

## Programming and Editing as Alternative Logics of Music Radio Production

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The disparity between structural and phenomenological perspectives in media studies informs an unacknowledged distinction between two alternative logics of music radio production: programming and editing. Whereas programmers employ predetermined playlists nested in structural considerations, editors consider thematic associations both linearly between songs and simultaneously with shared external events. Implementation of both logics is illustrated in Israeli radio, where stations partly preserve music editing despite commercialization. By privileging the moment of the live broadcast and attending to semiotic, performative, and temporal contingencies, editors aim to encode preferred meanings, acting as engineers of collective mood. Favoring the logic of live editing over predetermined programming may provide one of radio's last advantages in the changing media field.

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The endurance of radio in the face of television and Internet technology has attracted much scholarly attention. Following radio's significant shift from verbal to musical content, a central line of research explored radio's alliances with the music industry and its transformation of musical genres to formats and audience tastes to products (e.g., Negus, 1993; Rothenbuhler, 1985) as well as its current expansion to digital platforms (e.g., Baker, 2009). Building on the production-of-culture perspective (Dowd, 2004; Peterson, 1979), much of this research formulates the challenges facing radio in terms of structural-organizational considerations in the field, such as commercialization and regulations. A separate line of research echoed the cultural paradigm in media studies (Carey, 1989; Schudson, 1989) in exploring the social and communal aspects of radio communication, mainly on the receiving end. Adopting mostly phenomenological-ethnographic frameworks, studies in this vein underscore how radio could adjust to and bridge between changing geographical, social, and media landscapes by addressing localized needs and sustaining cultural diversity (e.g., Fisher & Bessire, 2012; Spitulnik, 1999; Tacchi, 2000).

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Not only is there a limited dialogue between these scholarly traditions, but the implications of this gap to the study of radio have not been sufficiently addressed. In this article, I situate this conceptual disparity in a concrete aspect of radio production: the practice of selecting and sequencing the material for the musical broadcast, which I will address alternately as music *programming* and *editing*. I suggest that the gap between structural and phenomenological perspectives to radio is epitomized in the unacknowledged split between programming and editing. Both terms refer to the same *practice* of selecting and sequencing the musical content—a practice performed by either the music presenter/disc jockey or a separate production person. However, I argue that programming and editing reflect distinct organizational logics of music production and, ultimately, distinct logics of communicating and engaging with the community.

Virtually all scholarly articles that address the practice of designing a station's musical broadcast refer to it as *music programming*. This concept apparently emerged in the context of U.S. commercial radio, where marketing considerations encouraged standardization of radio operation. Programmers typically employ a predetermined playlist in accordance with their station's designated music format.<sup>2</sup> The alternative term *music editing* is not employed in radio scholarship, although it is widely used in popular discourse of radio.<sup>3</sup> This disparity and lack of prior academic theorizing poses a challenge for any exposition of the editing logic. Editing connotes closer attention to the grammar of the musical sequence—considering the right linkage or cross between consecutive songs, between a song and a talk item, and between a song and concurrent external events that may concern the audience. Possibly originating in the BBC radio tradition,<sup>4</sup> this logic downplays the broader organizational constraints for choosing songs and foregrounds broader cultural aspects associated with the actual moment of the radio broadcast. Following Hall's (1980) seminal analysis of media "text" production, the meaning of the text received significant scholarly attention, yet the meaning of the "moment of the text" has not. Since contemporary radio employs almost exclusively real-time broadcasting (unlike print, Internet, and much of television programming), this live encounter between producers and audiences requires closer consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> A station's format is strategically chosen as part of a market positioning and can derive from a narrowly specified genre or a set of current hits, such as top 40, or from a broader repertoire, such as adult contemporary. Songs are played repetitively according to a predefined level of (daily or weekly) rotations (Ahlkvist and Fisher, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> A Google search conducted on March 12, 2012, on the terms "music programmer" and "music editor" in association with the term "radio" yielded 121,000 sites for the former and 490,000 sites for the latter (excluding other common associations of both programmer and editor with terms related to computer software, film, video, television, and journalism). In contrast, a scholarly search in social science databases yielded 30 abstracts related to radio in association with music programming but virtually none that referred to music editing.

<sup>4</sup> Narrowing the nonscholarly Internet search described in note 3 to the UK domain yielded "music editor" in 15,500 sites and "music programmer" in only 516 sites (a ratio of 1:30 compared with a ratio of roughly 1:4 in the aforementioned general search). Adding the term "BBC radio" to this UK search yielded similar ratios, with 180 results for "music editor" and only 5 for "music programmer." Given the methodological limitations of a Google search, further study is called for to substantiate the British roots of the editing model.

My initial thoughts about the programming–editing distinction developed during my fieldwork in Israeli radio, where the Hebrew equivalent of *editing* is effectively the only term used to address the sequencing of the musical broadcast. As I reexamined my findings in light of the alternative term *programming*, which prevails in academic writing, I came to realize that beyond the question of semantics, these terms may reflect differing positions and worldviews held, often inadvertently, by media producers.

The argument is presented in the following order. First, I outline the main distinctions between structural and phenomenological perspectives to music radio, as these inform logics of music programming and editing. An overview of the Israeli case study comes next, followed by a description of the ways that local radio personnel use and make sense of programming, editing, and related tropes as distinct organizational logics, often within the same radio station. This provides the basis for a theoretical exposition of music editing, which privileges the moment of the broadcast by attending to semiotic, performative, and temporal contingencies. In conclusion, I suggest that the editing logic engages with collective meanings in ways that may provide one of radio’s last advantages in the changing electronic media.

## Literature Review

### ***Structural Perspectives of Music Radio***

After facing its first central challenge with the advent of television in the 1950s, radio partly turned away from rich verbal content to focus on musical broadcasting (Berland, 1990; Crisell, 2004). The scholarly literature reflects this surge in music radio by focusing primarily on questions of commercialization and institutionalization. Particularly in the American case, where commercial radio broadcasting began as early as the 1920s, rapid development and standardization of musical genres and formats has led to ample research on marketing considerations and processes of institutionalization, such as the development of conventions in the U.S. broadcasting industry (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991), mimetic patterns of new market positioning (Greve, 1996), or predictors of cultural diversity (Lee, 2004). Concerns over ownership consolidation also triggered research on alternatives to corporate-owned stations, such as music broadcasting in locally owned, nonprofit stations (Hubbard, 2010).

These diverse studies reflect a structural perspective to music radio, in that they are mainly concerned with structural constraints in the field, often conceived as a system composed of roles arranged in a sequence (Rothenbuhler, 1985). Specifically, most of these studies correspond to the production-of-culture framework (Peterson, 1979), which considers popular music as an organizational field shaped by institutional constraints such as technological innovations, state regulation, market considerations, the music industry, and professional networks (Dowd, 2004). A closely related framework is that of “art worlds” (Becker, 1982), which lends greater emphasis to cooperative interactions and shared conventions in the field (Sanders, 1982).

Most studies of music programming likewise reflect a structural perspective and adopt the production-of-culture framework, where radio holds a strategic position as “gatekeeper” (Hirsch, 1972) between music producers and local audiences. Programmers serve as a bridge between actors with

disparate interests or viewpoints in the music field by interacting with other mediators and legitimating shared conventions that allow for coordination and cooperation. In particular, when programmers encourage standardized musical preferences among their audiences, and in turn bring audience concerns to the attention of the producers, they facilitate the smooth flow of production in the music field and at the same time contribute to its lack of diversity (Negus, 1993).

Studies in the production-of-culture framework build on neoinstitutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer, 2007) in viewing actors across the field—from artists and record companies to radio stations and audiences—as seeking institutional legitimacy as they rationalize their decisions—for example, when introducing or validating new products or organizational models (Johnson, Dowd, & Ridgeway, 2006). Inherent to production studies, although rarely discussed as such, is the neoinstitutional principle of rationalized actorhood. It considers actors in the field as guided by purposive and rationalized models and scripts, which—irrespective of practical outcomes or demonstrated efficiency—define and legitimate agendas for action and ultimately shape the structures, practices, and policies in the organizational field (Meyer, 2007).

### ***Phenomenological Perspectives of Music Radio***

As early as the 1940s, Adorno famously criticized the role of radio in reinforcing “commodity listening,” such that “music has ceased to be a human force and is consumed like other consumers’ goods.” He further objected to the “exploitive character” of “administrative” market analysis techniques (Adorno, 1945/2004, pp. 211–212). More recently, the production-of-culture framework was criticized for presupposing a linear process rather than a cultural site constituted in and through interpretations and negotiations between producers and audiences (Jensen, 1984). Some studies of radio production attempted to address these concerns by considering radio programmers as “mediators” (Hennion & Meadle, 1986), extending the notion of gatekeeping to the discursive aspects and organizational conventions of the production process. Along these lines, Rothenbuhler (1985) was one of the first to provide an exploratory phenomenological study of radio producers, employing participant observations in an American Midwest rock station. He concluded that radio personnel often disregarded distinct concerns of their local audience in favor of industrywide trends and rationalized their decisions for selecting songs as informed and objective, applying practices such as consulting nationwide trade charts or mimicking selections of competing stations.

Ahlkvist (2001) expanded this type of inquiry to what is perhaps the most systematic phenomenological study of music programming to date. Following in-depth interviews with programmers and directors at 20 U.S. commercial music stations, Ahlkvist delineated four programming philosophies, or knowledge frameworks, from which radio personnel draw their programming strategies. His analysis complemented the conceptual dichotomy between local audience and industry orientation with a second dichotomy between aesthetic and research orientation. It also offered valuable insights about how a station’s choice of a distinct programming philosophy figures in structural considerations such as market size or types of music format.

Despite their phenomenological perspective, studies of programming as mediation reiterated the focus on structural concerns such as technology, regulation, and marketing. In line with the original purpose of the production-of-culture framework to “understand contexts in which cultural symbols are consciously created for sale” (Peterson & Anand, 2004, p. 324), the variable meanings that producers potentially assign to the musical broadcast were confined to those of rationalized actorhood (Meyer, 2007), attending to positions that explicitly encourage or discourage standardization in the field. Given their focus on culture workers, such studies could be enhanced by an interactionist approach to occupational identities, such as Fine’s (1996) study of “occupational rhetorics” that workers strategically employ as a resource to justify their work. While echoing aforementioned orientations among radio producers, rhetorics such as art, professionalism, or business go beyond organizational constraints to culturally available tool kits and could illuminate broader cultural considerations that legitimize radio production.

An alternative line of research to structural perspectives set out to decipher the rich use of radio in everyday life and its role in constructing shared identities (e.g., Douglas, 2004; Tacchi, 1998), building on ethnographic and performative frameworks to the study of popular music (DeNora, 2000; Frith, 1998). The “ethnographic turn” in the study of mass media (Spitulnik, 1993, p. 298) and a growing impetus to map and conceptualize the heterogeneity of audience responses (Hay, Grossberg, and Wartella, 1996; Livingstone, 1998) replaced the notion of organizational field with that of a localized community. This spurred anthropologically oriented research on cultural and political aspects of radio reception, mainly in non-Western societies or among marginalized populations (e.g., Fisher & Bessire, 2012; Spitulnik, 1999). Ethnographic attention to the performative dimension of listening to music foregrounded the emergent contingencies of radio broadcasting. A telling example is Hamm’s (1992) microanalysis of how the naïve lyrics of a pop song by American singer Lionel Richie aired on a South African state radio during the Apartheid era gained unforeseen political meanings among a localized black audience.

However, most of the phenomenological exploration of radio’s engagement with collective meanings attended to verbal content more often than musical content, as the former is taken “to define identity and interests in more explicit ways” (Crisell, 2004, p. vii). This is especially salient in the way scholars have opted to study radio’s involvement in nation-building, often going back to radio’s golden age, when its social and political presence appeared to be more central and was achieved mainly by the spoken word (Liebes, 2006; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991). With music radio taking center stage, there has been little systematic effort to address radio’s changing engagement with collective meanings through popular music. Moreover, because much of the ethnographic scholarship centers on audience reception, the interpretive aspects of the production process have not been sufficiently addressed. To conclude, applying ethnographic-driven phenomenological analysis to radio production could illuminate not only organizational considerations but also broader cultural considerations that inform and legitimize distinct logics of music production and variable modes of engagement with the audience.

### **A Case Study of Privatization Reforms in Israeli Radio**

Between 2004 and 2010, I conducted ethnographic research in Israeli state and regional radio stations. The study focused on the way music radio professionals negotiated new models of commercial

radio and at the same time engaged with their listeners by employing practices of national “engineering” (Kaplan, 2009). Fieldwork was conducted in selected sites that occasioned the association of music broadcasting with Israeli national culture in daily schedules and during events of collective significance. It consisted of: (1) 18 in-depth interviews with music editors, disc jockeys, and radio directors in state network Kol Israel, the military radio, and eight commercial-regional stations; (2) visits to four selected stations for in situ observations of everyday activities and interactions among staff members; (3) listening diaries of music broadcasting by all Hebrew-speaking stations during Memorial Days for Fallen Soldiers; (4) ethnography under fire among selected audiences during the Second Lebanon War (Kaplan & Hirsch, 2012); (5) review of local journal reports and Internet forums addressing changes in radio practices since the advent of the commercial reforms.<sup>5</sup>

Until the 1990s, Israeli radio operated as a public service consisting of the state-run network Kol Israel (Voice of Israel) and the military station (catering also to the general population). Radio played an important role in shaping the national culture, modeled after the BBC tradition as a state apparatus committed to nation-building (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991). British influences go back to the British Mandate government, which ran the first public radio in Palestine. Its Jewish personnel formed the kernel of the ensuing Israeli radio. A conspicuous example of the BBC legacy is the “six pips” Greenwich time signal that is still aired before the hourly news bulletins on all Kol Israel stations. Assuming that the term *music editing* originates in the BBC radio tradition (see note 4), the standard use of this term rather than *music programming* in Israeli radio discourse may be another outcome of the British legacy.

Since the early 1990s, Israeli electronic media underwent decentralization and privatization reforms. In the radio field, 17 privately owned regional stations have been gradually established. The legislature authorized the new stations to provide new niches and address distinctive needs of the community within their designated regions. In practice, however, only 5 stations cater to distinctively differentiated audiences, such as the Palestinian minority of northern Israel, Jewish orthodox audiences, and the sizeable Russian immigrant population. Other regional stations have followed the military and state networks in targeting a relatively undifferentiated Hebrew-speaking audience and offering a mainstream musical repertoire with relatively minor variations between stations.

Private regional stations and public stations alike faced institutional pressures to address perceived commercialization constraints. However, the Israeli field has not become as standardized as is common in the U.S. radio market. The only radio to have adopted a fully standardized format model was, paradoxically, the state-funded military radio. It established in 1993 a substation, Galgalatz, the first radio station in the country to specialize in nonstop pop music combined with traffic reports. Galgalatz soon became Israel’s most listened-to music station. Its programming logic was based on the U.S. format

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<sup>5</sup> Following Giorgi’s (1975) proposal for phenomenological analysis, nonredundant themes were gleaned from the entire material to derive a theory of nomothetic value, attending to organizational practices and to emic interpretations by actors in the field. Fieldwork and interviews were conducted with the assistance of Orit Hirsh and Noa Bergman. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. All source material was translated from Hebrew by the author.

known as adult contemporary,<sup>6</sup> adapted to include a larger portion of contemporary hits targeting the younger soldier and teenager audience and complementing the Anglo-American playlist with a share of Israeli songs with a similar soft rock sound.

In contrast, most of the newly erected private stations opted to avoid a fully standardized nonstop music format. Although they often addressed the playlist practice (employing the original English term), this was often used only for highlighting how they standardized a small number of latest hits to be combined in their otherwise nonstandardized repertoire employed in daily programs of music or talk and music shows.

A good example for the complexities involved in local adaptations of the programming logic is Radio Lev HaMedina (RLH). RLH is a centrally located commercial-regional music-only station that plays exclusively Israeli music. It also designates half of its musical repertoire to a specialized genre, *mizrahi* (eastern) music, influenced by popular Arabic music and formerly excluded from public radio (Regev & Seroussi, 2004). RLH music director described the station in the following way:

This station plays contemporary Israeli music. I mean, if you take foreign stations which I love and cherish . . . if you take the British Radio One or Virgin Radio . . . you'll see that in terms of the playlist what we do is the same . . . the idea is that you try to build a pie of [music] editing, like a marketing pie chart, a plate which has different elements. Usually I try to pick five to six big hits from recent years, one to two different entries from the '80s or '90s, and one to two songs from the station's playlist, the hottest, most recent titles from the last week that the audience has never heard before.

On the one hand, the music director employed a global and commercial vocabulary associated with music programming to describe his station. His passion for British radio had less to do with the BBC tradition of nation-building than with contemporary commercial music formats such as Virgin Radio. Accordingly, his language was replete with marketing idioms, such as describing his musical selections in terms of a "marketing pie."

On the other hand, the station did not adopt a format radio model. Moreover, its specialization in Israeli and particularly *mizrahi* music provided a wide space for interpretation. Thus, in keeping with a typical commercial scheduling model that differentiated between daytime-mainstream versus evening-specialist programming, the station came up with creative aesthetic rules to distinguish between hard-core, traditional *mizrahi* songs, relegated to evening schedules, and the softer *mizrahi* variety, aired during prime-time morning schedules. The result was a gradual pressure toward "light *mizrahi*" songs, diluted from musical and vocal markers of Arab music and repackaged in standardized pop arrangements to meet the challenges of a standardized adult contemporary format in the rival station Galgalatz. Over time, the previously marginalized *mizrahi* music, recast as "Mediterranean pop," became the dominant

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<sup>6</sup> Adult contemporary is one of the most popular formats in the United States, spanning two or three decades of predominantly the soft rock genre and aimed at the 25–49 age range, a sought-after demographic group among advertisers (Greve, 1996).

Israeli genre (Kaplan, 2012). Eventually, as RLH producers “translated” Anglo-American programming notions associated with a marketing “pie” to an Israeli “salad” (to keep with culinary images) they also reshaped local genres along the way.<sup>7</sup>

### **Programming and Editing in Use**

Despite the success of Galgalatz and its format programming and despite the dramatic increase in commercial radio stations, the term *music programmer* never entered Israeli radio discourse, and *music editor*—often renamed *music director* in the smaller commercial stations—have remained the common term. In what follows I describe how local music radio professionals made sense of programming and editing and how these logics and related tropes legitimized their engagement with the audience.

#### ***Weaving Songs Together: The Logic of the “Cross” versus “Crossfade”***

A central task in the sequencing of a music-based broadcast is to link consecutive songs, a linkage referred to as a “cross.” It refers to a common theme, either musical or textual, that forms a smooth transition between songs. Interestingly, although the term used was borrowed directly from the English, I could not find popular or scholarly sources on radio that addressed this usage of *cross* in a non-Israeli context. The major considerations for forming a cross between songs are aesthetic, taking into account musical parameters such as the change of chords, groove, or musical arrangement as well broader parameters of style such as the genre, era, and language of the specified songs. While both the editing and programming logic attempt to maintain a smooth link in the musical sequence, they differ on what a smooth link entails.

The heart of music editing lies in the power to make new associations in the listener’s imagination. A senior editor at Kol Israel described how applying the logic of the cross is crucial to professional editing and sets it apart from other ways of handling music:

In terms of the sequence . . . I work by associations and by musical contexts, melodic, rhythmic, and arrangement-wise. It’s important to preserve something that I think is very important for music editing, which is the crosses, maintaining a link between the song currently on the air and the song that will follow it. Otherwise, what you get is what I call editing from the shelf. Today everyone uses the Internet and can access their music library and edit as they please, so we need to ask how the music editor is different from the average person who loves music.

Although she did not directly differentiate editing from programming, the Kol Israel editor implied that editing crosses is losing ground to the alternative logic, which she compared to the sequencing

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<sup>7</sup> The translation approach in organization studies suggests that local actors actively reshape organizational models as they move across borders (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Frenkel, 2005). This approach replaces static notions of reception or rejection with that of human sense-making and emergent meanings.

accomplished by any music listener who selects songs using Internet digital platforms. Although the industrial logic of professional programming is more structured than recent developments in user-led content production (Bruns, 2008), both turn attention to technical-digital solutions based on software programs that can facilitate the flow of the musical sequence (Hendy, 2000, p. 179) and potentially diminish free associations in crossing songs.

Professional programming, however, goes beyond the selection of songs. It requires expertise in generating a gradual and smooth "ebb and flow of mood, tempo, energy and texture" (Hendy, 2000, p. 176) consistent with the predetermined atmosphere chosen for a given program and, ultimately, for the overall, standardized style of a (format) radio station. Perhaps the most common effect associated with such programming conventions is to insert a short jingle with the station's slogan or other brief messages. Jingles act both as a "framing mechanism" at the beginning or end of a program, setting its style and tone (Crisell, 1994, p. 50), and as "musical stepping stones or gear changes" (Hendy, 2000, p. 175) to assist the musical flow between consecutive songs. Some of these technical effects have been adopted from film and television editing, such as the "crossfade," where one song fades out and dissolves into the subsequent song, or the "segue," an abrupt cut between songs separated by a beat of silence (MacFarland, 1997).

These various effects relieve the programmer from considering an appropriate thematic cross between songs. A music director at Radio Tel Aviv, a talk and music station specializing in current pop music, outlined some of these principles. Having worked previously in both Reshet Gimmel, Kol Israel's music station, and in American and British radio, he offered a broad perspective in identifying key changes in the local field from editing to programming:

During the era of Reshet Gimmel . . . you could tell that their editing made musical connection between songs, whether through a common chord or common themes. As soon as Galgalatz entered the picture, they broke this barrier, and today in Galgalatz there is no connection between one song and another. You could listen to a pop song from the '80s and after that you suddenly hear the Yarkon Bridge Threesome [a Hebrew folk band from the 1960s] with a totally different message; in the past this was not acceptable. . . . But for that reason you have the connecting jingle between songs. . . . The jingle has two functions. One function is to break the musical sequence and the other is to tell the listeners where they're tuned to . . . [The right editing] is more dependent on how the DJ enters the jingle. It has to be entered at the right timing, on the right intro, there's a wide variety of factors in this.

The shift from thematic judgments to technical proficiency exemplifies the changes from editing to programming. The former considers how to create interesting associations between songs, while the latter applies predetermined effects precisely to untie unwarranted associations between songs.

At the same time, one should bear in mind that radio producers may interchangeably employ both logics as a resource to justify their work. Thus, in recent years, Galgalatz directors opted to incorporate more flexible human editing choices in the digital software used by the station for

programming daily schedules, in response to public pressures to provide more nuanced selections in the Hebrew music repertoire offered by Galgalatz.

The art of weaving songs together can extend from musical-aesthetic considerations to textual considerations. Along these lines, another type of cross that exemplifies the editing logic is to consider thematic associations between the lyrics of consecutive songs or to match a theme in a song's lyrics with the content of a talk item that is aired right before or after the song (on talk or news shows). This is precisely where editors begin to exercise their faculty in generating new meanings to popular music. The Kol Israel senior editor elaborated on the typical themes she may pick up when editing music for her talk or news shows:

When I edit the daily news show, I open the program with something that links in my view to what's happening around me. It could be the weather, the number of casualties in a car accident, Left versus Right, returning land for peace or not, [Israel's] relationship with America, with Russia. I simply can't ignore the connection to current affairs . . . or if it's a holiday, or Back to School Day, International Women's Day.

Although the meanings of a song's lyrics are often open-ended or ambivalent, in such circumstances, when a song is linked to a topic under discussion in a talk show, editors can foreground and determine particular meanings. Under the programming logic, in contrast, such preoccupation with thematic crosses between songs and talk items is considered obsolete. As RLH music director put it, selecting a song to create a "winking on a topic" is "sometimes regarded as a little pathetic."

### ***Crossing Between Music and the Community***

The editing logic extends the idea of the cross beyond the linear dimension of the musical or textual sequence to the simultaneous dimension of radio broadcasting and ongoing external occurrences. As the live radio broadcast accompanies the listener in everyday life, it can form connections between the song's lyrics and public events. As hinted at previously by the Kol Israel senior editor, far from becoming obsolete, the faculty of generating associations between sounds and public events may become an important vantage point as radio stations compete with the easy accessibility of unmediated listening to music on the Internet.

Perhaps the most common crossing between music and shared external occurrences involves references to the weather. In Israel's dry climate, spells of rainy weather are met by virtually all music editors with innumerable songs rich with rain imagery. As noted by Morris (2008; following Billig, 1995), by providing regional and countrywide weather reports, radio stations may evoke a sense of national identity so that "even 'the weather,' so familiar and so concrete a concept, is routinely nationalized" (p. 174).

Moreover, Israel's geopolitical circumstances and ongoing military struggles offer music editors additional occasions to refer to the public climate in and through the music broadcast. A telling example is the Israeli rock song "On the Rooftops of Tel Aviv" (Daniel, 1990), which became popular among radio

editors during the outbreak of the First Gulf War in 1991, when Iraqi missiles targeted Tel Aviv. The song's lyrics about singlehood lifestyle and sexual lust and its energetic rock rhythm were far removed from the war experience. But its particular imagery of closed spaces, Tel Aviv rooftops, and a theme of anticipation coincided with the general mood of a population hiding in sealed rooms, at times standing on rooftops in search of missile strikes. Given its war heritage, the song became engraved in collective memory and was celebrated as one of Tel Aviv's hymns during the city's centennial anniversary in 2009.

Another, more systematic, crossing between music and national events manifests itself in the way local radio stations employ a unique practice of mood shifting between everyday life and sacred collective times. Israeli music editors developed a "commemoration mode" of broadcasting, accompanying the unfolding of collective events with a shift of musical genres, rhythms, and atmosphere to reflect changes in the national mood (Kaplan, 2009). This practice is most salient during Memorial Days for Fallen Soldiers and the Holocaust, when virtually all radio stations switch to a nonstop commemorative mode schedule for 24 hours. This repeated, ritualized mode of broadcasting serves to overdetermine the meaning of the selected songs as mnemonic cultural objects, even when the lyrics do not directly address themes of commemoration (Neiger, Meyers, & Zandberg, 2011).

Interestingly, the commemoration mode and associated logic of mood shifting was adopted for use during "cyclic interruptions" of emergency, such as repeated terror attacks. Particularly during the Second Intifada (Palestinian Uprising) characterized by mass suicide bombings with heavy casualties, most radio stations, including commercial stations, responded to the fatal attacks by halting the regular broadcast and switching for a few hours to a commercial-free broadcast of downbeat solemn songs (Kaplan, 2009).

In terms of music editing, the underlying logic during such collective events is identical to that which guides editors in crossing between songs and events in everyday life. Just as rainy weather invokes a cross with songs that convey a rainy mood, disturbances in the national climate may be crossed with songs that reflect a change in the national mood. The main difference is that, whereas weather conditions cannot be simply altered by broadcasting music, music editors consider it their professional duty to alter the national mood during periods of commemoration or crisis and make strategic broadcasting decisions accordingly. The music director of Galgalatz explained:

Radio signifies the national mood. . . . X hours have passed since the terror attack, and we want to return the color to the cheeks, lift the spirit and go back to normal life despite the pain . . . the motivation to make a change is something we need to decide. We need to reach a decision and stick to it.

This example illustrates how even a station committed to format radio such as Galgalatz can suspended its inclusive programming logic and partly switch to editing considerations to address external emergency or commemorative events shared by its audience. While this may not be surprising coming from a military radio, the newly erected commercial-regional stations draw on similar national sentiments despite their commercial basis. A case in point is Red Sea Radio in Eilat. To better prepare its listeners to the sudden change of atmosphere during memorial days, the station refrains from airing commercials two

hours earlier. The station director explained that they get “amazing responses . . . it’s nonstop music with no commercials and the listeners are simply happy, even though the music is of mourning.” Radio stations lose profits from suspending commercials during memorial days and emergency events, but in abiding to the sanctity of these special days of national communion, they gain in public relations all year long.

In this sense, a broadcasting policy that attends to shared norms of the community, such as the ethos of commemoration, can substitute material capital with symbolic capital (Meyers, Zandberg, & Neiger, &, 2009). Even though such a policy may contradict immediate commercial considerations, in the long term, it provides a strategic market positioning for commercial radio. In this respect, one of the potential advantages of music editing over the programming alternative lies in its effort to connect the meanings of the live musical broadcast with the perceived needs of the community, as I discuss below.

### **Discussion: Editing the Moment of the Broadcast**

The examples above of programming and editing in use underscore how the editing logic downplays structural-organizational considerations when designing a musical broadcast and directs attention to the moment of the broadcast itself. A good starting point for this discussion is Hall’s (1980) analysis of the production and reception of a media text as an interpretive, ideological-laden process of encoding and decoding. Originally applied to television broadcasting and better known for its suggestion of dominant and oppositional audience readings in the moment of decoding, Hall’s analysis also addressed the encoding process, understood as the interplay between relations of production, technical infrastructure, and discursive frameworks of knowledge. This attention to both interpretive and institutional aspects of production foreshadows a similar focus in the aforementioned studies of music programming as mediation.

Both programming and editing refer to the encoding stage. However, editing is more attentive to the “moment of the text”—an ambiguous aspect of Hall’s encoding/decoding paradigm, understood as the “symbolic construction, arrangement and perhaps performance . . . the form and content of what is published or broadcast” (Corner, 1983, p. 267). Scholars have devoted significant attention to the ways that media producers encode preferred forms and contents in the meaning of the “text,” particularly in the semiotically richer setting of television broadcasting (e.g., Allan, 1998). Yet, for our current purposes, more should be said about the meaning of the “moment of the text.” I discuss this encounter between producers and their audience in terms of semiotics, performativity, and temporal considerations.

### ***Semiotic Considerations***

Music editors epitomize the semiotic perspective in considering radio music as text. They attend to the “grammar” of the musical sequence by employing syntagmatic considerations in connecting songs to one another and paradigmatic considerations in choosing songs in association with external events. Instead of selecting songs according to a prearranged playlist, the epitome of programming, this mode of selection according to rules of combination (Saussure, 1974) provides a fertile ground for assigning meanings to radio music. Where radio programmers apply technical effects to untie unwarranted associations between songs, associations that might burden the smooth stream of the musical

transmission, the editor's attention is directed precisely to forming creative ties between songs and between a song and nonmusical events to encode and determine intended associations.

For this reason, the logic of cross is central to editing. Moreover, editors extend this logic from the linear associations between consecutive songs to simultaneous associations between the musical broadcast and concurrent external events that are shared (or imagined to be shared) by the audience. Given the scholarly focus on programming, much more research is required to map and delineate the range of thematic parameters that music editors in various radio fields and cultural contexts employ when crossing songs.

### ***Performative Considerations***

Although Hall's discussion of encoding addressed mainly linguistic rather than musical content, it may provide a useful theoretical framework for thinking about the ways that music editors negotiate, or "articulate" social practices in ways that engender emergent meanings.<sup>8</sup> In this, I draw on the study of popular music as a "performing rite" (Frith, 1998). The combination of a song's lyrics, its musical parameters, the singer's personality and biographical "voice," the context of the performance, and the listeners' modes of attention are all open to multiple spheres of meaning. Thus, lyrics in performance function as "speech acts": "Song words are not about ideas ('content') but about their expression" (Frith, 1998, p. 164). Frith further notes how this expression is dependent on variable readings of the performance and the changing circumstances of repeated performances, as exemplified in the Israeli case. By repeatedly juxtaposing songs with external events set in ritualized settings, such as memorial days and cyclic interruptions of emergency, selected songs gained unforeseen, emergent social and political meanings.

Since broadcasting is situated in this broader performative context, radio scholars have often dismissed Hall's semiological analysis for ignoring the variable audience distractions that are inherent to the very function of radio (Scannell, 1991). Even Crisell (1994, p. 49), who employed semiotic analysis in the study of talk and music radio, downplayed its usefulness in analyzing pure musical schedules, arguing that the open-ended meaning of radio music renders it "unilluminating," as it "refers scarcely at all to anything outside itself, and is therefore one code which is not distinctively shaped by radio itself."

However, although music broadcasters cannot quite determine the meaning of songs that are ultimately assimilated by listeners to their own thoughts and moods, the position of music editors in assuming such a role is in itself a source of performative, emergent meanings, precisely because they presuppose a relatively unified audience response. As demonstrated in the Israeli case, editors consider

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<sup>8</sup> Hall's encoding/decoding paradigm has been criticized for treating the mediated text or broadcast as a "fixed" semiotic construction of sender-receiver based on predetermined preferred meanings (Spitulnik, 1993). Against this criticism, Pillai (1992) discussed how Hall partly addressed the problem of fixed determinations by offering an (undertheorized) conception of the "moment of articulation," providing some leeway for new meanings to emerge as dominant ideologies could be articulated and rearticulated by subjects through discursive social practices.

themselves as engineers of collective identification, encoding well-rehearsed national narratives in ways that not only reproduce the dominant ideology but also serve to produce it anew, and from the bottom up.

Whereas the meaning of news and talk programs can be conveyed explicitly and independent of broadcasting contingencies, and in this sense can be easily replaced by other media, a musical broadcast may raise particular interpretations only in juxtaposition to nonrecurring experiences shared by the audience during the time of the transmission. It is precisely this irreplaceable and context-dependent quality of live music radio that renders it a potentially powerful vehicle for forming new collective associations for popular music.

### ***Temporal Considerations***

The cultural paradigm in media studies underscores the ceremonial aspects of mass communication and its role in drawing people together. It is directed “not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time” (Carey, 1989, p. 18). Popular music can likewise play a role as “a device for social ordering [and] occasioning” (DeNora, 2000, p. 110). The editing model applies these social-temporal considerations to music radio by considering the broadcast as a mediated social event. Although radio broadcasting is associated primarily with the continuous flow of everyday life (Scannell, 1988), it can also attend to the interrupted, ceremonial production of “media events” (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Music editing is better suited than programming to address the latter form of production. It poses a deliberate engagement with the unfolding of shared events, often encoding well-rehearsed collective narratives and summoning shared values of the community.

This ceremonial function of simultaneity is highlighted in Anderson’s (1991) seminal analysis of the newspaper reading ritual as a formative instance for imagining the national community. Radio (as well as live television) provides an even stronger case for this simultaneity (see also Douglas, 2004, p. 23). Unlike print and Internet media, it imposes a uniform pace to engage collectively with the unfolding of events. The very notion of a live broadcast captures this sense of a combination of people and events moving jointly as one living social body. Along these lines, scholars have noted how radio and partly television broadcasting generates collectively shared rhythms for patterning routine, daily schedules as well as for the celebration of special occasions, all of which sustain a sense of national community (Edensor, 2006; Scannell, 1988). It is here that music editing holds a strategic position, not only in that it parallels the national calendar (Scannell, 1988) but also in assigning—or rather, *inscribing*—collective meaning to shared time. The Israeli case illustrates how Israeli stations apply this strategic position through the practice of mood shifting, bestowing a sense of sacredness to times of commemoration and emergency (Kaplan, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

Most of the media scholarship on radio has privileged either processes of production, typically through structural perspectives, or those of reception, studied mainly through phenomenological perspectives. Partly because of the conceptual rupture between these distinct perspectives, scholars have

failed to notice a related distinction within the actual organizational field of radio between two distinct logics for designing the musical broadcast: programming and editing.

Programming underscores the production of predetermined playlists, often according to designated formats. It conceives of audience tastes as products to be delivered to marketers and pays little attention to emergent meanings on the reception end. It follows the logic of neoinstitutional theory in attending to questions of rationalization and standardization.

In contrast, the editing model privileges the actual moment of broadcasting, a moment that has not received sufficient theoretical attention. Editors juxtapose music with nonmusical themes and external events set in a widely shared context, attending to semiotic, performative, and temporal contingencies of the musical broadcast. Although editors cannot predict emergent interpretations, they aim to engineer preferred structures of meaning for their listeners, conceived as a relatively unified audience that shares not only musical tastes but also social and cultural norms. In this sense, the editing logic could be more readily employed in community-oriented radio, which promotes civic concerns, is highly responsive to audience needs and to direct feedback (Rothenbuhler, 1985), and is typically identified with nonprofit broadcasting (Hubbard, 2010).

Although the proposed distinction between music editing and programming relates to central dichotomies in radio studies such as community versus industry orientation or aesthetic-artistic versus scientific-commercial orientation (Ahlkvist, 2001; Rothenbuhler, 1985), it should not be reduced to these essentially structural considerations. First, there is no direct overlap between a station's structural characteristics and its use of one of these music-broadcasting logics. Following Fine's (1996) occupational rhetorics approach, both logics could be interchangeably employed by producers in a single radio station, whether commercial or public, countrywide or regional, as a resource to justify their work, depending on varying circumstantial and cultural constraints. More localized research is called for to explore how these alternative logics—particularly the unacknowledged and understudied editing logic—play out in other radio fields.

Second, the thrust of the editing-programming distinction lies not in structural constraints but in phenomenology. In particular, the phenomenology of editing encapsulates not only the idea of thematically linking songs to one another but of actively interpreting social and political life, crisscrossing and weaving songs to the very fabric of the community. As editors imagine a unified community rather than market niches, this imagined community may extend to a countrywide audience, otherwise known as the nation.

Finally, the human sense-making faculty underlying the editing logic should be reexamined in light of new developments in digital and Internet radio platforms. The music programming logic adheres to standardized and predetermined procedures, and in this sense readily coincides with digital software technologies for selecting and delivering music. Yet as media scholars explore the ways that digital radio also responds to diversifying community needs (Tacchi, 2000) and encourages bottom-up, user-led content production (Bruns, 2008; Flew, 2010), they should also consider the importance of a highly flexible, real-time, context-dependent form of music delivery reflected in the editing logic.

As suggested by Percival (2007, pp. 55–56), even though digital technologies are changing the landscape of production and enable “asynchronous” listening patterns (e.g., Internet audio streaming) audience demand for context-dependent contingencies of synchronous, live radio seems to have actually increased rather than decreased. Radio can benefit from cultivating and sustaining such irreplaceable practices that reinforce its role as an interpreter of collective time for small or large communities alike. In this respect, the music editing model may provide a strategic market positioning and one of radio’s last advantages in the changing electronic media.

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