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[transcript]

# Sonic Artefacts

## Reality Codes of Urbanity in Early German Radio Documentary

Carolyn Birdsall

Cities can be reflected in the camera; cities come into being on radio.<sup>1</sup>

The purely aural world [...] is relatively poor in documentary qualities.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Despite assertions that radio was a *blind* medium, early German radio practitioners sought to convey the sounds and sights of urban environments, whether from their own cities or faraway places.<sup>3</sup> City life was marked by the effects of industrialization and urbanization, and the intense concentration of activity in the city – with its pulsating crowds and traffic – was claimed to cause an overstimulation of the senses. In Germany, numerous commentators defined urban experience in terms of the intensification of *visual* stimuli, which was explicitly commented upon in photography, film, and modernist painting and literature.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, sounds were also asserted as definitive markers of life in the modern metropolis.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, there was not a fully-fledged practice for documenting the sonic dimensions of cityscapes. While modern music cited

1 »Städte spiegeln sich in der Kamera – Städte erstehen im Funk«. Marek 1930, 73.

2 Arnheim 1933/1972, 279.

3 Cf. *ibid.*

4 See, for instance, Simmel 1903/1997.

5 Cf. Lessing 1908, 1909. For a comparative account, see Bijsterveld 2001.

characteristic urban sounds, sometimes using horns and sirens in performance, technologies like the gramophone were primarily employed for recording speech and musical performance rather than urban soundscapes.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the previous chapters in this volume, which mainly focus on the representation of urban soundscapes in fictional genres, this chapter takes documentary as its starting point. Documentary portrayals of the city are usually considered in terms of visual or textual strategies; I will instead examine documentary impulses in early German radio broadcasting from 1923 onwards. The first decade of radio broadcasting coincided with the rise of the modern documentary film, which in numerous accounts is cited in reference to Robert Flaherty's films *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Moana* (1926). The contribution of radio to the historical documentary project, however, has been significantly under-researched.<sup>7</sup> This may be in part due to the uneven development of *documentary* within early radio, which did not gain institutional and critical status in any way comparable to the documentary film movement.

One of the challenges to examining documentary sound in radio portrayals of the urban is the limited availability of archival recordings. The *sonic artefacts* that will be discussed in this chapter are still accessible because these programmes were pre-recorded and recorded on shellac discs, unlike the majority of live programming in the 1920s. While these recordings may form part of an audiovisual heritage of urban soundscapes, this chapter does not partake in the discourse that mourns the lost or ephemeral nature of the sound archive. As radio scholar Josephine Dolan emphatically argues, written sources are also essential to the study of (British) broadcast history:

The transmitted voices that are the focus of the sound archive can not be isolated from the voices of the written policy statements about audition, selection criteria, scripts and performance standards that are anterior to the moment of transmission. The moment of transmission [...] is a highly orchestrated production that is fully located within the complex relationships between the BBC, its personnel, its imagined audience and its empirical audience.<sup>8</sup>

6 On the technological restrictions posed on artistic projects to use phonographs for outdoor recordings, see Kahn 1994. When (outdoor) phonographic recordings were conducted, it was often for the ethnographic study of non-Western people. Cf. Stangl 2000, Ames 2007, Lange 2007.

7 For several notable exceptions, see Scannell 1986, Madsen 2009, Hendy 2004. For the development of documentary forms in the context of American radio, see, for instance, Loviglio 2002, as well as Bluem 1965, 60-72, Barnouw 1978, 28-37, McDonald 1979, 281-325, Lichty and Bohn 1974, 458-62.

8 See Dolan 2003, 69.

In other words, it is crucial that the investigation of documentary sound in German radio portrayals of the urban does not overprivilege archival recordings as preferable or superior to written and printed sources. With Dolan's comments in mind, the analysis here will also refer to programmes that were not recorded or preserved, and will engage printed archival documentation to situate the selected programmes in terms of the aesthetic choices, technological possibilities and institutional context of their production.

In what follows, I will begin with some conceptual groundwork concerning the notion of documentary. This requires attention to debates about indexicality in relation to photography and cinema, as well as discourses of documentary realism and the modernist preoccupation with urban subject matter. When adopting the documentary concept for radio history, it is important to acknowledge that this is a retrospective labelling, since »documentary« was not necessarily a unified field of production and reception at the time. Likewise, attempts to capture the *sounds of the real* predate radio broadcasting, and a prehistory could be traced in telegraphy, telephony, gramophone and early wireless practices. Having introduced key concepts for this investigation I will give further reasoning on my decision to focus on German radio broadcasting, which was launched in late 1923. I stress the particular background to state-governed radio broadcasting and the significant engagement of German intellectuals and artists with the medium in the decade following 1923. In the analysis, I will identify three main currents in documentary sound portrayals of the urban in Weimar-era radio. Firstly, and primarily in the early years of radio broadcasting, the project to document the urban took the form of studio-produced city portraits (*Hörbilder*), and, later, more ambitious outdoor broadcasts with the aid of sound recording and editing. This first analysis will acknowledge the relative fluidity between fiction and nonfiction categories in early radio explorations of the urban, which took place prior to the formal institutional separation between drama and news departments. In addition to modernist documentary concepts and sound experiments, I will, secondly, investigate the notion of actuality within early radio, and the development of conventions of news and live event broadcasting. In this case, I will pay particular attention to the rise of radio reportage with the aid of microphones, vocal presentation, outdoor location recording (*Originalton*) and gramophone prerecording, as important conditions in the historical invention of media *reality codes*.<sup>9</sup> In addition to case studies of *documentary* and *actuality*, I will investigate a third, related aspect of *authenticity*, by considering the recourse to particular uses of spoken voice (dialect), local music repertoire and urban narratives, in particular during the years of crisis be-

9 *Originalton* has a range of possible English translations including original sound, wild sound, actuality or ambiance. See Madsen 2009.

tween 1930 and 1933. In these three analytical sections I seek to draw out three main sonic strategies in portrayals of the urban: the *wandering* microphone (an imaginative, explorative mode), the *bird's eye* view (often providing a fixed, aerial perspective) and, finally, the transposition of urban documentary techniques to convey the nature of the region or the nation as a whole.

## 2. Documentary Realism, Urbanity and Radio Broadcasting

There are two common observations in scholarly criticism about the historical development of documentary. The first is that early cinema exhibition – such as by the Lumière Brothers and Skladanowsky brothers in 1895-96 – featured short recordings of city scenes, such as factory workers, trains in motion and inner city traffic. As Guntram Vogt notes, already by 1905, the fascination with the city had led to film sequences »moving over rooftops, along city walls, through courtyards, on the river and out of the city, through to open spaces«. <sup>10</sup> In addition to this preoccupation with urban scenes, a second observation concerns the shared origins of fiction and nonfiction film in early cinema, much of which »casually blended the staged and unstaged, actors and non-actors, fact and fiction«. <sup>11</sup> Indeed, prior to the establishment of narrative cinema as a dominant mode in the late 1910s, the actuality film was a prevalent feature of early cinema exhibition, with the popularity of topical themes, street scenes, exotic scenes or travelogues already suggesting the appeal of *real sights* for audiences. Both of these aspects – the city as subject matter and the *blurred boundary* of cinema history prior to a fiction-nonfiction divide – provide impetus for this section, which will focus on documentary film discourse, notions of documentary realism and the portrayal of urban environment. In terms of sound, the most immediate observation about 1920s documentary film is that it was *silent*, with its truth claims linked to the photographic. <sup>12</sup> The concepts of the document and documentary as associated with (written) evidence is consistent with both the historical rise of media of mechanical reproduction (photography, phonography, cinema) and the professional field of history in the nineteenth century. <sup>13</sup> This

10 »...über Dächer, entlang an Außenmauern, durch Hinterhöfe, hinaus der Stadt auf den Fluß, aufs offene Land«. Vogt 2001, 123.

11 Nichols 1995, n.p.

12 Cf. Altman 2004.

13 Cf. Rosen 1993.

simultaneous development gave rise to notions of knowledge acquisition by observing the traces of the past, as evidenced by authentic historical documentation, written or otherwise. A similar investment in documentary evidence was present in the emergent fields of ethnography and anthropology, with figures like Franz Boas promoting phonographic recordings for fieldwork, since it

provided a form of documentation directly apprehensible to the senses, presumably uncontaminated by the observer's inevitable categorical and perceptual biases. <sup>14</sup>

In other words, indexical media technologies were increasingly affirmed as facilitating the collection of *pure data* for the task of capturing reality. This rhetoric of science, in turn, was also intrinsic to early discourses of documentary film, since photography's ability to reproduce the real was perceived as similar to that of scientific tools (such as the thermometer). <sup>15</sup>

The photographic dimension to cinema has traditionally offered a marker that distinguishes it from other documentary or realist strategies in literature or painting. <sup>16</sup> In the particular case of documentary film, realist theorizations have been countered with readings of documentary history that foreground the poetic and expressive. The silent *city films* of the 1920s are often cited as a case in point for both formal experimentation and social commentary. The most well-known European examples of this trans-national genre include Alberto Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (1926) and Jean Vigo's *À Propos de Nice* (1930), and feature-length films by Walther Ruttmann (*Berlin: Sinfonie der Großstadt*, 1927) and Dziga Vertov (*Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929). The avant-garde genre of the *city film* is usually identified in terms of the emergence of a new visual language that tried to capture the distinct modern experience of urban life, often with the aid of montage and the metaphor of the symphony.

For many, there was a sense in which synchronized sound was perceived as interfering with cinema's modernist project, and silent documentaries continued in different forms until at least the 1960s. <sup>17</sup> Some of the initial setbacks with sound film included limited movement of cameras, which were primarily confined to the studio, with post-production sound techniques only possible after 1932. Following the ascension of sound

14 Brady 1999, 69.

15 Winston 1993.

16 For a good overview of debates on realism in relation to European cinema, see Aitken 2001.

17 See Nichols 1995, n.p.

synchronization, however, there were various projects seeking to experiment with voice, music and noise, particularly with techniques of sound collage, counterpoint and asynchrony. Some notable examples of this experimentation include Vertov's *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Don Basin* (1931), but also GPO Film Unit productions like *Pett and Pott* (1934) and *Night Mail* (1936). Bill Nichols has noted that a second trend, from the mid-1930s, signals the establishment of what he has called »expository« documentary, characterized by direct-address style with »voice of God« commentary. This style can be observed in films like *Housing Problems* (1935) and *The River* (1937), and, after 1939, wartime propaganda films like Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* (1942-1945). Ultimately, Nichols argues, »collage, sound, and documentary became tamed, placed at the service of sponsors«.<sup>18</sup>

Though the history of observational and journalistic documentary has allowed for music – and sound more broadly – to be deemphasized or formalized in function, we can suggest that this historical shift was neither straightforward nor immediate. James Lastra, for instance, has usefully stressed the ongoing debates over sound perspective and continuity following the introduction of synchronized sound in Hollywood. In the struggle over 1920s reality codes, a »phonographic« model (based on fidelity to usual perception) was pitted against a »telephonic model« (foregrounding vocal clarity or intelligibility), with the latter gradually adopted as the industry-driven production convention.<sup>19</sup> Both models continued well into the 1930s, with technicians lobbying for a wider sound space based on multiple microphones. However, the studios' preference for sound intelligibility led to close-miked directional sound, with the microphone replicating the visual perspective. In turn, the establishment of voice-over narration in documentary could be said to be influenced by this trend towards clear, standardized vocal presentation, although documentary films generally demonstrated a greater range of accent and (un)intelligibility, particularly in post-war observational cinema.<sup>20</sup>

As the above has demonstrated, sound has come to play a crucial role in documentary's narration, authentication of evidence, for establishing mood and eliciting emotion. Indeed, apart from camerawork, two of documentary's most important key codes are sound-based: 1) commentary/voice and 2) authentication through sound/music.<sup>21</sup> Rather than further discuss recording technologies (photography, phonography, cinema), I will now focus on transmission technology. Unlike photography or cinema, which

18 Ibid.

19 Lastra 2000, 139.

20 Ruoff 1993, Chanan 2007, 116.

21 Cf. Hattendorf 1999, Corner 2002.

can capture images in time, broadcasting transmission was credited with overcoming spatial boundaries and invested with notions of liveness, intimacy and interiority. The state-administered broadcast system emerged directly out of military uses of wireless during World War I, albeit primarily for point-to-point communication for naval ships and, later, in trench warfare. The subsequent development of German broadcasting was influenced by the involvement of state postal and military authorities in telegraphy, and the close relationship between state and industry in developing communications technologies.<sup>22</sup> Telegraphy pioneer and postal services director Hans Bredow was placed in charge of developing a radio network from 1919. Following the establishment of the licensing system and regular programming after 1923, Bredow maintained the assertion that radio should be a public trust that would be above party politics. He also pursued a bourgeois concept of radio in terms of cultural and educational improvement (*Bildungsideal*).<sup>23</sup> This concept was influenced by broadcast radio's emergence at the height of inflation and Bredow joined in articulating widespread fears about the urban masses, citing radio as a domestic medium that would help to unite families and keep children away from the corrupting influences of urban streets.<sup>24</sup>

The institutional setting of Weimar-era radio after 1923 did not lend itself easily to creative explorations of urban soundscape, given its emergence during a tense period of social unrest, economic upheaval and political crisis. Not only was broadcasting a state-governed enterprise, but censorship boards monitored station production. This institutional context placed restrictions on the discussion of politics, and with it, the depiction of social reality and current affairs (*Aktualität*). Finally, technological difficulties with microphone sensitivity and transmission initially prevented outdoor recordings. However, the cultural production of the Weimar years is decisive for understanding the significance of sound within modern media culture and, indeed, in everyday urban life. Experimentation in broadcast content and form in Weimar Germany prefigured developments during the second half of the twentieth century, and cannot be found to the same extent in other national contexts in the same period.<sup>25</sup> There was a new generation of advocates for new music and radio-specific composition during the 1920s. Some

22 Cf. Friedewald 1999, 2000.

23 Hagen 2005, 75-78.

24 This institutional context involved a gradual domestication of the medium, shifting from the early male tinkers (*Bastlern*) with crystal detectors to licensed, vacuum tube sets in the domestic environment, which remained predominantly for the consumption of the middle classes in the 1920s. See Lacey 2000, 49, MarBolek 2001, 214.

25 Cf. Crook 1999, Douglas 1999/2004.

of these composers were influenced by futurist aesthetics, their own experiences of war and the sound of the modern city (usually typified by whistles, sirens, bells, engines and transport vehicles).<sup>26</sup> German radio is also distinct due to the engagement of writers and artists in radio production and the intellectual debates about this new medium, and their subsequent role in the development of radio as an art form, as Andreas Fickers' chapter on *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in this volume also indicates.<sup>27</sup> In what follows, I will investigate main currents in documentary portrayals of the urban during the decade following 1923, in terms of *documentary*, *actuality* and *authenticity*, with particular attention to the contrasting techniques of the mobile, »wandering« microphone and the »bird's eye« view.

### 3. Documentary Portraits of the City

The task to document the urban environment and draw on its characteristic sounds was taken up within the first months of station transmission in Germany. One of the challenges in this period was to find sufficient content to fill up broadcast schedules, which allowed for innovation and experimentation with broadcast forms, although stations drew extensively on existing cultural forms, particularly from literature and theatre traditions.<sup>28</sup> Here, I will focus primarily on those programmes that involved a clearly-defined project to produce a *Hörbild* (acoustic portrait) of a particular city, whether covering the entire city or a number of components that make up the whole. In this early period, such experimentation, as I will show, ranged from studio-produced portraits, modernist sound experiments and notions of documentary collage, to ambitious outdoor broadcasts that variously employed live link-ups, wax disc recording and editing techniques.

The Hamburg Norag station, which began broadcasting in March 1924, was exemplary in its attempts to foreground urban sounds in early programming. Radio-specific pro-

gramming was marked by a preoccupation with Hamburg's status as an international port and city of trade, and with it, the sounds of the harbour and maritime culture more broadly. Station director Hans Bodenstedt had previously worked as a newspaper journalist, but his concept of radio production entailed a creative rendering of the urban by means of sound. Shortly following the launch of the Hamburg station, Bodenstedt aired a radio play, *Im Hafen* (In the Harbour), which sought to draw on the »sounds of reality« (*Geräusche der Wirklichkeit*) as much as possible.<sup>29</sup> According to Bodenstedt's understanding, a *Hörbild* necessarily produces »a portrait that one hears« (*Ein Bild, das man hört*). It is therefore necessary that radio announcers had to learn how to create a »sonorous portrayal« of the visual (*Bild tönend malen*) using speech, music or sound effects.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, this concept of portraying the real was reliant on studio production, rather than outdoor transmission. Such conditions were observed by radio announcer and producer Alfred Braun, in a 1926 article that included sketches of the production of studio sound effects: a water basin with a fan propeller and horn signal being operated to create the departure of a ship from Hamburg harbour, a hand-operated wheel with fabric for wind, a shower onto plywood for rain, and a car horn and pressurized tank for a car.<sup>31</sup>

Around one year after Bodenstedt's first radio play, Norag was the first German station to conduct an outdoor transmission on 24 May 1925. The programme *Mainacht auf der Alster* (May Evening on the Alster River), was broadcast outdoors, as a way to extend the possibilities of staging radio plays against the background of the real soundscape.<sup>32</sup> This broadcast was enabled by cable lines connecting back to a pre-amplifier, and it was performed both for the listening audience and the large crowds that gathered around three outdoor locations. This open-air broadcast was credited with providing a sense of »three-dimensional spatial listening«, since listeners could be better encouraged to develop a fantasy of seeing the broadcast due to its spatial markings and claim on the real.<sup>33</sup> Norag staff member Kurt Stapelfeldt described a mixture of spoken and musical performance, set against the existing sounds of the riverside and a café terrace, and partially disrupted by wet weather conditions, which

26 Some of these composers included Franz Schreker, Paul Hindemith, Max Butting and Kurt Weill, alongside those working in North America such as Georges Antheil and Edgar Varèse. See Hailey 1994, 14-16, Donhauser 2007, 67-125.

27 For the involvement of German intellectuals in Weimar-era radio, see Schneider 1984, Wittenbrink 2006. For a comparative assessment of German, British and American radio in this period, see Lacey 2002.

28 See, for instance, Arnheim 1933/1972, 39, 232, Cory 1994, 333-36, 346.

29 Fitze 1929, 6.

30 Bodenstedt 1929, 45.

31 Braun 1926.

32 Fitze 1929, 10.

33 »Hier draussen im Freien, wo der Schall vollkommen ausschwingt, oft auch füllend zurückkehren konnte, verhalf dies 3 dimensionale räumliche Hören der Fantasie zum plastischen Sehen«. Stapelfeldt 1925, 1457.

required the microphone and cables to be shielded with umbrellas.<sup>34</sup> This programme suggests the novelty of a technological breakthrough as much as the creative investment in outdoor broadcasting of the city.

Writing several years later, Bodenstedt noted that outdoor broadcasts were still limited by the cable extension possible from pre-amplifiers (at around 500 metres).<sup>35</sup> He concludes with the observation that he hopes it will be possible in the future to free the microphone from a fixed location, and that short wave radio will help to allow for »significant event(s) that is instantaneously brought closer to the listener through images and commentary.«<sup>36</sup> Here we can already determine a modernist desire for a mobile or wandering microphone, which would allow for radio reports from cars, boats, aeroplanes and airships, in order to bring the listener to where the action was. In turn, Bodenstedt noted that the Hamburg station had conducted experiments with transmission from difficult locations – such as under water and from the air – in order to help increase the mobility of the microphone for maritime broadcasts from large ships or islands like Sylt.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the introduction of mobile microphones by around 1929-1930 encouraged both the technique of a explorative or wandering microphone and that of a fixed, aerial or bird's eye view, which I will return to later in this chapter.

A strong theme in city portraits during the first years of broadcasting was the perceived need to facilitate visualization for the radio listening audience. One of the challenges, as Bodenstedt observed in 1929, was for radio reporters to learn to give their reports in visual language, and communicate their message without the benefit of headlines, layout or bold type (as with printed reportage). This notion of translating sensory impressions into verbal commentary was developed as a training technique for new radio announcers in the late 1920s. According to this *Filmfunk* (film radio) method, announcers were given the task to narrate silent film footage, in order to sufficiently hone their »radiophonic« style for live events and reportage.<sup>38</sup>

The emphasis on visualization, as Inge MarBolek has pointed out, was not only limited to notions of acoustic portraits but depends on a broader notion of radio as a *magic eye*. The perceived need for visualization is also evidenced by the on-going »behind the scenes« features in radio journals, which sought to familiarize listeners with station an-



Figure 7: Ferdinand Krantze (Norag) during a reportage from the Hamburg fruit and vegetable market, 16 December 1930.

nouncers and studio production.<sup>39</sup> Radio journals and yearbooks also visually performed the notion of collating the sounds of the city in a montage configuration. For instance, in the 1929 Norag yearbook, an overview of the station's programming was accompanied by photographic cut-out collages of urban phenomena like trains, cars, horse races, ships, radio towers, street scenes, sailors and aesthetic configurations of (female) bodies. In the same year, the annual *Rundfunkjahrbuch* also picked up on the popular urban »symphony« theme, as discussed earlier with the city film genre. Placed within an article discussing the importance of experimentation, radio director Carl Schmidt is pictured in the foreground with a large microphone against a photographic collage depicting factory buildings, telephone lines, conveyer belts and machinery. The caption notes that radio microphones are taken to factories and shop floors in order to reveal »The symphony of work, the melody of our times« (*Die Sinfonie der Arbeit, die Melodie unserer Zeit*).<sup>40</sup> This emphasis on visiting various urban sites is consistent with the no-

34 Ibid., 1457.

35 Bodenstedt 1930, 309.

36 Ibid., 315.

37 Bodenstedt 1929, 49-50. For the preoccupation with topographies of the urban and the ongoing cultural fascination with »oceanic metaphors« developed for wireless, see Sconce 2000, 62.

38 Fitze 1929, 11.

39 MarBolek 2001, 210-212.

40 Bodenstedt 1929, 47.



tion of an explorative microphone that would unify the diverse sounds of the city with the aid of montage.

The modernist notion of visual collage in depicting the city was developed more explicitly in station programming in the late 1920s. Fritz Bischoff, for instance, drew on a concept of visuality in his experiments with sound recording on optical film celluloid. Bischoff's experimental montage *Hallo! Hier Welle Erdball* (1928) employed sound (on) film techniques to comment on radio eventness, news reportage and modern urban perception.<sup>41</sup> In a subsequent article, Bischoff draws on a comparison with visual cross-fading in the cinema for his notion of »acoustic dramaturgy« (*akustische Dramaturgie*), based on voice, music and sound effect.<sup>42</sup> Making a comparison to camera operators, the radio technician is described as turning the amplifier condenser slowly in order to fade from one sound source to another, and thereby move to the next part of the storyline. Bischoff advocates this development in terms of progress, using the controller as a technique to switch between two adjacent sound studios, as a quasi-editing device to cut between scenes.<sup>43</sup> As this example illustrates, Bischoff demonstrated a keen sense of the necessity for radio-specific production, and criticized the influence of the theatre in standard sound effect practices.<sup>44</sup> Even though the sounds of wind, machines and street noises could be used sparingly for naturalistic effect, he wrote, there was a risk that sounds that appeared realistic in reportage could seem ridiculous in a topical radio play and result in a situation that parodies reality.<sup>45</sup> In this context, Bischoff noted that for a recent radio play production, *Spielen aus der Zeit* (Contemporary Scenes), he and his colleagues used a switch mechanism that allowed for sound effects from their studio as well as real sounds from the street outside.<sup>46</sup>

A popular programme with a similar project to document the city – with a wandering microphone – was the Berlin Funk-Stunde series *Mit dem Mikro durch Berlin*

41 Prior to this broadcast, all radio plays were broadcast live and were not recorded for archiving purposes. There appear to have been two versions of Bischoff's radio play. The original version was aired in February 1928. The remaining recording fragment in the German Radio Archive (Frankfurt) appears to be derived from a second airing in November 1929. See Gilfillan 2009, 75-76.

42 Bischoff 1930, 202.

43 *Ibid.*, 203.

44 »ein Weg von der grässlichen Theatermaschinerie, der akustischen Geräuschkulisse, den Löffelersben als Rieselregen, zu einer natürlichen Hörbarwendung ins akustische Spiel einzubeziehender Geräuschkulisse«. *Ibid.*, 204.

45 »... die Wirklichkeit parodiert«. *Ibid.*, 204.

46 *Ibid.*

(Around Berlin with the Microphone), initiated by Alfred Braun from October 1928. This programme included reports from different (often indoor) locations as a means of taking a tour through various night-time locations. A landmark programme from Hamburg in October 1929 also conducted a four-hour reportage with almost thirty segments from different locations around the city. The *Deutscher Rundfunk* magazine reproduced the timetable for the programme, directed by Hans Bodenstedt, which preserves the notion of a potpourri of segments, each around ten minutes in length.<sup>47</sup> It opens with the premise that a German man in Mexico wanted to know how his *Heimatstadt* (hometown) Hamburg had become, with the first segment broadcasting his telephone conversation with the station. The reportage then presumes to travel between different sites and present the sounds of Hamburg to its listeners, who are imagined as tuning in from far away. These sounds ranged from transmissions of a chamber music concert, a variety show, sound film screening, theatre performance, short wave radio reception, fishing trawlers in the harbour, a crowded bar, and concludes with sirens at a police station and the characteristic sounds of the Michaelis church bells.<sup>48</sup> One of the notions that emerged with mobile microphone techniques was that of the reporter as a kind of *flâneur*, with a microphone that could lose its way and get lost while exploring the city. This is suggested by several programmes introducing German listeners to foreign cities. The Frankfurt station Süwrag, for instance, produced a reportage from Paris, *Verirrtes Mikrophon* (Lost Microphone), in which three station reporters spoke from multiple popular locations in Paris.<sup>49</sup> With the more widespread adoption of wax disc recordings, in order to broadcast programmes at a later timeslot, there was more room to experiment with mobile reporting techniques. In September 1931, the Cologne radio station Werag broadcast a report by journalist Hellmut H. Hellmut as part of the series *Die Welt auf der Schallplatte* (The World on Gramophone Record). For this programme, Hellmut travelled through the streets of New York in a recording van, with a microphone used to record both ambient sound and Hellmut's description of what he saw and heard.<sup>50</sup> This style of recording, which seems to prefigure the subjective style of soundscape walks, was recorded onto wax records and reworked for a later Cologne broadcast.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to the simultaneous portrait of a city from multiple locations, the gramophone allowed for the possibility of recording a single narrative while moving

47 See the programme review: Tasiemka 1929, 1365.

48 *Ibid.*

49 See *Das Sechste Berliner Rundfunkjahr* 1929, 102-03.

50 Schumacher 1997, 564.

51 Cf. Järviluoma/Wagstaff 2002.

through the city, and by virtue of its recording, some possibility for alteration before airing the programme.

Norag also continued to make lyrical city portraits as late as 1931, which alternated between wandering and fixed microphone positions. One illustration of such a portrait, for which a sound recording is still available, is the approximately forty-minute programme *Städtebild Kopenhagen* from September 1931.<sup>52</sup> In this programme, the Norag reporter Ferdinand Krantze speaks to listeners from the centrally-located Axelborg radio building, and visits three urban sites: the shipping wharf, the town hall and central square, and the Tivoli Gardens.<sup>53</sup> In the programme, described in visual terms as a *Schaubericht* and *Städtebild*, Krantze begins by describing Copenhagen from his position at the central Axelborg studio. Although the programme seems to use pre-recorded segments, its stress on liveness is achieved on the basis of Krantze's delivery and the echoing characteristics of the various indoor and outdoor spaces from which the transmission takes place. At the same time, however, unlike the 1929 Hamburg programme discussed above – with its heightened sense of eventness – this programme remains conventional in its use of sounds, stilted interviews and pleas for international brotherhood, tourism and trade.

To sum up, while there were numerous projects to create urban portraits in early German radio, both in the studio and with location sound, the tour through the city format was considered a bit dated by 1931. Felix Stiemer, writing in *Der Deutsche Rundfunk*, suggested that these programmes initially provided the listener a chance to hear the sounds from places they had never visited, yet they had become too formulaic and undifferentiated in their portrayals. Stiemer gives the example of Alfred Braun's innovation in broadcasting from a lighthouse, but argues that this novel idea soon became a cliché when others imitated him.<sup>54</sup> Stiemer argues that the documentary possibilities with sound had been overrated in the first years of radio:

One shouldn't have any illusions about this: the expressive qualities of sound have been overestimated. We know today, how even the most representative

52 See archival recording *Städtebild Kopenhagen* (8 September 1931). Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

53 At each of the three locations, however, urban sounds are reasonably limited in scope. The programme begins with the sound of church bells and a clock chiming, and has the pretension – as part of the *Ostseejahr 1931* – of performing a link between Copenhagen and listeners of the syndicated northern German stations of Hamburg, Bremen, Kiel, Flensburg and Stettin.

54 Stiemer 1931, 31.

visual image for a city can be false; for this reason the postcard has lost its authority as the cinema has become more popular. Sound is too ambiguous and too abstract.<sup>55</sup>

Implicit in this argument is the suggestion that acoustic portraits of cities were not successful enough in conveying the unique essence of a city to its listener. The creative rendering of the urban had even discredited radio as a cultural form, Stiemer argues, and it was disappointing for listeners when reporters broadcast from »sightseeing« locations that were not necessarily acoustically interesting or appropriate. Despite such critiques, many commentators and practitioners defended urban portraits and reportage as a means for addressing the sounds of particular cityscapes and for accessing the social in a period of social and political crisis. In the following section, I will further investigate the concept of »actuality« in early radio practice, with particular attention to the microphone techniques used for portraying of urban social life in news and live event programming.

#### 4. Actuality

The prevailing notion of *Aktualität* (actuality) in Weimar radio was often simplistic or naive. Indeed, one might say that Weimar radio did not really constitute a public sphere since there was still too little news and political information.<sup>56</sup> A clear separation of news and commentary was imposed, with centralized news service *Dradag* dictating the agenda and indirect style of news programming. In the first few years after 1923, politicians occasionally appeared on radio, but then only in their representative function, with their party name left unmentioned. There were few outdoor broadcasts of current affairs between 1924 and 1926 – in part due to technological restrictions – but on several occasions there were large outdoor events transmitted, such as the celebrations marking the withdrawal of French troops from the Rhineland on 31 January 1926, which featured speeches by Cologne Mayor Konrad Adenauer as well as German President von Hinden-

55 »Man soll sich keine Illusionen darüber machen: hier wird die Ausdrucksfähigkeit der akustischen Mittel weit überschätzt. Wir wissen heute, wie sogar das repräsentative Bild den individuellen Charakter einer Stadt verfälscht, weil ihm die Bewegung, das wichtigste Moment fehlt; deshalb ist auch die Ansichtskarte ausser Kurs gekommen, je populärer der Film wurde. Klang ist zu vieldeutig und zu abstrakt«. Ibid., 31.

56 Cf. Hagen 2005, 71, 79.

burg.<sup>57</sup> Hamburg's Norag station was pioneering in their reporting of actual events, and already had its first regular *newsreel* (*Wochenschau*) from mid-1924. But, as Bernhard Heitger has pointed out, Weimar radio was predominantly defined by an »event-related actuality, marked by an absence of politics«. <sup>58</sup> An illustration of this is the comment by a journalist in 1927 that radio's representation of actuality should comprise: »life, humour, unaffected naturalness«. <sup>59</sup> Such interpretations meant that programmes seeking out the sounds of actuality usually resulted in a visit to the zoo or circus (with the sounds of animals or exotic languages) or from public events, such as commemorations and the opening of museums and bridges.<sup>60</sup> One prominent feature of such actuality programming was reportage from strange locations, by taking the microphone to a mountain peak, the rooftop of a tall building or from inside an aeroplane.<sup>61</sup> In such cases, the microphone was usually held in a fixed position, from which the elevated reporter commented on what could be seen below from their privileged, aerial view.

The other major development – where we can observe the technique of the fixed microphone and bird's eye perspective – was in sport reporting, which became a fixture of all station programming in the 1920s. As Renate Schumacher points out, sport emerged as a major radio genre from 1925, although largely a result of its popularity with the German public, rather than its appropriateness for radio transmission. Station reporters covered rowing, and later, football, car racing, horse racing, swimming and boxing.<sup>62</sup> Given the difficulties in covering large outdoor events with live transmission, sport broadcasting emerged as a field of experimentation in presentation styles and technical set ups. Germany's *star announcers* such as Bernhard Ernst (Cologne), Fritz Wenzel (Breslau) and Alfred Braun (Berlin) variously placed emphasis on the sporting event, its sounds and description, and developed generic features such as unscripted commentary, interviews with athletes and multiple microphones.<sup>63</sup>

57 For the various withdrawal celebrations broadcast on radio, see Mohl 2009.

58 »Außerhalb der Nachrichtengebung dominierte eine ereignis-bezogene, politikfreie Aktualität«. See Heitger 2003, 399.

59 »Leben, Humor, ungeschminkte Natürlichkeit«. See Schumacher 1997, 451.

60 *Ibid.*, 452-53.

61 Aviation, in particular, featured very prominently in outdoor reporting, particularly around 1927-1928, a period in which the Zeppelin airship developed into a national symbol. This obsession with flying is evident in radio yearbooks from the 1920s onwards. On the prominence of *airmindedness* in interwar Germany, see Fritzsche (1992).

62 Schumacher 1997, 454-59.

63 See, for instance, the editorial »In zwölfter Stunde« (1929).

It is thus in sport reporting that we can detect both the development of the wandering microphone – bringing sports listeners closer to the action – and the fixed aerial perspective from towers, providing an overview or bird's eye perspective. Of the few available recordings from outdoor sporting events, there are two instructive examples by Frankfurt reporter Paul Laven from March and May 1930. In the case of Laven's broadcast from May 1930, a national football match between Germany and England, an eight-minute archival recording gives an indication of how the specific soundscape of the Berlin stadium was presented to listeners at home. We hear cheers, applause and distant voices surrounding the reporter's microphone, which seems to be positioned above and behind the crowd. Laven's voice heightens the sense of anticipation in the match, describing what is happening prior to the game, with the arrival of players, their rendition of the national anthem and posing for photographers. On 2 March 1930, Laven's commentary for a national football match similarly provided an overall perspective for listeners at home. An archival photograph revealed his position from a tower above the crowd, from which he observed the game and crowd responses from a fixed, bird's eye position.<sup>64</sup> In addition to his factual stance as a reporter, Laven's football commentary often partially adopted the stance of spectators – as the private realm – with his admissions of limited visibility, uncertainty about player names and emotive outburst following a goal:

11 meter line, takes a shot [...] Goal! [sound of cheers] Goal! [sound of muffled clapping][...] Attention! This is the international match between Germany and England in the Berlin stadium! All German radio stations are present. The match is in the second half. Five minutes after the start of the second half, it became 2:2 [...] Bergmeier! Shoots! Misses!<sup>65</sup>

While Laven reported from above, looking down at both the game action and crowd

64 See archival photograph, *Paul Laven kommentiert 1930 das Fußball-Länderspiel Deutschland - Italien in Frankfurt*, 2 March 1930. Photo Archive, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt). See also archival recording, *Reportage vom Fussball-Länderspiel in Frankfurt am Main zwischen Deutschland und Italien*, 2 March 1930. Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

65 »11 Meter Punkt, volle Schoss [...] Tor! Tor! [...] Achtung! Hier ist der Länderkampf Deutschland – England im deutschen Stadium zu Berlin! Hier sind alle deutsche Sender. Der Kampf ist in der zweiten Halbzeit. Fünf Minuten nach Beginn der zweiten Hälfte, 2:2 [...] Bergmeier! Schoss! Aus!« See archival recording *Reportage vom Fussball-Länderkampf Deutschland gegen England im Berliner Stadion (3:3)*, 16 May 1930. Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

below, it is clear that the commentary and atmospheric sounds heightened the immersive qualities of the game. Sports reporting, more generally, was crucial to early radio, since it

set the precedent for a more relaxed, colloquial, and emotionally inflected form of announcing that influenced radio advertising, announcing for entertainment shows, and radio news in the 1930s and beyond.<sup>66</sup>

Sport reportage like this increasingly developed new strategies to heighten the representation of outdoor events, often employing sensational commentary, wandering microphones and, later, gramophone recordings and sound mixes with musical sound.<sup>67</sup> Such reportage gains an additional significance since its pioneers – Ernst, Wenzel, Braun, Laven – were also involved in the development of news programmes and other outdoor event reportage. Laven, for instance, began the programme *Wo uns der Schuh drückt* in 1929, which was promoted as a microphone vox pop for people from different occupations and class backgrounds, although discontinued within one year. In Breslau, for instance, current affairs and opinion were pursued with their programme *Blick in die Zeit*, which was also discontinued by 1932 following heavy criticism from conservative circles.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, these programmes had been initiated during the liberalization within national politics in 1928 and 1929, there was new license for politicians (particularly for social democrats) to speak on radio, along with the live broadcast of Republican commemorative events.<sup>69</sup> In the case of the Werag station, a new series began in 1928 that eventually appeared on weekdays under the title *Vom Tage*. This was a short and accessible presentation of current political affairs, yet it had all but disappeared in 1931 and was finally discontinued in autumn 1932. That the programme, presented by Hermann Tolle, lasted as long as it did has been since attributed to its avoidance of domestic politics and a favourable reading of economic forecasts.<sup>70</sup> The use of gramophone and wax disc recording for news gathering began in mid-1929. Nonetheless, this development was accompanied by concerns that recording reportage for later transmission would detach reports from the *real* and

66 Douglas 1999/2004, 202-03.

67 Schumacher, 462-66; Douglas 1999/2004, 199-218.

68 See, for instance, Heitger 2003, 400-05.

69 MarBolek 2001, 213.

70 See Heitger 2003, 401.

that [reporters] would be released from their responsibility to present a real actuality. They would also know that they could improve their announcements at a later time.<sup>71</sup>

In other words, if reporters would be aware of the possibility of later re-recording, it might lead to complacency and detract from radio's purchase on liveness and eventness. Nonetheless, such programmes are consistent with those discussed in the previous section, many of which sought to unify diverse sounds of public, urban life, whether deploying a wandering microphone or notions of montage.

The gramophone news compilation appeared in earnest with Hans Flesch's end of year *Rückblick im Schallplatte* presented on 31 December 1929, a development not long after innovations in film compilations like Esfir Schub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927). Flesch's radio compilation includes short clips from earlier events like Alfred Braun's forty-minute commentary from the outdoor procession and commemorative events for German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann in October 1929, along with clips from a car race and a ceremony laying a foundation stone in Cologne.<sup>72</sup> These same clips featured in several eight-minute versions of the programme presented for their novelty value to visitors at the German radio exhibition in August 1930.<sup>73</sup> In the year that followed, the series was aired once per month, and managed to receive permission to include short clips from Reichstag speeches.<sup>74</sup> What we can discern as a general trend is that most programme stations were using gramophone as part of their broader attempt to transmit from public, urban sites (*Vor-Ort-Reportage*) and thereby provide location recording of original sound sources (*Originalton*). The replaying of gramophone record mixes still proved difficult with stylus needles sometimes getting stuck during live transmission and a somewhat lengthy production process, which led to complaints about newspapers being far more up to date (*aktuell*) than such radio programming.<sup>75</sup>

71 »dass sie losgelöst von der Verantwortung einer wirklichen Aktualität [sprechen]. Sie [wissen], dass ihre Ansagen späterhin immer noch zu verbessern [sind]«. See *Sport auf Schallplatten. Der Deutsche Rundfunk 1932*, 9, qtd. in Favre 2007, 92.

72 See archival recording, Alfred Braun (Breslau), *Reportage von der Trauerfeier in Berlin für Reichsaussenminister Gustav Stresemann*, 6 Oktober 1929, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

73 See archival recording, *Rückblick auf Schallplatte* 14 August 1930, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

74 Schumacher 1997, 568.

75 For the various complaints on this issue during 1932, see Heitger 2003, 404.

In the context of these experiments in radio genre and style, Werag began a series in October 1929 titled *Irgendwo in Westdeutschland* (Somewhere in West Germany). The inspiration provided by montage techniques is suggested by the programme's organizing principle of the *symphony*, which should unify the multiple rhythms of industry, urban and economic life. The programme is distinctive in its attempt to foreground the sounds of work (alongside spoken interviews) as well as compositions inspired by these industrial noises. According to the script, an announcer in Cologne facilitated the switches between eleven different locations and performances in the studio, with short interludes: »That was a hammer mill, just as it revealed in reality! To artistic ears it sounds like this...«. <sup>76</sup> This sound bridge by the announcer introduced a large studio orchestra playing the *Hammerwerk Symphonie* (hammer mill symphony). The formal structure of the programme provides a cultural space for exchange between reportage and musical experimentation, and between the sounds of the real and their inspiration for modernist composition.

Commenting on the programme, Bernhardt Ernst noted that the introduction of amplifier vans and portable microphones allowed for more mobility during such broadcasts, and praised the decision to include five minutes from each location as heightening the enjoyment for the listener. Even though industrial recordings remain difficult, as Ernst observed, the extensive planning of the programme facilitated the idea of travel, with a wandering microphone that could transport listeners from one location to another. The notion of imaginatively taking a tour through Werag's broadcast region is reinforced by the lines marking the itinerary, with each city given a number. At the same time, however, the programme could be said to inhabit a »bird's eye« perspective, as implied by the aerial view provided by the map of the Rhineland. <sup>77</sup> Indeed the map depicts each city name, their geographical location and an image related to the characteristic sounds of that place. <sup>78</sup>

The appeal to the symphony (as a means of narrative structure) and rhythm (as a metaphor for the social) shares similarities with the city film of the same period. Instead of gesturing to industrial disputes or social-political tensions (like the city films), *Irgendwo in Westdeutschland* affirms the integrity of physical labour and regional

<sup>76</sup> »Hammerwerk, wie die Wirklichkeit es uns zeigt! Künstlerohren hörten es so...« Ibid., 210.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>78</sup> The sound sources imagined in this depiction included: cathedral clock (Münster), cattle (Westphalian farm estate), mine shaft and coke oven (Gelsenkirchen), blast furnace (Dortmund), steel pipe factory (Dortmund), forge (Essen), roller plant (Oberhausen), docklands and harbour (Duisburg), spinning and weaving mill (Viersen), main train station (Cologne) and a winery (Rhine area). See Ernst (1930).

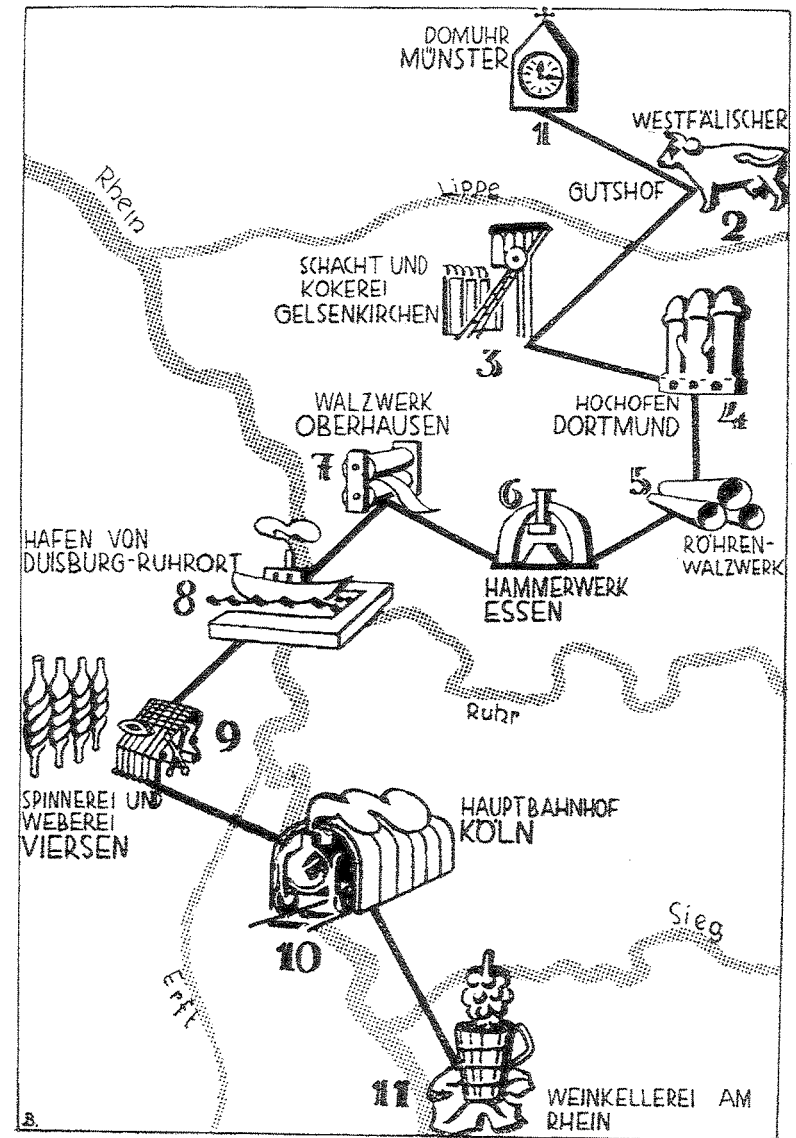


Figure 8: Image accompanying the publication Ernst, Bernhard: *Überall in Westdeutschland: Aus den aktuellen Arbeitsversuchen des Westdeutschen Rundfunks* (1930).

identity.<sup>79</sup> This non-confrontational position of the programme-makers was confirmed in an article by Werag reporter Bernhard Ernst, who quotes a listener letter praising the experience of listening to their region (*Heimat*) and thus being allowed to forget about political and economic crisis.<sup>80</sup> In this case, then, the regional appears to offer refuge from both political crisis (at a national level) and depressed urban realities (at a local level).

In sum, there were numerous experiments in event and news-related genres to heighten authenticity, eventness and »mediated liveness« in the documentary representation of urban contexts.<sup>81</sup> In part due to ongoing institutional and technological restrictions, the concept of actuality within radio often was quite limited in scope. With the onset of the Depression in Germany, programmes devoted to economic questions, world politics and news were under pressure from the right (particularly the National Socialist radio lobby group). Due to political fragility in 1931, state intervention became more prevalent, and state monitoring boards (*Überwachungsschüsse*) were more prone to censoring or refusing station programmes in advance.<sup>82</sup> In July 1932, Chancellor Franz von Papen approved extensive radio reforms that resulted in increased state ownership and unprecedented control over regional stations. These reforms meant that only government-issued reports were aired, more policing of the ban on political discussion and a clear caution on the part of station directors, who discontinued almost all innovative news and current affairs programmes during the course of 1932. While programmes like *Irgendwo in Westdeutschland* had a strong purchase on liveness and formal experimentation, such programmes increasingly focused on local sonic identities, particularly in relation to their surrounding regional areas. It is this transposition from specific urban contexts to the regional and national that I will now investigate in more detail.

79 The general address of a middle class listener is revealed by Ernst's observation that the radio inter-viewer had to find workers in these locations that were familiar with radio and knew what it was. This comment signals an assumption that the working classes were not necessarily considered a usual part of their imagined listening audience. *Ibid.*, 205.

80 *Ibid.*, 212.

81 See Auslander 1999.

82 MarBolek 2001, 213.

## 5. Authenticity

Representations of the city and urban life in early German radio have been framed in the previous sections with the notions of documentary and actuality. For the former, I focused primarily on city portraits, montage experiments and urban reportage techniques, and in the latter, on live event, outdoor and news reporting. This section will instead consider the significant investments in *authenticity* on the basis of voice (regional dialect) and location sounds. The Werag (Cologne) and Norag (Hamburg) stations are useful for this purpose due to their prominent but different articulations of regional identity and uses of *Heimat* and *Volk* programming. I will focus in particular on how techniques of documenting the city, with both mobile and fixed microphones, were increasingly transported to regional and national frameworks.

The establishment of the various German radio stations, from late 1923 onwards, was bound up with the idea of each station catering to a regional cultural area (*Kulturräum*). Radio, as a medium of spoken language, lent itself to programming based on local dialect (*Mundart*) and musical traditions. The West-German station was initially based in the Westphalia region, and a large portion of the station's staff and management had strong ties to local *Heimat* and *Mundart* associations. Dialect mainly featured in programmes like *Westphalian Language and Sounds (Westfälisch in Wort und Klang, 1925)*, which were frequent but not established within a specific programme department. By contrast, the Norag station's commitment to the *Plattdeutsch* dialect was established early on, and institutionalized within a regular programme series *Heimat and Volkstum*.<sup>83</sup>

One major problem for the West-German station's purchase on authenticity was that it catered to two linguistic regions: Rhineland and Westphalia. Following the establishment of Cologne as the main station location in 1927, there were disagreements over the *voice of the Heimat*. The new Werag station director Ernst Hardt was half-hearted at best about regional content, and instead sought to establish station programming that was drama- and literary-oriented. Hardt, himself a member of the Social Democrat Party, subscribed to their pluralistic concept of radio, and argued that the station »would not transmit to the city or country, but would rather to the entire world«. <sup>84</sup> Hardt was committed to exposing listeners to art and literature, and only a fraction of the radio plays (*Sendespielen*) in 1927 were in Rhenish or Westphalian dialect.<sup>85</sup>

83 Karst 1984, 252-54.

84 »nicht in die Stadt oder in das Land, sondern er geht in die Welt hinaus«. Bierbach 1986, 208.

85 Karst 1984, 258.

Due to Hardt's reluctance about regional content, between 1927 and 1933, the Werag only broadcast as many dialect programmes as Norag broadcast during the course of 1927.<sup>86</sup> However, while dialect was perceived as too provincial, *Volk* and *Heimat* culture still formed an intrinsic part of station programming. From its inception, radio broadcasting was associated with internationalism, due to the ability to tune in to sounds from faraway places. Internationalization was experienced by many as threatening, and resulted in a renewed emphasis on German cultural forms, particularly in relation to American cultural modernity. As Adelheid von Saldern points out,

Appeals to *Volk* and *Heimat* were seen as the only adequate response to the challenges of modernity and the so-called mass society. *Volk* and *Heimat* culture was conceived of as 'good entertainment'.<sup>87</sup>

More generally, von Saldern has identified a number of similar motivations between radio station management and the promoters of *Volk* and *Heimat* culture during the Weimar era. Above all, these figures were all cultural reformers, seeking to find common ground above party politics. Many were wary of socialist-leaning worker culture, and saw *Volk* culture as a good alternative, one that was acceptable according to the dictates of state censorship. Moreover, *Volk* and *Heimat* culture appealed to bourgeois aspirations for *Bildung*, as a way of uplifting listeners' tastes.<sup>88</sup> In terms of programming, the authentic sound of the *Heimat* was initially asserted in the Rhineland region with the celebratory events that surrounded the withdrawal of foreign troops from Cologne, culminating in the *Befreiungsfeier* (liberation celebration) held on 31 January 1926. It has been suggested that the gathering of large crowds outside the cathedral, the resounding church bells and presence of political leaders was given undue national significance as a syndicated mediated event and ritual performance of reoccupying the *Heimat*.<sup>89</sup> Prior to this high-profile event, German politicians had made efforts to preserve the *Heimat* through asserting the voice and sounds of Germans against those of French. For instance, in late 1925, Aachen politician Wilhelm Rombach (Centre Party) expressed concerns that French and Belgian stations could be heard too easily in his city. Even though Aachen was still in the occupied region, the Prussian government decided to establish a small transmission station there in April

86 Ibid., 263.

87 Saldern von 2004, 318.

88 Ibid., 319.

89 See, for instance, Eckert 1941, 23-24, 233, Göttert 1998, 426-29, Mohl 2009.

1927.<sup>90</sup> Despite limitations on the types of announcements made, this station provided a symbol for the presence of Germany on the local airwaves. Dialect programming in the 1920s was varied and could take the form of radio plays, dialogues, or *potpourri* programmes. The radio play genre, although by no means standardized in its first years, was a key part of the exchange between Weimar-era broadcasting and *Heimat* culture. Radio historian Karl Karst suggests that dialect needed the radio play as a

vehicle for *Heimat* and language preservation while for radio, dialect was the vehicle for demonstrating rootedness, folksiness and a regional connection.<sup>91</sup>

Potpourri broadcasts (*Mischsendungen*) often contained a mix of entertainment, fiction and factual inquiry, with segments about the local region as well as presentations, music performance and short skits. Commenting on these programmes, Adelheid von Saldern points out that variety programmes

resulted from an attempt to satisfy disparate tastes by presenting a wide variety of material within the same program. Musical medleys containing *Volk* music and sketches relating to particular regional cultures were integral parts of these programs. They were a means of catering to the audience's diverse interests and tastes so as to bind listeners together virtually.<sup>92</sup>

The rise of *potpourri* and musical medley programs was less in line with broadcasters' central focus on *Bildung* than a decision to concede to popular demand for light programming and music hits.

In this period, the articulation of a social-democratic and communist idea of *Heimat*, primarily through the lens of labour, can be also discerned.<sup>93</sup> At Werag, for instance, social histories of the Rhenish and Westphalian region were produced, as well as worker plays, which provided fictionalized accounts about unemployment and social hardship, often with montage sequences of street and factory sounds.<sup>94</sup> Ernst Hardt's production

90 Bierbach 1986, 20-21, 58.

91 Karst 1984, 255, 266.

92 von Saldern 2004, 328.

93 Cebulla 2004, 169, Schumacher 1997, 221-25.

94 Examples of this genre included *Strassenmann* (Kesser, 1930) and *Der Ruf* (Kasack, 1932). See, for instance, Kreuzer 2003, 77-86.

of *Toter Mann* (1931) in particular was praised for narration of a young man who becomes unemployed, with its authenticity based on author Karl A. Düppengiesser's own experiences as a worker:

[Düppengiesser] restricts himself to a sequence of factual events and avoids unnecessary exaggeration. The plot delivers more than just the fate of a worker, it confirms the spiritual and material need of all those whose employment is taken away from them, and who feel like a 'dead man' when their life's purpose is taken away. [...] All linguistic and acoustic possibilities are deployed in the creation of an exemplary radio play production, one that has an impressive effect. Hans Ebert has composed effective music that is based on the rhythm of work.<sup>95</sup>

This review suggests that the work achieves a sense of urgency, dramatizing the present-day situation of workers, by experimenting with sonic effects to, such as a symphony of factory sounds similar to the example of *Irgendwo in Westdeutschland*.<sup>96</sup> While we can identify such examples of programming for and about the unemployed, and interviews with workers about their situation, these programmes were produced in a time when station members like Ernst Hardt were under significant pressure. From 1930, the Nazi *Rundfunkteilnehmer* lobby group began serious agitation, as evidenced by a smear campaign in the party's *Westdeutscher Beobachter* newspaper, which attacked Hardt and several Jewish Werag employees.<sup>97</sup> One of the reasons Hardt was targeted was due to his efforts to commission works by modern writers such as Bertolt Brecht, and provide a platform for experimentations with radio form. Subsequently, the sounds on Werag were marked by a more cautious tone, and with the increase in censorship with new radio laws in June 1932, left-wing staff like the Marxist historian Hans Stein were rarely on air anymore. One of the other distinct changes in radio sounds in

95 »Er stellt sich ganz auf den Boden der Tatsachen und vermeidet nachteilige Übertreibungen. Die Handlung bringt mehr als das Schicksal eines Arbeitslosen, sie bringt die seelischen und materiellen Nöte aller derer, denen die Arbeit genommen wurde und die sich als 'Toter Mann' fühlen, da ihnen der Lebensinhalt genommen ist. ... Alle sprachlichen und akustischen Möglichkeiten einer vorbildlichen Hörspielaufführung wurden erschöpft, so dass eine eindrucksvolle Wirkung zustande kam. Hans Ebert schrieb eine vom Rhythmus der Arbeit bestimmte, effektvolle Musik«. See *Sendung* 1931.

96 Bräutigam 2005, 381, Krug 1992, 159-90. See archival recording *Toter Mann*. Script by Karl August Düppengiesser. Produced by Ernst Hardt, Werag. 23 January 1931, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

97 Bernard 1997, 304.

this period is that new music and jazz featured less in programming, unless it could be disguised with the pretext of, for instance, an historical overview of popular music. The main sounds from public life remaining on radio comprised sport and *Heimat* programming like the series *Unsere Städte in Rheinland und Westfalen* and *Der westfälische Lebensraum*, both of which were launched in 1931.

To give a sense of the increased caution in programming, and renewed appeals to *Heimat*, it is instructive to revisit the programme *Welt auf der Schallplatte*, which I discussed above in relationship to urban reportage. In early 1933, an article in the *Rufer und Hörer* magazine reflected on the past 150 episodes of the programme. Even though the programme was famous for reporting the sounds of large metropolises like New York, the author emphasized that it was increasingly authentic *Heimat* sounds that the programme presented, whether in German cities or regional areas.<sup>98</sup> The use of the gramophone in programme production not only allowed the preservation of sonic heritage, but it heightened the ability to accrue a library of real sound effects to use later for radio plays and first-person reports, including:

The marching of soldiers, the clapping of horses, the hissing and heaving of a railway train, the tooting of cars, the buzzing of crowds and fairground attractions, church bell tones of all kinds, waves crashing and storms.<sup>99</sup>

The author affirms the possibilities for recording authentic location recordings, and thus dispensing with theatre-style sound effects. However the emphasis of the article is on the ability for this radio programme to record dialect, folk song and dances, and besides German examples, the author cites recordings of regional music from Italy, France and Spain, as well as that of American Indians.

Another illustrative example of the renewed appeals to *Heimat* amongst station staff is evidence by several articles published by Fritz Worm in *Rufer und Hörer* in 1931-32. Prior to becoming the head of literature and visual art at Werag in 1931, Worm had made the series *Wert und Ehre deutscher Sprache* (1928-29) and also took part in the roundtable discussions for *Gespräche über Menschentum*. In his article on the task of *Heimat* representation, Worm takes up an idealist position, affirming the potential of radio for uniting listeners during a time of »societal, economic and worldview divi-

98 Bombe 1933, 523.

99 »das Aufmarschieren von Soldaten, das Getrappel von Pferden, das Fauchen und Stampfen einer Lokomotive, das Hupen der Kraftwagen, Volksgemurmel und Kirmesbetrieb, Glockenklänge aller Art, Meeresbrandung und Sturm« Ibid.



siveness». <sup>100</sup> In this piece, Worm reframes earlier actuality experiments as being *Heimat* programming. Worm cites the example of a night-time visit to the Cologne cathedral in April 1930, in which a mobile microphone took the listener from the underground level up to the top of the bell tower. Although this programme was an experiment in reportage, Worm asserts this programme as demonstrating the intrinsic value of the *Heimat* for listeners. <sup>101</sup> Worm goes so far as to downplay the role of the announcer, as not required to add much extra to broadcasts of

a celebration with dance, singing, music, the sounds of gathered audience, a funeral procession, a sport competition, a trip through a factory with the sounds of machines. <sup>102</sup>

More typical sounds of the Rhenish and Westphalian *Heimat* are described as including a steamship on the Rhine, songs and brass music, the pounding of machines or the goings-on of a festive crowd. While Worm vouches for a variety of sounds from the natural environment and culture (in the widest sense), his call to foreground work, the everyday, local celebrations, the voices of farmers, miners and winegrowers signals a retreat from the programmes I discussed earlier, which sought to challenge or circumvent restrictions on reporting topical news and political affairs. Radio is affirmed here as a medium that can foreground oral culture, whereby local dialect would provide comfort to listeners, if not a means for positive articulation of German cultural identity.

In the case of Norag, we can observe a similar trend with programmes like the *Das Hamburger Hafenkonzert* (Hamburg harbour concert), hosted by Karl Esmarch on Sunday mornings from 1929 onwards. This programme was remarkable given the longevity of its format over several decades, and which was based on a potpourri of concert performance, interludes, on-board reportage and interviews with seamen. At least in its first years, the programme began at seven am with the church bells of the Michaelis church, heard against music performance, usually a brass band and a festive choral, and

100 »Wie kann in einer Zeit der gesellschaftlichen, wirtschaftlichen und weltanschaulichen Zerrissenheit eine Darbietung an alle herangebracht werden?« Worm 1931, 78. Cf. Worm 1932.

101 Other examples of content described as *Heimat* programming are that of liberation celebrations in Koblenz, a Gregorian choral from Priestermund, the choir of the Cologne cathedral, a Westphalian farmers' wedding, the sounds of carnival and a procession in Paderborn.

102 »Ein Fest mit Tanz, Gesang, Musik, der Anteilnahme der versammelten Zuschauer, ein Trauerzug, ein Sportwettkampf, der Gang durch ein Fabrik mit dem Geräusch der Maschinen...« Worm 1931, 78.

harbour sounds such as a ship's whistle or horn. <sup>103</sup> The sonic appeal of the Hamburg harbour, as Germany's *gateway* to the world, as Esmarch suggested in 1934 was in part due to its permanent activity and romantic associations. While Esmarch emphasizes the non-political status of the programme here, it should be pointed out that the celebration of German maritime culture coincided with the expansion of Hamburg harbour activity by 1929, when it outstripped its competitors of Rotterdam and Antwerp for the first time since before 1914. <sup>104</sup> The radio presentation of the Hamburg harbour sounds, in this context, should be seen not only in terms of regional *Heimat* programming, but as national symbols marking the resurgence of German industry after World War I.

In this same period, the *Böttcherstrasse in Bremen* programme provides an interesting case study of an urban portrait that was permissible in this tense period of increased state intervention in radio. <sup>105</sup> This programme, aired by Norag on 16 June 1932, is reminiscent of some earlier *city portraits* in its premise of taking a tour through a small Bremen street. The Böttcherstrasse was a historic street, situated between the main square and the embarkment area for transatlantic ocean liners (on the New York-Berlin route). All the property had been bought and redeveloped by coffee trader Ludwig Roselius, who conceived of the street as a social-architectural blueprint for a corporatist »third way«, an alternative to the radicalized politics of the 1920s and early 1930s. <sup>106</sup> The radio programme in 1932 was premiered in the nine pm primetime slot, and syndicated to all German stations. This *Hörbild* was around 100 minutes in length and constructed from separate recordings on wax disc. There is a clear sense of a strict order of events, although the desired sense of liveness was disrupted by a technical default with the wax discs, which caused a sentence to be repeated during the broadcast. The use of both dramatized dialogues and limited location sounds provides a counterexample to the programmes discussed earlier, not least due to the programme's more blatant appeal to tourism, promotional culture and international trade. Despite the ban on advertising in radio, it allows for the promotion of Roselius' coffee business, as well as a projection of what the interviewer dubs a »fairytale street«. In response, Roselius

103 See archival recording *Das Hamburger Hafenkonzert*. Date unknown (circa 1929-1932), Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

104 Kurt Esmarch, »Alle deutschen Sender übertragen Sonntags morgens das Hafenkonzert aus Hamburg«. *Funkstunde* 1934, 552, qtd. in Kiekel 2011, 14.

105 See archival recording *Die Böttcherstrasse in Bremen: Eine Strasse der Wandlungen im Mikrophon*, 16 June 1932, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

106 See, for instance, Henderson 1994 on the architectural reconstruction of the street and Roselius' utopian ideal, which fused the reactionary and modern.

argues that the street provides »fantasy, modernity and the homely«. <sup>107</sup> The broadcast's portrayal of this utopian project conveys very clearly a concept of the urban that retreats from late Weimar reality, and a reinvestment in spoken voice and dialect in terms of *authentic* German culture.

The above examples illustrate a broader trend during the last years of the Weimar era, in which political figures and the elite resorted to *Heimat* and *Volk* culture amidst cultural anxieties about national and cultural identity. The specific case of radio affirms the characterization of 1930-1932 as a transition period marked by a

backlash against the avant-garde of Weimar and a growing role for conservative and reactionary elements in politics and culture. <sup>108</sup>

Journalist and satirist Kurt Tucholsky, for instance, complained that military marches and national anthems were heard more frequently on radio in this last period. On 30 January 1933, the National Socialist takeover was broadcast as a live event reportage as thousands of party supporters took to the streets of night-time Berlin. <sup>109</sup> The reportage commented on this procession with torchlights, which proceeded past the German Chancellery and through the triumphal archway of the Brandenburg Gate. This supposedly spontaneous performance by uniformed party members provided an important sonic assertion of the new status quo and encapsulated the contemporary slogan »Germany awakes!« (*Deutschland erwacht!*).

The subsuming of the local and regional within the national is evident in the first months of the Nazi takeover, during which the Ministry of Propaganda was established under Joseph Goebbels, followed by a National Socialist Chamber of Radio under Eugen Hadamovsky. <sup>110</sup> In Cologne, Werag station employees like Ernst Hardt, Fritz Worm and Hans Stein were forced out of their positions, with party member, *Heimat* culture enthusiast and archivist Dr. Heinrich Glasmeier appointed as station director. <sup>111</sup> On first

107 »Fantastik, Modernität und Heimlich«. The reporter visits various sites of the complex, which comprised cafes, a coffee showroom, museums, arts and crafts workshops, as well as a business club and the Institute of Physical Culture.

108 Saldern von 2004, 312.

109 See archival recording, *Reportage vom Fackelzug der SA- und der Stahlhelmsformationen vor der Berliner Reichskanzlei*, 30 January 1933, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, Frankfurt.

110 For an elaboration on the tension between these two figures, and the eventual disbanding of Hadamovsky's organization due to Goebbels' power machinations, see Diller (1980).

111 Bernhard 1997, 305.

glance, it would appear that *Heimat* was reaffirmed, with a new station tune based on a Rhenish-Westphalian folk song, and renewed lip service played to the importance of dialect as an expression of *Blut und Boden* sentiments. However, the station came under further centralized control, and the smaller regional stations were shut down, partly because the Cologne station had more mobility with improved outdoor broadcast technology. Regional identity, according to the new political system, should not be affirmed in terms of uniqueness, but rather absorbed within the larger concept of national community. <sup>112</sup> A programme from 1934 titled *Stimme der Heimat* was one of the few expressions of regional identity, as rendered through an ideological lens. Taking party slogans like *Der Rundfunk geht ins Volk* as programme themes, it produced »portraits« of towns and villages that focused on artisans and local production. Dialect was sidelined in most locally-oriented programming, only featuring in songs or in catchy phrases that heightened authenticity for programmes in high German, like *Der Frohe Samstagabend*. <sup>113</sup>

In the case of Hamburg's Norag station, we can identify two illustrative cases for how portraits of a local region were reframed within the *Stunde der Nation* (National Hour) series during 1933. This nationally-syndicated series was usually associated with simultaneity and liveness, since it was also used as a forum for broadcasting Adolf Hitler's speeches to live audiences. <sup>114</sup> The first programme, produced by Hans Bodenstedt, was titled *Der Harz* and involved a three-part broadcast of sounds from the Harz, Rübeland and Wendefurth areas in Lower Saxony. <sup>115</sup> The programme, from 4 May 1933, presents events held to commemorate international workers' day or May Day, which under the new regime was appropriated and transformed into *Der Tag der Arbeit* (National Day of Labour). Not unlike the city portrait of Copenhagen from 1931, Bodenstedt describes the natural and built environment, the towns and historical sites in this region. However, Bodenstedt's introduction also describes the actions of a *Hitler Jugend* youth group, whose spoken chorus (*Sprechchor*) and political slogans are faded in. The remaining segments alternate between commentary on National Socialism and

112 Karst 1984, 268-71.

113 See Karst 1984, 272. Karst also notes that around one-quarter of the eighty regional programmes made between 1933 and 1939 were concerned with carnival and fairs. For further discussion of carnival programming in interwar German radio, see Birdsall 2012.

114 After an unsuccessful radio recording in a studio around 1932, Hitler gave all subsequent speeches from outdoor public events (rather than enclosed studios). Cf. Hagen 2005.

115 See archival recording *Der Harz (Stunde der Nation)*, 4 May 1933, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

location sound recordings of folksongs and marching music, short interviews with mine-workers, foresters and railworkers, and authentic sound effects, such as woodchopping and gunshots. Bodenstedt's commentary frames the May Day events in terms of hope for Germany's future, as symbolized by the participation of the youth group in party-organized events.

Bodenstedt himself was forced to leave the Norag station in late June 1933, shortly after acting station director Karl Stapelfeldt. Shortly before his forced release, Bodenstedt participated in another *Stunde der Nation* about the island Helgoland, off the North German coastline.<sup>116</sup> This programme was framed more insistently in terms of the nation, opening with the *Horst-Wessel-Lied* and closing with the *Deutschlandlied* anthem, both performed live.<sup>117</sup> Here too, the broadcast begins with a mix of environmental sounds (birds, the wind whistling and a ship horn) and fades in a choral song about the sea. The announcer's commentary provides information about the island, interspersed with location sounds, and emphasizes the importance of this radio programme for drawing attention to the island, which had been fought over in British-German naval wars. The context of the nation is highlighted, since the German national anthem was written there in 1841, and the submarine station is a pretext for marine music performances and a speech decrying the left-wing November 1918 revolution. The local environment, in other words, is framed in terms of national commemoration of World War I losses and an *honouring of the dead (Totenehrung)* for SA deaths in 1923. This broadcast, too, indicates how the authentic voices and sounds of locality in event-based broadcasts were given national significance already within the first months following the Nazi takeover.

116 See archival recording *Helgoland, das Bild einer Insel im deutschen Meer*, 14 June 1933, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

117 On the additional of the *Horst-Wessel-Lied* to the national anthem during National Socialism, see Hermand 2002.

## 6. Conclusion

The above examples from the period 1923-1933 show us how *Heimat* discourse and cultural forms in radio were formulated in response to contemporary crises, and with modern techniques of reportage and gramophone prerecording. As Adelheid von Saldern points out,

No analysis of *Volk and Heimat* culture that focuses only on dichotomies, such as modern vs. antimodern, can do justice to its multiple functions. What seemed to be symbols of durability were in fact characterized by continuing alteration.<sup>118</sup>

The radio programmes I have examined indicate how *Volk and Heimat* culture were resorted to by station managers as a safe option in a period of social tension and attacks on modern(ist) culture. As discussed here, regional identity in particular was approached differently by the Werag and Norag stations, and yet their uses of dialect and traditional culture in station programming provide insights how combinations of old and new were involved when it came to representing local environments and their inhabitants.

In sum, then, the examples discussed here illustrate the media techniques that were developed for documenting and imagining the urban during the first decade of German radio broadcasting. In particular, I have contrasted experimentation with an explorative mode of recording (with the wandering microphone) with that of an aerial perspective (or bird's eye view). Whether the microphone was presenting as wandering, reporting from overseas or venturing above and below ground, these techniques involved an appeal to listeners, sometimes venturing beyond the scope of their everyday experiences. The notions of documentary, actuality and authenticity have provided an instructive framework for examining urban representations and the frequent crossovers between outdoor sounds and studio recordings, between the visual and listening imagination. Urban sounds were foregrounded in programmes that ranged from early city portraits and dramatizations to more elaborate live transmissions from multiple sites in large metropolises like Berlin and Hamburg. The networking of the broadcast region, too, was evident in programmes like *Irgendwo in Westdeutschland* that blended industrial location sounds with musical performance in a manner similar to the *noisification* of music described in earlier chapters. The documentation and presentation of urban soundscapes, moreover, is revealed as increasingly situated within regional, national or even global frameworks. While the 1931 portrait of Copenhagen's urban sounds

118 Saldern von 2004, 319.

referred briefly to its regional context and syndication, subsequent programming – like *Die Böttcherstrasse* and *Stunde der Nation* – insistently reframed urban documentary techniques within the national. By tracing the particular investments in *Volk* and *Heimat* culture, I have demonstrated how, by 1932-1933, radiophonic depictions of the local increasingly provided a model for imagining nation through sound.

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- Berlin: Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927), dir.: Walther Ruttmann
- Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Don Basin* (1931), dir.: Dziga Vertov
- The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), dir.: Esfir Schub.
- Housing Problems* (1935), prod.: British Commercial Gas Association
- Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), dir.: Dziga Vertov.
- Moana* (1926), dir.: Robert Flaherty
- Nanook of the North* (1922), dir.: Robert Flaherty
- Night Mail* (1936), dir.: Harry Watt, Basil Wright
- Pett and Pott* (1934), dir.: Alberto Cavalcanti
- Rien que les heures* (1926), dir.: Alberto Cavalcanti
- The River* (1937), dir.: Pare Lorentz
- Why We Fight* (1942-1945), dir.: Frank Capra.
- Die Kölner Befreiungsfeier*, 31 January 1926. Werag.
- Blick in die Zeit* [series], from 1927 to 1932. Schlesische Funkstunde AG.

*Böttcherstrasse in Bremen*, 16 June 1932. Norag. Recording held at Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

*Der Frohe Samstagnachmittag* [series], from November 1934 to March 1939. Werag.

*Gespräche über Menschentum* [series], from ca. August 1930 to 1932. Werag.

*Hallo! Hier Welle Erdball*, 4 February 1928. Schlesische Funkstunde AG.

*Im Hafen*«, 31 May 1924. Norag.

*Das Hamburger Hafenkonzert* [series], from 9 June 1929. Norag.

*Der Harz* [Stimme der Heimat series], 4 May 1933. Norag. Recording held at Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

*Helgoland, das Bild einer Insel im deutschen Meer* [Stimme der Heimat series], 14 June 1933. Norag. Recording held at Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

*Irgendwo in Westdeutschland* [series], from 4 October 1929. Werag.

*Mainacht auf der Alster*, 24 May 1925. Norag.

*Mit dem Mikro durch Berlin*, 27 October 1928. Funk-Stunde Berlin.

*Reportage vom Fussball-Länderspiel in Frankfurt am Main zwischen Deutschland und Italien*, 2 March 1930. Recording held at Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

*Rückblick im Schallplatte*, 31 December 1929. Recording held at Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

*Spielen aus der Zeit*, ca. 1929. Schlesische Funkstunde AG.

*Städtebild Kopenhagen*, 8 September 1931. Norag. Recording held at Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt).

*Unsere Städte in Rheinland und Westfalen* [series], from 25 January 1931. Werag.

*Verirrtes Mikrophon*, 3 September 1929. Süwrag.

*Vom Tage* [series], from February 1928 to 1932. Werag.

*Die Welt auf der Schallplatte* [series], from May 1931. Werag.

*Wert und Ehre deutscher Sprache* [series], from 1928 to 1929. Werag.

*Westfälisch in Wort und Klang* (Westphalian Language and Sounds), 18 September 1925. Wefag.

*Der westfälische Lebensraum* [series], ca. 1931 to 1933. Werag.

*Wo uns der Schuh drückt* [series], from 1929 to 1930. Süwrag.