ya casi tres años esta pregunta se clavó en mí como ancla a la arena. Desde entonces he dedicado gran parte de mis días (y mis noches) a explorar posibles respuestas. Ahora que el calendario y los números en negativo de mi cuenta bancaria me obligan a dar por terminada esta travesía, no puedo decir que he logrado hallar un rumbo único o incuestionable para contestar esta pregunta. En cambio, he descubierto que las razones por las cuáles necesitamos radios comunitarias son tan variadas y diversas como lo son las voces, las manos, y los saberes que se reúnen para crearlas.

De esta forma he aprendido, por ejemplo, que los medios comunitarios más que medios son espacios. Espacios que no están delimitados por el tamaño de una cabina porque los cimientos en donde se asientan no están formados tan solo con cemento, sino también y sobre todo con voluntades que laten al unísono y que como el barro se mezclan – y como ladrillos se alinean – para sumar fuerzas y construir nuevos caminos. Así, he comprendido que un micrófono, una palabra, una imagen o un sonido bastan para conectar el pasado con el presente, el “aquí” con el “para siempre” y el “a ti” con el “conmigo”. Y es que he aprendido también que los medios comunitarios más que espacios son refugios. Refugios en donde lo individual se funde con lo colectivo para imaginar y forjar futuros mejores, más justos y distintos.

Futuros creados a pulso de quimeras que se amplían como el eco de pasos fuertes e incansables, como el retumbar de los tambores. Quimeras que convergen en las radios comunitarias que avanzan junto a voces antes silenciadas. Voces que tienen tanto por decir y que han sido durante siglos opacadas por discursos grandes e imponentes que hablan sin comunicar ni cambiar nada. Voces que, a pesar de haber sido censuradas, han encontrado diversas vías para expresarse a través de los sentidos, de bailes, músicas y rituales en espacios compartidos. Voces que, con el apoyo de las radios comunitarias, estallan ahora como estrellas en una noche oscura a manera de palabras.

En este trayecto he entendido, además, que necesitamos radios comunitarias porque nos han impuesto demasiados mapas con fronteras invisibles que fragmentan, aíslan, nos separan. Y, en cambio, entretejiendo historias en nuestras propias lenguas, sabidurías que nacen en el día a día, y experiencias en común, las radios comunitarias elevan puentes que nos reúnen, nos congregan y abren sendas que acompañan, rompiendo así falsas promesas de objetividad y distancia, remplazándolas con lazos atados por una comunicación empática, comprometida y cercana a las resistencias constructivas que proponen alternativas antes no imaginadas.

En este viaje he aprendido – sobre todo – a cuestionar mi pasado y mis ideas, a enderezar mi timón y mis velas. El tesoro más valioso que de él me llevo es el más profundo y sincero agradecimiento por la oportunidad de coincidir en un espacio, un tiempo y muchos sueños con gente que, como yo, siente un amor ardiente e indestructible por la palabra. Gente a la que también se le desborda del cuerpo el deseo inherente que quema más que el fuego porque nace en un rincón cercano al corazón, o incluso más adentro, por con letras trazar nuevas rutas hacia la razón para este mundo un tanto a la deriva. Un mundo que naufraga.

Ha sido un enorme privilegio el haber encontrado tantas puertas de par en par abiertas que sin preguntas me invitaron a entrar y a juntar energías con aquellas personas cuyo trabajo tanto admiro. Personas que me han hecho el inmenso regalo de permitirme llamarles compañeros, colegas, aliados y amigos. Por eso, con estas líneas como testigo, quiero ofrecer lo único verdadero que tengo para dar. Quiero ofrecer mi entrega sin reservas, mi trabajo sin cansancio, mi tiempo sin reloj, mis palabras con pasión y mi dedicación entera para que, incondicionalmente y para siempre, cuenten conmigo.

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List of Acronyms

ALAI	Latin American Information Agency (Agencia Latinoamericana de Información)
ALER	Latin American Association of Radio Education (Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica)
CIESPAL	International Centre of Post-secondary Communication Studies for Latin America (Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina)
CODELCO	National Copper Corporation of Chile (Corporación Nacional del Cobre de Chile)
CONAIE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador)
CORAPE	Coordinator of Popular Educational Radio of Ecuador (Coordinadora de Radio Popular Educativa del Ecuador)
CRS	Community Radio Stations
ENAMI	National Mining Company of Ecuador (Empresa Nacional Minera del Ecuador)
ERPE	Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares del Ecuador

Introductory Image



cantamos por el niño y porque todo
y porque algún futuro y porque el pueblo
cantamos porque los sobrevivientes
y nuestros muertos quieren que cantemos
cantamos porque el grito no es bastante
y no es bastante el llanto ni la bronca
cantamos porque creemos en la gente
y porque venceremos la derrota
cantamos porque el sol nos reconoce
y porque el campo huele a primavera
y porque en este tallo en aquel fruto
cada pregunta tiene su respuesta
cantamos porque llueve sobre el surco

Figure 1 Public demonstration in Quito's streets
Photograph courtesy of Wambra Radio

Chapter 1

Introduction

The introductory image of this study illustrates a peaceful demonstration taking place in the streets of the historic downtown of Quito, Ecuador's capital; and it is also one of the pictures that the members of Wambra Radio, an online community radio station (referred to as CRS hereafter) located in this city, had chosen for their Facebook profile.

As a medium that exclusively conducts sound, it would seem possible to consider that the work of CRS relies entirely on voice and verbal expressions, and that this work is conducted inside a radio station and behind a microphone. However, I chose to start this study with the picture above instead of one of a radio's *cabina* or station, not only because (as is this research project) it is situated in Ecuador, but also because it illustrates some of the arguments that I will develop in the following pages. Throughout this thesis I will assert that although the *cabinas* of CRS offer an important space for participation and interaction among communication workers of CRS, their audience members, and members of social movements, it is not from there where most of their work is conducted, but precisely from the cities' and towns' parks, plazas, sidewalks, and streets.

In addition, I did not choose this picture exclusively for the image that it illustrates, but also because beside it the members of Wambra Radio included excerpts of the poem titled "Why do we sing" (Por qué cantamos) , by the Latin American writer Mario Benedetti, which reads as follows:

If our brave people are left without support
our homeland dies from sorrow
and the heart of man is smashed to pieces

even before the shame explodes
you might ask, why do we sing?...

We sing because the clamor is not enough
and the sobs and quarrels are not enough
We sing because we believe in people
and because we will defeat the collapse ...

We sing because it rains over the furrows
and we are militants of life
and because we neither want nor can
allow the song to be turned to ashes¹

This poem talks about a group of people, a “we”, that share a common objective to change unjust situations. In this study, I will also argue that CRS in Ecuador contribute to creating spaces for participation among members of a community and accompany, strengthen and communicate their struggles, resistances, and initiatives.

In addition, this poem highlights the potential of artistic expressions as valuable means to communication. Similarly, I will maintain that individuals and communities that have not had access to traditional mediums of communication, may turn to alternative verbal and non-verbal expressions, such as songs, strikes, dances, street protests, and performances (Conquergood 1991: 189; Dutta 2012), and that CRS can contribute to render them visible by translating them into words.

Therefore, I selected this image because it is an initial visual representation of the topics that I address in this study, in which I explore some of the main characteristics that define the work of CRS in Ecuador, to see if these characteristics may contribute to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of the individuals, communities, and social movements with and for whom their programming is created, and if so, how. In addition, drawing from the inputs of performance theories, the concept of *Sumak*

¹ Si nuestros bravos quedan sin abrazos/la patria se nos muere de tristeza/y el corazón del hombre se hace añicos/antes aún que explote la vergüenza/ usted preguntará por qué cantamos...

Cantamos porque el grito no es bastante/ y no es bastante el llanto ni la bronca/cantamos porque creemos en la gente/y porque venceremos la derrota...

Cantamos porque llueve sobre el surco/y somos militantes de la vida/ y porque no podemos ni queremos/dejar que la canción se haga ceniza (Benedetti 1979:102-3).

Kawsay or *Good Living*, and my ethnographic fieldwork, I propose some further steps that this type of media could take in order to possibly reinforce and increase such contributions.

I start by the consideration that in order to better understand the possible contributions of CRS, we need to focus our attention not only on the final communicative product that they disseminate, but on the whole collaborative process of content creation. Paying close attention to this process, I maintain that CRS can contribute to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of communities mainly by generating and offering spaces for active participation among the members of the community and social movements through a horizontal understanding of communication, so that they can express their own needs according to their own worldviews. In addition, they bring communities closer in both a geographical and symbolic levels, contributing in this way to strengthen their feeling of identity and membership in the group, so that they can formulate the ideas, actions, and political plans to work towards a shared objective. Moreover, they actively accompany individuals and communities by going to the places in which people that do not necessarily use words as their main medium of communication express themselves. They also offer spaces from where these individuals and communities can express their resistances and propose their initiatives. In addition, they translate the verbal and non-verbal actions and expressions of individuals and communities into voices to be heard, and they create networks among communities, social movements, and other community media for these narratives to circulate.

I followed a performance approach to formulate this argument. In the following section I explain why.

1.1 Why Study Radio through Performance?

Given that it is a medium that transmits sound exclusively, making voice the primary focus of attention when studying radio would seem coherent. There are two broad perspectives to understanding the notion of voice that guide such an approach. First, voice can be seen as the sound or utterance of a person speaking (Couldry 2010:

1). When applied to the study of CRS, this understanding of voice could lead the researcher to be interested in the formulation and distribution of discourses. As such, she would focus her attention on topics related to the verbal or written expressions of individuals and communities, or on content analysis of the communicational products broadcasted by this media.

Secondly, voice can also be conceptualized as social agency (Bessire and Fisher 2012:20-1), or the human capacity to act, bend and resist lines of power, mediate, or exercise freedom of choice and free will (Kockelman 2007). In this vein, voice can be understood as “the expression of a distinctive perspective on the world that needs to be acknowledged” (Couldry 2010:1). When applied to the understanding of CRS in Ecuador, this conceptualization of voice has led to conclude that the main role of this type of media is to “give voice to the voiceless” (J.I. López Vigil; G. Dávila; S. Tipanluisa, personal communication, 2013). This approach implies that individuals and communities that have not had access to express themselves in dominant mediums do not have a voice, and that CRS can give them one.

On the other hand, performance theories do not start from the consideration that individuals and communities that have not had access to mainstream mediums do not have a voice. Instead, they believe that they do speak and have been speaking and expressing themselves in ways and places that have not been publicly recognized (Madison 2012:197). Strikes, street protests, poetry, visual art, dance, food, and songs can be some of the ways in which these individuals have expressed their resistance and proposals of initiatives to social injustice, oppression and power (Conquergood 1991: 189; Dutta 2011: 195).The epistemological considerations of these theories open avenues for the recognition of such expressions.

On one level, performance can be understood as theatrical practice. However, this notion can transcend the limits of aesthetics and represent a broad research field that views communication as performance (Krolokke 2009:3).Therefore, the main focus of this approach is not words, but actions. It posits that “embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge” (Madison 2012: 183). In other words, these theories situate knowledge, as well as emotion and creation, inside the body. This

epistemological concept opens the possibility for knowledge not being exclusively held in and expressed through the spoken or written word, but instead in and through the bodies themselves and through multiple senses (Madison 2006:348). By considering the body the primary site where knowledge resides, performance recognizes that discourse is not always and exclusively verbal, and that individuals can find embodied ways to express themselves. It identifies the limitations of the approaches that study exclusively oral and written words (Conquergood 1991: 189; Madison 2012:176). When applied to the understanding of CRS, this focuses the attention not on the final communicative products that they broadcast, but on the process that leads towards such products.

Moreover, performance, as the scholar Dwight Conquergood suggests, displaces the idea of solid centres with permeable and continuously shifting borders and zones of contestation where “many identities and interests articulate with multiple others” (Conquergood 1991: 184). Moreover, this theoretical framework invites us to conceptualize identity as “a performance in process” and individuals as “culture-inventing, social-performing, self-making and self-transforming” creatures. Thus, if identity is a relational continuous creation, then the imagined membership in a particular group and community is built as well (Conquergood 1991: 185-7). This conceptualization of identity and membership as fluid, invites us to see people as actors who play and represent roles (Conquergood 1991: 184). In the study of CRS, this provides us with analytical frameworks to see communicational workers, members of social movements and the audience as social actors, which open the possibility to look for both the power and the mediums they have to enable them to work individually and collectively, to affect their surroundings and “reinvent their ways of being in the world” (Madison and Hamera 2006: xii), thus exploring the different ways they find of creating and being.

Therefore, the first reason why I chose to study CRS through performance is that it allows to recognize some of the mechanisms that these individuals employ to access or create alternative mediums for public discussions and expressions; to circulate discourses that challenge the dominant ones; to stage their identities, interests, and needs both individually and collectively, and, by doing so, generate and nourish the ideas and narratives to advance together towards social change and social justice (Conquergood 1991: 187-9).

Compared to other approaches that are also interested in processes rather than outcomes, performance is especially attentive to the investigation and understanding of the practice of ethnography (Madison 2012; Conquergood 1991). The media anthropologist S. Elizabeth Bird argues that anthropology and journalism are related enterprises because both are interested in “gathering information about people and constructing narratives about what they learn from an audience”. For this reason, she says, they can enrich each other (Bird 2010: 4). Performance’s contributions to ethnography are particularly relatable to the work of the staff of CRS in Ecuador because, in both cases, communication is understood as an embodied process. Hence, performance can contribute much to the understanding of the communicational endeavour of CRS and the possibility to suggest alternative further steps.

I also chose this approach because it provides me with both the theoretical background and the language to articulate my recommendations for the directions that CRS could take in Ecuador in order to increase even more the contributions that they bring to the communities with and for whom they work.

Because of these main contributions of performance theories, this approach is particularly useful when studying the ways in which CRS in Ecuador intersect with the needs, struggles, resistances and initiatives of individuals, communities, and social movements. I dedicate the following pages of this study, which is situated in a particular national context in relation to media, to this analysis.

1.2 Ecuador’s on-going Process of Media Reform

This study is situated in a particular context of media reform that is taking place in Latin America in general, and in Ecuador in particular. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the fight for the democratization of communication and for the right of communication has been long and has represented a difficult process (Burch et al 2004: 114). The governments that have emerged in several Latin American countries since the 2000s have undertaken projects towards new legal frameworks that aim to change fundamental aspects of media systems. Although these projects have unique features in each country, they share the objective of diversifying media ownership, which was

previously centered in private hands. In this way, they aim to encourage more public, state, and community participation, so that more and diverse voices can have access to their own mediums of expression, from which they can articulate and propose alternative ways of understanding and inhabiting the world (Follari 2013: 9; Reilly 2012: 5; Waisbord 2011: 98-9).

The communication scholar Mohan J. Dutta argues that the lack of access to resources goes hand in hand with lack of access to communication platforms and processes. For this reason, he suggests that “dialogue offers a discursive opening for creating spaces for social change by transforming the structural inequities in the distribution of resources through the presence of subaltern voices in the discursive spaces” (Dutta 2011:169). In other words, the redistribution of media ownership through media reforms could potentially represent an initial step towards the incorporation of different ways of understanding the world that may lead to different ways of inhabiting it.

Ecuador is one of the Latin American countries where this media reform is taking place, and it is also one of the nations of the region where the concentration of media ownership in the private sector is visible. At the moment of data collection, 85.5% of radio frequencies and 71% of television frequencies were private, while only 1.6% of radio frequencies and no television frequencies were communitarian (Cerbino and Ramos 2008: 35; Ramos 2010; Ramos 2013: 68; Servindi 2012). A media reform could potentially regulate the distribution of the broadcast spectrum to guarantee a more equitable access (Reilly 2012:4).

Despite the fact that Quito, Ecuador’s capital, is the home of several Latin American organizations and networks that also address communication topics, such as the Latin American Association of Radio Education (Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica- referred to as ALER hereafter), the Latin American Information Agency (Agencia Latinoamericana de Información- referred to as ALAI hereafter), and the International Centre of Post-secondary Communication Studies for Latin America (Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina- referred to as CIESPAL hereafter), community media in general and community radio in particular have had several restrictions in the country, such as the prohibition against

having commercial publicity or any other kind of subsidy; limitations on the radio-frequency power spectral density that are permitted (300 watts for AM frequencies and 150 watts for FM frequencies); and limitations on the kinds of programming that they could produce. The members of these radio networks were allowed to broadcast cultural or educational programs, but no informational or entertainment programming was permitted (Jurado, personal communication, 2013; Mediaciones 2013).

Because of these limitations, both the existence and the outreach of CRS in Ecuador have been extremely limited (G. Dávila; López Vigil, personal communications, 2013). Since 1995, the Coordinator of Popular Educational Radio of Ecuador (Coordinadora de Radio Popular Educativa del Ecuador, referred to as CORAPE hereafter), along with other communications groups and social movements, have been demanding changes in this system. Thanks to these efforts, in 2002 these restrictions was eliminated, but CRS were not granted equal rights until 2008, with the creation of the new Ecuadorian Constitution (Mediaciones 2013).

The rights of communication are established in articles 16 to 20 of the current Ecuadorian Constitution. Among others, these include the right to “free, intercultural, inclusive, diverse and participatory communication in social interaction, by any means or form, in their own language and with their own symbols” (Political Constitution of Ecuador 2008. Article 16.1). Moreover, it recognizes the right to the creation of media and equal access to radio spectrum frequencies for the management of public, private, and community radio and television stations (Political Constitution of Ecuador 2008. Article 16.3).

On June 14, 2013 the “Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de Comunicación” (Draft Constitutional Law on Communication) was approved after more than three years of debate. Among other objectives, one of the ostensible purposes of this law is to contribute to the diversification of media ownership in the country by providing equal access to spectrum frequencies to public, private and community media (AEDEP 2012: 3). In addition, this law also addresses other aspects of media ownership and content dissemination, such as legal limits on media ownership and percentages of national

production that each medium of communication has to include in its programming (Reilly 2012:4).

Following Articles 16 and 57 of the Constitution, ratified in 2008, which promote the creation of means of social communication under equal conditions, providing equal access to spectrum frequencies, this project offers to distribute frequencies in the following manner: 33% for public media, 33% for private media, and 34% for community media (AEDEP 2012: 3; Political Constitution of Ecuador 2008). This Law defines these three types of media as follows:

- **Public Media:** State-owned legal entity that pursues the objective of producing and disseminating content of public relevance. This may include media of official character that broadcast the position of the public entity in relation to matters of its competence and of citizens' general interests (Ley Orgánica de Comunicación- Sección I Art. 78- 83).
- **Private Media:** Natural persons or legal private law with either a for-profit or non-profit benefit, whose purpose is the provision of public communication services with social responsibility (Ley Orgánica de Comunicación- Sección II Art. 84).
- **Community Media:** Media that is owned, administered and directed by non-profit social organizations, communities or nationalities, and has social profitability (Ley Orgánica de Comunicación- Sección III Art. 85-87).

Although useful, these definitions of community media are broad and do not describe the diverse types of community media and CRS that currently exist in the country, which are as follows:

CRS created, run, and financed by the Catholic Church: The Catholic Church, in participation with the government of the time, created, ran and financed a number of educational radio stations during the decades of 1960-70. Their main objective was to teach indigenous people how to read and write and to “raise awareness” in indigenous communities through Christian values. At the moment of data gathering, there were approximately 45 educational radio stations and they were located in 21 of the 22 provinces of the country. Not all of them were religious. Some of these radio stations follow or initially followed the dominant paradigm of development. Through

vertical communication they were first used as a medium to “help the communities achieve development” according to Western standards. Others work according to a participatory paradigm. Starting from a critique of modernization as the engine of development, these radio stations do not take for granted a universal development model to which they might aspire. Instead, they consider that development is a multi-dimensional and dialectic process that is unique to each community. A third group of educational radio stations follow Paulo Freire’s work on literacy programs and his notion of *dialogue of knowledge*, or the horizontal relationship between subjects that “engage in an exchange of knowledge based upon their realities” (CORAPE 2010; Chela, personal communication, 2013; ERPE 2003; Freire 1974/2005: 39; Germani 1993; Rogers 1976/2006).

CRS created, run and financed by members of the community for which they produce programming: There are 18 radio frequencies registered in the country with these characteristics and they are located in eight provinces of Ecuador. However, there are also radio stations with these features that function without a frequency assigned by the state or that have a private frequency even if the work that they do is communitarian. Their existence might be related to the restrictions to CRS described in previous pages (CIESPAL 2009; Light 2011:54).

Radio stations created and financed with support from the State, and run by members of the community in which they operate: Arguing for the objective of situating the representation of indigenous peoples and communities in their own voices, the Draft Constitutional Law on Communication establishes that community media will be given economic help and credits to be allocated in equipment, capacitation and participation in state publicity (AEDEP 2012: 3; Servindi 2012). Following this intent, the government created 14 community radio stations in 2010, and plans to reach a total of 54 in 2015 (Portelles 2012). However, given that their funding comes from the state, the freedom that these radios have to create and disseminate content has been questioned (R. Jurado, personal communication, 2013).

Despite the differences among the three types of CRS, they share the objective of not only talking about communities, but also of providing the opportunity to talk for themselves, responding to their own communicative needs. This is not the principal

objective of either private or public media. On one hand, private media tends to respond to private needs, and these do not always match those of the communities (Lander 2012:31). For this reason, María Galindo, a Latin American feminist, activist, and creator of the Bolivian CRS “Radio Deseo”, said that “mainstream media takes our life stories and reproduces them, giving back to us a mirror in which we cannot find our reflection”. On the other hand, public media’s purpose should be to produce a programming that is relevant to the general interests of the population (Ley Orgánica de Comunicación- Sección I Art. 78- 83). Therefore, it cannot include the local struggles and interests of each community. In addition, sometimes public media can function more as governmental media (Lander 2012:31), turning the radio station into a channel for governmental propaganda, thus responding to the interests of the government instead of those of the communities.

In this vein, the lawyer and human rights consultant, Romel Jurado, highlighted during the interview that I conducted with him that in order for community media to contribute to communities, the radio stations have to emerge and operate from the needs and interests of the communities from where they are created and in which they operate. If not, “there is the danger that they only serve as a channel by which external actors of the community, which could be private groups or the State, use them as a medium to reach otherwise remote locations in order to spread their own interests, instead of the interests of the community” (R. Jurado, personal communication, 2013). It is also important to consider that an increased access to the spectrum and radio frequencies does not necessarily result in an “economic autonomy that allows you to *produce* media, or influence the system of media production and distribution” (Reilly 2012:6 –emphasis in original).

Considering this challenge, I have chosen to focus on an analysis of radio stations that are performing communitarian work in practice. In other words, I chose to focus on radio stations that are run by members of the community for and with which they produce programming, regardless of their sources of financial income and of their frequency being legally recognized as public, private, or communitarian. I decided to pursue this focus taking into consideration that, as previously mentioned, some radio

stations that are conducting communitarian work do not have a communitarian frequency due to the restrictions previously outlined.

The radio stations that I worked with are:

Wambra Radio is an on-line community radio situated in urban Quito, Ecuador's capital that is created, run and financed by members of a social collective called "El Churo"². This collective was formed after Radio La Luna, the radio station in which some of its members used to work, was closed. Wambra Radio does not have a radio frequency yet. However, in 2005, their members, who are young adults, took the internet as their medium to voice the needs of several urban communities. In addition, Wambra Radio works closely with rural CRS to disseminate the struggles and needs of these communities inside the city.

Radio Sucumbíos is a rural CRS situated in Sucumbíos, a province located in the Ecuadorian Amazon region. Since its opening in 1992, it has voiced the resistance of the population of this province towards the oil extraction that is taking place in this area.

Radio Ilumán is a rural CRS situated in Ecuador's highlands. It started as a project of the indigenous community of Ilumán to strengthen their fight for the defence of their territory and to disseminate their traditions, stories, interests, struggles, and initiatives, both in their language, Kichwa, and in Spanish.

Radio Intag is a CRS situated in Intag, a community set in Ecuador's highland. Since 2005, this radio station has aimed to offer this community a space to promote participation of its members to express their culture and their worldviews. It is also the medium through which members of the community have organized and expressed their resistance towards several mining projects earmarked for this territory.

Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares del Ecuador (referred to as ERPE hereafter) is one of the first CRS of Ecuador, as it was founded in 1962 with the objective of educating the rural indigenous population through radio. At present, it serves as a space for

² The name makes reference to a traditional mode of communication in Andean indigenous communities (Simbaña 2001: 52).

participation and interaction of the communities of the province of Chimborazo where it is situated, paying particular attention to the promotion of human rights.

These radio stations have different methods for financing and sustainability, which include:

- **Voluntary work:** many of these radio stations are sustained by the voluntary work of communication workers, audience and community members. Several participants mentioned that although this form of sustainability allows them to have more freedom than if they were financed public or private entities, it also represents a challenge for maintaining continuity, as they find it difficult to sustain their communicational projects for long periods of time due to the lack of commitment that unpaid work represents.
- **Funding from regional and/or international organizations** that work on topics related to community media and communication for development and social change.
- **Paid advertisements:** some CRS receive part of their financing from paid advertisements. They mentioned that they restrict these advertisements to the companies and topics that are aligned with the views broadcasted and maintained by the radio station.
- **Paid workshops:** some CRS give paid workshops on topics related to communication and human rights to members of the community, such as police officers, women, or children.
- **Paid events:** some CRS organize events such as soccer games, concerts, and workshops staffed by members of the community. They charge a fee for entry to these events and they sell food or artistic objects while they are taking place.
- **Donations by members of the community:** members of the community can donate money or objects that the radio station needs to work or to organize events or workshops.
- **Production** of different objects, art, or agricultural products to sell among the members of the community.
- **Mingas:** the word *minga* is a term in Kichwa that defines a collective participation in which members of a community work as a group to achieve a shared goal (Ramírez 1980:93-9). The participants of this study mentioned that they usually invite audience

and community members to participate in *mingas* to achieve a specific objective, such as painting or cleaning the radios' *cabinas*.

Although there are other radio stations in Ecuador that have characteristics of community media, and I interviewed some of them, for this particular study I chose to focus on the ones described above because they all share the objective of helping the communities with which they work to voice their resistances and initiatives. In other words, all of them focus on amplifying the voices of the communities in which they are situated to express their needs, struggles, and suggestions.

To choose these particular radio stations, I first contacted the members of Wambra Radio via e-mail. Once they agreed to participate in this study, I asked them for suggestions of other radio stations that they considered could enrich the analysis of this research. I studied the web pages and the programming of the radio stations that they suggested and I contacted the ones I thought were more relevant for this research according to the objectives that they pursue. I interviewed the ones that were feasible considering time and resources constraints. Hence, this study does not aim to offer a comprehensive overview of community radio stations in Ecuador. Instead, it focuses on exploring different experiences of CRS in the country that contribute in different ways to the shared objective of accompanying the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives proposed by the communities with and for whom they produce content. Together, the different experiences of these radio stations can point towards the broader possible contributions and limitations of CRS in Ecuador.

Thus, I believe that this focus is the most beneficial considering the context of media reform in which this investigation is situated. Studying in depth the different experiences, contributions and limitations of the existing CRS could possibly offer ideas and guidance to the stations that are emerging due to the redistribution of radio frequencies that is taking place in the country.

In the following section, I describe in detail how the engagement with the work of these radio stations took place.

1.3 Methods and Methodology

Methodology

Since my first day of fieldwork in Ecuador, it was clear that it was going to be impossible for me to separate myself from the subjects of study. Armed with a pen, a pencil and a wrinkled small notebook, off I went on my first day of research in Quito. I was determined to take detailed field notes about the way in which Wambra Radio covered the news about the march that more than a hundred women from the Amazon had organized to protest against oil extraction in their territory. However, as soon as I took my supplies out, Beto, one of the communication workers of the radio, told me that he needed me to transmit a live interview with one of the organizers of the protest. I did not have time to say that my experience was in written journalism and that I had never done a radio broadcast before; he did not give me time to hesitate or to find a suitable excuse. Before I could answer or even put my pen and notebook back in my backpack, he handed me a microphone and called Jorge, the communication worker that was in the station, to tell him that we were ready, and the interview started. I did not have time to stop shaking when the interview was over and the phone from which we were transmitting was in Beto's hands again. The woman that I was talking to asked me to go with her and help them organize the food donations that they had received so they and their children would have something to eat during their stay in the capital.

In that moment, I realized that the boundaries between the roles I would play during this research process would not be clear-cut or easy to define. In less than ten minutes, I had passed from being a graduate researcher to a broadcaster of a CRS to an activist. During the three months that I spent in Ecuador conducting research among CRS, my duties were just as intertwined as they were in this first experience.

During the research process, I often found myself writing quick field-notes on the margins of the pages where I was writing down the drafts of the articles that I would later publish on the web page of Wambra Radio. At other times I recorded protests, poems, speeches or songs to use as data in this research while broadcasting information for one of the radio stations and later joined the protest carrying signs or water to hand out to the people that were there.

I decided not to fight against these intersections, but to embrace them instead. Hence, the research methodology that I chose to pursue was what the performance and anthropology scholar D. Soyini Madison defines as Critical Ethnography (Madison 2006, Madison 2012). Madison states that performance is both a practice and a theory, as we can rely on theory to “interpret or illuminate a social action”, while it can also be a methodological process to complete the research (Madison 2012:16). Because theories of performance situate knowledge inside the body, they invite us to understand ethnographic research as an embodied practice in which the researcher’s body immerses in the everyday life of the field during the dialogical meeting of co-performance, as Conquergood proposed, to redefine the notion of participant observation highlighting the importance of the body during this interaction (Conquergood 1991; Madison 2006:348-9). Hence, performance’s epistemological consideration that knowledge can be held in and communicated through the body guided both the methodology and the methods that I followed. In other words, understanding performance as a practice helps us recognize the bodily interactions that take place among the researcher and the participants during the research process. Such interactions may be similar to the non-linguistic expressions of individuals that community radio stations help to render visible. In this way, performance as theory and performance as practice have a strong relationship in this study.

Performance opens the possibility for the researcher to adopt new roles in the investigation process. Performance considers that the researcher needs to be a co-performer in order to try to grasp a deeper understanding of the embodied meanings that the participants attribute to their daily experiences. This invites the researcher to move from a position of a distant and detached observer to undertake an involved, engaged and self-reflexive role in what is under scrutiny (Conquergood 1991: 356 Madison 2012:185). In this vein, Madison argues that “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain”, (emphasis in original) and that such ethical responsibility responds to a commitment of the researcher to “make a contribution toward changing those conditions toward greater freedom and equity” (2012:5). It is with the conviction that CRS can serve as a medium to challenge the inequalities that exist in Ecuador that I have undertaken this research project, and it is with the profound desire to contribute as much as I can to

the process towards social change in the country through the understanding of communication that I write about it. Moreover, this consideration encouraged me to propose further steps that CRS should take to increase the possible impacts that they could have.

In addition, Madison argues that the critical ethnographer “will use resources, skills, and privileges available to her to make accessible –to penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defense of – the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach” (2012:6). The methods that I used and that I will describe later in this section were designed to try to comprehend some of the ways in which community media workers, in participation with their audience members, make an effort to listen and render visible the voices of the individuals that have been confined to the margins.

Moreover, Madison argues that this methodology is incomplete without a critical self-reflection of the researcher’s positionality in the study. I have tried to be aware of my positionality during the whole process of this research, in which I have felt simultaneously an insider and conversely an outsider. My Ecuadorian nationality and my academic background in communication have contributed to make me feel as both an insider and a member of the groups I am writing about. This feeling was accentuated when members of Wambra Radio called me “compa”, the diminutive of “compañera”, which is translated from the Kichwa word Mashi, used in this language to refer to members of the same community. However, if the topic of the place or the language in which I was conducting this research emerged, they sometimes called me “*la extranjerita*”, or the “foreign girl” in a friendly way, referring to the fact that I now live in Canada. These two nicknames illustrate my dual positionality in relation to the people that participated in this study. However, Madison urges us to take into consideration that while it is important to recognize the researcher’s positionality, it is also fundamental to remember that “we are not simply subjects, but we are subjects in dialogue with others”. For this reason, she continues saying that critical ethnography is “always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among others, one in which there is a negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in others’ worlds” (2012: 10). Therefore, I consider that my dual positionality gives great

weight to my findings. Feeling an outsider has allowed me to see things from a different perspective, while feeling an insider has passionately driven me to the desire to contribute, challenge and change social inequalities.

Finally, because performance understands identity as a never-ending process, Madison urges us to remember that the research participants are as unfixed and as mobile as the researcher is, and that it is crucial to maintain a dialogue to move “from the ethnographic *present* to ethnographic *presence* by opening the passageways for readers and audiences to experience and grasp the partial presence of a temporal conversation constituted by others’ voices, bodies, histories, and yearnings” (Madison 2012: 11- emphasis in original). For this reason, I have not meant to provide a closed description of “facts”. Instead, I have explored, analysed, and shared some of the multiple ways in which CRS could contribute to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of peoples and communities, and proposed some further steps that CRS take to enhance such contributions.

Methods

I spent three months in Ecuador, from September to December 2013. During this time, I conducted **participant observation at Wambra Radio**. Following performance’s consideration that the researcher needs to be a co-performer in the study (Conquergood 1991: 188), I actively collaborated as a member of the team. I produced journalistic content and worked as a reporter for the radio station. This method permitted me to observe and understand their main objectives and the way in which they put them into practice. It also allowed me to have a close relation to the audience members and social movements with whom this radio station works and for whom their work is directed, and allowed me to cover events to publish on Wambra Radio’s web page. I was able to conduct interviews, and attend meetings, events, and situations to which I could not have had access otherwise. This access informed my research, while simultaneously allowing me to contribute to Wambra Radio by creating content for them. I gained a deeper grasp of the needs of the audience members that inspire and drive the work of Wambra Radio, as well as the ways in which they collaborate with each other. Finally, I had several informal conversations with the members of this radio station, the organizations they collaborate with, and the audience members, during which we shared

opinions and different points of view regarding the work and contributions of community media.

I also conducted **two 90-minute focus-groups with the members of Wambra Radio**. One focus-group was held at the beginning of the data-gathering phase of my research and another one towards the end. The main goal of the first semi-structured conversations was to talk about the history of the radio station, its intended goals and the limitations they have encountered to implement them. This initial phase shaped the questions of my research. The objective of the second focus-group that I held with them was to share my findings and receive comments and feedback. In addition, these focus groups were extremely insightful because they opened opportunities for— in some cases, extremely passionate – debates among the members of this radio station. Mostly, we did not reach conclusions or agreements. Instead, these conversations raised more inquiries and profound analysis of the role of CRS and community communication that enriched this study. These interactions made important contributions to this research because they allowed me not only to listen to their memories, interpretations, and narratives, but also to observe how they are formulated and embodied.

In addition, I conducted a **focus-group with some of their audience members**. In order to explore the relationship between listeners and the radio station, I based my analysis on the notion of Resistance Performance Paradigm of Audience Analysis (RPP), proposed by Joshua Atkinson and Debbie S. Dougherty (2006). Starting from the concept that community media is “integral to the performance of social justice movements”, this approach conceives audience not as a passive recipient but instead as an active part of community media. Therefore, it aims to explore the relationship between performances and community media content with social movements and struggles. It is characterized by different critical worldviews and interactions of audience members with community media production within “intertwining theatres” shaped and coordinated by the content produced in this type of media (Atkinson and Dougherty 2006: 83-4). Therefore, this approach allows us to see the relationships audiences have to this type of media. In addition, we can explore some of the ways in which individuals may use alternative media to perform social justice movements, and to resist dominant discourses and power structures (Atkinson and Dougherty 2006: 65). Hence, with these

qualitative interviews I did not aim to represent the audience as a whole. Instead, my goal was to understand the audience's interactions with the information processes of CRS.

I also conducted **semi-structured interviews with members of eight community radio stations in Ecuador**, from which I decided to focus on the five that I described in the last section. Critical ethnography considers that the relevance of interviews is that they render visible the “complex realms of individual subjectivity” that are inseparable from the shared expressions of “communal strivings, social history, and political possibility” (Madison 2012:28). Madison further states that the interview “is a window to individual subjectivity and collective belonging: *I am because we are, and we are because I am.*” (Madison 2012:28). For this reason, focusing on one exclusive CRS would not have been enough to understand the different meanings that this media may have in Ecuador, as many of these radios work together as a collaborative network, share similar characteristics, and advocate for similar goals. The main objective of these interviews was to explore diverse ways in which members of CRS conceptualize and perform their work. The juxtaposition of the insights drawn from their experiences could possibly contribute to broaden the scope within which community media is understood and discussed in the on-going process of media reform that is taking place in Ecuador.

I also conducted a **90 minute semi-structured interview with a lawyer specializing in communication and human rights**, who participated in the creation of the Draft Constitutional Law on Communication. This interview contributed to the analysis of the history of communications in Latin America in general and in Ecuador in particular, as well as to the analysis of communications as a human right.

Finally, I conducted **semi-structured interviews with members of national and regional** organizations and networks that also address communication topics, such as ALER, ALAI, CORAPE, and CIESPAL. These interviews contributed to situate the study and the work of the CRS I interviewed in a national and regional context.

I also conducted **document and content analysis** by examining the radios' websites and print materials, along with the content that they produce and broadcast. This method permitted me to understand the ways in which the resistances, struggles,

and initiatives of communities are depicted, comprehended, and shared in community radio stations and its networks.

I made an effort to respect as much as possible the ways in which participants of this study talked about their experiences, ideas and worldviews. I identified the main themes that emerged from the data through inductive *in vivo* coding (Bernard 2006: 464), which recommends using the actual phrases or words of the participants. This was not always easy, as I conducted the interviews in Spanish. In addition, the participants often used Kichwa-language words to express themselves. Nonetheless, trying to translate the precise terms into English made me slow down my process of thought, and carefully analyse what the word or phrase meant in each particular context. As a result, this method for data analysis provided me with some insights and allowed me to make some theoretical connections that may have not occurred otherwise.

As this aims to be a participatory project, I asked for voluntary feedback from the communication worker participants throughout the process of data analysis by presenting them with my initial thoughts through oral informal conversations while I was in Ecuador. Because the participants chose their identities to be disclosed and not confidential, I also shared the progress of my analysis via e-mail and Skype after my return to Canada, and I maintained constant contact through this and other mediums, such as Facebook or e-mails. I also listened to their programming and visited their web-pages regularly. In addition, I wrote an article about each of the radio stations that I interviewed, which were published on Wambra Radio's web page. I shared these articles with the members of each radio station before publishing them. Besides allowing me to make sure that they agreed with my interpretations and narrations, I saw the comments and changes that they made in these articles as non-verbal dialogues that enriched the way I understood their work.

The performance approach has informed and has been transversal to the theoretical framework, the methodology, and the methods of this study. But I hope that its contribution does not stop there, as I have aimed for it to influence my writing as well. Performance resists closed and unquestionable conclusions and opens the avenue for what Conquergood calls a "dialogical performance" (Conquergood 1985), or the

possibility to bring together multiple knowledge(s) so that they enter into conversation with each other. By analysing the work of CRS and proposing possible further steps that they could take to increment their contributions, I hope to extend the dialogue about the understanding of CRS in Ecuador, and of the multiple parts that they could perform in the efforts for social change.

1.4 Thesis Outline and Possible Contributions of the Study

In **Chapter 1**, I introduced the study, situating it in the context of media reform that is currently taking place in Ecuador. I said that performance theories can contribute much to the analysis of CRS, as they can open the possibility to appreciate the actions, interactions, and relations that take place within the process of content creation in this type of media. Moreover, I detailed the methodology and the methods that I pursued to explore some of the main characteristics of the work of CRS in the country, with the objective of understanding if and how they can contribute to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of the individuals, communities, and social movements with and for whom their programming is created.

Taking as the point of departure the emphasis that performance theories put on actions, and considering that these actions need to take place in a particular setting, in **Chapter 2** I analyse the relevance of the physical space of the radio's stations or *cabinas* in the process of content creation. I argue the *cabinas* offer the space for participation among the communication workers, the audience members and the social movements. This participation results in the practice of a horizontal communication that emerges from, and responds to, the everyday needs, worldviews, and life experiences of these groups. In addition, they function as the settings where desired social relations can be performed, and where communities and social movements can articulate their ideas and communicate them to a broader audience.

In **Chapter 3**, I turn my attention to the work of CRS outside the *cabinas*. Drawing from performance's consideration that margins can be understood as membranes to be trespassed (Conquergood 1991: 182), I maintain that CRS could be defined as bridges that help permeate the geographical and symbolic boundaries of

communities. Moreover, I argue that performance's considerations of the ethnographic endeavour is related to the understanding of the work of staff members in CRS because both conceptualise communication as an embodied practice, both emphasise the relationship of the body to the production of content and knowledge, and both see the value of incorporating multiple senses into the process. The consideration of the relationship between the two enterprises allows exploring the ways in which the work of the members of CRS contributes to shorten the distance between the members of a community, both in its physical and symbolic dimensions. Their work will contribute to strengthening the identity and membership of the group, which enables them to generate ideas and political initiatives towards a common objective, geared towards resistance or proposition of alternative ways of understanding and inhabiting the world.

In **Chapter 4**, I examine such resistances and proposed initiatives. Performance theories do not consider the fact that the voices of some individuals and communities have not been heard necessarily means that they do not have one, as other approaches do. Instead, this approach argues that if these voices have not been heard, it is because they have been erased from dominant platforms of communication. Nevertheless, they have found other avenues and modes of expression. (Madison 2012:197). In this way, performance opens paths to find, document, value, and try to comprehend such places and manifestations. Hence, in this chapter I argue that individuals and communities that have not had access to traditional platforms of communication find other verbal and non-verbal mediums for communicating their resistance and proposing initiatives. Artistic demonstrations, street protests, and performances are some examples of these mediums. I assert that CRS contribute to render these expressions visible because they pay attention to these verbal and non-verbal manifestations, they actively accompany them or create alternative spaces for them to occur, and then they translate them into words and narratives so that they can be understood by a broader audience. In this chapter, I also suggest that the Andean concept of "Sumak Kawsay" or Good Living can open avenues towards an epistemological framework that could make a shift from an understanding of communication *for* development towards a communication that focuses on the process of creating, articulating, and communicating different alternatives *to* development.

In **Chapter 5**, I study the ways in which CRS build physical and virtual networks of collaboration so that the narratives they create will circulate beyond the margins of the communities. I argue that the internet plays an important role in this process, and explore both its possible contributions and limitations. Moreover, I maintain that the construction of the networks among community media, audience members, and social movements is a cyclical process of creation and collaboration that strengthens the initiatives of the communities to resist and nourishes the possibilities to generate new alternative solutions that may lead towards social change. Finally, I suggest some further steps CRS could take in order to strengthen their contributions even more and to move towards a communication promoting alternatives *to* development. With these suggestions I only aim to offer one of many possible paths to understand the communication process in CRS so that they can keep strengthening their work. The suggestions that I make emerge from the contributions of performance theories and of the local knowledge of the country because I believe that both have much to offer to the understanding and practice of communication in this type of media. Hence, starting from the Andean lifestyle philosophy of *Sumak Kawsay* or Harmonious Living and drawing from performance's theories in general, and the work of Victor Turner and Dwight Conquergood in particular, I maintain that CRS could become *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance* by opening their doors to the articulation and communication of multiple and diverse narratives, worldviews, and ways of understanding and inhabiting the world.

I conclude this thesis in **Chapter 6**, where I review the main arguments I have developed through this study, as well as the suggestions that I have made so that CRS can contribute even more to the collective efforts which strive for social change and social justice in Ecuador.

Some readers might miss an in-depth analysis of the internal organization of each radio station. However, because of space constraint, I chose to focus on other aspects of the work of CRS that I consider add more to the understanding of the possible contributions of this type of media. Thus, as a whole, this thesis offers the opportunity to explore and understand the relevance of both verbal and non-verbal expressions of individuals, communities, and social movements that have not had

access to mainstream mediums of communication, and the possible ways in which CRS could contribute to them. Through the study of CRS in Ecuador by way of a performance approach, this research project suggests that the contributions of this type of media do not rely exclusively on the final communicational products that it broadcasts, but also on the interactions, practices, and collaborations that take place in the process of content creation. In addition, interesting intersections can be found among performance's attention to the ethnographic endeavour and the work of communication workers in CRS. These intersections inform the understanding of the work of these types of media, and offer some possible future guidelines for their work.

Moreover, drawing from performance's theories and from the Andean concept of *Sumak Kawsay*, which is based on the application of knowledge to achieve a harmonic and horizontal relationship with self, others, and the environment (Guerrero Arias 1993; Lizarazo 2012; Rodríguez 2010; Svampa 2012), this thesis suggests some possible paths for CRS to take in the near future to strengthen their work, and to further support the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of individuals, communities and social movements. More broadly, it proposes that Andean knowledge³ could contribute much to the understanding and practice of knowledge production in general, and of the collaborative process of knowledge and content creation in community media in particular.

³ Through the principal texts that I consulted to inform this section of my study (Guerrero Arias 1993; Lizarazo 2012; Prada Alcoreza 2012; Rodríguez 2010; Simbaña 2012; Svampa 2012) as well as among the participants that self-identify as indigenous, I encountered the terms Andean knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and indigenous worldviews (in Spanish: *sabiduría Andina*, *conocimiento indígena* and *cosmovisión indígena*) to refer to indigenous knowledge and indigenous worldviews as a whole. They did not mark a distinction between the knowledge(s) of the different communities that live in the country. As someone who does not self-identify as indigenous, I recognize the difficulty of talking about indigenous groups while simultaneously questioning the narratives that have been written about and despite them. I also consider indigeneity as being a social and political contested and constantly reconfigured category (Hathaway 2010:303; Purcell, T. W 1998:258). In addition, I am aware that the terms *indigenous knowledge*, *indigenous worldviews*, and *Andean knowledge* could potentially represent the discursive risk of relying on a generalization (Fortun, Fortun, and Rubenstein 2010:232). However, when I use this term, I do not aim to homogenize the different indigenous communities that inhabit Ecuador – along with their own unique experiences, knowledge(s), and worldviews – under a single denomination. Instead, aiming not to reproduce external narratives about indigenous peoples in Ecuador, in this thesis I make an effort to use the same terms that the participants of this study that self-identify as indigenous used to talk about their lives, stories, and knowledge.

These contributions are particularly relevant because the study is situated in an on-going process of media reform. In this process, public policies are being formulated, radio frequencies are being redistributed, and struggles for an increased respect for community media and the communication that it generates are taking place. In this crucial context, a better understanding of the contributions of CRS, as well as considerations to guide their future work, could potentially shape the direction of the decisions that are framing the communication process in the country, so that the work of CRS can be geared towards the needs of individuals, communities, and social movements that have not had access to dominant platforms of expression in the past.

Chapter 2

CRS: Media or Spaces for Participation?

During my fieldwork in Ecuador, interviewees often said that communication can be a fundamental component when striving for social change, as it can contribute to the dissemination of the perspectives of particular social groups. However, they also said that not all types of communication are necessarily adequate to achieve this goal, and not all types of media share this objective. For example, during our interview, Carmen Yamberla, a communication worker who co-created and co-runs Radio Ilumán, explained that mainstream media has not always accompanied the fight of her community for their territory, which began in 1986.

With frustration, she explained that during the most critical moments when her community was fighting for their land, mainstream media was not present, and if it was, the information that it broadcasted was directed towards particular interests, which were not compatible with the interests of this community. As Carmen stated, mainstream media “only broadcasted the parts that they were interested in or the parts that did not say anything important, but they never showed the fundamental parts where we said what we really wanted to say.” She contends the existing media of the time did not provide the attention that their struggles deserved, as she remembers that “the most terrible thing about mainstream media was that while we were fighting in the streets during days and nights, while we were dying in the streets in our fight, they broadcast cartoons and soap operas.”

These comments demonstrate Schramm’s suggestion that the existence of media of communication does not necessarily guarantee social change (1964: 26) because it will not necessarily broadcast relevant content for and about their audience members (Gumucio Dagron 2004: 47). Indeed, César Herrera, from CIESPAL said,

during our interview that “the important thing to explore is what social imaginaries each medium of communication is circulating. Mainstream media circulates just the dominant ways of understanding the world, and it leaves us with no option for seeing or understanding other ways”. Similarly, Rómel Jurado, the lawyer specializing in communication and human rights, stated during our interview that “community media can invite us to question the values that dominant communication has created and reproduced, and it can make it visible that there might be other types of understanding and living life that may be more favorable”.

Both César and Rómel highlight how community media can become a medium to circulate alternative ways of understanding and inhabiting the world, which may have not been circulated in mainstream media. But, how can this type of communication be produced?

In the article “Alternative Communication for Social Change in Latin America” (1981), the Chilean scholar Fernando Reyes Matta explains that the type of communication that aims to remain objective, merely observing and narrating the “facts” of “reality” from a neutral distance, is not appropriate for the goal of creating and circulating diverse types of knowledge, as it concentrates power in a few, usually private hands, determines content, and imposes an agenda on public opinion. Such an agenda tends to be driven by the interests of the market, tends to reflect the economic power structure in which it is situated, and tends to reproduce dominant ideas and behaviours by portraying them as the norm to follow (Reyes Matta 1981: 224).

Reyes Matta asserts that in order for communication to help achieve social change, a journalist should work as a mediator situated in the middle of the information process, “shaping the background that energizes a society’s internal dialogue” (Reyes Matta 1981: 225). Similarly, during the interviews that I conducted during the research process of this study, participants stressed that if journalists work as mediators, the type of communication they create would help amplify the needs of a particular group, let authorities know about the different problems that the community faces, and serve as a medium by which individuals and communities could organize themselves and express their culture, worldviews, and language. Moreover, they argued that this sort of

communication could provide people with information about the political life of the country, and as a result, help them achieve political emancipation, while opening a space for dialogue among themselves and between groups with both similar and different interests and experiences that strive for social change.

2.1 Communication for Development and Social Change

Broadly, communication for development and social change can be described as an umbrella term to design research and communicational interventions concerned with improving conditions among people struggling with economic, social, and political problems (Waisbord 2001:28). It originated in international aid programs that initially focused on Latin American, Asian, and African countries, and was based on theories of development that measured well-being in relation to the Western world (Waisbord 2001: 1). However, the understanding of development has shifted over the years. As a result, the way in which communication for development and social change has been conceptualized has varied as well. It has been understood through two main theoretical orientations.

On the one hand are the approaches that aim to “modernize” local communities through a vertical understanding of communication, seeing it as a process of transmission of information that combines strategies and principles directed towards assisting the countries and citizens that struggle with poverty, illiteracy, poor health, and a lack of economic, political and social infrastructures in comparison to Western standards of development (Dutta 2011:32).

For this set of theories, the implicit assumption is that there is one form of development, usually measured by the rate of economic growth that “underdeveloped” societies need to replicate (Escobar 1995: 5-7; Rogers 1976/2006: 113; Waisbord 2001: 1). In addition, these theories consider underdevelopment and economic scarcity to be a result of a lack of knowledge of individuals from the “underdeveloped” countries. They declare that the goal of communication should be to transmit information to citizens in order to change their behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, skills, and social norms, so that they

can achieve a Western understanding of development (Lerner 1958: 60; Rogers 1976/2006; Schramm 1964; Waisbord 2001: 2-5).

On the other hand are the efforts that challenge the dominant paradigm. Rather than considering communication as a vertical transmission of information, they understand it as a participatory and horizontal process that aims to transform social conditions according to local needs. As a result, they privilege media structures intended to serve the needs of local people and promote their participation and involvement in social change processes (De Albuquerque 2012; Dutta 2011: 32; Waisbord 2001:16-7). Among others, some of the ways in which these theories have understood communication are: as the “articulation of social relations among people”, where they dialogue and find ways to achieve social change according to their own needs (Mosquera and Obregón 2005; Sparks, 2007: 57- 60; Waisbord 2001:17); as a dialogical and participatory process that should aim to raise awareness of individuals through free dialogue that prioritizes cultural identity, trust and commitment (Freire 1974: 4, 30, 41-8; Mosquera and Obregón 2005:234; Waisbord 2001:18-9); as a medium to promote responsible portrayals and coverage of social issues, to raise awareness of issues to be discussed and to put pressure on decision-makers to address them (Benford and Snow 2000; Waisbord 2001:24-5); or as a medium to mobilize individuals so they become aware of particular problems, and identify and design possible actions by providing new channels of dialogue to achieve solutions (McAnanay 2012: 108; Prahalad 2005 : 6, 25; Waisbord 2001:26-7).

This second approach to the understanding of communication for social change invites us to see communication not as a distant and detached endeavour, but as “a way of thinking and practice that puts people in control of the means and content of communication process”. (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2006: xix-xxi). Based on dialogue and collective action, communication for social change is understood as a dialogical process through which “people determine who they are, what they need and what they want in order to improve their lives” (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2006: xix-xxi). In other words, this approach considers communication as a horizontal and dialogical process that, starting from local knowledge and traditions, enables communities to achieve change according to their own needs and in their own parameters. This dialogical

process is one of creation between individuals, not an imposition of ideas, beliefs or behaviours (Freire 1970: 44-5). Hence, it is characterized by community participation in the creation and dissemination of content; promotion of local knowledge, language, and culture; and encouragement of dialogue in and between communities (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2006: xix-xxi).

Because community media is an on-going process, it is difficult to provide a closed or final description of it. However, it is possible to argue that one of the aspects that make this type of media unique is its participatory component that aims to provide specific groups and communities with the possibility to express themselves in their own voices and for their own needs (Browne 2012: 155; Gumucio Dagron 2004: 46-8; Huesca 2001: 756).

By inviting audience members to participate actively in the creation and dissemination of content relevant to a particular group, this type of media blurs the boundaries between producers and audiences. This has the potential to offer communities a space to produce their own media and represent themselves (Foxwell 2012:136-9), and to challenge social roles and practices by pronouncing critiques of power structures (Atkinson and Dougherty 2006:65) while simultaneously voicing and articulating different ways of understanding and inhabiting the world.

This interaction is more feasible in radio stations than in other type of media, as radio remains the most inexpensive and accessible medium for communication (Foxwell 2012: 134). In addition, it is versatile and it reaches both literate and illiterate individuals. This participation starts from the interactions that take place in the physical location of the radio stations.

2.2 Participation in the Physical Space of CRS

César Herrera from CIESPAL said during our interview that “when talking about community-led communication, we should not talk about mediums, but about spaces instead; meeting spaces, spaces for being, for sharing, and also for communicating”. Although a deep analysis of the extensive literature on the conceptualization of space

and place goes beyond the scope of this study, a distinction of the way I understand these two notions in this particular research would help to better appreciate the meaning of César's words.

The anthropologist SETHA M. LOW defines the notion of *embodied space* as “the location where human experience and consciousness takes on material and spatial form” (LOW 2009: 28). In addition, she explains that space is transformed through “people’s social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning” (LOW 2009: 24). This notion, together with performance’s emphasis on the body and bodies’ interactions, invites us to understand place as a particular physical location, and space as being constructed by the symbolic and embodied experiences of social processes and interactions. In other words and borrowing the language of performance, I understand place as the physical stage, and space as the set where an artistic performance occurs. In this light, César’s words open the possibility to understand the radio stations not only as the place from which communication is disseminated, but also as the space where it is co-produced. In other words, he invites us to see the embodied experiences and social processes and interactions that CRS hold.

The focus of performance theories relies on actions (MADISON 2012:176). However, these actions take place in a particular space. Hence, in order to see and comprehend the interactions that take place during the communication process in CRS, we need to pay attention to the location in which such interactions occur. The physical space of the radio stations becomes a crucial component of the communication process, as it can be one of the locations where the interactions between the members of the CRS and their listeners occur, as well as a space from which to practice desirable social relations (DUNBAR-HESTER 2014: 33).

On the walls of Wambra Radio’s *cabinas*, between posters depicting national music bands, quotes about community media and CRS written on bright cardboard, stickers of all shapes and sizes, and comics with political content, hangs a colourful printed schedule of the tasks of which each of the persons that collaborates in the radio station is in charge. These tasks include, among others, sweeping the floors, cleaning

the bathrooms, and washing the dishes. The schedule is changed weekly, so that everybody gets to do something different after seven days.

When I arrived for my first day of participant observation in the radio station, the members of Wambra Radio gave me a tour around the apartment situated on the third floor of a residential building in which the station operates. After he had showed me the radio's *cabina*, Jorge let me know that my name was already on the printed schedule. Smiling at me, he said "the work of community media starts from community practice", and told me that the task that they had assigned me for the first week was dusting.

Over the three months that I spent working with them and conducting research, I came to understand these words, and to agree with the journalism and media studies scholar, Christina Dunbar-Hester, when, in her field notes about the research that she conducted about radio activism among a collective in Philadelphia, she wrote "a barn raising isn't the most efficient way to build a radio station, but it is the best way to build a movement" (Dunbar-Hester 2014: 33).

During my own participant observation in Ecuador, I also came to notice that the social interactions that take place inside the radio stations, both the ones directly related to communication and the ones that may seem distant from it – such as cleaning the house – are a fundamental component of the process.

An example of this interaction is narrated by B lgica Chela, from ERPE. During our interview she stated that "the radio station is the meeting point for our people. Before the radio station was built, we did not have a public space for the community to meet, and now it is here where we congregate, we plan, and we feel accompanied".

B lgica is describing the radio station as a space where members of the community can meet and from which a feeling of membership to a community is built. Likewise, Jorge from Wambra Radio said during the focus group that "in the radio station, we construct a collective work and in this way we create a community-led communication; community communication goes hand in hand with community organizational practices. The house materializes the community because it allows for social relationships and relationships between ideas to take place".

The importance of the radio station as a physical space became very noticeable during the three months that I spent in Wambra Radio. In fact, it is so important that the members of this radio station named the house “Casa Cultural La Zurda” (“Cultural House of The Left”).⁴

The members of Wambra Radio saw the need for having a space for these interactions and participation processes to occur even before the radio station was created. Some of the people now at Wambra Radio used to work at another radio station, Radio La Luna. They remembered this beginning during the focus group that I held with them:

Anita: We started looking for a meeting space because when we graduated from the university, we could not access the classroom where we had our meetings anymore.

Vero: and at first we had our meetings in the restaurant of the university, but they kicked us out because we did not consume anything while we were there.

(Laughs)

Vero: then we met outside Casa de La Cultura.

Anita: but then it started to rain so we had to run.

(Laughs)

Anita: then the director of the radio station we were working in at the time gave us a *cabina* that was empty and we cleaned it and we had our meetings there, all crammed and heated.

Vero: we did a *minga* with all the audience members that wanted to participate, we cleaned the space, and since then we met there. This is how La Zurda was born. Later, when Radio La Luna was closed and we decided to start our own project, we continued with La Zurda in our own space.

⁴ The precise meaning of this word is difficult to translate. It can refer both to the use of the left hand, and the political preference for left-wing positions.

The conversation about these initial steps of the radio station keeps going for almost 25 minutes. It is so passionate that at some points it is hard to distinguish what they are saying in my recordings. They have stopped trying to contain themselves from talking at the same time, not managing to take turns to speak anymore.

Jorge: this is the first newspaper article that someone wrote about us.

Belén: oh, that is cool!

Vero: six, seven years ago.

Jorge: it is very nice, look: "radio for the future".

Anita: is that the one where Rafa appears?

Vero and Jorge: noooo

(inaudible conversation)

Jorge: it was earlier than that. "Eight students from two universities present to the public weekly radio programs about diverse topics".

(Laughs)

In the recounting of the beginnings of Wambra Radio, we hear the need for them to have a physical space in which to meet and interact with each other. It is particularly interesting how Vero uses the word *minga*, which is a word in Kichwa to define a collective participation in which members of a community, who usually know each other, work together to achieve a particular goal. This type of collective work commonly takes place in the agricultural sector, but it can also be applied for other ends, such as, for example, constructing a road, organizing a party, or building a community house or centre. The participants do not receive monetary payment for their work. They may receive, however, food, drinks, or other ways of remuneration (Ramírez 1980:93-9). Therefore, her word choice denotes that she is considering both the audience members and the workers of Wambra Radio as members of the same community that are working together towards a shared objective. In addition, it is also interesting to note that while they changed the physical location of the house when they opened their own project with Wambra Radio, the name La Zurda remained. This demonstrates that what makes this house important for them is not so much its physical location, but the social interactions that take place inside it.

During my participant observation, I could see that La Zurda was filled with volunteers almost every day. Sometimes they were helping the communication workers of the radio station with the programming, while at other times they were planning new themes to explore, cleaning the house (most of their names are on the printed schedule as well), eating, chatting, doing their homework, or even sleeping on one of its couches.

Therefore, the radio station becomes a space for community building and interaction among the listeners. During our interview, Denis, a volunteer, said that “in this space we meet very diverse people, there are people who live close to here who come, but also people who live in other parts of the city where some of us never go, and here we get to know each other and to work together”. To this, Yonel, another audience member, added:

For example, I have to leave my house two hours and a half before the meeting hour to be able to be here on time. Sometimes I have to wait for a bus around an hour or so, because I live far away and there are not always buses, but I don't mind, I really want to be here, it is like a space for exchange, for *trueque*, where we share so many things, we share ideas, we participate in workshops, we can express ourselves and tell other people about our different points of view and learn other perspectives as well (Yonel, personal communication, 2013).

These excerpts demonstrate the importance audience members give to the physical interaction and the participation that takes place inside the radio stations. Of particular interest in this interview is Yonel's choice of the word *trueque* to define the kind of interaction that takes place inside, as it refers to a traditional exchange of services or goods considered of having similar value that requires mutual agreement between two parties (Madrazo 1981:216). Therefore, he is describing the participation of the audience members inside the radio stations as an interaction of mutual benefit and growth.

The members of Wambra Radio offer space for members of the community to share with other individuals and to use their own symbols to communicate a message. Similarly, the content that is produced in the programs of Wambra Radio is also defined by the interest of the audience members that participate in this process. In fact, both Beto, staff member of Wambra Radio, and Jorge, who are now part of the

communication workers of the radio station, started by being audience members, proposing ideas for programs, and creating them.

Jorge said that they use this space of creation to talk about communication processes as well. For example, he remembers that some audience members were punk, and they taught them how to sew fabric patches that are commonly used as an accessory among the members of this group. Then Jorge explained that they used these patches, which are relevant for the punkers, to promote the work of Wambra Radio. The audience members taught the communication workers of this radio station how to sew these patches with the name of Wambra Radio, and then they distributed them at punk concerts, so more people would learn about the project.

Therefore, it is clear that for the participants of these radio stations, the communicational process does not start with the creation of the product, but from the interactions and social relations that produce desirable social relations and that allow for the ideas that enable these products to emerge.

The physical locations of the radio stations offer a space for these interactions to occur. While these interactions are by themselves a fundamental component of the communication process in community media, they are at the same time relevant because they are geared towards generating new ideas and narratives. I will dedicate the following section of this chapter to analyse the ways in which these narratives are formulated inside the physical space of the radio stations.

2.3 Generating New Narratives in the Installations of CRS

The academic literature regarding community media is divided into two broad bodies of work. One is constituted by descriptive studies that explain the type of programming it broadcasts, the audience towards which it is directed, and its founding sources. The second group is formed by studies that provide a theoretical analysis that aims to explore the importance of this type of media and its relation to democracy and social justice (Rodríguez 2001:768-770). Nevertheless, both approaches tend to

describe community media in binary opposition to mainstream media (Gumucio Dagron 2004: 46, 50; Rodríguez 2001: 768-770).

For example, it has been said that while both public and private media may be directed to a larger and undifferentiated public or “mass”, community media is both created by and directed to a group of people with similar characteristics and interests (Foxwell 2012:134). It has also been argued that the difference relies on the programming that this type of media broadcasts. This programming is not always found in mainstream media, and it may consist of a particular type of music, a foreign or minority language, a specific political view-point, or formats that are not commonly used in public or private media (Browne 2012: 154).The differentiation may also be marked by the source of financial income, the ownership, or the objective that each type of media pursues or is supposed to pursue (Constitutional Law on Communication).

However, as Anita, one of the members of Wambra Radio, stated in our interview, it would not be completely accurate to analyse this and other community media exclusively under the parameters of mainstream media, or as a mere opposition to mainstream media. According to her, “it could be more useful to explore the ways in which this type of media is inserted in a cultural, social and political context; and the possible roles that they may play in such contexts”.

Similarly, the Bolivian communications scholar Alfonso Gumucio Dagron considers that “we cannot productively use the parameters and criteria of dominant media to measure alternative media. The success or failure of alternative media cannot be measured by numbers and percentages of audience or income but in terms of the ability for opening dialogue in the public sphere, be it at the community level or through existing social networks” (2004: 48). This author argues that the key differentiation of community media is that it is directly linked to social struggles and social movements, and its main goal is to build new and strengthen existing alternative media channels of communication through participation (Gumucio Dagron 2004: 44). The openness that the physical location of the community radio station has enables the active participation of members of the community, and the articulation of their needs with a communicational perspective. In other words, by offering the space for interaction and interconnection of

voices that may not have found other space to communicate with each other, community media often has ties with several social, political, and cultural movements enabling to contribute to build new, and strengthen existing, alternative media channels of communication through participation (Gumucio Dagron 2004: 44).

I could see this active participation with social movements very present in the work of Wambra Radio. I found that Wambra Radio has this interaction inside the physical location of the radio station with social movements in two main ways. The first way is that members of the social movements go to the radio station to articulate together with the members of the radio station, communicational strategies for their plans. An example of this was Benito, a member of Yasunidos, a non-profit organization that is fighting for defending the protected area of Yasuní, in Ecuador's Amazon Rainforest, from oil extraction. For every evening over one week, Benito went to La Zurda and asked the members of the radio station to help him formulate a communication plan. The members of Wambra Radio proposed ideas contributing possible slogans for the organization, and possible strategies to follow. For example, they proposed to create an artistic event, they suggested some of the people that could participate, and they contacted some of these participants. When it took place, Wambra Radio broadcast the whole event. In this way, they helped the organization to generate their communicational strategies, and later they circulated them by broadcasting them.

A second way in which Wambra Radio contributes to social movements is by offering the space for the movement to express themselves through radio. An example of this way of contribution is the feminist program created by the "Assembly of Popular and Diverse Women"⁵. Five members of this feminist collective create a program in which they talk about feminism and issues related to women. Enith Flores, one of the members of this organization, told me during our interview that "having this program allows us to conceptualize our work and think about ourselves, it allows us to construct ourselves as a group and from a feminist, popular, and communitarian perspective, but from what we are and from our local context, from the everyday, not from what we are told that feminism is from abroad. Moreover, while we understand ourselves, it allows us

⁵ Asamblea de Mujeres Populares y Diversas

to communicate our initiatives and our work to a broader public; it allows us to generate new debates”.

Enith’s words illustrate how the process of participating in the programming itself is beneficial for her group, as it allows them to think about their own work and where they want to go while disseminating this work to a larger audience through radio. Moreover, she highlights the importance of the “everyday” (cotidiano). This “everyday” is fundamental in community communication, as it proposes not to create communication from above or from a distance, but from the common practices that are relevant and known to the people that produce the content (López Vigil 2004). Even more, if we return once more to performance, we see that another of its important contributions relies on its theoretical view that addresses the notion of experience. This view considers that experience occurs when we “give feeling, reason, and language” to an event (Madison 2012: 167). Therefore, an “everyday” or quotidian event becomes experience when we reflect upon it. In this vein, CRS become the spaces from where individuals can engage in dialogue and reflect upon their experiences and in this process, fill them with meaning and articulate them through words. Once this experience is expressed in words, it is no longer a personal or individual reality, but a shared one, as “it occupies time, space, and public reality” (Madison 2012:168).

Performance also considers that identity is not fixed, but fluid and it places emphasis on the perpetual process of becoming in the “changing and evolving dynamic of human relationships and creations” (Madison 2012: 184). Therefore, in Enith’s narration we can see that CRS can be the sites where this collective process of becoming social movements takes place. The radio station also contributes to social movements by offering them a space in which they can talk and reflect upon their experiences and turn them into words. Wambra Radio is functioning as a space from where social organizations can reflect upon, articulate and express their points of view and enterprises on a regular basis. Along those lines, Anita from Wambra Radio explained that:

a crucial part of what we propose is that the programming needs to come from the needs of the communities, of their demands, and their projects. Nobody can tell the feminist groups what they need to do, they have to figure it out by themselves, and we are here to provide them with the

space and the communication knowledge to express their own views and to link them with the views of other social groups (Anita, personal communication, 2013).

I did not get to deeply appreciate what Anita meant with these words until the program started. On the Thursday in which they broadcasted the program, Gaby, Amparo, and Doris, three of the members of this organization, arrived to La Zurda at 6:03 pm. For nearly an hour, these women discussed with Anita what topics they had prepared for that week's program. Anita did not speak much. After they told her the topics that they were planning to address, Anita proposed to include a song from a Mexican singer that she had previously heard that week: "I was not born without a cause/I was not born without faith/ My heart beats hard to shout to those that do not feel/ And in that way chase happiness"⁶. The members of the organization agreed that the song was a good idea. At 6:51 pm. Jorge let us know that everything in the *cabina* was set for the program to start. He had organized five chairs in a semi-circle, but only three of them were in front of a microphone. Anita asked Gaby, Amparo, and Doris to take those chairs, letting me know that the ones that were not in front of a microphone were for her and me.

When all of us were sitting down and Jorge bowed his head to let us know that he had started recording, I turned my eyes to Anita, expecting her to be the first to start talking and to lead the program, just like a journalist would in mainstream media. But Doris spoke instead:

⁶ Yo no nací sin causa/Yo no nací sin fe/ Mi corazón pega fuerte/Para gritar a los que no sienten/Y así perseguir a la felicidad (Natalia Lafourcade).

With a lot of enthusiasm we are once more here with you, dear friends⁷, in this program. Today we have prepared many surprises. We are going to chat and share with you our thoughts on women's rights and how they have been formulated in legal frameworks and public policies. My name is Doris and I am very happy to be here with you tonight. Gaby, how are you doing?

Hi everyone, my name is Gabucha, and I am here with you in this program, *Voces Irreverentes*⁸. As always, we have prepared a lot of content for this program and we have brought many interesting topics for you, including women's rights and how these have been included, as Doris mentioned, in the legislations. Even more, we also have prepared some news of Ecuador and other parts of the world (...)

The program continued as a conversation among the three women. They talked about the history of women's rights, and mention the biographies and main ideas of women that have contributed to the feminist movement. They mixed these contributions with their own insights and personal experiences. For example, they talked about how they felt when they visited a clinic asking about contraceptive methods, and how their grandmothers did not have much choice about how many children to have. They connected these experiences with broader considerations on women's rights.

In the second part of the program, they conducted an interview with Tanya, a member of another feminist organization. They talked about the resources for women that experience domestic violence. They were the ones who asked the questions. Anita continued silently listening to the program. She just made a sign with her hands to let the members of the organizations know that they could keep going, and that everything was going all right.

⁷In Spanish, gender is mostly expressed by the letters "o" (masculine), and "a" (feminine). Thus, the word friends translates to *amigas* if the group is formed exclusively by women; and *amigos* if it is formed exclusively by men. However, according to grammatical rules, if a man arrives to a group of women, the gender of the group becomes masculine, regardless of the ratio of women and men in the group. If, on the other hand, a woman arrives of the group of men, the gender of the group does not change to feminine. However, both in the programs that they produce and in their everyday mode of speaking, the members of Wambra Radio make an effort to include the feminine and masculine gender when they address to a group, and they encourage the members of the organizations, communities, and social movements with whom they participate to do the same. Hence, Doris said: *amigas y amigos* to refer to the audience members. Later, Jorge explained to me that with this, they aim to contribute to "depatriarchalize language and sexist ways of thinking".

⁸ Irreverent Voices

Instead of following a specific schedule or a plan divided by time, the program reached an end when the members of the organization felt that they had addressed all the topics that they had prepared. Time management in the CRS that participated in this study is fluid and differs from other types of media.

According to César Herrera, from CIESPAL, “we should not ask a person that has walked from their house during two or three hours in order to arrive at the radio station – as often is the case in rural areas – to talk just for a minute, a minute and a half. In the West, time is gold, and we think that media has to be brief, concise, to the point, but why?” He argues that community media needs to adjust its work to reality and the everyday life of the communities. The CRS that participated in this study are making an effort to respect the organizational and communicational forms of the communities with the objective of generating communicational processes that respond to the needs and dynamics of such communities.

Therefore, this program is an example of how participation with audience members and with social movements by Wambra Radio starts from the physical location of the radio station. La Zurda is the space where community interactions among communication workers and audience members take place, and where members of social movements work together with the communication workers of the radio station to create content collectively. CRS are helping audience members and social movements to articulate their work, while also translating into words their thoughts and activities and communicating them to a broader audience.

During the time that I spent in Ecuador conducting this research, I heard several times and in different contexts the members of Wambra Radio say that they make an effort to open the space for diverse topics relevant for the social movements to be discussed during the programs. However, sometimes disagreements between the staff and the members of the organizations may emerge. In this case, they discuss and try to reach an agreement about what should and should not be said during the programs. If they do not reach an agreement, the program may be discontinued. I will return to this consideration later in this study to propose that opening the doors to ideas, worldviews,

and experiences that are not necessarily in tune with those of the staff members of CRS in Ecuador, could possibly strengthen the contributions they could offer.

2.4 Conclusion

Starting from the emphasis that performance puts on actions, and considering that these actions need to take place in a particular setting, in this chapter I have explored some of the roles that the embodied space of the radio stations play in the process of collaboration and content creation.

I have started by arguing that because mainstream media does not always effectively respond to the particular needs and struggles of communities, another type of communication is more appropriate when striving for social change. The characteristics that define the way in which the members of CRS in Ecuador understand the communication process and put it into practice make this media a more suitable avenue for achieving this goal, as it better joins, accompanies and communicates the needs of members of the community and of the social movements with and for whom they create content. In addition, CRS can be the space from where social organizations can reflect upon, articulate and express their points of view and enterprises. Also, the physical space of the radio's *cabinas* is not used exclusively to broadcast events that occur outside the radio station. They also serve as the stages where interactions among the members of social movements, communities and the staff of CRS are performed, and these interactions articulate the content that is disseminated later. Hence, the physical location of the radio station plays an important part in this process of co-creation, as it offers the space for participation among the communication workers, the audience members and the social movements to occur. In addition, it is the site where desirable social relations can be performed, and where members of the community can meet and strengthen their feeling of membership and belonging.

Therefore, in this chapter I have explored the crucial role of an active participation and collaboration that emerges from the everyday needs and interests of audience members and social movements as some of the main characteristics that define the type of communication that CRS produce. However, while the physical space

of the radio station is of particular importance in the work of CRS because it allows its members to go beyond the mere production of content, opening the possibility for an active participation to happen, most of the work that this type of media does occurs outside the radio station. After having established the importance of the physical locations of radio stations as spaces for interaction and participation in this first chapter, I will dedicate the following pages of this study to explore the contributions of the work of CRS that transcend the confined spaces inside these walls.

Chapter 3

Building Communicational Bridges inside Communities

“The main objective of the work that we do in Radio Sucumbíos could be described as serving as a bridge, a bridge that brings together the people of our community”. This is the answer that Nazario Silva, communication worker at Radio Sucumbíos, gave me when I asked him about the goals of the radio station during our interview. His use of the word *bridge* for describing the work of the radio station is, as I argue in this chapter, particularly suitable because it illustrates a horizontal construction between two or more subjects that brings them closer.

After having studied the interactions that take place inside the *cabinas* of CRS, in this chapter I enlarge the space of analysis by directing attention outside the physical limits of the stations. I aim to argue that CRS contribute to bringing closer the members of the communities in which and with whom they work. Understanding the different ways in which the notion of “community” can be conceptualized contributes to this attempt.

3.1 Considerations on the Concept of “Community”

The efforts to comprehend and define the contested and constantly reconfigured concept of “community” as an idea can be traced back to the work of Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, and Hobbes (Delanty 2010: 1; Studdert 2005: 11-27). The attempt to disentangle the meaning of this concept goes beyond the scope of this study. However, defining how I understand this word in relation to the work of community media can open possible interesting routes for analysis.

The word “community” is a combination of the Latin term *com*, which means with or together, and *unus*, which is the number one or singularity. Therefore, the word community could represent the grouping of many individuals or elements (Delanty 2010:x; Keller 2003:7) and could be encompassed by the idea of belonging (Delanty 2010:xiii). The political sociologist Gerard Delanty recognizes four broad approaches to understand the notion of community: geographical, symbolic, political, and virtual. In this chapter I will address the first three approaches, and I will return to the last one in Chapter 5.

The Geographical Dimension of Community: The word community can refer to a group of individuals situated in a particular territory. In this sense, “community” could be seen as having a physical dimension and being spatially rooted (Keller 2003:6, 38). Therefore, CRS could be seen as a type of media that is situated in a particular territory and creates content with and for individuals that inhabit such territory. However, as Keller (2003: 6) suggests, “the territory that encloses a community offers proximity and density conducive to other kinds of closeness”. In other words, the physical closeness that sharing a particular territory requires could bring along other types of bonds that bring individuals that share such space closer. Hence, we could understand community as a form of social organization based on small groups that inhabit the same area (Delanty 2010:xi). The role of community media could be understood as strengthening the ties of “collective life” and “patterns of life” (Keller 2003:6) of individuals that inhabit the same territory. These bonds have a relation to sharing the same physical space and can include, as Keller states, “having sentimental attachments to who share one’s life space”, created by social interactions. Therefore, if we understand community as being spatially rooted, we could define CRS as a type of media that is situated in a particular territory, and that creates content with and for the people that inhabit such territory, with the objective of strengthening the bonds among them.

The Symbolic Dimension of Community: The notion of “community” is not necessarily and exclusively spatially rooted. It can also have a symbolic connotation that is not unavoidably related to the location in a particular territory, nor is it solely dependent on face-to-face interactions. The approaches that focus on this symbolic aspect of community are more interested in the sense of belonging and the cultural construction of group identity that this term encompasses, regardless of the physical location of its

members (Delanty 2010:xiii). Drawing particularly from Victor Turner's contributions on the ritual process and the rites of passage (Turner 1969), Delanty states that the symbolic understanding of community invites us to pay attention to the symbolic bonds between members of a group that do not necessarily share the same physical location. Instead, these individuals may share similar characteristics and meanings that unite them. In this sense, one of the contributions of CRS could be to strengthen the symbolic ties that link individuals that do not necessarily live in the same place. In the case of CRS, these ties could relate to "language, ethnicity, gender, generation, sexual orientation, and topic of interest" (Browne 2012: 153).

The Political Dimension of Community: A third approach to understand the notion of community conceptualises it as being based on political consciousness and on an everlasting communicative process that is formed in the dynamics of social and collective action to oppose injustice, to protest, to look for an alternative society, or to contribute to the construction of a collective identity of social movements (Delanty 2010:xiii, 86). Hence, this approach does not consider that community is an existing set of values or has an underlying reality. Instead, it is continuously constructed in processes of mobilization, or, in Delanty's words "community is not a static notion, but is defined in the achieving of it" (Delanty 2010:96), and these communities are "reproduced in communication in which new imaginaries are articulated" (Delanty 2010:102). Consequently, this conceptualisation of community could suggest that one of the contributions of CRS could be related to the articulation of the efforts of the community to take action to change unjust situations, to resist, to look for initiatives, and to contribute to the performance of the collective identity and participation of members of the community and of social movements, united by a common commitment and a shared solidarity towards a collective goal (Delanty 2010: 90-7).

In addition, community has also been conceptualized as being based on the symbolic construction of boundaries by which one community differentiates itself from others (Delanty 2010:33). In his book *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (1985) Anthony Cohen states: "By definition, the boundary marks the beginning and end of a community" (Cohen 1985: 12). However, performance theories invite us to understand boundaries and margins not as fixed entities, but as membranes that can be reconfigured and trespassed (Conquergood 1991: 182). Following this contribution of

performance theories, along with the metaphor used by one of the participants of this study to define the work of the CRS where he works, in the first section of this chapter I will argue that CRS can be seen as *bridges* that help trespass the margins that separate members of the community, understanding it both in its geographical and symbolic dimensions. Later the chapter will tackle the political dimension of community by analysing the ways in which CRS must contribute to strengthen the collective identity of the community so that its members can then better articulate the efforts that strive for social change.

3.2 CRS as Bridges

Bridging Communities in their Geographical Dimensions

While I was inside one of the small and humid *cabinas* of Radio Sucumbios waiting for Wilmer, one of its communication workers, to finish transmitting his daily program for youth in order to have our interview, a message arrived through the webpage of the radio station. A member of the audience was asking Wilmer to let his family know that he would be home soon. The doctors had not found anything strange in his exams, and he would shortly take the bus from the city of Quito to Sucumbíos, the province of the Amazon rainforest where the radio station with the same name is located.

Although it is not uncommon any longer to see people chatting or texting by cell phones, parents in Sucumbíos still use the radio as a channel to remind their children to take care of their cows, pigs, and chickens when they are not home. People still use this medium to alert other members of the community if they see someone that they do not recognize prowling the dusty, cobblestoned roads of their town; and, similarly to what the media anthropologist, Debra Spitulnik, found in her research on Zambian State Radio (2010), it is still a frequent way in which families communicate to their loved ones that a relative has passed away, and that a funeral needs to be planned.

As on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) analysed by Spitulnik, personal news in Radio Sucumbíos has been an important means for long-

distance interpersonal communication among families that do not live in the same geographic area (Spitulnik 2010: 182). Since Radio Sucumbíos opened its doors in 1991, roads have been constructed and the river that goes through this land is no longer the only means of transportation. Still, providing a medium that unites and integrates the people that inhabit this geographically dispersed province remains one of the objectives of this radio station. During our interview, Alcívar Bravo, the current director explained that:

We are close to our audience. In other types of media, communication is a distant endeavour. It is a communication made from the desk, from behind a microphone and from a studio. It is information that the audience receives, but does not allow any interaction to occur. We try to make a different type of communication, a communication that allows our audience to be part of the process of communication, so that they do not only receive the information, but also interact with it. In this way, they become active actors in the communication process (A. Bravo, personal communication, 2013).

Alcívar's reflection that in other types of media, communication is a *distant endeavour* because it is made only from the studio, brings into consideration the importance of the physical location of the bodies of the communication workers of CRS in the process of content creation.

Because performance also emphasises the need for the researcher to be physically present at the site of study, and also talks of a collaborative process of content creation, performance's contributions to the understanding of the role of the researcher in the ethnographic endeavour can offer some insights into the understanding of the work of communication workers of CRS in Ecuador.

The physical presence of the reporters of Radio Sucumbíos in the space of the interviewees is particularly visible in the cultural program "Let's wake up" (Levantémonos). Every weekend, Germán Tapuy, the communication worker in charge of this program, travels by his old blue motorcycle to one of the five indigenous communities that live in Sucumbíos (Kichwa, Secoya, Sionas, Cofanes, and Shuaras). Walking with people or accompanying them while they fish or plow the land, Germán interviews members of the communities and gathers local news and struggles, oral short stories, myths, jokes, and legends to broadcast.

Despite the difficulties of travelling to different locations, Germán sees value in visiting the news sites. A narration of his experience broadcasting one of the oil spills that has taken place in Sucumbíos, a province where oil extraction takes place, illustrates the difference that his presence in the location where the news occurs makes:

Sometimes it is hard because I mostly use my motorcycle to travel from place to place, and they are not close to each other. Sometimes I get wet by the rain, sometimes it is hard, sometimes I have to wake up at 1 A.M. in order to be able to be in the place on time, but I think it is worth the trouble. In an oil spill that occurred some years ago in a community far from here, I had heard in other news what had happened, and I thought it was a lie, or at least, an exaggeration. But when I got there, I saw that animals were sick. I saw that people had rashes in their bodies, they were sick. I was very sad because there were people suffering, and I broadcast everything I saw and everything I felt, I talked about the colours, the smells, everything. I was there and I tried to help in everything I could while I gave the information of what was going on (G. Tapuy, personal communication, 2013).

Germán's words (i.e. *felt*, *colours*, *smells*) demonstrate the importance that different senses have, and how all of them contribute to the generation of the news and descriptions.

This type of communication can be understood through performance theories. Conquergood (1991:180) defines ethnography as an *embodied practice* (emphasis in original). Following this contribution, I suggest the work that communication workers do in CRS could also be understood through this lens, and come to be seen as embodied communicational practices that consist of “an embodied mode of being together with Others on intersubjective ground. The aliveness of interactive engagement requires the touch, smell, sights, and sounds of physical, bodily contact, free from the mediations of distance and detachment” (Madison 2012: 185).

Both in the way that performance theories define the practice of ethnography and the way in which communication is put into practice in CRS there is a goal of not remaining as a detached observer, but being actively involved in a “reciprocal role-playing between knower and known” (Conquergood 1991: 182). In other words, being a co-performer in the process of content-creation. It is through this embodied

communicational practice that Germán gives the news. He is not merely producing and broadcasting information, as he mentions that he also assists his interviewees in everything he can. In other words, he is not a detached spectator and narrator of “facts”, but he gets actively and bodily involved in what he broadcasts.

This active involvement of the communication worker in the site of the news permits for a deeper interaction with the audience, where he or she is not only informing about the events, but also taking part in them, which makes an important distinction between the types of information that are broadcast in other type of media. While in other media journalists aim to remain objective and distant, and do not get involved in the news that they broadcast, the members of the CRS with whom I conducted this study do not intend to be impartial. Instead, they want to take an active part in what they broadcast and their physical presence at the sites where the events are occurring allows them to do so because they become part of what they are narrating. Therefore, the physical closeness of the communicators to the places where the news occurs allows them to have a symbolic closeness to the needs and struggles of the people that they interview, and to take an active involvement in what they are relating.

Moreover, performance theories illuminate the importance of the body in communication processes, as they highlight the relevance of the interaction that occurs when one moves from being a distant observer or listener, to having an “intimate involvement and engagement of ‘coactivity’ or co-performance with historically situated, named, unique individuals” (Conquergood 1991: 187, Madison 2012: 185).

By going to the place where the audience members are in order to interview them instead of inviting them to the studios to be interviewed, this radio station recognizes that the physical presence of the reporter at the site contributes to the understanding of the struggles that the interviewees are going through in their unique context. In addition, this presence helps the communication worker to grasp and transmit to the listeners the embodied meanings and emotions that such circumstances carry. Therefore, by physically going to the places where the members of the dispersed community are, this radio station is contributing to bringing them together.

This bridging is not only necessary in rural areas, but also inside cities. For this reason, the members of Wambra Radio, which is situated in the core of Quito, Ecuador's capital, have also encountered the need to go to the physical places where people that usually do not have access to other mediums of communication are. For this, they have the "Churomovil".



Figure 2 Churomovil
Photograph courtesy of Wambra Radio

The "Churomovil" is a van with a megaphone in which the members of Wambra Radio travel to produce programming, to talk about the need for community media, and to interview people in markets, plazas, and other places where other types of media do not reach. For example, during the struggle for including the redistribution of radio frequencies in the Draft Constitutional Law on Communication, the members of Wambra Radio used the Churomóvil to go to the streets and tell the people about the need for CRS.

Jorge explained that “Churomovil is an example of how we work and how we understand communication; we work from a symbolic construction of meanings. Everything that we do is aimed at constructing a narrative so that people can feel close and can relate to what we are trying to communicate”. The megaphone is still commonly used in markets and plazas in Ecuador as a medium for communication. Therefore, Wambra Radio is using the megaphone as a medium that is known to the people they are communicating with, and through this medium they are telling them about something that they may not know, which is the importance of community media. Moreover, Wambra Radio’s logo is a megaphone. This logo demonstrates Jorge’s definition of a symbolic construction of meanings, because it indicates that the type of communication that Wambra Radio creates is close and familiar to the audience they aim to reach. In addition, while they travel through these places, they also record content to broadcast in the radio station. In this way, they offer a space for people to talk and to share conceptions, knowledge and experiences.

When they used this van as a medium for talking about the need for radio frequencies, they took to the streets and public spaces to communicate with their audience. In this way, they demonstrated the need for CRS not only through words, but also symbolically, as the presence of the car verified the lack of other consolidated spaces for communication. In this way, Wambra Radio is producing content not only from the *cabinas*, but also from the places in which peoples and communities of urban areas that have not had access to another type of media are, and they are doing so with mechanisms that are relevant for them.

Yet another example of a radio station that works as a bridge between members of a geographically dispersed community is Radio Intag. The physical location where the community of Intag is situated is scattered. Seven parishes form this area. In order to go from one parish to the next one, people need to walk through dusty and steep roads for an average of two to three hours. Cars are not common, and the few buses that inconsistently arrive to some parts of Intag are always full: people, who are usually carrying animals and tools, need to cram inside, and they should not expect to sit down during their travels.



Figure 3 Intag

Miguel Andrade originally opened Intag's radio station with the objective of reaching children who could not attend school because of the distance between the school and their houses. With this goal in mind, the radio broadcast daily the lectures that a teacher gave in the school, therefore, the children did not have to go to the school's facilities in order to receive education.

However, this radio station has acquired a different role because of the mining projects attempting to enter this area for more than two decades. In 1990, the mining company Bishimetals found copper, and in smaller quantity, gold and silver, in the area. A fight of seven years commenced, until, in 1997, the company desisted due to the resistance that the population of Intag had shown. However, in 2004, the company Ascendant Copper Corporation tried to enter the zone with the objective of extracting copper. After four years of dispute, it discontinued its operations as well, and left the territory. Nevertheless, since 2009, the national company Empresa Nacional Minera del Ecuador (ENAMI), together with the Chilean company Corporación Nacional del Cobre

de Chile (CODELCO) have started processes to try to enter the territory and extract copper again (Zorrilla 2010).

These attempts have caused division among the people who support the projects, and those who do not. For this reason, Miguel said that his main objective is to bring people closer together because the mining projects that are scheduled for the zone have divided the people and created a great social conflict. He explains that the radio station aims to create programming that highlights the similarities among them so that these divisions are blurred, if not erased.

Miguel is not referring any longer to bringing the community together in a geographical dimension, but in a symbolic one. By offering a space for participation and creating programming relevant for these causes, this radio station could contribute to blur the boundaries between the different symbolic communities, as Miguel highlights, which lead to the second part of this chapter.

Bridging Communities in their Symbolic Dimension

Performance theories invite us to understand identity as a relational continuous creation, and therefore, to see the imagined membership to a particular group and community as constructed as well (Conquergood 1991: 185-7).

This contribution can be seen in one of the audience members of Wambra Radio, Denis's, description of his perceptions of the work of the radio station:

Radio allows us to feel that we are a part of a group, that we belong. You can call the radio and say things that you don't tell anybody else. You can say that the teacher teases you because you have long hair and you are a boy. I was always very troublesome and when I call the radio I can talk about what I think, I can explain why I am like this. The radio is also like a space to denounce, a space to tell other people that I am being discriminated against in my school because I like rock music and because I dress in a different way. I can say this because in the radio I also listen to other people that call and feel the same that I feel and that go through similar problems. It allows me to find people with whom I can identify, people who have similar interests, similar worldviews, and similar problems. This is the best part of radio, the feeling that you are sharing what you like the most and what troubles you the most with people that you may not know but that are the

same as you. Then, your passions and your troubles are not only yours anymore. If, for example, you put your headphones on, you are in your own world alone, what you listen to is just yours, you are enclosed, but if you are listening to the radio, you know that other people with whom you share so many things are listening to the same programming, then you don't feel different (Denis, personal communication, 2013).

This excerpt illustrates that CRS can potentially be a medium for individuals to feel they are not alone in their struggles by finding people that are going through similar situations, and to denounce the discontent or the problems they face. In this way, CRS are contributing to strengthening existing, and creating new, communities that are not necessarily or exclusively based on the geographical location of its members.

This aspect is present in the work of Wambra Radio, and the words of Jorge illuminate this when he said that "the notion of community shifts from a territorial construction to a construction of meanings. I think communication is a court for symbolic and collective construction and dispute of meanings that generate new and different narratives". In these sentences, Jorge highlights the need to make a distinction between the geographical and the non-localized communities in order to understand the different roles that communication can have in each case.

In this vein, Anita added that:

Sometimes it is thought that the struggle has to take place only in the rural areas because everything is already done in the city, but we asked ourselves, what about the youth communities that do not have a space to express themselves, to share their music, to learn or to talk about the topics that interest them? What about women, what about feminist groups who do not have a space to share their worldviews and struggles? What about the indigenous people who live in the city? There might have been mediums of communication before, but their airtime was denied for us. Nobody was thinking about the urban space as created communities, as meeting spaces, so we started doing so (Anita, personal communication, 2013).

Anita's account of how Wambra Radio initiated its work makes a connection between the geographical and the symbolic margins in the urban setting, as she refers to people who share similar characteristics, which can include gender, age, interests, struggles, and initiatives, regardless of their geographic location. In other words, she

identifies the need to work with and for communities that inhabit the symbolic and material margins while living in the geographical centres.

Therefore, from these narrations it is seen that the members of Wambra Radio aim to generate an air space of intersection and interaction where members of the community can dialogue with each other and can work together to generate collectively ideas, knowledge, and mutual understandings, and the programming that they broadcast is geared towards this goal.

The following table, which summarizes the main regular programming broadcast by this radio station, shows that Wambra Radio's efforts are geared towards the goal of constructing symbolic bridges so that the different communities that inhabit the city of Quito can communicate with each other and can work together towards similar objectives.

Table 1 Wambra Radio's Programming

Programs	Description
Calzón Violeta	Program realized mostly by women. Talks about topics related to gender and feminism.
Catedral del Verso Chulla Pop Este Mundo es una Sopa Cancionautas Raymo Rock	These four programs are dedicated to national, regional and international alternative music bands, and to non-traditional ways of cultural expression.
Descolonizar el Coco	Program that tackles issues related to colonization. It aims to be a space from which to challenge dominant ways of thinking, and of creation and sharing of alternative ways of understanding and inhabiting the world.
Hij@s de la Tierra	Program dedicated to social and environmental struggles and initiatives of resistance. This is a collaborative project broadcast from Mexico.
Inmundial	Soccer is very popular among Ecuadorians. For this reason, this program focuses on topics related to this sport, addressing it from a social perspective.
Democracy Now	Daily independent program produced in the United States that broadcasts on the internet and on more than 900 community and university radio stations and satellite television channels around the world.
Medio Pasaje	This program aims to be a space in which the youth can express themselves and can talk about the topics that interest and trouble them. Although it includes music and artistic expressions, it focuses on issues that tend to be considered as taboo, so that young people see in this program a space to learn and talk about things that cannot be mentioned in other places.
Ser + Animal	Program created by the environmental organizations "Anima Naturis Ecuador" and "Movimiento Ecuador Abolicionista". It addresses environmental issues.
Noti Wambras	News program that covers diverse current topics and events.
Voces Irreverentes	Feminist program created in collaboration with the Assembly of Diverse Women of Ecuador (Asamblea de Mujeres Populares y Diversas del Ecuador).
Contacto Sur	Latin American news program produced by ALER.
Ojo de Agua	Program that talks about topics related to the conservation of water and natural resources, as well as oil extraction, mining, food sovereignty, and the environment.
Radikal Sonoro	Wambra Radio re-broadcasts this program produced in Spain, which aims to support the production and distribution of alternative music in Latin America and Spain.

By looking at the programming of Wambra Radio listed in Table 1, we can see that it offers a space for diverse communities inside the urban area to communicate; especially those communities of women, youth, alternative musicians and artists, and individuals dedicated to environmental causes. Besides these regular programs, Wambra Radio also produces special features and interviews with emphasis on topics related to the democratization of communication; environmental rights; cultural expressions such as urban and ancestral art, music and theatre; feminism, social organizations, and people and communities in resistance.

Through this programming, Wambra Radio is generating spaces from which communities can learn and talk about topics and issues that are of specific and self-reflexive interest and are not part of general conversations and discussions. For example, Sofi, a teenager who listens to Wambra Radio and participated in the focus group said:

I like to listen to the program for youth produced by Wambra Radio, especially when they talk about sexuality. I could not talk to anybody about the things that they talk about, I would not dare to ask anybody those kinds of questions because it is, like, it is not allowed to talk about those things here, you know? In school, they try to teach us about sexuality sometimes but they make it so boring. I don't really care for what they say, but in the radio I always pay attention because they talk about things that I am interested in and that I really want to learn, and I feel free to call and ask if I have questions or if I want say something or learn more (Sofi, personal communication, 2013).

This excerpt shows that Wambra Radio is contributing to generate knowledge about topics that are interesting for its audience, and that it is inviting them to participate in this process. For example, Sofi explains that she feels comfortable calling the radio station and giving her opinion or expressing her desire to learn more, something that she does not feel comfortable doing elsewhere.

However, Jorge highlighted the need to avoid focusing on a particular community exclusively, but, on the contrary, to bring together several and diverse groups. In this way, he brought into consideration the importance of generating programming relevant to several communities. Moreover, he mentioned the need to bring these communities

together so that they can collaborate with each other and they can walk side by side towards common objectives.

Wambra Radio also creates content relevant to the different symbolic communities integrated by individuals of similar characteristics. To be sure, CRS can serve as an avenue through which different communities can communicate with each other, can share and learn from each other's experiences and points of view, can integrate their efforts, and can work together to create projects geared towards social change.

This last aspect is fundamental, as the objective of community communication is not only to provide a space for participation of different communities, but also to have a purpose and work together towards a similar objective (López Vigil 2004:258).

In the next section of this chapter and focusing on the work of Radio Ilumán, I will describe how CRS can become a space from where members of the community work together towards a shared goal.

3.3 The Experience of Radio Illumán⁹

Radio Illumán and the Fight for Land

With a sparkle in her eyes that communicates both passion and anger, and simultaneously conviction and strength, Carmen Yamberla, one of the founding members of Radio Illumán, narrates the story of how a small dark room that used to be a prison cell inside the community became a radio station.

She tells me that the size or configuration of the space was not important in the beginnings of the radio. Crammed inside the humid cubicle built with adobe and hay, some leaning against each other and others kneeling on the floor, dozens of people took turns to speak through the one microphone they had when they first broadcast, while others ran to their houses to bring old cassettes to have some music to play.

Over the years, this room was refitted with the white cement walls and wooden doors that surround us while we speak; but the excitement that she felt that first day of working for the radio has not changed. This memory makes her smile, but it is not what brings the gleam into her eyes. Her fervent story of why she and other members of her community decided that they needed to have their own medium of communication does.

⁹ While in the other sections of this study I draw from the experiences of diverse radio stations to formulate my argument, in this segment I base my analysis mostly on Radio Illumán. This is so because, as I said in the methodology section, I wrote an article about each of the radio stations that participated in this study to be published on Wambra Radio's web page. Before publishing them, I shared with the members of the radio station what each article was about. I initially titled the article about Radio Illumán quoting Carmen Yamberla's words and I named it: "Radio Illumán: taking our fight from the land to the air". When she reviewed the article, she did not alter any of the body of the text. She did change, however, its title. The name that she chose was: "Radio Illumán fights for cultural identity and the Kichwa language". Drawing from performance's contributions on dialogue beyond words, I understood this modification to be a type of non-verbal and virtual performance, as we did not have any conversation about it. However, it pointed onto me the importance that Carmen gives to the role of the radio station in relation to the community's identity and language. For this reason, in this section I focus particularly on the experiences of this radio station to analyse possible intersections between radio, identity, performance, and the political dimension of community (C. Yamberla, personal communication, 2013).

“Here we have a very, very close relationship with nature. We keep sacred ancient rituals alive. It is not that we have lost them and are trying to recover them. They are still alive. They have always been”, she explains. She is referring to the three rituals that take place at the San Juan Pukyu watershed, which is located inside the geographic community. One of the rituals that take place in this watershed is weddings, which culminate with the couple taking a bath in this sacred water. A second ritual is performed by the *curanderos*, or healers, who have a spiritual relationship with this place because they use this water to complete their healing process. The third important ritual that takes place in this water occurs every year before the Inti Raymi, a pre-colonial indigenous celebration of the sun. On this day, the members of the community go to the watershed to have a bath of purification. It is for this spiritual connection with the watershed that the community of Ilumán fought so fiercely in 1986, when the government of the time wanted to expropriate it. And it is during this fight that they saw the need for a medium of communication of their own.

“In the fight for our water we saw the huge need for our people to have a medium by which they can defend themselves. We already had the strength, but we did not know what else we needed to do, where we needed to go, or who could give us a voice (*darnos hablando*). So we said, no, we need to speak for ourselves”, Carmen remembers.

Carmen’s phrase *darnos hablando*, which I have translated as “give us a voice” is an example of an expression of the Andean Spanish, in which the verb *dar* (to give) is combined with a gerund, in this case *talk* (i.e. *hablando*).¹⁰ This expression is commonly used when asking for a favour (Olbertz 2002). It denotes a passive voice from the person that is speaking, as the active verb is directed towards the person to whom the favour is being asked. Hence, Carmen’s words demonstrate a shift from a passive

¹⁰ This phrase was particularly difficult to translate, and the process of trying to do so was extremely insightful, as it allowed me to realize the change from a passive to an active voice in Carmen’s narration. I feel that the full meaning of the phrase gets lost in the translation. Its literal translation would be “give us talking”. Nevertheless, I believe that the phrase “give us a voice” communicates its implicit meaning more accurately. An alternative translation could be “being talked”, as this phrase denotes a passive voice of who talks, and puts the action in someone else.

position regarding communication, in which she and her community may have been “being spoken” by someone else, to a proactive role in which they see themselves as active social actors, and they may speak for themselves.

These colloquial Andean forms are present in their broadcasting as well, which could contribute to creating a feeling of closeness with the audience members because the language that is used is familiar and relevant for them. Moreover, this close relationship with the audience members can generate a type of communication that could play an important role in the strengthening of identity and feeling of belonging to the community. This, in turn, could allow them to generate ideas and political initiatives towards a shared goal.

It is often argued that communication can be a fundamental component for achieving other rights and advocate for social change, as it serves as a channel by which a community may voice its needs and struggles, and demand action (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2006: xxxvi; Jurado Vargas 2009:19). Nevertheless, this has not always been the case for communities in Ecuador, where the representation of peoples and other minority groups has been marked by continuous layers of silencing. Authoritative narratives and the discourses created by others about and despite minority groups have been historically produced and maintained since the XV century, and the legacy from the colonial representation of indigenous people still remains in the XXI century (Casaús 2010; Fernández López 2013; Malkki 1996).

Community media can serve as a channel not only of communication between individuals in the community at large, but also as a way to “recuperate their own collective stories and histories –some of them traumatic –that have been erased in the national narratives of the dominant culture and are in danger of being forgotten within the local worlds as well” (Ginsburg 2002:40).

For this reason, we could understand communication not merely as a tool, but also as a territory (Doyle 2012:12). During our interview, Carmen remembers that when she and her community, which she identifies as indigenous, started the fight for their land, they thought: “we are fighting for our land, from the earth, but what about the air?”

They are trying to dominate us from there as well. We realized that we needed to bring our fight to the air, and that is how the idea of the radio station emerged.”

In this excerpt, Carmen describes the air as a space that, as land, needs to be defended; and she describes the radio station as the medium through which to fight in this territory. Thus, we understand communication not only as a territory, but particularly as a territory in dispute (Doyle 2012:12-3). For this, we should understand territory not only as a geographic location, but also as a constructed space that is configured and determined in the frame of social relations (Doyle 2012:12). Therefore, communication is seen as a socially performed territory from which individuals conceptualize, organize and express themselves.

This is precisely what has happened in Radio Ilumán. According to Carmen, speaking for themselves has contributed the most to their struggle for defence of natural resources:

The radio has been really important in all the process. Before, people had to come walking from distant locations to let a coordinator know about a project or a problem, so he could communicate it to the leaders of the community, to then organize a convention to transmit the information and make plans or decisions. It was a complex process, and who knows how the content of the message traveled. Who knows if in this process they made it bigger, smaller, or if they changed it completely? But on the radio it is enough if someone comes and talks directly and informs directly. In this way, not only the communal convention is listening, but the person is heard by every member of the community, and they can know the reasons and the possible outcomes. Another very, very important aspect is that the radio has permitted us to communicate our ways of seeing and understanding the world, our worldview, our knowledge, our tradition, our identity, to other parts of society, so that they can know how we think and they can begin to understand us and respect us. Before the radio, the only thing that authorities and the government could see was that there was water that could be utilized, they saw that we washed our clothes there and that we took our animals there so that they could drink water; that is everything they could see. They did not know anything about the real, the ritualistic, the symbolic importance that this water has for us (C. Yamberla, personal communication, 2013).

In this excerpt, Carmen describes that the station has been a channel by which individuals from the community can communicate with each other, and they can

organize themselves to resist. This opens the space for more members of the community to actively participate in the issues of the community, and this participation of community members and local actors is fundamental in the process of social change. Similarly, Dutta explains that “it is through the commitment and active involvement of locally situated actors that agendas of social change are articulated, and actions are taken to bring about transformations in the structures constituting the lived experiences of community members” (Dutta 2011: 243).

Moreover, this process has contributed to strengthening the feeling of belonging to the community, and therefore, to the reinforcement of their identity as a group. If we understand identity to be, as Conquergood (2006: 356) suggests, a “performance in process”, the radio station can come to be seen as the territory in which these identities are performed, reshaped, reassured, and strengthened.

Radio, Identity, and the Political Dimension of Community

The approaches that conceptualise community in its political dimension consider that this concept refers to a communicative process of collective action and participation to resist and propose initiatives (Delanty 2010: 86). Similarly, performance theories invite us to understand identity and membership as fluid, seeing people as actors who “creatively play, improvise, interpret, and re-present roles and scripts” (Conquergood 1991: 184). Therefore, they pay attention to the “doing of identity” (Madison 2012: 184). Community radio stations are thus seen as a performance site for a collective and participatory communication process where shared representations are created, where collective identity is performed, and where cooperative meaning-making takes place so that the alternative narratives to challenge dominant discourses are generated.

Radio is a suitable medium for identity performance in Ilumán for several reasons. In the first place, it is close to oral culture, the traditional way of communication of people in Ilumán. Historically, oral culture has been the mechanism by which collective memory has been preserved, and traditional knowledge has been shared (Guerrero Arias 1993: 63). Radio allows this way of communication that is closer to indigenous oral tradition to reach a broader audience.

A second aspect of identity performance in Radio Illumán is language. This radio station broadcasts both in Kichwa and in Spanish. The fact that it broadcasts in Kichwa is crucial for the collective identity performance of this community. With colonization, Spanish was imposed on indigenous populations in place of their own language. Their language represented a central component of their identity, because through it they could “socialize their knowledge and preserve their memory, articulate past and present, and transmit the essential codes for reproducing their own culture” (Guerrero Arias 1993:62). With the imposition of Spanish as the dominant language, the mother tongues of indigenous populations “are conducted to a space of secrecy so that they can survive, and they are reduced to the ambits of the everyday” (Guerrero Arias 1993:63).

Therefore, the usage of Kichwa as the language of communication in Radio Illumán has both a symbolic and a practical meaning. In a symbolic meaning, it is resisting the language that was imposed on them as a group, and starting from the everyday, they are constructing narratives to disseminate among the community. In this way, the radio station is returning the value of the language so that it emerges from the quotidian and returns to the social and political. On a practical level, the radio station is contributing to the dissemination of their tongue and their own culture among themselves.

On the other hand, broadcasting in Spanish has allowed them to voice their opinions and explain their worldviews and actions to authorities and to other people outside their geographical and symbolic community. Carmen comments that it is for this reason that they broadcast in Spanish as well. “We make radio, but we do not make it just for us. From us we want to reach a broader public, if not, they will not understand us, and then communication is not very useful. Ours is a strategic communication in which we have to reach as many people as we can,” she says.

In this excerpt, Carmen describes communication as a strategic avenue, and highlights the importance to reach a broader audience in order to express the ideas, worldviews, and struggles of a particular group. Therefore, CRS can be the site where participation and interactions among members of the community take place, and in this process they can articulate their efforts towards a shared objective.

3.4 Conclusion

Starting from performance's understanding of margins and boundaries as membranes that can be reconfigured and trespassed (Conquergood 1991: 182), together with a participant's metaphor of "bridge" to define the work of CRS, in this chapter I maintained that, through a horizontal understanding of communication, CRS bridge the geographical and symbolic distances between the members of the communities for and with whom they create content.

Moreover, I argued that performance's contributions to the understanding of the practice of ethnography can provide avenues to comprehend the work of the communication workers of CRS. In both cases, there is a strong emphasis on the conceptualization of communication as an embodied practice and both consider the body as a site for the creation and exchange of knowledge. Both also find value in the incorporation of multiple senses in the process of content creation. The consideration of the relation between the two practices opens avenues for exploring possible ways in which the work of the members of CRS can contribute to shorten the distance between the members of a community, both in its physical and symbolic dimensions. CRS can contribute to permeate the borders of communities in their geographical dimension by shortening the physical distances that separate the individuals inside a community. On the other hand, they contribute to bring communities closer in their symbolic dimension by accentuating the characteristics and strengthening the bonds that the members of the communities share.

In this process, the feeling of identity and of membership in a group is strengthened. As exemplified by the experience of Radio Ilumán and its contribution to the fight of the community for the defence of their land, this strengthening of the membership of a group can enable such a group to generate the ideas and initiatives that could lead towards a shared goal. In this way, CRS contribute to the practice of the political dimension of community by generating a collaborative communicative process to oppose injustice, to resist, and to look for an alternative society.

In the next chapter, I will analyse some of the ways in which CRS can contribute to accompanying the resistances of the communities, as well as the initiatives that they propose, which may or may not be uttered through words.

Chapter 4

CRS and the Performance of Social Change

In chapter 3, I analyzed the ways in which CRS can bring together members of a community (in this case, I am understanding the word “community” both in its geographical and a symbolic dimension), and in this way, strengthen their identity and feeling of belonging to the group, so that they can begin to formulate the processes that may lead towards change, thus placing the political dimension of “community” into practice. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which CRS can contribute to render visible and nourish the processes of resistance and of articulation of initiatives.

Often times it is argued that community media “gives voice to the voiceless” and to social movements (J. I. López Vigil, personal communication, 2013; G. Dávila, personal communication, 2013). However, as Anita said during one of our interviews, it might be more accurate to consider people who have not accessed mediums of public expression not as “voiceless”, but as individuals or groups that have been deprived or dispossessed of their voices¹¹.

The difference between these two conceptualizations is fundamental because while the first one considers individuals as not having a voice of their own, the second one sees that the fact that their voice has not been heard, or that it has been only partially heard in dominant discourses, does not mean that they do not have one. Instead, it means that the voice of some individuals has been systematically and historically erased from dominant discursive spaces of knowledge production, and that their expressions have not been visibilized (Dutta 2011:3, 169). In other words, their voices have been confined to the margins, from where they may be difficult to notice,

¹¹ In Spanish: “despojados de la palabra”.

see and document (Huesca 2001: 754). As a result, these individuals and groups have often been portrayed as passive and without agency by the dominant ideological constructions (Dutta 2011: 171).

Similar to Anita's consideration, performance theories understand that the marginalized "speak and have been speaking in spaces and places often foreign to us" (Madison 2012:197). Therefore, it is necessary to go to the spaces from which they are speaking in order to listen to what they are saying, and it is necessary to understand ways in which they are expressing themselves, which may not be through words. In the following paragraphs, I will argue that this is precisely what CRS do.

4.1 Accompanying Non-linguistic Expressions of Resistance

And here I am, writing, late at night. So late, in fact, that it does not make any sense to take a look at my watch anymore. What difference does it make? Here I am, sitting, rather uncomfortably, in front of a computer and a wooden desk covered with highlighted, wrinkled, read and re-read articles with messy, almost intelligible annotations on the sides, camouflaged with empty cups, open books, closed books with more than one bookmark in between their pages. Here I am, in silence, alone, in the dark. It's cold. The image of my present body is so contrasting – so fearfully contrasting – with the picture I have in front of me. The picture I present below. The picture I took more than a year ago.



Figure 4 National March for Life

Yet, if I look at it closely enough, long enough, my mind still recalls the sound of the *pingullos*, the *rondadores*, and other traditional instruments that were played. Yes, the echoes of this music still dance with the songs, the poems, the laughs of the women, the men, the children; and with the honks of the cars that passed by as well. The blurred memories of the movement of the bodies, the fluttering flags, and the bright colors still make me a little dizzy, a little confused, a little excited. Just like when I was there, partaking in this performance that aimed, as Dutta (2011: 197) explains, to “reclaim the streets as public sites of dialogue and debate”.

This is so because when people or communities have been confined to the margins and their voices have not been heard, bodily and artistic expressions can become a way to perform and articulate their individual and collective resistance towards dominant discourses and practices (Gumucio Dagron 2004: 61), as well as the possible initiatives that they may propose. As Conquergood puts it: “through cultural performance many people both construct and participate in ‘public’ life. Particularly for poor and marginalized people denied access to middle-class ‘public’ forums, cultural performance

becomes the venue for 'public discussion' of vital issues central to their communities, as well as an arena for gaining visibility and staging their identity" (Conquergood 1991: 189). Therefore, performance for social change, as Dutta states, "embodies the politics of representing issues of social injustice, oppression, power, control and resistance in public spaces through the use of aesthetic forms of representations" (Dutta 2011: 195).

CRS pay special attention to these performances. One of the examples of how they do it is their coverage of the National March for Life that took place in Quito on October 2013, depicted in Figure 4. During this march, women and men from the Amazon region walked to the city to express their resistance towards resource extraction projects that are either taking place or are planned to take place within their territory. This walk took the participants three days to complete, and it can be understood as an embodied device to reclaim the territory (Magnat 2015).

During all the days in which the participants of the march were in Quito, Wambra Radio covered their performances. Through these performances, they represented and embodied different symbolic ways of resistance. For example, they went to plazas and to cultural sites of the city, and they sang traditional songs of resistance both in Spanish and in Kichwa, played traditional music, danced, and gave speeches.

Every time that the participants of the performance arrived at a location from which they wanted to speak, they performed a sacred traditional ritual.



Figure 5 Ritual during the National March for Life

The picture above demonstrates the ritual that the participants of this demonstration performed in different public spaces of the capital. The man dressed in white clothing is holding in his left hand a traditional symbol of communication, such as the the *churo* (or *kipa* in Kichwa), which is a big seashell that, when blown through one of its sides, produces a sound that can be heard from a kilometer away. It is a traditional way of communication in Andean indigenous communities, and it is commonly used to convene a meeting or assembly, or to give important news or announcements (Simbaña 2001: 52). Dutta writes that “the political capacity of performance to constitute social change lies in its ability to disrupt the dominant structures and the assumptions built into these structures through the use of cultural symbols. The conservative elements of the culture embodied in the symbols that are circulated widely are pieced together at performative sites to bring crisis to the status quo” (Dutta 2011:197).

This is why the members of Wambra Radio named their collective El Churo. In the picture we can also see Vero from Wambra Radio, sitting close to the people who are performing the ritual, and holding the microphone to broadcast the information about

what is happening through the radio. While the rituals were taking place, Vero narrated in her own words and in Spanish what was happening, also recording the sounds of the Churo, and the elements burning.



Figure 6 Speech during the National March for Life

After the non-verbal demonstrations, the participants gave speeches, as the picture above reveals. Wambra Radio transmitted these speeches, which were given both in Spanish and in Kichwa.

After the speeches and the rituals ended, they interviewed the participants of the demonstration:

What happened today in this among women from the Amazon and other women organizations? Tell us a little bit about what happened since the morning.

Yes, I invited women of other social sectors because they also fight for their life, for their causes, for everybody, not only for one, this fight is for all citizens, for all communities, this fight is for all, so I invited many *compañeras*, many women, and we have taken the resolution to work together, they support us and we support them.

Another manifestation is planned for tomorrow, at what time is it going to happen?

We are going to meet at 10:00 a.m. and we are going to walk together to other public spaces.

What are you asking the government, what are you demanding?

We have arrived to our resolutions and our proposals. Why are we here, fighting? We are not in the air, the women in this movement. Women from the Amazon are saying: stop the oiling companies in our territories. Repeatedly, oil companies are knocking at our doors, at the Amazon, saying that they want to come in, come in, come in. That it is for the improvement of the community, the improvement of the city, the improvement... no. We do not want that. We live better in the Amazon because we have healthy rivers, healthy jungles, healthy environment, healthy animals. For this reason, we are defending our territory; we want the oil to remain underground, that it is not taken out, that it is not taken out from Pachamama¹². It is the blood from Pachamama that they want to take out.

In these excerpts, we can see that Anita from Wambra Radio is asking one of the participants of the manifestation to explain in her own words the reasons why she is there, and what they are asking to the government. In this way, Wambra Radio is accompanying¹³ the resistances of the communities, while also offering them a space for expressing their experiences, opinions and worldviews in their own words. Therefore, this is an example of how the work of Wambra Radio starts from the worldviews and the traditional ways of communication of the communities, how they accompany the non-verbal performances of these communities, and how they translate them into narratives to broadcast through the radio.

¹² Kichwa word for "Mother Earth".

¹³ On several occasions, the participants used the Spanish word *acompañar*, which I have translated as *accompany*, to describe the work of CRS. Some of the meanings of this word are: 1) to join one thing to another; 2) to simultaneously exist with another thing or individual; 3) to participate in someone else's feelings, or 4) to join efforts with someone else with similar "powers" in order to care for an objective (RAE). This word choice may demonstrate a horizontal and close understanding of their communicative role. This word indicates that according to the view of the interviewees, the radio stations do not aim to "educate" or to tell members of the communities what they should do, neither do they consider that CRS should merely translate their processes, resistances, and initiatives. Instead, the word *acompañar* indicates the desire to work together with the members of these communities, or to join their efforts to walk towards a shared objective.

In addition, although it was a protest that took place over several days and in which more than a hundred people participated, no mainstream media was present during the process of the demonstrations. Therefore, Wambra Radio contributed to communicating these resistances, which may have otherwise remained undocumented. And they do not document them from a distance. On the contrary, they take an active part in the struggles of the communities. For example, in the coverage they invited active involvement of the audience, telling them specific actions that they could take if they wanted to help the people that were participating in the march. The communication workers themselves brought food, clothes and blankets for the women, men, and children who were participating, and who stayed for days in the capital of the country showing that the members of Wambra Radio had a committed and active part in this struggle. As a result, the content that they created responded to the needs of the audience.

Therefore, through this example we can see that CRS can contribute to documenting the expressions of resistance that take place in public spaces that do not reach mainstream media. These expressions remain on the margins of the discourses and narratives that circulate in the centre of discussion inside the country. In addition, CRS do not only talk about the struggles and resistances that they are covering from a distance, but are present during the entire demonstrations. In this way, they contribute to translate into words the embodied and symbolic expressions of communities into narratives, so that they can later circulate among a broader audience. However, community radio stations do not only accompany these non-verbal expressions of resistance of individuals and communities; as I will explore in depth in the next section, they also create spaces for these expressions to occur.

4.2 Creating Alternative Spaces for Expression

Radio Sucumbíos

One of the main objectives of Radio Sucumbíos is to provide a space for the voices that are not always heard to express themselves. To this end, it has programs dedicated specifically to youth, children, women, and immigrants, among others.

However, in order to listen to the voices that have been confined to the margins, this radio station does not only contribute with its programming, but also with the creation of alternative spaces of expression (Dutta 2011: 250). Such spaces include cultural events, festivals, contests, and concerts. In these events, local artists and members of the community are invited to participate with their songs, dances, poems, and other forms of artistic expression.

Through these events, which are financed by donations, by subscription prices to contests, and by food and beverage sales, the radio station creates a moment in which audience members can interact with each other; and share food, music, and the public physical space. In other words, by organizing these events, Radio Sucumbíos is not only allowing audience members to express their thoughts, emotions, experience, worldviews and resistances through art, but it is also contributing to the disruption of “hegemonic control of dominant discursive spaces by creating entry points for subaltern voices” (Dutta 2011: 252, 257) in public spaces, and simultaneously, inscribing them with new symbolic meanings (Juris 2008: 128). Therefore, through the physical presence of the participants in public spaces, the members of the radio station and the artists challenge the dominant use of space, while participating in a process of collective meaning-making.

The disruption of dominant practices is not given only through space, but also through the prizes that the radio station offers to the participants. Instead of providing a monetary reward to the participants in festivals and contests, it gives them chickens, pigs, fruit, vegetables and wheelbarrows to work the land, which are donated by the members of the community. Through these prizes, the event is situated in the reality of the everyday life of the community, and it offers an alternative to the dominant economic system, which may not necessarily be appropriate for the local way of living and the traditional worldview.

Finally, the radio station broadcasts these events. In this way, it translates these embodied collective experiences into words, so that a broader non-physically present audience can take part as well.

Radio Intag's Cultural Night

The space is ready. The microphones are on. The small sign with the words "silence, recording" quickly written with a light blue marker is hung in the window of the radio cabin, where the person in charge of broadcasting nods his head and turns a red light on so the musicians at the other side of the room know that it is time to start. It is seven P.M. and the Cultural Night at Radio Intag has begun. The objective of this night is to express resistance against mining operations through art; and particularly, through poetry, music, and declamation.



Figure 7 Radio Intag's *cabina* during the Cultural Night

As soon as they receive the signal from the cabin, the seven members of the group "Los Cantares de Intag" begin to play. Accompanied by guitars, drums, and local instruments, the soloists sing:

As they dug in Zaruma, and in the jungle as well,
They think that here they can do the same.
They are very mistaken, they cannot do that,
Because we are united and we are going to defend.

We ask the mining companies to go away
And to leave our air, our rivers and our hillsides free ¹⁴

This first song, as many of the others that this and other music groups interpreted during the night, expresses resistance against the mining projects that aim to enter Intag, the zone where this radio station is located.

The Cultural Night took place on the balcony of the house where the radio station is located. Because the communication worker who organized this event was one of the musicians as well, they asked me to record the interpretations and conduct the interviews that were broadcasted on the radio.

The member of Radio Intag who was also a member of the band that played during the Cultural Night was Luis Robalino. He considers that music is a powerful way to approach the goal of expressing resistance towards mining. During the interview that I conducted to broadcast on the radio, he stated that “art has a phenomenal potential to communicate through different ways. Music, and art in general, travels from house to house, from community to community, and it affects more than rationality, our emotions, and that makes us have a passion, a conviction.”

Similarly, Dutta (2011: 206) writes that “songs frame key issues within the broader agendas of the processes of social change, mobilizing public support and public participation in challenging the dominant structures of oppression and exploitation”. Hence, music, and more broadly, art, can be seen as a medium to reach a broad audience and to communicate messages of resistance to a large group, because by offering an alternative channel for expression, it can open the possibility to listen to voices that have not had access to other mediums of verbal or written manifestation. By organizing events such as the Cultural Night, Radio Intag contributes to the dissemination of these manifestations.

¹⁴ Como en Zaruma cavaron y en el Oriente también, piensan que en el Occidente también lo pueden hacer. Están muy equivocados, eso no lo pueden hacer, porque la zona está unida y vamos a defender. A las empresas mineras les pedimos que se vayan y dejen libre nuestro aire, nuestros ríos y laderas.

The Cultural Night in Radio Intag is an example of community-based performance. Community-based performances are events that are created by and for members of a group of people that share similar circumstances. The purpose of such events is not only to entertain, but also to create a collective and participatory process in which individuals can work together to express their opinions and points of view, their resistance towards the circumstances in which they live, and their cultural traditions. Even more, these interactions can represent an opportunity to articulate possible ways to imagine a collective future towards social change (Cohen- Cruz, 2006: 427-30, 444). In this way, it is also an avenue to put the political dimension of community into practice, and an expression of the geographical and symbolic dimensions of this concept.

The artists in the Cultural Night of Radio Intag had a communal context (Cohen-Cruz, 2006: 444) with the audience to whom they were playing. In other words, they all lived in Intag, and they had personally experienced the struggles that mining has caused in the zone. Moreover, they had also taken active participation in the efforts to resist. This allowed them to write songs that were not detached from the reality of the people to whom they were singing, as the next verses exemplify:

Don Víctor told me that in the forest
all the water for Intag is born,
The spring waters and fountainheads
that nourish our valley

Don Mariano told me
that the landscape is in danger
because the mining companies
want to extract copper

They are thinking only about money
Which will be given to the bartender

With honour I want to sing
to the intelligent people

That very bravely defend
so many people¹⁵

This song narrates conversations that the authors had with people of Intag regarding the mining struggles. In this way, the musicians are not only expressing their own opinion and resistance towards mining but through their music, they are also voicing the opinions of other inhabitants of this territory, and amplifying them through the radio, so they can reach a broader audience.

Moreover, the audience members also had a space to talk during this event. Although the Cultural Night took place inside the facilities of the radio station, and the audience members were not invited to physically attend the event, there was a strong level of participation by the listeners. The phone lines were open during the whole event, and people from the community of Intag who also opposed mining called in to express their support throughout the night. On two occasions, members of the community who were listening to the program called and read their own poems, and one audience member sang her song. In this way, the radio blurred the boundaries between the artists and the listeners, and invited them to create a shared artistic experience with a common goal.

This interaction opens the space for reciprocity, or the “desired relationship between community-based artists and community participants” (Cohen- Cruz 2006: 432-3) to occur. Thus, these performances offer the opportunity to both artists and audience members to involve into dialogue as members of the same community.

Until now, in this chapter I have argued that individuals and communities that have not had access to traditional mediums of communication which privilege verbal expressions find other ways of communicating this resistance, and that CRS can contribute to render these expressions visible by accompanying them, and by creating

¹⁵ Don Víctor me contó que en los bosques, allí nace toda el agua, toda el agua para Intag, vertientes y manantiales que alimentan nuestro valle. Don Mariano me contó que el paisaje está en peligro por culpa de los mineros que quieren sacar el cobre, pensando solo en dinero para darle al cantinero. Con honra quiero contar a la gente inteligente que de forma muy valiente defiende a tanta gente.

alternative spaces for these expressions to occur. However, participants do not understand resistance only as a way of defiance or combat, but also as a strategy that can be geared towards the proposition of new and different initiatives. Similarly, Dutta reminds us that performances not only disrupt structures through the participation of the subaltern sectors, they also open the space for alternative ways of thinking, feeling and being, as well as for new collectively constructed narratives and meanings (Dutta 2011: 213-4).

In the following section I will argue that CRS also contribute to voice the initiatives proposed by communities. For considering this contribution in depth, I will focus specifically on the Andean concept of *Sumak Kawsay*, or “Good Living”, which is a lifestyle philosophy that refers to an aspiration of maintaining a harmonious co-existence among individuals, the community, and the environment (Pachamama Alliance 2014).

4.3 Voicing Initiatives

The Concept of Sumak Kawsay

Isabel Nangonó, one of the artists who participated in the Cultural Night of Radio Intag, which I described in detail in the first section of this chapter, said:

Mining companies have divided people in Intag and have convinced some of them to agree with their presence in the zone by talking about things such as employment, money, modern development, while some others are worried about the water, the forests, the air, the agriculture. Because of this, we propose initiatives, such as selling our craftwork, focusing on agriculture and tourism. These kinds of activities would be more in accordance with our ways of understanding the world (I. Nangonó, personal communication, 2013).

This excerpt illuminates a tension between the discourses of what Isabel calls *modern development*, which justify the need for extraction of natural resources in terms of monetary income, and the way of life that the interviewees want, according to their own worldviews and needs.

According to the Andean knowledge¹⁶ held by some communities in Ecuador, the world is a living entity that encompasses time, space, life, and consciousness, and is in a permanent process of change, interrelation, and creation. Moreover, it considers every component of nature, such as “rivers, stones, rainbows, plants, animals, and stars as particularized and complementary expressions of life” (Rodríguez 2010:37). In this vein, the Kichwa word “kawsay”, which can be translated as life, “recognizes every being or process of nature as a living thing” (Rodríguez 2010:37) that is interrelated and complements each other (Rodríguez 2010: 115-118).

In addition, this conception does not have a lineal understanding of time, but is cyclical instead (Rodríguez 2010:102). This understanding of time is fundamental because it opens the possibility for return. Therefore, the main necessity is not to appropriate resources, but guarantee that resources are always available instead (Ceceña 2012:60), and in this way, it secures diversity, life, and equal distribution of resources (Prada Alcoreza 2012:231).

From this understanding, wellbeing is determined by the capacity of applying knowledge to achieve a harmonic interrelation with nature, and “development for the Andean world is the capacity of knowing how to optimize the resources that the environment offers to satisfy the vital needs of the community” (Guerrero Arias 1993: 76), and use these resources in such a way that it promotes regeneration and re-growth (Pachamama Alliance 2014).

Cristina Gualinga, one of the women who participated in the National March for Life that I described in Chapter 3, told me that for her, *Sumak Kawsay* means “to have a living rainforest, to live in harmony inside a community, either a small or a big community, such as a country. It means sharing as equals everything that we have and taking care of our Pacha Mama that we have inherited from our ancestors”.

In this interview, we see the need for a horizontal relationship among members of the community and nature, or Pacha Mama. In a similar vein, Jonny Dagua, another

¹⁶ Refer to footnote 3

participant of the manifestation told me that “Sumak Kawsay means to maintain and use natural resources in a moderate way, applying our ancestral knowledge about agriculture and about nature so that we can apply our communitarian economy, valuing the principles of solidarity, of reciprocity, of redistribution, always applying our own knowledge, which is essential for the identity of our peoples”.

Here he narrates a way of using resources in a moderate way and he links this to the identity of the indigenous population. Guerrero Arias (1993: 76) writes that defending an alternative to development such as *Sumak Kawsay* can be “a space for affirmation of social relations that allow the reaffirmation of a collective identity, as it is sustained in cultural matrixes that have been socially produced”. For this, he adds that fighting for these initiatives is also a fight for maintaining indigenous identity, “ it is a fight against forms of oppression that maintain indigenous populations tied to continuous alienation that make domination viable” (Guerrero Arias 1993: 73). These words point towards an understanding of *Sumak Kawsay* as a concept related to the struggle for cognitive justice.

Then, Dutta reminds us that “the material margins are defined, produced, and reproduced through communicative processes that mark the margins as backward and incapable of participation, and simultaneously erase those from the margins from the mainstream policy platforms, juridical structures, and platforms of decision making” (Dutta 2012:5). Similarly, Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that there has been a dominant way of recognizing just one way of knowing and thinking as valid, which can be understood as a “cognitive injustice” (2011: 16). Moreover, he argues that without cognitive justice, social justice is not achievable, as both are directly related. The processes of exploitation and coercion are achieved through the exclusion of the knowledge of the oppressed social groups; a knowledge that is needed to discontinue practices that legitimize and reproduce conditions of social inequalities (De Sousa Santos 2009: 12; Van Dijk 2001:249-250).

Therefore, a struggle for cognitive justice through the dissemination and understanding of the meaning of *Sumak Kawsay* among the non-indigenous Ecuadorian population could potentially open avenues for alternative ways of understanding

development, which in turn could result in different ways of relating to the environment (Doyle 2012:18). Hence, it could open avenues for social justice as well.

By considering that development as plural rather than unitary and universal, *Sumak Kawsay* can incorporate multiple knowledge(s) and diverse cultural, economic, political, and social aspects. While still relevant, economic abundance plays a less important role yielding to the relations among humans, who are considered as being interdependent with nature and with their communities (Prada Alcoreza 2012: 235). For this reason, it has been proposed that this concept encompasses social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political dimensions, and as such it can be considered as a political project to propose alternatives to the Western understanding of development (Simbaña 2012); or as a possible economic model for the State (Prada Alcoreza 2012).

Sumak Kawsay and the Ecuadorian Constitution

The Constitution of 2008 is the first Constitution in the world which has included the notion of *Sumak Kawsay*. In Article 275, the Constitution states that “the development structure is the organized, sustainable, and dynamic group of economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental systems which underpin the achievement of the good way of living (*Sumak Kawsay*). The good way of living shall require persons, communities, peoples, and nationalities to effectively exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities within the framework of interculturalism, respect for their diversity, and harmonious coexistence with nature” (Political Constitution of Ecuador 2008).

According to the Government’s National Plan for Good Living (Plan Nacional Para el Buen Vivir 2009-2013), the inclusion of this concept responds to an effort to respect nature’s rights¹⁷; to generate a new economic model; and to value and recognize the country’s diverse “peoples, cultures, knowledge(s) and ways of life” (Senplades 2015).

¹⁷ Ecuador is the first country to recognize Nature’s rights in the Constitution, which are stated in Chapter 7, Art. 71-74. (Political Constitution of Ecuador 2008).

It is the first time that this notion that comes from indigenous knowledge, as well as other Kichwa words, such as Pachamama, which can be translated as “Mother Earth”, are included in the Constitution of the country. This inclusion could be understood, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos proposes, as a possibility for generating a different theoretical framework to understand the national identity, a framework based on intercultural democracy that celebrates diversity and traditional knowledge and includes them in their political plans, which may result in new ways of understanding and undertaking territorial organizations and public policies, as well as the relations between civil society and the State and new criteria for participation (De Sousa Santos 2012: 19-20). Therefore, the incorporation of these notions in the Constitution should potentially contribute to bring the traditional knowledge that had been historically confined to the margins to the economic, political, and social centres from where the country is understood and from where the policies that will shape it are formulated.

Nevertheless, this inclusion in the Constitution is just an initial step, as for it to acquire real value and have an impact on the lives of individuals it needs to be applied in the everyday practices and decisions that take place inside the country. In the words of de Sousa Santos, the presence of this notion in the Constitution opens the space for what he calls “ecology of knowledge”. This ecology of knowledge could be understood as the comparison or interaction between different ways of knowing (De Sousa Santos 2012: 116) that could emerge from the interaction between the dominant worldview and the indigenous worldview, but this ecology of knowledge needs to be created (De Sousa Santos 2012: 21). However, a gap can be found between what the Constitution says and the projects that are currently taking place in Ecuador.

During our interview, Jonny Dagua said that the extraction projects that are currently taking place in the country are not aligned with the notion of *Sumak Kawsay*. He explained that “for us, petroleum in short equals death because it is the death of our life as we know it, leaving only scraps, leaving nothing else than huge social, environmental, and cultural impacts, and none of the richness that they promise us”.

In this excerpt, we can see that Jonny finds an inconsistency between the extraction projects and the concept of *Sumak Kawsay*. The extraction of petroleum and

other natural resources does not correspond with the notion of *Sumak Kawsay* because it does not ensure the reuse of the resource and of the land, which contradicts the cyclical understanding of time on which *Sumak Kawsay* is based. In addition, following proponents of the notion of *Sumak Kawsay*, the working of land is not understood as a process of domination over nature, but as a space of collective performance of a harmonious relation between individuals and nature in which the members of the community take care of the Pachamama so that it can still provide for them in the future (Ceceña 2012: 63; Prada Alcoreza 2012:228; Svampa 2012: 198). Therefore, the extraction projects that take place on indigenous lands do not only interrupt the indigenous way of life on a symbolic level by contradicting their understanding of time, nature, and relations, but also in their everyday practice of labour as a social act instead of an economic endeavour.

Therefore, a new question regarding the way in which the notion of *Sumak Kawsay* is put into practice outside the indigenous communities emerges. The Venezuelan sociologist Edgardo Lander asks: “Do Good Living and Mother Earth constitute expressions of the search for transitions that lay out profound civilizing ruptures from the colonial patterns of subjugation of human beings and nature, or will they turn out to be reduced to an adjective, to an embellishment to legitimize *developmentalist* and extractive public policies?” (Lander 2012:31).

Here, Lander invites us to critically analyse if there might be intrinsic objectives for including indigenous concepts and worldviews in the processes that are taking place in the country. Jorge from Wambra Radio mentioned, “what we are seeing now is an apparent guarantee of rights. We are living in a society that guarantees your rights but at the same time, it takes the political content out of these rights, so with what are we left?” In other words, we should ask ourselves if these concepts are being introduced with the objective of contributing to the individuals and communities on their own terms, or if, on the contrary, they are being appropriated, emptied of their content, decontextualized, and returned to the communities as an avenue that is familiar to the communities for legitimizing practices that do not respond to their worldviews and their needs.

While exploring this question, Lander argues that these categories are opened and they may have several meanings. In addition, he maintains that a process of construction of shared imaginaries of these categories is currently taking place, and that communication can play a crucial role in this critical moment. In the following section, I explore the ways in which CRS could contribute in this process.

4.4 CRS, *Sumak Kawsay* and their Intersections: Towards a Communication that Promotes Alternatives to Development?

Many of the dialogues and conversations that occurred during one of the focus groups that I held with the members of Wambra Radio circled around the ways in which communication in community media could be defined. We did not get to a “final” answer. However, the members of this radio station conceded that it could be understood in terms that encompass a “collective and symbolic construction of meanings”. Jorge argued that “communitarian communication could be seen as a sort of field of symbolic construction that generates narratives of ideas that either legitimize or do not legitimize the system”. Therefore, we could see communication as the space in which concepts and experiences are filled with collective meaning. Then I ask, how can communitarian communication contribute to the process of filling with meaning and significance the concepts and notions that are now under dispute between the State and the *indigenous knowledge* so that they contribute to the wellbeing of the communities?

ALER, a regional communication network with more than 80 community radio stations from Latin America affiliated to it and whose offices are situated in Quito, framed its work in relation to *Sumak Kawsay* as the striving for a new “paradigm of life” (Lizarazo 2012: 5). Therefore, it considers that *Sumak Kawsay* is an alternative to development that, starting from a bio-centric perspective, understands sustainability as:

The cultivation of relations, meanings, and practices that generate sustenance and that support all forms of life. Good Living means another philosophy of life in which there is neither a superior state to which to aspire, nor an inferior state that needs to be overcome. Each community imagines, agrees upon, and constructs its modes of life. In

synthesis, everything that has been organized towards “development” is now organized towards life (Lizarazo 2012:6).

In this excerpt, we see that the understanding by ALER of Good Living is framed as an alternative to development that does not privilege one way of life over the other that has historically been directed towards a Western understanding of development (De Sousa Santos 2012) but instead is based on the application of knowledge to achieve a harmonic and horizontal relation with self, others, the environment, and all forms of life (Guerrero Arias 1993; Lizarazo 2012; Rodríguez 2010; Svampa 2012). Thus, by close work and participation with audience members and members of the community, CRS can contribute not only to the dissemination of resistances to the dominant worldviews and practices, but also to the diffusion of the initiatives that emerge from the communities, such as the concept of *Sumak Kawsay*. While not all the CRS that participated in this study are necessarily framing their work under the definition of *Sumak Kawsay*, they expressed their interest in creating content geared towards this way of understanding the world. For example, Luis Robalino from Radio Intag said:

The mining companies have turned some people into their favor by talking about an increase in their income or about the modern development, but in the radio we talk about the *Sumak Kawsay*, we talk about how mining will affect our water, our forests, our air, our agriculture. For this reason, we offer a space to talk about this vision of the world. We broadcast different points of view of both women and men. For example, sometimes women see beyond the economic aspect, they see that more income could represent more money to buy alcohol, so it may increase alcoholism and, as result, domestic violence. We also talk about the social division that mining has caused among the people that support it and the ones who are against it (L. Robalino, personal communication, 2013).

We can see that according to Luis, CRS do not only contribute to disseminate discourses of resistance towards mining among members of the community, and to authorities and other people struggling with similar challenges, but it also contributes to strengthening the dissemination of different ways of living and of alternative ways of understanding and inhabiting the world that may be more aligned with the worldviews and needs of the communities and with nature. It is for this reason that we can consider that, as the Argentinian scholar Magdalena Doyle argues, communitarian communication consists of building “possibilities for expression from the own languages,

from the own dynamics of everyday life and modes of organization” (Doyle 2012:19; Simbaña 2012: 222). Therefore, CRS can contribute to create content towards an understanding of the world on the bases of the notion of *Sumak Kawsay* and as an alternative to the extraction projects that put its application at risk. However, CRS could take even a further step. *Sumak Kawsay* could open avenues for CRS to go beyond the dissemination of initiatives in their content, and could offer new possibilities for the understanding and the practice of communication in community media.

In previous pages of this study, I argued that the different approaches to understand the notion of community can offer some guidelines to explore the possible roles that CRS could have. Similarly, *Sumak Kawsay*'s understanding of community could offer some insights for the understanding of communication and for possible future paths for CRS in Ecuador.

According to *Sumak Kawsay*, community is based on the following principles: complementarity, solidarity, reciprocity, equality, collective participation and property system, harmonic relationship with nature and with others, social responsibility, dialogue and consensus (CONAIE 1994;10; Prada Alcoreza 2012: 228; Simbaña 2012: 225). Although a harmonious coexistence with others cannot always be achieved under all circumstances; and conflict and violence are also present in communities that live by this philosophy (Sánchez-Parga 2013: 55-61), it offers the possibility for an epistemological shift on the understanding of communication and the work that CRS can do.

The principles on which the concept of community is based in *Sumak Kawsay* point to an understanding of life as an interrelated and interdependent process in which every element depends on the others; thus, it respects every individual as equal (Simbaña 2012: 222). As such, it does not fear or reject difference, but embraces and values it instead, opening possible new ways for coexistence, interaction, dialogue and interculturality (Prada Alcoreza 2012:235). When applied to the understanding of communication, *Sumak Kawsay* could point towards an epistemological consideration of complementarity, which can be understood as “the assumption that human interdependency among different individuals who have, in turn, different capacities and characteristics, enrich interaction and sets the base for common learning” (Prada

Alcoreza 2012: 229-30). Therefore, it views knowledge not as generated by few to apply to all, nor as a separate endeavour that produces different ideas that collide with each other. Instead, it opens the space for considering knowledge production as a collaborative process among different ideas of equal value that can be related to enrich and supplement, rather than threaten, each other.

This consideration would open the possibilities to contemplate that CRS would move from the practice of communication *for* development towards a communication that opens the space for different alternatives *to* development to dialogue. This would not necessarily mean that they disseminate content to promote the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* as *the* alternative to replace development, or to encourage this particular worldview or way of life. Instead, starting from the considerations of collaboration, equality, complementarity, and interrelation of *Sumak Kawsay*, a communication that promotes alternatives to development would invite many different and plural knowledge(s) to dialogue, from where new ideas that could lead towards social change could emerge.

4.5 Conclusions

Drawing from performance's consideration that individuals and communities whose voices have been erased from dominant platforms for communication have found alternative places and mediums for expression, in this chapter I have argued that these individuals and communities find paths for communicating their resistance and to propose initiatives. These modes of expression can include artistic demonstrations, such as songs, dances, poetry, and symbolic rituals, among others. I have asserted that CRS can contribute to render these expressions visible because they pay attention to these verbal and non-verbal manifestations, they actively accompany them and then they translate them into words and narratives so that they can be understood by a broader audience.

In addition, they create spaces for these expressions to occur. In this way, they contribute to rendering visible the expressions of resistance of communities. However, CRS do not only focus on translating the resistances of communities, but also on

visibilizing their initiatives. Therefore, CRS can contribute to listening to and disseminating the initiatives that communities propose. Although I encountered several examples of this during my stay in Ecuador, I decided to focus on the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* or Good Living because it is a fundamental understanding of the world that starts from the communities, and this understanding has shaped the way in which community communication has framed itself in Ecuador.

In addition, I have stated that the way in which *Sumak Kawsay* conceptualizes the notion of “community” can point us towards the epistemological framework that could allow us to shift from an understanding of communication *for* development towards a communication that focuses on the process of creating, articulating, and communicating different alternatives *to* development.

For this to occur, CRS need networks of collaborative efforts to strengthen their work and expand the reachability that they can have. In the following chapter, I analyse the creation and practice of these networks to suggest some further steps that CRS in Ecuador could take in order to implement this type of communication.

Chapter 5

Permeating the Margins through Networks: Weaving together Efforts and Meanings

Up to this point, I have said that through a horizontal understanding of communication that holds space for an active participation among members of the community, CRS can contribute to render visible the non-verbal resistances and initiatives of individuals and communities, and to translate them into voices and narratives. After having argued for a communication that promotes alternatives to development in Chapter 4, I will turn my attention to the ways in which the narratives produced by CRS circulate among community media, audience members, and social movements. This analysis will allow me to get to a more in-depth understanding of the possible contributions of the generation, embodiment and strengthening of networks that take place in the circulation of these narratives. In addition, it will permit me to see the interactions among these narratives, and to propose further steps that CRS could take in order to strengthen the dialogue among them so that they contribute to the resistances and initiatives that aim to challenge the dominant discourses, and therefore, the dominant ideas and worldviews that such discourses sustain and perpetuate.

Performance theories do not understand boundaries and margins as limiting lines that encapsulate places and individuals, isolating them from each other. Instead, they invite us to understand boundaries as flexible membranes that can be – and constantly are – permeated, crossed, and redefined (Conquergood 1991: 182). This way of understanding the margins as constantly performed negotiations opens the possibility to see the exchanges and resistances that take place within them; and the media that communities find to permeate and reconfigure them.

In previous pages, I have said that communities can have a geographical, a symbolic, and a political dimension (Delanty 2010). The margins that define these communities can be conceptualized in a similar vein. Thus, we can understand the margins as geographic divisions between different physical locations. Symbolically, these can be seen as the peripheries in which some individuals or groups have been situated. In addition, we could understand the political margins as the erasure of voices from the central and mainstream platforms for participation, discussion, and decision making (Dutta 2012:5). CRS can contribute to permeate these margins and to bring the experiences, struggles, resistances, and initiatives proposed by the people that dwell in them closer to each other and to the geographic and symbolic centres; but how?

During our interview, Hugo Ramírez, from ALER, highlighted the need for community media to be connected and work together so that they strengthen their forces and their work can have more transcendence. He said that “a CRS can have local impact by itself, but if it wants to have a broader impact, it needs to work together as a web with other community media”.

Hugo’s words highlight the necessity for CRS to work together and to build networks to create strength. In order to start to explore the ways in which these networks among community media, social movements, and audience members are built, I will turn to the contributions of the anthropologist Jeffrey S. Juris.

Juris argues that the networking logic within contemporary movements involves the concept of “horizontal coordination among autonomous elements” (Juris 2008: 16) instead of a vertical transmission of information. In other words, digital networks could potentially contribute to the horizontal communication between community media, social movements, and audience members that characterizes community media.

In order to better illustrate how this sharing becomes possible, in the next section of this chapter I will focus on the event Yasunizarte, which took place during my fieldwork in Quito.

5.1 How do the Narratives Created by CRS Circulate?

Yasuní is a natural reserve located in Ecuador's rainforest. It is home to at least two indigenous communities in voluntary isolation ¹⁸ (Colleoni and Proaño 2012:170), 2,300 tree species, 1,000 species of insects by hectare and 567 bird species (Yasunidos 2014). Several expressions of resistance have taken place since the government uttered the decision to initiate projects of oil extraction in this area. The artistic event Yasunizarte was one of these expressions.

During this event, which more than 600 people attended, several individuals and organizations demonstrated, through art, their support for Yasuní. Kids danced to traditional music played with drums and Andean instruments; people shared their oral legends, which have passed from generation to generation; a street comedian told local jokes; and national musicians, together with a cheerful crowd, sang songs both in Spanish and in Kichwa.

Wambra Radio transmitted the complete event, and interviewed some of the artists who participated. During the days before the event, they contacted other CRS and regional networks that work on topics related to communication and that are situated in Ecuador as well as in other countries of Latin America, so both local and regional media re-broadcasted the coverage of this event. In this way, Wambra Radio contributed to the dissemination of the opinions and initiatives of the groups that participated in this event outside of the boundaries of their geographic location.

One of the radio stations that re-broadcasted this programming was Radio Intag. The radio stations contributed to connect two groups that are resisting extraction projects, and to take the initiative from an urban to a rural setting, which it could not have accessed otherwise.

¹⁸ Communities in voluntary isolation are formed by individuals that do not maintain or have never had regular contact with populations outside their group, and that tend to avoid contact with such populations (Shelton 2012: 8).

However, the collaboration did not stop there. Listening to this enterprise, Luis Robalino, the communication worker from Radio Intag, decided to replicate this initiative in his community, and that is why the Cultural Night that I described in detail in Chapter 3 took place. Therefore, the work of these radio stations contributed not only to share information about what was happening in the city, but also to create spaces from where the members of the community could express themselves working together towards the same objective of strengthening the resistance against extraction projects taking place in different locations of the country.

In addition, the members of Wambra Radio asked me to write an article and to produce audiovisual material about the event in Radio Intag, which they shared on their web page. This effort, which took place in a geographically isolated community, reached the city, and the internet allowed for these two communities to sustain interactions across the distance (Juris 2008:12; León et al. 2005: 16). Moreover, CRS also broadcast productions created by other community media on a regular basis. For example, every Saturday Radio Intag broadcasts the program “Ojo de Agua” created by Wambra Radio. In this way, they complement their local programming with content that originates from outside the geographic communities.

Even more, Ecuadorian CRS share programming that is created not only for and inside Ecuador, but also for and inside Latin America. For example, they share the programs created by ALER, thus contributing not only to strengthening the resistances and initiatives that happen inside Ecuador, but also the ones that take place at a regional level, so that they can nourish, learn from and support the other resistances that are taking place inside Latin America.

Through this example, we can see that the creation of the networks weaves a web of cooperation between community media, social movements and audience members, and they all collaborate in the horizontal sharing and dissemination of content that could potentially strengthen and expand their individual work. This allows members of community media, its audience, and social movements to participate in an “enhanced connectivity and horizontal expansion by articulating diverse movements within flexible,

decentralized information structures that facilitate transnational coordination and communication” (Juris 2008:14).

However, these networks would not be possible without the internet. For this reason, I will explore its role in community media in the following section of this chapter.

5.2 The Internet’s Role

Internet access has increased considerably in recent times in Ecuador. According to the national report for statistics regarding information and communication technologies, 28.3% of the national households had internet access in 2013, in comparison to 11.8% in 2010 (INEC 2013). In other words, we can observe a growth of 16.5 points in the national percentage of internet access in the last three years. This growth could potentially result in a broader accessibility of online community media.

However, there are still some limitations to consider. Although internet reachability has increased in the country, this does not necessarily result in more accessibility of CRS. For example, 45.1% of the national population accessed the internet from their house in 2013, 9.8% accessed it through their work, 12.2% accessed it through an educational institution, 29.8% accessed it through a centre for public access, and 2.1% accessed it through other locations (INEC 2013).

These numbers could indicate that more than half of the Ecuadorian population access the internet during a limited time and for specific tasks because they are not in their homes when they do so, which could mean that not all the people that have access to the internet would use it to listen to radio. In fact, 32.0 % of the population said that they use the internet as a medium for obtaining news information (INEC 2013). Further, this statistic is not specific to the type of media that is used for obtaining information. In other words, it is difficult to know what percentage of the people that use the internet as a medium for obtaining information go specifically to on-line radio stations.

Many of the audience members that participated in the focus group that I held had started to contribute with the members of Wambra Radio when they were working at

Radio La Luna, a radio station that had a radio frequency. When I asked them about this initial involvement, they were passionately tangled in the conversation. They talked fast. They sat at the edge of the couch. They had to make an effort not to interrupt each other, not always managing to do so. Their backs were titled forward, facing towards each other. However, when I said: “could you please tell me a little bit about what you felt when Wambra Radio became an online radio station?” three of them replied: “aaaawwww”. One boy whispered that he needed to go to the bathroom, and a girl stood up, explaining that she needed a glass of water. The conversation took a slower pace, and their answers became shorter. Denis replied to my question saying: “it is not the same”. They mentioned several reasons. In the first place, they explained that they do not listen to Wambra Radio as much as they would like any longer because it broadcasts through the internet, and when they have access to it, they focus on doing their homework. In addition, one of them mentioned that the quality of the internet that she can access is also an impediment. Therefore, while they do have internet access, they do not always use it to listen to the radio. Hence, despite internet accessibility increasing in the country during the past years, having it as the only source for broadcasting represents that the radio has less reachability than it would have if it had a dedicated frequency.

This reachability could be even smaller in rural areas than in urban areas. While internet accessibility in urban areas of the country reached 37.0% in 2013, the accessibility in rural areas was 9.1% in the same year. Likewise, 50.1% of the urban population said that they use a computer, while this percentage was 29.9% for the rural areas of the country (INEC 2013). Therefore, it could be argued that the internet does not have much space for CRS located in rural settings.

Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration that information and communication technologies

are not merely instruments to be used but, rather, logics and dynamics that must be appropriated (...) a criterion to discern and assess the suitability of one or another technology, and ways of incorporating it, is to look at the social processes in which a social organization is embedded, and analyze the communicative ways through which the people in this organization cater to understand the world, communicate and express

themselves (...). This allows us to rediscover communication as an ability to relate, to create bonds and construct meaning (Marí Sáez 2006: 1009).

In other words, for analysing the implications of the use of the internet by community media it is fundamental to take into consideration not only its reachability in numbers, but also the ways in which it contributes to the creation of webs of interaction, participation and collaboration among media, audience members, and social movements and organizations.

Considering that internet access is still limited in rural areas, it is possible to state that it does not play an important role for community media situated there. However, CRS located in rural areas still find that the internet has made crucial contributions to their work. For example, Carmen Yamberla, the communication worker of Radio Ilumán explained that:

The Kichwa people from Ilumán have historically been traders and musicians. With commerce and music, we have occupied the world. We have people living in many countries and they always express the need to have a strong bond with their people and with their families. We started to think about how to reach them, how to help them create this bond if with the radio we cannot even reach outside the province. Then we thought about the internet, so we created our webpage and we started the online radio as well. It has been great and it has had a very good response. In the chat that we have in our web page, the people that do not live in the community any more always write compliments and they always write us asking us to send messages to their families. The Kichwa people who live abroad also call us and ask us to air their music, or to listen to the news that we produce, so it is a way that they have to keep connected to their land, to their roots (C. Yamberla, personal communication, 2013).

The screen shot of the chat of Radio Iluman's web page confirms Carmen's words.

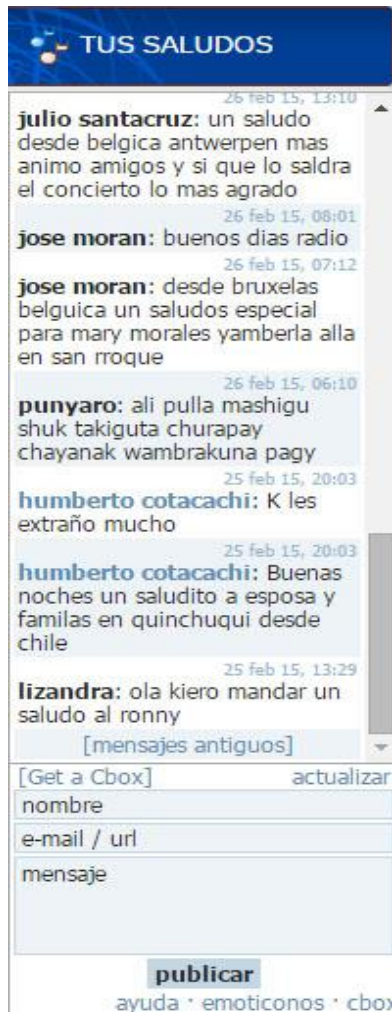


Figure 8 Chat in Radio Illuman's web page

This chat illustrates messages from the audience. Two of these messages are written from Belgium, and one of them from Chile. One of these messages is written in Kichwa, and the others are in Spanish¹⁹.

¹⁹ julio santacruz: Greetings from Belgium Antwerp more energy my friends and your concert will be very pleasant.

jose moran: good day radio- from Brussels Belgium a special greeting to Mary Morales Yamberla there in San Roque

punyaro: message in Kichwa

humberto cotacachi: I miss you very much- good night, a greeting to my wife and family in quinchuqui from Chile

lizandra: hi I want to say hi to Ronny

In both this chat and Carmen's words, we can see that the internet allows the radio station not only to permeate the geographical boundaries between different communities inside the country, but also to work as a conduit that connects people of these communities in other locations. In other words, by having different avenues for communication, such as online chats and national phone calls, the radio station can consolidate different mediums of communication, and can unify them using their web page as the site for this interaction. As a result, the actual reach of the content created goes far beyond the number of internet terminals.

Moreover, through the internet, the radio station can contribute to help the people who live outside the geographic communities to maintain their bonds with these communities, which would be much harder to do through radio frequencies. The internet makes it easier for other community media and social organizations to take the material produced by CRS situated in urban areas, such as Wambra Radio, and redistribute it in their local geographic communities, and allows information to permeate the geographic boundaries and reach otherwise geographically isolated communities, such as Intag or Illumán. Therefore, although Internet accessibility is still limited in rural areas of Ecuador, it has contributed to the work of rural CRS.

However, the contributions of the internet are not only present in CRS situated in rural areas, but in urban areas as well. For example, while she was conducting an interview with María Galindo – the feminist, activist, and creator of Radio Deseo that I mentioned in the introduction to this study – Anita compared the way in which CRS can use the internet as a platform for expression for individuals and communities to whom access to mainstream mediums of communication has been denied, to the ways in which people appropriate public walls to express themselves through graffiti.

Similarly, León et. al. (2005: 17, 38-9) invite us to understand the internet not only as a technical medium, but also as an interactive and multidirectional space for social interaction and participation that encompasses dialogue, cooperation and participation that may contribute to construct common agreements and consensus among different groups . In other words, we see in the internet a public platform that can be appropriated to communicate both individual and collective experiences, opinions,

resistances, and initiatives, when other spaces for communication are not publicly available. Moreover, it simultaneously supports text, images, and sound, thus allowing for different media, such as video, written text, audio, and photographs to converge and interact (Burch et al. 2004: 50). The members of Wambra Radio consider that having a platform on which to share photography, written material, and video, besides the audio produced for radio broadcasting, opens the possibility to go beyond voice and words for reaching different audiences through different avenues, which they consider to be a crucial benefit from the use of the internet. Jorge mentioned that if they have a radio frequency in the future, they would like to look for mechanisms and avenues to incorporate these media there as well.

The presence of multiple media in the internet opens a space in which audience members can have an active and immediate participation in the co-construction and dissemination of information relevant for them. For instance, Vero said that “it is funny. Sometimes people write us on our Facebook page asking us what is happening regarding specific news, but they talk to us as you talk to friends, not as you would write to traditional media journalists. They also post pictures or comments about the news that we are covering”.

In this excerpt, Vero is narrating a mutual and horizontal construction of information between Wambra Radio and its audience members. Through their web page, people can actively participate in the creation of information. In addition, the space that Facebook and other online platforms offer for posting comments can generate “an open forum for debate” (Juris 2008:272).

In a similar vein, Beto argued, “we should understand the role of a journalist in a different way on the internet. A lot of times it is the people who post a picture or a comment, and we construct the information from there. In this way, the internet allows for a co-construction of information with the members of the community with a speed that would not be possible through other media”.

Consider, for example, the following Facebook post in Wambra Radio’s wall:



Conaie Comunicación

4 de enero · 🌐

Compartimos la agenda de actividades del 5 y 6 de Enero del 2015. Todxs difundamos y seamos parte de esta lucha y resistencia.
Defendamos todxs nuestros derechos y la #CONAIECasadeTodxs — con Pueblo Kayambi y 51 personas más.



Figure 9 CONAIE'S post in Wambra Radio's Facebook page

This post was shared in Wambra Radio's Facebook page by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (referred to as CONAIE hereafter). Through this image, this organization shared information about the activities that they were planning to put in practice the following week, after they were told that they had to leave the building in Quito that, through a contract that makes available a property free of charge, had been provided to them in 1991 by the government of the time. Press conferences, marches, concerts and ancestral ceremonies were some of the intended events.

The members of Wambra Radio attended all the activities advertised through this medium, from where they produced live transmissions and interviews. They also published pictures of the events on their Facebook page, as well as other statements written by this and allied organizations. Moreover, they invited some of the participants of these expressions of resistances to the radio station, from where they conducted in-

depth interviews. Later, Wambra Radio created a web page where they included images, audio-recordings, videos, and letters of support to this event.

Both in Beto's words and in the example of Wambra Radio's coverage of the events carried out by CONAIE, we find that the internet allows for a kind of collaboration between the members of the audience and the members of the radio station that could also be understood as a horizontal process of communication and participation. In addition, he says that the short time that it takes for this interaction to occur is a crucial component of the internet. Similarly, Juris also recognizes the speed for interaction and participation as a positive contribution of online platforms (Juris 2008: 12).

Another of the advantages that some of the members of Wambra Radio saw in the internet is that they consider that it allows them to have more freedom to talk about topics that are not covered in other spaces because they do not have an economic dependency on other institutions, as their financing comes from the workshops that they give, from the collaboration of volunteers, and from the sale of food or artistic products. They also expressed the idea that they have more freedom to broadcast and disseminate information than other types of media because they consider that there are fewer restrictions for media that broadcast exclusively through the internet. However, the third article of the General Regulations for the Constitutional Law on Communication states that online media has the same rights and responsibilities as non-digital media. (Reglamento general a la Ley Orgánica de Comunicación: 2014). Therefore, they are subject to the same regulations. This discrepancy between what the members of the radio feel and what the law says could potentially represent difficulties for the work that they do. This tension opens the possibility to see not only communication as a territory of dispute, as I had suggested in previous pages, but also the internet as a "space in dispute" (León et. al. 2005:37) in which different groups are trying to appropriate it and use it for their benefits.

In this section, I have argued that networks allow CRS to function as conduits that carry the narratives that permeate both the geographical and the symbolic margins that separate communities. But, how do the creation of these networks and the

circulation of these narratives contribute to the resistances and initiatives of such communities? I will address this question in the following section.

5.3 The Contributions of the Creation of Networks

While the internet represents several possible benefits for CRS, which I have described above, it could also raise some challenges. For instance, during our interview, Nelsy Lizarazo from ALER mentioned the need to be aware that “while internet and technology can be a great opportunity for communication, we need to be careful not to think that because we are virtually connected with the audience, we are really connected with the audience. In that case, we have the danger of being locked up inside the stations and losing contact with the communities. However, it is unquestionable that it can open the possibility for a huge participation of the audience”. These words invite us to explore some of the possible relations between virtual and face-to-face interaction.

For this, let us briefly return to the work of Delanty in the analysis of the notion of community. This author argues that the information and communication technologies have created new expressions of community (Delanty 2010: 135). After analysing different approaches to explore the role of the internet in the creation of communities, he invites us to understand virtual communities as “social relationships of belonging” that supplement other forms of community. For this reason, he argues that the analysis should focus on the exploration of the possible impacts of the information and communication technologies in the different expressions of social belonging (Delanty 2010:146). Hence, he states that “the contemporary community may be understood as a communication community based on new kinds of belonging” (Delanty 2010: 151) and that “community as belonging is constructed in communicative processes wherever they occur” (Delanty 2010: 152). In the case of CRS in Ecuador, I see the internet as complementing other forms of social relations and interaction. As Jeffrey S. Juris suggests, I view the internet as complementing and reinforcing face-to-face interactions rather than replacing them (Juris 2008: 15). In addition, Juris also reminds us that the discourses created by social movements and community media “do not merely circulate through networks; they produce and reproduce networks themselves” (Juris 2008: 97).

Juris adds that the process of construction of networks itself can represent a contribution to the communities because it requires the coordination of actions and face-to-face interactions. Nelsy's words illustrate the importance of the physical presence of the members of CRS inside the communities and the interactions between them and the audience members for these networks to occur. Drawing from this idea, I would like to extend Juris' analysis and maintain that the contribution of the creation of networks and of the circulation of the narratives translated by CRS could rely on a cyclical process of cooperation and co-creation, which I illustrate in the following table.

Table 2 Cyclical Process of Network Creation

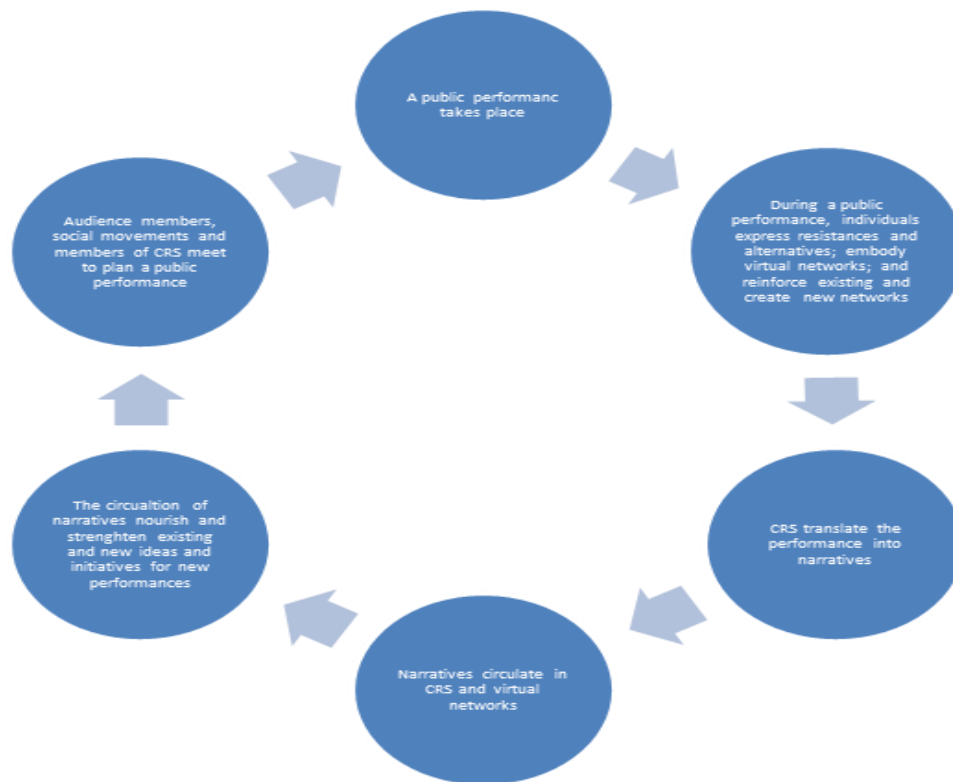


Table 2 shows a cyclical process in which a public performance takes place. This public performance is, as Juris illuminates, not only a non-verbal expression of both resistances and initiatives, but also an embodied networking practice of the “diverse, egalitarian, and self-managed world” that the participants hope to create (Juris 2008:124), and a space for collaboration, as well as creation and strengthening of virtual networks. During and after these performances, the CRS translate the embodiments of resistance, initiatives and collaboration into narratives to circulate in their programming

and among the online networks. These narratives strengthen new ideas, and initiatives for more performances start to emerge. Such performances are planned through more meetings among members of CRS and their audiences, as well as social movements, which lead to more public performances, and the cycle starts again.

This cycle became particularly visible for me while I was covering the performance that took place on November 25th, 2013, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. On this day, women from different organizations and collectives that had previously met to organize a performance, got together at one of Quito's historic public plazas, where they symbolically communicated both resistance and initiatives. In order to communicate resistance, they painted their faces and bodies with what looked like bruises and blood with the objective of, literally, rendering visible physical abuse against women. In addition, they carried signs with information about abuse. They sang songs and recited poems that invited women to take action in order to denounce and stop violence.



Figure 10 Women singing in public performance against violence

However, the participants did not only express their resistance, but also their proposition of symbolic initiatives. In the first place, the performance started with the women lying on the floor, and then standing up, which was a symbolic representation of women raising together in order to stop violence and abuse. In this way, this performance contributed to deconstruct pre-existing conceptions and meanings, while simultaneously creating new ones (Dutta 2011:214).



Figure 11 Participants in public performance encouraging denouncing violence against women

Another way in which they symbolically represented initiatives is depicted in Figure 11. The two women whose faces are covered with paper bags have a sign that reads "I was raped too, and you?", while the sign of the woman that does not have her face covered says: "Woman, if you were raped by a man that is your father, your brother, or your uncle, would you have the child product of that rape? Break the silence!"

When I interviewed the women from the pictures, they told me that they aimed to represent that women do not need to hide or be ashamed if they have been victims of abuse, and that they can uncover themselves and denounce the violence, as the symbolic uncovering of the face of the woman who has the sign that says “break the silence” is representing. Moreover, in another part of the performance, men gave roses to women to symbolize respect. Therefore, in this performance we can see how, as Juris suggests, while some tactics emphasized rejection of the current order, others prefigured initiatives (Juris 2012:131).

In addition, this performance was also one of the multiple examples in which the networks that take place among community media, audience, and social movements are embodied during physical performances. This demonstration was organized, attended, and conducted by several organizations both related specifically to women and to other causes, such as the defence of the land. During the performance, the participants mentioned these causes and sang the songs that represent them. The participants also asked for signatures to a petition to stop the exploitation in Yasuní. In this way, uniting multiple efforts and related causes reinforced virtual networks.

One of the collaborators of Wambra Radio covered this event and broadcast it through the radio station, while I took photos and wrote an article to publish on their web page. Thus, this radio station contributed to document and translate this performance into different media to circulate in their web page. Several national CRS redistributed this material and circulated it in their own medium.

After the performance took place, some of the participants gathered to eat together. During this meeting, they talked about their impressions of the production, watched the pictures that were taken, and started to plan the next performance, which in this case was a second artistic night for the defense of Yasuní.

Juris argues, “activist networks are produced and reproduced through myriad communicative interactions” (Juris 2008:125) and individuals and communities “perform their networks through diverse bodily and spatial practices” (Juris 2008:128). Thus, the performance that took place on November 25th in Quito’s downtown to resist and embody initiatives to eliminate violence against women is an example of how both virtual

and embodied networks are interrelated and complement each other, thus contributing to strengthen the cooperation among CRS, audience members, and social movements so that the impact of their work will be more resilient.

Hence, we can see that the internet is not replacing the physical interactions among individuals and groups that are striving for social change, but opening avenues for complementing and reinforcing these physical participations with online engagement (Juris 2008:97). In this way, the creation and embodiment of networks, and the circulation of narratives in CRS contribute to strengthen the voices that aim to resist the dominant discourses and worldviews and propose initiatives. In a similar vein:

Performance strives to communicate a sense of subjects' worlds in their own words; it hopes to amplify their meanings and intentions to a larger group of listeners and observers. These listeners and observers are then affected by what they see and hear in ways that motivate them to act and think in ways that now beneficially affect (directly and indirectly) either the subjects themselves or what they advocate. At this point, the audience moves from the performance space to the social world or the interrogative field.

The interrogative field is the point at which the performance of possibilities aims to create or contribute to a discursive space where unjust systems and processes are identified and interrogated. It is where what has been expressed through the illumination of voice and the encounter with subjectivity motivates individuals to some level of informed and strategic action (Madison 2012: 193).

Therefore, the narratives that circulate in the networks can contribute not only to strengthen the voices of resistance, but also to invite listeners and other participants to take an active action. However, I consider that in order for this to happen, CRS could take yet a further step.

5.4 CRS as Liminal Meeting Spaces for Dialogical Performance?

Through this study I have maintained that many of the fundamental contributions of the work of CRS rely on the process of collaboration and content creation. With this consideration still in mind, in this section I aim to explore possible further steps that this

media could take in order to expand even more their positive impacts. Thus, continuing with the arguments that I made in Chapter 4 when –inspired by the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* – I argued for a communication that promotes alternatives to development, and viewing this communication as a participatory and “active process of meaning-making through which individuals and communities come to understand their contexts and act upon them” (Dutta 2011: 32), I would like to suggest that CRS could function as participatory sites for a process of creating, sharing, articulating, and communicating not only one, but multiple, ways of understanding and inhabiting the world.

Some of the participants of this study argued that the role of CRS is to provide an exclusive space for the individuals and communities that have not had access to other mediums of communication to express themselves. I agree that this is a central contribution of this type of media. However, closing the doors on perspectives that differ from those of the individuals and communities that take part in the creation of content of CRS can limit the contributions that this media can have, as this position risks binding the narratives that they create inside the circles and groups that already know and agree with what they have to say. As a result, their contributions, while important, cannot transcend the articulation, accompaniment, and strengthening of the resistances and initiatives proposed by individuals and communities. Hence, for CRS to challenge dominant discourses and worldviews, they would need to reach the groups that sustain them, and enter into a dialogue with them. It is important to remember throughout that in order for dialogue to occur different perspectives need to discuss areas of disagreement with the objective of resolving them. If not, it does not go beyond being a conversation among peers, where different groups talk to themselves but none of them actually listens or tries to understand what the other has to say.

To see the possible steps that CRS could take in this direction, it is useful to return once more to the different approaches to understand the notion of community. In this vein, Delanty (2010) argues that contemporary communities are based in a world of plurality that opens new and different possibilities for belonging. In this contemporary world of plurality, he considers that “the persistence of community consists in its ability to communicate ways of belonging”. He puts emphasis on the communicative nature of community and argues that communities are becoming more discursive constitutive.

Thus, he states that “belonging today is participation in communication more than anything else, and the multiple forms of communication are mirrored in the plurality of discourses of belonging, which we call ‘communication communities’” (Delanty 2010: 152). Therefore, he invites to conceptualize contemporary communities as open-ended systems of communication about belonging.

This understanding of community puts emphasis on the communication process. It suggests that we could understand CRS as sites where different ways of belonging can strengthen themselves through dialogue. In addition, these different forms of belonging are based on dissimilar modes of communication. Hence, “the individual is not tied to only one community, but may have multiple and overlapping bonds” (Delanty 2010: 152-3). This understanding of belonging as not being exclusive to just one particular community, but as an opportunity for new ways of belonging that are formed and take place in a communication process, can open the space for understanding possible avenues for the future work of CRS in Ecuador.

Additionally, performance theories can have positive inputs in the way in which we understand the communication process and the contributions that this type of media can have. Dwight Conquergood introduces the concept of “dialogical performance” (Conquergood 1985) as a possible path to understand others. Dialogical performance “struggles to bring together different voices, world views, value systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another” (Conquergood 1985: 9). However, this interaction goes beyond a conversation, as it aims for these voices to question, debate, and challenge each other, while respecting, embracing, and appreciating diversity, difference, and pluralism (Conquergood 1985:9; Madison 2012:10, 186). For this appreciation of difference, Conquergood situates this stance in “a space *in between* competing ideologies” (Conquergood 1985: 9- emphasis in original). In addition, he writes that dialogical performance is “a way of having intimate conversation with other people and cultures. Instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them” (Conquergood 1985:10).

The space *in between* to which Conquergood refers relates to Victor Turner’s contribution of the “liminal process”. Expanding on Arnold Van Gennep’s ritual theory,

Turner introduces the concept of the liminal stage to define the practice of status change in a performative way (Njaradi 2013:25). This process includes three phases: the pre-liminal, the liminal, and the post-liminal. The pre-liminal consists of separation; the liminal is a stage of in-between, and the post-liminal is reincorporation. I believe that this conception can be extrapolated to the work of CRS and can have important contributions to the further steps that they could take to put in practice a dialogical performance in which many knowledge(s) converse with each other. Thus, applied to CRS, this process would be constituted by the following phases:

Separation: Drawing from Van Gennep's contributions, Turner defines the separation phase of rites of passage as comprising "symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both" (Turner 1969:94). Applied to CRS, we could understand the phase of separation as the endeavour of taking distance from what we believe and from what is familiar to us. By this I mean that it is necessary to make an effort to analyse our ideas and behaviours, not only from our point of view, but also from the point of view of our interlocutor, regardless of how distant the different points may seem. Dialogical performance suggests that in order to profoundly respect the difference of the other groups, we need to question and make vulnerable our own *a priori* assumptions (Conquergood 1985:9). Therefore, CRS could work as the space in which individuals, communities, and social movements can carefully think about where our words come from, how our background ideas and experiences shape them, and what they mean in each particular context. Madison suggests that it is through "meeting with others that I am most fully myself (...) communion with another brings the self more fully into being and, in doing so, opens you to know others more fully" (Madison 2012: 11). Therefore, through communication, CRS could contribute to articulate the ideas that could enter into a dialogic performance with different understandings.

Liminal phase: Turner describes the liminal phase as a period in which the characteristics of the ritual subject, or the "passenger", are ambiguous and have "few or none of the attributes of the past coming state" (Turner 1969: 94). In other words, the liminal phase is the process in between structures and social norms that take place in rituals. Moreover, Turner introduces the concept of *communitas* to refer to an

unstructured modality of social relationships of communion of equal individuals that take place during the ritual process. This modality of social relationships is characterized by the “recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be *no* society. Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low” (Turner 1969: 96-7- emphasis in original). Applied to CRS, this is when the dialogical performance would take place. Conquergood suggests that dialogical performance is more like a hyphen than a period because it brings together different narratives (Conquergood 1985: 9).

However, Dutta reminds us that we should not consider the communities that have not had access to traditional mediums of communication as being a homogenous group (Dutta 2011: 187). In other words, despite the possibility of them having similar characteristics, life experiences, or challenges, each community is particular. Extending the visual metaphor of the hyphen along with the Kichwa conception of *taypi*, which refers to the centric place where antagonist dualities or opposite elements meet, and to the place where differences can coexist (Prada Alcoreza 2012:231), I would like to suggest that CRS could be seen as an asterisk of convergence and exchange, as a meeting site where multiple narratives about different topics simultaneously and collaboratively enter into dialogue. In this way, they could possibly find some intersections, while understanding and communicating what they have in common, what differentiates them, and what they can learn from and enrich each other. This process could help diverse individuals and communities to find a middle ground from where to exchange experiences, worldviews, and knowledge(s). In this way, CRS could work as the sites where the dialogical performance becomes “the vehicle by which we travel to other worlds of subjects and enter domains of intersubjectivity that problematize how we categorize who is *us* and who is *them* and how we see *ourselves* with other and different eyes” (Madison 2012:194- emphasis in original). In this vein, Turner states that “liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men with a set of templates or models which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality and man’s relationship to society, nature, and culture. But they are more than classifications, since they incite men to action as well as to

thought” (Turner 1969: 129). Therefore, CRS could strengthen their efforts towards social change by becoming *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance* and transition between the world as it is and the world as it could be.

Re-aggregation or reincorporation: Turner defines this phase as the period in which the ritual ends and the ritual subject returns to the world in her new status. If CRS worked as *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance*, they could contribute to new conversations, new ideas to emerge, new relations and, possibly, new ways of inhabiting the world.

Then, by still focusing on the collaborative process of content creation and continuing to put into practice the characteristics that define their work, but opening the doors for dialogical performance among different communities, CRS in Ecuador could introduce a communication that proposes alternatives to development. In this way, they could become *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance* and could contribute even more to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of individuals, communities, and social movements.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the creation and practice of networks in CRS. Basing my analysis on an event that took place for the defence of the Yasuní during my fieldwork, I have argued that the narratives circulate through the creation of networks that allow for CRS to become a conduit to permeate both the geographical and the symbolic margins of communities, so that these narratives can reach the centres of discussion and can challenge the discourses that nourish and perpetuate dominant ideas and worldviews. For this, I have said that the role of the internet is crucial and, understanding it as León proposes, as a space in dispute, I have analysed both its possible contributions and limitations to this process.

After examining how the work of local CRS transcends their geographical location, I explored the objectives they pursue with this collaboration. I did so drawing on Juris’ contributions of the logics of networking, and paying close attention to the performance that took place to resist and propose initiatives to eliminate violence against

women. I said that creation and embodiment of networks that are part of the process of circulation of the narratives contribute to the resistances and initiatives of the communities because they generate a cyclical process of creation and collaboration, where virtual and embodied networks occur and the initiatives and resistances of communities can nourish and enrich each other, thus contributing to strengthening their collective force so that they can challenge the dominant discourses.

Therefore, the creation of the networks that allow for the cooperative cycle of the circulation of narratives to take place can be understood as an ensemble of relations of reciprocal interactions and interchanges that take place in a particular social space, and also as a way of social organization that articulates interests, resources, and initiatives that work together to create a shared desired outcome (Rocha et al. 2011: 223). Moreover, they could function as platforms to share experiences, ideas and initiatives, and to unify and coordinate forces towards the same goal (Rocha et al. 2011:237).

More broadly, this cycle allows us to understand that CRS are not fixed entities. Instead, they can be seen as an on-going process that is articulated and continuously re-created by several collaborations and interactions, and in these interactions, which can be illuminated through the theories of performance, reside many of their contributions to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of communities.

Finally, I explored some further steps that CRS could take in order to strengthen these contributions even more and to move towards a communication that promotes alternatives *to* development. I said that CRS could function as participatory sites for a process of creating, sharing, articulating, and communicating not only one, but multiple ways of understanding and inhabiting the world. Drawing on Victor Turner's conception of the liminal process, and Dwight Conquergood's notion of dialogical performance, I argued that CRS could become liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance by operating as convergence sites among different communities, ideas, worldviews, narratives and knowledge(s) so that together they look for new, different, and alternative avenues towards social change.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

I have devoted this study, which took place in a crucial context of media reform in Ecuador, to the analysis of the possible contributions of community radio stations to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of communities in this country.

Anita, one of the creators of the online CRS, Wambra Radio, intimated during one of our interviews that the main contribution of this type of media does not consist of giving voice to the voiceless, as sometimes it is argued, but on paying attention to the expressions of the individuals and communities that have been deprived of their voices and that have been destined to the margins of mainstream communication.

Inspired by her observation, I decided to explore more in depth how these radio stations pay attention to these expressions. I based this study on the contributions of performance theories because they open the possibility to transcend the notion of voice, and invite us to observe and comprehend non-verbal expressions and interactions. I maintain that the individuals and communities that have been deprived of their voices turn to both verbal and non-verbal expressions to communicate, which are not always seen, understood, or documented, and that CRS contribute to accompany and strengthen these expressions, while translating them into words so that they can circulate and challenge the dominant discourses that perpetuate dominant practices.

Thus, the performance approach allowed me to explore possible answers and to analyse some of the characteristics that define the work of CRS in Ecuador, as well as the potential ways in which this type of media contributes to the needs, struggles, resistances, and initiatives of individuals both inside and outside their communities.

The work of CRS is mainly characterized by blurred boundaries and active participation in the creation of a horizontal communication among audience members, communication workers and social movements, which allows these radio stations to become spaces for communicational processes of co-production and collaboration that emerge from the needs, struggles, initiatives, and worldviews of the individuals and communities with and for whom their programming is created.

These characteristics of radio stations allow them to function as bridges between members of the community with and for whom they produce content, both in a geographical and at a symbolic level. On a geographical level, they can contribute to bring members of a community together by shortening the physical distances that separate them. They bring members of the community closer on a symbolic level by contributing to reaffirming the bonds and characteristics that unite them. In this process, the feeling of identity and of membership in a group can be reinforced, which could potentially open the possibility to put into practice the political dimension of community by generating a collaborative communicative process to oppose injustice, to resist, and to look for an alternative society. The members of the community should work together with a shared objective towards social change.

This process can support the community to unite efforts for a common objective and express their resistance towards dominant discourses and practices. Because they may not have access to mainstream media, they have found alternative mediums of communication to express themselves, such as dances, poetry, street protests, public performances, and songs, among others. These expressions tend to be underrepresented by the dominant media. On the other hand, because communication in community media is produced in collaboration with the communities, this type of media witnesses, accompanies, and generates spaces for such resistances to occur. In addition, it translates these non-verbal resistances into programming uttered by words to circulate in their medium.

Nonetheless, the communities not only express their resistance to existing discourses and practices, but also propose initiatives to question, challenge, and disrupt them. Thus, the work of CRS does not only consist of accompanying and generating

spaces for resistance of the communities, but also incorporates articulating, rendering visible, and translating into narratives the initiatives that they propose.

Therefore, CRS contribute to articulate, accompany, and generate spaces to express both the resistances and the initiatives that emerge from geographical and symbolic communities. However, their impact does not stop there, as they also help to transcend the margins of these communities, so that the narratives that have emerged from each community can enter into dialogue with the ones from other communities, so that they can strengthen and nourish each other.

CRS help to permeate both the geographical and symbolic margins of the communities by creating physical and virtual networks among members of other local, national, and regional community media, audience members, and social movements. The creation of these networks open the space for a cyclical process of cooperative and co-creative cycle of collaboration to occur, which nourishes and strengthens new and existing ideas, efforts, and initiatives that strive for social change.

These characteristics of the work of CRS could be applied to suggest some further steps that they could take to reinforce their contributions.

6.1 Possible further steps for CRS

Some of the participants of this study said that CRS should focus on offering a space for expression only to those individuals, communities, and social movements that have not had access to mainstream mediums of communication. While I consider that providing such a space is a fundamental contribution of this type of media, this approach can have the risk of creating narratives that circulate only among groups of similar ideas and worldviews, which could limit the possible contributions that CRS offer in the search for new avenues towards social change.

For this reason, I propose that a further step that CRS in Ecuador could take could be to try to find ways to engage in dialogue diverse groups, while also continuing

to offer spaces to those individuals and communities that have been deprived of their voices.

The concept of *Sumak Kawsay*, or Good Living, could offer some epistemological considerations in this endeavour. The principles on which this notion is based point to an understanding of life as an interrelated and interdependent process among equal elements. Hence, these principles open the possibility to consider knowledge as a collaborative process among different ideas of equal value that could conduct a dialogue in order to nourish and complement each other.

This consideration could open the possibility to contemplate that CRS could move from the practice of communication *for* development towards a communication that opens the space for dialogue among different alternatives *to* development. This dialogue could be better understood through Dwight Conquergood's concept of "dialogical performance", which, starting from valuing and respecting difference, aims to bring together diverse voices to converse and debate (Conquergood 1985).

The characteristics of the work of CRS that I have described in this study make them suitable sites for putting this dialogical performance into practice. Mohan J. Dutta argues that:

the very requirements of certain skill sets and knowledge about dialogic procedures in dominant platforms keep these platforms inaccessible to the subaltern sectors, operating in a parallel sphere of domination and control. Dominant approaches promoting participation often operate within these spheres of inaccessibility because they do not engage with the structural capacities of subaltern communities (Dutta 2011: 182).

On the other hand, CRS could function as *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance* by promoting a type of participation that is adequate and responds to the needs, the struggles, the resistances, and the initiatives of the individuals and communities that have not had access to such dominant platforms. They could do so in two main ways. In the first place, they could work as *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance* by offering the physical space of the radio stations as meeting sites for individuals and groups with different ideas and worldviews to interact and converse. They could open the space for dialogue during the programs that they create

and broadcast. However, the spaces that they create would still respond to the needs and the ways of communication of the individuals that have not had access to other platforms.

In addition, they could become *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance* not only by putting individuals, but also narratives, into dialogue. In other words, they could continue accompanying and creating spaces for verbal and non-verbal expressions of resistance and proposition of initiatives of individuals and communities that have not had access to dominant platforms of communication and translating them into narratives. But, in addition, they could broaden the topics and worldviews that they allow in their programming, thus including narratives that do not necessarily agree, but also challenge and contest, the ones that they have created. In this way, these narratives could enter into a process of dialogical performance and possibly find points of intersections from where new ideas towards social change could emerge.

This approach could be particularly relevant in the process of media reform and redistribution of frequencies that is currently taking place in Ecuador. Some sectors have seen the reclaiming of space in community media as a risk (Jaramillo 2015). However, if CRS opened their doors to more and diverse ideas and worldviews, this could change the perception about this reclamation. Instead of being seen as a threat, it could come to be understood as a possibility for new and different platforms for dialogue, which could result in a reinforcement of CRS and their efforts towards social change.

6.2 Some (Not) Final Thoughts

As a study situated in an on-going process of media reform, I do not aim to reach final or closed conclusions. Instead, my efforts have been geared towards the generation of inquiries that aim to open different avenues through which we might understand the possible contributions that CRS in Ecuador could have in relation to the struggles, needs, resistances, and initiatives of individuals, communities, and social movements with and for whom their programming is created. I have aimed to suggest some possible further steps that they could take in order to broaden their impact; and I have done so through the scope of performance.

In conjunction with Anita's consideration that some individuals and communities have been deprived of their voices and have been consigned to the margins of dominant platforms of communication, performance theories consider that some individuals and communities have not been heard because they have been speaking and expressing themselves in ways and places that have not been historically or publicly acknowledged (Madison 2012:197). These modes of expression can include both verbal and non-verbal interactions and can take the form of street protests, public performances, and artistic manifestations, among others. Because the focus of performance theories does not rely exclusively on words, but on actions as well, the possibility arises to notice these expressions and to recognize their value. This approach has allowed me to argue that CRS in Ecuador contribute by going into the places where individuals and communities express themselves, and by translating into narratives their verbal and non-verbal manifestations of resistance and propositions of initiatives of these groups.

In addition, the performance approach interest on actions and embodiment consider individuals as performer creatures that collaboratively and continuously perform new ways of creating and being (Madison and Hamera 2006: xii). This conceptualization of performance can offer much to the understanding of the work of community media because it invites us to pay attention not only to the final communicational products that they create and disseminate, but also to the collaborative process that leads towards these products. Many of the contributions of this type of media rely precisely on the actions, interactions, practices, and relations that are performed in this process.

Performance's understanding of ethnography can contribute much to the study of the work of communication workers of CRS in Ecuador, and to the articulation of suggestions for possible steps that they could take in the future. It was because of Dwight Conquergood's concept of dialogical performance as a path for ethnographers towards a "genuine understanding of others" (Conquergood 1985:9) that I could formulate some suggestions that the staff of CRS could implement to turn this type of media into *liminal meeting spaces for dialogical performance* where multiple ideas, worldviews and knowledge(s) can dialogue with each other with the objective of finding potential new avenues towards social change.

However, this approach considers that we neither could nor should arrive at final conclusions. For this reason, instead of arriving at closure, this thesis is an effort to offer possible avenues to understand the work of CRS in Ecuador; to explore some of the contributions that they can offer to its individuals, communities and social movements; and to propose imaginable further steps to strengthen such contributions. Conquergood suggests that a dialogical performance should be seen less as a period and more as a hyphen. Following this visual metaphor, I would like to end this study not with a final period, but with a hyphen that invites multiple perspectives to immerse into a dialogical performance with each other to find new paths from where ideas for social change can emerge, articulate, circulate -

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