Community Radio, Politics, and Immigration in Quebec: The Case of Radio Centre-Ville

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This article addresses community radio in the Canadian province of Quebec. In particular, I reflect on the ways different economic, social, and political processes influence the community action related to this medium. I advocate a flexible, non-reified conception of the community action related to this form of broadcasting and its political dimension. In the case of Quebec, capitalist economics, provincial politics, and immigration appear to be key relevant factors. Community radio in Quebec emerged when Quebec nationalism was at its height. Over time, the political nature of this medium evolved into a less political, more economic profile. However, immigration dynamics also played an important role in this evolution by giving community radio a culturally and politically heterogeneous base. From this perspective, this article focuses on the case of Radio Centre-Ville, a multicultural radio station, to highlight the political implications of these historical processes.

Keywords: community radio, community action, immigration, neoliberal governance, Quebec

Introduction

This article addresses the issue of community radio in the Canadian province of Quebec. In particular, it concerns the way in which different economic, social, and political processes have given the community action related to this medium a rather changing, heterogeneous profile. Insights gained through this study can improve understanding of the challenges faced by the Quebecois community-radio milieu today. To this end, I advocate a flexible, non-reified conception of both the community action related to this form of broadcasting and its political dimension. In the case of Quebec, capitalist economics, provincial politics, and immigration appear to be major factors in this regard. Quebec nationalism was at its height when the medium of community radio emerged there. Over time, its political nature evolved into a less political, more economic profile. Immigration dynamics were crucial to this process because they provided the medium with a culturally and politically heterogeneous base. Given this perspective, much of this article focuses on the case of a particular radio station, Radio Centre-Ville, and the way it highlights the political implications of these historical processes.

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Radio Centre-Ville is a multilingual community-radio station broadcasting on the FM band in the city of Montreal. Established in the early 1970s, the station has always adopted critical leftist positions on different issues concerning Quebec society. Considered a multicultural radio station, Radio Centre-Ville was founded by different groups of immigrants living in Montreal. Initially many of these immigrant groups consisted of political refugees from Chile and Argentina; nowadays, several Mexican activists have joined the station, revitalizing its identity. Currently, however, conflicts over the management of the radio station and economic difficulties caused by lack of donors are significantly complicating its daily operations and making its situation precarious. As I will show, all these problems represent a particular manifestation of the complex predicaments faced by Quebec's community-radio sector as a whole.

The case under study stems from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council SSHRC postdoctoral research on community radio conducted in Mexico and Canada from 2010 to 2012. The fieldwork in Canada lasted from November 2011 to March 2012 and involved 10 structured interviews (group and individual) carried out with people involved in community radio (volunteers, employees, representatives of radio associations). These interviews were recorded and subsequently analyzed using a thematic grid. Fieldwork also included participant observation during the assemblies of some radio stations as well as a short survey with the people involved with these radio stations. The research sample included the following radio stations: CKCL, CIBL, and CINQ (city of Montréal); CHAA (Longueuil region); CIEU and CJRG (Gaspé Peninsula region).

After reflecting on the study of community radio, I will portray the historical and contemporary features of community radio in Quebec. This section will pay special attention to this medium's incorporation into the political evolution of the province. In the subsequent section, I will explore in more detail the factors that motivate broadcasters to participate in community radio today. Lastly, in a section that highlights Latino immigrants' participation in the station, I will discuss the way Radio Centre-Ville merges with the depicted milieu.

Studying Community Radio

In an article on digital broadcasting, the researcher Jo Tacchi (2000) argued that radio's status as a lesser studied communication technology in the social sciences is attributable to the seemingly "secondary" value this electronic medium has for contemporary society (versus, e.g., visual or graphic media such as the press or television). Nonetheless, radio's historical persistence and indisputable importance led Tacchi to talk about the urgency of a radio theory that illuminates the impact of radio technologies in social life, collective sensibilities, and the reproduction of identities. Kate Lacey (2000) echoed these ideas, stating that the Frankfurt School philosophers who reflected on the influence of media in modernity (i.e., Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer) said little about the act of listening (as opposed to observing). According to Lacey, the study of radio's peculiarities may help identify new political and social implications of using communication technologies.

The construction of a social theory of radio can draw on an established corpus of theories of the media generally, from the functionalist perspective with its focus on social function and the reception of content, to the critical approach centered on how the media and the "cultural industry" contribute to the

reproduction of capitalist society (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1974), to more "optimistic" views about the cultural and political implications of communication technologies (Benjamin, 1935/2007; Martín-Barbero, 2002; Williams, 1994). However, the construction of this theory should not lose sight of the specificities of radio, which inhere in the relative simplicity and cheapness of this medium: "Beyond spoken language itself, radio is the easiest medium to learn and to teach. It is, as we have seen, the most pervasive medium worldwide and is cheap and straightforward to set up" (Buckley, 2000, p. 186). In terms of listening, this simplicity enables radio's penetration into different spheres of daily life. In terms of production, it makes radio particularly "suitable" for collective appropriation.

Obviously, the social and collective appropriation of radio as a technology for production and cultural diffusion does not always happen in practice because this possibility depends heavily on the political and economic context within which broadcasting exists. In contemporary society the dominant model of broadcasting is the private company dedicated to the pursuit of profits, so collective and nonprofit radio are rather marginal phenomena nowadays. Yet collective appropriation of this medium does occur—for instance, at the community radio stations studied in this article.

Some scholars commonly categorize community radio and other examples of the collective appropriation of media as "alternative." Academic research on "alternative" media tends to emphasize its political dimension (Atkinson, 2010; Kidd & Rodríguez, 2010; Uzelman, 2005). Although the presence of this dimension is undeniable, it seems impossible to determine a priori its particular political content, for the political orientation of "alternative" media depends on the conditions in which collective broadcasting takes place (see Atton, 2002; González Castillo, 2012; Light, 2011). Thus the comments of some authors (Buckley, 2000; Howley, 2000) defending the progressive potential of community radio should not be taken literally. The political dimension of community radio and of media generally, and their implications for a political order grounded in democracy, social justice, and equality, should be valued according to the relational insertion of these media in society (see Gingras, 2010). Following the same reasoning, community action related to these media should not be conceived as politically or culturally homogeneous.[1] Thinking instead of such community actions as politically or culturally heterogeneous allows scholars to approach extremely rare situations in which "alternative" media have been associated with rather violent or unacceptable events (e.g., RTLM radio's active role in the Rwandan genocide of 1994; see Li, 2004; Mamdani, 2001).

In this light, formulating a general definition of the community radio station is a challenge because the term can designate a wide variety of situations and projects. According to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), a community radio station

> is owned, operated, managed and controlled by a not-for-profit organization that
> provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by

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[1] Despite the homogeneous picture found in some political theory (e.g., Breaugh, 2007; Corten, Huart, & Peñafiel, 2012), the same can be said of collective action in general. As Sian Lazar (2008) has argued, distinctiveness and hierarchy very often modulate the most spontaneous and radical manifestations of collective political action.

members of the community served. In its openness to community involvement, campus
and community stations offer ongoing opportunities for training in the operation of their
station to volunteers from the community served. (CRTC, 2010).

This definition is useful for this article insofar as it emphasizes the collective dimension of practices related
to the establishment and operation of community radio stations. It is also useful because it does not
presuppose a particular political content (e.g., conservative, negotiation-based, resistance-based) for this
kind of medium. The case study of Radio Centre-Ville also involved more specific questions, since the
station has been consistently attuned to the dynamics of immigration this North American country has
experienced in recent years.

In fact, insights stemming from the study of these dynamics are important for the study of
Quebec community radio in general. I will show that migration dynamics call into question the reified idea
of "community" usually associated with this medium and point to the need for a more flexible and
historical conception of the community action related to it. Clearly the study of these dynamics should be
accompanied by analysis of the main historical processes shaping the society in question. With respect to
Quebec, the evolution of community radio is closely related to (a) capitalism's fostering of uneven spatial
development, (b) nationalistic conflicts between Quebec and Ottawa, and (c) the changing political profile
of a significant share of immigrants to this province.

Media and Community Radio in Quebec

Canadian legislation regards community media as the third broadcasting sector of the country,
after the private and the public sectors. The CRTC is the institution that officially grants the status of
"community radio" to radio stations in Canada. As already noted, radio stations requesting this status
must have no profit motives and must work to improve the social conditions of a particular locality
(neighborhood or town). In this sense, the word "community" does not refer to the cultural or ethnic
dimension of these media, but rather to their legal and social status.

According to the official website of the Association of Community Radio in Quebec (ARCQ, 2013),
about 30 community radio stations operate in this province. Although these stations are mainly
concentrated in the south of Quebec (particularly around the main population centers of Montreal and
Quebec City), their scattered presence in the rest of the province is not negligible. This asymmetric
distribution of radio stations is an outcome of the capitalist dynamics of uneven spatial development (Cox,
2008; Harvey, 1985; Smith, 1990). It reflects the unequal development that Quebec regions experienced
since the fall of Fordism (and the delocalisation of several industries) and the deployment of a regime of
flexible accumulation in the country. Generally speaking, the economic and demographic processes
associated with this change have accelerated the demographic and economic growth of the province's
major urban centers as well as the decline of some of its "marginal" or "remote" regions.

This situation has imposed contrasting conditions on the province's different community radio
stations. In the less populated regions of Quebec, the existence of community radio stations converges
"favorably" with policies challenging depopulation and economic decline (community radio stations being

perceived as media that support these regions' economic recovery). In major cities, however, community stations are torn between the need to justify their social utility and the struggle for survival in a competitive environment dominated by private media. Thus, it appears that the uneven development of Canadian capitalism inserts radio stations into spatial processes whose progress depends on macroeconomic changes and whose consequences are thus beyond the stations' control. At the same time, the demographic dynamics associated with these rounds of uneven development has given these media's social base a rather heterogeneous and changing profile. This situation manifests itself in the growing importance of community radio among the immigrant population, as I will show.

Meanwhile, the impact of capitalist economics on Quebec community radio is not limited to this spatial dimension. Also important is the dominance of private interests (Gusse, 2006) that characterizes the contemporary media industry in Quebec and Canada. Sanctioned by the Canadian federal government, the features of the current panorama of media in Quebec resemble those elsewhere in North America (for Mexico, see Vidal Bonifaz, 2008; for the U.S., Howley, 2000): a concentration of the market in the hands of a limited number of companies (e.g., the companies Corus and Astral in radio in the 2000s); the predominance of the principle of economic competition at the core of the sector (which is even more overwhelming in the context of the digitization of communication services); and the centralization of content production and services in the main urban centers of the province (Gusse, 2006).

But the field of broadcasting in Quebec is also historically marked by the nationalist controversies that have characterized relations between Quebec and the Canadian federal government (Raboy, 1993). These debates have always concerned linguistic, ethnic, and cultural differences as well as economic and political asymmetries between Quebec's population (mostly francophone) and people in the rest of Canada (mainly anglophone). Since the construction of national communities depends heavily on communication technologies (Anderson, 1991), the issue of the media seems an inevitable part of the clashes between Quebec and Ottawa.

In this context, the federal government has explicitly limited Quebec's jurisdiction in the field of broadcasting (Raboy, 1993) since the arrival of electronic media in Canada. Since the first half of the 20th century, management and regulation of the sector have been defined as the exclusive prerogative of the federal government, one of whose acts was to found the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and its French-language counterpart, Société Radio-Canada, which together represent the main public media in the country. To be sure, the Quebec government has tried several times to claim its place in the sector. The initiatives of the province have included, for example, the adoption in 1929 of a provincial law on the establishment of the provincial public media Radio-Québec (nowadays known as Télé-Québec, see Lacroix, 1993) and the creation in 1969 of Quebec's Ministry of Communications (Laramée, 1993). In fact, at a certain point, the proliferation of community radio in Quebec almost seemed to symbolize provincial progress in the field of broadcasting, even though these media were not state-owned.

Quebec community radio was born in the 1960s during a social transformation that culminated in the construction of a welfare state in the province. This historical process, known as *la révolution tranquille* (the quiet revolution), is widely considered the high point of Quebec nationalism (Gagnon, 2006). The changes occurring in this revolutionary context prompted marginalized groups to appropriate

media technologies, so community radio stations were strongly influenced by the nationalist rhetoric that became hegemonic in those years. This background clarifies why provincial funding is crucial to the survival of community radio in Quebec. Even so, the first community radio stations' involvement in social and political movements besides the nationalist movement—such as the feminist, labor, and community movements—should not be underestimated (e.g., Drainville, 2011; Lamoureux & Lamoureux, 2009; and Paiement, 2009). In fact, as I will show below, this involvement with a diversity of causes explains the emergence of Radio Centre-Ville, the only community radio station broadcasting in a language other than French in Montreal today.

According to Lucie Gagnon (2006), the creators of the first community radio stations in Quebec initially defined themselves as representatives of an alternative culture. Those early radio stations were generally rather fragile in nature, ran on limited resources, and were only borderline legal. At that time, these media's priority was to give a voice to marginalized social groups that mainstream media excluded from the cultural landscape. A certain alternative political approach was therefore clearly associated with these early stations.

Gagnon (2006) claims that a few years later (1970–1980), increasing numbers of community radio stations in the province spurred community broadcasters to reappraise and better serve their audiences' needs and interests. This signaled a change in both the social base and the political discourse of these stations, which began attending to the local character of their projects. Alternative radio stations began to use the word *community* to identify themselves within the Quebec radio landscape. The provincial government's interest in these cultural projects also began to influence the way community radio was organized, leading to increased access to public funding for community radio. Most community radio stations also engaged with government policies that supported regional economies. By the late 1970s, Quebec's French-language community radio stations had united to form the ARCQ, which represents the interests of this community medium vis-à-vis both commercial radio and national and provincial governmental bodies in charge of culture and communication.

More recently, two important processes have significantly impacted the evolution of the collective appropriation of community radio in Quebec. The first was the province-wide consolidation of neoliberal governance, which in the last decades of the 20th century gradually replaced the welfare state that had resulted from the quiet revolution with private (or semiprivate) entities associated with what political geographers call "roll-out neoliberalism" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; see also Deneault, 2010): civil associations, foundations, NGOs, public–private partnerships. The second process affecting the evolution of Quebec community radio concerns Canada's growing immigrant population. This population, I will show, has not only enriched the stations' sociocultural base (calling into question the homogeneous ideal of "community") but also revealed, at least in some cases, the political stakes that have played into the recent evolution of this medium in the province.

The next two sections of this article tackle these processes. The first outlines the features that Quebec community radio has adopted in a context of neoliberal transformation. The second reflects on immigrant participation in Radio Centre-Ville and shows how this participation accentuates the political issues surrounding contemporary community broadcasting.

Community Radio in Contemporary Quebec

The gradual installation of neoliberal governance in Quebec manifested itself to community broadcasters through the emergence of the so-called social economy (Ministère des Affaires Municipales et des Régions, 2008). This economy can be generally defined as the set of collective economic initiatives that are neither public nor private and focus on satisfying social needs rather than generating profits. The social economy's compatibility with the neoliberal policies of reducing the role of the state, privatizing social services, and "socializing" the costs incurred by the reduction of social policies is worth mention. In the broadcasting milieu, this change toward social economy resulted in a kind of "economization" and "professionalization" of radio stations (see also Gagnon, 2006). In fact, from the era of the quiet revolution to the present day, the collective appropriation of Quebec community radio seems to have shifted from a highly politicized to a more entrepreneurial, economic profile.

To explore this shift, I will examine data collected during fieldwork. The community radio broadcasters participating in the survey conducted as part of this research were male and female in almost equal proportions (52.1% and 47.9% respectively). The median age of the sample was 34, but the data also reveal a wide spread in terms of age (from 19 to 87 years), reflecting the present-day aging of Quebec's population. Most respondents (58.8%) had undergraduate or graduate diplomas and held paid jobs during the year of the survey (75.1%). A third of the respondents (34.3%), in fact, were paid employees of radio stations. Although a good share of the respondents (47.1%) were born outside the regions (or countries) where the radio stations were located, most of them (91.4%) resided in the localities served by these media. This fact points to the importance of migration for Quebec community radio, suggesting that this medium should not be understood as involving a unique and homogeneous collectivity. I will return to this issue in the next section.

Overall, the survey results appear to confirm the dominance of an "economic" perspective among community radio broadcasters. Similarly, though most of the broadcasters interviewed during my fieldwork stressed the importance of community radio as a not-for-profit activity, most of them appeared also to want firmer integration of community radio into the market economy. Here, their goal could be to ensure projects' economic viability rather than transform radio stations into "traditional" capitalist companies. This position relates partly to the already mentioned fact that radio stations are an important source of paid work for some respondents. Likewise, most interviewees considered a radio station's amount of business (turnover) an indicator of success or achievement, and the community radio stations that community broadcasters admired most appear to be those that managed significant quantities of money. At the opposite extreme, they often perceived community radio stations that were less able to generate revenues as ineffective or problematic.

The perception of radio as a means of professional development is concomitant with the "entrepreneurial" view of radio stations. Indeed, it seems that insofar as radio stations become more like economic enterprises, the possibility of a "career" in the milieu becomes an important motivation to join these media. Thus, some interviewees saw community radio as a place for professional improvement in fields like communication or management, a view the survey appears to confirm. The majority of the

respondents either completely agreed (47.9%) or tended to agree (26.8%) with the idea that their participation in the radio station stemmed from a professional interest in media in general (see Table 1).

Table 1. Responses to "My participation in this radio station stems from my professional interest in media."

	Observations	Percentage
Completely disagree	7	9.9
Tend to disagree	4	5.6
More or less agree	7	9.9
Tend to agree	19	26.8
Completely agree	34	47.9
Total	71	100.0

This illuminates why broadcasters so often describe radio stations as places for training and creating musical talents (talents that, according to one interviewee, are often "stolen" by private and public radio stations).

Consistent with this description, when asked about the mandate or project of their radio stations, respondents no longer spoke of giving a voice to the voiceless and marginalized or evoked radical political demands. They spoke instead of promoting local development through quality radio that informs and entertains. In fact, broadcasters now avoid the model of a spontaneous, radical, marginal community radio. The only exception in the sample was Radio Centre-Ville, whose employees were struggling to decide whether the radio station should continue as a "militant" medium of "cultural exchange" or become a communication project based on the principles of social economy, as I will discuss in the next section.

The survey results seem to confirm broadcasters' rejection of any political/ideological motive. Thus, as Table 2 shows, most respondents regarded their participation in community-radio broadcasting as a choice that had nothing to do with politics (51.4%):

Table 2. Responses to "My participation in this radio station is a political choice."

	Observations	Percentage
Completely disagree	36	51.4
Tend to disagree	7	10.0
More or less agree	9	12.9
Tend to agree	5	7.1
Completely agree	13	18.6
Total	70	100

Clearly, the entrepreneurial management–political engagement dichotomy is a widespread problem for community media. Quebec community radio's solution to this dilemma is closely tied to recent economic and politic shifts in the province. Thus, the transformation in community broadcasters' discourse (the decline of politics) parallels, to some extent, the shifts in other forms of political and cultural life in the province. In her study of new forms of artistic activism in Quebec, Ève Lamoureux (2009) reveals a similar trend among artists and concludes that it expresses a "redefinition of the contours of politics" (p. 237) that is reshaping the contestation of power relations as something more personal and intimate: a micropolitics in which commitment is no longer based on the anarchist, socialist, or Marxist ideals of the 20th century.

From a more critical perspective, the shift in political practices of cultural production formerly seen as alternative appears to parallel the general transformation, almost globally, of the protest and marginal movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Cited by Diane Nelson (2009), a Guatemalan activist's observation about the evolution of social movements in her country offers a perfect description of this change:

> We really see a transformation of what once were political movements into NGOs. Instead of working on larger transformations, the best people are managing funding . . . Now the task people are concerned with is just keeping their organization going. (p. 228)

The next section will discuss the implications of this "depoliticization" of community radio from the perspective of a particular case, that of Radio Centre-Ville. This exercise will enhance understanding of

how community broadcasters experience the decline of politics and what impact immigrant participation has on this process.

Radio Centre-Ville at the Crossroads: Multicultural Activism and Social Economy

Radio Centre-Ville is located next to one of Montreal's most active, culturally rich neighborhoods, the Plateau-Mont-Royal. The station, which broadcasts with a signal power of 1,300 watts on the FM band, occupies the second and third floors of a building its board of directors bought to obtain a stable location (the station had previously had to move several times for economic reasons). Over the course of a week, youth, adults, and elderly people of various origins, both male and female, arrive and leave the radio station. Most of them are employees, volunteers, or supporters of other social and community organizations in the city.

Thanks to special linguistic permission from the CRTC, Radio Centre-Ville broadcasts in different languages: French, English, Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Greek. As I have said, the radio station was founded in the early 1970s when various immigrant groups decided to create a medium devoted to Montreal's non-francophone population—a very interesting origin, given Quebec community radio's strong relation to the ascendance of nationalism and defense of the French language. Indeed, according to some of the broadcasters I met during my fieldwork, Quebec's first community radio stations had very close ties to the nationalist movement, which eventually gave birth to a party, the nationalist Parti Quebecois. In this context, where francophone community radio was seen as an instrument for reinforcing nationalist pride, the creation of Radio Centre-Ville seems rather paradoxical.

This paradox is resolved by recalling that the period of the "quiet revolution" involved more than just francophone nationalism. It was also a space for anti-colonial, feminist, and working-class mobilizations in Quebec, where community organizations (*organismes communautaires*), unions, and women's organizations proliferated (Lamoureux & Lamoureux, 2009; Linteau, Robert, Durocher, & Ricard, 1989; Paiement, 2009) and the leftist guerrilla front known as the FLQ tried to fight the federal power with anti-colonial narratives and a kind of third-world strategy (Drainville, 2011). As the revolution evolved, the national perspective became hegemonic (Gramsci, 1950/1978) because it offered what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) call a master signifier: the symbol whose negotiated content creates a certain level of consensus in society (Žižek, 2000). In this sense, Quebecois nationalism was a symbol whose (negotiated) meaning was able to conciliate the class, ethnic, and even gender perspectives of the main sectors of society.

The "triumph" of the nationalist perspective involved subordination of the other ideological trends of the "revolution," even if the nationalist perspective was not necessarily opposed to them. A well-known example is the significant improvement in women's and workers' conditions after the installation of a nationalist welfare state.

Whereas most community radio in Quebec was hooked on the nationalist "mainstream" in the 1970s, Radio Centre-Ville persisted as a radio linked to more leftist and heterogeneous perspectives. The presence of immigrants and political refugees from different origins certainly contributed to this orientation. This political divergence may be at the root of the attitude of francophone broadcasters

nowadays when, in talking about the milieu of community radio in Montreal, they speak of Radio Centre-Ville as a different kind of radio, a station concerned with the "cultural communities" (*commaunutés culturelles*) of the city. Analysis of the case of one of these cultural communities, the Latino community, can improve understanding of this question.

Latino/a immigration to Canada became statistically significant in the 1970s, when this North American destination terminated an immigration policy that privileged immigration from White Christian countries and started to accept immigrants and refugees from so-called third-world countries (Germain & Poirier, 2007). Since that time, Latino/a immigrants to Canada have been a highly politicized population. Two different politico-historical moments are distinguishable in this regard. The first began when immigrants began arriving from South and Central America in the 1970s (Simmons, 1993). This immigration was largely the consequence of the rise of repressive right-wing dictatorships and civil wars in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, and El Salvador. In those Latin American nations, people whose lives were in danger because of their political positions became refugees in countries whose humanitarian immigration policies allowed them entry (Mexico, Canada, Australia). Therefore, the condition of being highly politicized was a key feature of this immigrant wave, which included many leftist activists, social movement leaders, and politicians.

The second historical moment of Latin American immigration to Canada is occurring right now in a different context. This phase can be situated between the beginning of the 21st century and the present day. Whereas the profile of the first Latino immigrants to Canada was above all political, the profile of immigrants of the second wave is rather heterogeneous. Stimulated by new Canadian immigration policies, the growing hostility of U.S. immigration policy, and economic and social crises in countries like Mexico and Colombia, this more recent Latino immigration has brought middle-class professionals, students, and specialized workers to Canada in search of well-being and economic prosperity. Politics is still a "push" factor among Latin American immigrants, but it operates in a less evident way and concerns another kind of recent Latino/a immigration: In parallel with the arrival of middle-class professionals, a significant number of asylum seekers (*demandeurs d'asile*) and leftist activists abandoned their countries of origin to seek security in Canada (Rose & Charette, 2011). Different kinds of violence impel this immigration: gender and homophobic violence, civil insecurity, political repression, economic exclusion, and others.

Certainly, broadcasters from these Latino communities give Radio Centre-Ville an "ethnic" profile that seems to separate this station from Quebec's francophone community-radio network. However, I see this separation as due more to the political evolution of the province's community radio network than to the "ethnic" character of Radio Centre-Ville. As I noted above, a signal feature of the Quebecois milieu of community radio in recent years has been its insertion into the neoliberal logic. Most of the broadcasters I met during my fieldwork framed their participation in this medium in terms of economic entrepreneurship and professional development. Their approaches apparently did not encompass political issues such as the accessibility of communication technologies, the construction of independent media, or the fight against mainstream corporations in the communication sector. This absence was the most important difference between other Quebecois community radio stations and Radio Centre-Ville, which has always been associated (by at least some of its chief collaborators) with more politicized views.

Latino immigrants—some of whom have escaped dictatorships and violence—seemed to find Radio Centre-Ville a favorable space for airing their political interests. Their vision of the collective appropriation of radio technology thus differed substantially from the plans of other community radio stations in the 1980s. Differences emerged even among some collaborators of Radio Centre-Ville itself: Greek and Haitian groups, for example, shared more entrepreneurial and economic views of community broadcasting. Indeed, at the time of my fieldwork, tension between two opposing views of the station's future was causing an internal crisis at Radio Centre-Ville. First, the station's governing board at the time—evidently interested above all in making the station economically viable—stressed the importance of conforming to the model of the other Quebecois community radio stations. In contrast, Latino broadcasters insisted on the social and political goals of community radio. Despite economic difficulties, their perspective prioritized keeping Radio Centre-Ville a medium whose content and politics were defined independently of its economic sustainability.

The station's economic situation gave some credence to the first perspective. Radio Centre-Ville depended strongly on public and private subsidies; its own commercial revenue was rather insignificant. In response, the board decided to "regularize" the station by implementing strict new administrative regulations—for example, an internal policy of zero tolerance for certain recurrent problems, such as broadcasting delays, the unjustified absence of collaborators, and omissions in administrative procedure for filling out forms for the radio station. Also part of this administrative overhaul was a mandatory course to be completed by all new collaborators. Some radio "teams" (Latino, Portuguese, and anglophone) felt targeted by this measure, whose actual purpose, in their view, was to force the more politicized groups out of the station. The message "Don't mess with Radio Centre-Ville," written in English on a sheet of paper stuck on one of the station walls, was their anonymous answer to the new policies of the radio administration. (Perhaps driven by these changes, the station's workers formed a union in those days.)

Latino immigrants were particularly affected by this policy. They saw it as an attempt to privatize, which ran contrary to the principles the radio station had defended throughout its history: An alternative radio station could not be administrated as a private business because its goals went beyond the impetus of economic ascension. The objective of the radio station, as they saw it, was to inform Montreal city dwellers about what was happening in the rest of the world, to stimulate dialogue between cultures, and to give voice to social movements. Latino immigrants also felt particularly targeted by those initiatives because they often had only elementary knowledge of French and thus were, in most cases, the ones who were challenged by the required formalities.

In this context, second-wave Latin American immigrants to Canada appear to have reinforced the political component of Radio Centre-Ville, using the station as a special medium for discussing the situation in their countries. Like many in the first wave of immigrants from Argentina, Chile, and El Salvador, later Mexican immigrants found a space of solidarity in Radio Centre-Ville. As part of a rather vulnerable immigrant population, these groups fight constantly for the recognition of the legitimacy of some members' asylum demands. Radio Centre-Ville is a place where they can actively contend with those and other difficulties. In this sense, the chance to broadcast Spanish-language discussions of affairs in their countries of origin is very precious to these immigrants. Moreover, as a population suffering from nonrecognition of its professional skills, access to community radio represents a highly valued opportunity

to participate in Montreal's public life. Their politically oriented activities contribute to the persistence of an alternative model of community radio in the context of a hegemonic tendency to integrate these media into the dominant economy.

Conclusion

Community radio has usually been depicted as stemming from politically and culturally homogeneous communities. The various depictions of community radio—whether inherently progressive or expressing the desires and projects of an ethnically homogeneous community—seem to miss the complexity of the collective action related to this medium. In contrast, this study has shown that the collective appropriation of radio has always been modulated and diversified by major economic, political, and social processes. In the case under study, this fact created an environment in which divergent goals (social economy vs. political activism) put some community broadcasters at odds with each other.

More precisely, different capitalist processes in Quebec (from the province's unequal development to the general installation of neoliberal policies) have strongly influenced the evolution of community radio's social base. Nationalist political conflicts between Quebec and Canada and the weight of private interests in the broadcasting sector have also been critical issues in this respect. In these conditions, the different historical moments associated with the construction of hegemony in Quebec have altered the political contents of community radio. Between the time of "quiet revolution" and the installation of neoliberal governance, the collective appropriation at the core of Quebecois community radio shifted from a militant approach to a more economic and professional standpoint under the banner of the social economy. As in other countries (Ke, 2000; Light, 2011), these changes relate strongly to the evolution of the state and the more or less predatory character of the private interests in the sector.

Immigration dynamics has also been a major factor in the evolution and diversification of the social base of Quebec community radio—not because a unique, stable immigrant community is present, but because different waves of immigrant populations have constantly redrawn and enriched the sociopolitical profile of community broadcasters. Although Radio Centre-Ville is a fascinating, edifying example of this process, on another level it is also a symptom of the contradictions associated with the recent evolution of community radio in Quebec, given that the leftist and radical perspectives of some of this station's collaborators deviate from the political path taken by most of the province's community radio stations in recent years. In this article, my goal has been to shed light on this dichotomy and thereby improve understanding of the collective action underlying this medium. In this regard, one important conclusion of this study is that the political dimension of alternative media depends not only on the political narratives of their supporters, but also, and above all, on these narratives' continuous interplay with the social forces that structure society.

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