

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

What's Local? Localism as a Discursive Boundary Object in Low-Power Radio Policymaking

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This article addresses the discourse of “localism” used in the formulation of low-power FM radio service in the United States. It builds on S. L. Star and J. Griesemer’s (1989) concept of “boundary object” to theorize localism as a “discursive boundary object.” Drawing on interviews with advocates and regulators, participant observation with low-power radio activists, and documentary research in relevant policy discussions, the article argues that “localism” moved across discourse communities and effaced differences for groups who otherwise might not have agreed. “Localism” was also polemically deployed at the level of national policy. Its unique potency may be seen in the seeming inability of even actors who opposed the introduction of low-power FM radio service to oppose localism outright.

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It is difficult to define “localism.” One reason for this is that the concept is recursive: to make sense of what is “local,” people often employ other related vocabulary that borders on being indexical,¹ such as “close to home,” or “oriented toward a local community.”² Indeed, even scholars and policymakers rarely bother to define what they mean when they invoke localism (see Hilliard & Keith 2005, p. 65). Another reason is simply that “localism” is a fluid, even protean concept.

This article addresses the discourse of “localism” as deployed by a range of groups in the recent policy discussion over the formulation of the low-power FM (LPFM) radio service in the United States in 1990–2000. Rather than attempting to define localism, the article instead empirically shows the range of uses to which actors put it. It demonstrates that varying interpretive communities, with differing political commitments, each mobilized localism in their advocacy for the creation and expansion of low-power radio. Differing notions for the importance of localism included a general public good arising from news coverage of local affairs, the promotion and sustainability of musical artists, public safety and disaster preparedness, and the value of community autonomy, as well as a “for-granted” notion of localism

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that was not otherwise specified; in all cases local programming was contrasted to syndicated programming carried by either commercial or noncommercial stations. The article thus conceives of localism as a “discursive boundary object” that was malleable enough to mean different things to different interpretive communities but robust enough to maintain an identity across these boundaries (Star & Griesemer, 1989; Star, 2010). In the conclusion, the article speculates on alternative discourses to that of localism, namely the discourse of “information,” as well as the implications of these discourses in media and cultural policy.

Broadcast localism in historical context

In the early days of broadcasting, partly due to the legacy of amateur operators' pre-broadcasting practices in the period 1900–1920, the urge for radio to span distance was strong. In fact, one prominent use of radio was to try to transmit and receive signals from as far away as possible, a practice called “DXing,” practiced by so-called “distance fiends.”³ According to cultural historian Susan Smulyan, “Listeners wanted radio technology, like earlier technologies, to conquer space, at least partially for the sheer pleasure of being able to do so. Once the technical feat was accomplished, many listeners found the programming from different places novel and sometimes even better than that broadcast closer to home” (1994, p. 20). Smulyan argues that this idea of listening across distance contributed to the formation of the conception of a national audience, and many types of musical and sports programming were popular across regions and audiences. Reformers and educators, including John Dewey and Robert Park, “construed modern communication essentially as an agent for restoring a broad moral and political consensus to America, a consensus they believed to have been threatened by the wrenching disruptions of the nineteenth century: industrialization, urbanization, and immigration” (p. 32). For Smulyan, with this conception of radio as having a national reach came the necessity to meet this ideal technologically.

Even if one considers the technological choice upon which the industry settled to be a “technological imperative,” many other factors influenced the shape of the national radio system (Smulyan, 1994, p. 57).⁴ For example, government approval sanctioned the wireless network system in the Radio Act of 1927, which gave the government a one-year mandate to allocate frequencies and established the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), while not calling into question the format, ownership, or arrangement of the wireless network system; the 1934 Communications Act further entrenched and normalized this arrangement by not distinguishing networks or advertising-funded stations from other types of stations, and not affording protection for religious, educational, farm, or labor stations (Smulyan, 1994, p. 126). Media historian Hugh Slotten argues that the Commission was “a weak agency, uncertain about its role,” which in part contributed to the Commission's readiness to reduce the complex and controversial regulatory issues it faced into “technical, instrumental problems” (2000, pp. 51, 57). According to Slotten, the FRC's readiness

to constrain the spectrum allocation process to largely technocratic decision making resulted in the favoring of high-power, national stations, and gave small stations secondary status, which further privileged the network system (2000, p. 59).⁵

Thus since the earliest era of broadcasting, radio was organized to favor nationally networked broadcasting and large-scale, powerful broadcasters. Attempted redefinitions of the meaning and use of broadcasting have recurred with notable regularity since then, with reform efforts circa 1928–1934, in the postwar 1940s, and in the civil-rights-era 1960s (see McChesney, 1999, chapter 4; Pickard, 2011; Horwitz, 1997, respectively). The issues of who should have access to broadcasting and whom broadcasting should serve are perennial aspects of these reform movements. The role of localism in broadcasting, including the relationships between localism, ownership, and media diversity, has featured throughout these debates (see Napoli, 2007). For example, Victor Pickard's discussion of the 1940s "Blue Book" progressive reform effort reveals that two goals of this reform were to require broadcast licensees to "promote local live programs [and] devote programs to the discussion of local public issues" (2011, p. 182).⁶

This article focuses on the most recent wave of effort to reform broadcast policy, in which a movement promoting citizen access to the airwaves emerged during the 1980s and 1990s (Brand, 2004; Coopman, 1999; Walker, 2001). In 1978, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ceased to grant noncommercial, low-wattage licenses to not-for-profit educational and community groups, and people subsequently took to the airwaves in "electronic civil disobedience" (Opel, 2004; Walker, 2001). The Telecommunications Act of 1996 removed significant restrictions on radio station ownership, allowing unprecedented consolidation. This further stoked activist efforts to secure the rights of small-scale community broadcasters, and drew attention to media consolidation more generally. When the FCC experienced difficulty enforcing regulations against unlicensed broadcasting, in the late 1990s, then-Chairman William Kennard considered reinstating some form of license option.⁷

In 2000, the FCC initiated the legal designation of "LPFM," noncommercial stations that operate at 100 watts or less (reaching at most only a few miles from the site of transmission). However, later that year, acting at the behest of the broadcast lobby, Congress limited the number of LPFMs that could be built. This meant that LPFM stations were virtually impossible to license in U.S. cities (see Riismandel, 2002; Spinelli, 2000). Rural areas were favored, where spectrum was less scarce and the stricter spacing requirements between LPFMs and full-power stations could be met. By early 2009, over 800 LPFMs were on the air. Advocates remained committed to changing legislation to allow LPFMs in more population-dense areas, and after 10 years of struggle achieved this goal in 2011 when President Obama signed the Local Community Radio Act into law. Agonists in forming and shaping noncommercial, low-power radio during this period included microbroadcasting activists who had been on the air during the 1980s and 1990s, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB; commercial broadcasters' lobby), National Public Radio (NPR), members of

the FCC, Washington, DC based advocacy groups, religious organizations, and other citizens and consumers' groups. LPFM advocates' interpretation of radio significantly diverges from the enduring meaning and use of radio that was promoted by the Federal Radio Commission in the 1920s and 1930s, and later reinscribed by the formation of NPR in 1970 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996, all of which promoted a national, network-oriented interpretation of radio (Pinch & Bijker, 1987).

Research activities and methods

This article is drawn from a large-scale ethnographic project on LPFM activism, researched between 2003 and 2008. I spent a year (2004–2005) on full-time participant observation and volunteering with a low-power radio activist group, Philadelphia based Prometheus Radio Project, an organization born out of the ashes of a 1990s microbroadcasting station that had been shut down by the FCC in 1997. This article draws on a combination of observational data (activists, citizens, and policymakers in local settings such as radio station “barnraising” workshops where new stations are built, and other presentations and meetings with lobbyists, FCC members, Congress members and staffers, and members of community groups involved with or seeking LPFMs), interview data collected during 2004–2006, and documentary data (comments filed with the FCC and other matters of public record). I conducted 29 semistructured interviews with activists, lobbyists, policymakers, and citizens, as well as informal interviewing in settings such as workshops, meetings, and barnraisings. The period addressed in this article, circa 1998–2010, is crucial because it was the time during which LPFM was shaped and its expansion was debated.

Theorizing the “work” of localism in the 1990s–2000s

Building on Star and Griesemer's (1989) idea of “boundary objects” that are malleable enough to travel across boundaries in order to accommodate different institutional and interpretive viewpoints yet robust enough to maintain identity across them, this article conceives of localism as a “discursive boundary object”.⁸ Drawing on a combination of interviews with advocates and regulators, participant observation with low-power radio activists, and documentary research in relevant policy discussions, the article argues that “localism” moved across interpretive communities and effaced differences for groups who otherwise might not have agreed (Dunbar-Hester, 2011; Streeter, 1996). Actors held localism to support such disparate goals as disaster preparedness, independent news media, Christian broadcasting across the political spectrum, immigrant community affairs and health media, “community-building,” and “balancing” or countering the hegemony of corporate and networked broadcasters, among others. As in Star and Griesemer's conception, localism acted as a discursive anchor. Even without a shared definition of localism, it served to bridge between and thus ally these interpretive communities who sought to promote small-scale broadcasting, even those whose end goals for broadcast reform and social policy differed from their fellow advocates.

In conceptualizing localism as a discourse, I emphasize the potential for competition between and among discourses (Foucault, 1970; Lynch, 2007). Following Paul Edwards, I employ an expanded notion of discourse, holding it to be a self-elaborating “heterogeneous ensemble” that combines techniques and technologies, language, and practices (1996, pp. 37–41), and is elaborated at multiple sites. Though the focus of this article is mainly on the symbolic power of language within policy rhetoric, its relationship to sociotechnical arrangements, embodied in the choice of certain technological artifacts conjoined with social relations, is implicit. This notion of discourse is especially useful for analyzing the politics of technology. The paper’s conclusion will revisit the issue of competing discourses (localism vs. information).⁹

Interpretations of localism

The following examples demonstrate some of the ways in which actors invoked localism in conceiving of low-power radio and broadcasting policy. The categories into which I have grouped the examples are not exhaustive, nor mutually exclusive, but are instead meant to sketch some of the meaningful contours of what the discourse of localism encompassed during discussions of initiating and expanding low-power radio.

Localism I: News programming

Advocates for low-power radio consistently argued that communities had a need for local news. They stressed that this objective was not consonant with a particular position on the political spectrum, but was simply a core element of democratic media and politics. In 1999, while the Commission was considering the design of the LPFM service, Prometheus Radio Project filed the following comment:

Stations should be locally programmed. No more than 20% of air time should come from off-site feeds or syndicated tapes. We feel that the bedrock value that the FM service was designed for, localism, has been undermined in recent years by changes in the broadcast industries. The formats of both commercial and noncommercial stations barely reflect the activities, interests and diversity of the listening community or “market.” We see LPFM as an opportunity for people to hear news and music and other programming from people in their own cities, towns and neighborhoods—an opportunity which is currently unavailable.¹⁰

Notably, while the advocates emphasized the importance of locally originating content, they took care to also claim that requiring local content is not the same as taking a stand on the content itself. The FCC has a longstanding aversion to overtly favoring some content over other content, which it argues is necessary to keep broadcast media in line with the First Amendment; additionally the FCC rhetorically places itself in a position of neutrality on controversial issues, and this includes

not adjudicating between broadcasters on the basis of their content, or valuing some speech over others (Streeter, 1996, p. 137).¹¹ (Of course, the FCC does indeed have a history of favoring some content over other content—specifically, commercial content that the FCC deems a “value-neutral” use of the airwaves, vs. noncommercial content that the FCC regards as “partisan” or representing “special interests”—and this has been widely noted by media scholars. See Streeter, 1996; Vaillant, 2002.)

Further comments filed at the FCC echoed this notion of localism as embodied in local news reporting. The United Church of Christ (UCC), whose entrée into media reform dates to the 1960s civil rights era (Horwitz, 1997), filed the following comments in 1999:

The nation’s citizens have the right to exchange ideas and wrestle with local problems through the media. There is a compelling need for citizens to be able to get accurate, unbiased news and information about their localities, down to the smallest neighborhood. Low power radio presents this opportunity . . .

Concern about profits in the commercial radio industry has all but eliminated local radio news reporting. As stations consolidate, many radio stations are “outsourcing” the reporting of news. Even stations with all news formats may be nothing more than a series of syndicated shows. For example, in the Washington, D.C. market, WTOP, an all news station, is the only commercial station that employs local reporters. Twelve of the stations in that market get their syndicated news from Metro Networks, and nine from Shadow (two of the providers that transmit syndicated news across the country).¹²

Here the UCC stressed the contrast between news programming that originates in and speaks to a local community (even “the smallest neighborhood”) and news programming produced by consolidated media firms whose programming is distributed in many areas and markets. The advocates noted that citizens face a “compelling need” for local news, implying that local news and “wrestling with local problems through the media” were features of a strong and functioning democracy at both national and local levels.

A year after a new LPFM went on the air just outside Nashville, TN in 2005, a young woman who was involved with the station remarked:

Nashville needs this. Not even a liberal outlet—we just need a community outlet . . . There’s not good news coverage [by other media outlets]. For example, there was a sit-in at the State Capitol. Tennessee was the first state to abolish state health care, so many of the people at the sit-in were really ill people, people in wheelchairs . . . This event wasn’t covered at all [by other news outlets]. The “local” NBC news affiliates [just] talk about crime and sensationalism. I hate the way liberal is coupled with good reporting. We just need local reporting.¹³

She noted that the station did have a lot of “liberal” programming, but to her, the more important distinction was not “liberal” versus mainstream or conservative

programming, but local versus nonlocal programming. Thus she appealed to the ostensible political neutrality of localism in news, even if individual examples of local news coverage were not themselves politically “neutral.” Like the comments filed by the advocates above, local news was in itself held to be valuable, and a likely and desired outcome of establishing and expanding LPFM.

Localism II: Public safety and disaster preparedness

In addition to general news programming, LPFM advocates strategically focused on the importance of local reporting in disaster situations. They seized on the potential significance of local media in terms of national security and preparedness during the 2000s as they pursued legislation to expand LPFM. After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, Prometheus activists routinely stated that “When the planes hit the Pentagon on 9/11, the Clear Channel-owned station had to stream a CNN feed—there were no local broadcasters to report or give emergency information.”¹⁴ The radio activists were thus willing to tailor their narrative of why LPFM was valuable to appeal to policymakers and politicians concerned about national security, and they did this by invoking the potential harm of relying on nonlocal broadcasters in times of crisis.

After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, LPFM advocates further intensified their call for the expansion of the LPFM service. They also obtained an emergency license from the FCC to set up a low power radio station (KAMP radio, 95.3 FM) in a trailer outside the Houston Astrodome, where hurricane evacuees were congregated, which demonstrated a limited and temporary success of such appeals.¹⁵ Here, a Prometheus activist solicited from an LPFM mailing list attestations about radio stations’ activities, which they hoped to take to lawmakers:

Many of our stations did great work with and for the displaced families of the Gulf, after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We have a chance to tell the FCC how our community radio stations helped during the storms, helped rebuild after the crisis, and continue to provide donations, access and other support to groups even now. If we can make an impact, it could make a really big difference as the FCC considers important changes that can improve and protect the Low Power FM service!

... If your station (regardless of whether or not you are located in the Gulf region) did anything to aid in the relief efforts for hurricane Katina, please write a summary of what you did and send it to [Prometheus] so that we may bring these stories to the attention to the FCC.¹⁶

In 2006, LPFM advocates attempted to accomplish the expansion of LPFM they sought by adding LPFM to a bill in the House of Representatives, the Warning, Alerts and Response Network (WARN) Act. Prometheus issued a press release advocating for the expansion of LPFM on the basis of its utility to disaster response teams and the public during emergencies. And Prometheus testified to the House of Representatives’ Subcommittee on Telecommunications:

Across the Gulf Coast and in countless other situations across the country, locally owned, volunteer-run community radio stations like LPFMs have been the difference between life and death, safety and danger for local communities. . . . Stations like WQRZ-LP, a low power station in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, were perfectly placed to give neighborhood-by-neighborhood coverage of the damage of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and to help those communities know exactly how to interface with local and federal safety and health officials after the storms.

But these stations are few and far between—limited from thousands more towns and neighborhoods by an out-of-date law limiting low power radio to small, remote communities. With the WARN act, Congress has the opportunity to expand the national [Emergency Alert System] infrastructure to reach millions of Americans at risk from a lack of local information about emergencies. . . .¹⁷

Critically, the LPFM advocates argued, large-scale, consolidated broadcasters were not well-suited to provide disaster coverage or highly local and up-to-the-minute bulletins, as they may not have staff who in the area, who knew the area, or even have human staff members on site at all, as much programming is automated.¹⁸ Instead the advocates recommended that safety and law enforcement officials forge relationships with LPFMs, since they could guarantee in many cases that live people, with intimate knowledge of the locality, would be accessible at the station in times of emergency. LPFM operators reinforced that they too conceived of disaster preparedness as important to their mission. Reflecting during a workshop on emergency preparedness at a radio station “barnraising” to build a new LPFM, a station operator of an existing LPFM said, “It scares the heck out of me that we could have a disaster in our town. I want to know exactly what to do in case of a flood, earthquake, or whatever. We are the station they [our local listening public] would turn to.”¹⁹ Another workshop participant said, “If you’re the station that’s on the air with good information, you’ll increase your listenership and loyalty to the station. As opposed to Clear Channel or whatever, with their automated programming.”²⁰ Implied in both of these statements is the idea that these highly local broadcasters, with firsthand knowledge of the areas their broadcasts reached, had a critical role in providing communication services to their communities.

Though the WARN Act passed in October 2006, LPFM advocates failed to expand LPFM with its passage, leaving them to pursue other avenues to pass the pro-LPFM legislation. Nonetheless, their discursive use of “localism” to mean “disaster preparedness” was strategic, as they attempted to shore up support for LPFM with groups who might not otherwise care much about small-scale broadcasting, such as police and emergency responders. Like local news reporting, this definition of localism also studiously avoided linking LPFM or localism to politically partisan positions. Notably, the LPFM advocates’ positioning around disaster preparedness distinctly echoes the arguments made by amateur radio operators in the 1940s, who offered to the government their services as operators of communications systems with the potential to aid in conducting public alerts or transmit vital information

for “citizens’ defense”, in order to maintain autonomy and retain use the airwaves during World War II.²¹

Localism III: Cultural programming

In addition to news and emergency reporting, many LPFM advocates cited localism in musical and cultural programming as a virtue that had been lost in the wake of consolidation. They argued that the lack of localism harmed musical artists economically and the public in terms of having reduced access to cultural diversity. A nonprofit think tank and advocacy group in Washington, DC devoted to policy work around independent music and technology stated in a press release that “radio ownership consolidation at the national and local levels has led to fewer choices in radio programming and harmed the listening public and those working in the music and media industries, including DJs, programmers and musicians” and went on to add that “commercial radio now offers musicians fewer opportunities to get airtime and offers the public a narrow set of overlapping and homogenized programming formats.”²² The Nashville LPFM station’s volunteer also raised the issue of musical and arts programming:

Nashville is such an arts and music town. People are so hungry for [a media outlet] that they’ll travel for 45 minutes [to the station] just to broadcast their music . . . The station has radio plays, a theater group does a radio play twice a month. . . . The music—we have old country and bluegrass, that’s cool because that’s really what Nashville *is*; the commercial country stations are just commercial new country. We [also] have hip-hop shows, French and Cambodian music shows, a 70s funk show, an indie/punk/hardcore show with obscure awesome records, Cajun music.²³

The issue of Nashville not having other outlets for its own local style of music, cited by this volunteer as old country and bluegrass, was one raised by a number of people at the 2005 barnraising for the Nashville station. And whenever they mentioned an LPFM station they built in Opelousas, LA, members of Prometheus too referred to the lack of local music prior to the area obtaining an LPFM: “Opelousas is home to Zydeco—hard-rocking accordion, fiddle, and guitar music native to Creole country like Opelousas. But because of the dominant presence of consolidated commercial radio in Opelousas, Zydeco was nowhere to be found on the radio dial—until KOCZ came along.”²⁴

Finally, the United Church of Christ also raised the issue of cultural programming:

One significant reason to adopt a low power radio service is to improve coverage of local issues and culture. As the Commission recognizes, locally-originated programming reflects the needs, interest, circumstances, and perspectives that are unique to the community being served by a licensee . . .

Localism will not be restored if low power radio becomes a replica of currently-existing services. In this proceeding, the Commission has wisely decided to counteract the current consolidation in the full power commercial

radio industry. Indeed, a primary benefit of creating a low power radio service is the likely increase in local coverage of local public affairs and culture²⁵

In each of the above examples, advocates bound localism to cultural forms unlikely to be found on large-scale consolidated radio, including radio plays (perceived as outside the mainstream in contemporary radio programming, though constituting a significant genre in earlier radio programming), and music understood to be linked to a place but falling outside of market-based conceptions of audience wants and needs, such as zydeco and bluegrass.

Localism IV: Community autonomy

Significantly, localism in musical programming was not only understood as cultural forms associated with the geography or ethnos of broadcasters or their audiences: The Nashville station's eclectic programming (hip-hop, Cajun music, etc.) as well as the independent music championed by the DC-based think tank²⁶ are rather examples of broadcasters' autonomy, which is also understood to flow from local control. This iteration of localism might simply be termed "community autonomy," meaning the right and need of the community served by the radio station to decide on the best use of the station, even to highly idiosyncratic ends. The Nashville volunteer said in her description of the value of their station, "We have lots of funny, weird programming that makes community radio and public access [television] so good."²⁷ And this ethic can be also heard in her above comment about the station having "hip-hop shows, French and Cambodian music shows, a 70s funk show, an indie/punk/hardcore show with obscure awesome records, Cajun music"; she cited variety and eclecticism, implying that the station was unique and worthwhile in part because of its unpredictability and independence.

A founder of the Nashville station said: "The basic idea of [this station] was simple The airwaves belong to the people, and the people should have access to them. Everyday people have as much right to speak on the radio as to listen. I've found that Middle Tennesseans truly want their voices to be heard."²⁸ Thus for her, the station was immensely valuable precisely for the right of the station's programmers to put on the air whatever they might wish. In a related vein, some Prometheus activists cited an interest in localism in radio that in part emerged from radical politics and the rights of communities to self-determination.²⁹

Another advocate for LPFM headed a group that promoted Christian community broadcasting. He stated that LPFM was ideally suited to small churches, who could run their own original content 24 hours per day, using an all-volunteer staff, for less than \$1,000 a year in operating expenses. In an interview, he gave some examples of the types of programming employed by these stations:

[There is a] program in Florida [that plays] secular music except one minute an hour they talk about an issue to think about. . . . [I also know a] church station that does funeral announcements, and they sometimes get a call complaining, "why didn't you do announcements?" The answer is, No one died! The church

groups that I know do not do it to run announcements over and over saying “come to our church”. They want to reach with positive programming a target audience in the homes.³⁰

This advocate for religious LPFM downplays churches’ potential desire to proselytize or to have any particular partisan “message” at all. Instead he highlighted extremely community-specific announcements and idiosyncratic uses of the airwaves that he claimed were supported by the scale and economics of LPFM.

This advocate thus argued that, as for secular low-power broadcasters, the main issue was programming that church groups may choose for themselves and actively participate in creating. To him, this distinction was more important than the theological or political basis of the content to be broadcast. When he raised the specter of LPFM’s opponents, he specifically invoked large-scale, consolidated broadcasters:

. . . [W]hether it’s a small church or a small advocacy group, it’s impacted by big full power broadcasters . . . It’s not an issue of all blue people [Democrats] want one thing and all red people [Republicans] want another. Whether control is by monolithic Christian entity or monolithic Clear Channel[, those are both antithetical to the interests of a local, small-scale religious broadcaster.] It’s not a theological or a classic “whether the programming on station is going to be liberal or conservative” issue.³¹

As seen in the above discussion of news programming, he was careful to distance himself from the notion that LPFM would be used for any particular sort of content beyond “local” content. Like other advocates, he claimed that LPFM was politically neutral and should be supported in a bi- (or non-) partisan manner; its only meaningful antithesis was “monolithic” full-power broadcasters of all sorts. He even quibbled with how the FCC determined whether content was “locally originating,” claiming that the standard was not stringent enough and allowed some stations to exploit loopholes in the policy.³²

Localism V: Localism for granted

Often, advocates of low-power radio did not feel a need to define localism beyond the thing itself. This again points to the issue of recursivity or indexicality in defining concepts like localism; this fuzziness is also a contributory factor in localism’s efficacy as a discursive boundary object. The for-granted use of localism was particularly salient in the rhetoric of law- and policymakers, who more than other advocates perhaps found it beneficial to couch their support for low-power radio in as “neutral” terms as possible (see Slotten, 2000; Streeter, 1996).

William Kennard, the Chairperson of the FCC who introduced LPFM, indicated that local use of radio was an important premise of the LPFM service. In a press release in April 2000, he admonished, “While the National Association of Broadcasters frequently opposes new competitive services, I’m particularly disappointed that NPR joined with commercial interests to stifle greater diversity of voices on the airwaves. I

can only wonder how an organization that excels in national programming could fear competition from local programming by these tiny stations operated by churches, schools, community groups and public safety agencies.”³³ Here, Kennard made pointed reference to the controversy that surrounded the introduction of LPFM, in which incumbent broadcasters fervently opposed the new service. Kennard rebuked NPR for siding with the NAB in the broadcasters’ (ultimately successful, later in 2000) attempt to shackle LPFM, drawing a contrast between the “tiny” LPFMs’ missions, which he characterized as harmless to the larger, networked broadcasters, as well as distinct from what the national networks provided.

In a 2006 interview, a former Commission member who had served while Kennard was Chairperson (from 1997 to 2001) and continued to support LPFM reflected on what she felt value to be the value of LPFM:

The amount of stations is limited by what Congress did. So I don’t think you can measure [the success of LPFM] by the number of stations. But if you’re going to measure success based on the stations that are there, to the extent you have empowered local voices to serve their community and be heard, I think that’s a good thing. It’s a pretty diverse group. . . . [Religious groups, s]tudent groups, ethnic immigrant groups, you have a very wide [range of citizens represented], it would be so much wider if there were more stations.³⁴

Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein (who served from 2002 to 2009) was not on the Commission at the introduction of LPFM, but was later charged with assessing whether LPFM should be upheld, expanded, curtailed, or shut down. In 2006, one of his staff members stated very plainly that locally originating content was what made LPFM special and distinguished it as something worth protecting in the eyes of the Commission:

What should be the benefits of LPFM, is locally-originated content, there is no question about it. . . .It’s content that draws in the community and speaks to their specific local concerns, and not just repurposing national programming. I think that’s going to be truly a measure of their success and their long-term viability as well, both from a regulatory standpoint, meaning the FCC is going to continue to recognize and that there is this increased importance since there is this concern that a lot of that national, commercial full-power broadcasters are not providing the type of local content that’s necessary. . . .³⁵

Lawmakers also argued that the promotion of localism would benefit the constituents they served, including listeners and the radio industry itself. The Local Community Radio Act of 2005, which sought to remove the spacing restrictions placed in late 2000 and restore LPFM to the original intent of the FCC, explicitly stated this³⁶:

(2) At a hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, on June 4, 2003, all 5 members of the Federal Communications

Commission testified that there has been, in at least some local radio markets, too much consolidation.

(3) A commitment to localism—local operations, local research, local management, locally-originated programming, local artists, and local news and events—would bolster radio listening.³⁷

Thus the lawmakers who supported the expansion of LPFM argued that consolidation of the radio industry had hurt localism in broadcasting, which hurt the industry overall, and that the introduction of LPFM was a means to counterbalance that. The Local Radio Act of 2005 had bipartisan sponsorship including Senators John McCain [R-AZ], Patrick Leahy [D-NH], and Maria Cantwell [D-WA]. In an interview, a staffer for Senator McCain said:

The idea of another media outlet for different voices appealed to [the Senator] . . . The LPFM stations, some of them are being run by church groups where they're broadcasting church services for those who are home-bound, some are used for giving the most localized content and community information, some are used for reading storybooks to children to promote children's reading, some are used as a communications outlet for community groups that are trying to combat crime . . .³⁸

The diversity of uses cited by this staffer indicates that the value of LPFM is that it enables a variety of ordinary citizens and community groups to have access to the airwaves. Like the FCC, she did not favor any particular form of content over others, instead viewing LPFM stations as a potential resource for local communities who will themselves determine the most appropriate use of the station (thus her conception of localism shades into the “community autonomy” definition).

Localism's largely neutral political valence (and the usefulness thereof) comes into sharp focus when the range of groups championing LPFM is scrutinized. During my fieldwork, I observed as Prometheus, the radical left activist group from Philadelphia, uneasily allied itself with some Christian broadcasters in hopes that these religious broadcasters could pressure their elected officials to side with LPFM and against the broadcast lobby. This was strategically useful to Prometheus activists for two reasons: First, they desired to make LPFM appear as bipartisan as possible, with strong support on both sides of the aisle in Congress; second, they hoped to leverage the relationships some religious constituents already had with their elected officials in conservative districts whom they themselves or likeminded advocates would likely not sway.³⁹ Of course, syndicated religious programming is a large, well-established, and lucrative phenomenon, so the broadcast lobby represents many religious broadcasters as well.⁴⁰ In short, Prometheus hoped to strategically spin the issue in conservative districts towards the obligation of elected officials to serve their own local constituencies, as opposed to siding with syndicated religious broadcasters and the NAB. Observing these tensions, a spokesperson for the National Association of Evangelicals commented, “It looks like money's talking, maybe at the

expense of what would be logical [in the] long term—the Republicans supporting their supporters.”⁴¹ (Not infrequently did LPFM proponents, religious and otherwise, invoke the Old Testament myth of David and Goliath when discussing the opposition of NPR and NAB to LPFM. The Christian community broadcasting advocate said, “[The issue is] underdog vs. [large consolidated broadcaster;] whether it’s a small church or a small advocacy group, it’s impacted by big full power broadcasters.”⁴²)

As for Prometheus’s relationship with the Christian community broadcasting advocates, one activist said, “[Prometheus] cleans up nice, but we’re not politically able to get senators like Sam Brownback [R-KS] or Trent Lott [R-MS] or even Kay Bailey Hutchison [R-TX] to talk to us as openly or as communally as we’d like. . . . In order to be able to expand LPFM on the Hill, we’re going to need these people.”⁴³ In an e-mail, an activist described her mild discomfort when meeting with a group of Christian allies in 2005: “the christians were okay—they actually tried to convert me, which is insane. i made good contacts with broadcasters who have actual relationships with their elected representatives, which is the point. . . .”⁴⁴ In a 2005 meeting with the House of Representatives Progressive Caucus, another Prometheus activist said that LPFM “is an important opportunity to take representatives and senators to task for siding with corporations and against constituents like small local conservative churches.”⁴⁵ Of course Prometheus’s main interest was not in championing the rights or agendas of conservative religious broadcasters; Prometheus activists framed these alliances for the Caucus as a means to an end in establishing “progressive radio in every nook and cranny around the country.”⁴⁶

Interestingly, the advocate for Christian community broadcasting speculated that a motivating factor for the passage of the 2000 rider limiting LPFM was Republican paranoia over giving broadcasting licenses to groups in inner cities: “[The] reason the December 2000 rider lines passed, to limit LPFM, what is the underlying non-technical reason? This [was] a Republican Congress. If you limit stations, fewer stations in big cities, cities are traditionally more Democratic, radical left-wing, [the Republicans didn’t] want to give licenses to the groups in inner cities, since they don’t believe that inner-city churches are the ones who are going to get the licenses.”⁴⁷ He was resentful that the Republican distrust of urban Democratic populations had an impact on the ability of urban church groups to procure LPFM licenses. While there is no way to verify whether his speculation is correct, it underscores the strain on the alliances formed to promote LPFM as well as the multiple and shifting allegiances of various actors, especially law- and policymakers balancing the input of a range of citizen constituents as well as lobbyists.

In these examples, the value of localism as a discursive boundary object becomes especially apparent: Groups with a very wide range of political and ideological differences had the option to rally around localism and thus skirt the minefield they would find themselves in had they tried to stitch together their starkly divergent wider agendas. The FCC had also lent some ballast to localism as a discursive boundary object.⁴⁸ In the original architecture of the LPFM service, the FCC opted to consider whether station applicants promised they would provide locally originating content

as one criterion of many in the license application. The FCC did not fully enshrine localism in LPFM by mandating that locally-originating content be required of all LPFM stations, but instead gave licensing preference to applicants who would broadcast a minimum of eight hours per day of locally-originating content; the issue of locally-originating content thus became a critical consideration only when applicants for a given license were in competition with one another.⁴⁹ Thus localism's status as a discursive boundary object was both inscribed into the 2000 version of LPFM and ensured for future advocacy efforts and policy discussions.

Conclusions: The opposition to (or opposite of?) localism

In the above examples, one finds a range of answers to the question, how did actors mobilize localism in support of LPFM? These examples demonstrate how localism was held to mean a variety of things from disaster preparedness to news reporting, and even to be an unspecified virtue in itself. Thus, localism in this case constitutes a discursive boundary object: It was heterogeneous, portable, and malleable, capable of crossing boundaries between differing interpretive communities, while at the same time serving as an anchor for policy goals. This enabled (uneasy) collaboration between actors such as radical left media activists and conservative Christians (as well as other groups across the political spectrum). Localism also succeeded because it could be constructed as a neutral value by law- and policymakers who generally prefer to seem "impartial" as opposed to "activist" (which is in no way to imply that localism is any more neutral, or less constructed, than any other value in policy-making). The worth of this discursive boundary object was especially salient given the political and ideological gulf between the interpretive communities who traded in it; indeed, localism functioned as a discursive boundary object precisely because it did not require consensus or broader agreement between parties who favored low-power radio.

In the concluding section of this article, I return to the idea of localism as a discourse and sketch some ideas about alternative or competing discourses to localism. One notable factor in considering localism's value as a discursive boundary object is that groups who opposed the introduction or expansion of LPFM radio did not object on the grounds of localism. For example, the commercial broadcast lobby's extensive campaign to oppose LPFM centered on the potential for technical interference to broadcast signals by the introduction of new low-power stations. NAB also raised additional concern about potential economic harm to incumbent broadcasters faced with declining audience market shares.⁵⁰ NAB did not argue that localism was unimportant or that low-power radio did not in fact support localism as its advocates claimed.

NPR in general acted to oppose LPFM, siding with the NAB on the issue of potential interference and the need for "third-adjacent channel protection" (conservative spacing requirements between stations), and supporting the "Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act of 2000" (which did not pass Congress but severely limited LPFM when it was passed as an appropriations rider in late 2000). NAB's

opposition to LPFM was predictable, but as William Kennard noted in his 2000 statement, the opposition to LPFM by noncommercial NPR took many by surprise.⁵¹ While NPR did oppose LPFM, like NAB, it did so on the grounds of technical interference. In fact, NPR argued that in principle, it was in favor of the addition of more community radio stations, and NPR president Kevin Klose stated, "Some in the industry wanted to gore low-power radio, we didn't do that. We aren't criticizing anybody. We have a set of very reasonable issues [about interference] that can be addressed. The goal is a conflict-free future between low-power and public radio."⁵²

However, NPR's claim to seek a "conflict-free future" with LPFM seemed rather disingenuous given that elsewhere, it argued against the introduction of LPFM, claiming that full-power radio stations and the Internet could better serve the public than LPFM. First, NPR stated that "[I]t makes no practical difference to the listener whether the source of the content is a low-power station transmitting from a mile away or a full service station transmitting from 5 or 10 miles away."⁵³ The statement continued, "[T]he benefits associated with the [LPFM] proposal may be better realized through other means of electronic communication, such as the Internet. The Internet is revolutionary because it connects individuals with distinct interests, whether those individuals reside within the same town or on opposite sides of the planet . . ."⁵⁴

It is worth interrogating NPR's statement. NPR did not oppose localism; in fact NPR came out strongly in favor of localism when it wrote, "NPR and its member stations recognize and value the public policy objective of fostering a diversity of broadcast voices to ensure the availability of programming responsive to local needs and interests."⁵⁵ NPR also did not claim that locally originating content was unimportant,⁵⁶ though it conflated full-power stations "five to ten" miles away with low-power ones "a mile away." Through these statements, NPR sought to deflate a central claim by LPFM proponents that low-power and full-power stations would not serve the same functions; NPR in essence claimed that LPFM provided nothing NPR didn't already do, and that NPR did it better. (However, it is worth noting that NPR glossed over whether "local content" pertained to content that serves a local community's needs vs. content created by a local community, as well as whether the content, vs. the transmission signal, is truly "locally originating," i.e., piped in from elsewhere, vs. concerning truly local affairs and originating at the site of transmission.⁵⁷)

More interesting, however, is NPR's suggestion that the would-be low-power broadcasters could be better served by the revolutionary potential of the Internet. In particular, NPR suggested that what is important in choosing an electronic communication platform or technology is the potential to serve and to cohere communities of interest, not "local" communities bound by geography, ethnos, or other spatiocultural factors. Thus, NPR proposed that would-be LPFM broadcasters congregate in cyberspace, not the ether.

It would be easy to interpret this statement as having no more significance than NPR's desire to deflate and dismiss the goals of low-power radio advocates. Indeed, NPR was doubtless motivated by this agenda. Nonetheless, there is more at stake

here. In privileging “communities of interest” whose members could be distributed anywhere from the same town to the opposite side of the earth, NPR drew on what could be termed an “informational” discourse. Implicitly, this discourse rests on the notion that what is occurring in electronic communication is the exchange of “information” and that information is divorced from context, from bodies, from space, from place.⁵⁸ Fred Turner notes a heritage of this understanding of information in the countercultural deployment of cybernetics, stating that “circuits [of energy and information] presented the possibility of a social order based . . . on the ebb and flow of communication” (2006, p. 38). Informational discourse, characterized by the adoption of information as a keyword, occurred in various discourse communities in academia, government, and business by about 1970. Information was understood to be ubiquitous and revolutionary, though in different discourse communities its precise contours varied (Kline, 2006). NPR was likely unaware of the baggage with which its exhortation to “go on the Internet instead” was laden, but this episode reveals why critical attention to the politics of technologies—as well as to a conception of discourse that includes technologies—is warranted.

Localism, on the other hand, conveys something different. As I have argued above, localism resists a singular definition, and in fact gained traction as a discursive boundary object through its multiple meanings. At the same time, localism is not an empty concept: It connotes something having to do with immediacy, contextual meaning, and relationships between neighboring bodies (bodies in all senses).⁵⁹ This contrasts to information, which wants to be free: free of embodiment, freely flowing, and freely commodified and exchanged.⁶⁰ It is not the goal of this analysis to speculate on the degree to which radio activists and other interpretive communities who seized on localism in their quest to expand community radio were or were not aware of the full entailments of this discourse. But in drawing an equivalency between the Internet and low-power radio, NPR was arguing that media technologies were useful for reasons that differed from what low-power radio proponents claimed, with significant consequences. This disagreement is about far more than the “purely” technical properties of the respective artifacts. Efforts to differentiate between the properties of respective technological artifacts are important because they are never merely descriptive; they serve to articulate artifacts to meanings and so constitute discourse.⁶¹

Indeed, I am arguing that careful attention to discursive claims around the meaning and value of different technologies should be a goal of scholars, policy advocates, and propagators of technology; we should make every effort to understand claims about the properties of a given technology for electronic communication as rhetorical claims, or conversations about values, as much as technical descriptions. The point here is not that the LPFM advocates are “right” while digital utopianists are “wrong.” That said, the radio activists’ attempt to vest debates about electronic communication with a value of proximate and bounded sociality may capture something missing from much strong digital utopianist rhetoric, and something we may lose if we concentrate too greatly on listening to (and building for) information utopianism.⁶²

Thus for media and cultural institutions such as public libraries,⁶³ subscribing to an informational discourse may cause these institutions' roles to be diminished. In aspiring to serve as transparent portals for users seeking information, these institutions make a universalist move of reducing social relations to the exchange of information. They deemphasize the particular, the contextual, and the messy problems of meaning that arise from grappling with knowledge as always situated, always partial, always embodied.⁶⁴ To the contrary, media institutions and libraries may enjoy renewed relevance if they instead stake a claim on overlapping components of localism, including contextual meaning and the proximity of neighboring bodies. In articulating technologies and institutions to "the local," they attain visibility and relevance. Nearly 70 years after its dawn, in advocates' articulation of LPFM radio to localism, broadcasting attained renewal.

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Notes

- 1 See Peirce (1932 [1897]) and Wittgenstein (1997 [1953]).
- 2 "Community" suffers from similar ambiguity. Raymond Williams offers some guidance, noting that "community" conveys a sense of having something in common, and of being "more immediate than 'society'" (1976, p. 75).
- 3 See Douglas (1987) for an excellent account of the practices of amateur operators, including "DXing." Also see Smulyan (1994) and Douglas (1999).
- 4 Thomas Streeter states that because radio is relatively "small, lightweight, inexpensive and flexible . . . the domination of radio by giant bureaucratic organizations is less easily attributable to technological necessity or capital intensiveness" (1996, p. 60), thus underscoring the contingency of corporate dominance in broadcasting.
- 5 According to Slotten, one commissioner, Ira Robinson, opposed the 1928 allocation plan and refused to take part in its implementation on the grounds that it favored commercial networks, but he was alone in his opposition (2000, p. 59).
- 6 Of course, the cast of localism has not been stable over time. In the 1920s–1930s debates over broadcasting, localism held a negative, provincialist connotation (Kirkpatrick, 2006, p. 91), and in the "Standing" case in the 1960s, localism may have even been tantamount to racism (see Horwitz, 1997). Local broadcasting was however enshrined in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, and it was assumed that the new National Public Radio system would serve local publics. To chart why and how localism emerged as a discursive boundary object in the 1990s is beyond the scope of this article, though this is a very important question.

- 7 Relatedly, in considering the nomenclature of low-power FM, Streeter's (1996) discussion of policy versus politics is instructive; alternate terms such as microradio, free radio, and especially pirate radio had (radical, confrontational) political edges that "low-power" did not. Thus like localism, LPFM had the potential to be cast as "neutral."
- 8 As Star made clear subsequent to her introduction of the concept, boundary objects do not have to be material objects, though they may be: the materiality of the "object" derives from its action in the world (2010).
- 9 Michael Lynch (2007) notes that "discourse analysis" is not a single method or even a continuous research field. While this paper does present an analysis of discourse, it is not situated within a specific tradition of "discourse analysis."
- 10 Comments of the Prometheus Radio Project before the FCC, MM Docket No. 99-25, July 29, 1999.
- 11 The advocates in fact attempt to get out in front of objections the FCC could raise with regard to locally-originating content, further adding in the comment, "Regulation of content origination does have precedent in the Commission. Translator and booster stations are a good example of regulation of content origination. If the FCC can forbid local origination for one class of stations, it can certainly require it for another." Comments of the [Prometheus] Radio Project before the FCC, MM Docket No. 99-25, July 29, 1999.
- 12 Comments of the United Church of Christ et al. before the FCC, MM Docket No. 99-25, August 2, 1999.
- 13 Interview, August 19, 2006.
- 14 Fieldnotes February 7, 2005.
- 15 Houston Indymedia. "Setting up 95.3 KAMP for broadcast [*sic*] tomorrow," September 12, 2005. Unlicensed microradio also surfaced in New Orleans as part of a grassroots relief mobilization.
- 16 E-mail—to Stubblefield, January 23, 2006.
- 17 E-mail, Ellen to Stubblefield, July 20, 2006. The WARN Act was approved by Congress in October 2006 but did not ultimately include language to restore/expand LPFM.
- 18 Eric Klinenberg (2007) cites a 2002 disaster in Minot, ND, in which a toxic gas cloud threatened the town; none of the six local commercial radio stations, all owned by Clear Channel, could be reached to make an on-air warning to residents. One person died and more than a thousand people were injured.
- 19 Fieldnotes August 18, 2006.
- 20 Fieldnotes August 18, 2006.
- 21 See Haring (2006, chapter 5).
- 22 Future of Music Coalition, "Radio Consolidation Hurts Public, New Data Shows," December 8, 2006.
- 23 Interview, August 19, 2006. Her emphasis.
- 24 Prometheus Radio Project Website, "Our Third Barnraising—KOCZ-LP in Opelousas, Louisiana."
- 25 Comments of the United Church of Christ et al. before the FCC, MM Docket No. 99-25, August 2, 1999.
- 26 Interview with lobbyist, July 19, 2006.
- 27 Interview, August 19, 2006.
- 28 E-mail—to CDH, March 15, 2007. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that the populist rhetorical positioning of "the people" here may be uniquely American.

- 29 One activist explicated her commitment to anarcho-syndicalism (informal conversation November 5, 2007). This lineage is almost certainly not shared by other groups with whom the radio activists collaborated. See Downing (2003).
- 30 Interview, September 20, 2006.
- 31 Interview, September 20, 2006.
- 32 Interview, September 20, 2006.
- 33 "FCC Chairman Responds to House Vote to Cut the Number of Community Radio Stations by 80%," April 13, 2000.
- 34 Interview, Gloria Tristani, October 5, 2006.
- 35 Interview, July 19, 2006. Of course, the FCC is not monolithic in its commitment to localism. In 2006, a scandal erupted over the FCC's having buried two reports it had itself commissioned in 2003–2004 that demonstrated that local television news reporting and independent radio station ownership were damaged by media consolidation. Yet Kevin Martin, who was chairman of the FCC when the reports emerged in 2006, and Michael Powell, who was chairman when the studies were authored, both moved to promote further consolidation. See McChesney (2006).
- 36 This effort failed, but slightly differing versions of the law were continually reintroduced in each Congressional session until its eventual passage in 2010 as the Local Community Radio Act of 2010, signed into law by President Obama in early 2011.
- 37 United States Senate, 109th Congress, 1st Session, February 8, 2005.
- 38 Interview, July 19, 2006.
- 39 Of course progressive churches like the United Church of Christ have been significant advocates for media reform, including LPFM, since the 1960s (see Horwitz 1997).
- 40 Apostolidis (2002) argues that there is a stark contrast between the Christian right's evangelical and fundamentalist theology and its embrace of modern communications technologies, as well as older technologies like radio.
- 41 Quoted in David Leonhardt. "Religious Groups Are Pushing Hard to Go on the Air With Low-Power Radio Stations," *The New York Times*, July 11, 2000.
- 42 Interview, September 20, 2006.
- 43 Quoted in Karr (2005, 22).
- 44 E-mail—to CDH, January 19, 2005.
- 45 Fieldnotes July 14, 2005.
- 46 Fieldnotes July 14, 2005.
- 47 Interview, September 20, 2006.
- 48 I do not wish to imply that the FCC was an impartial arbiter of these differences at whose door this discursive boundary object was laid; quite to the contrary, localism was likely appealing to the FCC for many of the same reasons other proponents of LPFM favored it. And of course, the FCC is anything but consistent or monolithic in its commitment to localism. In 2006, a scandal erupted over the FCC's having buried two reports it had itself commissioned in 2003–2004 that demonstrated that local television news reporting and independent radio station ownership were damaged by media consolidation. Yet Kevin Martin, who was Chairman of the FCC when the reports emerged in 2006, and Michael Powell, who was Chairman when the studies were authored, both moved to promote further consolidation. See McChesney (2006).
- 49 Federal Communications Commission, "Low Power FM Radio: An Applicant's Guide." April 28, 2000, p. 5.

- 50 See for example National Association of Broadcasters, "Comments of the National Association of Broadcasters on the MITRE Corporation Report," October 13, 2003, p. 12.
- 51 A usual refrain among radio activists was that most NPR reporters "got it," that is, they understood and supported the mission of LPFM, but that the "top brass" opposed LPFM because of their concern about losing market share to stations outside of the NPR network. This further underscored to activists the notion that NPR was unable to serve the functions LPFM was created to perform.
- 52 Quoted in Boehlert (2000).
- 53 National Public Radio, "Statement of National Public Radio, Inc.," April 27, 1998.
- 54 National Public Radio, "Statement of National Public Radio, Inc.," April 27, 1998.
- 55 National Public Radio, "Statement of National Public Radio, Inc.," April 27, 1998.
- 56 See National Public Radio, "Statement of National Public Radio, Inc.," April 27, 1998, endnote 1.
- 57 Though the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act makes it clear that the intent is not to support locally originating *signals* piping in outside content, ambiguity over what constitutes locally originating content begins with the FCC's own definition of locally originating content, which allows remarkable leeway. This points to additional difficulty pinning down what "localism" is.
- 58 This valence of information may relate in part to Claude Shannon's (1948) insistence on bracketing out meaning or semantics in his technical, mathematical definition of information. See Hayles (1999) for an analysis of how information came to be disembodied.
- 59 This hews to the construct of boundary object elaborated by Star. Though the meaning of a boundary object is flexible enough to allow groups without consensus to cooperate, it is not arbitrary (Star, 2010).
- 60 This is in no way to claim that this "freedom" has been achieved in any of the cases it has been claimed: my aim is only to point out the reach and success of the discourse.
- 61 See Dunbar-Hester (2009) for a discussion of media activists' negotiation between radio and Internet-based technologies.
- 62 As Langdon Winner has famously argued, while computer enthusiasts have long held that democracy is first and foremost a matter of distributing information, this is a damaging misconception (1988, p. 110).
- 63 Thanks to Emily Knox and Marija Dalbello for references to the library as a symbol of local values, such as Augst (2007).
- 64 Feminist scholars of science and technology have elaborated these issues especially helpfully. See Haraway (1991) and Suchman (2003).

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