

**Making Waves Behind Bars:
The Story of the Prison Radio Association**

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ABSTRACT

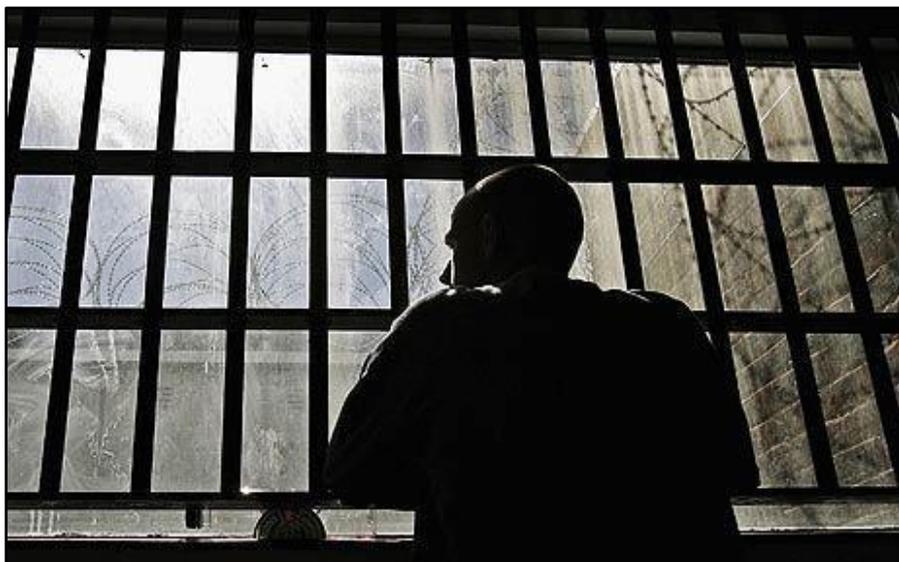
Prison radio is a particularly valuable contribution to the investigation of opportunities for social activism and the potential of radio for social change, able to support prisoners through their sentences and contribute to reducing re-offending. This study is the first to document the growth of UK prison radio, focusing on the accounts of the people involved in the formation of the Prison Radio Association (PRA). Established in 2006, the PRA was the first organisation of its kind internationally. Initially set up to network and support individual prison radio projects, it has now grown to the extent of creating and managing the world's first National Prison Radio service. This research outlines the process through which relatively small-scale media activism, based on prisoners' rights, came to be an intrinsic part of prison culture, playing a central role in institutional operations. It considers prison radio growth within the context of the economic reworking of broadcasting, prisons, and social activism in post-Thatcher Britain, acknowledging the emergence of the PRA as both a product of New Labour technologies of governance and of the counter-discursive opportunities they produced. Against a backdrop of public service privatisation and media commercialisation, the development of the PRA illustrates the complex processes of working in partnership with institutions and agencies to develop a prisoner-led service. It is a story which highlights the enduring importance of social values in broadcasting, represents new opportunities for social activism, and presents radio as a powerful force for social change.

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Show me a prison,
Show me a jail,
Show me a prison man,
Whose face is growing pale,
And I'll show you a young man,
With many reasons why,
And there but for fortune,
May go you or I.

Phil Ochs



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Prison radio is a particularly valuable contribution to the investigation of opportunities for social activism and the potential of radio for social change, able to support prisoners through their sentences and contribute to reducing re-offending. This study is the first to document the growth of UK prison radio, focusing on the accounts of the people involved in the formation of the Prison Radio Association (PRA). The PRA was established in 2006, initially set up to network and support individual prison radio projects, it has now grown to the extent of creating and managing the world's first National Prison Radio service. This work examines the process through which relatively small-scale media activism, based on prisoners' rights, came to be an intrinsic part of prison culture, playing a central role in institutional operations. It considers prison radio growth within the context of political and economic change, and argues that the successful development of an independent, prisoner-led service represents resistance against the forces of marketisation and managerialism that have redefined the organisation and function of broadcasting, punishment and social welfare. It is a story which highlights the enduring importance of social values in broadcasting, represents new opportunities for social activism, and presents radio as a powerful force for social change.

As the first historical analysis of early PRA development, this study brings together a body of references to inform future research and practice in a growing and productive field. Yet before detailing the focus, structure and theoretical framework of the research, an overview of the PRA story serves to clarify what is meant by prison radio in this context and sets the scene for the following analysis.

Making Waves Behind Bars – The Story of the Prison Radio Association

About 70 or 80 boys arrive each day in big buses. You are stripped, given a number, a box of clothes. You are put in a large room with 60 other boys, big guys staring at you. There's a lot of friction when you arrive and you've got to front it out. If you sit in a corner with your head down they will pick on you for sure....if you show fear your card is marked. I've seen guys with fear in their eyes...you get smashed around the head, sent to hospital and you're back on the wing the same night... Some of the boys are so frightened they won't come out of their cells (Sim 1994:104).

This prisoner account provides a vivid description of the systemic culture of violence within Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Feltham, West London, in March 1992. Four prisoners had killed themselves in the previous seven months and an additional forty prisoners were attempting suicide each month amid an "atmosphere of terror" (Sim 1994:104).

When asked where the idea for prison radio came from, founder, Mark Robinson, refers to the media coverage of high suicide and self-injury rates at the prison, which was close to where he lived (27.11.12). He talks of his chance involvement with hospital radio fundraising at the time, and of having the idea that prison radio could work in much the same way, helping to keep prisoners company when they were at their most vulnerable in their cells alone at night. After gaining the enthusiastic support of the prison governor, who was all too happy to take on any new ideas and support to address the problems faced, Mark Robinson enlisted the help of his friend and neighbour, Roma Hooper. When asked to reflect on her first engagement with prison radio she recalls the summer afternoon that he knocked on her door to ask for help with fundraising (27.11.12). She describes prisons as not having been "on my radar at all", and after visiting HMYOI Feltham, talks of being struck by the realisation

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that the prisoners were “just children” (27.11.12). They were locked up for long periods of time with little or no human contact, and limited access to activities or even television – from Hooper’s perspective, radio was a clear way for children in custody to maintain contact with the outside world (27.11.12).

Forward to 2006, and a large room in the education block of Her Majesty’s Prison (HMP) Birmingham, an imposing Victorian built local prison housing almost fifteen hundred adult remand and sentenced male prisoners. The room was filled to capacity with managers from prisons around the country together with senior representatives from criminal justice agencies, voluntary and education sector organisations and the BBC. For the majority of the media and external agency representatives, it was the first time they had visited a prison, leaving mobile telephones behind, experiencing the complex security procedures of entering the ‘airlock’ doors, being searched, and waiting patiently while numerous gates were unlocked and locked on the slow transit through the building. Guests were gathered for the official launch of the Prison Radio Association (PRA) and to hear about the work of a pilot project run in partnership with the BBC.

The accompanying CD, *Making Waves Behind Bars*, showcases audio produced by and with

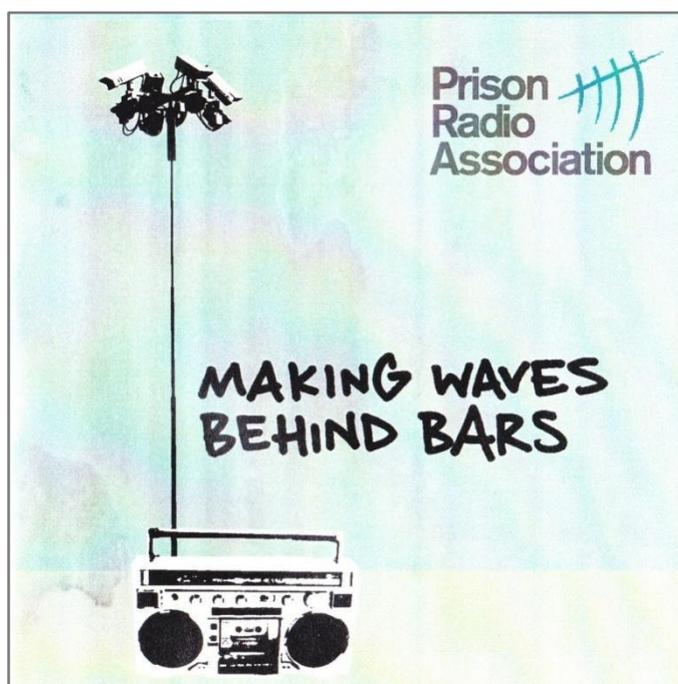


Figure 1: PRA Launch CD Cover, Making Waves Behind Bars, PRA 2006

Making Waves Behind Bars – The Story of the Prison Radio Association

prisoners from three prisons and includes a range of features addressing the question *Does Prison Work?*, together with a story on being *Inside at Christmas*, and *The Family Man* documentary and drama written and performed by prisoners (PRA 2006).

When asked to reflect on the development of the PRA, Chief Executive Phil Maguire, describes the project as a major turning point for prison radio, moving from “lads spinning records and doing shout-outs to their friends”, to a focus on speech-based content, “it became about offering an innovative way of drawing educationally hard to reach prisoners back into the classroom” (28.11.12).

In November of the following year, visitors were assembled for a similar event in a room at HMP Brixton in London. This time, a range of high profile figures attended the launch of the PRA’s flagship radio station, Electric Radio Brixton, including representatives from the newly formed Ministry of Justice, recently restructured

National Offender Management Service, and musicians Billy Bragg and Mick Jones on behalf of their charity, *Jail Guitar Doors*. It was here that Phil Maguire first pitched the next major stage of development for the Prison Radio Association, the idea of a national prison radio service (28.11.12).



Figure 2: ERB Launch CD Cover, signed by Billy Bragg and Mick Jones, PRA 200

Making Waves Behind Bars – The Story of the Prison Radio Association

From a focus on working with small groups of prisoners to make radio, Electric Radio Brixton demonstrated the potential for programming to impact not only upon the lives of the HMP Brixton audience, but over eighty thousand prisoners across England and Wales.

Less than three years after the original pitch, the roll-out of National Prison Radio had begun. Prison radio gained wider radio industry recognition in 2009, with Electric Radio Brixton beating mainstream networks to win four prestigious Sony Radio Academy Awards, a pattern that has continued each year since. Later in the same year, Electric Radio Brixton was relaunched as National Prison Radio, and now broadcasts to over one hundred prisons, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week through in-cell television, with the latest impact study showing that:

- 84% of prisoners listen for an average of 8.1 hours per week
- 85% of listeners say they have heard something which has increased their awareness of support services in prison
- 69% claim to have heard something that has made them think about making a positive change to their lives (PRA 2014).

The Research Focus

The events described above illustrate critical stages in the history of radio broadcast for and by prisoners:

- 1994 the beginning of Radio Feltham
- 2006 the establishment of the PRA as a charity
- 2007 the launch of Electric Radio Brixton
- 2009 the creation of National Prison Radio

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From the launch of the PRA in 2006 to the roll-out of a national service in 2009, the rapid pace of change is strikingly apparent. This period of intense growth is the focus of this study. It is also a period in which the researcher played a role as a prison radio practitioner, a position which has shaped the direction of the research project.

Through my role as regional manager for a media training charity, I was approached to bring an education focus to the original West Midlands prison radio pilot project in 2005. As the PRA became established, I moved into the organisation's second staff role, employed as Education Director to manage a two-year training pilot before a planned move to Australia. I have worked and volunteered in community radio since the early 1980s and continue to be enthused and energised by the role radio can play in giving a voice to the most excluded, underrepresented and misrepresented people in society. My experience as a member of the founding PRA team remains the most prominent example of this. After immigrating to Australia, I observed the relationship between radio and prisons within a dramatically different setting and soon became aware of the vast array of diverse factors involved in the PRA story. As a result, when I set out to explore the unique conditions and contexts of UK prison radio, I used and positioned my knowledge as a researcher in order to understand the possibilities of replicating and adapting future models.

The PRA is the first organisation of its kind internationally, stating their core aim as contributing to the reduction of re-offending through "the power of radio" (PRA 2014). The management of National Prison Radio in partnership with the National Offender Management Service remains their core function, together with supporting prison radio projects around the world and a more recent focus on producing prison-related

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audio for a range of clients, including the BBC. In the relatively short period since becoming established as a charitable organisation in 2006, the PRA has developed its services, audience and reputation at a rate that comparative non-mainstream media projects have struggled to achieve. This research shows that it is a trajectory that can be mapped against shifts in the political and cultural landscape, related to significant changes in the ways that broadcasting, criminal justice and social welfare are organised and conceptualised.

Context

Radio is undergoing a dramatic transformation shaped by developments in digital technology and redefined in the era of participatory media. As media institutions struggle to justify their positions in the face of a seemingly endless array of diverse platforms and content, radio has risen to the challenge most successfully through digital radio and online formats. Radio remains relatively affordable to make, transmit, and listen to, contributing to its enduring position as the most pervasive and democratic media worldwide (Hendy 2000), able to reach the most geographically and socially isolated locations in society (Tacchi 2000), including prisons. Equally, prison radio has emerged from a contradictory media landscape characterised by the contrast between increasing commercialism and concentration of mainstream media power on the one hand; and the democratisation and expansion of non-mainstream media on the other. Where mainstream media, “has never been more in thrall to corporate power, and has never been less trusted by its readers and viewers”, media outside the mainstream has increased dramatically (Waltz 2005:1). The positioning of prison radio between mainstream, institutionalised broadcasting, and alternative, independent

media, is a recurring theme throughout the study, a position which highlights the complexities of understanding radio that contributes equally to the functioning of prison as an institution of the state, and to the activist aims of empowering prisoners with a voice.

Similarly, the prison context is a shifting and controversial landscape. “The prison institution has always been a focus of concern and debate” (Foucault 1977:235), one which polarises public opinion, political discourse and academic debate like no other. Debate around rehabilitation and punishment has become increasingly politicised in recent decades, whilst prisons have become more visible than ever, not least through the proliferation of crime-related mass media news, reality shows and dramas. Yet prison remains a mysterious and mythologised space, represented through a simplified discourse of danger that fails to ask questions around prisoner treatment, prisoner rights and whether prison even works as a solution to crime. The role of prison is widely recognised as suffering from ongoing and deepening crisis (Sim 2009), failing to function as a solution to the problems of crime and crime control in society. As French sociologist Loïc Wacquant so eloquently argues,

We must theorise the prison not as a technical implement of law enforcement, but as a core political capacity whose selective and aggressive deployment in the lower regions of social space violates the ideals of democratic citizenship (2010:197).

Outdated and inadequate facilities and rapidly increasing prisoner numbers have impacted on institutional operations, whilst a process of privatisation and spread of managerialism have contributed to a crisis of legitimacy, raising questions about the function and efficacy of current approaches to crime and punishment and leading to a

seemingly constant stream of interventions to address the problems faced. Again, the landscape is one of contradictions, characterised by increasingly punitive political discourse and policy reform on the one hand, and a language of rehabilitation that has come to shape criminal justice practice on the other.

Where radio is concerned with communication and information, prison remains an isolated and misunderstood space. I was particularly interested in the ways in which the two things came together and how radio came to be used to make changes within the prison environment. In the following chapters, I examine the growth of the PRA in relation to the wider political and cultural context of a particular moment in time.

Prison radio is considered simultaneously as both a product of, and reaction against, multiple juxtapositions which have transformed the ways in which prisons, non-commercial broadcasting and social welfare are conceptualised. I argue that prison radio is connected to changes in the role, function and organisation of prisons and broadcasting, related to the spread of marketised and managerial discourse and practice, an issue which I shall outline more fully in the next section.

Chapter Overview

This research explores the ways in which radio came to be used in prisons through a study of the different contexts and conditions from which prison radio emerged and became established. A significant theme for analysis and understanding is the complex process through which relatively small-scale grassroots media activism based on the treatment of prisoners came to be an intrinsic part of prison culture, playing a central role in institutional operations. My work focuses on the way in which prison radio

became established, the process through which spontaneous activism became formalised, and the relationships that made it happen.

To this end, the research draws primarily on the reflective accounts of the people involved in the early stages of prison radio development, including the volunteer founders of Radio Feltham and the key players responsible for establishing the PRA and Electric Radio Brixton. This does not extend to the perspectives of the prisoners involved, work which would have been structured around the unique ethical and practical considerations of research in prisons. Instead, the aim is to understand the motivations and experiences of those driven to change the lives of prisoners from the outside. The themes identified within the interviews led to the exploration of secondary texts including newspaper coverage, policy documents and radio content. The examination of participant accounts as discursive and representational practices draws upon Foucault's notion of discourse as that which constructs knowledge and meaning (2002 [1972]). As Stuart Hall suggests, discourse "governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about" (1997:15). Consequently, meaning is transient, fixed only by discursive and representational practices at a particular moment (Mason 2006:253).

A focus on discourse in both theory and method has shaped the research process, recognising that the ways in which PRA founders and practitioners reflect on their experiences and make sense of what they do defines the activity. In addition, analysis of newspaper coverage of prison radio-related issues at the time, and a later National Prison Radio programme, considers prison radio as regime of representation, contributing to wider discourse on imprisonment that creates new meanings around

prison and prisoners. As Paul Mason demonstrates, it is an approach which recognises that “while objects exist outside of discourse, it is only through discourse that knowledge and meaning are produced” (2006:253). The thesis is divided into two sections. Part One presents an analysis of the literature relating to the rapidly changing contexts of broadcasting, prisons and social action.

This discussion provides a framework for Part Two, from which to understand the most prominent themes drawn from interviews with PRA participants. It is a historical reflection that attempts to unpick and understand the significance of the factors involved in order to define whether the resulting prison radio model is unique to the political and institutional conditions of the UK in the late 1990s/early 2000s and which factors (if any), can be replicated.

Part One

Prison radio is a relatively new and unexplored phenomenon in media studies. As such, there are very few explicitly relevant texts to which a researcher can turn. Instead, ideas which relate more broadly to the relationship between radio and social change prove useful. Part of the contribution of this work is to bring together a body of references, marking the first step in the analysis of a growing and productive field for the future. To this end, the review of literature is divided into three main themes which focus on the changing contexts of broadcasting, prison and social activism. In Chapter Two, the PRA belief in the transformative “power of radio” provides a starting point from which to examine the broadcast context. The chapter considers the complex historical relationship between government, radio and social change before discussing contemporary issues around non-mainstream, non-commercial radio. In particular, this

highlights the unique positioning of prison radio, relating at once to alternative, grassroots media to empower a misrepresented group, and to the changing institutional role and function of the BBC.

Chapter Three then turns to changes in theories relating to the penal context in order to understand prison as an environment in which radio can develop and contribute. In particular, I draw upon the Foucauldian theory of governmentality, relating prison radio to the complex ways in which prison functions as a technology of responsabilisation. Prison radio is considered as a product of the neoliberal prison, connected to the ongoing process of privatisation and the 'businessification' of punishment, representing an innovative, enterprising and relatively low cost solution to managing the prison population. Yet equally, I argue that PRA discourse and practice prioritises prisoner involvement and empowerment, representing resistance against increasingly punitive attitudes towards the problems of crime.

For the final theme of the literature section, Chapter Four focuses on motivations, characteristics and objectives of those involved in establishing the PRA. From the volunteer beginnings of Radio Feltham to the role of the PRA as a non-profit sector service provider within the prison system, the growth of prison radio is mapped against shifts in social policy reform which have redefined and repositioned the role of the non-profit sector. Theories of volunteerism and social activism frame the discussion of early, informal activity whilst the formal establishment of the PRA demonstrates the merging of these themes with the rise of social enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Part Two

The second section begins with Chapter Five, which outlines the research methods used and focuses on the methodological challenges and opportunities faced by the insider researcher. The findings are then divided into two prominent themes identified throughout the accounts of PRA participants:

- The partnerships and institutional arrangements involved in the process;
- The management of perceptions and assumptions about prison radio which have influenced the process.

In Chapter Six, two key partnership projects are identified as launching and shaping the PRA in the earliest stages. Firstly, the role of the BBC is examined in facilitating a regional prison radio pilot project that led to the formalisation of the PRA. This is followed by discussion of a prison radio education project run in partnership with a range of prisons, state and voluntary sector agencies, and education and broadcast partners. The examples illustrate the changing relationship between government, public sector and social welfare based on cross-sectoral partnerships. These relationships are presented as central to the neoliberal notion of 'government-at-a-distance' (Rose & Miller 1990). Again, prison radio is considered as connected to increasingly complex technologies of control whilst simultaneously representing resistance. Ultimately, it is argued that the PRA's commitment to facilitating prisoner engagement and agency through radio is indicative of continued opportunities for social activism and highlights the importance of maintaining independence.

Chapter Seven builds on the theme of managing institutional relationships. Here attention turns to the ways in which PRA founders and practitioners responded to

negative perceptions and assumptions about the prison radio concept as the activity developed. This is examined from the perspectives of those working within the prison system and in the outside world. Again, two key examples are used to illustrate the challenges faced. Firstly, an analysis of mainstream print media coverage of stories relating to prison radio shows the ways in which the PRA developed and managed a media strategy to reduce reputational risk. This is followed by discussion of a more recent stage in the growth of prison radio. An analysis of the *Face to Face* restorative justice programme, broadcast on National Prison Radio in 2012, illustrates a shift in the wider acceptance and legitimacy of prison radio.

The following chapter begins the analysis of literature which frames the later presentation of participant reflections on how radio came to be used in prison. Starting with a focus on radio, I relate prison radio growth to dramatic changes in the ways the broadcasting, prisons and social activism are organised and conceptualised and argue that the development of an independent, prisoner-led service represents resistance against the managerial and economic rationalities which have redefined all three arenas. In the first study to document the growth of UK prison radio, tell the stories of those involved, and bring together a body of references to assist further research, the recollections of PRA participants illustrate the complex processes through which grassroots media activism grew to be a recognised and established part of prison culture. The success of the PRA model lies in independence and the ability to balance dual, seemingly contradictory functions, linked to prison management and state control whilst simultaneously, remaining based in social activism, empowering prisoners with a voice.

CHAPTER 2: “THE POWER OF RADIO” – RADIO & SOCIAL CHANGE

The Prison Radio Association (PRA) states their core aim as contributing to the reduction of re-offending through “the power of radio” (PRA 2014). I use this statement as a starting point from which to explore the key ideas around radio as a socially and individually transformative medium in order to underpin the understanding of how it came to be used in prison. Through discussion of existing literature, this chapter outlines the shifting relationship between radio broadcasting and social change and argues that the evolution and establishment of radio within prisons is indicative of new opportunities for media activism, demonstrating the enduring social relevance and impact of radio.

As a relatively new and unexplored phenomenon, there are limited texts which directly address the use of radio in prisons. Heather Anderson’s study of community radio programming for prisoners in Australia and Canada provides the most thorough analysis to date, considering engagement with radio as a form of citizenship, reconnecting prisoners with families and communities (2011). Similarly, Tiziano Bonini and Mara Perrotta’s study of radio listening experiences inside an Italian prison presents radio as a form of civil engagement and connection with the outside world (2007). Underpinning both is the assumption that effective and sustainable rehabilitation is dependent on reintegration, community participation and connection rather than exclusion and isolation. In the following chapter, I explore the ways in which prison radio reflects and contributes to the rehabilitation focus of contemporary prison discourse and practice. Yet before tackling the complexities of the penal

context, I examine the link between radio and the concepts of democracy and citizenship which are used to support claims of rehabilitatory and social impact.

Prison radio is a unique format, made for, by and with prisoners. This chapter places its development within the wider broadcast context, related to the dramatic changes that continue to shape the form, function and future of radio. The unique position of prison radio is a central theme throughout this study, relating at once to institutional and governmental roles whilst equally framed in a commitment to prisoners' rights. In later chapters I outline key developmental stages in the PRA story, demonstrating the extent to which prison radio discourse and practice remains rooted in social activism and highlighting the importance of organisational independence in the process. In this chapter, I place PRA development within a wider debate on the history and future of non-commercial broadcasting, based on the balance between governmental regulation and control on the one hand and the counter-cultural opportunities it produces on the other.

Media texts not only contain entertainment and information, but function as the means through which, "our mediated culture itself is produced, consumed and recycled" (Waltz 2005:x). With the increase of corporate ownership, the range of voices heard within the mainstream decreases, and whether despite, or because of this, alternative and activist media continue to flourish, "opening cracks in the mass-media monolith through which strange flowers grow" (Waltz 2005:x).

Prison radio can be considered as one such flower, yet the 'alternative' label alone fails to encompass its institutional function, developed and delivered through state and public sector partnerships. As non-profit, socially-motivated media that focuses on the

voices, representations and empowerment of a marginalised and disenfranchised group, prison radio relates to theoretical discussion of alternative, activist, citizens', and community radio. However, partnership working with both the Prison Service and the BBC equally connect the development of the PRA to institutional, mainstream media.

Developing through the late 1990s and early 2000s, the convergence of two themes within the non-commercial media sector impacted on the establishment of the PRA:

- An increasingly regulated, formalised and professionalised community radio sector, repositioned as a public service with a key community development role
- An increasingly deregulated, managerialised and marketised Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) sector, struggling to redefine and justify its role through a reinvigorated focus on community engagement.

Firstly, I outline the unique challenges of radio theory before going on to establish the long-standing relationship between radio and social control through discussion of early broadcast development and regulation. I then address the dramatic changes that define the contemporary non-commercial media landscape and consider the development of prison radio within the context of both PSB and alternative media theory, highlighting the challenges in applying normative labels to the prison radio format.

A Misunderstood Medium

Prison radio is situated within the broader tradition of radio theory. The PRA case reflects the challenges of theorising, categorising and defining radio within a rapidly changing mediascape. In the global information age where digital technology and the internet are transforming the media landscape on a seemingly daily basis, and many

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media institutions are struggling to survive, radio has risen to the challenge most successfully, building on the listener relationship and embracing ideas of participation and involvement. In an age where consumers have infinite options through which to personalise their media choices, radio retains a deeply personal and intimate quality, building a unique relationship with each listener. In addition, the relative affordability and accessibility of production and broadcast technologies have ensured that radio continues to build on its democratic credentials, with the ability to reach and empower the most geographically remote and socially isolated spaces in society.

When asked to consider ‘why radio?’ PRA Chief Executive, Maguire, describes it as an intensely personal medium, one that people instinctively understand (28.11.12). Yet despite this connection, and brief resurgences in interest, radio remains a relatively ‘invisible medium’ (Lewis & Booth 1989) taking second place to television, not only for producers and consumers, but in academic and policy arenas. Peter Lewis bemoans the low cultural status of sound and radio, highlighting a gap between private experience and public status (2000). The private, intimate nature of radio has resulted in it becoming a ‘secret pleasure’ that needs no explanation or discussion in the public sphere, “the intimate things it does for us as a friend, trusted informant and soundtrack for living, are almost literally unmentionable in public” (2000:161).

Lewis presents an emotive portrayal of the intimacy of our relationship with radio. It is this personal, private nature of the medium which illustrates its value within a prison, representing a moment of personal freedom where personal space and privacy are stripped away. Jo Tacchi’s anthropological investigation into this relationship stresses radio’s impact on emotions, its ability to retain or alter mood, and to be emotionally

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evocative and reassuring (2000). Prisoners are isolated, not only in the physical sense of being locked in a cell, but through separation from family and support networks, and often through the barriers they create as a form of self-preservation within the loud, intimidating, and aggressive setting of the prison (Wilkie 28.11.12). Therefore, where emotional support is limited, the ‘trusted friend’ status of radio has the potential to offer comfort, raise morale and provide a sense of stability.

Yet whilst the ability to easily connect with radio supports its role in prisons, it equally contributes to the relative neglect of the medium politically, culturally and academically. Radio is ubiquitous and pervasive, and has become naturalised, “so much so that it is difficult to establish its significance” (Tacchi 2000:290). The growth of the internet, developments in digital production and distribution technologies, and related political and regulatory changes across the media industries during the late 1990s and 2000s sparked debate on the future of radio with the subject enjoying a resurgence of research interest. Writing at the time, Lewis argues the need to recognise and consider radio in its own terms rather than as an add-on to established media and cultural studies traditions. Radio is considered as transparent and unproblematic, due in part to a lack of terms with which to discuss it. Media and cultural studies have grown out of a literary tradition that values visual rather than aural skills, yet where critical analysis is based on visual techniques, radio is at a disadvantage,

At root is an absence of a critical discourse for sound and radio: although words are what radio uses above all else, it is as if there are no words to describe what radio is about (Lewis 2000:164).

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Prison radio is indicative of the increasingly problematic task of theorising radio in the digital age, where broadcasting is no longer confined to historically established institutions and a proliferation of new forms are developing through new technologies and practices. Writing in the early stages of digital developments in radio, Tacchi describes the changing audio and technological environment, with debate focused on the migration of radio to the internet and the resulting questions around what ‘radio’ actually is (2000). Noting the distinction between ‘net’ radio and ‘real’ radio, she highlights a resistance to change amongst some practitioners and academics, and a tendency to see webcast audio as “somehow un-radio-like” (2000:290). These distinctions have dissipated over the past decade, yet Tacchi’s discussion serves to illustrate the ongoing process of evolution of radio, arguing that ‘real’ radio has always been context-specific, used differently in different places and times with different meanings associated with it (2000:293). Where the definition of radio has changed through the emergence of new technologies, the process continues and the questions are no closer to being resolved. Therefore, the case to chart, examine and theorise about the future of radio remains stronger than ever (2000:296).

Radio is local, cheap and relatively easy to set up, lending itself to small, independent projects such as Radio Feltham. Yet the development of a national service equally relates to the discussion of mainstream media institutions. David Hendy’s work highlights the tendency to focus on nostalgic and idealistic notions of community stations, artistic experimentation, and ‘heroic pirates’, which unnecessarily limits radio theory (2000). In presenting the case for reconnecting the study of radio with mainstream media theory, he argues that it remains first and foremost an industry

(2000:5). Whilst radio may well be ‘television’s poor relation’, its development is shaped by the same themes: those of increasing corporatisation, commercialisation, and the fragmentation of audiences.

As with the case of prison radio, Hendy’s argument highlights the complex status of radio in general. Whilst subject to the same factors as mass media, it is equally driven by grassroots activity that ensures a level of independence, “radio is simultaneously more taken-for-granted than television and paradoxically a larger more diverse, more changeable field of study” (Hendy 2000:6). The accessible, Do-it-Yourself (DiY) nature of radio technology lends itself to innovation and activism whilst the “technical insurgency”, and resulting ability to reinvent itself so frequently means that corporate control can never grasp radio completely (Douglas 1999:357). Any attempt to theorise radio is further complicated by the ever-increasing quantity and range of activity, including the rapid expansion of internet and micro-broadcasting. Yet ultimately, it is the dynamic, fast pace of change that makes it difficult to pin down and categorise effectively, “it changes too quickly to let us ‘see’ it properly” (Hendy 2000:5).

Angeliki Gazi, Guy Starkey, and Stanislaw Jedrzejewski agree that radio is relatively under-theorised in relation to other media research (2011). However, they argue that the situation is more complex, pointing to a growing body of medium-specific, multidisciplinary work drawn from cultural studies, linguistics, psychology, and marketing (2011:15). Focusing on *Radio Content in the Digital Age*, they present the rapid changes in production and distribution as reinventing radio as a “great medium of tomorrow” (Gazi et al 2011:15). Equally, they recognise the challenges in

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understanding the future of radio as it adjusts, embraces the internet, and continues to generate a new language and narrative (2011:17).

Commentary on the significance and future of radio is dominated by digital developments in production and distribution techniques, the convergence of technology, and subsequent increase in capacity for participation and social change. Where this process is changing the position of radio within the wider media industries, the relationship between broadcasters and audiences is also shifting (Hendy 2000), resulting in increasingly sophisticated audience expectations and a need for broadcasters to be more responsive. Gazi et al describe radio of the past as a primarily one-way medium broadcasting to a passive and uninvolved audience, now developing into a form of communication that gives individuals a feeling of participation as a continual process (2011:13).

However, such arguments over-emphasise the internet as the key to media democratisation. The digitalisation process does play a vital role in the PRA story, yet the development of prison radio demonstrates that the participatory and democratic potential of radio is in no way limited to the internet. Technological developments have enabled satellite technology broadcasting across the prison estate and created increasingly affordable and portable professional quality audio recording and production equipment to enable prisoner participation in programme making. Yet internet access and mobile telephone use are strictly banned in UK prisons due to both security risks and opportunities for criminal activity. In a world of media convergence and digital technology, prisoners remain cut off from the proliferation of media platforms. Instead, prison radio bears a closer resemblance to the traditional one-way

broadcaster/listener relationship whilst simultaneously representing the principles of audience engagement and participation that define radio in the digital age.

Government Through Radio

Contemporary theory highlights the democratising potential of media, connecting the increasing range and accessibility of media platforms to ideas of citizenship, democracy and civil society. Yet linking such concepts to the development of broadcasting has long been established. Before exploring the contemporary context from which prison radio emerged, it is first useful to look at the ways in which radio has been traditionally positioned between ideas of social control and democratic empowerment. Since the development of radio technology during the First World War, governments and industry have recognised and regulated the potential of radio to inform and influence public values, opinions and tastes. Examining issues of contemporary media democratisation, John L. Hochheimer argues that electronic media communications have historically been, and continue to be, controlled by the few, and structured to benefit the interests of political, military and economic power (1993). During the war, the development of radio moved from what Stuart Hood describes as an era of “diffused experimentation” (1979:16) to tight government control and supervision. The instability of post-war Europe led to continued control evolving alongside the efforts of manufacturers to create a market for the product that they had built up during the war. Where they had financed programming as a means of promotion, they were happy to hand the task over to state-licensed companies and by 1923 the use of radio across Europe was largely institutionalised, “the state had established a satisfactory system of control over the new public medium of

broadcasting and had seen to it that the system was one that had no feed-back” (Hood 1979:18).

These developments met with corresponding interest amongst radical scholars and practitioners including Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno (1993:473) whose critique and experimentation with radio echo current debate on the democratic potential of new media technologies. Brecht describes early radio as a technology that society was not yet ready for, “It was suddenly possible to say everything to everybody but, thinking about it, there was nothing to say” (1979:24 [1932]). Rather than existing as a one-sided instrument of distribution, he recognised radio’s potential to actively engage citizens in public life, with the ability to become “the most wonderful public communication system imaginable” (1979:25[1932]).

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Brecht wrote and adapted numerous plays for German public radio (Hochheimer 1993:474). During the same period, in a move that seems to contrast greatly with his other works, Benjamin experimented with broadcasting by writing a number of radio plays for children, whilst Adorno speculated on the use and form of *Music in Radio* after emigrating to New York (Hochheimer 1993:473). Their work shows an early belief in the active role of the listener with greater control over form and content and the potential for civic engagement (Brecht 1979:27[1932]). Brecht’s early experiments in radio demonstrate that the relationship between radio and democracy has long been established (Hartley 2000:157). He considered radio as an opportunity for building a public sphere and for promoting the development of civil society, allowing direct contact with the people whilst bypassing the ideological apparatuses of the state (Hartley 2000:155). Brecht’s utopian vision of

two-way communication may not have been fully achieved, yet prison radio demonstrates the shift toward increasingly participatory models.

In the case of prison radio, the role of the PRA is crucial, acting as an independent intermediary to balance the aims of prisoner empowerment with the state function of prisoner management. Whilst initiated through grassroots media activism, radio developed in partnership with state agencies for use within the prison apparatus equally connects to ideas around broadcasting and social control. Bill Kirkpatrick's observations on the justifications for early broadcast regulation demonstrate the extent to which the transformative effects of radio have been recognised and manipulated to achieve both governmental and commercial aims from the outset (2011).

Identifying a proliferation of references to physical disability in the development of early US broadcasting policy, Kirkpatrick argues that the discourse of the 'shut-in' was central to the process of harnessing communication technologies as instruments of governmentality. The term 'shut-in' is used to describe those physically and socially isolated through long-term hospitalisation or homebound infirmity to whom radio was considered as a "blessed boon" through which to reconnect with society (2011). In a similar pattern to that of Europe, Kirkpatrick outlines the state's increasing concern with the control and regulation of two-way amateur radio in the post-war period and the attempt to turn radio into "a loudspeaker not a microphone", arguing that the discourse of the shut-in became the means of justification for one-way broadcasting (2011:171).

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Radio was quickly hailed as a social and cultural ‘marvel’, represented as “the herald of civilisation bringing culture to the literal or figurative wilderness” in a way which echoes the current democratisation claims of new media technology (Kirkpatrick 2011:166). For Kirkpatrick, by invoking the shut-in as the perfect passive listener, state regulation of the airwaves was justified as a noble social good, and radio re-positioned as playing a role in the management of society (2011:172). The co-articulation of disability and radio is presented as central to the process, shaping the social meanings of both, and operating as media policy, as disability policy, and as governmentality more generally. Kirkpatrick shows the ways in which the benefits of radio for people with disabilities were repeatedly used to support the case for the establishment of high-powered, commercially owned, national radio services. Broadcasting was defined in moral terms, and the audience imagined as passive recipients in need of ‘quality’ culture “provided by trusted stewards of the airwaves” (2011:174).

Kirkpatrick does acknowledge the obvious benefits of radio for people with disabilities, supported by listener accounts and testimonials that include claims of “a kind of mental rebirth” through listening. Yet his argument primarily considers the invocation of the shut-in as justifying and enabling government and corporate aims. The Foucauldian approach highlights the concept of therapeutic management, formed through the co-articulation of radio and disability, and serving to secure extensions of power. There are obvious parallels with the experience of the 1920s shut-in and that of the prisoner, not only as confined to one location, but as excluded from civic participation. Where Kirkpatrick describes people with disabilities as regarded as socially ‘in’-valid, partial citizens, cut-off from any real participation in the community

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or economic life, prisoners are similarly stripped of citizenship. Initial prison radio activity at Radio Feltham began as a reaction to the need to address mental health problems faced by young offenders struggling to cope with the isolation of incarceration. In both cases, radio performs a therapeutic function, becoming a way of reconnecting socially excluded, partial or non-citizens with civil society.

Prison radio is representative of new forms of governmental power through radio, contributing to the management of the prison population, facilitating the responsabilised prisoner through information and education content, and supporting the development of productive citizens on release. Kirkpatrick demonstrates the historical link between broadcasting and governance arguing that the discourses and procedures through which broadcasting and disability were connected together provide insight into how media structures and policies come to regulate conduct and redefine the parameters of citizenship (2011:168). Through focusing on the earliest inception of radio, he shows social exclusion as helping Americans to think about radio in particular ways at a historical moment when its purposes and structures were being defined. By 1930, the process was complete, with radio “cleared to beam into every home the discourses of good citizenship and the proper and normal conduct of conduct” (2011:182).

However, where Kirkpatrick suggests that the social benefits of radio were identified and appropriated as a means of achieving the market interests of the 1920s modern liberal state, prison radio differs. The shut-in are presented as a passive audience whose unique, therapeutic relationship with radio was recognised and utilised to further the commercial aims of early US broadcasting policy. In contrast, prison radio

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grew from grassroots recognition of the therapeutic potential of radio and developed in partnership with the Prison Service as a means of furthering the social aims of rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. The distribution format of prison radio essentially remains one-way, yet through an emphasis on the role of prisoners as an active audience with the power to influence and create content, the PRA model bears a greater resemblance to the Brechtian ideal of two-way communication that facilitates participation in public life and civil society.

Public Service Broadcasting

The evolution of PSB across Europe during the same period similarly builds on the socially transformative potential of broadcasting. The BBC remains the world's most famous cultural institution, widely considered as the model for PSB worldwide (Born 2004:95). Yet the story is one of contradictions, simultaneously considered as a form of cultural standardisation as well as being recognised as a crucial institution of civil society (Scannell 1989:136). Analysis of the changing role of the BBC is central to the understanding of the development of the PRA, both in terms of practical involvement in early prison radio activity but also in relation to the broader discussion of the democratic function of broadcasting. For discussion of the BBC's involvement with prison radio in Chapter Six, I draw heavily on Georgina Born's definitive research on an institution in crisis as it strove to reinvent and defend itself against a tide of managerialism and marketisation (2004). Her detailed analysis helps to contextualise prison radio activity, framing BBC interest as an attempt to demonstrate diversity and re-define a public 'service' function. Yet where the contemporary BBC context sets the scene for PRA growth, the institutional and governmental function of prison radio can

also be considered in terms of wider cultural and political significance of broadcasting in society (Brown 1996:3).

Whilst often perceived as the one-way voice of the state, the BBC broadcast model was able to achieve Brecht's 'public service' function to a degree (Hartley 2000). As John Hartley shows, early radio came to symbolise civil society and community, becoming a site for the establishment of national identity through national culture (2000:156). Along with others (Hajkowski 2010, Crissell 2002, Hartley 2000), Scannell places PSB at the centre of forming national identity in post-war Britain, continuing to contribute to the cultural enrichment of society today. PSB was central to democratising public life, creating the notion of a 'general' public through opening up of state occasions and public events for the first time, "the fundamental democratic thrust of broadcasting lay in the new kind of access to virtually the whole spectrum of public life that radio first made available to all" (Scannell 1989:140).

Scannell argues that radio was responsible for creating a shared 'culture in common' for the first time. Through addressing the whole of society, PSB gradually came to represent the whole of society, giving "a voice to the voiceless and faces to the faceless" (1989:142). The BBC's status as a 'public good' is justified through the universal distribution and availability of its services, producing a range of content that has become "deeply known and taken for granted, bedded down in the very fabric of daily life for all of us" (Scannell 1989:138). Despite criticisms of the BBC serving the interests of the ruling class elite, broadcasting created new communicative entitlements to excluded social groups, shedding light upon the social issues of unemployment, poverty and housing that had not previously been visible.

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Broadcasting brought public life into private life, and vice versa, continually extending the range of what could be talked about in the public domain (1989:144).

However, even Scannell's vigorous defence of PSB recognises the delicate balance between public service and political and cultural control. He acknowledges that the whole history of the relationship between broadcasting and politics is one of manipulation and pressure through news content, political discussions and direct regulation, but critiques the tendency amongst academics to focus on the manipulative power of media, as a force able to beguile and indoctrinate unwitting audiences (1989:135). Instead, Scannell shows the interplay between state and public factors, arguing that PSB has been driven by both political and moral influences all along, with public opinion shaping state regulation. His argument is unequivocal, defending the status of the BBC as a public good that has "unobtrusively contributed to the democratisation of everyday life, in public and private contexts, from its beginning through to this day" (1989:136).

In 1989, Scannell's defence of PSB came in response to attempts to deregulate public broadcasting by Margaret Thatcher's government. This process has continued to intensify over the past twenty five years with the social function of the BBC under mounting pressure from the concentration of commercial media power. Marking the start of media deregulation, Scannell argues that the 1984 Peacock Report represented the privatisation of information, culture and entertainment, redefining broadcasting as a commodity rather than a public good (1989:139). Instead of increasing and diversifying the range of media services, the commodification of PSB counteracts the

principles of universal access to cultural resources, destabilising the fundamentally democratic principles on which it was based (Scannell 1989:139).

Born's view from inside the BBC during the 1990s focuses on this controversial period and outlines the organisational shifts which set the scene for involvement with prison radio. She describes globalisation and digitalisation as creating a critical juncture for national broadcasters by the early 2000s with the BBC struggling to reinvent itself in the face of rapid social, economic, political and technological changes (2002). Whilst the BBC has historically enjoyed a unique position between commercial monopoly and government control, Born's work presents an institution suffering a crisis of identity and creativity in the aftermath of Thatcher's governments, New Labour interventionism and the continuation of the neoliberal economic agenda. The period marks key changes and challenges which remodel the concept and function of public service and create the conditions of possibility for the development of independently-run, socially focused prison radio provision.

The PRA is at once the product of the new opportunities for innovation presented through the neoliberal reworking of non-commercial media whilst remaining committed to the public service principles of accessibility, diversity and quality. As will be shown in Chapter Six, the PRA was established with the support of the BBC through an early partnership project. Yet equally, the growth of prison radio at the time is related to the dual pressures of commercialism and technological innovation that have destabilised the status of PSB. Digitalisation has increased the range and accessibility of media platforms, whilst deregulation has opened up the broadcast 'market',

bringing the privileged position of the BBC as the sole distributor of universal cultural resources into question.

The development of prison radio indicates new models of non-commercial media practice that demonstrate the enduring relevance of PSB values in the context of rapid political, cultural and technological change. Scannell's defence of the BBC as essential to democratic functioning remains relevant today. Yet where PSB played a clear role in defining a 'general' public, bringing communities together to rebuild post-war Britain, the dual forces of globalisation and digitalisation have created multiple, diverse publics. The PRA is representative of new models of media practice working together with multiple and previously unrecognised publics. This both changes the nature of PSB and provides opportunities to extend its reach. Rather than a single broadcast institution addressing a single general public, PSB values are now dispersed through a proliferation of grassroots, countercultural media opportunities which continue to develop radio as a social good.

Media Commercialisation & Democratisation

Prison radio is positioned between mainstream, non-commercial PSB and emerging forms of alternative media. So far, a historical perspective has been used to demonstrate the social impact and relevance of radio, highlighting the paradox of PSB as related to both social control and public empowerment. Kirkpatrick (2011) illustrates the early recognition of radio as a means of extending governmental and commercial power whilst Scannell (1989) highlights its influence in re-building society in post-war Europe, with both demonstrating the established practice of "government through radio" (Howley 2000). In outlining the more recent BBC context, Born (2005)

and Scannell (2007) focus on the impact of market rationalities on the concept of PSB, presenting an institution threatened both by outside commercial competition and the deregulation and marketisation of its own services.

Perhaps the strongest defence of PSB is its opposition to commercial media, representing a vital means of resistance against the profit-orientated rationality of the markets (Scannell 2007:255). However, the growth of the PRA is indicative of new forms of media activism in response to the increasingly complex relationship between media, market and governmental power. Examining the social impact of contemporary mass media, Daniel C. Hallin shows the extent to which market-based media have replaced non-market forms of social organisation (2008). He argues that broadcasting has always been inextricably linked to the market, yet the two influences were able to counterbalance each other while broadcasting was organised as an institution of the state (2008:43). Broadcasting in Europe was built on relatively autonomous cultural production, yet the collapse of public service systems during the 1980s and 1990s tipped the balance “toward market forces”,

In context of broader social and political transformation in which key institutions of the political field, particularly the organised social groups that made up the political public sphere, lost their centrality to peoples’ lives and commitments (2008:47).

Continuing the theme of government through radio, Hallin repositions contemporary media as a new apparatus, central to the rise of neoliberalism and crucial to ‘government-at-a-distance’. His analysis illustrates the contemporary mainstream media context which prison radio seeks to challenge, based on a continued commitment to individual and social empowerment through radio. Connecting the

marketisation of broadcasting to a decline in social capital, he describes a dramatic shift from the collectivist principles which form the basis of prison radio to individualist patterns of communication and association. Where media organisations were intimately connected to the lives and identities of social groups, they now operate as professionally run enterprises, targeting “individual citizens as consumers within political markets” (2008:47).

Hallin’s work illustrates the impact of commercialisation on the democratic function of broadcasting, presenting a context of dramatic social change in which the balance of power between political institutions and the market has shifted. This results in both the increased dominance of market forces within the media and the increased power of media themselves. Rather than functioning as institutions of the democratic public sphere, Hallin argues that the quality of democratic media has been reduced through sensationalism, unethical practice and dangerous concentrations of media power (2008).

However, where Hallin presents a decidedly dim view of contemporary media, he does highlight the complex effects and processes involved. Rather than a unilinear decline in the state of democracy and of the democratic role of the media in the age of neoliberalism, he concedes that market forces have had some positive effects: contributing to more independent media; able to serve wider political and social interests; less prone to state control; and more audience-focused, professional production.

For Hallin, neoliberalism represents a deliberate effort by economic elites to neutralise social movements, their challenges to power, and their related activities such as

activist journalism (2008:52). Yet paradoxically, the rise of individualism has broken down public/private boundaries, politicising other areas of public life and providing opportunities for those previously excluded from the institutionalised public sphere (2008:55). Hallin presents a complex process of change in which the position of the media in relation to power and political participation has been restructured, highlighting the ways in which the nature of broadcasting, markets, social movements and democracy have all mutually shaped each other. The contemporary media context can therefore be seen as “a contradictory joint product of several currents”, shaped by growing commercialisation on the one hand and democratisation on the other (2008:54).

Hallin’s work highlights the significant challenges to the democratic function of broadcasting within a neoliberal media context. Yet where the expansion of commercial media power and increasing marketisation of PSB reframe the social impact of broadcasting, the evolution of prison radio demonstrates its enduring potential. As Hallin shows, the ‘triumph of neoliberalism’ has led to the rise of consumerist culture which has suppressed the possibilities for democratic change (2008:52). However, his work tends to pitch the forces of commercialism and democratisation against each other, presenting the dramatic social changes of the past fifty years as based on key choices in social direction: between consumerist individualism or activist citizenship; media that was market dominated, or serving a democratic role (2008:52). Instead, the prison radio story reflects the complex interplay between these concepts, indicating the changing nature of media activism and democratic participation.

Alternative Media

The discussion so far has considered prison radio as non-commercial media in the broadest sense, connected to the historical position of radio in public life and the shifting democratic function of broadcasting. The contemporary media context is characterised by the dichotomy of the rapid expansion of both commercialism and democratisation. Where increased marketisation may have diminished the democratic potential of traditional mainstream media institutions, it has equally produced new instances of resistance through emerging forms of media practice. Having connected prison radio to shifts in mainstream, non-commercial media, attention now turns to the ways in which development relates to the growth and diversity of alternative media.

The accounts of those involved in PRA development and practice highlight the difficulty in categorising prison radio, with definitions alternating between ‘public service’, ‘niche radio’, and ‘a particular kind of community radio’. Whilst identifying with some characteristics and functions of both community and PSB, respondents instead choose to define prison radio in terms of its effects and what it is not. The lack of consensus and reluctance to categorise prison radio marks the only point of difference within the accounts, with PRA founders and practitioners discussing prison radio in terms its ability to impact upon the lives of prisoners, and Chief Executive, Maguire, ultimately concluding that “it’s bloody good radio that works” (28.11.12).

The lack of consensus in categorising prison radio mirrors the debate around the definition of alternative media. In his arguably definitive theory of alternative media, Chris Atton warns of the tendency to consider ‘alternative’ merely as ‘non-

mainstream’, leading to confusion between the two (2002). Instead, he develops a model that not only accounts for the texts, but emphasises the principles of organisation, production and social relations through which they are created, an approach that is “as much concerned with how it is organised within its socio-cultural context as with its subject matter” (2002:9). However, his discussion of content does recognise that mainstream media supports and reinforces powerful and influential elites through representations which marginalise and disempower other groups. Alternative media is a response that begins to redress the balance of power by presenting other interpretations of stories based on alternative values and frameworks. Mainstream representations of crime, prisoners and prison issues are inadequate and sensationalised, whether through populist reporting of crime or fictionalised depiction of prisoners, with both impacting on public opinion on crime and punishment (Anderson 2011:63-65). In contrast, prison radio facilitates the voices and representations of prisoners in their own terms, whilst simultaneously contributing to prisoner management and control.

Prison radio sits comfortably within the broadest categorisation of alternative media, covering issues relating to the prison community in the terms of prisoners themselves, reframing prisoners as people rather than the stereotypical ‘convict’, and promoting social change by opening up the conversation about prisons and punishment. A basic deconstruction of the term ‘alternative’ provides a definition of the term which places it as alternative to, and in opposition to, the mainstream, focused on presenting a different point of view, catering for communities not well served by mass media, or advocating social change (Waltz 2005:2). ‘Alternative’ media is used inclusively,

rejecting the idea of limiting theory to that of political resistance, and distinct from ‘radical’ or ‘activist’ media theory which leans towards more direct and revolutionary social change (2002:8).

Writing in the relatively early stages of the digital revolution, Atton’s model of alternative media recognises the potential of newer multimedia platforms and seeks to widen the definition to encompass a variety of artistic and cultural forms including music, fanzines and video (2002). He considers the range of production as a Foucauldian “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (Foucault 1980:81). Therefore, where increased voices are able to speak about such ‘subjugated knowledges’, ‘the Other’ has increased and multiple ways of representing itself (Atton 2002:9).

As shown through the above discussion, radio remains a pervasive and inclusive medium, with relative affordability and accessibility giving it a prominent role within alternative media. Whether community, micropower, pirate, digital or online, “radio may be the epitome of alternative media” (Waltz 2005:36). However, Mitzi Waltz warns of the limitations of placing alternative media in binary opposition to mainstream culture, recognising activity as the product of the social context from which it develops,

Content, intention, and production will, by necessity, evolve to fit the situation in which media is produced, or it will lose its relevance. Accordingly, alternative media are only ‘alternative’ in the context of their response to, and participation in, the cultures within which they are produced and consumed (Waltz 2005:5).

Alternative media provide a counter-narrative to that of mainstream media, one which is historically located and therefore expressed in different ways at different times. To

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illustrate this, Waltz gives the example of early 1960s beat poetry, jazz and rock and roll as a reaction to the repression of the McCarthy era. As the sociocultural conditions changed, she describes a process of recuperation with counterculture absorbed by mainstream culture rendering it harmless, and demonstrating that the form itself is only 'alternative' for a short while (2005:5). Prison radio grew from volunteer activist aims to change prison conditions, challenging norms and assumptions around the idea of punishment. Therefore, the process by which activity became institutionalised can equally be seen as one which harnessed and developed prison radio for greater social impact, and as one of recuperation in order to control and dilute potential challenges to power.

Whilst fitting with aspects of alternative media, prison radio equally relates to community media theory. PRA founder, Roma Hooper, connects early prison radio activity to developments in the community radio sector at the time (27.11.12) with the community development potential of community-based media recognised, formalised and professionalised to the extent that it was accepted and encouraged within prisons. Yet throughout their accounts, PRA participants demonstrate a reluctance to categorise prison radio as community media, seeing themselves more as niche media based on a public service model and identifying key points of difference around community ownership, management and quality of content. In the UK, community radio stations bid for a particular type of license, are governed by regulator Ofcom, and usually serve a specified geographical community, none of which apply to the PRA and National Prison Radio (NPR). In addition, where the sector is based on principles of community ownership and participation across all areas of activity, the opportunities

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for prisoner involvement in the management and operations of prison radio are limited, and the parameters for participation in programme-making are uniquely defined.

Where prisoner-led programming is described as central to prison radio success, so too is quality, yet PRA responses suggest that the community radio sector is often seen as privileging the process of making radio over the radio content itself. Reflecting on the beginnings of Electric Radio Brixton (ERB), Maguire highlights the need to be both professional and credible in order to build a loyal audience and a national service.

Prisoners co-producing and presenting the majority of programming ensures credibility and relevance to the target audience, whilst professional producers working alongside small groups of prisoners ensures that production values are as high as possible (28.11.12).

Community Media

Prison radio models of ownership, participation and production differ from the contemporary understanding of UK community radio, yet PRA practitioners do identify with the aim of strengthening a defined community of interest through radio (Wilkie 28.11.12). The range of responses reflects the difficulties in capturing the meanings of community media, not least due to the wide range of activities which the term encompasses. Yet in its broadest terms, theory focuses on individual and social empowerment through cultural production and participation, themes which form the basis of prison radio. *Community Media Matters*, the most comprehensive review of community media audiences to date, maps activity in Australia and recognises it as “a site of empowerment” (Meadows et al 2007:11). Where media plays a central role in

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the production and maintenance of cultures, participation in the processes of broadcasting music, information, representations and the 'whole way of life' of communities is in itself empowering, dissolving the boundary between producer and audience.

Community media analysis highlights the sector's individuality and diversity in opposition to the homogeneity of mainstream mass media. Prison radio addresses the unique, isolated and often misrepresented nature of the prison audience, enabling real representations, raising awareness of prison issues, and engaging prisoners in the prison reform debate. Where mass media neglects disenfranchised, disempowered and disadvantaged groups, community media enables representations of their way of life, priorities and agendas (Meadows et al 2007:13). Meadows, Forde, Ewart and Foxwell (2007) refer to Noam Chomsky's 'manufacturing consent' theory to illustrate the significance of community media in rejecting the political and commercial aims of mass media which discourage difference in an attempt to attract the largest possible audience, and influence individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society (Herman & Chomsky 1988).

As with prison radio, Meadows et al highlight the empowerment potential of community media on the different levels of community, media, and society, arguing that community media 'citizens' are empowered through increased capacity to participate in democratic processes. However, whilst linking participation to issues of power, democracy and citizenship, they show that the multiplicity of ways in which it functions in these terms, complicates any attempt to frame the activity. To illustrate

this they draw on Nico Carpentier, Rico Lie and Jan Servaes' link between community media and civil society claiming that through fostering citizen participation in public life, community media performs a crucial democratic function (2003:58). The instances of 'micro-participation' enabled by community media contribute to a broader 'macro-participation' where participants actively adopt civic attitudes and perform a pivotal role within a healthy democracy (2007:14).

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes' multi-theoretical approach provides a particularly useful framework for examining the complex position and function of prison radio.

Highlighting the challenges in capturing the elusive and complex identity of community media, they develop four perspectives which recognise both its empowerment potential and participatory function: as serving the community; as alternative to mainstream media; as linking to civil society; and ultimately, as 'rhizome' (2001:1). The first approach stresses the two-way function of community media, redefining the relationship between broadcaster and community. Rather than providing a service *for* a community, it operates as a means of expression *of* the community, in turn strengthening internal identity which then manifests to the outside world, enabling social change. Importantly, the notion of expression is not confined to broadcast output, the act of targeting a particular community, whether defined geographically or otherwise, is in itself significant. The community is validated and strengthened, becoming a collective of people holding a series of identifying group relations, and empowered by signifying that their views are considered important enough to be broadcast (2001:6).

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The notion of ‘empowering’ prisoners in these terms is controversial, where punishment is based on the removal of freedoms and power. Yet the introduction of new modes of communication into the prison environment positively impacts on individual prisoners and contributes to the management and functioning of the prison community as a whole. Prisoners are empowered to use their voices for positive ends, and appearing as protagonists, rather than subjects, of radio broadcasts can help to reshape their understanding of concepts such as community, responsibility and empathy.

The second approach outlined by Carpentier et al considers community media as alternative to mainstream media, again highlighting the participatory function on both an organisational and content level. Content offers representations and discourses that vary from those originating in mainstream media whilst the more horizontally structured ways of organising community media represent alternatives to the large-scale vertical structures of the mainstream (2001:8). In terms of content, prison radio challenges the mainstream prison discourse by facilitating the expression of a largely misrepresented community. Yet rather than performing an antagonistic function, it aims to supplement mainstream media by opening up the wider prison debate. In terms of organisational structure, the PRA fits the horizontal model, built on a range of public, private, government, and voluntary sector partnerships whilst performing a unique intermediary function, operating across the monolithic vertical institutions of the BBC, National Offender Service (NOMS), Her Majesty’s Prison Service (HMPS), and statutory agencies.

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The third approach, linking community media to civil society, demonstrates the shifting position of community media, no longer separate but operating at the intersection between state and private commercial media, representing the 'third voice'. Where public broadcasting organisations have adopted more market-based and efficiency-driven approaches, community media performs an increasingly crucial democratic function (Carpentier et al 2001:10). Carpentier et al claim to radicalise the civil society approach through the use of the 'rhizome' theory. Originating from a botanical term referring to complex root systems, they adapt Deleuze and Guattari's theory to the community media situation, "a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations, power and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles" (Carpentier et al 2001:12). In defining community media as rhizomes, Carpentier et al argue that they are both central to civil society as well as remaining antagonistic to state/market, whilst maintaining their own identities. The metaphor highlights the complex interdependent relationships that form and characterise non-mainstream media. Different types of relationship are formed with state/market, rather than projects operating in isolation and antagonism (2002:12).

As Meadows et al show, the antagonistic status of community media is unhelpful. Instead, the rhizomatic approach provides a more positive framework for identifying and informing the development of the sector. They encourage the 'embracing' of existing relationships with traditional mainstream opponents in order to enhance the democratic potential. Community media has been rearticulated, no longer opposing mainstream, but capitalising on a renewed political interest for revitalising the public sphere through developing different linkages and relationships with state and market

(Carpentier et al 2001). PRA development is the realisation of that process, building effective partnerships with state agencies and media institutions to achieve their aims. As Carpentier et al argue, such arrangements may be necessitated out of survival, but the potential for destabilising and territorialising the rigidities and certainties of mainstream media organisations remains (2001:12).

Citizens' Media

Clemencia Rodriguez aims to bypass 'alternative' and 'community' altogether with the concept of 'citizens' media', defining activity in terms of intentions, processes and effects rather than through its relationship to the mainstream (Waltz 2005:3). Where alternative media has become an area of interest through its potential to counter-balance the domination of mass media corporations, Rodriguez believes the existing theoretical frameworks are too narrow to describe the effects of participation on those involved (2001:3). Rather than simply challenging the mainstream through different perspectives and points of view, participation in alternative media facilitates the creation of images of self and space, and reconstructions of identity, which in turn, disrupt the traditional acceptance of imposed outside views, "it implies becoming one's own storyteller, regaining one's own voice; it implies reconstructing the self portrait of one's own community and one's own culture" (Rodriguez 2001:3).

Prison radio demonstrates the complexities of applying normative labels to non-commercial media. By examining alternative and community media in terms of its opposition to mainstream, debate has been framed within rigid categories of power and binary notions of domination and subordination that fail to consider the "fluidity and complexity of alternative media as a social, political and cultural phenomenon"

(Rodriguez 2001:4). Whilst Rodriguez recognises the necessity of theorising alternative media in terms of democracy, citizenship and democratic communicative action, she stresses the need to move away from the traditional, essentialist definitions of the powerful versus the powerless. Where mass media corporations are powerful and grassroots organisations are powerless, these positions become a defining characteristic. Alternative media projects are set up for failure if their value is measured purely upon the ability to redress the power equation between the big corporations and powerless communities. In addition, projects are marginalised as amateur attempts to democratise media when compared with mass media production values and audience reach. If the benchmark is to deliver the same democratising potential as the mass media through circulating professionally produced texts to wide audiences, “alternative media are always doomed to fail” (2001:12).

Rodriguez acknowledges the difficulty in applying one label to a diverse range of media experiences which may well have little in common. Where a binary approach presents alternative media producers as a single homogenous entity, the citizens’ media approach recognises the fluidity and complexity of power dynamics, and acknowledges the multiple streams of power which are disrupted through participation in alternative media practice (2001:15). Describing power relationships as permanently shifting and power dynamics as permanently reconstituted, Rodriguez critiques the inadequacy of existing theories to cover the range of media experiences and their role in the process. Instead she turns to the idea of ‘radical democracy’ developed by feminist theorists, Chantal Mouffe (1992) and Kristie McClure (1992) as a new way of examining alternative media. The radical theory of democracy develops a non-essentialist and

dynamic approach to rethinking politics and social change, recognising the socially and historically located nature of power positions (Rodriguez 2001:4). Applied to alternative media, Rodriguez argues that, “the richness of experiencing the reappropriation of mediated communication comes to life in all its exuberance” (2005:18). Where alternative media function as environments in which identities are re-formed and power positions are renegotiated, they “spin transformative processes that alter peoples’ senses of self, their subjective positionings, and therefore their access to power” (Rodriguez 2005:18).

Radical democracy redefines citizenship, expanding the traditional understanding of the concept from beyond legal rights to a status that is expressed and enacted through participation in everyday political practices. Where citizenship is presented as a process through which identities are pro-actively constructed (Anderson 2011:27), the process is one of empowerment. When applied to media production, participation becomes an act of citizenship in which power is produced through practices which reshape the identities of the self, of others, and of environments (Rodriguez 2005:19). Therefore citizens’ media is used to describe collective enactment of citizenship by disrupting and transforming the established mediascape, “these communication practices are empowering those involved to the point where these transformations and changes are possible” (2005:20).

Heather Anderson applies the citizens’ media model to the discussion of community radio programming for prisoners, arguing that where the target audience is un-entitled to vote and essentially stripped of citizen status, rights and freedoms, radio-making becomes a form of citizenship (2011:17). In the first study to catalogue and discuss the

genre of prisoners' radio she presents a snapshot of activity between 2005 and 2007 from community radio stations in Australia and Canada, focusing on the functions and roles of programme activities and the ways that democratic communication is produced within them.

As Anderson demonstrates, the issues around media and citizenship are even more complex in relation to prisoners, those "categorised as facing 'civil death' or treated as 'partial' or 'conditional' citizens" (2011:27). She relates the notion of prisoners as the 'civil dead' to the early history of prisons, where the convicted were routinely stripped of legal rights such as property ownership and the ability to inherit. Those who were not sentenced to death by execution instead faced a civil death "to emulate the results a natural death would produce" (Damaska 1968:351). Prisons are based on the loss of rights that include the removal of both liberty and citizenship. However, the ability to maintain community connections is central to prisoners' reintegration into society and reducing the risk of re-offending behaviours. Therefore, where citizenship is removed, "it becomes even more vital that prisoners have access to opportunities to enact their citizenship through alternative means", with prisoners' radio presented as becoming one such way (2011:58).

In contrast to the PRA model of radio produced and broadcast within prisons, Anderson's research focuses on radio programmes broadcast in the outside community to target the prisoner audience through music requests and coverage of prison issues, whilst also connecting with a wider audience including friends, family, and social justice groups. Recognising the role that prisoners' radio plays in bridging the information gap between the inside and out, she divides its function into two

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distinct categories: participatory and information-based. Where the participatory function can be examined as citizens' media, she describes the information function as public sphere activity arguing that by broadcasting alternative news and information on prison related issues, prisoners' radio increases public dialogue about the prison system, adding to the wider criminal justice discourse. Furthermore, by facilitating the participation of a disempowered group with limited access to the dominant public sphere, prisoners' radio promotes political participation, actively engaging them as citizens in the radical sense of democracy (2011:225).

Applied to prisoners' radio, a citizens' media framework focuses on the media itself, highlighting what the programming is 'doing' and what participation means to those involved (Anderson 2011:17). Programmes can also be considered more broadly as alternative media, located solely within the community radio sector, separate and completely independent from the prison system, and often consisting of direct campaigns for improved prison conditions. In contrast, PRA activity performs a clear institutional function, developed and delivered alongside, and in partnership, with HMPS, NOMS, and other statutory agencies. Where alternative media frameworks place emphasis on community ownership and management, and a high level of participation at all levels of programming, the parameters of ownership, management and participation in prison are uniquely restricted. In addition, where these approaches often focus on process rather than product, the PRA adopts mainstream broadcast methods which emphasise the importance of professionally produced, high quality content. Early prison radio grew out of grassroots activism based on a belief in the civil rights and empowerment of prisoners, aims that may have been considered as

oppositional at the outset but which the political and institutional aims of the time came to align with.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the existing theories and literature around the origins and evolution of radio as a socially transformative medium. The PRA belief in the “power of radio” provided a starting point from which to discuss the social impact of radio in order to understand the broadcast context from which prison radio developed. Firstly, the historical relationship between radio and issues of governmentality and social control were presented before arguing the continued significance of radio as a means of social change and empowerment. Discussion of contemporary non-mainstream media theory then served to demonstrate the challenges in applying normative labels to the range of emerging democratic forms of media practice.

The growth of prison radio is connected to changes in the ways that both PSB and alternative media are organised, conceptualised, and understood. This chapter established the unique positioning of prison radio, based on non-mainstream, alternative media principles of empowerment, participation and representation whilst equally performing an institutional function, connected to the management of the prison population. The independent status of the PRA is central to the process, enabling prison radio to represent the rights of prisoners whilst working in partnership with state agencies. In these terms, the PRA operates as an intermediary between the state and civil society, between PSB and community radio, and between mainstream and alternative media. This role will be further demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven. Having placed PRA development within a wider broadcast context, the

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following chapter examines changing ideas around prisoners and punishment in order to understand a prison environment in which radio was utilised and encouraged.

CHAPTER 3: “MAKING WAVES BEHIND BARS” – THE PRISON CONTEXT

To celebrate the official launch of the organisation as a charity in 2006, the first PRA productions to be distributed to an audience beyond the prisons were compiled on the *Making Waves Behind Bars* CD (PRA 2006). In the title, ‘making waves’ refers to radio broadcasting and audio editing technology, whilst equally indicating the potential for change and disruption ‘behind bars’. This chapter explores the theories and ideas relating to the prison environment, focusing on the cultural, political and institutional changes which contributed to the recognition, acceptance and encouragement of radio in prison. I argue that PRA development is representative of changing techniques of managing populations, both within the prison and outside. Prison radio facilitates the responsabilised, entrepreneurial prisoner able to adapt behaviours within the prison and develop skills for effective reintegration into the community. Yet whilst representing management and control, prison radio is equally based on the rejection of punitive, retributionist notions of prison and punishment, focusing instead on prisoner agency and voice.

Prison is not only a place where society locks away those it deems to be criminal, it simultaneously reflects and reproduces societal values, performing a deeper, symbolic function. Fyodor Dostoyevsky believed that a society should be judged not on how it treats its outstanding citizens, but on how it treats its criminals (Andrew 2007:878), and in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville considered prisons as a barometer of the condition of democracy in a society, “the United States gives the example of the most extended liberty, the prisons of that same country offer the spectacle of the most complete despotism” (Garland 1990:11). As an institution, prison retains an iconic

status and a deeply embedded ideological presence (Sim 2009:16), and continues to be the most controversial of institutions, generating deep-seated disputes and ongoing political debate (Carrabine et al 2004:289). This chapter explores key ideas around the evolution of the prison institution in order to understand how radio came to be utilised and developed.

The prison context from which the PRA emerged is one of radical change shaped by a punitive political turn in attitudes to crime, and the associated operational crisis of a prison system struggling to manage a dramatic rise in prisoner numbers within outdated and inadequate facilities. In the next chapter, I outline the voluntary sector context, arguing that social action is reframed in terms of enterprise and entrepreneurship with non-profit organisations repositioned as service providers in place of a diminished welfare state. Similarly, private sector practices and enterprise culture have gradually transformed public sector institutions, including prisons.

Where private sector ownership and management of prisons in England and Wales has steadily increased, so too has the expansion of economic rationalities and technologies throughout the remaining public sector Prison Service. The contemporary prison context is shaped by the privatisation process and debate, framed by a discourse of 'enterprise', both in terms of institutional operations and of the prisoners themselves. Yet whilst changes in penal policy and practice reflect a wider neoliberal reworking of the public sector, the issues are further complicated when dealing with the moral issue of punishment. I argue that working on a number of levels at a particular time, prison radio is a product of the neoliberal shift in prisons, offering an innovative, enterprising and relatively low-cost means of managing the prison population and supporting the

entrepreneurial prisoner to ‘invest’ in their future through education and information. Equally however, PRA discourse and practice demonstrates a commitment to prisoner rights, rehumanising the neoliberal position and performing a crucial role in bringing issues of social justice and social welfare back into the equation.

Through the discussion of literature on penal policy and practice, I argue that prison radio is a product of the neoliberal shift in approaches to crime control and punishment at the same time as representing the counter-cultural opportunities produced when power is at its most constraining. With reference to Michel Foucault’s work on the prison, I begin by demonstrating the institution’s significance in defining and reflecting the ways in which power operates within society and argue that prison radio both disrupts and contributes to this position. I then turn to discussion of his later work, which outlines the increasingly ‘governmentalised’ nature of state power and focus particularly on David Garland’s examination of governmentality theory in relation to issues of crime control. This framework informs the discussion of the contemporary neoliberal prison context where economic rationalities and technologies have reshaped penal policy and practice.

Power & Punishment

Society has become used to the prison as an indispensable operation, yet in reality, incarceration as punishment is a relatively new concept (Wacquant 2003:12).

Historically, those suspected of committing a crime were locked up, but not as punishment in itself. Instead it was a means of waiting for sentence and the primary punishment, whether hanging, flogging, fine or banishment (Klare 1973). Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1977) has become a central

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reference point for the study of punishment, creating a new agenda that has replaced more established traditions of discussing crime and crime control (Garland 1990:131). His investigation into the emergence of the prison in the early Nineteenth Century is used as a means of exploring the much wider theme of how domination is achieved, and how individuals are socially constructed in the modern world. The prison becomes symbolic of changing forms of power, from sovereignty where power is dispersed from above, to disciplinary where power is exercised through the social body.

Discipline and Punish tracks the shift from the violent and repressive forms of government of the past, to disciplinary regimes which exercise power through different mechanisms and techniques, based on self-regulation and perpetuated through institutions (Mills 2003:43). Foucault's observations on the dispersed and multi-directional nature of power set the scene for his later development of governmentality theory. He examines ways in which disciplinary regimes exercise power, presenting discipline as a form of self-regulation encouraged by institutions and permeating modern societies (Mills 2003:43). Rather than operating as a straightforward instrument of punishment, Foucault's work shows the ways in which prisons "invade and determine the structure of other institutional settings" (Mills 2003:44) representing and perpetuating disciplinary practice.

In direct opposition to a punitive shift in contemporary penal policy and practice (Garland 2001 & Wacquant 2010), PRA founders and practitioners discuss prison radio as remaining firmly based on the aims of prisoner empowerment and representation. Demonstrating the positivity of Foucault's power model, prison radio is both a product of a dominant punitive discourse, as well as a challenge to its status. Oppressive

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measures are presented as productive even at their most constraining, creating new forms of behaviours rather than simply censoring other behaviours (Mills 2003:34). For Foucault, disciplinary society is based on the assumption that power cannot exist without resistance, “where there is power, there is resistance” (1978). The PRA can then be seen as both a challenge to the established disciplinary framework and as a product of the counter-discursive opportunities it produces.

However, Foucault’s position on the constitutive nature of power can appear contradictory (Mills 2003 & Giddens 1984). The negative portrayal of disciplinary regimes in which the individual subject is powerless to resist deeply ingrained practices and procedures contrasts with the importance of resistance (Mills 2003:44). Instead, the PRA story relates to both apparently conflicting positions, demonstrating the multiple and complex ways in which resistance can effect disciplinary and institutional culture and practice. Such criticisms of Foucault’s approach characterise the common misconceptions around *Discipline and Punish* (Dean 1994). As Mitchell Dean argues, Foucault does not attempt a general theory of institutional power in modern society but offers a set of suggestions for analysing the relationship between power, time and space (1994:169). Instead of categorising institutional operations, his work focuses on the range of plans, policies and initiatives involved in the development and implementation of disciplinary regimes in specific locations, for particular requirements, and upon both micro and macro populations (Dean 1994).

This position is most clearly demonstrated through Foucault’s discussion of the panopticon as the architectural machine for surveillance of enclosed populations. The panopticon becomes the illustration of the process through which disciplinary power is

exercised, not only within the prison but representative of wider institutional techniques of surveillance that monitor peoples' behaviour. The possibility of being watched creates self-discipline and self-regulation, creating an internalised and self-perpetuating form of power (1977:200). Designed by Eighteenth Century English philosopher and reformer, Jeremy Bentham, the panopticon or 'inspection house', is based on a circular structure built around a central inspection tower, allowing for constant and individualised surveillance (2008 [1791]). Bentham's vision focuses on the reform of the prisoner, with isolation cells allowing for prayer and contemplation, illustrating what Foucault presents as the turning point from punishment of the body to discipline of the soul. The panopticon is described as "the diagram of the mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form" (1977:205), with its major effects outlined as inducing a state of conscious and permanent visibility, producing the automatic functioning of power. Surveillance does not need to be constantly active in order for its effects to be permanent; in fact the perfection of power should make its actual exercise unnecessary (1977:201).

The institutional introduction of radio in prison can be seen as both a challenge to the panopticon and as an extension of its disciplinary reach. Educational and informational content broadcast to prisoners in their cells indicates new ways of managing populations and can be linked to self-regulation and the internalisation of particular values and behaviours, a theme that I return to throughout this study. Yet I argue that the continued independent status of the PRA prioritises the voice and expression of prisoners, remaining focused on the representation of prison issues in their own terms. This view is supported through Tom Allan's observations on his observation of *Radio*

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Wanno at HMP Wandsworth, arguing that the major achievement of prison radio is the ability to invert the philosophy of the panopticon (2006). Rather than the isolated, faceless deviant as a subject of constant surveillance and observation, Allan claims that prison radio training and production activity encourages and empowers prisoners to engage and participate.

Referring to the ongoing prison reform debate, he highlights the controversy of empowering prisoners and giving them opportunities (2006:22). Incapacitation, to punish the prisoner and protect the public from potential harm, remains the primary purpose of prisons, yet focusing on incapacitation alone is harmful not only to the prisoner but to society. Locking people away may remove the threat but also removes responsibility for family, work or home and therefore the capacity to make responsible decisions on release. Where the isolation of the panopticon severs relationships and community links vital for successful rehabilitation, prison radio initiatives seek to build human relationships between prisoners, families, and prison staff (Allan 2006:22).

Allan illustrates the process through the example of prison radio work with *Family Man* courses, designed to support prisoners to develop and maintain family relationships.

This extends to the *Story Book Dads* and *Story Book Mums* projects which have worked closely with multiple prison radio stations to enable mothers and fathers in prison to record bed-time stories for their children to listen to. For Allan, this is indicative of the ways in which “human relationships are being recognised as the solution, rather than isolation” (2006:22).

Prison radio is representative of the increased range of rehabilitation programmes and activities available in prison, with NPR providing information on education and support

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to help prisoners to prepare for release. Yet despite such interventions, the challenges of life on the outside remain, with ex-offenders facing social stigmatisation and significant financial and accommodation problems. Whilst rehabilitation initiatives seek to strengthen relationships, the role of prison in society remains one of separation, illustrating the continued tension between “the history of authoritarian control and dehumanisation, and a modernity that sometimes demands, with moral and legal force, that prisoners’ rights be protected” (Allan 2006:23).

As the PRA story demonstrates, the reality of the prison role and function lies between the two influences. Prison remains an institution for punishment, satisfying an ancient public need for visible retribution as well as supporting the dominant social order by disciplining disaffected social groups, whilst simultaneously adopting the ‘modern mission’ to reintegrate and remake prisoners as law abiding citizens. It is a difficult balance to achieve where education opportunities and therapeutic interventions available inside do not necessarily translate to the practicalities of gaining employment and housing outside, “it’s a schizophrenic position: we are unwilling to fully accept ex-prisoners back into society, but also unwilling to reject them completely” (Allan 2006:23). Despite a discourse of rehabilitation playing an increasingly central role in penal policy and practice, prison still serves a decisive social function of separation, defined through disciplinary mechanisms based upon the binary branding of normal and abnormal, legal and illegal or safe and unsafe (Foucault 1977:199). It is a role that is deeply embedded, providing a means of isolating and separating the deviant ‘other’ which “comfortingly denies our own imperfections, depositing the dark side of human behaviour in the few” (Allan 2006:23).

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Prison radio may only broadcast behind the prison walls, but its very existence, together with the industry recognition of the PRA, challenges outside assumptions about prisons and prisoners. Reversing the principles of panopticism, prison radio recognises prisoners as individual people with a multitude of stories, backgrounds and experiences that may have contributed to incarceration. Where prison seeks to separate, prison radio opens up the conversation, facilitating a discourse between those inside and outside of the criminal justice sector, revealing prisoners as complex individuals rather than “the isolated silhouettes of the panopticon” (Allan 2006:23).

Governmentality & Crime Control

In the previous chapter, governmentality theory was introduced in relation to the evolution of national broadcasting. In this section, the literature serves to illustrate shifts in the ways that crime and crime control are conceptualised. Rather than a totalising and reductionist view of the prison context, the theory contributes to the understanding of prison radio as a product of the apparently conflicting discourses of control and empowerment. Building on the theme of self-regulation introduced in *Discipline and Punish*, the fundamental shift in Foucault’s later work is the concept of the ‘active’ subject as the means through which power is exercised (1982). No longer solely concerned with oppression or objectification, governmental power involves the construction of individuals with choice and action and seeks to align those choices with government objectives. Rather than the abolition of individual choice and action, governmental power is dependent on it, “power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free” (Foucault 1982:221)

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From 1978 onwards, Foucault's analysis of power recognised both the government of others and the government of one's self, focusing on the relationship between two poles of governance, "the forms of rule by which various authorities govern populations and the technologies of the self through which individuals work on themselves to shape their own subjectivity" (Garland 1997:174). The complexities of the resulting 'art of government' (Foucault 1991) not only show the organisational techniques used to govern society, but the ways in which governments shape and produce citizens to achieve their aims. Foucault's approach highlights the importance of 'technologies' of government such as the administration and corporate management of particular governmental programmes as opposed to the more traditional 'techniques', or the means, mechanisms, and instruments of administration, power and rule (1994:187). The theory emphasises the "polymorphous nature of governmental techniques and the perverse ways they become implanted into diverse technologies" (Dean 1994:188).

Prison radio is representative of the increasingly complex technologies of control through which governmental power operates (Dean 1994:177), indicating emerging disciplinary techniques and practices. Yet activity rejects the economic individualism of modern neoliberal governmentality, remaining based in a communitarian approach to social welfare and social justice. David Garland applies Foucault's power analysis to the issue of crime control (1990, 1992, 1997 & 2000), providing a useful framework from which to explore the multiple and complex ways in which radio relates to, and functions within, a rapidly changing prison environment.

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Writing throughout the 1990s, Garland notes the growing significance of governmentality literature in the study of crime control and criminal justice. At a time of crisis and dramatic change, he argues the relevance of the approach for analysis of the way in which crime is problematised and controlled, opening up new ways of understanding “the discourses, problems and practices of contemporary crime control” (1997:174). Over the past fifty years, the criminal justice field has been reconfigured, based on the shift from welfarist to neoliberal forms of government and characterised by the expansion of economic rationalities and technologies (Garland 1997:174).

At a time of crisis and change, Garland argues that a governmentality approach provides a non-totalising, open-ended analysis of contemporary practices, showing the ways in which modes of exercising power depend on ways of both thinking and acting (1997:174). He argues that ‘governmental rationality’ is crucial to the understanding of often unnoticed dimensions of crime control, presenting rationalities as practical rather than theoretical or discursive entities. Instead of focusing on the policy statements or the justifications of institutions, or the criminology theories and reform programmes that influence them, he refers to ways of thinking and styles of reasoning that are embodied in a particular set of practices (Garland 1997:184).

Such a focus raises questions around the ways in which governments, institutions and agencies have constructed their role in relation to crime, and the ways in which responses to crime are conceptualised. Criminology theorists highlight a shift in the governance of crime and crime control from traditional social and legal forms of reasoning towards those based on managerialism and marketisation (Garland 1996;

Feeley & Simon 1992). Within this framework prison radio can be seen both as a product of the economic rationalities on which the governance of crime is based (Garland 1997:185), and as a practical response to a crisis of overcrowding, underfunding and privatisation.

Current crime control discourse and practice is reframed through a language that translates 'economic' forms of reasoning and calculation into the field of punishment, including a focus on 'objectives' and the introduction of the technologies of audit, market competition, and devolved management (1997:185). To illustrate this, Garland outlines a shift in criminological theory, away from sociological or psychological understanding, towards a pseudo-economic approach where the 'rational criminal' is governed through the manipulation of incentive and risk. Crime control is shaped by commercial and insurance-based thinking, with increasing focus on prevention rather than punishment, and on minimizing risk rather than ensuring justice (1997:185).

Traditional criminological approaches focus on the control and differentiation of the individual offender, yet economic analysis views crime as a routine and inevitable phenomenon with criminal events seen as predictable and systematic. Within this context, action upon crime becomes less focused on the correction of deviant individuals, and increasingly concerned with the governance of social and economic routines (1997:186).

Prison radio is a product of the neoliberal governmental rationalities and technologies that continue to transform criminal justice practice, based on 'economic' forms of reasoning about crime and crime control, and the use of 'technologies of the self' in prisons (Garland 1997:173). In the following sections, I argue that PRA growth relates

to the ways in which neoliberalism redefines both the prison institution and the prisoner, linking to shifts in both governance of the state and of the self. Yet rather than describing a political philosophy or world view, I use the term to encompass a range of economic practices and modes of government (Dean 1994). It is an approach which recognises a shift from direct state intervention to a focus on self-regulation in relation to issues of crime control.

Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller develop Foucault's governmentality framework in their arguably definitive exploration of contemporary neoliberalism (1990). They describe governmental power as diffuse and dispersed beyond the state, representing complex networks exercising 'government-at a-distance' (1990:9). Autonomous actors play a central role in the process, not as coerced or manipulated, but whose active engagement shapes "the powers that govern them and by which they govern themselves" (Garland 1997:183). Rather than Foucault's focus on historical events, Rose and Miller concentrate on programmes, rationalities, and technologies in order to investigate the forms of discourse, knowledge and subjectivity involved.

As Garland argues, the concepts of 'governing through freedom' and 'active subjects of power' are particularly relevant to the analysis of neoliberal policies designed to "maximise entrepreneurial activity, to empower the consumer and to replace state or professional governance with market mechanisms" (1997:184). Yet where Garland suggests that the link between governmentality and modern neoliberal politics is coincidental, I argue that neoliberal rationalities are central to the concept of 'government-at-a-distance' (Rose & Miller 1990:9). Foucault's original work explicitly addresses the shift from liberal to neoliberal forms of governance (2007 & 2008). The

theory of governmentality is developed through his later series of lectures at the Collège de France, *Security, Territory, Population 1977-78*, (2007) and *The Birth of Biopolitics 1978-79* (2008), focusing on the genealogy of the modern state. As Foucault himself suggests, the lectures might equally have been named the ‘birth of neoliberalism’ (Gane 2008:355). The works emphasise the theme of ‘political economy’, describing a mid-Eighteenth Century shift toward the internalisation of government, where the self-limitation of governmental reason becomes a “method of government that can procure the nation’s prosperity” (Foucault 2008:13).

The relationship between economy and political practice is a key theme, yet Foucault notes a shift, arguing that political economy has acquired a modern meaning where “one governs for the market, not because of the market” (2008:121). Where the 1977-78 lectures focus on the relationship between market and state in early liberalism, the following year’s work is concerned with the increasing visibility of the ‘hidden hand of the market’ (Gane 2008:361). Classical liberalism may have *respected* the market, yet neoliberalism re-positions the market as the guiding principle, raising the question of whether “a market economy can in fact serve as the principle, form and model for a state” (Foucault 2008:117).

The Neoliberal Prison

The PRA is a product of, and reaction against, the neoliberal prison environment.

Before examining the impact and function of radio in prison it is worth outlining the background and characteristics of the contemporary prison context. Over the past half century, prison theorists recognise a fundamental shift in the ways that crime and punishment are conceptualised (Feeley & Simon 1992; Garland 1997; Wacquant 2003;

Sim 2009). Whether the dramatic rise of the prison population is considered as a symptom of wider socio-economic breakdown (Sim 2009) or as central to the functioning and expansion of the neoliberal state (Wacquant 2003), all highlight the impact of combining neoliberal rationalities and practices with the ‘business’ of punishment. The role of the prison has been dramatically reconfigured, shaped by multiple and often conflicting themes including privatisation, the contracting out of service provision, managerialism, and a punitive shift in attitudes to crime driven by populist political rhetoric. It is a contradictory context which has led to an institutional crisis that extends beyond practical issues of funding and overcrowding, underpinned by a crisis of identity and legitimacy connected to moral and ethical implications of the economic reworking of punishment.

Paul McDowell, PRA Trustee and HM Chief Inspector of Probation, has been connected to prison radio since the early days of Radio Feltham. During his time as governor of HMP Brixton, he played a central role in the development of ERB and subsequently, NPR. Reflecting on the beginnings of the project, he highlights the challenges of the prison at the time, describing overcrowding and a severe shortage of space, facilities and activities (29.11.12). With a population of around nine hundred prisoners at any time, opportunities for prisoner activities were limited to only half of the people for half of the prison day, a total of three hours. In a “negative and depressing” environment, where staff were “surviving” from day to day, and prisoners had nothing to do, radio was recognised as a practical solution, making use of limited space to generate as wide an impact as possible, “something interesting that everyone could feel a part of” (McDowell 29.11.2).

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This picture is one which reflects a state of ever-deepening crisis across the prison system in England and Wales (Carrabine, Iganski, Lee, Plummer & South 2004:289). Prison Service support for the work of the PRA indicates a desire to identify effective, innovative, low-cost solutions to the range of challenges faced by a prison system in crisis. However, where the term ‘crisis’ implies a short-lived critical point in time, the penal crisis should be viewed as “an enduring feature of the past few decades” that not only compromises the ability of the state to maintain order but challenges the moral sensibilities around the purpose of prisons (Carrabine et al 2004:289). The practical challenges of managing a rapidly increasing prison population within old, inadequate facilities are widely recognised. Yet the situation extends beyond practical and material issues, exacerbated by a crisis of legitimacy and connected to one of self-definition (Carrabine et al 2004:290).

Current issues can be traced back to the 1970s, with a dramatic rise in UK prison numbers connected to the deepening economic crisis of the time (Sim 2009:28), and its effects on what Steven Box presents as the criminalisation of subordinate groups,

Prisons are being used to punish more and more offenders and particularly the young. They are also being used to serve as a warning to those not deserving imprisonment this time round (Box 1983:207).

The subject of prisons was raised in the public consciousness through a series of bitter industrial disputes between prison staff and managers, and concerns about severe overcrowding and conditions so bad that even prison governors spoke out in the press (Sim 2009). The governor of HMP Wormwood Scrubs described himself as “the manager of a large penal dustbin” whilst the governor of Strangeways (now HMP

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Manchester), described conditions in the prison as “an affront to civilised society” (Sim 2009:30).

Joe Sim argues that these factors combined to undermine the legitimacy of the institution, symbolising a broader social crisis of legitimacy and hegemony in the wider society (2009:26). Where the prisons of the state were no longer seen as contributing to the social order, Thatcher’s Conservative Party was able to achieve an landslide election victory in 1979 through a government programme of law and order based on the principles of the free market and the strong state (2009:26), “Make no mistake about it: under this regime, the market is to be Free; the People are to be Disciplined” (Hall 1980:5).

The prison system of the time reflected the drive towards the social authoritarianism of Thatcher’s first government, indicating an intensification of state power (Sim 2009:28), a position which has since been adapted and strengthened by successive governments on both sides of the political spectrum. By 1987, the prison system in England and Wales was in need of drastic reform, with record prisoner population levels of almost 51,000 (Nathan 2003). The privatisation option was adopted as a viable solution to overcome spiralling costs through “innovative management and technological methods” (Nathan 2003:162) becoming part of the government’s determination to promote private enterprise and extend the free market into public services (Prison Reform Trust 2005). Rather than a purely practical step, privatisation policy marks an ideological shift, championed by the right wing Adam Smith Institute and building on free-market theory and developments in the US (Nathan 2003).

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Focusing on PRA and NPR early development in partnership with NOMS and HMPS, this study is primarily concerned with the growth of radio within the public prison sector. However, the policies, processes, and underlying ideologies that have driven the gradual privatisation of the UK prison system illustrate a deeper shift in values and ideas around prisons (Nathan 2003). By 1987, the issue of privatisation had “become one of the most distinctive policies and themes of the Thatcher government” (Sim 2009:50). Rather than a straightforward offloading of prisons into the marketplace, Mike Nash and Mick Ryan present a strategy of privatisation which incorporated the development of new management practices and techniques (2003). Based on existing US models, the introduction of the New Public Management programme (NPM) involved separating government bureaucracies off into quangos with agency status to create greater choice and reduce costs whilst introducing private sector management practices into the public sector (Nash & Ryan 2003:158).

The growth of prison radio is both a product of, and a reaction to, a long-term privatisation strategy based on the extension of market values and managerial processes throughout the penal system, functioning through devolved responsibility and partnerships between state, public, private and voluntary sectors. The PRA works with prisoners and a variety of voluntary and statutory organisations, to identify the most important issues faced by prisoners. Access to information and support is promoted through daily NPR programming as well as through regular social action campaigns, with recent examples ranging from a series of short promotional features on drug and alcohol awareness, to a one-day focus on smoking, and a month-long campaign about learning to read while in prison (PRA 2014). Programming represents a

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co-ordinated and collaborative approach to ensuring that prisoners have access to rehabilitation and resettlement support. Whilst prison radio growth is indicative of new opportunities for innovative service provision within an opened up, marketised public sector, the increased role of voluntary organisations, civil society groups, and social care services operating within prisons can be seen as a reaction to a punitive, managerial turn in penal policy, restoring and safeguarding the principles of social justice within the ‘business’ of punishment.

Jane Andrew provides a useful analysis of the problematic implications of combining business aims and practices with the state function of punishment and the public sector function of prison management (2007). She focuses on the issue of public accountability as “central to the democratic government’s ability to exercise its powers of restraint and punishment” (2007:878). Where prison classifies and separates those that society considers to be criminal, shifts in public accountability caused by privatisation separate prisoners even further from society (Andrew 2007:878).

Recognising that society as a whole has a stake in the prison system, she argues that the availability of information is central to our ability to form a picture of society’s treatment of those we deem to be criminals. Forming a key benchmark for how we function as a society, “the exchange of information becomes even more important when that information pertains to the closed and isolated environment of the prison” (Andrew 2007:878).

Andrew’s analysis shows that access to information on prison management and performance is not enough. Instead she stresses the need for issues of ethics and morality to frame the ways in which the decision to imprison is understood (2007:878).

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Prison radio is concerned with bridging the information divide, not only through promoting prisoner access to rehabilitation and resettlement services, but through facilitating awareness and debate on the closed, and often mythologised, subject of prison and prisoners. The PRA operates within a business framework, contributing to the managerial tasks and targets of the Prison Service and NOMS, yet seeks to represent prisoners within the process through communication and collaboration.

Punishment is complex social, ideological and cultural terrain that will never be an entirely rational execution of orders with clear objectives and controllable outcomes, “it has multiple and competing aims and innumerable intended and unintended consequences” (Andrew 2007:898). The neoliberal prison normalises the connection between punishment and profit. Yet the notion of punishing people for profit links profit to pain and suffering, a situation which Mick Ryan and Tony Ward describe as “morally repugnant” (1989:70). Punishment in itself is not the issue, instead it is the socio-political message that private ownership sends through the “rewards that accrue to penal entrepreneurs” (Ryan & Ward 1989:70). The possibility for profit creates a vested interest in prison expansion and the risk that prisoners will suffer abuse and exploitation for profit (Andrew 2007).

Both prison regimes, and the powers exercised by those who manage them, involve a continuation of sovereign power, raising questions around responsibility and the powers that can and cannot be delegatable within a democracy (Moyle 1999:154). Where the definitions and parameters of criminality and punishment are defined and decided upon by the state, the delivery of prison services should remain within the

state's control, as raised by Sir David Ramsbotham, the former Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales:

I can accept the private sector looking after unsentenced prisoners because they are still innocent in the eyes of the law. But I do have questions about the sentenced. The state has awarded that punishment and the state should deliver it (Nathan 2003:174).

The role of business in the administration of prisons is nothing new, yet the emergence of the 'for-profit' prison industry over the past twenty five years has transformed the prison function. The prison remains a state apparatus whilst the appearance of responsibility for prisons moves away from the state, and the private sector gains a new way of generating profit. Private prisons serve the interests of both government and private enterprise, particularly in the light of public concern over spiralling costs and prison population numbers at constant crisis point. Neither has to maintain the budgets and required standards of service provision that had gone before, the slate is effectively wiped clean and both are able to blame each other for the inadequacies. Both the government and private prison operator are able to benefit from producing the appearance of accountability at the same time as, "distorting its meaning in fundamental ways that enable a retreat from responsibility" (Andrew 2007:896).

Government of the State

The privatisation of prison building, management and services implies the withdrawal of direct state intervention. Yet the neoliberal reworking of punishment paradoxically indicates the intensification of state power. Prison radio can be seen as a product of the shifting function of the prison, reflecting changing governmental technologies of both the self and of the state in relation to crime. In the following section, I consider

the ways in which of prison radio facilitates prisoner self-governance and self-regulation. Here, I focus on prison radio as a product of the changing relationship between the prison and the state. Both themes recognise prison radio as a form of governmental control whilst arguing that independent status of the PRA, and the values and motivations which define prison radio, resist the economic reworking of attitudes to crime and punishment.

Opening up the costly and beleaguered prison service to free market competition can be seen as the epitome of the privatisation policies of the Thatcher era, representing the last bastion of state control. However, the gradual processes which have transformed penal policy and practice over recent decades highlight the contradictory nature of the neoliberal prison. Where privatisation suggests the withdrawal of direct state intervention, the dispersal of power shaped through economic rationalities and technologies, intensifies and reinforces state control. Rather than handing over responsibility for punishment, the role and function of the state in relation to crime control is repositioned and the traditional notion of 'the state' is redefined as a 'nodal point' from which many powers derive authority rather than the main seat of power (Garland 1997:175).

A shift in the governance of crime repositions the prison, from the last resort and ultimate representation of state power, to one element within a "chain of coordinated action" (Garland 1997). Garland outlines a new set of objectives around the fear of crime, reduction of crime, and security consciousness that are achieved by acting through, rather than upon, the actors involved. Prison radio then becomes part of a 'responsibilisation strategy' through which state authorities enlist agencies to

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achieve crime control on the part of ‘responsibilised’ actors (1997:188). Responsibility for crime reduction is extended beyond the state, reliant on multiple agencies and individuals who are both in a position to contribute, and see it as being in their interests to do so, “‘government’ is thus extended and enhanced by the creation of ‘governors’ and ‘guardians’ in the space between the state and the offender” (Garland 1997:186).

As an organisation working together with prisoners, the state, and other agencies, the PRA is indicative of a fundamental shift in the governance of crime. Practices of governing are dispersed over many sites, all involved in the conduct of conduct, and demonstrating the continued dissolution of lines of demarcation between the ‘public’ and ‘private’ or the ‘state’ and ‘civil society’ (Garland 1997:175). Prison radio is then representative of the dispersal of state control, operating as a technology of responsabilisation within a wider, inter-agency approach to crime control.

Garland outlines a growing sense of doubt and dissatisfaction around modern penal practices stemming from rising crime rates and prison unrest at the end of the 1960s, “it has become one of the most perplexing and perpetual crisis of modern social life” (1990:4). Yet the failure of the prison is central to its enduring success as a means of wider political domination. The negative impact of prisons has been recognised and criticised from as early as the 1820s, including the failure to reduce crime, tendency to increase recidivism, and the pressure inflicted upon prisoners’ families (Garland 1990:149). As Foucault argues, prison has always been a penological failure, yet its continued survival lies in its political effects on a wider social level (1977). Presenting a historical pattern of continual failure and continual resistance to change, he suggests

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two reasons why the institution persists. Firstly, that the prison is deeply embedded in the wider disciplinary practices that are characteristic of modern society, and secondly, because it carries out “certain very precise functions” (1977:271) which reframe the failures as a covert form of success.

For French sociologist, Loïc Wacquant, the rise of the prison state marks a major political transformation of the last half century (2009:xiii), “becoming increasingly active and intrusive in the lower regions of social space” (2003:11). He offers a dramatic and expansive critique of the prison as central to the neoliberal governance of the poor, indicating an increased reliance on the police and penal institutions to control the disorders produced by mass unemployment, wage insecurity and diminishing social protection (Wacquant 2003:13). Where liberalism is evident in terms of markets, the state is increasingly punitive towards the poor, illustrating a central paradox of neoliberalism: that those who called for the end of ‘big government’ are the same as those who currently glorify the penal state (Wacquant 2003). Rather than being contradictory themes, Wacquant sees both as being essential components of a new institutional machinery for managing poverty. Where imprisonment functions as a protection against the fall-out of global capitalism, it simultaneously reinforces and strengthens neoliberal ideology by demonising those who fail to ‘succeed’ in terms of free-market values.

In a society that values enterprise and profit, those who fail to reinforce those values present a risk by undermining the belief that everyone has equal opportunity to flourish. Arguing that the current revival of the prison institution is central to a “government of social insecurity”, Wacquant shows the invisible hand of the market as

combining with the iron fist of the state to make the lower classes accept a deregulated labour market and the social issues that it creates (2003:14). Prisons therefore disguise the socio-economic impact of global capitalism on people by imprisoning the products of political and economic alienation (Andrew 2007:883).

The “symbolic charges of incarceration” (Wacquant 2009:xv) are further demonstrated through Garland’s analysis of ‘delinquency’ in which the creation of a delinquent class has advantages which perform a key role in a strategy of political domination, “it works to separate crime from politics, to divide the working classes against themselves, to enhance the fear of prison, and to guarantee the authority and powers of the police” (Garland 1990:150). As individualised, small attacks on property or authority, delinquency primarily affects victims from lower classes, presenting little political danger. Such criminality is tolerated by the authorities, within certain limits, ensuring that repeat offenders are known by the authorities and contributing to improved management and surveillance. On a wider societal level, the predatory nature of delinquency makes it unpopular with other members of the working class and the myths of dangerousness that develop add to the process of distancing and division (1990). Therefore, the prison does not control the criminal so much as control the working class by creating the criminal. For Foucault, this is the unspoken rationale for the persistence of the prison institution, where the unintended consequences of imprisonment that were first seen as detrimental are subsequently recognised, reinforced and deliberately employed (Garland 1990:150).

Malcolm M. Feeley and Jonathan Simon’s concept of the ‘New Penology’ (1992) has played an influential role in the analysis of changing penal policy and practice. Writing

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in 1992, they chart the shift in attitudes to crime throughout the 1970s and 1980s and argue that prison is no longer concerned with the transformation of the individual, but with the management of dangerous groups, “the task is managerial, not transformative” (1992:452). They highlight the use of actuarial language that has come to define the ‘correctional enterprise’, arguing that it marks a ‘spectacular shift’ from rehabilitation to crime control (1992:454), “it is concerned with the rationality not of individual behaviour or even community organisation, but of managerial processes” (1992:455).

To illustrate the concept, Feeley and Simon discuss a decline in focus on ‘recidivism’, arguing that whilst the term may still be prominent within penal systems and procedures, the use and meaning have changed. Where the normative connotation of recidivism was connected to the aim of reintegration into the community, it is now used as an ‘indicator’ of performance targets. Applying terms of rehabilitation to the measuring and monitoring of systems and targets not only diminishes the focus on individual transformation and potential, but performs a precise function that deflects attention away from the failures of the criminal system “by emphasising correctional programs in terms of aggregate control and system management rather than individual success and failure, the New Penology lowers one’s expectations about the criminal sanctions” (1992:455).

Writing at the height of Conservative Party punitive penal policy and rhetoric, Feeley and Simon present an extremely negative view of the prison function, arguing that it is no longer based on either punishment or rehabilitation, but on management through variable detention based on risk assessment. The observations were made only five

years before New Labour came to power in the UK with a Third Way policy direction that combined a 'tough' stance on crime with a discourse of social justice. Yet rather than restoring the principles of rehabilitation and reintegration, the Third Way approach to crime control can be seen as extending the managerial reach of the New Penology through the appropriation of a discourse of education, empowerment and transformation. Penal policy and practice has been restructured through a focus on Key Performance Indicators and *Reducing Re-offending* targets (Home Office 2004) which further serve to categorise and manage unruly groups according to differentiated risk factors rather than "aspirations to rehabilitate, reintegrate and retrain" (Feeley & Simon 1992:457).

Feeley and Simon do acknowledge the increase in projects and programmes that were beginning to emerge within the prison system by 1992, recognising the "myriad of new and innovative technologies introduced over the past decade" (1992:463). Yet they argue that while new ideas are presented in the terms of the Old Penology, focused on the normalisation and rehabilitation of individuals, reforms have a tendency to evolve in ways in which they were not originally meant, "many of these innovations are compatible with the imperatives of the New Penology, that is, managing a permanently dangerous population while maintaining the system at a minimum cost" (1992:463).

They concede that the long term effects are yet to be seen, but are cynical about the possibilities for change (1992:463). Despite the 'lingering language' of rehabilitation and reintegration, innovative projects generated under the New Penology are presented in terms of managing costs and controlling dangerous populations rather

than focus on social and personal transformation (1992:452). However, over twenty years later, prison radio growth demonstrates a further reworking of rehabilitation that combines a managerial function with a focus on prisoner empowerment. The PRA and NPR work collaboratively with voluntary and statutory sector agencies to connect prisoners to a range of information and services. Rather than initiatives ‘imposed’ upon unwilling subjects to achieve managerial outputs, outside organisations and agencies are increasingly involved in working together with prisoners and prison staff to provide services. Considered as a reaction to the negative institutional and personal impact of the New Penology, prison radio bridges the managerial needs of the prison with the individual needs of the prisoner.

Government of the Self

The notion of prisoners as an audience redefines the prisoner as an active participant in their own incarceration, empowered through information and participation to make choices about their actions and behaviours. Prison radio programming serves a management function through the provision of information on ways in which prisoners can invest in their own rehabilitation, representing a governmental technique for the remodelling of productive citizens. PRA practitioners stress the importance of positive stories, and their role in showcasing constructive experiences of prison. Through talking to prisoners “who have worked out how to use the system to their advantage, in a very positive way”, they hold them up as role models for other prisoners (Maguire 28.11.13). Celebrating achievements on the radio then acts as a form of incentive to inspire other prisoners, impacting on the behaviour of the wider prison population and the culture of the prison,

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What we do is actively seek out those people who are genuinely making an effort to change their life in whatever way that might be. We give them a platform, and we broadcast their voice into prison cells across the country. The idea is the way they act, the way they behave, the way they talk, the language they use, kind of becomes the accepted norm (Wilkie 28.11.12).

Prison radio contributes to the institutional management of the prison population, promoting conforming behaviour through rational choice and encouraging prisoners to engage with sentence planning. However, PRA discourse and practice emphasises the prisoner voice in the process. Where prison radio aims to change behaviours, it aligns them with communitarian principles through a discourse of respect, acting as a counterpoint to the individualistic focus of the neoliberal prison.

The agency of the independent rational actor is central to the functioning of neoliberal governmentality, with even the criminal reframed in economic terms. Through a discourse of freedom, choice and responsibility, the emphasis shifts from state care to that of the empowered and active citizen optimising performance and productivity. Where unemployment and homelessness may have contributed to an offender's imprisonment, they are no longer social risk factors seen as the responsibility of the state, but reframed as problems of 'self-care'. The responsible and productive citizen governs their own conduct through their own choices, whilst the neoliberal rationalities of the state reframe those choices in market terms. Governmentality acts upon 'free subjects', yet as Dean highlights, there are contrary meanings that can be attributed to the term: On the one hand a free subject might be free to exercise choice, and on the other, the subjection of a free subject operates through the exercise of choice (1994). Therefore neoliberalism invokes choice whilst

simultaneously multiplying the domains of life that can be restructured in market terms (1994:193). Where choice is shaped to benefit the market alone, 'empowerment' paradoxically becomes a technology of control.

Foucault illustrates the extent to which the individual is reframed in entrepreneurial and enterprise terms through discussion of the theory of human capital developed by American neoliberal thinkers, Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz (2008:220). Rather than relating solely to the value of labour, human capital takes into account the qualitative relation of the worker to themselves and others, and to their bodily, genetic, and environmentally acquired skills and abilities. Individuals are no longer seen as dependent employees selling their labour, but autonomous entrepreneurs with responsibility for their own investment decisions and endeavouring to produce surplus value.

The significance of the entrepreneurial self is demonstrated through the neoliberal analysis of crime and criminality, where the criminal too is reconsidered as an economic rational individual (Foucault 2008). Crime is no longer a moral or anthropological issue, but is reframed as a form of economic risk and considered as any action which incurs a penalty. If a person commits a criminal act, they are investing their 'human capital' and considering the risks, as with any other commercial venture (Schirato et al 2012:134). The role of the penal system ceases to be concerned with dealing with criminal behaviours in any psychological or moral sense, reacting instead to the supply of crime by performing a regulating and organising function rather than disciplining or normalising behaviours (Foucault 2008:253).

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There are inevitable parallels with the Eighteenth Century liberal position outlined by Bentham, considering crime as punishable because of its negative impact on others. Yet where the panopticon theoretically aimed to eradicate crime completely, the neoliberal approach recognises the impossibility of the task, with proposed expenditure far outweighing the benefits (Schirato et al 2012:135). Rather than being a sign of social dysfunction, a certain degree of regulated and distributed criminality is necessary for society to function optimally (Foucault 2008).

Individual agency is central to neoliberal functioning, yet rather than re-imagining the individual as an entirely economic being, Foucault claims that economic behaviour becomes ‘the grid of intelligibility’ one will adopt on the behaviour of a new individual (2008). This economic grid then becomes the surface of contact through which power is exercised, where the power over the individual is formulated out of the notion of the human as “an economic ensemble” (Schirato et al 2012:134) with the individual ultimately becoming more ‘governmentalizable’ (Foucault 2008:252). This position presents the ‘entrepreneurial self’ as empowered to manipulate their environment and maximise human capital. Yet as Dean argues, the degree of empowerment is debatable: if the market comes to pervade every dimension of that environment, then there is little difference between one directly shaped by the state and the embedding of market terms into all spheres of life (1994:193).

Governmentality does not replace sovereignty and discipline, but adds to the equation, creating a triangle of control exercised through the social body. The extension of power suggests an even more pervasive and inescapable form of domination. Despite his insistence of the positivity of Foucault’s model, Garland presents an insidiously

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oppressive account of modern prison rehabilitation practice through the discussion of the 'responsibilised prisoner' (1997). He describes contemporary prison regimes as seeking to assimilate individual prisoners to its terms through new 'technologies of the self'. Based on new economic rationalities, these techniques of correction insist that the offender takes responsibility for criminal actions. Yet rather than the prisoner as free-willed, and capable of self-directed action and moral agency, the key problem is seen as a lack of responsibility that needs to be addressed and remedied through procedures that actively 'subjectify' individuals (1997:191).

To illustrate this, Garland uses the example of a Scottish Prison Service programme for long-term prisoners. The Personal Development File enlists the prisoner as an agent in his own rehabilitation, as an "entrepreneur of his own personal development", instead of imposing therapeutic solutions upon an objectified and infantilised client (1997).

Prisoners work through a series of decision-making and self-assessment exercises designed to help them to examine aspects of their lives, such as drug use, relationships, and attitudes to authority. Self-examination and reflection are not new concepts in this situation, yet where they were once used to achieve spiritual or moral outcomes, these new procedures are more concerned with teaching "prudent, self-interested decision making" (1997:191). Instead of preaching that actions and behaviours are wrong, the message is that indulgence in bad practices is "imprudent, self-defeating and leads ultimately to being a loser who ends up in prison" (1997:191).

Responsible choices and resulting behaviours are rewarded through the Sentence Planning Scheme, including increased options for prison activities and employment. In this way prisoners take part in the government of their own imprisonment. They are

both governed, and learn to govern themselves, in ways which emphasise agency and autonomy (1997:192). However, 'agency' does not equate with 'freedom'. Rather than the freedom to exercise autonomy in any way they choose, Garland refers to a form of institutionally sanctioned agency, "that of the self-confining, prudent individual whose behaviour is aligned with the goals of the prison authority" (1997:192).

The contrast between the principle of incarceration and the development of incentive and enterprise schemes characterises late-modern penal practice (Carrabine, Lee & South 2000). Systems of incentive and reward are long established in prison, with privileges such as access to the most sought after jobs, free association time, and television and radio, dependent on good behaviour. Garland's discussion of the Personal Development File contrasts with earlier behaviourist-based reward and incentive schemes demonstrating the reframing of 'responsibility' in economic terms. Yet where the approach can be criticised as a means of moulding individuals to align with institutional and governmental aims, it does begin to acknowledge prisoner agency, marking an important development in the move towards a more just and humane penal system (Carrabine, Lee & South 2000:197).

Prison radio facilitates and supports the development of the 'responsibilised prisoner' through educational and informational programming that can be seen as a means of imposing a particular set of attitudes and values upon the prisoner. However, the PRA differs through emphasis on the agency of prisoners in shaping and defining activity. The accounts of PRA practitioners highlight the importance of prisoner involvement in production, with information presented by prisoners in their own terms, in ways that they can relate to. Listener feedback is encouraged, and a sense of ownership and

involvement gives credibility to the programming. Prisoners are not only empowered to make choices, but in shaping the content that informs those choices. The PRA works in partnership with the Prison Service, contributing to institutional management objectives and *Reducing Re-offending* targets (Home Office 2004), yet ultimately, prison radio is concerned with the empowerment of prisoners in their own terms,

We're in-cell delivered by prisoners themselves, we're credible, we're not the voice of the authorities, we don't represent the prison. We represent prisoners; we give a voice to the prisoners (Wilkie 28.11.12).

Chapter Summary

Punishment is inextricably connected to power, with prison performing both symbolic and material functions (Wacquant 2003:xv). This chapter began by establishing the status of prison as a representation of the wider function of disciplinary power in society. I then introduced the governmentalised nature of state power and the neoliberal rationalities and technologies that characterise the modern penal system. The UK backdrop from which the PRA emerged saw public services and institutions gradually restructured and privatised to varying degrees, with even the traditional state apparatus of the prison reinvented as a site of enterprise. The PRA is representative of increased numbers of voluntary organisations, education providers and social care agencies operating within an opened up, marketised prison sector. In the wake of institutional crisis and state withdrawal from welfare issues, they play a vital role in balancing institutional managerial aims with a focus on the transformative potential of individual prisoners, a role I examine in the following chapter.

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Working on a number of levels at a particular time, prison radio addresses the social issue of prisoner rights whilst also fitting with neoliberal solutions to the issues of crime and punishment, promoting the responsibilised, entrepreneurial prisoner and representing innovation within the new 'enterprising' public sector, maximising impact for minimum spend. In these terms, prison radio is both a practical response to an institutional crisis and a resistance against the punitive rhetoric that drives penal policy. Rather than a straightforward system of domination, this demonstrates the productive nature of power. The PRA resists the economic reworking of punishment through an emphasis on prisoner agency, choice and opportunity, functioning as an intermediary between prisoner, institution and state.

Prison radio is a product of the dual currents of marketisation and privatisation that continue to shape the contemporary UK prison context. After outlining the changes in both the broadcasting and prison sectors from which the PRA emerged, the following chapter identifies comparable shifts in the non-profit sector, focusing on the people who founded and developed prison radio.

CHAPTER 4: “MAKING A DIFFERENCE” - SOCIAL ACTION & ENTERPRISE

As with any new social venture, the prison radio story is driven by the people who instigated and developed the activity. When asked to reflect on what drew them to the idea of prison radio, PRA participants all talk of the potential to change the lives of prisoners, and of a continued commitment to “making a difference”. This chapter focuses on the motivations, characteristics and actions of those involved in the process. I present PRA growth as a product of a wider political and cultural context that has redefined volunteerism, social activism, and cultural production in terms of enterprise and entrepreneurship, in order to support the restoration of social welfare and growth of the knowledge-based economy.

As people developing a new, non-profit, creative service within the public sector, PRA founders and practitioners typify the innovation and enterprise recognised by New Labour as central to economic and social reform. However, through discussion of literature on the reconfiguration of the non-profit sector and theories of social and creative entrepreneurship, I argue that the focus on economic functioning fails to adequately acknowledge the social values and motivations at the heart of the activity.

In the preceding chapters, prison radio was presented as both alternative and public service media, and as both a product of, and resistance against, neoliberal disciplinary practice. Here I argue that the PRA is a product of new arrangements for the contracting out of public services, epitomising a governmental shift toward a more enterprising, innovative and independent prison sector. Yet at the same time, PRA discourse and practice remains focused on changing the lives of prisoners, rejecting the economic reworking of volunteerism, social activism and cultural production. The

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accounts of PRA founders and practitioners all highlight the importance of people over business targets and measures, demonstrating the enduring character of social activism in the context of increased marketisation.

I begin by outlining the New Labour political context, placing the development of prison radio within the formalisation of the wider non-profit sector. I then go on to identify common characteristics of prison radio founders and practitioners, dividing them into two overlapping groups: firstly considering early activity in relation to literature on volunteerism and social activism; then through the theories of social and creative entrepreneurship which increasingly inform voluntary and public sector practice.

The PRA is representative of an increased number of voluntary sector and civil society organisations involved in the provision of welfare services and support. Developing throughout the 2000s, and formally established in 2006, PRA founders and early practitioners were able to navigate and negotiate a rapidly changing policy and funding environment in order to build a prisoner-led radio service. Through the examination of specific projects in later chapters, I explore the range of opportunities and challenges faced. Each of the examples, including the delivery of a prison radio education partnership project, demonstrates the reconfiguration of public services and ideas of social justice, and the role of the third sector in the process. Here, I outline existing theories on social activism, volunteerism and the non-profit sector which inform the later discussion of the people, partnerships and institutional arrangements through which prison radio was developed.

Third Way Politics & The Third Sector

From the beginnings of Radio Feltham in the late 1990s to the current NPR partnership with NOMS, the growth of the PRA can be tracked against the wider political and economic repositioning of the ‘third sector’, where organisations and agencies driven by social rather than profit motives have gained a new prominence in civic revival. As such, the actions of those involved in establishing the PRA, and subsequent organisational development, need to be considered within the wider context of the recognition, legitimisation, and professionalisation of the non-profit sector.

The PRA grew out of a policy context that recognises the social and economic potential of non-profit organisations working in partnership with state and private sectors to achieve social outcomes. However, the formalisation and professionalisation of the non-profit sector raises questions around the degree to which it conflicts with the aims of individual actors, dilutes social impact, and stifles the creativity and flexibility that define it. The PRA story reflects and represents the development of the sector itself, from informal, spontaneous activity to institutionalised service provision. The professionalisation, trust, and state reliance on the voluntary sector has increased to the extent of supporting the development of creative projects in prisons, whilst the accounts of PRA founders and practitioners illustrate both the possibilities and challenges of navigating and negotiating a rapidly shifting cultural and political landscape in order to achieve their original aims.

In England, the New Labour landslide election victory of 1997 began the mainstreaming of the third sector on to the public policy agenda. The process began in the 1970s marked by the publication of the Wolfenden Committee Report, *The Future*

of Voluntary Organisations, with voluntary organisations achieving a critical mass and becoming recognised as a ‘sector’ in its own right (Kendall 2000:544). However, it was New Labour’s ‘Third Way’ policy agenda that served to develop its role and services, with three major policy events identified within the first two years of administration (Kendall 2000:543).

As a product of a New Labour policy context, the PRA epitomises a Third Way communitarian approach to social justice and the repositioning of the voluntary sector in social welfare provision. Widely attributed to Anthony Giddens (1998) and developed by Tony Blair’s New Labour, the Third Way describes a middle ground between the top-down, society-focussed, welfare state and the market-driven, self-determining individualism of neoliberalism (Rose 2000). Individual responsibility and economic productivity are combined with notions of social justice and renewed focus on community and collective responsibility. The Third Way can be viewed as a compromise, reacting to the failure and rejection of the neoliberal model of the 1980s (Roper & Cheney 2005).

Juliet Roper and George Cheney outline the UK’s shift from the Keynesian social welfare model to Thatcher’s free market neoliberalism, including the process of corporatisation and privatisation of previously state owned assets, including to varying extents, education, health, and corrections (2005). By the late 1990s it had become apparent that the neoliberal model was not “ensuring the welfare of all people” and the gap between rich and poor became bigger. The extension of market principles into government and civil society by virtue of individual rather than collective responsibility led to a blurring of the boundaries between the public and private sectors (2005:96). In

addition, where governments sold off the assets that once provided the infrastructure and revenue, they can no longer provide the extent of social welfare that they once could. For Roper and Cheney the rise of the Third Way, characterised by the growth and professionalisation of the non-profit sector, represents a pragmatic solution to the failures of the free market. However, rather than a straightforward attempt to rebuild civil society in the wake of the civil decay of the 1980s, New Labour's unique brand of neoliberalism sought to strengthen the market economy *through* the reinvigoration of civil society.

In *The Third Way: the Renewal of Social Democracy* (1998), Giddens outlines the need for a new radical centre approach responding to a world of growing globalisation pulling power away from nation states on one hand, and of increasing localisms on the other. However, Nikolas Rose critiques the approach as a simplistic repackaging of Twentieth Century political and philosophical themes including economic revitalisation and support for family values and civil society (2000). Instead, he argues that the defining difference of the Third Way lies in a form of "therapeutic individualism" through which citizens are remodelled as "moral subjects of responsible communities" (2000:1397). Rose's analysis of *Community, Citizenship and the Third Way* (2000) demonstrates the move towards a politics of conduct through which prison radio was recognised and legitimised, with the PRA not only contributing to the management of the prison population but representative of wider shifts in governing society. Rather than a 'new' politics, he argues that the approach merely adds a language of ethics into the neoliberal equation, outlining emerging ways in which acting on the ethical formation and self-management of individuals are used to promote "engagement in

their collective destiny, in the interests of economic advancement, social stability, and even justice and happiness” (2000:1398).

In applying the theory of governmentality to the analysis of the Third Way, Rose presents individuals as governed through the concepts of citizenship and community (2000:1399). In these terms, the support of community initiatives not only represents the empowerment of the sector but becomes a technology of control within a “politics of behaviour”. Rose describes a particular “territorialisation of life” in which a community-based ethic shapes the values that guide each individual, accomplished through a combination of “ethical citizenship and responsible community” fostered, but not administered, by the state (2000:1398). Rather than the withdrawal of the state in matters of security, health and productivity, a new model of the state emerges as facilitator and enabler, with politics redistributed in the form of individual morality, organisational responsibility and ethical community (Rose 2000:1400).

The politics of the Third Way redefines public problems in terms of ethical and cultural subjectivity (Rose 2000:1404). Social divides caused by contrasting cultures of dependence and selfishness throughout the 1980s, are replaced with a focus on collective responsibility and ‘duty’ (Rose 2000:1404) that highlights the importance of active citizenship and volunteering. Citing the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, Rose illustrates the collaborative approach to civic revival. Yet it is as much an ethical as a practical response (Rose 2000:1405) with active participation reshaped in moral terms,

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We are trying to develop the concept of ‘the active community’ in which the commitment of the individual is backed by the duty of all organisations – in the public sector, the private sector and the voluntary sector – to work towards a community of mutual care and a balance of rights and responsibilities (Straw 1998 in Rose 2000).

The Third Way marks the point at which the economic and social value of charitable organisations was recognised and harnessed. Prison radio is representative of a new relationship between state, market and civil society in which the third sector has gained a new role in welfare reform. Yet rather than characterising the sector simply as lying between state and market, PRA development demonstrates the interconnected and interdependent nature of the relationship. As Nicholas R. Fyfe suggests, the third sector should be more accurately conceptualised as “lying within a triangular tension field” where state, market and the ‘informal sector’ are cornerstones simultaneously shaped by the respective influences of the other (2005:538).

Jeremy Kendall argues that the Conservative government’s lack of interest in the charity sector throughout the 1980s and early 1990s can be attributed to the two-sector preoccupation with the dichotomy between the market and the state (2000:550). Blair’s leadership marked a dramatic shift in Labour Party policy, moving away from traditional attachment to the state and towards the market. This was combined with a communitarian focus, where shared, strong values would be instilled through the combination of family, government and institutions of civil society to rebuild the social order from the “debris of dysfunctional neoliberalism” (Kendall 2000:551). Through increasing reference to, and gradual recognition of, a third sector, charitable organisations were plucked from relative political obscurity and reframed as

vital institutions of civil society, creating the conditions of possibility for the development of diverse and creative projects such as prison radio. The rise of the third sector is broadly recognised as a reaction to the failures of Thatcher's free-market policy focus and privatisation of public services, yet where Roper and Cheney present it as a practical and pragmatic response, Kendall takes a more emotive approach, highlighting its role as central to New Labour's ideological commitment to civil society.

Kendall presents an optimistic and empowering account of New Labour's strategic partnership with the voluntary sector, forming a new relationship based on capacity building for increased access and participation. Where the old apparatuses are no longer effective, or even functioning, the non-profit sector was recognised as bridging the gap between state and society (Rose 2000). However, the Third Way approach can equally be considered as the appropriation of social activism. The PRA is not only a product of New Labour policy which recognised the potential of the third sector, opening up funding and contractual opportunities, but is representative of the discursive repositioning of the concept of civil society. John Morison equates the non-profit sector with civil society, arguing that the term itself has been re-worked as a key notion in the development of a new social democratic agenda that reaches beyond the binary politics of left and right (2000:104).

Third Way governance is achieved through focus on the networks and alliances which exercise 'government-at-a-distance', with civil society repositioned as a space where government can happen, "a correlate of the political technology of the state" (Morison 2000). Formal government, through state institutions, has access to the majority of the resources and therefore retains the most power, yet the relationship between the

state and informal networks of government are increasingly complex and interdependent. In traditional liberal terms, civil society was seen as oppositional to the state, more tolerated rather than embraced or harnessed (Morison 2000:111). Service delivery was the domain of state or statutory agencies, and on the occasions where voluntary organisations were involved, they were seen more as the ‘innovators’ or ‘pathfinders’ rather than the providers. Whilst considered as a space where innovation might occur and be managed, civil society was traditionally placed outside of politics, essentially separate and autonomous. Yet the Third Way repositions civil society as a resource of the state, recognising its role as “a reserve army of potential” (Morison 2000:112).

Morison too views the process as a positive move, highlighting the role of the third sector in moderating the influence of the market and developing power beyond the state (2000:104). However, through the use of governmentality theory, he shows that the formalisation of a third sector represents both control and empowerment, “a new political rationality is being developed by the state and articulated through governmental technologies of control and measurement that so far are only hinted at in the discourse” (2000:119). It is presented as a space where power is being worked out, with community and voluntary organisations playing an active role, contributing to the reconstruction of the relationship between civil society and state.

Rather than new rationalities being imposed by the state, the process works both ways, with formal government being changed whilst it operationalises a programme through the networks of civil society, responding to new priorities and ways of thinking. The process is one of ‘degovernmentalisation’, where new technologies and

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rationalities of power develop to stimulate agency whilst simultaneously reconfiguring the constraints of freedom of choice of the agent, or “governing through freedom” (Morison 2000). The sector is encouraged to exercise ‘responsibilised’ autonomy in the development of partnership agreements, whilst the aims and interests of organisations are directed through a framework which reinforces an economic rationality alongside the more traditional welfare ethos. Yet as Morison argues, the extent to which a managerialist or economist approach is promoted over traditional welfare values raises important sociological and constitutional questions about the way in which power operates in society (2000:132).

As demonstrated through shifts in the management and operations of both the BBC and HMPS discussed in earlier chapters, private sector management values and techniques had infiltrated the public sector during the previous decade through a gradual process of privatisation. Now the same principles were beginning to shape the growth and establishment of the voluntary sector (Morison 2000:110), embedded through funding sources and structures increasingly reliant on inter-sectoral partnerships. The PRA is a product of an environment in which the third sector was formalised, yet such strategies equally represent governmental techniques for diluting the campaigning and oppositional potential of the sector and bureaucratising smaller organisations out of existence. Many non-profit organisations were struggling to negotiate a shifting funding landscape based upon collaborative working with inflexible and bureaucratic government agencies. Similarly, the comparable institutional changes in the still largely public sector agencies of HMPS and the BBC contributed to the key partnerships which PRA founders and practitioners describe as pivotal to the

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organisation's development. Growing from a single project at this time, they were in a unique position to flexibly adapt their operations to fit within the institutional structures of partner organisations whilst striving to maintain independence, autonomy and focus on their core objectives.

With the emergence of a new breed of professionalised, well-funded and well-organised organisations, Morison highlights developing tensions between the professional, managerial approach and a more traditional, informal, volunteering ethos. A rise in economic rationality, including the move towards managerialism, and an emphasis on efficiency and business practice, may well have come at the expense of the more traditional ideas of social welfare (2000:109). The conflict between social aims and professionalism can be seen through similar patterns within the community media sector, where a focus on professionalism and the highest broadcast standards possible is often seen in opposition to the primary aim of promoting access, participation, diversity, plurality (Van Vuuren 2001).

Writing on the changing role of the volunteers and voluntary agencies in prisons in 2002, Radio Feltham and PRA founder, Roma Hooper also highlights the dangers of over-regulation and over-managerialism. Volunteers in prison have long been involved with supporting prisoners and their families, yet voluntary agencies have remained largely invisible to the Prison Service and individual establishments (Bryans & Walker 2002:13). Hooper identifies a shift in the acknowledgment of the role of prison volunteers in the early 2000s, illustrated through the creation of the new position of Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator for the Prison Service and a good practice guide for governors and agencies produced by Clinks, the umbrella organisation for supporting

and representing volunteers in prison (2002:103). Whilst calling for a cohesive strategy of joint initiatives between voluntary agencies and prisons, she stresses the importance of the continued independence of the sector. 'Working together' does not equate with becoming totally absorbed within the prison culture and methods. Instead, the quality and strength of volunteers and voluntary organisations lies in their alternative perspective and independent culture,

To over-managerialise them could not only be de-motivating but deny them the most important quality they have – a non-statutory, experienced, confidential and caring listening ear which transcends the institutional setting and enables the prisoners and their families to benefit from service and support which they may not be able to access elsewhere (Hooper 2002:104).

The voluntary sector qualities outlined by Hooper (2002) illustrate the principles on which the PRA was founded. Focusing on the early stages of prison radio development, I have sought to illustrate the rapid shifts in third sector policy and practice which set the scene for the growth of the PRA through discussion of the political context of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Third Way placed the voluntary sector at the centre of welfare reform, offering a solution to the civic decay of Thatcher's Britain based on a commitment to civil society and the generation of social capital. Yet I argue that the re-working of social aims in managerialist and economic terms can be seen as an extension of free-market neoliberalism, harnessing and developing the market potential of social and voluntary action. The PRA story is one of balance, relating to the wider opportunities and challenges of the non-profit sector, and the ability to navigate a new funding and operational environment whilst retaining independence in order to achieve the aims of supporting and representing prisoners.

Volunteerism & Social Activism

Having related PRA growth to the wider non-profit sector, attention now turns to the actions and motivations of the people involved. Here I outline the key theories relating to the characteristics and objectives of PRA founders and practitioners, arguing that their individual and collective aims are central to, and indicative of, the repositioning and reconfiguration of both the non-profit sector and creative industries in terms of economic and social reform. The prison radio story spans from the first voluntary radio broadcast within HMYOI Feltham, to the establishment of the PRA as a registered charity, launch of flagship station ERB, and beginnings of the NPR. Throughout interviews with key prison radio developers, there is a clear distinction between those involved at each stage, from early volunteer founders with little or no prior radio experience, to paid professional radio practitioners. However, individual accounts show a collection of complementary skills, combined to varying degrees, and developed through a range of professional backgrounds, primarily those of community development, criminal justice, education, social work and public service broadcasting. The combination of these skills and backgrounds not only highlights a common set of social, non-commercial values, but demonstrates an ethical commitment to non-profit and public sector working that has helped to define the organisation's activity and shape its development. First, I focus on the volunteer, activist beginnings of prison radio before considering the significance of entrepreneurship theory in relation to PRA development.

Radio Feltham began in the early 1990s, before the emergence of Third Way policy and the development of the third sector. Instead, it grew out of the self-organisation of

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individual volunteers who were concerned about the problem of youth suicides in custody in their local community and identified radio as the best way to communicate information. The volunteer founders remain involved in prison radio as PRA Chair and Company Secretary, yet they came to the field with limited prior involvement or experience in broadcasting. They were concerned with addressing a particular social problem in whatever way they felt would make the most impact. The beginning of Radio Feltham was primarily un-funded, driven by those who identified a social need and potential solution, and reliant on those who had the passion, skill and commitment and time to make it happen. Later development sees the formal establishment of the PRA with paid staff, business and strategic planning, and government contracts. Where theories of volunteerism and social activism can be applied to the early prison radio activity, later development demonstrates the merging of these themes with a discourse of entrepreneurship and enterprise that has redefined both the media industry and social welfare practice.

From the outset, the prison radio concept demonstrates the overlapping characteristics of volunteerism and social activism. In 1992, PRA Company Secretary, Mark Robinson read a plea for help in the press from the local prison following a series of five youth suicides in quick succession. Feeling that prison radio could work in much the same way as the more established format of hospital radio in promoting communication and combating feelings of isolation, he enlisted the help of his friend and neighbour, Roma Hooper, now PRA Chair (Robinson 27.11.12). Hooper had significant experience of fundraising in the disability sector which not only indicates the specific skills to raise money to start a project, and experience of navigating public

and charitable sector systems, but a commitment to social inclusion that characterises social activism, whether paid or unpaid.

Volunteerism is notoriously difficult to define due to the range of activities that the term encompasses, from prison visiting to producing community radio. An understanding of what motivates people to give their time and skills to benefit others is equally hard to achieve due to the vast array of personal, political and cultural beliefs and values that underpin such actions. However, the past twenty five years has seen a rapid increase in the study of volunteering, originally prompted by a growing concern over the provision of social services in an age of increasing materialism and individualism (Wilson 2000:233) and more recently, in an attempt to inform wider sector development. Writing on the contribution of volunteers in the penal system, Hooper identifies a tendency for the actions of volunteers to be confused with those of the wider voluntary sector (2002:92). Instead, she defines volunteering as “unpaid (except for out-of pocket expenses); freely chosen; done through the medium of an organisation or agency; and for the benefit of others or the environment as well as oneself” (2000:12)

Where volunteers seek to *help* society, activists aim to *change* society. However, the accounts of PRA participants relate to both positions, focused on supporting prisoners whilst changing attitudes about prison and rehabilitation. The roots of the PRA lie in the desire to address the individual problem of suicides in custody at HMYOI Feltham, yet the growth of the activity and the organisation’s focus on the potential for wider social change around the treatment of prisoners, demonstrates that terms

‘volunteerism’ and ‘social activism’ in this instance are not only closely related, but can be interchangeable.

This merging of the terms is further supported by John Wilson who argues that that the two roles are social constructions that need to be examined in conjunction with each other (2000:217). Volunteers focus on the improvement of individual problems whilst social activists are traditionally orientated to social change. Yet where there is a case for distinguishing between activism and volunteerism along the lines of the different types of people they attract, social circumstances help to determine the meaning of the two roles and their relationship to each other. Using the example of the AIDS crisis, Wilson shows that when the government was slow to respond, volunteers doubled up as activists to deal with the problem (2000). This is further demonstrated in relation to the significance of volunteer organisations in prison. A recent report by Clinks highlights the continued role the voluntary sector plays in addressing social problems. They argue that rather than merely providing offender services, there is a diverse range of assets that set volunteer organisations apart from other sectors, “they are advocates, campaigners, sources of vital information on service user need, a critical eye on existing services, and innovators that drive service change” (2014:3).

Theories that aim to understand the reasons why people donate their time and skills fall broadly into two areas - those that emphasise either emotional or rational motivations. Wojciech Sokolowski divides the understanding of why people volunteer into two distinct, yet complementary, categories of human behaviour: the ‘attitudinal’ model which explains philanthropic acts by personal motives, attitudes and

dispositions; and the 'microstructural' model which recognises the influence of various social forces on the individual actor (1996).

The attitudinal approach identifies two types of conscious motives that affect human behaviour, "rational pursuit of self-interest; and altruism or commitment to promoting a particular set of values" (1996:260). Actions are guided by both the rational calculation of personal gratification as well as altruistic motives that aim to benefit others. Defining altruism as the "desire to lend a helping hand" and self-interest as the "gratification of unfulfilled psychological needs" he argues that both play a significant role in the decision to volunteer (1996:260). It is important to recognise that involvement in volunteer and social activism is motivated by personal gratification as well as a desire to help, yet it is too simplistic a model to encompass the range of activities and benefits on both a personal and social level.

Instead, Sokolowski calls for a move towards a microstructural model which stresses the influence of social ties and interaction in explaining volunteering behaviour.

Previously applied to the study of social movements and civil rights activism (McAdam 1986), the microstructural approach highlights the similarities between what he describes as 'philanthropic activism' and involvement in social movements. Both behaviours are forms of collective action requiring the interaction and co-operation of a group of people and both aim to achieve some form of social good which require a degree of personal commitment as well as spontaneity, dedication and orientation towards others (1996:262).

The microstructural approach is useful for the understanding of the actions of the PRA founders as it draws clear parallels between the informal voluntary beginnings of

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Radio Feltham with social and political activism. Rather than reducing their actions to a desire to help, or an opportunity for self-improvement alone, what drew Robinson and Hooper to prison radio can also be explained through social ties and interaction that are based on shared ideologies and a social goals. Both refer to becoming involved through neighbours and friends, of enlisting the help of their wider network of contacts in gaining support for the project, and of the bonds that developed with people working within the prison. As Sokolowski highlights, people engage in philanthropic activities because they are induced by their friends, relatives or philanthropic activists, or because they are recruited through networks of organisational affiliations (1996:275). Once engaged, there is a snowball effect of participation, where philanthropy impacts on individual attitudes and values, and ultimately motivates people towards further activity and a desire to pursue the “next worthy deed” (1996:275). Hoping to take a break from fundraising, Hooper needed some persuading to commit to the funding role again, but admits to being “hooked” from her first visit to the prison, struck by the people who cared inside, and the lack of awareness about prisons on the outside (27.11.12). Discussion of the motivations and drivers behind setting up a prison radio project demonstrates the interdependent relationship between personal and collective values that form the basis of social action.

Social & Cultural Entrepreneurship

Volunteerism and social activism theory contributes to the understanding of the volunteer roots of prison radio. However, the actions and motivations of the staff team involved in the formal establishment and subsequent growth of the PRA equally

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connect to theories of social and cultural entrepreneurship. Interviews with founding Chief Executive, Phil Maguire; Director of Operations, Kieron Tilley; and Director of Radio, Andrew Wilkie, demonstrate the same values and social objectives of the volunteer founders, together with talk of being drawn to the opportunity, of a unique and powerful idea, and the potential to drive it forward. Their accounts typify the commitment, values and innovation attributed to a new breed of socially motivated ethical entrepreneur placed at the centre of economic and social policy. Here, I consider the actions of PRA founders and practitioners in relation to ideas around social and cultural entrepreneurship and argue that the political and discursive repositioning of ‘entrepreneurship’ represents the governmental appropriation of volunteer and activist principles for economic and social reform. Entrepreneurship may describe the innovation and enterprise of the people who established and developed the PRA, yet their accounts remain firmly based in the objectives of producing quality radio to improve the lives of prisoners.

The development of prison radio beyond Radio Feltham can be traced to a BBC partnership project examined further in Chapter Six. Here the story serves to illustrate the individual backgrounds and aims of the founding staff members. Following a number of meetings with various BBC figures, Hooper describes the contact with Keith Beech, Managing Editor of BBC West Midlands, as the point “where it all started”, stressing the importance of finding the right person to take it forward. Beech was instrumental in bringing together a steering group comprising of the Prison Service, Probation Service, education providers and the BBC, whilst Hooper speedily established charitable status and put together a small Board chaired by Tilley, then

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Head of Learning for BBC Radio (Hooper 27.11.12). The steering group met for over a year until the secondment of Maguire as full-time BBC Prison Radio Co-ordinator in September 2005 began to move things forward at a faster pace. From this point, the PRA grew beyond its volunteer roots, gradually building a team of paid, specialist staff able to dedicate the additional time and energy to develop prison radio. Within one year, two new prison radio stations were established, radio skills training courses delivered, the PRA was officially launched with a high profile event at HMP Birmingham, and Maguire left the BBC to become the organisation's first Chief Executive. The momentum continued into the following year with the development of a regional pilot project involving six additional prisons, the beginnings of ERB, and Tilley leaving the BBC to become the PRA Director of Operations.

Both Tilley and Maguire talk of their moves from the BBC to the PRA as a logical next step, combining their previous skills, experience and personal values with a new and exciting opportunity. Tilley was linked to Radio Feltham in the late 1990s through a previous role as Regional Manager of CSV Media, a connection that eventually led to my own work with the steering group. Having identified potential staff and part-funding for a training course within the prison, he talks of his frustration when the project fell through at the last hurdle for funding reasons, and his continued interest in the idea when it reappeared on the radar during his later involvement with the BBC Corporate Social Responsibility Steering Group (Tilley 28.11.12). Maguire's background also illustrates this pattern, from his time as a residential social worker in a children's home and teaching children excluded from school, he retrained as a broadcast journalist and was working as a BBC Radio 2 producer when he saw the prison radio opportunity,

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describing it as bringing his different interests together, “radio and doing something positive” (Maguire 28.11.12).

Reflecting on their individual motivations for moving from the BBC, both accounts are framed in voluntary and public sector discourse of a desire to ‘make a difference’ and do something ‘important’ whilst equally demonstrating the innovation and enterprise of the private sector through talk of ‘risk’, ‘opportunity’ and ‘potential’ (Maguire & Tilley 28.11.12). Both remain committed to the public service ethos yet the BBC’s shift towards a more enterprising model of PSB discussed in Chapter Two, ironically contributed to their decisions to leave to be entrepreneurial in their own right, with the freedom to shape something new in their own way.

Tilley in particular talks of his frustration with BBC bureaucracy restricting creativity, with clearance for every decision needed even whilst working at a relatively high level. As Head of Learning for BBC Radio, and with involvement with CSR outreach, he had the job he thought he “had always wanted”, but talks of being “unfulfilled” and not being used as creatively as possible (28.11.12). Tilley was already in post as Chair of the inaugural Board on a voluntary basis and describes the decision to leave the BBC to focus on PRA development full time as an “opportunity... to make a real difference”. Yet equally, he recognises the risk of leaving a job at the BBC to work for small start-up charity, with only one year of confirmed funding, “It was a gamble... we didn’t know whether a national project would ever get off the ground, but it was something we thought could be *really* exciting” (Tilley 28.11.12).

The excitement and enthusiasm for what both Tilley and Maguire identify as the potential of prison radio, typifies the commitment, values and creativity of those

developing innovative projects and services within the public and creative sectors. As a small start-up media organisation focused on developing a quality radio service for a previously unrecognised, niche, target audience, PRA founders are representative of the independent, 'cultural entrepreneurs' reshaping the creative industries. Equally, as a small start-up non-profit organisation developing an innovative, client-centred service within the public sector, their experiences reflect those of the 'social entrepreneurs' credited as redefining public and voluntary sector practice.

Charles Leadbeater's work on social and cultural entrepreneurship in the late 1990s represents New Labour's policy position, reframing free market development in social and communitarian terms. Both the *Rise of the Social Entrepreneur* (1997) and *Why Cultural Entrepreneurs Matter* (Leadbeater & Oakley 1999) were published by Demos, the cross party think-tank closely aligned to New Labour in the run up to the election victory and recognised as helping to develop the party vision. As an advisor to Blair's government, Leadbeater places entrepreneurship at the centre of social and economic reform, simultaneously informing and justifying government policy and rhetoric. The argument is positive in itself, highlighting the importance of independent, creative endeavours. Yet it equally raises questions around the degree to which a call for policy support for enterprise and entrepreneurship represents governmental control of social action and cultural production.

Cultural Entrepreneurs

The main contention is in the reworking of the term 'entrepreneur', formalising a connection between social and cultural innovation and capitalistic, profit-making motivations. This is particularly prominent in Leadbeater and Oakley's argument on

the significance of cultural entrepreneurs, recognising their role in replacing declining manufacturing industries through the growth of the knowledge-based economy (1999). They equate the term with 'The Independents', or the small, independent operations involved with the production and distribution of cultural products, from band promoters, to graphic designers, music producers and freelance journalists. The rise of the independent is linked to changes in the wider creative industries, enabled through the rapid pace of technological change on the one hand and reacting to the domination of global media corporations on the other. Leadbeater and Oakley define the cultural entrepreneur as the product of a convergence of the three forces of technology, values and economics (2005:302), all of which fit comfortably with the accounts of PRA founders and practitioners. From a technology perspective, they are enabled rather than threatened by advances in digital radio production and distribution techniques. They are characterised by common values which are "anti-establishment and anti-traditionalist" and prioritise choice, freedom, and autonomy, predisposing them to "pursue self-employment and entrepreneurship in a spirit of self-exploration and self-fulfilment" (2005:302).

Equally, economic conditions have contributed to a move toward more independent working, as demonstrated through Tilley and Maguire's decision to leave the BBC. The rise of the independent workforce is a reaction to increased job insecurities since the late 1980s, with careers in large organisations becoming more uncertain (2005:302). Whilst both were in secure jobs at the BBC, the restructuring and downsizing of the organisation outlined in Chapter Two contributes to the increasing relevance of independent working as a realistic and attractive option.

Leadbeater and Oakley highlight the positivity of new models of working within the creative industries, calling for policy development to support cultural entrepreneurs (1999). However, the difficulty lies in the focus on economic value, citing profit and growth as the primary motivation. Their advice for the successful independent includes, “Don’t aim to become the next Bill Gates, aim to get bought out by him” (2005:310).

Creative industries commentators argue that the success of the cultural entrepreneur is measured by economic growth and profit (Leadbeater & Oakley 1999, Hesmondalgh 2002, Howkins 2002). Yet it is a position which fails to acknowledge the array of motivations and values behind any creative mission. As shown through the PRA story, what motivates innovators of any kind is not profit, but a passion for what they do, which creates the necessary energy, creativity and inspiration to drive projects forward. More than profit, the ability to act independently, according to individual values and beliefs fosters greater creativity and success.

Social Entrepreneurs

As media professionals, the experiences of the founding PRA staff relate to shifts in the ways that creative industries are organised and politically perceived. However, the reworking of voluntary and public sectors in terms of enterprise and entrepreneurship has additional relevance to the PRA story. The BBC and voluntary sector backgrounds of PRA founders, together with the public and non-profit sector environment in which they operate, link their experiences and actions directly to ‘social entrepreneurship’ theory. The PRA developed from a policy context which highlighted the generation of social capital through innovation and enterprise within a professionalised and

formalised non-profit sector. The concept of the social entrepreneur represents a merging of social activism with business rationalities which changes the shape of both, moving towards more ethical business practice on the one hand and more enterprising social action on the other. Yet the rise of the social entrepreneur can equally be seen as the marketisation of volunteer and social activism.

There is no real consensus in defining the phenomena of social entrepreneurship (Dacin, Dacin & Matear 2010:38), although most attempts refer to the ability to leverage resources that address social problems. In a broad sense, social entrepreneurs are categorised as one 'species' of entrepreneur, those with a social mission (Dees 2001:2). Similarly, Dacin et al argue that theorising social entrepreneurship separately from other, more traditional forms detracts from its opportunity and potential. Whilst the term is most used to describe socially and ethically driven individual innovators, it is equally applied to the activities and characteristics that signify a wider shift in government, public and voluntary sector working,

Social entrepreneurship differs from the traditional understanding of the non-profit organisation in terms of the strategy, structure, norms and values, and represents a radical innovation in the non-profit sector (Dart 2004:411).

The motivations and activities involved in the establishment of the PRA fit within a social entrepreneurship framework. Radio Feltham represents a new approach to the problem of suicide within the prison, and the development of NPR indicates a move towards innovative service delivery within the prison system. With impact across both the public and voluntary sectors, the terms 'public' and 'social' entrepreneurs can be

used interchangeably and applied in two ways: to situations where individuals set up new approaches to specific problems within the social economy, and to public services delivered in new and innovative ways within established social services (Hemingway 2005:237).

As with the concept of the cultural entrepreneur, Leadbeater's work serves to illustrate the social and political context from which the PRA emerged. *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur* (Leadbeater 1997) sets out the Third Way vision, placing innovation and enterprise at the centre of welfare reform. Through the discussion of five case studies, Leadbeater presents social entrepreneurship as the panacea of social ills, capable of transforming and revolutionising an outdated and irrelevant framework for social care. Claiming that society is at an impasse, he calls for a gradual process of change through a "wave of social innovation" from different sources, "innovation in ideas and policies will be vital to underpin the values and philosophy of an active, problem solving welfare system" (1997:8). Social entrepreneurs are presented as central to the process, identifying under-utilised resources and finding new ways of putting them to use to satisfy unmet social needs, not only innovating new welfare services but new ways of delivering existing services.

The growth of the PRA represents an enterprising approach to addressing the social issue of the treatment of prisoners with founders working creatively and collaboratively to develop the project, able to adapt, and committed to finding new ways of achieving their original aims. They are features which equate with a 'calling' and a vocation, characterised by a passionate and enthusiastic approach to the task, as illustrated by Tilley's account of the appointment of the Prison Radio Co-ordinator,

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“Phil blew the panel away. It was the job he was born to do... so engaging, so creative and dynamic, and... he got the project off the ground” (Tilley 28.11.12).

In addition, the launch of NPR in partnership with NOMS represents innovation of service delivery within the prison built on new public sector arrangements through inter-sectoral partnerships. As Leadbeater argues, the value of social entrepreneurship lies in its role as an unofficial “research and development wing” of the welfare system, “innovating new solutions to intractable social problems” and capable of delivering services more effectively and efficiently than bureaucratic public sector (1997:9).

Social entrepreneurship is recognised as a “discovery mechanism”, as a key way through which society adapts and learns (Mulgan 2006:77). Through the hard work of trying to put the idea of prison radio into practice, PRA founders were able to prove whether there is a need and a feasible business model for meeting it.

For Geoff Mulgan, former Chief Advisor on Social Policy for New Labour, the crucial role of social entrepreneurship for innovation cannot be praised enough (2006). He claims that however brilliant policy makers and analysts may be, they are no judge of what will and what will not work, and the higher up they are, the less likely they are to be able to think of something radically new (2006). Therefore, prison radio could only emerge independently of the Prison Service, through the relative freedom to test whether it would work, and demonstrating a clear need and potential model for a National Prison Radio service.

The approach is a useful acknowledgement of the innovative work carried out in communities by creative and committed groups of people. However, Leadbeater’s call to ‘create’ more social entrepreneurs fails to acknowledge the innovation that has

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historically defined volunteerism and social activism. As Roper and Cheney argue, social entrepreneurship is nothing new within the non-profit organisations (2005). Instead, the term is merely a new label for the combination of innovation and values which have shaped the sector to date,

Many advocacy groups, and community initiatives have been started and sustained all over the world through the passion, insight, and creative work of people that fit our contemporary application of the idea of the entrepreneur (Roper & Cheney 2005:98).

Leadbeater cites independence and creative freedom as key characteristics of both social and cultural entrepreneurs, qualities which attracted founding PRA staff to the organisation. Yet in calling for policy development, there are questions around the point at which governmental support becomes control. The partnerships and institutional arrangements involved in the development of the PRA are discussed in later chapters, with prison radio growth based on a collaborative and constructive approach to partnership working, yet the importance of organisational independence is reiterated throughout. In working with large public sector institutions and state agencies, the ability for small, non-profit organisations to maintain control over aims, direction, and operations becomes an issue. Concerns over freedom and independence are reflected across a non-profit sector increasingly reliant on contract working with government agencies, where funding frameworks and mechanisms define, and usually restrict, opportunities for social innovation.

A policy framework which encourages entrepreneurial values acknowledges and supports innovation. Yet it also represents a political justification of the marketisation of social and volunteer activism. The issue lies in the extent to which this alters the

original aims of individual activists and challenges the independence of community groups and organisations. As a key player in New Labour social policy reform, Mulgan stresses the role of social entrepreneurs in creating a more flexible, adaptable state, more in touch with communities and able to make better use of limited resources, recognising its potential to generate types of value that can no longer be achieved by business or public agency alone (2006:82). Mulgan presents an interdependent relationship between social entrepreneurship and state in the generation of social value where social enterprise thrives in a state that engages with civil society in an open, accessible, active and supportive role. He argues that where social enterprises are seen as competitors, civil society suffers, yet where open and supportive relationships exist, the civic scene thrives and social capital is increased (2006:81).

Both Mulgan (2006) and Leadbeater (1997) present a positive account of social entrepreneurship, one which creates a productive and mutually supportive relationship between state and civil society. Yet as Roper and Cheney argue (2005), the creation of the 'social entrepreneur' as a discursive construct plays a key role in the wider spread of market rationality, representing the business colonisation of volunteer and social activism. Their argument focuses on the role of language in the process.

Terms which were once restricted to the business world, such as 'revenue', 'invest', or 'client', are increasingly applied to public and social sectors marking a shift towards the material acceptance. For Roper and Cheney, the rationalisation of social entrepreneurship illustrates the process through which the boundaries are blurred between business, social and public sectors. The barriers between the sectors are

broken down and normalised through the ‘colonisation’ of the social and public sectors through “the language of business” (Roper & Cheney 2005:102).

Yet rather than a one way process, PRA development demonstrates the agency involved, with social entrepreneurs themselves seeking to “marry rational economic calculation and socially inspired vision” (Roper & Cheney 2005:102). Where money for social initiatives is short, it opens up opportunity for non-profits within a competitive field whilst simultaneously being a way for business to balance profit with public responsibility (2005:102). Roper and Cheney’s work highlights the significance of the ‘social entrepreneur’ as a construct which redefines social and volunteer action in economic and business terms. It is a process that works in both directions with PRA founders able to benefit from new opportunities to develop services within the prison system whilst continually safeguarding their independence and right to campaign.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the people behind the PRA, highlighting the values and motivations which underpinned the development of prison radio. Considering the PRA in the context of the wider non-profit sector, I introduced the contradictory forces which have redefined volunteerism, social activism and cultural production in recent decades. The establishment and expansion of the PRA reflects the repositioning of the non-profit sector as central to efforts in rebuilding a framework for social care. Similarly, the place of the PRA within the wider broadcast sector indicates the recognition of independent media production as central to the growth of creative industries. Within this context, the formalisation of prison radio from a volunteer project to a national organisation working in partnership with state, voluntary and

private sector organisations epitomises the Third Way vision for social and welfare reform.

The recollections of the volunteer founders of Radio Feltham were discussed in relation to literature on volunteerism and social activism, whilst theories of cultural and social entrepreneurship framed accounts of the staff involved in developing the PRA. Discussion of the Third Way political context shows a merging of volunteerism, activism and enterprise, achieved through a political discourse which focuses on the 'value' of social and cultural 'entrepreneurship', and representing the formalisation and appropriation of volunteer and social action. I argue that reframing social action through market rationalities and business techniques not only harnesses potential impact but risks restricting the innovation and creativity that defines it.

Through discussion of the literature relating to the political and cultural context of broadcasting, prisons and voluntary sector in the preceding chapters, I have identified common themes around the contradictory, yet interdependent relationship between the formal structures of government and state, and informal, community-based social action. This highlights the unique positioning of the PRA, representing a bridge between state and civil society. In the following section, I focus on key examples which demonstrate the ways in which the PRA navigated the process, balancing governmental and institutional opportunities and restrictions whilst remaining focused on social change to improve the lives of prisoners. Before this however, the next chapter outlines the methods and methodologies which shaped the research process.

CHAPTER 5: REFLEXIVITY & THE 'INSIDER' RESEARCHER

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and reflect upon the methodology and methods utilised through this research and the significance for the project of conducting research as an 'insider'. Part One of the thesis introduced the key existing ideas that can be used to shed light upon the subject of radio in prisons. In Part Two, attention now turns towards the new information the researcher set out to gather, how the task was approached, and the issues which became apparent in the process.

So far, the work has been largely theoretical, with previous chapters outlining literature relating to the contemporary political, cultural and economic context of the activity. The previous chapters argued that the success and establishment of prison radio at that time indicates significant changes in the organisation of broadcasting, criminal justice and social activism, representing the point at which three previously disparate, often oppositional, discourses converge. These are the broad ideas which underpin the presentation of my own findings on the development of the PRA. But firstly, through discussion of the literature, together with reflections on my own methodological journey, I unravel the factors which influenced my approach towards the research process.

This begins with an outline of the broad, qualitative, discourse-focused approach to the research task before detailing the research design and specific methods used. The overall theme throughout the process is that of my own research position and the impact of my prior involvement, knowledge and assumptions about prison radio on the research itself. It is a position that relates to what Linda Finlay describes as

“negotiating the swamp”, of balancing the apparently conflicting aims of researcher objectivity and reflexivity within the qualitative research process (2002a).

Methodological Approach

The broad aim of this research is to capture a history of the PRA, not in any totalising, purely chronological sense, but based on the experiences and perspectives of those involved. The approach has built upon my own prior involvement and continued contact with the organisation with the purpose of informing the future development of prison radio. Rather than a purely detached, isolated account, the project was designed as a collective enterprise. Developed through consultation, the overall approach to the research process was based on the principles of co-operative and collaborative enquiry, one which reflects the shared values not only of the researcher and former colleagues, but the working practices of the organisation and of wider non-commercial, alternative media practice.

The research focuses on the organisation, and the political and institutional contexts which shaped the development of prison radio at a particular point in time. As such, the methodological approach is purely qualitative, based primarily on a series of in-depth interviews with PRA founders and practitioners through which key themes and events were identified to illustrate the growth of the organisation. In turn, the interviews led to the examination of a series of evaluation reports, policy documents, newspaper reports and radio broadcasts in an iterative, responsive process.

Collectively, these texts make up the research data, representing discursive practices which simultaneously reflect and produce the PRA story.

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This approach focuses on discourse in its broadest, abstract sense, as presenting interpretations and versions of the development of prison radio rather than a linguistic micro-analysis. It is one which highlights the subtle ways in which language not only orders perceptions, but how it makes things happen, showing the ways in which language is used to “construct and create social interaction and diverse social worlds” (Potter & Wetherell 1987:1). Rather than privileging one dominant voice in telling the story of prison radio, the aim was to capture a number of different perspectives in recognition of the multiple ways in which people make sense of the world. Yet most importantly, focus on the ways in which PRA founders and practitioners talk about, and reflect upon, their experiences and understandings, places them at the centre of the process. In an attempt to redress the traditional power imbalance between researcher and subject, respondents are reframed as participants guiding the process and contributing to its ongoing development.

The Researcher’s Background

The research topic stemmed from my own interest and involvement in prison radio and built upon my ongoing connection with the PRA. As such, it is impossible to extricate my own values and experience from the research process, from the initial idea to the overall approach and presentation of findings. My commitment to media as a means of influencing social change has shaped both my personal and professional life, and exploration into the possibilities and limitations lies at the heart of this research. I produced my first community radio programme at the age of fifteen; was a DiY punk fanzine publisher, music promoter and performer throughout the 1990s; worked for over fifteen years with a media charity developing education projects with

diverse and disadvantaged groups in the UK; and currently remain active in alternative media practice and research in Australia. The values, skills and interests which underpin this background reflect similar patterns amongst the prison radio founders and practitioners discussed in Chapter Four, leading to my own involvement in the development of the PRA and continued commitment to ‘the cause’ of prison radio.

I first became involved in prison radio in 2005 through Tilley, a former colleague who was then heading up the project for BBC Radio Training and would later become the founding PRA Chair and current Director of Operations. I was the Regional Manager for CSV Media Midlands, a post that Tilley had previously held in the London and South East region. When Maguire was appointed as BBC Prison Radio Co-ordinator, Tilley pointed him in my direction as a contact for developing education provision within the project. The activity fitted well with my role, using media production to engage non-traditional learners into education. Yet I was equally fascinated on a personal level, drawn to the challenge of developing creative media projects within an environment as isolated and mysterious as prisons. In 2006, as the PRA became established, I joined the organisation as Education Director, to develop and co-ordinate a two-year education project designed to evaluate the potential for radio training in prisons before my planned move to Australia in 2008.

Throughout the research, participants all talk of being instantly drawn to prison radio, showing a continued enthusiasm and commitment to the idea that characterises my own experience. I was involved in the initial story before relocating across the globe and have remained interested in progress and in contact with former colleagues since. The distance I gained, both geographically and over time, provided a unique position

from which to reflect and document the development of prison radio in the UK. By the time the idea and opportunity for formal research came to fruition, I had been away from the project for two years and was based on the opposite side of the world whilst simultaneously able to draw upon my own UK contacts, experiences and knowledge.

The Qualitative Researcher

Qualitative research into media and communications has been recognised in recent decades, evolving around a variety of interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological influences (Jensen 2012:266). Attention has shifted from text and audience studies to an industry and production focus, examining the structures and institutions that create media and their content (Lotz & Newcomb 2012:71). Such qualitative approaches have proved useful for the study of non-mainstream, alternative media in particular, exploring the ways in which various technological, institutional and discursive conditions both enable and constrain communication. Rather than focusing on the media itself, a growing field of research explores “the diverse communicative processes that they facilitate in social and cultural contexts” (Jensen 2012:270).

A qualitative research approach highlights the community empowerment and democratic potential of radio through collaborative research methods which complement the nature and goals of both the community sector and of alternative media practice. As Meadows et al show through their exploration of community media audiences in Australia, the democratic nature of qualitative research is particularly relevant to sector through a focus on the democratic principles of access and participation (2007:18). The research process is described as a cycle of shared activities and understandings, where the relationship between the researcher and researched is

transformed to enable a more democratic process and therefore shared responsibility, knowledge and power,

In this configuration, the cycle of participation and sharing is satisfied by careful attention to the way the data is presented as well as ensuring the research has empowering practical possibilities for research participants (Meadows et al 2007:18).

In analysing the rise of qualitative communications research, Klaus Bruhn Jensen identifies three key common denominators based on meaning, context and interpretation and argues that the ways in which humans interpret experiences and events through communications technologies is meaningful in itself. In turn, the researcher role is to “interpret the interpretations that we have of ourselves and our communications” (2012:266).

The aim of this research is to acknowledge the different interpretations of the PRA story in order to identify and present common themes in the process. For Jensen, interpretation, and therefore meaning, is central to the ways in which people position themselves in the world and exercise agency. Interpretation occurs in a context and for a purpose which informs actions, in both the ways that media is produced within organisations and in audience engagement with those texts (2012:266). In addition, communications are context specific, with Jensen calling for the need to adopt anthropological methodologies that focus on the understanding of “the native’s perspective” on her or his reality, and the need to consider the naturalistic contexts in which particular communicative phenomena are encountered and explained (2012:266). The final common feature of qualitative communications research

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presented by Jensen lies in the role of the researcher as ‘interpretive agent’ claiming that the degree of interpretation throughout the process is what distinguishes qualitative research (2012:266).

The role of the researcher as ‘interpretive agent’ is central to qualitative, discursive-focused methodology. As Carla Willig argues, qualitative methods of data collection and analysis are “ways of listening” (2013:150). Rather than making definitive claims, methods aim to give a description or explanation, acknowledging the existence of multiple and varied meanings. Social research then does not aim to produce a definitive, “totalising view of history” (Wall 2003). Instead, the aim is to explore the ways in which people produce social life through focus on the ways in which they interpret the world and interact with each other (May 2001:14). This move towards the understanding of social life recognises that “the meanings which we attach to the world are not static, nor universal, but always multiple and constantly subject to modification and change” (May 2001:15).

This process takes into account the importance of the researcher’s own techniques for understanding and interpreting the social world. Commitment to, and engagement with, the research subject is no longer seen as a challenge but becomes a condition of understanding of social life in a process where the researcher’s own understandings are both utilised and challenged. Within this framework, a reflexive awareness of one’s own knowledge claims, and the discourses used to construct them, becomes an important component (Willig 2013:139). The researcher is repositioned as ‘author’, rather than the ‘discoverer’ of knowledge, recognising their own active role in the construction of research findings (Willig 2013:126).

My own position as ‘expert witness’ simultaneously represents the unique strengths and challenges of this project. On the one hand, I already had the contacts and professional trust of the people involved, together with a prior knowledge and experience of the policy context and background detail. This resulted in less time spent on building the foundations and more time available for focusing on in-depth information. Yet on the other, my own commitment to prison radio and the significance of alternative media in general could easily lead to a singular, subjective ‘celebration’ of the subject, whilst an over-reliance on my own experiences and assumptions puts at risk the ability to fully value the accounts of the participants. Instead, I sought to achieve a deeper, more collective understanding of the subject. As ‘author’ of the findings, my aim was to stand back and present the story in the terms of those involved whilst acknowledging my own position - to tell their story rather than my own. As a result, the ability to achieve analytical distance through the reflexive process then became a central feature of the research.

Reflexivity

Qualitative, discourse-focused researchers accept that the role is one which influences the collection, selection and interpretation of data to varying degrees. As Wetherell, Taylor and Yates argue, such research tends to be small and the choice of topic tends to “chime with the researcher’s personal interests, sympathies and political beliefs” (2001:17). Rather than focusing on scientific techniques, the roots of the Chicago School’s empathetic approach lie in Park and Burgess’ call to post-graduate students to “study what you know” (1921). Starting from a position of empathy encourages understanding and trust in the research process. As I was a former colleague,

participants were already sure of my commitment to the development of prison radio and provided invaluable support through access to information which may well have taken an outsider longer to achieve. Yet equally, the quality and depth of research is dependent on the ability to reflexively acknowledge the impact of the researcher's own values and beliefs upon the nature of the data collected.

Reflexivity and issues around researcher objectivity and distance become even more important where the researcher has experience and involvement. In *Digital Culture – the View from the Dance Floor* (1998), Helen Cunningham highlights the complex methodological issues faced by the insider researcher. As both a practicing clubber and a researcher, she acknowledges that a lack of analytical distance may be seen as problematic. Yet the insider position represents a major strength of the research, where starting from a position of trust enabled her to access more information than an outsider from a university conducting a formal interview (Cunningham 1998:130). The balance between academic objectivity and empathy may present specific challenges, and it is arguably important to be even more detached and critical where the researcher and respondent share the same ideological framework and political sympathies. Yet as Cunningham argues, the position adds legitimacy and validity to the process and respondents are more likely to engage and to provide more focused and in-depth information than if they were starting from scratch with an outsider (Cunningham 1998).

Reflexivity moves beyond awareness of the researcher role, to explicitly situate them at the centre of the research,

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Researchers are imposed at all stages of the research process – from the questions they ask to those they ignore, from who they study to who they ignore, from problem formulation to analysis, representation and writing – in order to produce less distorted accounts of the social world (Hertz 1997:viii).

Finlay's approach is useful for understanding the challenge of achieving a balance in the reflexive process. She presents reflexivity as critical reflection to continually monitor the research process in a move towards objectivity, integrity and trustworthiness (2002a:210). Critical reflection of one's own role in the process is about eroding the 'privileged position' of the researcher, redressing the power imbalance between researcher and participants (Finlay 2002a:210). In turn, the researcher is no longer the 'provider' of knowledge, but the process is repositioned as the "(co)-construction of knowledge" (Finlay 2002a:211). This builds upon the view that meanings are negotiated within particular social contexts, recognising that different researchers will inevitably present different interpretations. Rather than striving for complete objectivity and trying to detach the researcher completely from the process, critical evaluation of their role presents research as co-constituted, as a joint product of the participants, the researcher and their relationship. However, when it comes to practice, Finlay highlights the challenges, "the process of reflexivity is perilous, full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails.... researchers have to negotiate the 'swamp' of interminable self-analysis and self-disclosure" (2002a:212)

Rather than an in-depth analysis of one's own personal, emotional experiences, reflexivity relates to the broad awareness of the ways in which one's own unconscious reactions inevitably impact upon the project design and direction (Finlay 2002b:534).

As the researcher cannot help but bring their own experiences, understandings and

history into the process, objectivity can only be achieved through the awareness of, and presentation of, subjectivity in the process, “understanding thus results from a dialectic between the researcher’s pre-understandings and the research process, between the self-interpreted constructions of the researcher and those of the participants” (Finlay 2002b:534). However, balance becomes the key issue in ensuring that the voice of the participants remains the primary focus. Rather than self-indulgent reflection, reflexivity should only be entered into with purpose, returning to the self only as part of increasing awareness and insight, with emphasis on the importance of “striving for enhanced self-awareness but eschewing navel gazing” (2002b:541).

Reflexivity explicitly positions the researcher within the qualitative research process. Finlay’s work focuses on the personal and emotional impact of healthcare-based ethnographic research. Yet the concept is equally important for achieving distance through self-awareness in discourse-based enquiry. As Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips demonstrate, there are unique challenges in analysing discourses that one is familiar with and distance becomes essential to the process (2002). Rather than the discovery of truth and reality, a focus on discourse is concerned with exploring general patterns of meaning and identifying the social consequences of different representations of reality. The process is based on the analysis of general overarching patterns to achieve an abstract understanding of the ways in which discourses circulate in society at a particular moment in time or within a specific social domain (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:20). Yet where researchers are already immersed in particular discursive practices, it can be difficult to detach themselves in order to recognise the factors that distinguish different discourses as socially constructed

meaning-systems that could have been different. As in this case, when researchers are part of the culture of study, “they share many of the taken-for-granted, common-sense understandings expressed in the material” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:21). Yet it is precisely the ways in which certain ways of speaking have become naturalised that are under investigation. In these terms, Jørgensen and Phillips advise on imagining oneself as an anthropologist or explorer as a starting point to be able to find out what makes sense.

My prior experience, knowledge and contacts shaped the research planning and process, contributing the outcome. Yet from the earliest stages, I was aware of the need to detach myself from my own prior assumptions and strive towards an objective analysis in order ‘explore’ the development of prison radio and achieve a broader understanding. This is perhaps best illustrated by an early research finding. Of the initial staff team, I was the only one who had primarily come from a community media background and from the outset had always considered prison radio as community radio. As such, much of the early theoretical research had focused on the definition and impact of community media. Yet throughout the interviews, it quickly became apparent that respondents were reluctant to define prison radio in such terms, a point I referred to in Chapter Two. This demonstrates the need to be informed by experience and knowledge whilst avoiding being driven by personal assumptions. Instead, the aim was to stand back, let go of prior preconceptions and let the interview data lead the way. In contrast to my original thoughts on how the research would shape up, it has evolved around three major themes of PRA discourse that became apparent through the interview process.

Research Design

Having outlined the overall themes which have shaped the qualitative, discourse-focused methodological approach for researching the growth of prison radio, I now turn to the practicalities of the project. As discussed above, researcher reflection, intuition and thinking can be considered as data even from the earliest stages of forming the research question, “the task of initial engagement is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher” (Moustakas 1994).

As the idea is forming, reflecting on one’s own relationship with the topic can be helpful in examining motivations, assumptions and interests in order to identify early on, “the forces that might skew the research in particular directions” (Finlay 2002b:536). As a former prison radio practitioner, I was interested in developing a research project would contribute to the longer term understanding and development of prison radio. Yet wary of reliance on my own subjective understandings about prison radio, I aimed to be led by those who remained involved and discussions with both Maguire and Tilley marked the first stage in formulating the research design, questions and focus. In particular, Tilley was able to clarify how the organisational direction had evolved since my involvement and provided appropriate documents including strategic plans, previous evaluation reports and current evaluation models to inform the research design. The project began to take shape as a way of complementing existing PRA monitoring and evaluation methods by providing a detailed analysis of the story which could provide insight into how the model could be replicated and built upon.

Next, a proposal outlining the project aims was submitted for consideration and formal approval at the PRA Board Meeting in September 2011. As a former colleague, I was instinctively aware of the challenges that research projects might pose if not handled sensitively, collaboratively and empathetically, issues which are discussed in detail in Chapter Seven. The PRA retains a delicate balance between the prisoner and the prison, bridging the gap between prisoner empowerment and prison authorities. They are all too aware of the uncertainty of this position and have worked hard to build the relationships and reputation to strengthen it. These relationships and the ways in which they came about have become a major focus of the research. Having been involved in the earliest stages and helping to build these relationships, I was already aware of the considerations and sensitivities, rather than participants needing to instil such awareness with an outsider researcher.

However, the submission of a project proposal was more than a formality. The process served to centralise the participants in the research, framing the project as a collaborative attempt to gain insight into the growth of the organisation. In addition, involvement was not limited to the design stage, with participant feedback and comment encouraged throughout, ensuring that the process was democratic and contributing to the validity and credibility of the findings (Sherlock & Thynne 2010:7). Following PRA Board approval, Maguire and Tilley remained the first points of contact, providing access to reports and help in contacting potential interviewees, and have remained invaluable advisors throughout. However, once the parameters and practicalities had been collectively agreed, there was minimal contact. If nothing else, my awareness of the organisational structure and pressures led me to choose carefully

how I would use their time. This can be seen as a reflection of the freedom afforded to the insider researcher where an existing relationship and shared values and working practices leads to trust and collective ownership of the project.

Sampling

Interviews with seven participants were carried out over five days during a research trip to the UK in November and December 2012. The aim was to talk to a range of participants who had played an active role in setting up the PRA and driving the direction of its development. To this end, the final sample represents the scope of activity from the volunteer founders of Radio Feltham, to founding PRA staffmembers, and includes the perspective of a former prison governor who continues to be involved in prison radio development.

- Roma Hooper – PRA Chair & founder
- Mark Robinson – PRA Secretary & founder
- Phil Maguire –PRA Chief Executive & former BBC Prison Radio Co-ordinator
- Kieron Tilley –PRA Director of Operations & former PRA Chair
- Andrew Wilkie – PRA Director of Radio & former ERB Station Manager
- Paul McDowell – PRA Trustee & HM Chief Inspector of Probation, & former Chief Executive of NACRO (at time of interview) & former Governor of HMP Brixton
- Jules McCarthy – former PRA Trainer & current Senior Lecturer in Broadcast Journalism, Staffordshire University

The sample population for the interviews is relatively small, comprising mainly of key stakeholders involved in early stages of activity, selected on the basis of playing an instrumental role in the launch of the PRA or of NPR. The small interview sample is representative of both the PRA as a growing organisation, and of prison radio activity

as a whole. Yet in recognition of the sample size, particular attention was paid to securing a range of perspectives by talking to representatives from different aspects of prison radio, including training, operations, content production, and prison management. The process of identifying potential interviewees began through initial consultation with Maguire and Tilley who invited involvement from the PRA Board. Based on contacts, interest and availability, the approach could be classed as ‘convenience sampling’. Yet where ease of availability can be seen as over-simplistic, “a well-documented convenience sample can generate both valid and relevant insights” (Jensen 2012:269). In order to gain insight into the motivations, challenges and opportunities of prison radio development, the enthusiasm and willingness of participants to be involved was a crucial factor.

Research Trip

Based on the other side of the globe, the option of Skype and email correspondence with participants was considered. Yet in asking people to reflect and share their stories, face-to-face interviews were thought to be more effective for encouraging more in-depth responses. A research visit to London was planned around the PRA Board meeting at the end of November 2012 (Schedule, Appendix 1). As a national organisation, staff and Board members are based in different locations, and the meeting provided an opportunity to talk with as many participants as possible without additional travel and unnecessary imposition on their time. I met with each participant individually either on the day of Board Meeting or during the following week at a variety of London locations to suit their schedules. In contrast to the informal, social discussions between former colleagues, separate, individual meetings were arranged

to conduct recorded interviews. This lent the process a formality which allowed for more in-depth reflection, and helped to differentiate participant's own personal experiences from those of the organisation as a whole.

Beyond practicalities, the visit helped to re-establish previous links and was invaluable in seeing first-hand how the PRA had developed. Personal contact allowed for more flexibility and in-depth conversation with individual participants, not only making it easier to explain the process but helping to remind and reassure them that I was the same person who valued and appreciated their involvement. In addition, a visit to NPR based at HMP Brixton not only demonstrated how the radio station had grown and become embedded within the prison, but helped to remind me of the prison working environment.

Interviews

As shown throughout the following chapters, interviewing is the most effective means of finding out different perspectives, "the best way to find out what the people think about something is to ask them" (Bower 1973:vi). Yet it is the task of the researcher to bring out the meanings and implications. The interview process asks people to put ideas, notions and stories into discourses, ones which may not have otherwise been articulated and might not have been part of practical consciousness. These discourses are then 'data' that "become sources of information through analysis, and of meaning through interpretation" (Jensen 2012:270).

Rather than straightforward accounts, interview statements need to be considered as actions within a context, arising from interaction between interviewee and

interviewer. Such interaction has the potential to empower respondents, not only through the process itself but in validating participant viewpoints and opinions through the research findings. For this project, Garfinkle's ethnomethodological techniques could have been useful in acknowledging and exploring how participant perceptions are culturally bound, yet the focus on empathetic understanding rejects the approach as too confrontational and isolating. Rather than challenging perceptions, in-depth interviews gain access to the points of view, and frames of references, of the respondents themselves.

The traditional goal of the interview is that of obtaining or measuring consistency or evidence of corresponding sets of actions and beliefs, where consistent talk presents a consistent reality. However, drawing on Foucault's focus on the theoretic primacy of talk, the variation in response is as important as consistency and the analytical aim is to identify patterns in talk or 'families of terms'. As such, Potter and Wetherell argue that the interview itself is a more interventionist arena, with the interviewer recognised as active participant rather than "speaking questionnaire" (1987:158).

Participants were provided with information sheets and signed a consent form at the beginning of each interview, which was recorded with permission. In order to encourage open and honest recollection of involvement in prison radio, a flexible, semi-structured interview style was adopted, ruling out the more formal approach. An outline checklist served as a safeguard to ensure that interviews remained focused whilst allowing questions to be customised for individual situations. Informal preliminary discussions helped to maintain clear direction and where necessary, follow-up discussions helped to clarify any ambiguous statements. Central to the

concept of semi-structured in-depth interviews is the importance of a relaxed, informal environment and of building a rapport (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:206). The insider position of the researcher as a practitioner, and as former colleague in the case of PRA respondents, helped to foster feelings of trust and rapport, yet keeping researcher contributions to a minimum was also a consideration.

The main challenge lies in achieving an effective balance between the role of the insider interviewer and that of detached researcher in an interview process with structured formality. In order to achieve the balance between full engagement and detached analysis, Tim May highlights the importance of establishing an intersubjective understanding between the interviewer and respondent, recognising the effect of interviewer role on the material collected (2001:123). Writing up research notes following each interview contributed to the reflexive aims, giving insight into how the process and outcomes depend on how the research relationship evolves (Finlay 2002b:538).

One of the key observations centred on the methodological implications of interviewing media professionals. As radio journalists and producers, participants were comfortable with the concept of recorded semi-structured interviews, yet were more used to being in control of the interview and asking the questions. For instance there was a particular difference in tone and dynamic when interviewing the Chief Executives of the PRA and NACRO who are used to pitching the official aims of their respective organisations as opposed to the personal reflections of other participants. In addition, interview techniques, including the creation of a relaxed atmosphere and establishing rapport, are central to my own background in radio production,

demonstrating a need to actively focus on my own role as academic researcher rather than as radio interviewer.

All interviews followed a similar structure with only minor changes made to reflect differences in participant roles or backgrounds. For instance, the interview schedule prepared for the PRA Chief Executive refers to his transition from the BBC to prison radio:

- Can you start by telling me how and why you became involved in prison radio?
- Can you describe your original role and the way in which it has changed?
- As a BBC radio producer, how did you find the transition to working with HMPS?
- Can you tell me about the process of getting support for the idea and why you feel it was successful at that time?
- What were the pivotal partnerships and processes?
- What do you feel were the most challenging aspects of developing radio projects within prison?
- What do you feel have been the major achievements?
- From your initial expectations and first impressions, has your view of prison radio changed, and if so, how?

The questions were used as a guide and the overall approach was designed to enable reflection on the participant's own personal involvement including motivations, actions and current opinions. The approach builds upon the concept of the act of story-telling as empowering respondents through validating and formalising their accounts. This was demonstrated during informal feedback afterwards, where key respondents described the experience of thinking back on and articulating how it all

happened as unique and beneficial, bringing into focus the distance they had travelled and the changes along the way.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the broad methodological aims which shaped the research project, focusing in particular on the challenges and opportunities faced by the insider researcher. My own position as a former PRA practitioner provides a starting point for the methodology in a reflexive process which combines experience and observation with listening and distance. An ongoing relationship with the PRA is a central feature of both the overall approach and use of interviews as the primary method of investigation. Acknowledging the centrality of the researcher role in the process is based on the assumption that if meanings are negotiated within particular social contexts at particular times then each researcher will tell a different story. From this perspective, research cannot present a definitive, scientific result, but is seen as co-constituted, joint product of the participants, the researcher and their relationship (Finlay 2002:212). The relationship was central to the empathetic and democratic research approach starting from a position of trust and insight that provided access to participants and information that would have taken the outside researcher longer to achieve and contributing to the collaborative and productive aims of the project. Equally however, reflexive awareness of the impact of the researcher's prior experience and assumptions helps to achieve objective distance in order to prioritise and sufficiently value the accounts of others.

A series of interviews with key prison radio founders and practitioners was used as primary data to gain insight into different perspectives of PRA development. The

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transcribed interview texts present a range of PRA discourses which indicate patterns of importance and lines of investigation that have led to the exploration of the three key areas discussed in the following chapters. Analysis of supporting texts then contributes to the discussion of each theme. Firstly, policy documents and PRA evaluation reports add to the understanding of an early PRA partnership project, whilst a selection of newspaper stories help to illustrate the issues around mainstream media coverage of prison radio, and finally, analysis of a more recent broadcast of an NPR radio documentary demonstrates the distance travelled.

CHAPTER 6: PARTNERSHIPS & INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

In Part One, I outlined the existing literature and theory useful for informing the understanding of prison radio. Here, these ideas are used to examine the information gathered through interviews with PRA participants on their experiences of prison radio development. These findings are presented in a broadly chronological order, beginning with the events immediately prior to the formation of the PRA. Yet rather than a purely historical account, the following chapters are structured around prominent discursive themes identified through the accounts – namely, the partnerships and institutional arrangements involved; and the management of perceptions and assumptions about prison radio which have influenced the process.

This chapter presents an analysis of the partnerships, relationships and institutional arrangements that contributed to the early growth of prison radio and shaped the development of the PRA. In particular, I focus on two key projects which illustrate the factors involved in the earliest stages. Firstly, I discuss the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership*, a regional pilot project designed to assess the feasibility of developing prison radio beyond Radio Feltham. Particular attention is paid to the role of the BBC in the process and the impact of the activity on establishing and formalising the PRA. Secondly, the *West Midlands Taster Project* represents the organisation's first formal, contracted delivery project developed in partnership with public, private and third sector agencies. Designed to assess the impact and potential of prison radio training, I focus on the ways the activity served to crystallise the PRA vision.

In order to understand the process through which a single prison radio project became recognised to the extent that radio is now an established feature of prison culture, this

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research focuses on the ways in which PRA founders and practitioners tell their stories. 'People', 'relationships', and 'partnerships' emerge as prominent themes throughout these accounts with a number of relationships discussed as playing a major role in the early growth of prison radio and continuing to be central to current activity.

'Partnership' appears as a key term throughout the accounts of the early stages of PRA development with recollections of the relationships with particular personalities, and the balance of retaining independence appearing as recurring themes. To a degree, the PRA is discussed as a 'conduit', facilitating relationships with diverse stakeholders in order to develop and create radio by and for prisoners. Whilst activity may have been initiated through the conviction of prison radio activists, they were able to build upon the ways in which the idea aligned with cultural, policy, and institutional objectives of the time, developing and shaping it to fit with the needs of multiple stakeholders.

Through a governmentality framework, I discuss the multiple factors involved, and argue that the emergence of the PRA is both a product of New Labour technologies of governance and of the counter-discursive opportunities it produced. I begin by discussing the concept of 'partnership working' as central to contemporary governmental efforts to restructure public sector practice and present the growth of prison radio as facilitated through New Labour policy and discourse that frames social welfare in economic terms. Yet equally, I argue that the accounts of PRA founders and practitioners show prison radio as built upon the principles of mutual support and collaboration, remaining focused on media activism to improve the lives of prisoners.

The West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership

Outlining the beginnings of the PRA, founders describe prison radio activity in the West Midlands region as the next major step for developing activity beyond Radio Feltham.

The events leading up to the formulation of the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* are outlined in the following section through discussion of the PRA's relationship with the BBC. Here however, the project serves to illustrate the organisation's navigation and interpretation of the broader political and institutional context of inter-sectoral partnership working. PRA participants use the terms 'partnership' and 'steering group' interchangeably to describe the bringing together of the BBC, Prison Service, Probation Service, individual prison governors, voluntary sector organisations and education providers in the region. The group grew gradually from early 2004, meeting regularly to discuss ideas and strategies for the development of a pilot project to test the viability of prison radio growth. This culminated in Maguire's appointment in September 2005 to co-ordinate the development of radio stations in two prisons, HMP Birmingham and HMP Hewell Grange (now HMP Hewell). As the project progressed, the PRA was formed and formally launched alongside the opening of the HMP Birmingham radio station. With the PRA established as a charity, Maguire in post as Chief Executive and the original pilot project complete, regional activity continued through a further formal partnership project, expanding prison radio through the design and delivery of short radio training courses in six prisons during 2007 and 2008.

Emerging during the late 1990s and early 2000s, the central role of relationships and networks in the formation and continued development of the PRA reflects New Labour

discourse and policy. As Norman Fairclough identifies, 'partnership' is a key word in Third Way discourse, with partnerships seen as an essential part of New Labour's way of governing (2000:127). Fairclough's discussion of the contemporary reworking and repositioning of the concept of 'partnership' illustrates the policy, funding and institutional context for the development of prison radio. The application of these ideas to the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* positions the PRA simultaneously as a product of emerging governmental arrangements and as resistance against the economic reworking of social activism.

New Labour policy and discourse focuses on the economic function of partnerships, recognising the concept as an important technology of governance (Fairclough 2000 & Davis 2006). Yet from the perspective of those involved, PRA development was based on the principles of mutual support and collaboration with founders highlighting the role of key personalities and personal relationships in the process. Throughout these accounts, the initial *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* is described as a collection of like-minded people trying to work out how prison radio could be expanded whilst contributing to their institutional and organisational needs. For PRA founders, the process is discussed as one of research and consultation, identifying the practical considerations, resources, and opportunities for development.

Partnership working suggests increased autonomy and collaboration in the delivery of social welfare. Yet rather than indicating the withdrawal of the state, Fairclough considers partnerships as an extension of privatisation. Using the example of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), he argues that the term 'partnership' is used in the same way as 'privatisation', simply reframing private finance in less threatening and

more collaborative terms (2000:127). The PFI epitomises the ‘public-private partnership’, involving new buildings financed by private businesses then leased to public services to take over after an agreed time. In relation to prison privatisation, PFI projects enabled public service development without increased public spending, yet the high costs of leasing back the facilities was unsustainable, merely representing the gradual roll-out of the privatisation of public assets and services. Through the language of ‘working together’ and ‘partnerships’, Fairclough shows the term as giving a more positive spin on previously negative perceptions of the risks of privatisation, “Once again, the term ‘partnership’ seems to be giving a more favourable gloss to a relationship which some would describe in more negative terms” (2000:129).

Yet the role of partnerships is not restricted to relationships between government and business. The public sector institutions and voluntary organisations brought together through the initial *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* reflect the way in which New Labour discourse constructs new partnership arrangements between government agencies, public services and the third sector. Fairclough describes the resulting merging together of different sectors and changing nature and role of each,

These hitherto more autonomous domains are being drawn more tightly together into what is widely being called a form of ‘governance’ which transcends and makes partly redundant the old divisions between domains (Fairclough 2000:124).

As indicated previously, ‘New Labour’ can equally be named ‘Post-Thatcherism’, extending themes and policies rather than reacting against those of previous administrations (Fairclough 2000:66). Whilst there are many continuities between the

political discourses of Thatcherism and New Labour, Fairclough shows the main differentiation as the addition of a 'communitarian discourse' (2000:37). The Third Way adds communitarianism to the Conservative 'one nation' approach, yet the key word of 'community' has changed in meaning, shifting from collective to individual responsibility, "the point is that 'community' has come to be understood in moral terms which emphasise that 'responsibilities' are the other side of 'rights'" (2000:38).

The moral element is central to New Labour discourse, with social inclusion and community development regularly linked to strengthening of civil society. Moral claims are combined with authoritarian discourses, citizens' 'rights' are replaced with 'responsibilities', 'duties' and 'obligations', with rights and responsibilities creating a new form of contract between individuals and government (2000:39).

William Davis also highlights the "apparent schizophrenia of a government that flops constantly between communitarianism and authoritarian rhetoric" (2006:253). He outlines the contrast of devolution of power to local and community levels with the extension of the Home Office's surveillance and punishment remit (2006:249). Yet rather than based on contradictions, he describes New Labour's approach as governmentality based on the combined elements of 'double devolution' and more coercive forms of social regulation.

The concept of prison radio relates to both authoritarian and communitarian approaches, based on principles of social justice whilst simultaneously facilitating individual responsibilisation and supporting disciplinary regimes. Where radio may initially appear incongruous with ideas of prison and punishment, prison radio is

indicative of new techniques of governance that build upon both. As Davis argues, governmentality theory offers a fresh perspective, able to sidestep and move beyond distinctions between central and local, top-down and bottom-up (2006). In justifying his Foucauldian approach, he describes the withdrawal of the state from some areas of social life whilst simultaneously extending other strategies of power. These impose restraints on behaviour whilst producing more 'desirable' behaviours and traits including entrepreneurship and citizenship, "power does not only act upon people, but through them, harnessing their desires and choices to achieve the sought-after social order" (2006:252).

Rather than focus upon the apparent conflict between the increasingly authoritarian state and the expanding power of the market, and ideas of community, social justice and collaboration, governmentality accounts for the multiple directions in which power operates. However, Davis argues that communitarianism is merely a projection that never quite comes into existence, with the political function of such concepts relating to the way that they are used (2006:253),

Government is a congenitally failing operation in that its social vision never quite corresponds to anything that actually exists, but the projection of that vision is nevertheless a means of asserting power (Rose & Miller 1992:191).

Under New Labour, the reorientation of discourse and policy proceeds from both fronts at once, with authoritarianism achieved and reframed through a language of communitarianism. Therefore, the language of government does not reflect the realities of social relations but reflects the dominant strategy for regulating and producing them. The 'partnership' concept is central to the Third Way economic vision,

projecting an ideal of innovative, collaborative working whilst simultaneously becoming a technology for the withdrawal of the state from public service delivery,” before one can seek to manage a domain such as an economy it is first necessary to conceptualise a set of processes and relations as an economy which is amenable to management” (Rose & Miller 1990:6).

Partnerships are a key component of the process, where the ‘business’ of public services is reconceptualised in collaborative and communitarian terms. The public and voluntary sector focus on partnerships is indicative of the dominant economic discourse of the time. However, based on the principles of prisoners’ rights, prison radio is representative of the counter-discursive possibilities available, with the PRA able to develop activity by building and adapting a business model in line with the range of relationships and institutional arrangements presented in the following section.

The evolution of the PRA can be seen as a model of partnership working, representing what Fairclough describes a “new ‘networked’ form of governance” (2000:124). Yet equally, the ability to successfully negotiate and manage the needs and aspirations of partners remains central to the organisation’s function and development. Recognising both the opportunities and challenges of partnership working, the need to manage and maintain a balance between different stakeholder objectives is a recurrent theme throughout the accounts of the PRA founders. Far from unique to prison radio, these challenges are typical of emerging arrangements. As Fairclough argues, the sustainability of networks based on diverse interests and agendas is questionable, with marked differences between the model and aspiration, and the ‘messier realities’ of

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partnership working (2000:124). However, where the PRA story differs is through the ways in which participants successfully managed to navigate the process whilst maintaining independence and focus.

PRA founders describe individual steering group members as being committed, and enthusiastic about the possibilities, yet the length of the development process shows the difficulties faced when representatives from a range of large, highly pressured, relatively inflexible agencies and institutions try to create something new and innovative. Whilst partnership working was an attractive notion, the pace of progress only began to speed up once the resources were identified to employ Maguire to co-ordinate such a complex process. As Prison Radio Co-ordinator during this stage, Maguire reflects on the management of the partnership as major part of his role, highlighting the range of different stakeholders all with different remits including individual prison governors, Heads of Learning and Skills, tutors and prisoners, all whilst juggling the production of BBC content and wanting to demonstrate project development to Hooper and other group members, “my job was really working out what all the different stakeholders wanted to get out of it and try to make sure they got it, so it was a bit of a challenge” (Maguire 28.11.12).

The ability to recognise, adapt and align the remits of a range of diverse stakeholders plays a key role in the development of prison radio. The accounts of those involved at the time reiterate the wider aim of developing the potential positive impact of radio and supporting prisoners in a relevant and accessible way. Yet the ability to contribute to multiple stakeholder aims is equally recognised. For the individual prisons, the

activity was able to contribute towards the seven pathways of the Home Office

Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan:

- Pathway 1: Accommodation
- Pathway 2: Education, Training and Employment
- Pathway 3: Health
- Pathway 4: Drugs and Alcohol
- Pathway 5: Finance, Benefit and Debt
- Pathway 6: Children and Families
- Pathway 7: Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour (Home Office 2004)

Not only was prison radio able to produce Education, Training and Employment outputs through radio training courses, but offered a way of distributing information relating to all of the pathways prioritised in the recently introduced guide to criminal justice practice and performance. In addition, education providers were able to contribute towards ‘widening participation’ targets and generate funding through the delivery of an accredited qualification. Similarly, the opportunity to provide employability support to disadvantaged learners fit with the existing European funding framework of voluntary sector partners, CSV Media.

Reflecting on the ongoing partnership between the PRA and the Prison Service, Hooper highlights the challenge of retaining independence and maintaining a balance between the needs of the organisation and the institution (27.11.12). Ultimately, she puts the success of the project down to constant diplomacy and communication combined with a commitment to standing firm. Recognising the extent to which prison radio was a new, different and ‘edgy’ proposition, she discusses the importance of considering the needs of the Prison Service and identifying the benefits for all parties, “remember that

you are there as their guest, and that you need to make sure that you're giving something back to them" (Hooper 27.11.12).

In contrast, she argues that many voluntary sector organisations working in prisons, particularly in the arts, fail to take this into account. Where they believe they have something unique and special, there is a mistaken assumption that the Prison Service will automatically value it. Instead, Hooper highlights the need to prove that a project generates added value showing that from the outset, prison radio was able to provide 'purposeful activity' and hours out of the cell, whilst ultimately being the main form of communication between staff and prisoners,

So we contribute to education and literacy, we contribute to purposeful activity, we now contribute to health and wellbeing... we manage to infiltrate many different aspects... you make yourself indispensable (Hooper 27.11.12).

The prison radio concept is based on the ability to improve the lives of prisoners, yet the successful development of the PRA is equally connected to the ways in which activity can be shaped to contribute to the Prison Service targets and operations. For Hooper, the capacity to negotiate this process without losing sight of the original objective is attributed to the professionalism, sensitivity and diplomacy of the PRA team, developing valuable relationships both within and outside the prison (27.11.12). Both founders and the initial staff team talk of the importance of partnership working, of a merging of ideas and approaches and identifying shared objectives across the previously very different institutions of prison and broadcasting. Yet ultimately, all highlight the significance of individual personalities and relationships in the process, with the project based on the importance of finding the right people and the ability to

connect with likeminded people. The *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* is an example of the ‘partnership’ discourse that was beginning to reshape voluntary, public and private sector practice at the time. However, the accounts of those involved are all firmly based in the traditional language of social welfare, highlighting the importance of people over business targets and measures and demonstrating the enduring character of social activism in the context of increased marketisation and merging of sectors and institutions.

The PRA & The BBC

Building a relationship with the BBC marks a pivotal point in the expansion of prison radio and establishment of the PRA. The BBC was instrumental in developing and facilitating the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* and PRA founders talk of the ‘crucial’ role the partnership played in kick-starting the growth of activity. The contribution falls into two overlapping and inter-connected areas: practical support through the provision of staff and skills, and through the association of prison radio with the BBC’s reputation and Public Service Broadcasting (PSB). Whilst the relationship is described as pivotal, it is discussed as one of many equally important factors and partnerships that continue to contribute to the growth of prison radio. However, it is a relationship that warrants further examination within the context of rapid change and reconfiguration of broadcasting during the period.

The role, function and legitimacy of PSB is under threat, shown through well-documented changes in BBC culture and operations (Born 2003 & 2004) within an increasingly fragmented, commercialised and digitised media environment. Whilst BBC interest in prison radio is indicative of contemporary corporate policy, the growth of

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the PRA as an independent enterprise working in partnership with state agencies represents the innovative and accountable community engagement to which the BBC aspired.

Examined against a backdrop of BBC institutional changes throughout the 1990s and 2000s the PRA can be viewed as a product and reflection of renewed corporate objectives of accountability, diversity and social responsibility in the face of an ongoing need to justify public funding. However, evolving as a relatively small, independent social enterprise, the PRA epitomises the innovation, creativity and public service values that the BBC was arguably struggling to achieve (Born 2004). Therefore, developed through the combined influence of national broadcaster and independent prison radio activity, the PRA represents a new form of PSB within changing media and institutional environments, achieved in partnership and demonstrating the enduring importance of PSB values.

During an interview, Hooper outlines a visit to Radio Feltham in 2002 as marking the beginnings of BBC recognition of activity. She describes the reaction of BBC Radio 2 legal representative, Andrew Phillips, claiming she should be “bottling this and getting it out” and encouraging her to write to the then Director-General, Greg Dyke, with a wish-list for developing prison radio (27.11.12). Hooper’s request for help was passed on to Michael Hastings, then Head of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and soon to be Director-General from 2004 to 2012. Hastings then visited Radio Feltham together with the Head of BBC Radio 1, meeting with the governor to discuss the possibility of work experience opportunities for prisoners. Phillips continued to network, connecting Hooper to interested contacts at BBC West Midlands where she describes “a two-year

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lead up”, from the initial suggestion to finding the right people to form the regional partnership which was then able to design a pilot project to develop prison radio further (27.11.12).

Founding PRA Chair and current Director of Operations, Kieron Tilley, was Head of Learning for BBC Radio at the time, a role combining community outreach with staff development. He recalls the subject of prison radio being raised by Hastings at a BBC CSR Reporting Steering Group meeting, “and I couldn’t put my hand up quick enough” (28.11.12), seeing it as an opportunity to support a project that he had hoped to develop at Radio Feltham through his previous role as CSV Media South East Regional Manager years earlier. Tilley was central to establishing the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* and later launch of the PRA, with his BBC role not only providing specialist knowledge and contacts within the corporation, but bringing a credibility and legitimacy to the project. As PRA Chief Executive, Maguire reflects, “I think that the fact that the BBC were taking this partnership seriously meant that everyone else did” (28.11.12).

Tilley and Hooper networked a range of stakeholders within the region, including representatives of the Prison Service, Probation Service, regional BBC, further education providers, and community education charity, CSV Media. Yet whilst the group is described as ‘enthusiastic’ (Maguire 28.11.12), progress was slow until the BBC agreed to release a producer, through a BBC Training initiative, to develop the project. Tilley and Hooper prepared a job description and together with Keith Beech, then Managing Editor of BBC West Midlands, sat on the interview panel recruiting Maguire to the post of Prison Radio Co-ordinator in September 2005. Maguire moved

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from his position as producer and reporter on the BBC Radio 2 Jeremy Vine Show, successfully setting up prison radio stations at HMP Birmingham and HMP Hewell over a nine month period. Combined with the ongoing commitment and enthusiasm of those involved, the rapid progress of the pilot project and increasing enquiries from other prisons, provided evidence that prison radio had the potential to develop further. As activity grew, Tilley and Hooper's idea of setting up a charity to continue the process began to take shape, and towards the end of his secondment term, Maguire started a conversation about leaving the BBC to become the first employee (Maguire 28.11.12).

The PRA was officially launched at an event at HMP Birmingham in 2006 with the BBC covering the first three months of Maguire's salary as the charity's inaugural Chief Executive, a degree of support that would be unlikely within the current climate of staff and funding cuts (Maguire 28.11.12). Tilley describes the relationship as remaining "hugely important today" (28.11.12) through links with BBC Outreach and the secondment of a Head of Prison Radio post to NOMS to work in partnership with the PRA on the roll-out of NPR. However, whilst the relationship continues, the start-up funding for Maguire's post marks the end of the BBC's direct contribution to the project, "after that, we were on our own two feet as the PRA" (Maguire 28.11.12).

The BBC influence and impact upon the PRA's organisational development reaches beyond that of formal partnerships and official support, continued through informal association and an ongoing pattern of BBC staff migrating to the PRA. After acting as inaugural PRA Chair of Trustees, Tilley made the controversial decision to give up his BBC post to focus on the charity, becoming PRA Director of Operations in 2007. A

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legacy continued with five of the key founding PRA staff moving from BBC positions, and current NPR producers predominantly coming from BBC backgrounds. Far from indicative of a specific recruitment policy, both Maguire and Tilley attribute the trend to a focus on high quality speech-based production skills that remain almost exclusively within the BBC,

There is a quality that we look for in the producers that we recruit, the producers that work for NPR and the PRA are at the top of their game. They are exceptional producers and they make exceptionally high quality speech content (Tilley 28.11.12).

Throughout the reflections, 'ex-BBC staff' is coterminous with 'quality' broadcasting, indicating a strong influence on the PRA's organisational and operational culture beyond the practicalities of specific funding and partnership arrangements. Without exception, PRA founders highlight the 'credibility', 'professionalism', and 'legitimacy' that the partnership afforded the project in the earliest stages, enabling them to attract funders and gain access to the prison system. In addition, BBC skills and experience continue to influence the PRA's broadcast model and production values, demonstrating the BBC's enduring reputation as a quality and trustworthy broadcaster within a context of public service reduction and a dramatically changing media environment.

The BBC Context

Outlining a BBC crisis of legitimacy during the 1990s and early 2000s, Georgina Born connects the situation to the wider attack on public sector organisations, describing a process not only of privatisation but of marketisation, with pressure to become

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competitive, commercial and therefore accountable, underpinned by the “voracious growth of auditing” (2003:64). In *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC* (2004) and associated works, Born’s picture of the BBC at this time highlights the challenge of combining private sector business management techniques with the intangible nature of public services and the resulting negative impact on creativity. Under government pressure to demonstrate visible accountability, the BBC was restructured and redefined through a managerial discourse focused on performance targets and tangible outputs. Born links the rise of accountability not only to the public sector reforms of the Thatcher governments but to the parallel ascendance of neoliberal values in public life, describing a new managerialism resulting from converging forces throughout the 1980s and early 1990s and resulting in a crisis of both funding and legitimisation of the BBC (2003:65).

The BBC involvement in prison radio development needs to be examined from this context of crisis and change, as the corporation struggled to demonstrate relevance and value against criticisms of London-centric elitism through initiatives such as ‘Open Learning Centres’ and ‘Local TV’ that expanded the focus on accessibility and diversity beyond the act of programme making. This is combined with the impact of audit and accountability upon the culture of the organisation which Born presents in Foucauldian terms as “cultivating individuals in a new disciplinary reflexivity of transparency, calculability and targets” (2003:72).

Rather than dismissing the Reithian principles on which the BBC was based, a new form of corporate ethics added to the equation as the BBC attempted to expand the ethical engagement of staff outside of programme making and services. This is

exemplified through both the existence and status of the CSR Board within the corporation, and staff positions including Tilley's then role, both of which were fundamental drivers in the development of the prison radio partnership.

The BBC staff development and outreach initiatives that facilitated Tilley and Maguire's involvement with prison radio represent the development of a new corporate ethic, yet equally contributed to their decision to move away. Both acknowledge their ongoing respect for the BBC as the epitome of quality broadcasting, yet discuss their motivations for leaving to focus on PRA development as based upon a need for creative freedom combined with a desire to do something 'worthwhile' and 'important' (28.11.12). Within the context of new managerial policies of the 1990s and early 2000s, Born presents the BBC as stuck between systematic auditing and accountability on one hand, and quasi-markets and entrepreneurialism on the other, resulting in negative consequences for the core activity of programme making (2003). Where creativity is restricted through managerialism and bureaucracy, the PRA as a small organisation growing independently, from small yet focused beginnings, epitomises the freedom to innovate and adapt. In this case, the abstract principles of "democracy, citizenship and universality" on which the BBC was formed (Born & Prosser 2001) are maintained, yet are rethought and achieved through creativity, independence and flexibility.

Whilst Born outlines the BBC struggle to defend its role and funding against the combined forces of managerialism and entrepreneurialism, Elizabeth Jacka argues that the current PSB model is both outdated and unsustainable (2003). The BBC was built upon the Reithian vision of broadcasting as an instrument "for social integration, for

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enhancing democratic functioning and raising cultural and educational standards through the trinity of information, education and entertainment” (Born 2003:64). As Born argues, its role has long been central to the construction of national culture, mediating information and collective identities whilst inhabiting the, “critical liminal space between public and private powers, state and people, propaganda and knowledge” (2003:64).

The BBC is presented as the combined ethical and cultural project of modern government, no matter how challenging the dialogue with government may be, whilst the Reithian ethic is used as a practice of legitimation, “through rhetorical displays of a sanctimonious soft nationalism, a nationalism that, in times of national crisis and celebration, the BBC claimed as its special territory” (2003:65).

However, as Jacka shows, PSB is struggling to define itself as neoliberal political rationality moves away from the state (2003). The privileged position of PSB output has long been attached to the now outdated role of the paternalistic state, and Jacka argues that automatic privileging on the basis of empty rhetoric of quality, democracy and citizenship can no longer apply (2003:177). However, where Jacka renders PSB obsolete, the PRA represents a new model based on reworked and enduring ideals in a new media environment. PSB is struggling to adapt and respond to rapid changes in communications contexts, “under attack” around the world, and where threatened, she describes a “veritable avalanche of discourse” attempting to defend its existence,

Key concepts are intoned like mantras – public service, public sphere, citizenship, democracy – as if by their repetition alone they had the power to persuade unwilling governments to continue to support PSB (2003:178).

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When discussing the origins of prison radio, PRA founders and practitioners highlight the democratic function of radio, demonstrating a belief in the power of radio to ‘give people a voice’, empowering and informing minority groups through information and representation, with activity based upon the principles of public service and citizenship that are used to defend the continued role of traditional PSB. Yet Jacka challenges the assumption that PSB contributes to democracy in any way, critiquing contemporary theories of democracy as failing to reflect the complexities of modern societies and the changing nature of citizenship in pluralised society (2003:182). Again, Chantal Mouffe’s (1992) radical democracy approach is used to highlight the re-working of ideas of citizenship and democracy beyond the social contract with the state towards associational networks of civil society where people make smaller decisions that to some degree shape, “the more distant determinations of state and economy” (Jacka 2003:182). Recognising differential power relations, Jacka presents society as bound together not by a universal ‘common good’ dictated by the state, but a common recognition of a set of ethical-political values, “pragmatic and negotiated exchanges about ethical behaviour and ethically inspired courses of action” (2003:183). Some form of communicative action is central to the theory and practice of democracy, yet the transition from welfare state to neoliberalism has transformed the political rationality of PSB from educating, informing and influencing taste to one in which the paternalistic state has no role. In this situation, she argues that the special status of PSB is no longer valid, becoming just one more item of choice in a regime governed by individual consumer sovereignty (2003:187).

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Jacka's approach is overly pessimistic, presenting PSB worldwide as outdated and unsustainable. However, her argument highlights the increasing complexity of both communication media and of democratic participation, recognising the need for "a much more nuanced account of the connection between (various forms of) citizenship and the media" (2003:183). Where general arguments of 'specialness' have been replaced by free-market inspired arguments, Jacka calls for an individualised approach to the discussion of PSB that goes beyond the automatically privileging of 'high journalism' or mindless worship of populist media,

We need to provide very situated microanalyses of our 'public broadcasters' within their particular media and not endlessly regurgitate tired and superseded general arguments about PSB's natural superiority (2003:188).

The PRA demonstrates the enduring democratic function of media, reclaiming and expanding PSB principles into a previously unexplored and un-reached setting. For Jacka, the concepts of democracy and citizenship have been reduced to the status of empty rhetoric used to defend an institution that is fundamentally undemocratic, representative of elitist, oppressive power. Yet where she presents the defence of PSB as resting upon an "essentialist conception of 'ideal democracy'" (2003:181), David Nolan highlights the performative function of these concepts, applying Foucault's governmentality approach to show how institutions not only reflect, but create and produce definitions (2006). PSB remains a 'technology of citizenship', with Nolan highlighting the role it performs in creating spaces where ideas of collective identity are articulated and deliberated (2006). Recognising contemporary formations of citizenship as shaped by multiple interactions between authorities and publics, he

argues that PSB informs modes of governmental practice and media practice that 'define' formations of citizenship rather than facilitating a notional ideal or abstract theorisation of it (2006:227). Therefore, PSB operates as a field of practice that works to 'performatively' define formations of citizenship, one that is simultaneously situated within, and governed by, a larger field of socio-political relations (2006:228).

Referring to Paddy Scannell's portrayal of the role of the BBC in the formation of British public life (1992), Nolan argues that PSB not only produces citizenship, but defines citizenship through inclusion and exclusion, "for different audience members, definitions of citizenship produced through broadcasting simultaneously work to produce forms of membership within, and exclusion from, the political community" (2006:230). Prison radio reconnects prisoners with citizenship, re-incorporating them into the political community and simultaneously serving to redefine formations of both prisoners and citizenship. Therefore, the BBC's role in this and similar community outreach initiatives can be seen as a reworking of the public service function, acting as agents of responsibilisation within disenfranchised communities through the expansion of technologies of citizenship.

The citizen-forming role of the BBC has shifted dramatically over recent decades, with the prison radio relationship representing a drive to towards diversity, accessibility and audience accountability. The rise of neoliberal managerialism within the BBC documented by Born (2003 & 2004) shows an institution in crisis as it strove to defend funding under the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s. In line with the wider public sector, the BBC became subject to criticism,

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Public sector organisations were seen as unaccountable, inefficient, incompetent, self-serving and secretive. They were charged with being unresponsive to consumers and clients, of failing to offer consumer choice and – given the neoliberal equation of markets with democracy – of being undemocratic (Born 2003:65).

Whilst the political climate of privatisation thawed slightly after Thatcher, Born describes the increasing condemnation of the BBC as excessively elitist and centralist in the context of the populist 1990s (2003:72). Instead, a discourse of consumer sovereignty was deployed and Director-General, John Birt (1992-2000) transformed the corporation through New Public Management, characterised by audit and monitoring processes, and focused on “robust and measurable performance indicators” (Born 2004:214), “the effect is to render conceptually residual the questions of innovation, creativity, distinctiveness and quality that form the core of the BBC’s public cultural remit” (Born 2003:72).

Born not only outlines the effects of prioritising audit and productivity over programme-making and creativity as detrimental for the cultural role of the BBC but highlights the “corrosive effects” of Birt’s new managerialism on the culture of the BBC, “stoking hierarchy and division” within the corporation (2004:215). Under New Labour, Birt’s successors, Greg Dyke and Mark Thompson, strove to rebuild staff morale and introduced initiatives that built upon the public duty of the BBC as reflecting and responding to the needs of audiences. The increased focus on social responsibility and community outreach that the prison radio partnership represents can be seen as a reaction against the inward-facing bureaucratic BBC culture of the 1990s. As Hooper recalls, the status and influence of the CSR Board within the

corporation at the time was a major contributor to the growth of prison radio (27.11.12), and the project sat well with a BBC drive towards greater diversity and audience accountability in the face of criticisms of elitism.

When asked why they felt the BBC became involved in the project, PRA founders outline a number of factors including community benefit, reaching a new audience, producing new content, and staff development opportunities. Maguire maintains that the desire to do something positive within the local community was a big driver for BBC West Midlands' initial involvement with the project, whilst recognising the rationale for the funding of the Prison Radio Co-ordinator post as largely based on the production of content about prisons, and from within prisons, as well as testing the viability of replicating the prison radio model around the country (28.11.13). Tilley and Maguire describe staff development opportunities as a major factor in the process. Through placing BBC staff with community groups they were able to provide specialist skills whilst learning about partnership working with other groups and agencies and gaining valuable insight into diverse audiences (Maguire 28.11.12). For both, this connects to the importance of what Tilley describes as the BBC's 'public purpose' of reaching diverse audiences, with prisoners among the hardest to reach (28.11.12).

Redefining PSB

The BBC focus on staff development opportunities within communities indicates a desire to reconnect with audiences and justify their public service function. The ability to cater for minority groups is a traditional defence of PSB, yet automatic assumptions about the effectiveness and relevance of services are invalid in a new media environment with a rapidly expanding diversity of platforms and content. Whilst

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audiences are increasingly dispersed, PSB supporters continue to argue the need for universally accessible, free-to-air services with a range of content that reflects cultural diversity and fosters social cohesion and inclusion (Harrison & Wessels 2005:835). A key distinction here is the relevance of traditional PSB models and values for minority audiences, where the reputation of the BBC is recognised as a major factor in developing the partnerships on which the PRA was built; independence and grassroots credibility are described as equally important. The activity grew through a unique selection of relationships and arrangements which combined the top-down national broadcaster role aiming to engage with diverse audiences in new ways with that of grassroots media activism committed to serving the needs of prisoners. Therefore, rather than the BBC alone, it is the partnership model that represents the expansion and reapplication of PSB values, creating relevant content by and with prisoners, a target audience that cannot be reached through traditional or emerging online media platforms.

The conditions which shaped and developed traditional PSB have been radically altered by technology, to the extent that government challenges to PSB funding and governance are somewhat justified. Jackie Harrison and Bridgette Wessels (2005) state that technological and institutional change are inextricably linked, arguing that PSB policy objectives are constrained by institutional arrangements that fail to enable audiences and users to shape and produce their own public service communications.

Instead, they outline the new partnerships and alliances that are facilitating the use of new media and forming new ways of communicating, and show that developments in reconfiguring media remain based upon the values of inclusion, participation and

universal access (2005). Presenting a series of community ICT case studies from the early 2000s, Harrison and Wessels (2005) argue that such initiatives redefine the PSB ethos in a reconfigured new media environment. Whilst their focus is on the use of free computer and internet access and activities designed to engage the public in urban regeneration, the same can be applied to the case of community based media production projects at the time, with the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* representative of emerging new institutional arrangements and new ways of communicating. Traditional PSB is formed through relationships between media institutions, their audiences, producers and funding, and shaped through statutory requirements imposed upon them by their regulatory bodies, yet new social relationships are emerging, with new technology enabling local grassroots activity and creating new forms of engagement.

Outlining the complexities of the media environment, they highlight the dichotomy of commercial populism and cultural pluralism discussed in Chapter Two: that of commercial domination of media co-existing with diverse forms of audience participation and local democratic action facilitated by new media technologies,

Some of the reconfiguring forms remind us that there is a distinction that can be made between populism informed by commercial imperatives and genuine cultural pluralism informed by the social, cultural and political experience of different individuals and groups (2005:840).

Where market dominance by commercial media companies presents a danger to media pluralism Harrison and Wessels argue the continued importance of PSB as a counterbalance to commercial concentration (2005:840). The defence of PSB remains

linked to the social and political value placed upon freedom of expression and editorial independence, values which are central rights of citizens to a wide range of opinions which they connect to John Stuart Mill (1989 [1869]), claiming that any defence for freedom of expression equates freedom with responsibility. Therefore the role of PSB is not only to expand the range and quality of views expressed but to avoid extremes (2005:840-841).

The prison radio partnership is representative of the new social relationships through which PSB is being redefined within a digital media environment. However, whilst the BBC was influential in the process, the PRA could only flourish independently, outside of institutional restrictions. Similarly, the new forms of PSB outlined by Harrison and Wessels are developed independently through partnership working and loose institutional frameworks that allow for experimentation with new forms of media “in which public service values form the guidelines for development” (2005:836).

In a digital media environment in which audiences are fragmented and dispersed across a rapidly increasing number of media platforms, the function of PSB also becomes dispersed and delivered through a range of new relationships in which the BBC becomes one element. For instance, whilst the BBC brand added credibility to early activity, Maguire describes the support of the Ministry of Justice and individual prison governors as far more powerful and influential in the process (28.11.12). Rather than a formal arrangement with clearly defined roles and objectives, the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* is discussed as a series of informal contacts and networks, evolving through shared personal and organisational aims. The flexibility to involve different partner organisations with complementary aims and identified skills

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represents a collective and responsive approach to development illustrated through the example of CSV Media's role in identifying ways to combine activity with the delivery of accredited radio qualifications at HMP Birmingham and HMP Hewell (Maguire 28.11.12). For Harrison and Wessels, this organic growth is an essential feature of new technologies of partnership, functioning as a "largely self-governing mode of operation" to respond to diverse interests and needs and develop a plurality of services and content (2005:836).

Harrison and Wessels' argument is useful for demonstrating the evolving and enduring characteristics of PSB within a reconfigured media environment, particularly the ways in which the PSB ethos is being redefined in ways that are completely separate from, and independent of the BBC. Through arrangements that mirror features of the prison radio partnership, they describe the central role of non-media users and producers in the process, including public authorities and voluntary sector agencies. These arrangements build on issues of universal access, partnership and regulation whilst also exploring citizenship, creativity, diversity and empowerment through participation, ultimately developing public service content tailored to local needs and produced through local democratic forums (2005:843). Arguably, the BBC is no longer central to the PSB model, where local partnerships and civil society organisations are more effective in ensuring diverse representations and responding to local needs. PSB as a technology of citizenship is now facilitated through emerging technologies of partnership with different groups, agencies and stakeholders. Therefore, the democratic role and function of PSB is no longer delivered by and for the state, but democratised and dispersed through civil society.

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Whilst the principles of partnership working are based on shared objectives and collaboration, the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership* involved additional challenges, combining and aligning the interests and aims of grassroots activism with those of the major institutional monoliths of the BBC and the Prison Service. For a small start-up charity, independence then becomes a risk, with PRA founders mindful of the point where institutional involvement becomes institutional control. Without exception, their accounts highlight the importance of independence if they were to remain credible with their target audience, determined to develop and retain a separate identity from the outset. The BBC brand may have been instrumental in building trust and reputation with the Prison Service, funders and partner agencies, yet PRA participants recognise independence as critical for building trust and retaining credibility with the prison audience, a point that equally applies to community based projects that aim to support disadvantaged and disengaged groups of anykind. Therefore, the PSB values of universality, access and citizenship can be considered as more effectively delivered through grassroots initiatives working in partnership with diverse audiences than through top-down institutional arrangements.

PRA founders describe the BBC partnership as a crucial element in the early development of the organisation, “without it, I don’t think it would have happened” (Maguire 28.11.12). The reputation of the BBC gave the project a credibility and gravitas that enabled them to gain trust and build relationships with other pivotal agencies and stakeholders. This is particularly relevant in the case of the Prison Service whose often uneasy relationship with the media will be explored further in Chapter Seven. In addition, the provision of specialist staff not only helped the project off the

ground through skills and funding, but set standards in quality production and organisational management that have continued to shape the PRA and development of NPR. However, the founding staff who migrated from the BBC describe the PRA as equally built upon a freedom to innovate that was previously unavailable to them. As a small start-up organisation, they had the flexibility to adapt and respond to the multiple needs of diverse stakeholders in a way that large institutions are unable to.

This section has focused on the initial *West Midlands Prison Radio Project* and the role of the BBC in supporting and facilitating early prison radio. The relationships forged during this period played a major role in the establishment of the PRA and the organisation's ongoing development. The following section examines a second partnership project, designed to test the feasibility and effectiveness of prison radio training in the region. As the organisation's first formal contracted delivery project, the *West Midlands Taster Project* not only expanded the PRA's work with prisoners and a range of new partners, but provided the opportunity to demonstrate and evaluate the impact of prison radio.

The PRA & Prison Education

In this section, the PRA's formal education delivery project is outlined. The discussion builds upon the theme of cross-sectoral partnerships addressed above, whilst focusing on a policy context in which education and training is recognised as central to the expansion of enterprise culture. The PRA experience connects with the theme of enterprise culture in two ways: representing new, innovative service delivery in prison; and facilitating the responsabilised, entrepreneurial prisoner. Again, the PRA is presented as a product of, and reaction against, the neoliberal reworking of welfarism,

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simultaneously employing business rationalities and methods whilst retaining a focus on representing and supporting prisoners.

The ability to acknowledge and creatively adapt to the remits and objectives of partner organisations is demonstrated through the joining together of prison radio with education provision. For Hooper, Tilley and Maguire, the realisation of the way in which prison radio could work with education marks a major turning point in the development of the PRA (27.11.12 & 28.11.12). The beneficial effects of making radio were already informally recognised by those involved in the partnership, yet the ability to match the production of speech-based content with both soft transferable skills and measurable outcomes around literacy, numeracy and computer skills helped to formalise the activity further. As outlined earlier, 'Education, Training and Employment' (ETE) was identified as a key pathway in the government's 2004 *Reducing Re-Offending Action Plan*,

Three quarters of prisoners do not have paid employment to go on to on release. 55% of offenders subject to community sentences are unemployed at the start of orders. Better literacy and numeracy are key, both to improving the employment prospects of offenders and to their engagement with a range of services. But 52% of male and 71% of female adult prisoners have no qualifications at all. Half of all prisoners are at or below level 1 in reading, two thirds in numeracy and four fifths in writing. Of those offenders assessed in the community, 64% are at or below level 1 in terms of numeracy and literacy. Level 1 is what is expected of an 11 year old (Home Office 2004:17).

In a prison system where over half of the population has literacy levels below that expected of an eleven year old, radio is an effective and innovative method both of disseminating information and of engaging people back into education, particularly

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those with previously negative experiences of schooling. Through the West Midlands partnership, prison radio founders were able to consult with partner organisations to identify the many targets to which activity could contribute. Models were trialled at HMPs Birmingham and Hewell, with trainers from South Birmingham College delivering an NCFE Certificate for two small groups of learners who produced information bulletins and creative content for broadcast and distribution on the wings. For learners, education outcomes were the bi-product of creative radio production: computer skills developed through the use of audio editing software, literacy through research and interview planning, numeracy through editing and producing audio to time, and the softer skills of team-work, communication and conflict resolution through working in a production team. The PRA Executive Summary at the time demonstrates the ways in which these outcomes combined to justify and shape the expansion of prison radio, adapting to both the needs of the 'market' and of prisoners,

As well as gaining a recognised qualification, offenders completing courses develop a range of skills including measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy and computing. They also develop 'soft transferable skills', which are essential to successful integration into mainstream society. These 'soft skills' include team-working, social skills, communication, confidence building, analytical thinking and the ability to empathise with others. Prison radio has a proven track record in helping offenders tackle the barriers they face on release, equipping them with the confidence, skills and qualifications they need to more easily access education, training and employment (PRA 2007).

Governmental recognition of ETE within strategies for reducing recidivism is indicative of the New Labour expansion of enterprise culture. A discourse of 'education and skills' represents a Third Way technology of responsibilisation through which those

excluded from a rapidly changing labour market can ‘invest’ in their own futures. Michael Peters (2001) describes the increased role of ‘enterprise’ and ‘enterprise culture’ in education as a form of cultural remodelling, and whilst applied to the wider field of education and welfare, his argument helps to illustrate the contemporary prison education context through which radio was able to be incorporated and legitimised. Peters identifies the theme of the ‘responsibilisation of the self’ as a distinctive means of neoliberal governance of education and welfare through the rise of enterprise culture during the Thatcher years whilst arguing the its continued prominence highlights the neoliberal thinking that underlies New Labour policies and Third Way politics. Expanded through New Labour, ‘enterprise culture’ represents “a deliberate attempt at cultural restructuring and engineering based on the neoliberal model of the entrepreneurial self” (2001:58).

Yet where Peters presents a cultural remodelling based on wholly economic terms, I argue in this section that the PRA represents the continued relevance and survival of social values.

Tracking the emergence of enterprise culture as a central theme of political thought back to the Thatcher era, Peters argues that questions of economic survival and competition in the world economy came to be seen as questions of cultural reconstruction (2001:33),

The task of reconstructing culture in terms of enterprise has involved remodelling public institutions along commercial lines as corporations and has encouraged the acquisition and use of so-called entrepreneurial qualities (2001:60).

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Outlining the demise of the welfare state, he presents a context of privatisation, public sector downsizing and the reduction of the state's capacity to both achieve traditional welfare goals and regulate the vagaries of an unstable and fragmented labour market. Peters argues that the withdrawal of the state from traditional welfare responsibilities is achieved through a dual strategy of greater individualisation of society and the responsabilisation of individuals and families whilst identifying simultaneous attempts to conceptually 'remoralise' the link between welfare and employment and to 'responsibilise' individuals for investing in their own education (2001:59).

Education and training are recognised as key sectors in the expansion of enterprise culture, providing the means for promoting national economic prosperity and competitive advantage. Increasingly, they represent the transition from dependent passive welfare consumer to an entrepreneurial self, "at one and the same time enterprise culture provides the means for analysis and the prescription for change" (Peters 2001:60).

This approach underpins the government strategy for reducing re-offending (Home Office 2004), recognising the barriers faced by prisoners as among the most socio-economically disadvantaged in society and outlining a policy framework to promote learning and development opportunities. However, rather than the practical measures of privatisation and contractualisation, the withdrawal of the state from direct service delivery is equally connected to moral factors and an "intensification of moral regulation" (Peters 2001:59). Outlining the shift from disciplinary technologies of power to programmes of social security as governmentalised risk management, Peters highlights the 'responsibilising of the self' through education as both an economic and

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moral process (2001:61). The focus on moral regulation links back to the discussion of the ‘responsibilised prisoner’ in Chapter Three, reframed simultaneously as both a moral agent and rational choice actor, with rehabilitation strategies based on work, education and self-development, illustrating the shift from discipline to economic forms of governance.

Responsibilisation of the self is a prominent theme within the governance of education and welfare, providing the means for encouraging enterprise culture within Third Way politics through placing emphasis on the economy and work as fundamental to the moral concept of citizenship. With the realisation that the market alone is unable to achieve economic prosperity, a language of communitarianism adds to the equation. For Peters, this is associated with the substitution of ‘community’ for ‘society’, rather than reinventing society and the process is one in which neoliberals “substitute some notion of civil society for the welfare state under the metaphor of community, where civil society means an association of free individuals based on self-rule (2001:61).

The development of prison radio connects to ideas of enterprise culture and responsibilisation in two key areas: the operational and institutional context through which it was developed including funding frameworks and partnership arrangements; and the ways in which activity contributes to the concept of the responsibilised entrepreneurial prisoner for effective rehabilitation. Yet where Peters argues the wholesale takeover of education provision through an economic discourse of enterprise, the PRA’s continued link with education in prisons illustrates the survival of social values. Presenting an economic narrative based on a vision of the future sustained by ‘excellence’, ‘technological literacy’, ‘skills training’, ‘performance’ and

‘enterprise’, he notes the demise of a language of equality of opportunity and attempts to redress power imbalances and socio-economic inequalities (2001:58), all concepts on which prison radio continues to be based.

As Peters demonstrates, ‘enterprise’ and ‘enterprise culture’ are major signifiers in a new discourse that emphasises economic goals over social and cultural objectives within the education system (2001:66). Yet rather than promoting an abstract set of ideals, he concedes that the move also reflects the new realities of the labour market in the knowledge economy, in need of flexible workers with a particular set of skills. Where government seeks to change the values of a culture based on economic themes, the culture of helping people is brought into question, with Peters citing Shaun Hargreaves Heap’s work on cultural theorist Mary Douglas and enterprise culture,

Is it really possible for a government to achieve such a wholesale change in the values of a culture? Will the encouragement of individual initiative and the free play of market forces succeed without an accompanying change in the culture” and if the attempt were to succeed, what would be the costs? Can the public virtues of caring for those unable to care for themselves, survive in this new order? (Heap & Ross 1992:1)

In the context of the neoliberal reworking of welfarism, the PRA becomes the model of how social values and the culture of care can survive, employing enterprise rationalities and methods whilst retaining the focus on supporting prisoners and promoting prisoners’ rights. This appears to be a difficult, and often unsustainable, balance to achieve within a framework of increased contractualisation and marketisation of social services. As Peters argues, the wider contractualisation of

society and the contracting out of state services are key factors in achieving responsabilisation and individualisation (2001:59). In place of traditional welfare services, he outlines a shift toward policing and surveillance through information systems and monitoring. Referring to the emergence of a “shadow state”, he suggests that the privatisation of welfare is shaped by the contestability of funding and the contracting out of the welfare provision to an ‘informal’ non-governmental sector which “minister to the ‘poor’ and the ‘disadvantaged’ according to set criteria and performance targets” (2001:61). In these terms, Peters’ argument dismisses any notion of agency on the behalf of a third sector, reducing its function to ‘watchdog’ of the state. Whilst agreeing with his premise that the increasingly governmental role of the sector represents the privatisation of welfare linked to the management of socially excluded groups, I argue that the growth of prison radio demonstrates the continuation of opportunities for social action.

The West Midlands Taster Project

Within the context discussed above, the *West Midlands Taster Project* illustrates the PRA’s ability to adapt and develop whilst remaining independent and focused on the original objectives of developing a prisoner-led service. Once formally established as a charity, the PRA successfully applied for a contract to design and trial the delivery of prison radio training packages in six prisons in 2007 and 2008. The project marks the PRA’s first formal partnership contract based on the delivery of specified learner outputs. As a project it is representative of the contemporary enterprise priorities of prison education, both in terms of the contractualisation of partnership projects and through a focus on employability skills and personal development opportunities for

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prisoners. In addition, the project is an example of the ways in which the PRA were able to make the economic, cultural and political context work for them, able to justify and formalise activity through demonstrating outputs for the Prison Service and funding agencies, whilst using the process to develop and define the direction of the organisation.

Designed to test the potential of prison radio, the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership*, outlined in the previous section, led to the establishment of the PRA. Whilst in post as BBC Prison Radio Co-ordinator, Maguire presents his role as “essentially micromanaging” the setup of the two radio stations as well as responding to the growing number of enquiries from prisons around the country. The pilot enabled founders to identify a clear need to support prison radio stations, whilst at the same time realising that the ability to manage numerous projects was unsustainable (Maguire 28.11.12). The capacity to trial models of delivery and identify opportunities shaped the direction and development of the PRA, achieved through consultation with a growing number of partner prisons and external organisations. Inaugural Chair, Tilley, outlines the initial aims of the charity as providing advice and guidance to existing and developing prison radio projects across the prison estate,” there were other pockets of prison radio activity across the country, but there was no single organisation that was showing best practice and networking each of these projects” (28.11.12).

Immediately following the PRA’s launch and Maguire’s appointment as Chief Executive, the charity was primarily concerned with continuing the momentum of development and supporting prison radio stations. During this stage, two major projects emerged,

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with the organisation building on the activity in the West Midlands, as well as exploring possibilities at HMP Brixton in London. Led by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the West Midlands pilot was expanded through a regional project that resulted in the PRA's first formal partnership and government contract to test models of best practice in prison radio training.

In 2006, I moved from CSV Media to the PRA, joining as Education Director and becoming the second paid staff member. In a move that mirrors that of Maguire and Tilley's stories, my role came with a need to identify continued funding for the post and primarily involved securing and co-ordinating the *West Midlands Taster Project*. The development of Electric Radio Brixton now plays a much more prominent role in the accounts of PRA founders than that of the regional training project, reflecting the later move away from direct education provision to focus on the National Prison Radio service. However, whilst no longer emphasised in the PRA's history, the project remains significant, playing a key role in defining the direction of the organisation and helping to identify and demonstrate the areas which the PRA could make the most impact, not least through the information and recommendations included in the accompanying project evaluation process and report.

The *West Midlands Taster Project* forms the basis of the evaluation of the organisation's first year, commissioned by the PRA and produced by the Sheffield Hallam University Centre for Community Justice (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008). Part of a three-year evaluation of the PRA's activities, the process was specifically designed to assess the extent to which the organisation met their objectives in order to demonstrate the potential benefits of prison radio (2008:11). In addition, the aim was

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to identify what worked well and what did not in terms of outputs and processes, and to provide information on the progress the organisation was able to make in terms of its objectives and the needs of key stakeholders including prison staff and prisoners (2008:11). Designed and implemented in the earliest stages, the evaluation demonstrates the PRA's focus on organisational growth as well as recognising the importance of meeting the needs of a range of prison and external partners in the process.

Here, the *West Midlands Prison Radio Taster Project* is presented both as an example of New Labour partnership policy and discourse around education and skills, as well as enabling the PRA as a start-up venture to trial services and build in an evaluation process to inform the organisation's strategic development. Both the project and the evaluation warrant further examination, as they indicate shifting governmental approaches to the management and delivery of public services such as education in prison.

The activity was funded through the last stages of the EQUAL strand of the European Structural Fund, designed to support innovative ways of tackling inequalities and discrimination in the labour market. In 2007, the LSC was the contract holder for two million pounds worth of EQUAL European Structural Funding for one year's activity in the West Midlands. Guided by the newly formed LSC Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) division, the PRA, CSV, BBC and private training company, Carter and Carter, successfully applied for a subsidy arrangement by outlining a vocationally focused training project. Designed as a pilot scheme, the partnership aimed to develop a two-week taster course in radio production for delivery in six prisons across the

region (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:2). Outlining the project objectives, the PRA evaluation report not only lists overall project delivery but the wider remit of examining the potential sustainability and growth of radio training programmes in the Prison Service (2008:2).

The EQUAL framework and LSC OLASS guidelines emphasise the need to build on existing partnerships and formulate new ones, including relationships with additional prisons, and Carter and Carter, a private training provider with a considerable foothold in prison education at the time. The funding application form itself asks for potential organisations to explicitly address the ways in which activity will demonstrate ‘empowerment’, ‘innovation’ and ‘partnerships’, whilst the project evaluation illustrates the recurrent link between the terms ‘partnership’, ‘funding’ and ‘training’ (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:2). All are key words in Third Way governmental discourse and whilst the terms imply the positive outcomes of new, collaborative initiatives for the beneficiaries, they are equally loaded with economic connotations, indicative of the spread of enterprise culture, both in terms of how prisoners are considered and in how institutions operate. Prisoners are re-imagined as rational economic actors, able to make choices and ‘invest’ in their own training and education, whilst the Prison Service is reconfigured around ‘enterprising’ partnership arrangements with private and voluntary sector service providers.

Larger, more established organisations struggled to adapt to new funding priorities and language, yet the PRA had the flexibility to work out ways in which the core activity of producing radio for prisoners could match with different funding and delivery options. For PRA founders, the project is seen as a learning experience,

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significant not only for demonstrating what prison radio could do, but also in acknowledging the activities they felt were unsustainable. Whilst the project was recognised as successful by the participants, partners and funders, it predicated the PRA's move away from direct education provision which was able to reach only small groups of prisoners at a time, towards the wider impact of a National Prison Radio service able to reach the entire prison population of over eighty thousand at a time (Maguire 28.11.12). For PRA participants, the main outcome of the project was the sharpening of this vision. Other organisational outcomes included the experience of negotiating and building new formal contract arrangements for a new and evolving charity as well as providing the means for recruiting new staff including my own role as Education Director, and former BBC broadcast journalist and Project Co-ordinator/Tutor, Jules McCarthy. In addition, the education focus provided the opportunity to build a 'proven track record', demonstrating the impact of prison radio through the delivery of measurable outputs for potential partners and funders. Finally, the inclusion of an evaluation process not only satisfied funding requirements but significantly contributed to the PRA's ongoing strategic development by collating and presenting the first formal feedback from prisoners, prison managers, and partner organisations on the personal and institutional impact of radio projects.

In the project evaluation, Katherine Wilkinson and Joanna Davidson divide the objectives into two distinct categories: the first consisting of the design and delivery of accredited training courses and the second around the wider organisational aims (2008:10). Project delivery focuses on the practicalities of course provision including:

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- The recruitment of a professional radio trainer with relevant industry experience
- The sourcing of a mobile studio for training
- Development of course materials and teaching resources
- Consultation with Heads of Learning and Skills (HOLS) at prisons across the region
- Course delivery and the hosting of a Celebration Event at each prison (2008:10).

The wider programme aims include the raising of awareness of, and interest in, utilising radio training as a resource for the improvement of basic skills, identifying and promoting the benefits of radio training as a positive educational experience to existing education providers within the Prison Service, and the dissemination of learning points from project delivery (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:10).

Between September 2007 and February 2008, the PRA delivered the NCFE Level One *Award Introduction to Radio Production* qualification through five two-week courses in four prisons (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:16). Building on the pilot activity at HMPs Birmingham and Hewell, the project was designed to expand activity to other prisons in the region. Whilst HOLs at six prisons had originally expressed an interest in hosting courses, the practicalities and short timescales for delivery resulted in the involvement of four prisons: HMP YOI Swinfen Hall; HMP YOI Brinsford; HMP Long Lartin; with HMP Brockhill hosting a second two-week course.

Outlining the key findings of the evaluation, Wilkinson and Davidson highlight the impact on prisoners, with twenty four of the twenty nine learners successfully gaining the NCFE qualification. Of the four PRA learners who did not achieve the qualification,

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three were early leavers due to early release, with only one learner failing to fulfil the course requirements (2008:22). The delivery aims of engaging educationally hard-to-reach offenders were achieved, as over fifty percent of those recruited had qualifications below National Vocational Qualification Level One or had no formal qualifications at all (2008:2). Not only did the evaluation find that engagement in the project resulted in learners gaining confidence and increasing their self-esteem, but learners reported that it provided them with a positive educational experience that they were likely to repeat. They felt that their basic literacy skills had improved along with communication and social skills, and they reported feeling more confident about their options post-release (2008:2). In addition, the successful qualification outcomes, positive learner feedback and prison staff observations contribute to the organisational objectives of demonstrating and promoting the potential of radio training for engaging prisoners in education (2008:10) and the wider significance of prison radio.

The project design and delivery reflects the ETE priority of increasing basic and key skills amongst prisoners, recognising literacy and numeracy levels as a significant barrier to employment and long-term rehabilitation (Home Office 2004). Stakeholders saw radio as an effective and innovative way of engaging hard-to-reach offenders, and of providing a positive educational experience which would both enhance basic skills and encourage prisoners back into further learning,

What we were looking for was something new, a way of engaging with people from the prison who potentially otherwise wouldn't engage and learn (LSC Representative in Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:35).

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For both the LSC and individual HOLS, this acknowledges the failure of traditional education provision in prisons to effectively reach those most excluded and therefore, at most risk of re-offending. In addition, the prioritisation of basic and key skills recognises both the negative educational experiences and low attainment levels of the majority of the prison population.

The emphasis on basic and key skills is based on the 1995 introduction of the core curriculum and development of prison key performance targets to raise the number of prisoners with qualifications of Level Two and above (Clements 2004:173). By 2004, the curriculum had begun to reshape adult education both inside prison and out. Now re-branded under the more positive and affirming banner of 'Skills for Life', 'basic skills' focused on literacy, language and numeracy, whilst 'key skills' included the wider abilities such ICT, problem solving and working together, seen to underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development. Making the case for the rehabilitative role of arts education in prison, Paul Clements bemoans the impact of the curriculum on more creative courses (2004). With the view that creativity and practical learning are key components for enabling personal transformation, he argues that the arts "naturally encourage spontaneous and participatory learning, enabling a more liberating and self-directed rehabilitative process" (Clements 2004:169).

Prison radio fits within an arts education framework, focusing on prisoner participation in the creative process. Yet Clements illustrates the hostile environment from which it emerged, claiming that by the early 2000s, the majority of arts provision had been "replaced by an age of instrumental reason and measurement" (2004:173) through a

short-term framework of skills targets. Clements' work provides a useful backdrop from which to examine the PRA's development of prison education provision.

Outlining the need for a more creative and expressive curriculum, he shows a dramatic decline in opportunities for prisoners to engage with arts, replaced through a costly and ineffective move towards an instrumental agenda of basic, key and cognitive skills and highlights the irony that as champions of social inclusion, New Labour should oversee the process (2004:169).

Researching the changing role and curriculum of prison education over a five year period, Clements found that by 2001 arts classes at HMP Brixton had been reduced by seventy five percent, with remaining provision reshaped to deliver elements of the basic and key skills curriculum, a pattern that he shows as reflected across the prison estate (2004:173). Becoming governor of the prison in 2006, McDowell, too was struck by the negative culture and lack of activities for prisoners, placing the development of a radio station at the centre of a wider strategy to introduce more 'interesting' and creative initiatives (29.11.12). Clements' analysis fails to acknowledge the impact of the rapidly rising prison population on overcrowding and chronic lack of resources over this period, yet his work does highlight the inherent challenges of adapting and developing creative and empowering learning opportunities within a political and institutional framework based on performance targets.

The PRA education project shows the ways in which the organisation was able to remain focused on the principles of prisoner empowerment and expression whilst simultaneously adapting and producing institutional outputs. The project was designed to test ways of embedding basic and key skills delivery in an engaging and creative way

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with the evaluation finding that all stakeholders felt that this was achieved in a way that would both encourage involvement in further learning and develop the skills that prisoners would need for employment on release. The majority of learners reported having difficult prior experiences of education and felt that they would be unlikely to enrol on a standard basic literacy course. Yet on completion of the radio training, all acknowledged that their basic literacy skills had improved through the process as well as a range of wider skills including ICT; spelling; communication and public speaking; and working in a group (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:35),

I think all my skills have improved, it's all come together in this course.

Radio just seems to have brought all my skills together - this has been the best course I've ever been on

(PRA Learners in Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:36).

For Clements, an education culture based on the measurement of basic skills is in direct opposition to the aims of arts provision that focused on the holistic development of individuals in prison. Yet the radio education project demonstrates the way that both approaches not only co-exist, but can be mutually supportive, achieving both institutional objectives and realising personal transformative potential. Reflecting on their experiences of developing new and creative projects within this prison education framework, PRA founders talk of the opportunities for prisoners and the ability to do something positive, whatever the boundaries and restrictions.

Clements shows the importance of a curriculum that focuses on empowerment and emancipation, recommending that arts programmes should be supportive not

alternative to the curriculum, a strategy that was beginning to emerge by the early stages of PRA development. Highlighting the lack of research in the field of prison education, he outlines the range of different approaches for the examination of the arts, from practical and constructive use of time to behavioural and therapeutic effects, demonstrating both its social and practical functions. Citing research conducted by the *Anne Peaker Unit for Arts and Offenders*, early supporters of the PRA, he shows that engagement with creative programmes comes from “a need to find a voice of their own in a situation where they have a few means of communicating with others and where they suffer a consequent loss of identity” (2004:172).

Falling between both educational and therapy frameworks, he argues that the arts instil confidence, challenge low esteem and assure prisoners that they are worth educating, becoming a vehicle through which they can constructively occupy themselves and escape from the pressure of their immediate surroundings (2004:172). Creative programmes offer a far more effective reintroduction to lifelong learning than what he describes as ‘dumbed down’ basic skills, able to encourage a broader exploration of cultural values, individual behaviour and lifestyle by both “emancipating and empowering the prisoner” (2004:174).

The PRA interpretation of prisoner empowerment builds on the importance of expression and self-representation that link to the ideas around arts in prison, focusing on the ways in which creativity and new ways of thinking coincide with rehabilitative needs (Clements 2004:173). Clements argues that the distinction between emancipation and empowerment is crucial to understanding the function of the arts as transgressing the boundary between them, providing prisoners with valid

opportunities to explore individual potential and increase self-esteem (2004:174) whilst contributing to their understanding of their own and other peoples' cultures, "engagement with the arts helps produce active citizens and develops a critical attitude in them...this cannot be foisted onto prisoners...but has to be their choice and discovery" (2004:173).

A discourse of empowerment and emancipation had begun to influence wider adult education practice by the late 1990s (Inglis1997). Prison radio training is based on the idea of empowering learners through communication skills, giving them a voice and helping them to express themselves, and therefore represent themselves, in their own terms. As a practical and creative activity, radio training not only represents an attractive learning option for prisoners but is capable of contributing to both empowerment and emancipatory objectives. However, Tom Inglis highlights the complexities and shifting nature of the term 'empowerment', arguing that whilst it originated in the language of radical social movements of the 1960s, it has been gradually appropriated throughout education, social care, business, and organisational management.

For Inglis, the concepts of empowerment and emancipation may be based on the notion of enabling people to take control of their own lives and free themselves from the "structures which dominate and constrain them", yet he challenges the notion that emancipation can be achieved through personal transformation and questions the concept of empowerment completely (1997:4). A discourse of empowerment has emerged within adult education, yet it can only be examined within a wider discussion on the nature of power. To this end, he adopts Foucault's theory, describing power as

flowing through us “like an electric field” (1997:3) and arguing that real ‘emancipatory’ learning can only reach its full potential if it moves beyond a realist typology of power towards a structuralist analysis that helps people to understand how they are limited and controlled by discourses and practices (1997:4).

Inglis distinguishes ‘empowerment’ *within* the system from ‘emancipation’ as struggling for freedom by *changing* the system. Where emancipation involves critically analysing, resisting and challenging the systems of power, emphasis on personal empowerment focuses on the capacity for individual change. By highlighting the difference between the two concepts, he shows that a process leading to increased or devolved power also leads to a more subtle form of incorporation (1997:3). A focus on people becoming self-regulating and disciplined corresponds with Foucault’s ideas on the gradual movement towards a more insidious and pervasive culture of control. Furthermore, focus on reconstructing ‘the self’ through education not only foregrounds the potential for personal transformation but obscures opportunities to challenge and confront the existing power structures (1997:4). Therefore, the more emphasis on individual empowerment, the less likelihood there is of challenging and changing the dominant power structure and processes.

However, Inglis does concede that there is a value in individuals engaging in a process of self-realisation, but argues the need to move away from understanding human emancipation in terms of liberating a pre-existing, essential self. Instead he highlights the need to consider the fields of discourse and practice involved, “without an analysis of power there is a danger that transformative learning, instead of being emancipatory, could operate as a subtle form of self-control” (1997:5).

Inglis' work clearly outlines the issues of discipline and surveillance inherent in adult education policy and practice, demonstrating the extent to which emphasis on personal transformation has been reframed and repurposed as a means of social control. Tracking the shift towards a discourse of self-control based on the development of the critical reflective self, he describes a process of externalising, problematizing and critically evaluating one's own being, actions, and thoughts (1997:7). In addition, his use of the example of the focus on empowerment within management and industrial training demonstrates a strategy based on economic functioning and internalised surveillance rather than people gaining more power and taking control of their lives and environment, "it is about encouraging workers to rationally choose to commit themselves to the values, goals, policies and objectives of the organisation as a rational means of improving their life chances" (1997:6).

Inglis' approach is disheartening, focused on the restrictive and constraining nature of power and highlighting the extent to which 'empowerment' in adult education has come to represent organisational manipulation, used as a means for internalising self-control and surveillance. However, his argument is particularly relevant to the discussion of prison education where the power relationships and structures are even more visible and clearly defined. Where he suggests a pervasive and subtle form of control, prison education is explicitly concerned with the shaping the behaviours of individuals both inside the prison and post-release. Prison radio training was facilitated through a prison and adult education policy and funding framework shaped by a discourse of empowerment that promotes self-regulation and internalised control around neoliberal employability and enterprise priorities. However, the project differs

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in the ways that it engages with prisoners, how it treats prisoners, and how it aims to work collaboratively with them to identify strategies to work constructively within the system.

Inglis is influenced by the 1988 work of Michael Collins, which presents a scathing attack on self-directed learning in which he argues that education and training in prisons is essentially 'accommodative' rather than 'transformative'. Through work with prisoners and educators in Canada, he presents "disturbing insights" into the coercive structures and power relationships that impact on prison education but also shape wider adult education practice (1988:101). Describing the prison setting in order to contextualise education provision, he shows the "all-pervasive surveillance" through security checks and the control of movement of prisoners and staff, but also supported through the hierarchical structure and architecture of the prison. He argues that prison staff are subject to more reporting and accountability checks than outside employees and agencies resulting in a "watchful and distrustful" environment designed to individuate and control the population, which then 'infiltrates' education provision (1988:103).

Collins presents three overlapping models of prison education, all of which can be applied to radio training to varying degrees. Firstly, the 'medical model' focuses on rehabilitation and normalisation, which whilst more typically related to behaviour programmes such as anger-management and drug awareness, is based on the premise that skills development can reduce recidivism. The 'opportunities model' is based on institutional maintenance and focuses more on the need for prisoners to be occupied in meaningful activity rather than longer term rehabilitative aims. Finally, the

‘cognitive deficiency’ model focuses on moral development through education, including ethical, moral and political reasoning within arts and humanities subjects. However, whilst agreeing that it provides an ethical and humanistic alternative to the other more practical models, he maintains that it still represents a form of manipulation arguing that it embeds prison education within a model that subverts the idea of liberal education, “the incarcerated individual is again reduced to a delinquent requiring correctional treatment” (1988:105).

For Collins, education merely becomes an adjunct to the overall apparatus of surveillance, regulation and punishment, part of the strategy to treat, correct and infantilise criminals as delinquents and operating as a deeply embedded normalising technology (Clements 2004:171). Whilst presenting a wholly negative account of prison education in the 1980s, Collins provides a useful context for the emergence of more creative and prisoner-focused provision later on. Interestingly for this study, whilst his critique is particularly damning, his conclusion includes recognition of a small amount to activity which breaks away from the disciplinary and panoptic model, calling for further research,

It would certainly be enlightening to find out what qualities, drive and sustain those prison educators who do comprehend fully what they are up against and yet manage to resist by creating small, somewhat autonomous sites of civilised discourse in an otherwise hostile environment (Collins 1988:109).

Developing in the following decade, prison radio is representative of such pockets of resistance, whilst its continued success illustrates the extent to which genuine transformative learning and personal development can be achieved in prison. Both the

West Midlands project evaluation and later interviews with key participants suggest that this is based on attitudes towards people, and a respectful, supportive and collaborative approach that is central not only to partnership working, but to practical teaching endeavours and the media production process.

The evaluation report identifies 'people and partnerships' as the key to the success of the radio training project with feedback from the range of stakeholders including prisoners, prison managers, funders and partner organisations, stressing the importance of the personalities and values of those involved in the process, from the earliest stages of development (2008). This is evident both in terms of the management of the partnership but crucially, in the way that courses were delivered and prisoners were treated. On an institutional level, this includes the PRA's collaborative approach to the project design and development, working constructively with prison staff and partners to find effective ways to make it work. Yet most importantly, feedback shows course design and delivery as the major strength of the project, based on the principle of treating prisoners as people, with the potential to learn and achieve.

Project Development

In terms of the ways in which the PRA were able to build and manage relationships with partner organisations and agencies whilst working within a complex institutional framework, the evaluation report highlights both the flexibility of the PRA and the enthusiasm of key staff within the prisons,

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The project benefited from PRA utilising their existing prison contacts in the West Midlands and their wealth of knowledge and experience of working in the prison sector

The project benefited from the engagement of key prison staff from Heads of Learning and Skills, Heads of Regimes and Reducing Re-offending teams who were committed to supporting the project

(Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:53).

Where project preparation was based on a partnership model, the report and accounts of PRA participants demonstrate the importance of individual personalities and key relationships at the level of each prison. The project development and negotiation process was identified as crucial to successful delivery, ensuring that all appropriate staff were involved from the earliest stages of planning (2008:18). For instance, the proposal for newly appointed external staff to enter a prison with electronic equipment to deliver a short course is fraught with potential practical and security challenges and successful negotiation of access into each prison is recognised as both an achievement and a learning outcome within the project,

PRA staff reported that being flexible and open to individual discussions was the biggest learning point they came away from negotiating access with the four prisons involved (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:19).

The enthusiasm, flexibility and creativity of key PRA and prison staff are highlighted throughout the process (2008:3) with PRA Project Co-ordinator and Trainer, Jules McCarthy, recounting the importance of bringing together the HOLS, the Head of Reducing Re-offending, and Carter and Carter early on, to work out what was needed and think creatively about how it could work. This is particularly demonstrated through

the case of HMP Long Lartin, the highest security prison involved in the project. Showing their commitment to the project, three members of the Senior Management Team visited an earlier training session in another prison to see the training in action and speak with McCarthy at length. Rather than making the process more difficult, McCarthy felt that the higher the security of the prison contributed to the setting up of the project,

Everyone wants to try and iron out any potential pitfalls before they happen (McCarthy in Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:18).

Through communication, flexibility and negotiation in the earliest stages, the project details and practices were amended and adapted to account for the need for extra security for all involved and the evaluation found that delivery staff successfully 'honed' their negotiating skills at each stage,

I mean in terms of the overall project the idea was to test things out and test how they worked and we certainly have learnt a lot in terms of just how different each prison is and how they go about things (McCarthy in Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:18).

The commitment of those involved to finding ways to make a unique and potentially challenging project work can be attributed to an enthusiasm for new and innovative activity. However, the training was not universally accepted and encouraged. The prisons that failed to take up the opportunity were unsurprisingly concerned about the practical challenges of setting up a short term project within an overstretched and under-resourced prison system (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008). Even within the participating prisons, the additional work involved in moving equipment, and escorting

visiting staff and prisoners daily was not always well received by prison officers and managers. The success of the courses is recognised as dependent on the flexibility and creativity of those involved, with reluctant staff gradually witnessing the benefits for prisoners and prison alike.

Course Design & Delivery

Whilst highlighting the importance of a collaborative and flexible approach to the complexities of partnership working within prisons, the design and delivery of the radio training courses marks the major point of difference with traditional, more accommodative learning strategies. The evaluation recognises two critical success factors based on the practical content and positive delivery of the course:

The engagement of enthusiastic delivery staff that were committed to motivating learners to fulfil their potential

A training course that was delivered in a practical and supportive way that learners felt valued as 'equals' and 'not spoken down to'

(Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:53-54).

McCarthy's teaching style and attitude towards prisoners are identified as central to the process, able to engage learners through practical and enjoyable activity whilst remaining focused on the skills development objectives of the wider project. Training was designed to embed basic skills and create opportunities for learners to contemplate future career pathways by working on specific radio production projects in small groups. Group work enhanced spoken communication skills whilst the time set aside to produce individual journals developed literacy and ICT skills. In addition, project themes involved opportunities for self-reflection around issues of

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rehabilitation and were presented in ways that were both relevant and engaging for learners, with the Wilkinson and Davidson citing two examples:

- *Keeping it Real Behind the Steel*, where prisoners discussed the subject of restorative justice
- *ETE, a One-Way Ticket out Of HMP*, helping prisoners to think about the opportunities on release (2008:20).

During each course, learners produced audio material that was edited and copied to CD, typically consisting of personal statements; news items; group discussion on the realities of prison life; and interviews with prison staff (2008:28). Learners actively participated in identifying and defining the chosen topics for discussion with other projects including financial literacy, volunteering opportunities outside of prison, and the charity work of rapper Tupac Shakur, a topic which epitomises the tutor's ability to combine learners' interests with discussion on issues of social responsibility. In many cases the audio was then used to help with the prison induction process, explaining the workings of prison life, including interviews with prison departments such as healthcare, gym staff, canteen operators and drug treatment workers (2008:28).

The ability to integrate the curriculum with practical activity was seen as a strength by learners, prison staff and partner organisations, with one education provider describing the courses as,

Skills by the back door... They don't feel like they're learning basic skills and soft skills too (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:35).

Within Collins' framework, this relates to a 'cognitive deficiency model' of education that combines the ethical focus of education with a practical alternative to medical

model ‘fixing’ techniques (1988:105). Whilst recognising that traditional humanities subjects such as history and literature can help to improve the moral reasoning skills of prisoners, he argues that there is an ethical issue around the development of a ‘hidden curriculum’ (1988:105). In these terms, embedding basic skills becomes a form of manipulation that infantilises prisoners further.

However, whilst building on Collins’ work, Clements highlights the unique role that arts-based courses can play in prisoner empowerment and transformation, arguing that the creative process encourages “consciousness and critical intervention in the real world” (2004:175). This is supported through prison radio training feedback that demonstrates the strengths of the practical approach to learning based on the production of radio programmes. For learners, the practical focus of the course provided a stark contrast to their previous negative experiences of education based on traditional ‘school-type’ lessons with all reporting that it proved a far more positive learning experience (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:49). As Clements shows, creative activities not only prove to be an attractive option to encourage people back into learning, but offer a positive alternative that develops critical thinking skills and leads to further learning. As a reintroduction to education for those with negative previous experiences, engaging the eyes and hands of students inevitably leads to their minds, providing a valuable opportunity to explore individual potential and increase self-esteem, “Once interested in the arts, students will be more willing to look at more mundane and less attractive educational options, those for instance linked to the basic skills curriculum” (2004:173).

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Radio courses were designed to develop basic skills, yet as Clements argues, literacy goes beyond the ability to decode written symbols, involving a critical act of knowing which focuses on “wider issues of cultural democracy” where participants are better able to shape their environment and society. Rather than an add-on to mainstream prison education, practical, creative learning is shown as central to rehabilitative transformation, providing a framework through which the elements of choice, inclusion and change can operate (2004:177).

Clements presents prison education as based on short-term targets and dominated by vocational and cognitive programmes, parachuted onto often reluctant and unwilling students (2004:177). In contrast, he argues that creativity encourages the skills and qualities of self-direction, self-respect and self-management that underpin realistic transformation and lead to long-term rehabilitation. However, this not only relates to the practicalities of producing a creative product, but is based on the inherent values and attitudes involved in the creative process, with learners developing new behaviours through working and interacting within a positive environment,

Raising the collective consciousness and enabling authentic transformation of students requires non-authoritarian teaching based on rational discourse, critical reflection and respect (2004:177).

Prison radio training is based on a basic skills framework to contribute towards prison key performance targets. Yet equally, it challenges traditional, entrenched, authoritarian approaches to working with people in prison. Feedback from both learners and the prison staff directly involved in the delivery of the West Midland’s

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project highlight McCarthy's approach to teaching, and attitude towards the learners as a critical success factor (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008),

The success of this is down to the personality of the people who've delivered this course because if you didn't get somebody who was innovative and exciting and dynamic it could have all gone a very different way (Education Provider in Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:50).

Whilst individual personalities and attitudes are central to any positive and effective learning strategy, both the project evaluation and McCarthy's later reflection highlight two additional factors which remain fundamental to the success of prison radio: a passion for radio; and treating prisoners as people. McCarthy's attitude to prisoners is reflected throughout her interview, always referring to 'people' or 'learners' rather than 'prisoners' or 'offenders', and describing the work as 'humbling' (3.12.12). This is best illustrated through her account of her first encounter with prisoners as a BBC Regional News Reporter working on a project designed to shed light on the range of criminal justice procedures and processes. Visiting HMP Shrewsbury, she describes the "Dickensian dungeon of a prison" and talks of her shock at meeting with a group of alleged armed robbers,

I think I was expecting McVicar and the Kray Twins... I was stunned to find they were perfectly ordinary teenage boys and any one of them could have been my teenage sons... It really got to me because there was ordinariness about these boys that made me realise that prison can happen to anybody's son (3.12.12).

McCarthy's reaction mirrors the values of fellow PRA founders and practitioners, based on a realisation that many people in prison are only a set of circumstances, choices and chances away from ourselves. Rather than considering prisoners as demonised villains,

the radio education project is based on a belief that with the right conditions and opportunities, people can achieve. She talks of feeling that this was a field in which she could make a difference, of being inspired to volunteer with a local youth network group and of her enthusiasm when the PRA opportunity came up (3.12.12), themes which are both similar to those of colleagues' accounts and connect to the pathways, values and motivations of volunteers and social activists outlined in Chapter Four.

Discussing her transition from the BBC to teaching in prison, McCarthy expresses her shock at the degree to which people stagnate and demonstrates a continued belief in the transformative potential of education, "you are closed down as a human being" (3.12.12). Accounts of the radio courses describe a supportive and non-authoritarian approach to teaching based on a starting point of mutual respect that facilitates a civilised discourse within prison. This was identified as a major strength, and in comparison with previous experiences of school, learner feedback shows they, "felt that they were shown more respect, felt that the radio trainer treated them like adults and equals" (Wilkinson & Davidson 2008:49).

The tutor's attitude may have fostered a respectful learning environment, yet the dynamic was equally influenced by the prisoner perceptions and assumptions about her as a media professional from outside the prison. Describing her first meeting with a new group of learners, they appeared to be impressed both by her BBC background and queried why she would spend the time teaching them, whilst in contrast, McCarthy felt it was a privilege that they were talking to her, "they wanted to know why we were wasting our time talking to them. You are *never* wasting your time with somebody" (3.12.12).

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Learners' respect for McCarthy's role as an outside, industry professional was further reflected through feedback on the Masterclass element of the project with broadcasters from the BBC, CSV Media and Birmingham City University visiting the prisons to be interviewed by the group in order to share their skills and experiences. Again, the BBC link is felt to add credibility to the activity, yet for all involved in direct delivery, the PRA's status as an independent and separate entity was identified as a strength, able to bring new people, skills and perspectives into the prison and perceived as outside of the mainstream prison apparatus.

Examination of the prison education context, and a review of the *West Midlands Taster Project* in particular, demonstrates the central role of people and partnerships in driving the development of the PRA. Within the wider context of the contractualisation and privatisation of social welfare, prison radio can be considered as a product of the New Labour expansion of enterprise culture and individualism, shaped by economic rationalities, and becoming a technology of responsabilisation. Yet in contrast, the perspectives of the prisoners, practitioners and partners involved show that activity is equally driven by the passion, commitment and skills of individuals, based on a belief that prisoners deserve a chance, have the potential to change and should be treated with respect.

The example of the *West Midlands Taster Project* shows the ways in which the PRA were able to creatively adapt and meet the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders whilst remaining focused on the initial aim of developing services for prisoners. The PRA are no longer involved in the direct provision of radio training and the project now plays a minor role in the accounts of those involved, with the organisational vision

becoming more focused on the development of NPR. However, the PRA's radio training activity can be seen as pivotal in determining and shaping this objective, with education recognised as an important element in the formalisation and acceptance of their work from the early stages. In addition, the ability to support and work with radio training projects run by existing prison education partners remains pivotal to the success of NPR, engaging prisoners in the production process and ensuring the station remains relevant and interesting for listeners. The West Midlands project marks the beginning of this process, with the PRA able to demonstrate the benefits and potential of prison radio to a range of key stakeholders including prisoners, prisons, education partners and funders. On a prison level, it provided evidence that radio could contribute to *Reducing Re-Offending* performance targets, whilst for education providers and funding agencies, the partnership demonstrated the ability to raise qualification levels through new delivery models. For the PRA, the project provided an opportunity to build the relationships and knowledge to work with partners to mainstream radio training in prisons whilst the evaluation process helped to build a body of evidence to support the expansion of prison radio and the development of a national service.

Chapter Summary

'People' and 'partnerships' are recurring themes throughout participants' accounts of PRA development. The ability to work effectively and flexibly with a diverse, and often conflicting, range of partners and stakeholders is central to the PRA story. This chapter focused on the relationships and institutional arrangements considered as central to the growth of prison radio at a particular time. Examination of the political and

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institutional contexts of two regional partnership projects served to demonstrate the process. Discussion of the *West Midlands Prison Radio Partnership*, including focus on the role of the BBC, illustrated the formal establishment of the PRA, and an analysis of the *West Midlands Taster Project* demonstrated the development of the organisation's strategic vision.

Through these examples, I have linked PRA growth to the governmental restructuring of public services, based on innovation, enterprise and partnership. The ways in which the organisation grew reflects and perpetuates the governmental focus on enterprise culture, combining social welfare with business innovation, representing the devolved role of the state through contracted arrangements. Equally however, I argue that PRA discourse and practice highlights the importance of individual values, personalities and relationships in the process, remaining focused on the primary aim of developing radio with the potential for positive impact on the lives of individual prisoners and the prison community.

The PRA's early partnership working in the West Midlands region illustrates the ways in which founders and practitioners were able to work flexibly and creatively within a shifting environment, shaped by increasing managerialism and key performance indicators. This demonstrates that the ability to navigate and creatively adapt to complex and shifting prison framework is underpinned by the passion, commitment and values of those involved. The discussion of the partnership projects above demonstrates the PRA's focus on building positive and constructive relationships with stakeholders. In the following chapter, attention turns to the challenges in developing prison radio further. The challenges of negative and unrealistic perceptions about

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radio in prison are outlined, both from inside and outside of the prison system. This provides a backdrop for the discussion of two prominent examples of PRA management of the process which emerged through participants' accounts of prison radio development. Firstly, the ways in which PRA management of mainstream media coverage in the lead up to the launch of NPR, and the more recent production and reception of a NPR restorative justice programme.



Figure 3: Making Radio at HMP Brixton

CHAPTER 7: PERCEPTIONS OF PRISON RADIO

When discussing the process of establishing the PRA and NPR, founders and early practitioners talk of the need to keep a low public profile, of actively avoiding media attention. For them, the core objective was to develop quality radio that could change the lives of prisoners, an aim that appears to be directly opposed to the ideas of punishment and retribution that continue to dominate prison discourse. Instead, they talk of remaining focused on building a reputation with the prison audience and relationships with prison, charity and criminal justice sector partners, keenly aware of the risks posed by outside perceptions of what they were trying to achieve. The need to avoid negative attention and scandal not only relates to the concerns for their own project but for the partner institutions and organisations. Gaining the trust and reputation with key people within the Ministry of Justice and Prison Service was central to the success of the project, with the PRA aware that any publicity that brought the reputation of either institution into question could lead to closure. The success of the PRA lies in the ability to acknowledge, consider, and manage the risks for all involved, with Hooper and Maguire both highlighting the need to ensure that all parties were able to achieve their aims (27.11.12 & 28.11.12).

The accounts highlight the sensitivities involved in developing and operating a media organisation within the Prison Service in partnership with NOMS and the Ministry of Justice, aware of the complex relationship between media coverage of prison issues, public opinion, and criminal justice policy,

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We have absolutely positively shied away from engaging in the public arena because of the nervousness of it backfiring, so there hasn't been a major push to engage with the public more broadly about prisoners involved with prison radio (Hooper 27.11.12).

In this chapter, I outline the main arguments around the interplay between mainstream media, public opinion, and New Labour's distinctive brand of punitive discourse as a means of examining the PRA experience. I argue that the PRA's approach to managing the media recognised the futility of engaging directly with the dominant punitive discourse based on unrealistic representations, focusing instead on reclaiming media ground on behalf of both prisoners and the prison system.

In the previous chapter, I presented prison radio as a New Labour technology of responsibilisation, epitomising the discursive focus on partnerships, enterprise and skills. Yet simultaneously, the PRA challenges the populist punitive approach through which the Labour Party gained power and reinvented itself. In these terms, the PRA story highlights the contradictions of Third Way politics that combine a communitarian focus on social justice with a harsh, authoritarian approach towards criminal behaviours. As outlined in Chapter Three, prison radio relates to the rehabilitation principles of the 'old penology' whilst remaining relevant to the economic and managerial priorities of the 'new penology' (Feeley & Simon 1992). The PRA represents innovation and enterprise within a managerialised and commercialised prison system, impacting on the behaviours of prisoners both inside and out. However, whilst the project is facilitated through a framework of neoliberal governmentality, prison radio is based on counter-discursive principles of prisoner agency and voice, in direct opposition to populist ideas of prison and punishment.

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PRA founders and practitioners talk of challenges to early development based on inaccurate assumptions and negative perceptions of prison radio. This chapter explores the extent to which they were able to manage and shift negative attitudes both inside and out to ensure the continued growth of the project. Firstly, attitudes within the criminal justice sector are examined, relating to the contemporary shifts in the institutional context based on the neoliberal reworking of the prison. PRA development is then considered in relation to outside popular opinion on prison issues, the impact upon penal policy, and the role of mainstream media in the process. The PRA is presented as supporting the needs of prison stakeholders whilst facilitating alternative representations of prison issues, effectively bridging the information divide between the inside and out.

When asked why they felt the PRA was successful at that time, founding volunteers and staff all felt that prison radio was ‘a straightforward offer’. Overall, they describe it as a fundamentally easy concept to put across, with positive reactions from prison management and funding bodies based on the fact that it was new, innovative and relatively low cost. In addition, any reticence and negativity on the operational level of individual prisons was soon overcome as prison staff became more aware of the potential impact of radio training not only for individual prisoners but the culture of the prison as a whole.

With prison radio founders having spent the preceding years developing contacts and a track record in working with prisoners at Radio Feltham, the concept soon gained support at senior levels. However, they all talk of remaining keenly aware that the position was tenuous, with support dependent on changes in political policy and

therefore, public opinion. The PRA founders and practitioners interviewed attribute the success to a continued focus on professionalism, on quality, and working constructively with the key partners at the Ministry of Justice and NOMS as well as building relationships with prison staff at delivery level. Yet all discuss the outside perception of what they were trying to achieve as the biggest challenge to the development of prison radio. They mention instances of mainstream media coverage, highlighting the need to develop strategies to deal with the dangers of negative outside perceptions of the activity, demonstrating awareness that they were challenging and contradicting mainstream views of prison and punishment from the earliest stages.

Whilst many organisations and charities actively seek publicity to further their cause, the PRA concentrated instead on building a relationship with the Ministry of Justice press office, one that remains central to the work of both the PRA and NPR. For Chief Executive, Maguire, the task is focused on changing the lives of prisoners rather than changing public opinion,

Our job is to run a radio station that changes prisoners' lives, to make sure that the funding that we get keeps coming in. So, number 1: run a radio station that changes prisoners' lives. Number 2: make sure the funding comes in to continue to be able to make this happen. And number 3: to make sure that the politicians and the civil servants that we need on side, stay on side. As long as I'm doing those three things, I'm doing my job. And that doesn't involve talking to the general public about what we're doing, and evangelising about what a great thing prison radio is, it's not my job (28.11.12).

Both Maguire and Hooper indicate a delicate balance between notoriety and reputation, aware of the reputational risks and a need to carefully manage a relationship with mainstream media. In this chapter I explore the ways in which the process was achieved, focusing on attitudes about prison and prisoners. I outline the primarily punitive political and cultural context around prison issues in order to set the scene for two specific examples which relate to the PRA experience. Firstly, I focus on the ways in which the PRA managed perceptions of what they were trying to achieve from both within the prison system and mainstream media coverage. This is followed by discussion of a recent, critically acclaimed PRA radio documentary which I argue marks a shift in the acceptance of prison radio beyond the criminal justicesphere.

The Punitive Context

Prison theorists acknowledge an overall shift towards populist criminal justice policy in late modernity, with prisons becoming an increasingly political issue (Brownlee 1998, Garland 2001, Ryan 2006, Sim 2009, Wacquant 2009). In addition, the distinctive New Labour brand of populist punitivism in the UK provides the backdrop for PRA development. Ian Brownlee argues the inherent contradictions in New Labour's approach, combining punitive political rhetoric with a focus on social justice and moving away from traditionally welfarist approaches towards prevention based on punishment (1998). The law and order debate is central to the re-invention of the Labour Party with Tony Blair, as Shadow Home Secretary, successfully wrestling the issue away from the government whilst in opposition, "in the 1997 general election the Labour Party highlighted the issues of crime and fear of crime in ways quite unprecedented in its history" (Brownlee 1998:313).

New Labour rose to power on the back of a 'tough on crime' policy agenda and continued to establish their role in the minds of the public as the party who would instigate tough and effective measures against those who broke the law. Brownlee acknowledges that there were some progressive components to the regime, including an increase in community sentencing and a commitment to reducing re-offending, yet he describes confusion over where the personal and the social approaches crossover. Social issues are acknowledged as contributing to the causes of crime, whilst policy remains predominantly based on a "criminology of the other" (1998:316). In an attempt to re-enforce its newly won 'tough on crime' reputation, political rhetoric instils the fear of crime into the public and when discussing criminal behaviours, Ministers instinctively resort to "emphasis on individual factors, including fecklessness and wickedness" (Brownlee 1998:316).

Referring to the rise of the 'new penology' (Feeley & Simon 1992), Brownlee outlines a move away from humanitarian ideals and values towards a bureaucratised, efficiency-driven model. Within this context, criminal justice policy and practice performs a managerial rather than an aspirational or transformative function and relates to the wider policy environment of public sector managerialism based on a common discourse of new techniques for organising and governing social life. Brownlee highlights the role of actuarial techniques of risk management within an increasingly marketised, managerialised Prison Service (1998:323). Yet rather than a neoliberal programme based on economic rationalities, he suggests that the move towards personal responsibility for crime is a pragmatic response to global socio-economic

conditions of economic hardship combined with increasing materialism that leads to greater disillusion and therefore crime (1998:322).

Focusing on the actuarial nature of the new penology, Brownlee describes a system based on risk management, concerned less with diagnosing and treating individuals and more with the classifying and “managing unruly groups sorted by dangerousness” (1998:323). Prison remains the last option yet,

The task for the criminal justice system then becomes one of differentiating on the basis of actuarial calculation of aggregate risk between various groups of offenders in terms of who might be rehabilitated or deterred and who would not, and of providing appropriate and affordable levels of incapacitation according to that assessment of risk (1998:324).

In these terms, prison radio can be seen as an actuarial technique, with the PRA performing a managerial role and function. Rehabilitation is reframed in terms of economic functioning within a new penology context, yet PRA discourse remains firmly based in humanistic, social values of equality and individual empowerment. This dichotomy is representative of the wider contradictions of the New Labour approach to criminal justice issues. Where the realities of penal practice are shaped through actuarial techniques concerned with the management and normalisation of the risks of crime, the punitive political rhetoric is one which builds upon the populist fear of criminality (Brownlee 1998).

Joe Sim too highlights the contradictions and dualisms of the New Labour approach to penal policy and reform, describing the continuation and intensification of the punitiveness of the Thatcher era by referring to, *'Piety and Iron': New Labour and*

Social Authoritarianism (2009:71). In contrast to Brownlee however, Sim places the approach firmly within the neoliberal complex, concerned not only with the relentless targeting of the “criminality of the powerless”, but combined with the simultaneous reduction of “interventions for regulating the powerful” (2009:71). Sim draws upon Norman Fairclough’s analysis discussed earlier (2000) and highlights the New Labour ‘discursive universe’, where language is central to determining political action and reframing of power relationships. The New Labour reality is constructed through the deliberate use of value-laden language, and binary categories and dualisms (2009:72). In the following section, the PRA is presented as a product of this complex political context, related to the dual themes of authoritarianism and communitarianism. Firstly, the ways in which the prison radio concept was received by those working within the prison system are discussed, with PRA experiences and management of the process indicating changes in prison culture and operations. This is followed by an analysis of the outside perceptions of the prison radio as the activity progressed.

The View From The Inside

PRA founders and practitioners describe the development of prison radio as linked to building the trust of partner institutions and agencies, based on professional practice, credibility and reputation. Whilst these considerations arguably apply to any new social or creative endeavour, prison as a polarising, emotive, and political issue further complicates the process. From the outset, practitioners talk of negative perceptions of the activity based on misconceptions and assumptions about the nature of both prison and radio, shaped by mainstream representations of prisoners and prison issues as well as the dominance of commercial, entertainment-based radio. For the PRA, the

priorities lay in reassuring the Prison Service that the project would not attract negative media attention that could impact on all partners, and on an operational level they were able to challenge the more entrenched, punitive attitudes of some sections of uniformed staff through ongoing communication and demonstration of the institutional benefits of prison radio.

The PRA emerges from a contradictory political framework, simultaneously challenging the 'tough' focus on punishment through humanising the prisoner position, whilst equally facilitated through a managerialised and enterprising prison context. The contrast between punitive rhetoric in perceived public attitudes and political discourse, and that of the normalising focus of prison practice is reflected in PRA experience.

Whilst acknowledging the reputation of an 'archaic prison service', Maguire describes the PRA development as based on changing attitudes, "the archaic attitudes of the prison service were changing.... there are now more creative and innovative, forward thinking, progressive people working in prison management and prison education" (28.11.12).

The experience of PRA founders shows the concept as relatively straightforward to gain management level support within a newly opened up and enterprising prison service. Nevertheless, the more entrenched negative attitudes and distrust of new activity remained a challenge during early development.

Former PRA Project Co-ordinator and Trainer, Jules McCarthy, reflects on the importance of good relationships with the key governors. Yet, while working across different prisons, she equally encountered cynicism and resentment amongst some

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elements of the uniformed staff with one officer openly criticising her for teaching radio skills to the young men when his son was hard-working on the outside and unable to access similar opportunities (3.12.12). Interestingly, McCarthy's recollections, and my own experience, note increased levels of staff resistance within Young Offenders' Institutions. Radio can prove an effective means of engaging young people through practical activity involving music, and juvenile prisoners have a greater capacity to be rehabilitated (Richards 2011). Yet a range of biological and behavioural factors, including lack of maturity, propensity to take risks and susceptibility to peer influence, as well as intellectual disability, mental illness and victimisation, create specific challenges of managing a younger prison population (Richards 2011) and uniformed staff were often jaded and worn down.

Maguire too notes occasional resistance from uniformed officers in the early stages, seeing radio as a fundamentally bad idea and based on assumptions not only about the nature of radio training but about cost, "I once had a uniformed officer say to me that 'the reason we only got a 1% pay rise this year is because of your fucking radio station'" (Maguire 28.11.12). However, over the time of his involvement, he notes a marked shift towards more progressive attitudes amongst uniformed staff, highlighting their importance to the functioning of prison radio on a daily basis. As the men and women who unlock the prisoners and let them off the wings to be involved in radio, winning them over to the idea was crucial from the outset, a view echoed by founders, Hooper and Robinson (27.11.12). When asked how they changed perceptions, Maguire attributes the process to ongoing communication, helping them to realise that there

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were benefits on numerous levels and that radio is not solely about having fun with music,

Making them realise that this wasn't a multi-million pound project, that this isn't a frivolous way of getting prisoners in a studio and rap about gangster lifestyles. Convincing them that this was about a focus on speech radio, that this was about teaching prisoners *real* skills... that it wasn't all fun and games and that there's a genuine reason for it. And hopefully it could benefit them and the prison regime, as well as benefiting the prisoners (28.11.12).

The accounts show development as fraught with misconceptions and negative assumptions about the nature and perceived risks of producing and broadcasting radio in prisons. Following the launch and success of ERB, the then governor of HMP Brixton, Paul McDowell, describes his role as advocate for the idea of a national radio station, writing to the then Director-General of HM Prison Service, Phil Wheatley. Following a visit from Michael Spurr, then Deputy Director-General and soon to be Chief Executive Officer of NOMS, the project gained support at senior level, yet McDowell describes a more complex process in convincing individual governors about the benefits of prison radio. He describes a range of negative attitudes based on perceived risks to security and reputation, "so I would play that role of the devil's advocate and explain to them why it was a good thing and why their objections were utterly ludicrous" (29.11.12).

Once he began to explore the concerns of the more reticent governors, the risks soon began to unravel and fall apart, and when challenged about what the risks really were, they were unable to identify them fully. Ultimately however, McDowell's account shows negative attitudes as having minimal impact on the overall development of NPR.

Describing the hierarchical structure of disciplinary institutions, he highlights the fact

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that prison managers and staff are essentially good at doing as they are told. Whilst some may have bucked against it, the Director-General had essentially written to the governors and told them, “this is what we’re going to do” (29.11.12).

McDowell dismisses concerns about the perceived security risks of radio. However, he does acknowledge the possibility of reputational risks that prison radio could pose, an issue that Hooper describes as “the constant Daily Mail thing in the back of my head” (27.11.12). The caution and concern felt within the Prison Service is in part based in an uneasy relationship with the mainstream media, with the PRA constantly aware that any issue that gained negative attention would impact on prison partners, lose the governmental support, and could lead to the closure of the project. To this end, the PRA reiterate a focus on professional operations, mindful that any instance of playing inappropriate music, inappropriate language, or inappropriate narrative, could lead to closure,” there’s always somebody, not least prison officers, out there wanting to slam us” (Hooper 27.11.12).

Reflecting on her experiences with Radio Feltham, Hooper recalls attempts to actively jinx the AM broadcasts and constantly dealing with a particular mentality based on incredulity about prisoners having access to a radio station and lack of opportunities for their own children on the outside. She understands and empathises with such attitudes and highlights the importance of pitching and communicating the idea in a way that people understand the complexities of radio participation and potential benefits for them. Amongst those working in prisons, there are still people who think that prisoners should simply be locked up and punished, yet Hooper believes the balance has shifted.

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As NPR has become more established and the PRA has become formally included in the system, negative and challenging attitudes are diminishing. PRA participants emphasise the importance of organisational independence and maintaining credibility through being separate from the system, whilst equally connecting the growth to the acceptance of prison radio *within* the system. For the PRA, the success of the partnership is based in on the development of a mutual understanding, of what the Prison Service requires of them to continue, and of what they need to function (Hooper 27.11.12).

Hooper's account highlights constant diplomacy and a commitment to co-operative and collaborative working, ensuring that institutional as well as organisational needs are being met. The introduction of editorial guidelines developed by the PRA in partnership with NOMS, illustrate the practice, working together to reduce reputational risk. However, as Maguire points out, the development and adherence to editorial guidelines are standard practice for any broadcaster focused on the production of quality, relevant programming rather than restricting content in any way,

We, like any other broadcaster, have editorial guidelines to work to, so there are certain things we don't do on air, and that is *very* clear to the PRA staff, to the NPR prisoner staff that work on the project. So in terms of producing content, we run a very tight ship and there isn't a particular problem with security and content (Maguire 28.11.12).

The development of broadcasting protocols early on were a valuable move towards reassuring the Prison Service that NPR would run in the same manner and abide by the same ethical principles of any radio station. As Hooper suggests however, the prison

client group and setting require additional considerations and the protocols add a layer of protection against negative publicity,

The test would always be – what if a Daily Mail reader heard it? What would they say? So in many ways we've had to be much more conscious about behaviour, and language, and content, than you would necessarily have to be on the outside (Hooper 27.11.12).

The ability to manage the process is based on awareness of the problems such issues could cause on an institutional and organisational level, and the ability to reassure the Prison Service only enables the PRA to achieve their aims more easily. However, whilst communication, developing effective relationships, and introducing operational protocols have contributed to the reduction of concerns and negative attitudes within the prison over time, the need to manage outside media perceptions of prison radio remains an issue.

The need to carefully manage inside and outside perceptions of prison radio reflects common misconceptions about the nature of both radio and prisons. Inside, incredulity over its use as a prisoner activity, or concerns over perceived security and reputational risks, are based on a commercial radio model of music, entertainment and tabloid journalism. Instead, the PRA model is concerned with the quality broadcasting based on the intelligent and sensitive coverage of prison issues and information that can support the prison community as a whole. The benefits of prison radio on the inside have been demonstrated over time, and concerns addressed through effective communication and collaboration. However, whilst the challenges presented by outside representations of crime and punishment are far more complex.

Outside, Looking In

Throughout the accounts of early development, PRA founders and practitioners talk of being “desperately media shy”, only turning to the media when they had something specific to shout about (Maguire 28.11.12). “Something happening” or “something going wrong” is discussed as the greatest risk to the organisation, linked to attracting attention and negative publicity for both themselves and prison partners,

The biggest threat to prison radio is...something happening in a prison radio studio.... the wrong person going on air, the wrong person saying something on air, something going on air that somehow gets leaked out to a newspaper, and there’s a headline in a newspaper about prison radio that scares the politicians and they close down the project (Maguire 28.11.12).

As media professionals, the PRA were able to successfully manage the outside, mainstream media, through keeping a low profile, building key relationships, and focusing on operational details to avoid mistakes in recruitment or content. As the PRA has become more established, the risk has diminished yet media management remains an issue, “I still turn down requests from the media at least once a fortnight, and I have this conversation with them explaining why we don’t really do media” (Maguire 28.11.12).

This section examines the early media challenges discussed by PRA representatives, focusing on events which led to coverage in The Guardian, The Daily Mail, and The Sun newspapers. These examples illustrate the co-dependent relationship between mass media coverage, New Labour populist politics and perceived public opinion when it

comes to the divisive, emotive, and increasingly political issue of crime and punishment.

PRA Chief Executive, Maguire, recognises that “people are fascinated by prisons” (28.11.12) with Director of Operations, Tilley, highlighting the extent to which “crime polarises public opinion like no other area in the public sector”, veering between “lock ‘em up and rehabilitate” with little middle-ground between the two (28.11.12). Whilst PRA discourse and practice is firmly rooted in transformative and rehabilitation aims, the examples discussed so far highlight ‘the Daily Mail factor’ as an ongoing and influential theme throughout the PRA story, becoming symbolic of the challenges they faced and representing the antithesis of what they were trying to achieve.

The Daily Mail newspaper purports to be the voice of middle-England, with the UK’s second highest average daily circulation of almost two million (The Guardian 08.03.14), second only to the News Corp tabloid, The Sun. Originally designed as a middle-market newspaper for the lower middle classes, positioned between the sensationalist and entertainment-based tabloids and the high-end journalism of the broadsheets, it has traditionally supported the Conservative Party and epitomises populist, punitive attitudes to prison and prisoners. The prominence of the Daily Mail factor in each of the accounts illustrates the impact of news reporting on crime and punishment on criminal justice policy and practice. Where mainstream media reflects public concerns over safety, it equally fuels moral panics about crime and perpetuates punitive attitudes towards prisoners, which in turn, inform, influence and reinforce government policy. An increasingly authoritarian government approach to law and order over past decades has been driven by harsh public attitudes towards criminals (Garland 2001),

yet the relationship between the media, public opinion and policy is complex (Green 2009).

The Daily Mail epitomises the punitive attitudes of Middle-England, reflected in New Labour's 'tough on crime' populist political rhetoric. Rather than issues of state punishment and control remaining in the hands of the elite, the Third Way sought to reinstate the voice of the people in matters of crime. However, reducing the social complexities of crime and punishment to emotive sound-bites and an over-focus on violent offences has led to an overly simplified populist punitive discourse created and perpetuated through commercial mass media. Joe Sim (2009) describes a "coincidence of interests" between mainstream media and New Labour politicians when addressing crime and solutions, whilst others present a co-dependent, symbiotic relationship between the two, supporting and feeding off each other in a cycle of retributionist rhetoric (Wacquant 2010, Cheliotis 2010, Mason 2006).

The Daily Mail is representative of the punitive attitudes that have gained increased influence in the political domain, indicative of a wider move towards populist politics. However, as Anthony Bottoms' original 'populist punitiveness' theory shows, policy is not based on a straightforward reaction to the needs of the people, but on the manipulation of perceived public opinion in order to serve political interests, conveying the notion of "politicians tapping into, and using for their own purposes, what they believe to be the public's generally punitive stance" (Bottoms 1995:40).

The extent to which the public is naturally punitive is questionable, instead the process is part of a wider complex through which definitive discourses around political and

social issues are constructed in order to control them (Sim 2009). Sim describes a self-reinforcing relationship between state officials and the media (2009:72) with crime and punishment discourses increasingly characterised by the sound-bites and tabloidisation of Third Way politics. He stops short of presenting a ‘total synchronicity’ between the media and politicians, yet argues that they are “yoked in a cycle of mutually reproducing, narrowly defined discourses around law and order which themselves were not unconnected to New Labour’s definition of the same issues” (2009:73).

Commercial mass media, and a New Labour policy approach that has continued to expand through subsequent Conservative governments, have jointly constructed and perpetuated punitive attitudes towards prisoners and prison issues. Richard Sparks questions whether there is in fact a “malign intent” to inflame public passions and play on fears, highlighting an endless concentration on bad news about crime that reduces innovative research findings and progressive initiatives such as prison radio to soundbites, leading to “a deep-rooted frustration and anger towards the media” amongst criminal justice practitioners (Sparks 2001:6). Instead of cultivating communitarian solutions towards the problems of crime, the media play on public fears, overstate the danger of criminal victimisation and target already marginalised groups (Cheliotis 2010). This distrust of mainstream media’s ability to constructively contribute to the prison debate frames the PRA’s approach to outside attention and resulting media strategy.

Mass media has created a ‘holiday camp’ view of prisons, laying continual criticisms on the prison system for lax regimes that perpetuate criminality. This tendency has

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impacted on the development of prison radio in two ways: contributing to a wariness of media coverage amongst prison stakeholders; and an awareness of political sensitivity to popular opinion informed by media coverage. Prison radio is the antithesis of commercial mass media portrayal of prisoners and prison issues, counteracting sensationalist, moral panics around crime. Where “media representations of the prisoner preclude any rational debate about alternatives to prison” (Mason 2006:263), the PRA approach recognises the futility of directly challenging and engaging with an unrealistic and unrepresentative discursive practice, focusing instead on developing a new and positive one. Based on the community media principles of alternative representations and participatory democracy, it facilitates the depiction of prisoners as people, reintegrating them into the public discourse. The PRA reclaims media ground on behalf of prisons and prisoners, not through direct engagement with the dominant mainstream discourse, but instead focusing on the empowerment of the prison community.

The PRA story recognises a need to expand and diversify the existing dominant prison discourse, with prison radio challenging the mainstream media representations through which perceived attitudes are constructed and reinforced by introducing the prisoner voice into the equation. Rather than directly challenging mainstream punitive rhetoric, the PRA chose instead to focus on building their work, professional reputation and partnerships to develop a separate, independent, and more sophisticated discourse around prison issues, a strategy which I will explore in the following section.

Media & Public Punitiveness

David A. Green explores the link between culture and punitiveness, claiming that our understanding and reactions to crime and prison issues are predominantly informed by oversimplified and over-dramatic mass media representations (2009:524). Whilst we draw on a range of cultural resources to make sense of the world, the sources available to us on crime and criminality are limited. As the vast majority of the general public have little or no direct experience to inform them, the media plays a particularly prominent role in relation to issues of crime and punishment. However, rather than placing total responsibility in the hands of the media, Green highlights the complexity of the multidirectional causal connections between cultural resources and attitudes. He describes a process through which “mass-mediated ideational resources” are conditioned by distinct sets of cultural values and of social, cultural, political arrangements that create punitive rhetorics, and ultimately, an increase in punitive cultural materials builds and sustains more punitive attitudes (2009).

Highlighting an increasingly punitive discourse in relation to criminal justice issues, Green argues that there is rarely a “hydraulic relationship” between public attitudes and policy, outlining a range of influencing factors that impact upon each other, “though public attitudes, political rhetoric, public policies and penal practices are often conflated in discussions of punitiveness, none is a suitable proxy for the others” (2009:520). Green links such attitudes to anger, outrage, concern and fear about a rise in crime, “all of which are factors implicating media content” (2009:524). However, he falls short of suggesting that mass media creates and shapes public attitudes and opinions, arguing instead that within a new, diverged mediascape, mass media merely

fortifies and sustains already held beliefs (2009:519). Whilst Green underplays the impact of mass media representations of prison issues, he does acknowledge the danger of distortion, exaggeration and misinformation where news values stress “novelty, simplification and titillation” and recognises that policy decisions can be driven by misconceptions based on high-profile, unusual and inflammatory events (Scheingold et al. 1994 in Green 2009:524).

Green’s approach highlights the complex relationship between media content and behaviour within a rapidly evolving, prolific and divergent media context where a wider availability of different views and sentiments leads to shifts in media power. Rather than a straightforward causal relationship he argues that moral panics are now increasingly transient. Instead of competing views based on ‘propaganda’, ‘hegemony’, or ‘dominant ideology’, multiple hegemonies now exist, “different views ‘congeal’ and acquire collective mass legitimacy only for a short time” (2009:533).

Prison radio is a product of this diverse, rapidly expanding mediascape, facilitated by new technologies which increase access and participation even within the most closed off and marginalised communities. The production of prisoner-led media content challenges populist attitudes through the gradual and subtle introduction of the prisoner voice into the debate. Rather than a competing, overt challenge to the dominant punitive discourse on prisons and prisoners, it adds to the discursive landscape, promoting more sophisticated and informed discussion on prison issues.

From Green’s perspective, mass-mediated images and messages provide the public with ‘the tools to think with’ on the problems of crime and punishment and hold the

power to set public agendas. Audience responses to crimes and offenders are framed by the mediated information available to them, responses which simultaneously reflect and constitute the culture in which those messages function. However, where there is an increased availability of resources within a rapidly expanding mediascape, Green concludes that they will merely serve to legitimate punitive responses further due to the continued politicisation of crime and a lack of, “political courage to reach beyond the rhetoric of toughness” (2009:533).

Whether public punitiveness is on the rise, or whether it is merely a politically manipulated media construct, is a matter of debate (Green 2009; Matthews 2005; Brown 2006 & Garland 2001). Green cites UK research that shows respondents believing prison to be the most appropriate punishment for burglars as rising by 13% between 1989 and 2004, whilst those favouring community service peaked at 40% in 1992, dropping consistently each year to 29% in 2004 (Green 2009:521). This pattern shows a rise in the commitment to the prison solution during the New Labour years despite the government’s parallel focus on community sentencing. Communications media play an undeniable role in the perpetuation of these attitudes, opening up traditionally mysterious, closed off spaces, and increasing the visibility of prisons in unprecedented ways (Cheliotis 2010:170).

When discussing the key challenges to the prison radio concept, McDowell highlights the role of the right wing press as the lowest common denominator, “*obsessed* with punishment and passing that subliminally on to a sizable portion of the population” (29.11.12). He outlines the commonly held view of prisons as ‘not tough enough’ and ‘like a hotel’, where prisoners should be ‘punished properly’ without access to

privileges, yet is keen to distinguish between the attitudes of a large number of the population as opposed to ‘the vast majority’, “as the Mail would have you believe” (McDowell 29.11.12).

Whilst mass media may reinforce and perpetuate such attitudes, public punitiveness is similarly connected to issues of social insecurity and inequality, with Garland explaining it as a reaction to the anxious uncertainty of life in the global economy and resultant ‘precariousness’ and “strung-out nature of existence” (2001:155). Similarly, Green notes a rise in western countries experiencing “the rapid and destabilising socio-economic and moral changes of late modernity” (2009:520). As he suggests (albeit tentatively), “cultural appetites for punishment” relate to dominant value systems and cultural identities. Therefore, in advanced neoliberal societies, where the values of individualism and self-reliance are strong, “so too is the belief that offenders are calculating rational actors who deserve and will be deterred by harsh punishment” (Green 2009:523).

In these terms, the dominant cultural values of economic success, personal achievement and individual responsibility fail to foster the conditions for collective responses to inequality,

Demand for punishment seems to be higher in societies that have a strong commitment to individualistic means of social achievement and a correspondingly weak capacity for collective responses to inequality (Sutton 2004:171).

However, where Green appears to suggest that punitive attitudes are an inevitable bi-product of individualistic cultural values, an increase in punitive penal discourse and

practice should be seen as an essential technology of neoliberal governmentality. Brownlee illustrates the complex, cyclical relationship between political rhetoric and public attitudes (1998). New Labour ‘talk-up’ problems of law and order, promising tough and effective solutions, whilst at the same time, they promote economic policies that intensify the conditions of economic disadvantage under which criminally-oriented choices are made, as well as promising a reduction of public expenditure. These contradictory measures lead to a “black-hole of political credibility” with the resulting tensions creating a culture of blame on certain groups for crime which then reinforces the punitive expectations of the public (Brownlee 1998:334).

Where Brownlee presents a pragmatic response, Wacquant argues that harsh punishment discourse and policy not only relate to neoliberal values, but are central to the reconstruction of the neoliberal state (2009 & 2010). Outlining a punitive shift, he argues that the current crime and punishment framework is the antithesis of welfare and justice (2010). As Wacquant highlights, prison and penal policy perform both practical and symbolic functions not only through direct containment of urban disorder caused by economic deregulation, but through sending messages that constitute aspirations and realities (2010:198). He presents a “paternalist penalisation of poverty” designed to discipline the post-industrial working class which simultaneously acts as a vehicle for symbolic boundary drawing, creating divides primarily based on two key groups, “the black sub-proletariat trapped in the imploding ghetto, and the roaming sex offender” (2010:199).

Wacquant reiterates Garland’s ‘culture of control’ argument (2001), highlighting the political proceeds of penalisation. Yet where Garland describes increased punitiveness

as a reactionary right wing political move, Wacquant criticises the account as ‘vague’, arguing that it is not a return to past reactionary values but a complex institutional innovation to penalise poverty. Rather than being a gradual evolution based in left or right politics, he claims penal changes have been a revolutionary ruling class response to further the neoliberal cause, at once curbing social turmoil whilst redefining and establishing a new economic regime (2010:209-210).

Throughout this process, he describes commercial media as playing a central role, becoming a ‘civic theatre’, “onto whose stage elected officials prance to dramatise moral norms and display their professed capacity for decisive action” (2010:211).

Commercial media becomes the primary means through which politicians justify and achieve the expansion of the prison state, with Wacquant attributing the acceleration of penal activity to a “crystallisation of *law-and-order pornography*” (2010:206 emphasis in original). Prison radio is facilitated through the increased visibility of penal issues, yet equally represents the antithesis of the ritualistic, pornographised portrayal of prisons and prisoners, reclaiming power on behalf of the prison community.

Foucault’s original argument presented punishment as moving away from brutal spectacle of the sovereign state towards a less visible panoptic model (1977). Yet as Wacquant shows, the spectacle has been replaced not by the panopticon, but by a media obsession with crime and punishment displayed through a profusion of reality shows, drama and news coverage. Far from diminishing, the spectacle has been intensified through commercial media, now performing a vital function within an entire penal chain “set in a pornographic and managerialist key” (Wacquant 2010:211). The relationship between media, policy and populism can be seen as the dispersal of

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state power, placing responsibility for the control of criminality into the hands of the public, yet the ritualistic, theatrical punishment of groups perceived as economically and socially underperforming indicates the intensification of state power.

For Wacquant, commercial media is a form of ‘civic theatre’ through which politicians dramatise moral norms as a means of political manipulation to further the neoliberal cause (2010). However, Leonidas K. Cheliotis places more direct blame in the hands of the media, arguing that the imagery of crime and punishment creates and sustains punitive attitudes and dehumanises prison issues (2010). He attacks mass media for overstating the problem of crime; placing blame on marginalised groups; criticising the prison administration for laxity; and issuing urgent calls for stricter imprisonment and increased community and individual responsibility for crime. Whilst Cheliotis may well overplay the agency of the media in the process, his argument illustrates the challenges faced by the criminal justice sector which demonstrate the significance of prison media, not only in terms of facilitating constructive representations of prisoners but in supporting the work of those involved in the management and operations of the prison system on a daily basis. Where he presents a penal system under attack from mainstream media, prison radio reclaims media power on behalf of the prison community. As Cheliotis outlines, the increased visibility of prisons can be empowering, describing mass media as a double-edged sword that can be used and abused, “they can be an instrument of direct democracy as much as a subtle means of symbolic manipulation and oppression” (2010:171).

Where mass media has intensified prison mythologies, prison radio empowers a misrepresented community through the very means which have kept the human

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realities of punishment hidden to the general public. Through enabling prisoners to represent themselves, and the issues that matter to them in their own terms, prison radio re-humanises the prison experience adding a new and vital element to the law and order debate. As Cheliotis highlights, the ‘selective aestheticisation’ of the mass media significantly contributes to public punitiveness, neutralising the human suffering involved in punishment at the hands of the state whilst precluding any rational debate on alternatives to the prison solution (2010:170). Media exaggerates and extends the effects of crime, creating moral panics which result in greater punishments, increased punitiveness, and the marginalisation of populations whilst criticising an already stressed Prison Service for ‘coddling’ and thereby contributing to the pressure on the system (2010).

Cheliotis argues media responsibility for dehumanising the prisoner through unempathetic representations, citing Yvonne Jewkes (2006:151) to highlight the lack of ‘sympathy for the devil’ that no-one sees,

For so long have the press and television media.... Constructed *them+ as stigmatised ‘others’ that the possibilities for empathy have closed down to all but those who have experienced incarceration, or have some other relevant experience on which to draw (2010:177).

This approach is reflected in the accounts of PRA founders and their motivations for intervening in the problem of youth suicides and self-harm at HMYOI Feltham at the outset. Hooper was struck by the fact that no-one appeared to ‘care’ about those in prison (27.11.12), a reaction that is intensified in relation to the issue of incarcerated children where the state, and society as a whole, has a specific responsibility and duty

of care. For Cheliotis, the ambivalence of the general public is perpetuated by mass media, where ‘celebrity’ prisoners such as Paris Hilton are afforded a degree of sympathy, and high-profile criminals assured of coverage, whilst the suffering of the general prison population is made invisible,

By contrast with the hundreds of ‘anonymous’ men, women and children who slash their wrists or hang themselves in utter desperation behind the bars of a prison, the attempted suicide of Ian Huntley and the suicides of Fred West and Harold Shipman were reported throughout the popular press (2010:177).

However, the way we see prisons is not only influenced by selective coverage, but through the temporal and ethereal nature of mass media (Cheliotis 2010). Cheliotis presents a fundamental shift in our perceptions, no longer based on the ‘temporal properties of the here and now’ but ‘de-spatialised’, redefining social interaction, even between the closed off prison and the wider community. Mass media increases the visibility of prisons through an array of ‘factual’ and fictional media sources “that bring the insular microcosms of crime and criminal justice into the privacy of our safe and comfortable living rooms” (2010:173).

Yet increased visibility does not necessarily lead to a richness of knowledge on prison issues. Accounts may be more frequent, yet the content and aesthetic of representation are equally important (Cheliotis 2010). Cheliotis almost entirely attributes the situation to the institutional structures and professional decisions that engender media values and practices, placing greater responsibility with media institutions than other political, economic and cultural factors. He demonstrates that personal crime and victimisation are prone to sensationalism and distortion, yet

suggests that an emphasis on street crime is a reaction to what the audience empathises with and relates to. The effect is to feed moral panics about safety, create a criminal enemy, and blame marginalised groups whilst simultaneously protecting the power of corporations, yet Cheliotis suggests that this is an inevitable reflection of everyday concerns of voters rather than an act of political manipulation.

In contrast, Paul Mason argues that mass media plays an overtly political role, supporting government policy rather than reflecting public opinion (2006). He conducts a discourse analysis of prison stories in the British media over one month, an exercise which provides a useful basis for the examination of the prison radio context and demonstrates the mainstream media patterns and tendencies which prison radio challenges. Mainstream media discourses around prison promote populist, punitive penal policy (Mason 2006). Building on Garland's work (2001), Mason outlines the populist shift in criminal justice policy in late modernity and highlights the increasingly managerialist nature of prison, shifting from a place of 'pain delivery' to one which 'treats and trains' (2006:251). At the same time, he presents the heightened status of prisons and an increasingly punitive approach to crime, where New Labour has continued to engage in "social control measures amounting to crueller, more emotive and grandiose acts of punitive display" (Garland 2001 in Mason 2006:252).

New Labour's commitment to prison as the only solution to crime is perpetuated through a media discourse of dangerousness delivered to 'a fearful public' (2006:251) whilst media-driven public insecurities about crime and the criminal are then addressed through "highly visible, hollow 'initiatives'" (2006:252). For Mason, media provide the conditions of support for the penal system through the over-reporting of

violent and sexual crime. It is not crime that creates the prison population, but political decisions which are influenced by "inaccurate media (mis)representations and silences" (2006:253). He acknowledges the influence of media discourses on public attitudes to criminal justice, yet focuses on the ways in which representations of prisons and prisoners impact on debate on the role and function of prisons.

PRA accounts highlight a reluctance to engage with the mainstream prison discourse recognising the futility of directly challenging deeply entrenched populist punitive attitudes perpetuated through dramatic representations. Instead, the PRA focuses on developing a new prison-led perspective, expanding the prison debate through a gradual process. The introduction of alternative discourses becomes even more significant where mainstream media and the ensuing public debate has become characterised by "principled legitimisation" (Mason 2006). As Mason argues, mainstream media not only supports government policy but is responsible for informing and creating it, and the role of public opinion in the process becomes less important than the relationship between media discourse and the government's subsequent reaction to it,

The state must be seen to be taking into account public opinion, but that opinion is one that is constructed by, and represented in the media...it is the mainstream media more often than the public, that offer support for the government's mass incarceration policy in contemporary Britain (2006:264)

The PRA does not actively seek to change public opinion on prison issues, nor challenge mainstream into the media landscape enriches and informs public debate and government policy. Through focus on the representations and realities of the

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prison community, both the content and existence of radio in prison poses the ‘what works’ question on the effectiveness and possibilities around the treatment and prevention of criminality and crime. Prison radio focuses on the everyday experiences, information and interests of a diverse prison community whilst in contrast, mainstream media magnify violent and serious crime to the extent that prison becomes the only solution,

The media construct the prison as the essential cornerstone of criminal justice...through its discourses around dangerousness and fear, the perceived ‘soft touch’ liberalism of prison regimes and increases in prisoners’ rights. At the same time, media representations shroud the reality of prison as an instrument of pain delivery and ignore the collateral damage to prisoners’ families (Mason 2006:253).

Rather than a homogenous, dangerous group, PRA respondents talk of prisoners as ‘people’, recognising the diversity of the prison population and emphasising the range of human experiences. This opposes the commercial mass media position which informs large sections of public opinion and impacts on penal policy. As Mason shows, the public is led to believe that prisons are full of violent criminals living in luxury at the taxpayers’ expense whilst left un-informed about the harsh realities of prison life (2006:263). He too stresses the dehumanising function of media representation of crime and punishment, arguing that the discourse of the prisoner stifles any real debate about alternatives to prison, “media representations of incarceration as an institution full of murderers, rapists and paedophiles precludes a long overdue debate about prison suicides, the erosion of prisoners’ rights and the rising number of women and children incarcerated” (2006:251).

Through a study of media output over a period of one month, Mason shows that British media construct a penal discourse that not only normalises prison as the solution to crime but actively seeks to expand and increase its use (2006:253).

Recognising media as a discursive and representational practice at a particular point in time, his analysis is a useful basis from which to examine mainstream media coverage of prison radio. Mason explores how media produce and contribute to a discourse of imprisonment through the power to represent prisoners and prisons in a particular way (2006:253), a process which highlights the significance of media made by and for prisoners as producing alternative and oppositional discourse and knowledge.

Through analysis of the discursive strategies which legitimise and naturalise meaning, he shows prisoners as constructed as a social threat through lexical choices which limit and label them as ‘murderers and thugs’ and ‘killers and rapists’ whilst the complex issue of punishment is reduced to a narrative of violence and fear. Analysis of mainstream media coverage relating to prison radio mirrors the findings of Mason’s snapshot of prison news, characterised by the recurrent themes of dangerousness, fear and prison as a soft option (2006). In the next section I focus on three examples that feature prominently throughout the accounts of PRA founders and early staff, influencing and shaping the organisation’s media strategies. Issues of cost and the rights of victims and taxpayers are emphasised throughout the stories from The Daily Mail, The Sun, and The Guardian, contributing to the portrayal of creative prison projects as ludicrous, extravagant and outrageous. Both the texts themselves, and PRA recollections and responses to them, illustrate the dominant populist punitive

attitudes which frame the prison debate, demonstrating the counter-discursive role and significance of prison radio.

Creative Prison Projects & ‘Popular Opinion’

The above discussion illustrates the complexities of the impact of mass mediated representations of prison and prisoners on public opinion and criminal justice policy, and the context of media obsession with high-profile criminals and scandal which inform the approach of the PRA and partner organisations towards mainstream media coverage of prison radio. Throughout accounts of the early development of the PRA, respondents recall three events in particular which have shaped and influenced their story, starting with the hostile media coverage of a comparable creative education project. PRA founders all highlight the operational and reputational risks of early activity with Hooper, Robinson, Maguire and Tilley all recounting the experiences of The Comedy School as a cautionary tale of a creative prison project being closed down immediately following a headline story in The Daily Mail.

Prison radio is representative of the range of innovative creative projects developing and operating in prisons, designed to engage prisoners in constructive activity, self-reflection and personal change. Music, drama, singing, cooking or art projects may be recognised on an institutional level and more recently gaining a public profile through reality television programmes such as the Channel 4 series, *Gordon Behind Bars* in which Gordon Ramsay teaches a group of prisoners at HMP Brixton how to cook. Yet activities are usually stand-alone, driven by volunteers, and surviving from day to day subject to the proclivities of short-term funding opportunities. The PRA story uniquely shows the process through which activity can be mainstreamed whilst also highlighting

the importance of independence from the authoritarian system for continued credibility with the prison client group. The risk of closure has reduced as the PRA has developed a reputation and recognition for the quality of their work. However, the ‘nervousness’ of founders in the early stages can be linked to the experiences of *The Comedy School* and illustrates the government’s sensitivity to mass media outrage about prison issues.

The Comedy School

The Comedy School runs stand-up comedy workshops in prisons to help prisoners become more articulate, to build confidence, to interact with other prisoners, and develop their speaking and listening skills (Maguire 28.11.12). On November 22nd 2008, the project featured in The Daily Mail after a convicted Al Qaeda terrorist took part in a class at HMP Whitemoor Maximum Security Prison (McDermott 22.11.08). As a result, funding was withdrawn, the course was cancelled and staff were immediately removed from the prison, demonstrating the speed and severity of reactions to mass media outrage. The Daily Mail story builds on the threat of terrorism, opening with details of the prisoner and his offence before outlining the Justice Secretary, Jack Straw’s reaction to the news, immediately halting the workshop and branding the scheme “totally unacceptable” (McDermott 22.11.08). Here, perceived public outrage becomes Straw’s own, placing responsibility for such mistakes at the feet of prison governors and warning them to “take account of the public acceptability test” when approving courses (Straw, in McDermott 22.11.08). The public acceptability angle and prominence of Straw’s response within the story is indicative of New Labour’s efforts to extend public responsibility and accountability in crime and criminal justice issues.

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However, the incident equally illustrates the contradictions of social authoritarianism, at once facilitating and supporting education and rehabilitation priorities within prison whilst engaging in tough punitive rhetoric and knee-jerk reactions to negative press on the outside.

Whilst acknowledging the validity of training prisoners and engaging them in “constructive pursuits”, The Daily Mail story describes comedy courses as “a step too far” (McDermott 22.11.08). *The Comedy School’s* director, Keith Palmer, is called upon to defend the activity and outline the effectiveness of comedy as an education and rehabilitation tool, yet is only quoted in the closing paragraph after key responses from the partner of a victim of a terrorist attack, and from Matthew Elliot of the Taxpayers’ Alliance. Elliot is quoted three times, again giving prominence to the cost concern and injustices for the taxpayer,

There are a lot of ordinary people who would love to go on a comedy course but cannot afford it. Why should criminals get a go at the taxpayers’ expense? (Elliot, in McDermott 22.11.08).

The statement is representative of the ‘criminality of the other’ stance of the newspaper, invoking issues of responsibility based on taxpaying, productive members of society versus the irresponsible and demonised criminal, reiterated through the repeated focus on taxes, terrorism and punishment throughout the story.

Right-wing tabloid newspaper, The Sun, broke the story on November 21st with a more emotive piece describing the ‘evil’ terrorist learning alongside ‘murderers and rapists’, representing the sensationalised, over-dramatic portrayal of prisoners, and the issue was picked up by The Telegraph and The Guardian on the same day carrying similar,

yet smaller, and less prominent coverage. However, The Guardian story was followed up with an editorial piece by Mark Fisher in defence of *The Comedy School* (25.11.08). For Fisher, the closure of the project is indicative not only of the government's punitive stance but an ongoing obsession with how they are perceived by the press. Outlining his own experience of visiting a playwriting workshop at a Young Offenders Institution, he echoes similar responses to prison radio, citing the governor's support for creative projects, "he believes participation in the arts triggers behavioural change among inmates and affects the mood of a whole establishment" (Fisher 25.11.08). As Fisher highlights, these are the criteria on which rehabilitation programmes should be based rather than Straw's vague declaration of "appropriate" (McDermott 22.11.08).

Jack Straw plays a central role in the PRA story by approving NPR whilst heading the newly formed Ministry of Justice in 2007. In addition, he is a key figure in defining the New Labour criminal justice context, serving as Home Secretary under Blair from 1997 to 2001, and as Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice under Gordon Brown from 2007 to 2010. As Shadow Home Secretary in the lead up to the 1997 election victory, Straw took up Blair's 'tough on crime' battle cry, and as Home Secretary he continued and consolidated the punitive measures of Conservative predecessors. Under New Labour, the Conservative approach was combined with elements of 'Left Realism', highlighting the importance of the crime concerns of working class communities (Brownlee 1998) with Straw pronouncing the government's position, "we are on the side of the victim, law and order and the people of Britain" (cited in Prison Review 1999:3 from Sim 2009:80).

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Mick Ryan champions New Labour for reclaiming the law and order debate on behalf of the people (1999). Rather than simple political opportunism, he defends New Labour populism as concerned with “acknowledging loss and re-engaging the public voice”, a process that is more layered and complex than a straightforward social authoritarianism/punitive populism approach (1999:11). For Ryan, Straw’s consultative approach to policy making is an important move away from the elitist model. He argues that the “courting of tabloids”, which traditional elites purposely avoided, invites and responds to the concerns of “ordinary Labour Party supporters” (1999:13).

Ryan does acknowledge that the mobilisation of the public is usually concerned with managing and manipulating fear, yet presents New Labour as nobly valuing public opinion, responding to Garland’s call for a more communally responsible solution to the problems of crime (1996). Yet his argument fails to take into account the discourses which inform perceived public opinion on such issues. Where people can only make use of the discourses made available to them, attitudes around crime and punishment are overwhelmingly shaped by simplistic and sensationalist media representations which lead to the targeting of certain groups, particularly young people, welfare recipients and drug users (Sim 2009:80).

Whilst supporting the concept of NPR, Straw had a reputation for being notoriously punitive in reaction to perceived popular opinion, as illustrated through his reaction to *The Comedy School* episode. His response in *The Daily Mail* emphasises the role of the responsible taxpayer community working in partnership with the government to shape solutions and combat the effects of crime, “There is a crucial test: can the recreational,

social and educational classes paid for out of taxpayers' money (or otherwise) be justified to the community?" (Straw, in McDermott 22.11.08).

Similarly, PRA founders and practitioners recognise the need to continually demonstrate the benefits of prison radio. Yet rather than changing minds of those large sections of the general public who remain largely (mis)informed by mainstream commercial media, they focus instead on the opinions of stakeholders and partners within the prison community and wider criminal justice system. In contrast to Straw's 'community justification' test, Hooper talks of applying the 'Daily Mail test' to early prison radio, asking what a typical reader would think of content or activity, continually mindful of how the project could be perceived and the risks posed by the punitive, retributionist right.

'A Daily Mail Story Waiting to Happen'

Former HMP Brixton Governor, McDowell, recalls an early brush with outside media coverage following the launch of Electric Radio Brixton (29.11.12). The incident illustrates the sensationalist tendencies of the press in relation to prison issues, whilst equally implicating the left wing press in the process. McDowell, Hooper and Maguire all talk of the dangers of being 'tricked' and 'tripped up' by the press on the lookout for potential scandal (27.11.12, 28.11.12 & 29.11.12) and the endless quest for 'bite-sized chunks' of information (Sim 2009:73). McDowell attended the Radio Festival in Nottingham in June 2009. At the broadcast industry event he was interviewed on air by entertainments-based radio and television presenter, Richard Bacon. Having raised the point that many people would think that prisoners should not be provided with enjoyable activities like radio, Bacon asked "do you not think that this is a Daily Mail

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story waiting to happen?” (29.11.12). McDowell successfully managed to avoid the question before being asked a third time in a different way and “falling into the trap” (29.11.12), with a tweet from an audience member resulting in The Guardian headline: “Brixton prison radio 'a Daily Mail story waiting to happen', says governor” (Plunkett 30.06.09)

For McDowell, the incident perfectly illustrates the reputational risks that prison radio represents in the public domain (29.11.12), resulting in simplified, and negative representations of complex issues. Even when reported in a traditionally left-leaning, quality broadsheet such as The Guardian, prison radio is reduced to tabloid tactics that perpetuate the discourse of dangerousness and cost that dominate the prison debate. ERB is described as ‘Sony award-winning’, yet the first descriptor used is ‘taxpayer-funded’, pandering to the populist view of prison as ineffectual, lax and draining the public purse. Setting the tone for the story, it goes on to quote McDowell on the need to bar certain inmates from the airwaves “to protect the project from attack from The Daily Mail” (Plunkett 30.06.09).

These opening sentences illustrate the prevalent themes throughout the reporting of prison issues, highlighting perceived public concerns over cost, and moderate treatment of prisoners, as well as a fascination with high-profile prisoners and potential for scandal. The Daily Mail risk is presented as the driving force behind recruitment rather than any educational strategies, with the rehabilitative aims of the project relegated to the final third of the story. Not only does the coverage highlight the potential for something to go wrong but exaggerates the risks, suggesting the inevitability of scandal,

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I am a prison governor and half of my life is spent managing the politics of prisoners. One of the things I am not going to do is put Ian Huntley on a radio station to deliver a programme every week. That is opening us up [to attack] and if we get criticised for that then we might end up losing the whole thing (McDowell, in Plunkett 30.06.09).

As an early example of mainstream media coverage of prison radio, The Guardian story illustrates tabloid tendencies around prison issues based on perceived punitive public attitudes even outside of the right-wing tabloids. Yet the reader comments below the online version of the story show an overwhelming support for creative rehabilitative measures in prison, and express concern about the dangers of a Daily Mail mentality, indicating a continued commitment to issues of social justice amongst readers,

Totally happy for my taxes to go towards creative rehabilitative activities for prisoners (M0ngrel30 June 2009 3:53pm, The Guardian Online).

As shown through the editorial defence of *The Comedy School* project, and subsequent PRA coverage, reporting of prison issues in The Guardian generally contributes to a more sophisticated debate on solutions to crime and punishment, a pattern supported through Mason's monitoring and analysis of prison news in October 2005 (2006).

Mason gives the example of a Home Office move to extend home detention curfew eligibility to ease the prison overcrowding crisis from four and a half months left to serve, to six months (2006:255). Throughout news coverage on the issue, he notes the construction of dangerousness, shaped by a discourse of risk and fear through violent language presenting the 'slashing' of prisoners' sentences (2006:256). The narrative of stories in both the tabloid and broadsheet press draw on public fear of 'violent offenders' roaming the streets whilst also "framed within a prison-as-a-soft-option,

victims' rights agenda" (Mason 2006:256). Mason's snapshot indicates overwhelming support for increased incarceration based on the dominant resistance of 'outraged' opposition parties and victims' groups rather than those who may have supported the move. In relation to this and other prison news throughout the month, The Guardian provides the only counter-discourse (2006:257),

There is one clear lesson from earlier prison overcrowding crises. They cannot be resolved by a building programme. That approach has been tried by both Conservative and Labour administrations with disastrous results...the solution lies outside prison walls – in better drug treatment programmes, mental health care, and cuts to unnecessary remands and recalls to prison" (The Guardian 14.10.2005).

The Sun Story

For PRA founders and early staff members, negative tabloid coverage of prison radio presented a significant risk to the development of the organisation, yet whilst 'the Daily Mail factor' features repeatedly in their accounts, the most prominent example mentioned is a front page story in The Sun on 20th January 2009. Owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, The Sun remains the biggest selling newspaper in the UK (Greenslade 8.11.14). Average daily sales of around two million (newsworks.org.uk/The-Sun) are ten times that of the Guardian (Deans 6.12.13) with the wider readership estimated at 13.2% of the adult population (mediauk.com/Newspapers). Whilst the print industry is under considerable threat from the proliferation of digital platforms, the continued popularity of The Sun demonstrates its status and influence on the UK media landscape, purporting to be the voice of the skilled working classes whilst loudly supporting Conservative Party values

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and policies. The primary aim of the newspaper is entertainment, focusing on television and celebrity news together with salacious, titillating drama and scandal.

Hooper describes the tabloid tactic of putting flyers on windscreens in prison car parks to hunt for stories (27.11.12), highlighting the status of prisons as a source of potentially controversial, emotive and political content. After the Prison Service Order announcing the development of a NPR had been issued, a disgruntled prison officer is said to have called The Sun (Hooper 27.11.12), resulting in a front page story with a page seven spread. The story does not name the PRA at any point and only lasted for one day, with minimal overall impact on the development of the project. However, the incident epitomises the coverage that the PRA were so keen to avoid, and the challenges that mainstream media represent for the prison community and the wider criminal justice sector,

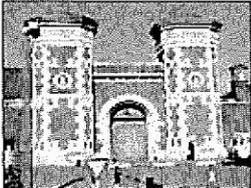
So even before we got going with broadcasting the service, one of the tabloids wanted to shut us down, and that was even before we started the project. From that day we decided to take a very low press profile, because we knew that a nervous minister could switch us off if it created bad press (Tilley 28.11.12).

Prison radio covers one third of the front page of The Sun on January 20th 2009 with the headlines “Prisons Exclusive” and “CON AIR” combining to create a sense of drama and danger through reference to the Hollywood action film of the same name. The subheading, “Lags’ Radio Station to Cost Public £2m” repeats the economic concerns noted in previous examples of prison news coverage whilst invoking the prisoner as both lazy and expensive.

PRISONS EXCLUSIVE

CON AIR

**Lags' radio station
to cost public £2m**



HMP FM . . . Wormwood Scrubs

By JOHN KAY
PAMPARED lags are to get their OWN radio station — beamed into every cell in the country at a cost to taxpayers of £2million, The Sun can reveal.
The music and chat station — dubbed Radio CON — will boast a captive audience of 81,000 at 140 jails like Wormwood Scrubs. Last night the Prison Service defended the cost amid outrage. It said cuts meant inmates spent more time in their cells.
Full Story — Page Seven

Figure 4: The Sun 20.01.09:1

The term 'lags' is of particular significance, used as the main name for prisoners throughout the story, appearing twice on the front page and twice again on page seven. Rather than the young street thug most usually invoked by politicians, or the gangster criminal favoured in dramatic portrayals of prison, 'lag' refers to old, long term, entrenched criminals in the style of comedy character Norman Stanley Fletcher from 1970s British television sitcom, *Porridge*. In a typically tabloid play on words, the term also suggests failure, slackness, and slowing others down which presents prisoners as failing to achieve economic success as well as being financially draining for the general public. Through focus on the habitual, career criminal, there is a suggestion that prisoners are beyond the reach of rehabilitation initiatives, a move which simultaneously recognises and challenges the rehabilitatory aims of prison radio. Mason too notes its use as a peculiarly tabloid device, noting an example in the Daily Star where the construction of prisoners as 'lags', "evokes a cosy, comic notion of

knockabout farce” (2006:259) that reinforces the view of prison as a soft option and obscures the issues of prison overcrowding and under-funding.

The Sun coverage of prison radio is similarly framed in comic terms, presenting the idea as farcical and ‘ridiculous’ (Kay 20.01.09). The introductory text on the front page expresses outrage and incredulity about the potential cost, “PAMPERED lags are to get their OWN radio station” (Kay 20.01.09) whilst in the full story on page seven, comic language and imagery feature more heavily. Chief Reporter, John Kay writes that,

Jail plans to blow millions on a new radio station beaming pop and chat to cells nationwide sparked fury last night (Kay 20.01.09:7).

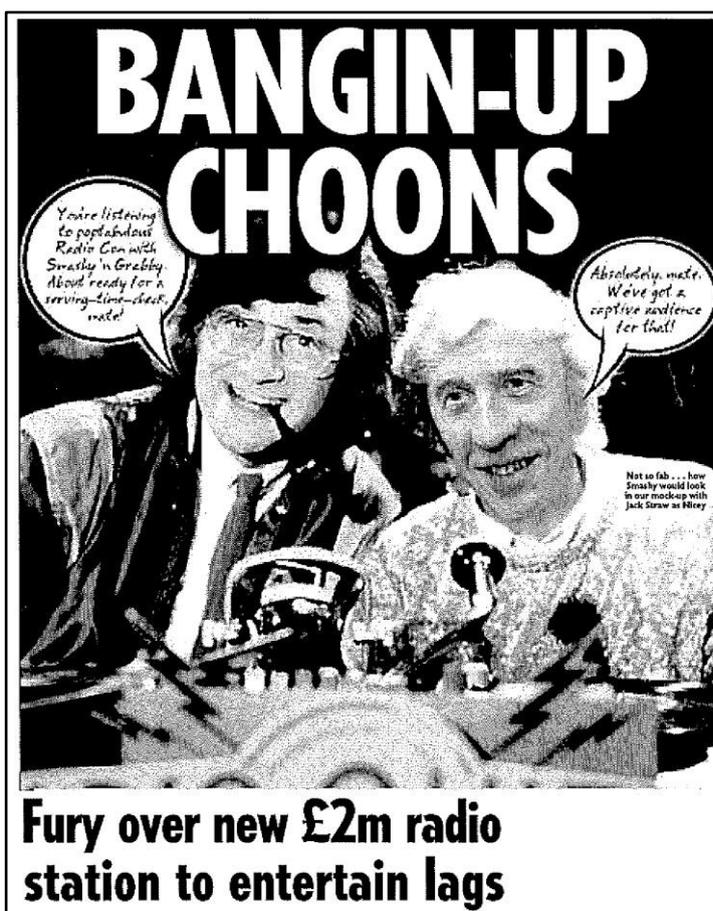


Figure 5: The Sun 20.01.09:7

The text is accompanied by a picture of 1990s fictional comedy DJ characters ‘Smashy and Nicey’ with Jack Straw’s face superimposed as Nicey. Straw is attacked as responsible for funding an ‘inappropriate’ initiative and ridiculed through portrayal as a tacky, comical radio presenter talking nonsense. The story is used as a political attack, with responsibility

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placed firmly in the hands of ‘Jack Straw’, ‘officials’, and the ‘Prison Service’ with the PRA only referred to once, as ‘a charity’,

The Prison Service, which came up with the idea claimed the £2 million to start the station up would come out of existing budgets and a charity would chip in with the running costs (Kay 20.01.09:7).

The notional figure of ‘£2 million’ is repeated four times throughout the story, reinforcing economic fear and attributing blame on the government for irresponsible and profligate spending of taxpayers’ money. Shadow Justice Minister, Edward Garnier, provides the main response, ‘blasting’ the cost to taxpayers and describing a national prison radio service as a “cock-eyed waste” (Kay 20.01.09). His is the main voice throughout the story, quoted in informal and friendly tones, representing the voice of the people, whilst the faceless officials of the Prison Service are presented as formal and detached.

The Prison Service is called upon to defend the idea ‘amid outrage’, claiming “cuts meant inmates spent more time in their cell”. Yet whilst the underlying issue of prison funding is acknowledged, it is given more prominence through Garnier’s response, used as a political manoeuvre in order to accuse the government of presiding over “the worst prison overcrowding in the history of the Prison Service” (Kay 20.01.09). Garnier’s response takes precedence over the practical aims of the project. Whilst the informative and educational focus is mentioned, it directly follows the subheading, ‘Ridiculous’, and a statement that the station would carry “messages and educational programmes” is set in quotation marks in sneering tones and presented as the words of a nameless ‘official’.

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Through his comparison of reporting of prison news, Mason identifies lax, liberal prison regimes as a prevalent theme, together with an emphasis on victims' rights (2006). Prison is continually constructed as lacking real punishment, and offering little comfort to victims of crime (2006:258). He uses the example of a Daily Express report on the 'hotel' conditions of the First Night Centre at HMP Holloway local women's prison, where new arrivals, "eat in a bistro-style dining room, sleep in comfortable beds and have 'befrienders' to help them settle in" (Daily Express 01.10.05).

In contrast, he highlights the prison's notorious reputation for suicides and self-harm citing a Guardian report from January 2005 in which Liberal Democrat MP, Sandra Gidley, was quoted as saying that officers at HMP Holloway "are cutting down five women a day from nooses" (2006:258). The Sun coverage of prison radio fits with Mason's findings, representative of a distinctive discursive regime of prison:

Of dangerous and violent inmates enjoying a positively lavish existence, with the threat of their escape looming large. This is reported in incredulous tones by tabloid newspapers in particular who consistently structure the prison narrative within a victims' rights/taxpaying 'law abiding citizen' agenda...Predicated upon an authoritarian populism (2006:260).

The idea of a national prison radio service is set in comic tones with prisoners repeatedly referred to as 'pampered', living a luxurious life "lying on their beds listening to Jack Straw twittering at them over the radio" (Kay 20.01.09). The description not only reinforces the notion of the 'lazy' prisoner but ridicules Straw as ineffectual and unimportant, further validating the comments of the Conservative opposition as the voice of the hard-working people. Through a comic narrative set in

tones of outrage and incredulity, the story reconstructs the issues of prison funding and prisoner rehabilitation as governmental and Prison Service failures.

Hooper describes The Sun coverage of prison radio as “diabolical” (27.11.12). Prisoners are presented as ‘pampered lags’, prisons as ineffectual, and radio as a waste of taxpayers’ money. Not only does the story reinforce the notion of prison as a soft option but plays on misconceptions about the nature of radio based solely on music-based entertainment stations whilst obscuring information and education potential. The comedic representation of prison radio is epitomised on page seven through a creative programme guide parody. “TODAY ON RADIO CON” repeats the Con Air reference on the front page, playing on ‘con’ both as shorthand for convict whilst also implying conning the public out of money, inferring that both politicians and prisoners are conmen who will cheat good people out of their hard-earned money. The excerpt below shows each mock programme as playing on the theme of dangerousness, ‘presented’ by high profile violent criminals including a serial killer, a serial rapist, a mother convicted of kidnapping her own daughter, and Islamic fundamentalist Abu Hamza,

6.00 *Wake Up With West*

No you’re not still asleep having nightmares. It really is the genial tones of Rose West to start your day.

8.00 *The Money Programme*

Lotto rapist Iorworth Hoare and co-host Nick-a-Ferrari tell you where to put your cash on the outside when you’re inside

10.00 *Woman’s Hour with Karen Matthews*

Mother of the year Karen talks women’s issues with fellow inmates.
(The Sun 20.01.09:7).

The PRA Media Strategy

Whilst the story represents a direct and potentially difficult challenge to the work of the PRA, Hooper, Tilley and Maguire comment on the creativity and humour of the programme guide (27.11.12 & 28.11.12). The story only featured for one day, quickly overshadowed by the inauguration of Barack Obama as US president with little negative impact on NPR development. Hooper attributes the relatively minor impact to the relatively short time the project spent in the spotlight combined with the degree of government support and senior level endorsement garnered by that stage,

By then, we'd got a really good relationship with the Prison Service. Jack Straw just said 'this is what we're doing'. It just goes to show that if you have political courage you can do it (Hooper 27.11.12).

However, the examples of media coverage discussed above demonstrate the perceptions and attitudes that prison radio seeks to counteract, informing and shaping the PRA approach to managing the media. Maguire in particular outlines the PRA media strategy, highlighting the importance of managing the process for themselves (28.11.12). As the founding PRA staff member, Maguire was the only person to have come directly from a BBC production background in the early stages, a position which he describes as giving him insight into media fascination with stories about prisons and prisoners. To illustrate the approach, he gives the example of managing the media coverage of the PRA's nominations for the 2009 Sony Radio Academy Awards,

We were the biggest story of the Sony's that year. It was unheard of, people hadn't really heard of prison radio before that within the radio industry, and for us to win two Golds and two Bronzes at the Sony's, it was just... an incredible thing (28.11.12).

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In the run up to the awards, they were aware that the nominations could lead to media interest and made the decision to carefully manage the process by contacting specific journalists they felt would understand and represent prison radio in an intelligent and appropriate way: Guardian Columnist, Zoe Williams; BBC Media Correspondent, Torin Douglas; and Times Media Editor, Dan Sabbagh who has since become News Editor at The Guardian. Maguire talks of “inviting” selected journalists to write about the work of the PRA, and “allowing them access” (28.11.12), indicating the importance of overseeing the process and the need to reclaim control from potentially unsupportive media.

In addition to select interviews, a press pack was compiled for the website. Hooper describes the Prison Service as “incredibly media-shy”, highlighting Maguire’s role in developing a positive working relationship with the press office (27.11.12). Maguire too stresses the importance of acquiring Ministry of Justice clearance for the press pack which included a media release on the activities and achievements to date (Appendix 2). This was accompanied by the audio that had been nominated for awards and been cleared for broadcast (28.11.12). Maguire then outlines the strategy of withdrawing from media contact completely, “we pulled up the drawbridge” and the PRA team put ‘out of office’ messages on telephones and emails saying they were not available for comment and referring press enquiries to the website (28.11.12).

From there, Maguire describes the BBC, Guardian and Times coverage as “going wild”, and attracting attention worldwide including stories on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and Forbes Magazine in the US (11.05.09). Through the awards, the PRA became a huge national and international story, whilst the media strategy of

limiting coverage to three carefully selected features and a one press release ensured that all articles contained the same positive message,

The wonderful thing was, I was reading articles by written by people in America, and I was reading my words from the press release. So we got what we wanted, they couldn't misquote anybody, they couldn't twist it, they simply took the message that we put out there and reiterated it across the globe (Maguire 28.11.12).

For Maguire, the success of the PRA media strategy was the focus on radio. Rather than coverage based on criminal justice, home affairs or social issues, PRA control of the process ensured that prison radio remained a story about radio rather than a story about prison (Maguire 28.11.12). Coverage that focuses on the radio activity and content highlights the project potential and is less likely to be drawn into political wrangling around the perceived successes and failures of the prison system.

The populist and highly punitive penal policy in the UK is supported by media constructions of prison and prisoners produced through the over-reporting of violent and sexual crime (Mason 2006:262). PRA participants recall three specific instances of mainstream coverage of prison radio, presenting 'the Daily Mail factor' as a significant challenge to their work. In this section, I analysed the three examples, the PRA response, and impact upon the development of the organisation. The stories illustrate the simplistic, punitive portrayal of prison issues in the mainstream press whilst the responses of political and academic commentators demonstrate the continued influence of mainstream media on perceived public opinion and government policy.

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Throughout the interviews with PRA founders, it became clear that the major keys to success were around credibility, professionalism and quality, whilst the main challenges came from some groups of prison staff and from right wing press.

We thought, very simply, let's do what we're gonna do, let's do it well, let's get some recognition... I'm talking long term here... let's get some awards for the work we're doing... and then think about going to the press (Tilley 28.11.12).

Throughout PRA responses, populist punitive attitudes and the mainstream portrayal of prison issues are recognised as a threat. Yet rather than directly challenging the perceived public opinion presented and perpetuated by the right wing press, the PRA focus on building a reputation within both the broadcast industry and the prison and criminal justice communities, creating a new prisoner-led discourse to inform the prison debate.

Throughout this section, prison radio has been positioned in opposition to mainstream media coverage which creates and perpetuates punitive attitudes and misconceptions about prison and punishment. The PRA experience is representative of the challenges faced by those working to change criminal justice policy and practice. Where negative attitudes and perceptions are formed through an over-simplified dominant discourse on prison issues, prison radio represents a counter-discourse, challenging punitive and retributionist attitudes to crime and crime control. The media examples discussed above illustrate the PRA strategy of focusing on building a reputation with the prison audience and relevant stakeholders in a gradual and sensitive process. In the following

section, the context and analysis of a NPR programme on restorative justice is presented as the realisation of this process, marking the wider acceptance of prison radio.

Prison Radio & Restorative Justice

From the first interview onward, PRA founders and practitioners discuss the main challenges to the prison radio concept as the retributionist attitudes of the right wing press and of some areas of the prison system. This context is outlined in the previous section which examines the strategies adopted by the PRA, and discusses the ways in which they impacted upon the development of the organisation. In reflecting on the earliest stages of PRA development, participants highlight the importance of careful management of perceptions of their work, yet all talk about a more recent turning point in the PRA story,

We needed time to provide the evidence of it being something serious. And so we've built up an array of incredibly professional programmes and campaigns, which have absolutely positioned us at a very high level of credibility and quality of service provision in prisons. And I think for me, the icing on the cake was getting the Sony for the work we do with Victim Support (Hooper 27.11.12).

In 2011, Victim Support commissioned the PRA to produce a documentary which gave three victims of violent crime the opportunity to explain the impact of these crimes to a group of prisoners. *Face to Face* was first broadcast on NPR on 23rd March 2012, and such was the impact that BBC Radio 4 made the rare move of re-broadcasting the programme. As a ground-breaking example of restorative justice in action, the hour-long documentary won the prestigious Gold Sony Radio Academy Award and won the

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PRA and Victim Support the award for Best Charity Partnership at the Third Sector Awards 2012 (PRA 2014),

True ‘stop what you’re doing’ radio. It was a programme that had made a difference to all who had participated in it...and the judges felt privileged to have heard it (Sony Radio Academy Awards 2012, PRA 2014).



Figure 6: Sony Radio Academy Award Winners 2012

Left to right: Phil Maguire (Chief Executive, PRA); Marianne Garvey (Producer, Face to Face); Roma Hooper (Chair and Founder, PRA); Martin Bell (former BBC Foreign Correspondent); Professor Tanya Byron (Presenter, Face to Face); Andrew Wilkie (Director of Radio, PRA).

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The programme's prominence throughout the accounts can be attributed to recency, with respondents inevitably keen to discuss the latest PRA achievement at the time of the interviews. However, responses also frame the event as a significant turning point, marking the wider acceptance and legitimacy of prison radio outside of the criminal justice field. As both Hooper and Maguire indicate, the key factor is the 'restorative justice' focus, a concept which I will examine in the following section. Through bringing the victim's voice into the equation, prison radio no longer risks being perceived as focused solely on the rights of 'undeserving' prisoners but also becomes a platform for victims' expression.

Within this section, I focus on the context, content and effects of the *Face to Face* programme in furthering the development of the PRA and argue that the case demonstrates the potential of prison radio to promote, facilitate and inform restorative justice practice. Firstly, I examine the restorative justice theme within the contemporary political context before turning to the programme itself, the wider reception and its impact and significance for the PRA. Through discussion of the increasingly victim-centred reporting of crime within mainstream media, I show that prison radio not only provides a voice for prisoners, but is able to empower victims of crime. Both mainstream media and criminal justice policy continue to marginalise those affected by crime, providing limited opportunities for expression of a range of views and largely reducing victims to a homogenous, vulnerable group. In contrast, prison radio facilitates a constructive and respectful discourse which can aid greater understanding between perpetrators and victims of crime and thereby contribute to a process of reconciliation and rehabilitation.

The Restorative Philosophy

The concept of restorative justice is based on principles of community responsibility and reconciliation. Focusing on the needs of both the victim and the offender, it not only recognises the need for restitution, but the role the community can play in helping offenders to avoid further criminal situations. Over the past two decades, restorative justice has been adopted and adapted as a progressive solution to the problems of crime, becoming a central theme of UK criminal justice reform, framing new approaches to working with young offenders in particular. On one level, restorative justice represents co-operative, communal, and humanitarian solutions to the problems of social exclusion, based on the aim of reconnecting and reconciling offenders with victims, families and communities. Yet government support of such approaches equally points to the adaptation of restorative justice as a neoliberal technology of responsabilisation, framed by a victim-centred discourse.

Discussing the emerging restorative justice framework for the governance of youth crime under New Labour, Patricia Gray notes an emphasis on ‘moral discipline’ rather than ‘social justice’ (2005). Within this context, the PRA plays an important role in maintaining a balance between victim and prisoner rights, facilitating a dialogue based in empowerment and reconciliation rather than regulation and control.

Summing up the essence of restorative justice, Dennis Sullivan and Larry Tifft refer to the ways that members of the Navajo Nation explain the reasons behind people harming others, describing them as “acting like they have no family” (2008:1). In these terms, the offending person is seen as so disconnected and disengaged from others that his/her actions are no longer based in personal foundations. Historically, Navajo

remedies for such situations focus on the act of healing and call upon the families of both parties to help perpetrators to connect or reconnect to the community in a process of ‘peacemaking’ (2008:1). Sullivan and Tifft refer to the Navajo peacemaking process as the quintessential form of restorative justice, involving the whole community in restoring harmony, based on meeting the needs of all concerned.

Such principles form the basis of healing following large-scale collective human rights violations, including the reconciliation process in post-genocide Rwanda and post-apartheid South Africa, and the Australian response to the Stolen Generation of Aboriginal children (Strang & Braithwaite 2001:11). Sullivan and Tifft describe a process broadly based on seeking to reach an agreement, where the needs of those harmed are “taken into account to the fullest extent possible” (2008:1). Within such situations, whilst victim rights are paramount, responsibility for making things right, and to varying extents for the harm itself, falls upon the whole community, whether directly, indirectly, actively or passively. The distinctiveness of restorative justice is based on its role as a healing process that involves wider support from families and communities which then engenders greater conflict resolution skills and empowers the community as a whole (Sullivan & Tifft 2008:3).

Such approaches are based on long-held indigenous customs that aim to meet the needs of all involved in a ‘harm situation’, “they know that, if a wrong is not righted in ways that take into account the needs of those who have been affected, the community will eat away at itself” (Sullivan & Tifft 2008:2). At the heart of the process is the ability to ‘talk things out’ to restore harmony (Sullivan & Tifft 2008:2). As shown in previous chapters, radio facilitates such conversations within the prison community,

yet the involvement of those whose lives have been affected by crime extends the discussion into the wider community, with the potential to increase information and understanding. Throughout their accounts, PRA practitioners refer to the largely unrealised potential of existing radio formats to engage audiences in driving content. For Andrew Wilkie, former founding ERB Station Manager and current PRA Director of Radio, radio performs a crucial community development function within prisons, giving the audience something they can feel proud of,

Building a community is about understanding that there are constructive ways of being, of acting, of interacting with each other. That's what a healthy community does, it interacts and mutually supports each other. That's what media is about in any community, it's about facilitating that interaction, that debate (28.11.12).

The wider philosophy of restorative justice becomes a powerful means of community empowerment and democratic participation in ways which mirror that of alternative, non-mainstream radio and indicate a natural merging of both. However, where both aim to restore the means of communication and decision making to communities, they equally challenge state power and remain open to governmental and commercial manipulation.

The UK Restorative Justice Context

PRA development, and the shift in perceptions indicated by the production and reception of the *Face to Face* programme, links to the rising significance of restorative justice within UK political responses to crime and punishment at the time. Yet as Sullivan and Tifft argue, the principles of restorative justice are inherently insurgent and subversive (2008:2). As a process, it competes with the role of the state, not only

in defining how to respond to harm, but in defining what constitutes harm in the first place (Sullivan & Tifft 2008:2). Crime is reconceptualised as committed against a community or individual rather than the state, shifting responsibility for addressing the crime. In these terms, restorative justice is seen by the state as a power challenge which needs to be co-opted and modified in order to achieve managerial and administrative aims,

Restorative justice sees the pain and suffering of all as worthy of our collective attention while the state discriminates between those worthy of the community's attention and those not (Sullivan & Tifft 2008:2).

Restorative justice represents the New Labour communitarian response to the 'causes of crime', continued through successive Conservative governments and significantly shaping youth justice reform (Pelikan & Trenczek 2008:77). Yet whilst the approach marks a humanitarian shift in solutions to crime, Sullivan and Tifft highlight the ironies of state supported programmes (2008). Reliance on the state for funding, development and continuation, results in initiatives being shaped into narrowly focused correctional alternatives alongside probation and community sentencing, becoming focused on the 'offender' and their 'liability' (Sullivan & Tifft 2008:2). Examination of the Ministry of Justice definition of restorative justice supports this view, framed in an authoritarian discourse of offender accountability and responsibility (www.justice.gov.uk 16.10.14). Whilst the information introduces the positive and inclusive process of 'bringing together' those harmed with those responsible 'to find a positive way forward', the focus remains on the victim's chance to:

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- Tell offenders the real impact of their crime
- Get answers to their questions
- Get an apology (www.justice.gov.uk16.10.14).

As the primary intended audience, the rights of victims and witnesses are paramount, yet the aggrieved and angry tone of the information illustrates a peculiarly governmental version of the restorative justice. Collaboration between the Ministry of Justice, the Youth Justice Board, NOMS, police and criminal justice agencies is recognised as important for expanding the use of restorative justice. Yet the concept is framed through repeated reference to offender ‘responsibility’ and ‘accountability’,

Restorative justice holds offenders to account for what they have done. It helps them understand the real impact, take responsibility, and make amends (www.justice.gov.uk16.10.14).

The restorative justice flavour of solutions to youth crime indicates its appropriation as a means of social control, focusing on individual and community responsibility for crime, combined with the invocation of unruly, feral youth as the main challenge to peaceful, law abiding, taxpaying citizens. Yet where restorative justice may have become a buzzword of social authoritarianism, prison radio relates to traditional principles of open dialogue and community healing, playing a central role in facilitating a constructive and progressive discourse on the problem of, and solutions to, crime. The criminal justice process is concerned with harm towards the state, with state officials exacting retribution on behalf of the collective (Zehr & Mika 1998). Whilst in contrast, restorative justice works towards the development of community competencies which foster “greater access to supportive re-integrative resources” (Sullivan & Tifft 2008:2).

Outlining research into restorative youth justice programmes following the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, Patricia Gray highlights the contradictions of New Labour's social authoritarianism (2005). Whilst recognising the social inclusion discourse that forms the basis of restorative justice, she argues that restorative practice has become a technology of moral responsabilisation. Within the 'new penology' regulation of individuals and situations, a whole new industry of risk assessment and management "has blossomed in response to this novel view of crime" (Gray 2005:938). For Gray, restorative youth justice practice is not situated within a wider social justice agenda, "instead, it carries the same moralising connotations that underlie other inclusionary policy measures developed by New Labour" (2005:942).

The contemporary rise of restorative justice suggests a move away from more punitive solutions to crime, yet a governmentalised reworking of the concept demonstrates its role within a correctional continuum of responsabilisation. Rather than indicating the demise of the prison and a withdrawal of the state, it indicates the intensification of intervention, shaping individual and community responses to crime in moral and economic terms,

Young offenders participating in restorative interventions are expected to take responsibility for the negotiation of their own social risks, with only limited social support and little sustained attempt to redress structural constraints. Failure on the part of young offenders to succeed in this endeavour is viewed as the result of individual inadequacies in their moral fortitude rather than as the outcome of socio-economic processes that lie beyond their control (2005:954)

Grey outlines an array of responsabilisation strategies contained in the 1998 Act and through an evaluation of a restorative justice programme developed by a Youth Offending Team in the South West of England, argues that the pursuit of responsabilisation within the current penal climate overshadows that of “restoration and reintegration in the delivery of restorative justice interventions” (Gray 2005:941).

Rather than seeking to heal relations between offenders, victims and communities, the principle of restorative justice has been translated as yet another way to hold young offenders accountable for their actions. Yet as she points out, any attempt to reintegrate offenders within their communities, needs equal focus on the social structures and support available, “any inclusionary programme which does not simultaneously advocate a redistribution of power, wealth and opportunity is likely to be flawed” (Muncie & Hughes 2002:10).

For young people, restorative initiatives have proved an effective alternative to custodial sentencing which often begins a cycle of re-offending. By addressing criminal behaviours at an early stage, the aim is to steer young people onto a more constructive path before the pattern becomes too deeply engrained. However, without adequate focus on reintegration and social inclusion, initiatives are set up to fail (Gray 2005:952). At the heart of the issue is the way in which the concept of social inclusion has been discursively constructed and managerially implemented by government agencies, framed by national standards and performance targets (Gray 2005:952). Emphasis on individual responsibility to ‘achieve’ fails to recognise the social support needed to effectively establish family relationships, address health issues or realise potential in education, training and employment.

At first glance, restorative justice appears to conflict with New Labour's 'what works' approach (Mason 2006:256), increasingly constructing,

An edifice of punishment which appears to be both unshakeable and unyielding in the ongoing conflict to maintain law, restore order and reduce risk to communities beleaguered by the activities of feral atavists who, according to the New Labour government and their Conservative opponents, are either unwilling or unable to 'responsibilise' themselves and participate in the multifarious benefits offered by twenty first century globalised, consumer capitalism (Ryan & Sim 2006:697).

Yet rather than challenging the role of prison, restorative justice initiatives add to the law and order equation, specifically aimed at addressing the problems of street crime and anti-social behaviour. Within New Labour policy and discourse, 'feral youth' have been criminalised and demonised, targeted as the key challenge to community cohesion. Combined with the rise of the victim movement, restorative solutions purportedly restore agency to affected communities. Yet the reworking of restorative justice in terms of individual responsabilisation clashes with reintegrative and reconciliatory aims on a wider level, and a discursive focus on accountability is concerned more with moral correction and attributing blame rather than building effective relationships with others.

Radio for Rehabilitation

The idea for the *Face to Face* programme came after a prisoner suggested to the PRA that it could improve a show it was making by including the victim's voice. Recognising that it was a good idea and realising the need for specialist skills, they approached Victim Support for help. The charity ended up playing a crucial role in the programme

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by advising the PRA production team on the issues faced by victims of crime and by ensuring that contributors were chosen appropriately and were looked after during the recording process (thirdsector.co.uk accessed 05.05.14). The project's innovative partnership approach won the 2012 Third Sector Excellence Award, with one of the judges Caron Bradshaw, Chief Executive of the Charity Finance Group commenting that "It was a powerful and creative way to deliver on both parties' complementary objectives" (thirdsector.co.uk accessed 05.05.14).

Based firmly in the third sector, the programme rejects the more retributionist discourse of many mainstream government initiatives, reclaiming the healing principles of restorative justice through equal focus on the needs of both victims and prisoners. Whilst aimed at encouraging prisoners to take responsibility for their actions, choices and decisions, the language and structure of the programme highlight the importance of mutual respect, reframing both victims and prisoners as people, with their own individual stories and perspectives. A governmental shift towards restorative options can be seen as a move towards more humanitarian and community focused solutions to crime, yet the above discussion shows that initiatives can only thrive when initiated and developed outside of state control. Whilst produced within prison, the *Face to Face* programme demonstrates the effectiveness of restorative practice that stems from civil society, as well as the potential of non-mainstream media for promoting and facilitating prison alternatives.

In contrast to a punitive discourse of 'accountability' and 'responsibility', the joint approach recognises the rehabilitative and restorative priorities of many victims of crime. In an interview for The Restorative Justice Council about the *Face to Face*

programme, Victim Support Chief Executive, Javed Khan, highlights the dual benefits of helping victims move forward and preventing criminals from offending again,

Restorative justice is a way for offenders to make amends and many victims find that it helps the mental scars of the crime to fade away. Victims constantly tell us that one of their key priorities is making sure that offenders don't go on to commit the same crime again and create more victims. Research has found that re-offending among offenders who took part in restorative justice went down by up to 27% (restorativejustice.org.uk accessed 10.05.14).

The development, production and reception of the programme is based on prisoner rehabilitation and the prevention of crime, building on the potential of individual victims to change the attitudes of prisoners by helping them to recognise the personal effects of crime within a constructive and supportive environment. Victim agency is central to the process, empowering those who have been affected by crime to actively participate in tackling the issues of crime. The *Face to Face* programme provides an opportunity for victims to tell their stories and promote understanding, not only through the recording but through sharing with the wider prison community. Through a radio documentary that focuses on their individual stories, perspectives and reactions, both victims and prisoners are reconstructed as 'people' rather than narrowly defined media constructs.

Mainstream Media & the 'Ideal Victim'

Restorative justice has steadily gained credibility as a powerful alternative in the response to crime, yet as Vicky De Mesmaecker argues, its rise within the dominant retributive climate of Western liberal democracies is contradictory (2010:239). She describes it as struggling to become more than a mere "hazy notion of justice" and

whilst in need of a public relations overhaul, the tendency to focus on benefits to victims alone has its own problems. In the previous section, I argued the role of prison radio in producing more authentic representations of prisoners and prison. Similarly, mass media portrayal of victims is selective and unrepresentative (Greer 2007 & De Mesmaecker 2010), suggesting the potential significance of non-mainstream media, such as prison radio, in facilitating a wider range of conversations on the impact of crime.

For De Mesmaecker, the media construct of the 'victim' is a major barrier to the expansion of restorative justice (2010:250). In contrast, the PRA's treatment of the subject indicates the part programming can play in raising awareness of prison alternatives. Restorative justice is becoming more credible yet development is restricted by a punitive penal context and deeply ingrained views throughout the criminal justice system and the general public. Relating to the wider public punitiveness debate, De Mesmaecker attributes a general lack of support for restorative justice to a lack of public awareness. She argues that the 'punitive public' versus 'merciful public' dichotomy is too rigid a view, noting challenges in public opinion research (2010:242). Rather than based on an essentially punitive position, public support for traditional models of punishment is related to a lack of available information on alternative solutions, with restorative justice suffering from the public's "ignorance of the concept" (2010:239).

Media plays a crucial role in promoting restorative options, yet a mainstream media obsession with the victim perspective is problematic (De Mesmaecker 2010:239). The opportunity to give a voice to the aggrieved citizen within the justice process is a major

strength of the restorative approach, with wider support linked to public sympathy and concern for the needs of the victim (De Mesmaecker 2010:242). However, De Mesmaecker calls for balance, recognising that where media informs the public on crime and punishment issues, it is equally capable of distorting realities. The victim perspective has shifted to centre stage in media coverage of crime over recent decades, a move which Chris Greer describes as one of the most significant qualitative changes in media representations of crime and control since the Second World War, “victims have taken on an unprecedented significance in media and criminal justice discourses, in the development of crime policy, and in the popular imagination” (2007:21).

The mainstream media coverage of prison radio outlined previously demonstrates the extent to which the victim voice is prioritised, with responses from a range of unrelated victim spokespersons used to express outrage at non-punitive, rehabilitative programmes for prisoners. The views of those affected by crime play a central role in shaping public attitudes toward punishment. The public empathises with the victim of crime, yet where the victim is constructed in certain ways, the opportunities for discussion of the range of responses to crime are restricted.

Reporting of crime and punishment may have become increasingly victim-centred and generally sympathetic, yet coverage has also been described as “selective, simplistic, disrespectful, stereotyping and scapegoating” (De Mesmaecker 2010:250). Where news reporting of crime is selective and unrepresentative, reporting of crime victims is equally limited, based on representations of those who can be portrayed as the ‘ideal victim’ (Greer 2007:21). Rather than relating to the crime itself, the victim status is

afforded to those deemed to be 'worthy' of sympathy, perpetuating the stereotypical construct of a helpless, vulnerable, innocent group (Greer 2007:22). In defining the concept, Nils Christie connects the 'ideal victim' to cultural values and the degree of societal sympathy generated. To illustrate this he describes "the little old lady on her way home at midday after caring for her sick sister, hit on the head by a big man who grabs her purse and uses the money to buy drugs" (1986).

In contrast, a drunk young man injured in a bar fight is far from the ideal, with varying levels of sympathy based on the extent of his injuries as well as other contributory factors including age and social status. The legitimacy of victim status is connected to the degree of power, visibility and respect that the person holds in society (Christie 1986). Responsibility and culpability can also be added to the equation, an argument most often invoked in the case of sexual offences against women. As Christie highlights, most real victims and real offenders are ordinary people, rather than culturally constructed 'ideals' and greater understanding of each can only be achieved through increased representation and communication.

Where elderly women and young children are typical 'ideal victims', young men, homeless people, those with drug problems and others on the margins of society have difficulty in achieving victim status (Greer 2008:22). Greer describes a 'hierarchy of victimisation' reflected and reinforced in media and criminal justice discourses,

At one extreme, those who acquire the status of 'ideal victim' may attract massive levels of media attention, generate collective mourning on a near global scale, and drive significant change to social and criminal justice policy and practice. At the other extreme, those crime victims who never acquire

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legitimate victim status or, still worse, perceived as ‘undeserving victims’ may receive little, if any, media attention, and pass virtually unnoticed in the wider social world (2008:22)

De Mesmaecker (2010) argues that the use of the ‘ideal victim’ not only builds a false view amongst the public, but creates a category of victims who are not socially recognised as such. The traditional image of the ‘helpless’, ‘passive’ victim holds symbolic power, influencing both government policy and public attitudes to crime whilst safeguarded and perpetuated through the disproportionate allocation of media resources (Greer 2007),

While individual victims are largely on the margins of the day to day workings of criminal justice, the victim of crime emerges as a strong symbolic construct in public discourse and in the operation of the criminal justices process. So do the accompanying notions of victims’ characteristics and needs. These preconceived notions are still largely based on stereotypical images of victims (De Mesmaecker 2010:251).

The victim perspective is afforded greater prominence in mainstream reporting of crime, yet the foregrounding of specific types of victim merely serves to further exclude them from crime and punishment discourse and practice. In contrast, prison radio demonstrates the potential of non-mainstream media to empower victims of crime by challenging stereotypical representations and facilitating constructive dialogue. Almost thirty years ago, Christie identified the need for victims to play a greater role in the criminal justice process in order to give victims and offenders closer contact and therefore more realistic views of one another (1986). The perpetuation of the ‘ideal victim’ through mainstream media supports the prison solution by obscuring other options. As such, movement towards more restorative, humanitarian solutions

can only be achieved where the portrayal of both victims and prisoners becomes authentic and the range of available information and discourse is expanded.

Responsibility for increasing the visibility of and concern about victims in society has been placed in the hands of mainstream media (De Mesmaecker 2010:244). De Mesmaecker solely attributes the shift to market motivations, arguing that victims contribute to the newsworthiness of a crime and broaden audience appeal through capturing emotion (2010:250). However, the rise of the victim's voice is equally connected to a neoliberal 'responsibilisation strategy' in relation to crime control (Garland 1996:452). David Garland argues that re-engaging citizens and groups into the criminal justice system is a major feature of a new form of 'governance-at-a-distance' (Rose & Miller 1992) that represents a new mode of exercising power (Garland 1996:454). Garland is keen to point out that rather than marking the reduction of state power through complete withdrawal from the criminal justice process, the strategy intensifies the power of the "centralised state machine" (1996:454). He identifies an increasing emphasis on individual and community responsibility for crime control, noting the rise of the victims' movement, an enhanced victim involvement in the criminal and sentencing process, and the beginnings of mediation schemes and reparation initiatives which mark "what may be the beginning of an important re-configuration of the 'criminal justice state' and its relation to the citizen" (1996:454).

Whilst Garland's observations and predictions stemmed from the criminal justice policies and practice of Conservative administrations, New Labour's populist brand of crime and punishment policy and discourse expands the strategy exponentially. Within this context, the involvement of the 'active citizen' is central to the "re-invention of

Government” (Ryan 1999:17) where media representations of crime, and government responses to crime, play an increasingly political role, re-engaging the public not only in crime control but in dialogue about punishment. Mick Ryan applauds New Labour’s populism as a genuine attempt to acknowledge the public voice, in contrast to Thatcher’s engagement with the media as a means of managing and manipulating public fear in order to secure public support for penal policy (1999:1). However, where victim representations are inaccurate and over-simplified, the strategy of promoting restorative justice through the media by placing the victim at centre stage is inherently flawed (De Mesmaecker 2010:252). Instead, the analysis of the NPR programme in the next section presents a viable alternative.

Face to Face

Over one hour, the *Face to Face* documentary brings together three victims of violent crime with three prisoners serving sentences for similar crimes. The result is a powerful and emotional portrayal of the personal impact of crime, not only in terms of the individuals involved but for the families and loved ones. The programme gained attention outside of the prison system, yet is made for a prison target audience with prisoner voices playing a prominent role throughout. Presented by a prisoner, the introduction includes information on seeking support if listeners are affected by any of the content,

If you are upset by anything you hear in this programme, there are people who can help – speak to a listener, call a Samaritan, or find someone you can trust and talk to them (NPR 2012).

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The statement is repeated four times, at regular intervals, acknowledging that prisoners too can suffer the psychological and physical effects of crime and are often likely to be emotionally vulnerable. The opening segment foregrounds the prisoner voice and experience, introducing ‘Karl, Liam and Adrian’ all currently serving sentences at HMP Brixton. With stories that the majority of the audience would relate to, they summarise their prison backgrounds including repeated prison terms from an early age, with offences and sentences escalating each time. Accounts then shift to all three men reflecting on their backgrounds, describing growing up with crime as a ‘way of life’ characterised by violence and poverty. Liam reflects on his childhood in a traveller community, describing a culture of violence, watching fights from an early age, and from thirteen years old, being thrown into a skip to “fight it out till the last man standing”. Rather than a means of absolving responsibility, they refer to the ‘wrong choices’ made and the stories provide a context for their involvement and responses to the restorative justice process.

The next voices heard are those of the three victim participants who introduce themselves and summarise their experiences. Raymond and Violet Donovan share that their two sons were attacked by a gang of youths in the street, leading to the death of their eldest son, Chris. Michelle Corellius then tells of the way that her life fell apart after her ex-husband was stabbed in another street attack. Taken from the full conversation to follow, the soundbites draw the audience in and set the tone for the remaining programme. Rather than pitching victim and prisoner against each other, placing their stories side by side attempts to frame them as equally relevant.

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The restorative process is then fully introduced by Professor Tanya Byron who presents and mediates the conversation throughout. Byron's role is crucial, as a psychology professional, a media professional, and as a victim of violent crime herself. She introduces herself as "hosting this session" declaring her own interest in involvement, not only as a psychologist and through her work with disadvantaged young people, but through her own experience, sharing that when she was fifteen years old her grandmother had been "battered to death". Byron is known for her television and radio work as well as writing regular articles in the national press. As a media personality, her role provides personable, relaxed, listener appeal, whilst her professional status lends a therapeutic quality to the process. Again focusing on the prisoner perspective, she asks each of the prisoners how they feel in advance of the meeting, with all participants nervous, of not knowing what to expect, and apprehensive about the potential for tears and blame. One participant is particularly defensive and concerned about 'blame', indicating the more authoritarian, retributionist reputation of restorative practice.

The meeting is set up in collaborative and supportive terms, marked by language that suggests and perpetuates mutual respect and trust. Informal introductions and the use of first names for addressing each contributor throughout personalises the process, creating an intimacy and informality that contrasts with formal justice procedures. At each stage in the process, Byron repeats that the crimes described are not those of the prisoners taking part in the programme. The aim is not to attribute blame but for prisoners to begin to understand the impact of crime on victims and families. However, whilst acknowledging their lack of responsibility for the particular instances, she

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presses each prisoner on whether the stories had made them think about their own victims. The impact on both victims and prisoners is profound, with all parties surprised at the outcome, revealing that they had little idea of what to expect at the beginning.

Raymond and Violet tell of the random, violent attack on their sons, the extent of Chris' injuries and their reactions to the crime. Their accounts are emotional and extremely difficult for participants and listeners to hear, focusing on the events and the effects on them as parents. Where the programme rejects the overly dramatic and sentimental tone of much mainstream media coverage of victim issues, the emotional impact is arguably even more intense. Their involvement in the process illustrates the restorative view of many victims of crime, concerned with ways they can prevent other families from being similarly affected, with Violet stressing the need to let go of anger, "My rage is not the answer. It's about restoring them so that they don't come out and do it again... to anybody (Violet Donovan, NPR 2012).

Addressing the prisoners directly, they ask for them to recognise that they each have victims, with Raymond stressing the need to recognise them as real people, "Victims have faces, feelings and families...they're not just a piece of paper in court" (Raymond Donovan, NPR 2012). Each account highlights dissatisfaction with existing legal processes for recognising the voice and agency for victims of crime, as reflected in the rise of the victims' movement over recent decades (Strang 2001). As Heather Strang argues, concern for victims has only emerged as a concept in Western democracies in relation to the rising importance of 'law and order' as a political issue, "For centuries, victims had been the forgotten third parties in a justice system which conceives of

criminal behaviour as a matter between the offender and the state, with no formal role for the individuals who suffer the crime” (Strang 2001:71).

Victim issues have been used to further political agendas around criminal justice, with mainstream media and campaigners for tougher sentences invoking statements of individual victims as if they were the views of *all* crime victims. Yet as the victims involved in the *Face to Face* programme indicate, views on sentencing and responses to crime are as varied as any other cross-section of the general public (Reeves & Mulley 2000:42). Strang presents the victims’ movement as a disparate spectrum, broadly divided into victims’ rights and victim support (2001:72). The US movement has largely been corrupted by the far right as a means of supporting punitive policies (Elias 1990), yet the UK movement leans more toward the support model, epitomised by the status of Victim Support as a group for providing assistance services and lobbying for victims’ rights. Victim Support has increasingly been recognised as an adjunct to the formal justice system, securing a place at the centre of government policy (Crawford 2000) and playing a central role in the development of restorative justice schemes within the court system (Bowcott 2.12.13).

Strang highlights the importance of social movements operating outside of existing institutions, arguing that those supported by institutions and the state risk being co-opted to varying degrees and in varying forms (2001:70). Yet where Crawford suggests that the political status of Victim Support has decreased its validity as a social movement (2000), the current commitment to restorative justice highlights the range and importance of the victim role in criminal justice practice. Rather than the manipulation of the ‘ideal victim’ concept used to further retributionist policies, the

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prison radio partnership project represents the restorative priorities of victims, focusing on changing peoples' lives and stopping others from going through the same experience," If we can save one of you from re-offending...the pain will have been worth it" (Raymond Donovan, NPR 2012).

Throughout the programme, participants reject the normative labels of 'prisoner' and 'victim', with all referred to by their first names and introduced as people with different experiences of crime. Presenting all parties as real people promotes understanding of the personal impact of crime, whilst personalising the depiction of crime informs wider public attitudes and responses to crime. When asked how the stories made them feel, Karl, Liam and Adrian all speak about how upset they were, "I feel angry, for Ray and Vi. It is very, very emotional.... It's really hard to see, I feel really upset right now" (Karl, NPR 2012).

All express their shock at hearing the stories, indicating that it is the first time they had thought about crime in personal terms. Byron repeats the 'this isn't your crime' message while also pressing them on whether it had made them think about the impact on their own victims. The responses show surprise at considering the pain they had caused,

When you are committing a crime you are not thinking about how it affects your victims (Karl, NPR 2012)

I never thought about that person or the pain I caused my victim.... until this day I've never felt this much remorse (Liam, NPR 2012).

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Michelle Corellius' story highlights the complex effects of crime on an individual, family and community level. Her account is very emotional as she tells of the effects of a random alcohol and cocaine fuelled attack on her husband. He survived being stabbed in the head, yet the emotional impact was more complex, leading to mental health problems, alcohol and drug addiction, and involvement in crime which ultimately led to divorce. The account illustrates the 'ripple effect' of violent crime not only on the individual victim but on a wider level. The issues raised in Michelle's story had particular resonance for the prisoners involved in the programme, relating to "the whole drink and drug fighting culture" that each of them had been involved in to varying degrees,

It could easily have been me....it really hit a nerve... I'm having trouble holding it together right now (Karl, NPR 2012).

I've done a drug fuelled crime, I was on drugs when I committed that crime, and for you to sit there and tell me that story, you find yourself welling up, you don't think about other people. I've done what I've done, I've been to court, I've been to prison, I come out and live my life normal, but people like yourselves, all of you, you're still dealing with that every day.... I've left a permanent mark on that person....I can honestly say that there's a big feeling of guilt on me now.... more than ever.... I'm happy that I done this (Liam, NPR 2012).

Byron describes restorative justice as a process through which people who have been affected by crime come face to face with people who have committed crime, with the aim of the perpetrators understanding the real impact of their actions. She reiterates the idea that offenders are held to account and made to take responsibility whilst also enabling victims to move forward. Her overview reflects the institutionalised model of

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restorative justice, yet the language, tone and content of the programme reinforces the principles of trust, respect and collective responsibility which are so often obscured. This is most strikingly demonstrated by Raymond Donovan expressing his appreciation, admiration and respect for the prisoners involved in the process,

You're very brave men....and I think that people listening to this programme should realise that it takes a lot of guts to sit in front of victims of crime, in a small room like this. It's an honour to be in the same room as you (Raymond Donovan, NPR 2012).

The statement sets the tone of the remaining discussion with 'respect' repeatedly referenced throughout the programme. Once explicitly shown to the prisoners, they mirror the language and behaviour, as shown in particular by Liam who comments on Michelle's bravery in sharing her story.

Respect is a crucial factor in the process of restorative justice and the wider reconstruction of society (Walklate 2008). Sandra Walklate highlights the problems of the victim label, arguing that the term is no longer relevant in an increasingly diverse society where difference is to be valued (2008:284). She presents contemporary definitions as further entrenching divisions of inequality, and whilst acknowledging that new 'imaginings' are beginning to emerge, argues that significant structural, cultural and political limitations remain,

Through a 'rhetoric of victimhood' both restorative justice and victimhood become vehicles for state policy, contributing to the culture of control and maintenance of economic relationships (2008:283).

She cites Will Hutton's presentation of the demise of the public realm (2002) to illustrate the extent to which the state infrastructure of justice, with aims of equalising opportunity and enlarging individual's capacity for self-respect, has been overtaken by individualism, failing to allow "the full flowering of our human sensibilities",

Taken to its limits, a society peopled only by conservative 'unencumbered selves' jealously guarding their individual liberties and privacy, is a denial of the human urge for association and meaning (Hutton 2002:84).

For Walklate, the true nature of oppression and opportunities for change lie within these processes, with restoration and reconstruction underpinned by respect for human difference and experience. She investigates the victim role in restorative justice, yet her argument can equally be applied to the involvement of offenders in the process, focusing on the need to treat people with respect, as individuals with personal resources, helping them to make sense of what has happened in their lives (2008:283).

The *Face to Face* programme frames the restorative justice process through a discourse of respect, treating all involved as individual people with their own equally valid stories and perspectives. Crime impacts on peoples' lives, and as Walklate controversially suggests, talk of 'victims' and 'criminals' has limitations, invoking the presumed 'special' status associated with victims of crime. Instead, they are complainants in a criminal justice system just as criminals are defendants, they are not necessarily 'good' in opposition to the offender's 'bad' (Walklate 2008:284). Within the programme Raymond Donovan explicitly raises the issue of respect, breaking down normative, value-laden definitions in a statement that enables the prisoners involved in the programme see themselves, and those around them, differently,

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I'll give you three one word, and that's 'respect', you deserve all the respect we can give you. It takes a lot of guts to come in here and open your heart. You're very brave men, the three of you (Raymond Donovan, NPR 2012).

Coming face to face with prisoners who are separate from, and not responsible for their own experiences, creates a uniquely supportive and rehabilitative process, helping victims to feel empowered to do something positive towards reducing recidivism. Had Raymond, Violet and Michelle been brought together with those responsible for their own stories, the dynamic would have been different, yet the personal distance enabled all involved to respect each other's position. Throughout the process, all express appreciation and respect for each other's time, stories and commitment to the process. For Violet, this is a marked contrast to the court system which "never asked us as victims what we thought or felt" (NPR 2012). Whilst for Karl, Liam and Adrian, the programme, prisoner feedback, PRA accounts, and my own experience of working in prisons shows that prisoners respond far more positively and are far more likely to engage with rehabilitation initiatives when treated with respect and as human beings.

In reference to wider restorative justice values and practice, the final segments of the documentary focus on moving forward. This includes participant reflections on the process with particular focus on the impact on the prisoners involved, what the experience has done for them, and what they want to do next. One week after the initial meeting, Karl, Liam and Adrian are interviewed separately, with Byron visiting them on the wings. The background actuality of general prison noise adds authenticity to their accounts and joining them in their territory breaks down the standard power

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relations of professional interactions with prisoners. This reinforces the status of their feedback as genuine insight, with all expressing how surprised they were at the emotional effect of the experience. Karl talks of feeling “like crap”, of starting to appreciate the personal impact of crime when listening to how people have been hurt whilst also feeling positive, that he had “done something to make a difference”.

Similarly, Adrian talks of feeling “ashamed” and of facing the fact of the emotional pain he caused. Byron points out that his was the most marked change in attitude, and he acknowledges the shift from being defensive to thinking about others. Liam talks of having his eyes opened and of the experience changing his mindset before leaving prison the following week and of being grateful for the opportunity to try and help, “to give something back.”

Throughout their reflections, they each refer to varying feelings of ‘shame’ and ‘guilt’ in relation to their own victims. To a large extent, the response can be connected to what they feel is expected of prisoners throughout formal criminal justice processes, as well as their role in the programme itself. However, the language used suggests the ‘experiencing’ of guilt rather than attributing the abstract notion of guilt and culpability. The victims involved are similarly struck by the emotional impact of the experience, with Raymond and Violet talking of being “overwhelmed” by the hope that lives can change because of their son’s story. Michelle too talks of being “blown away” by the reactions of the prisoners, feeling that the process may well have resulted in them taking some responsibility for their actions, “It’s been an emotional journey, the impact on the lads is powerful. They’re all good lads – they deserve another chance” (Michelle Corellius, NPR 2012).

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The production and reception of the *Face to Face* documentary marks a major turning point in the development of the PRA, gaining wider support and credibility through facilitating the victim's voice within the prison and punishment debate. Whilst I am in no way suggesting that one radio programme holds the key to the development of restorative justice values and practice in the UK, I do argue that the documentary highlights the need to extend the range of discourse and practice around victims, prisoners and restorative justice.

Prison radio challenges mainstream media representations of victims, promoting restorative alternatives through realistic representations of both victims and prisoner and facilitating a constructive dialogue between the two. In addition, the project highlights the importance of principles of reconciliation, reintegration and respect rather than those of individual responsibility through which restorative justice practice has come to be framed. The partnership between the PRA and Victim Support demonstrates the importance of the third sector in achieving humanitarian criminal justice reform, showing that innovative prison alternatives can only be developed outside of the institutional restrictions of the state. The partnership illustrates the role of the third sector in achieving civil society aims based on the generation of social capital. Therefore, real social justice reform is more effectively achieved through third sector, civil society organisations and actions.

Chapter Summary

Where the previous chapter outlined the productive partnerships and relationships which contributed to the early development of the PRA, this chapter focused the ways in which the organisation addressed the challenge of negative assumptions and

perceptions about the prison radio concept. Analysis of mainstream media coverage and an example of the PRA's own radio content served to illustrate the growth of prison radio from the West Midlands activity to the establishment of a national service.

I began by discussing resistance to the concept from within the prison, attitudes which the PRA were able to address through communication, collaboration and demonstrating the benefits of radio production and broadcasting for the wider prison community. This was followed by examination of the representation of creative, rehabilitative prison initiatives in mainstream media and the PRA strategy for dealing with outside perceptions. Finally, the example of the NPR *Face to Face* programme was used to demonstrate the wider acceptance of prison radio, recognising its contribution to a deeper understanding of prison issues.

These examples were discussed in relation to a context of political and institutional change, with prison radio presented as a product and reflection of multiple contradictory discourses around crime and punishment. Both here, and in the previous chapter, the PRA approach to managing the external and internal relationships emerges as a central theme. The case studies discussed above illustrate a strategy that avoids direct engagement with a dominant punitive discourse based on unrealistic representations of prisons and prisoners. Instead, these instances suggest a focus on building a new, more responsive and representative discourse, reclaiming media ground on behalf of prisoners, victims of crime, and the wider criminal justice sector.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This study has explored the unique conditions which led to the growth of prison radio at a specific moment in time, with the aim of identifying transferable factors to inform the development of future initiatives. I examined the establishment of the PRA in relation to rapid changes in the role and function of broadcasting, punishment and social welfare, and argue that the story represents continued resistance against the managerialist and economic rationalities which have reshaped all three arenas. This concluding chapter summarises the historical analysis presented so far and brings the story up to date. I outline the continued significance of prison radio within the contemporary prison context in order to define which of the contributory factors are unique to the early development of the PRA, and which can be applied to future models.

I began the study by identifying existing ideas and theories that inform the analysis of prison radio and the multiple factors which contributed to the development of the PRA in a particular way at a particular time. The literature was divided into the three separate yet interdependent themes of radio, prisons and social action. Firstly, discussion of the relationship between broadcasting and social change highlighted the unique positioning of radio which performs a function of state control whilst remaining embedded in alternative, grassroots media aims of giving prisoners a voice. The following chapter examined the prison environment through which radio was accepted and encouraged. Within the neoliberal prison context, prison radio emerges as both a

product of, and resistance against punitive, economy-based penal practice. Finally, PRA growth was mapped against the repositioning of volunteerism and activism, redefined through a political discourse of enterprise and entrepreneurship.

This theoretical analysis was then used as a framework from which to examine prison radio practice. The stories of PRA founders and practitioners revealed two major themes which defined the role and function of prison radio. Firstly, focus on two key partnerships projects involving the BBC and education provision illustrated the institutional arrangements which contributed to the process. The examples show that the PRA's activist aims were achieved through emerging partnership arrangements together with the ability to effectively balance the needs of diverse stakeholders. Theories of governmentality were explored and utilised to show the complex process through which prison radio simultaneously epitomises, yet contradicts, the economic reworking of punishment and social welfare. Finally, the analysis of newspaper coverage and radio content illustrated the ways in which the PRA managed negative perceptions and assumptions about prison radio. Ultimately, I argue that activity challenges punitive attitudes to crime and punishment through introducing a new, realistic, representative discourse into the prison debate.

Contemporary Significance

This research highlights the role of the New Labour governments of the late 1990s and early 2000s in providing the conditions for prison radio growth, and links the evolution of the PRA to a political context of neoliberal social authoritarianism. By the time the Conservative Party-led coalition government was elected in 2010, the PRA and NPR were already established and had demonstrating a proven track record in improving

communications within individual prisons, and across the prison estate. Under David Cameron's leadership, UK penal policy has taken a more overtly punitive, retributionist turn, unlikely to support the beginnings of such an initiative today. Yet despite, and even because, of these current conditions, prison radio continues to grow, responding to increasing pressures faced by a prison service in crisis.

A summary of the contemporary penal context demonstrates the increasing significance of prison radio which creates a humanitarian counter-balance to the privatisation of punishment and represents the prisoner voice in the penal reform debate. The culture of fear and violence in prisons described in Chapter One shows no signs of abating. At the end of 2014, the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales announced the highest suicide in custody rates in a decade (Hardwick 2014), and despite government claims to the contrary (Kotecha 19.08.14), the prison crisis continues to deepen. The *Autumn 2014 Bromley Briefing* figures produced by the Prison Reform Trust show the prison population as increasing by twenty percent in twelve years. On 10th October 2014, the figure reached 84,485, almost double the 1994 average (Prison Reform Trust 2014:4). In the meantime, the number of full-time equivalent staff employed in the public prison estate fell by twenty eight percent in the past three years, with sickness rates amongst prison staff double that of the average number days per worker in the labour market as a whole (2014:4), demonstrating the increasing pressures of working in an already high-stress environment.

Such issues of under-staffing, under-funding, and overcrowding, have contributed to a dramatic rise in self-inflicted deaths, self-harm and violence in custody (Bowcott 21.10.2014). The 2013-2014 Annual Report by the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Nick

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Hardwick, notes an increase in violent assaults and the highest suicide in custody rates in ten years (2014). Whilst recognising that there are multiple deep-seated contributory factors, he describes a “conjunction of resource, population and policy pressures” contributing to “the rapid deterioration in safety” (2014:11).

A Guardian newspaper investigation into prison suicides between January 2013 and October 2014 reveals that a total of 125 prisoners killed themselves in twenty months, equating to an average of six per month (Laville, Taylor & Haddou 18.10.14). In response, the Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, is reported as denying a pattern to the upsurge (Laville, Taylor & Haddou 18.10.14) and the Ministry of Justice denies that staffing cuts and crowding levels are responsible (Bowcott 21.10.2014). In contrast, Eoin McLennan-Murray, President of the Prison Governors Association argues that there is no coincidence in a peak in suicide rates occurring at a time when the service is facing its greatest financial challenges in thirty years (Laville, Taylor & Haddou 18.10.14).

Overcrowding, budget cuts, and staff cuts have been identified as contributory factors, together with the loss of more experienced staff as older prisons are closed down. Quoted in The Guardian newspaper, Danny Kruger, Chief Executive of the crime prevention charity, Only Connect, describes UK prisons as “close to boiling point” and “among the worst conditions we’ve seen” (Bowcott 21.10.2014). He places staff shortages at the centre of the problem. Where there are limited officers to escort prisoners to classrooms and workshops, and volunteers and staff from resettlement projects are facing increasing problems in entering the prisons, conditions lead to a reduction of rehabilitation activity and a constant threat of violence,

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It's incredibly sad that it has taken record numbers of prisoner suicides to bring this to public attention, but the prison authorities must face up to the long-term implications of this strategy. By clamping down on positive activity and support we are simply storing up trouble for when today's prisoners – often locked up for 23 hours a day and receiving no support to get their lives in order – hit the streets again (Kruger in Bowcott 21.10.2014).

This research has focused on PRA founder and practitioner accounts of events from the establishment of the PRA in 2006 to the creation of NPR in 2009. The story is uniquely situated in a particular place and time, emerging from a New Labour framework of social authoritarianism. Yet there are marked similarities with contemporary political discourse, particularly around the appropriation of a language of rehabilitation in penal reform. The 2010 Conservative Party Draft Manifesto sets out Cameron's plans for a "Rehabilitation Revolution", a mission described in terms of cost and contractualisation, where private and voluntary sector providers will train and rehabilitate offenders when they leave prison (2010:11). Following his appointment as Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain and Secretary of State for Justice, Chris Grayling reiterated the aims of the 'rehabilitation revolution' in a speech at the Centre of Social Justice in November 2012. The transcript bears resemblance to those of his Labour Party predecessors, resurrecting the 'tough on crime' message whilst acknowledging the complexities of the problem,

Broken homes, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, generational worklessness, violent and abusive relationships, childhoods spent in care, mental illness, educational failure... All elements that are so very common in the backgrounds of so many of our offenders (Grayling 2012:6).

Yet this approach sits in stark contrast to the draconian changes to the *Incentives and Earned Privileges* (IEP) scheme which came into effect in the following year, elements of which have since been declared ‘unlawful’ in the High Court (Howard League 5.12.14). Announcing a “major shake up to prisoner incentives” in November 2013, the Justice Secretary outlined changes to address alleged lax conditions in the prison system,

The changes we have made to the incentive scheme are not just about taking TVs away from prisoners, they are about making them work towards their rehabilitation. Poor behaviour and refusal to engage in the prison regime will result in a loss of privileges. It is as simple as that (Ministry of Justice 1.11.13).

Through changes designed to reflect the government’s tough stance and win over supporters of punishment-orientated regimes, the new rules included a ban on receiving parcels. Had this not resulted in the restriction of access to books, the move may well have been passed unchallenged (Ridyard 2014). The prohibition of books marked the biggest source of public resistance to the changes, and the *Books for Prisoners* campaign formed by the Howard League for Penal Reform led to the High Court ruling on 5th December 2014, declaring the ban on books as unlawful (Howard League 5.12.14). A group of eighty leading authors signed their names to an open letter which protested that “books represent a lifeline behind bars, a way of nourishing the mind and filling the many hours prisoners are locked in their cells” (Ridyard 2014).

Similarly, along with musicians including Johnny Marr, Dave Hawley and Seasick Steve, Billy Bragg led a successful campaign against the ban of steel-strung guitars within the IEP overhaul (Ellis-Peterson 29.04.14). In an open letter to the Minister for Justice

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published in The Guardian, “Please Don’t Lock Up Prisoners’ Guitars Too”, the musicians highlight the importance of music as a means of engaging prisoners in the process of rehabilitation (29.04.14). In both cases, campaigners refer to the rise in self-inflicted deaths in custody,

We would like to know whether the recent changes to the treatment of prisoners – which includes restrictions on books and steel-strung guitars – could be at the root of this steep increase in fatalities (The Guardian 29.04.14).

The humanitarian approach to prisons and punishment that characterises the response to the IEP scheme mirrors that of the PRA practitioner accounts of prison radio activity. Rather than a mediated, mass-media portrayal of prisoners as a homogenous dangerous group, such discourses contribute to an understanding of the complexities of crime and imprisonment together with a wider awareness of prison issues. As Guardian journalist, Mark Haddon, writes on the breadth of support in challenging the book ban,

Paradoxically, and wholly unintentionally, the ban has not only brought people together from opposing ends of the political spectrum in a way that has never happened before, and it has also made many people think about prisoners as human beings (8.12.14).

Within a context of increasingly retributionist political policy and rhetoric, such counter-discourses gain force, becoming even more significant. The extent of public outcry, and resulting changes to the IEP scheme recognise that rehabilitation cannot be achieved solely through an authoritarian focus on education, training and employment. Instead, sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration is dependent on treating prisoners as individuals, providing opportunities for a range of activities which

aid survival in prison and help to maintain and rebuild community and family connections on release.

The PRA Position

However, a major finding of this research links the establishment and continued growth of prison radio to the unique positioning of the activity, able to contribute to the multiple and often contradictory aims of a diverse range of stakeholders. Prison radio simultaneously represents resistance and activism around prisoner rights and opportunities whilst equally contributing to institutional and governmental aims around management and control. The balance between these functions continues to be a defining factor in developing a prisoner-led radio service.

In May 2014, the PRA celebrated five years of NPR, now broadcasting to around 70,000 prisoners via in-cell television, 84% of whom tune in regularly. Programmes are presented and produced by prisoners working with PRA staff in a growing number of prisons including HMPs Brixton, Styal, Hindley and Coldingley. The PRA continues to support prison radio projects across the country, many contributing regularly to NPR (Inside Time, May 2014), and the organisation has expanded to twelve staff positions which include the addition of a:

- Director of Development
- Fundraising Co-ordinator
- NPR Managing Editor
- Four Producers working with Prisoner-Producers at HMPs Coldingley and Brixton
- A dedicated Station-Sound Producer and a Production Assistant

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In addition, the organisation launched *PRA Productions* in 2013, building on the success of the *Face to Face* documentary discussed in the previous chapter. The audio production arm specialises in “making powerful, life-changing audio products targeted at specific audiences” (PRA 2014). Recent BBC commissions include *Gay on the Inside* with Stephen Fry for BBC Radio 4, and a range of documentaries for BBC World Service, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 1Xtra, with other clients including the Samaritans, the Department for Work and Pensions, Staffordshire County Council, and the London Probation Trust (PRA 2014). Within two years of operation, *PRA Productions* has been nominated twice for *Indie of the Year* at the Radio Academy’s Radio Production Awards, winning the 2014 Silver award in competition with the best radio producers in the country (PRA 2014). This illustrates the PRA’s place within the wider broadcast sector, demonstrating their ongoing commitment to quality production and innovative radio. The continued recognition of prison radio within the broadcast sector demonstrates the potential of radio for social change even within an increasingly commercialised and fragmented mediascape.

The continued growth of prison radio is recognised by PRA respondents as primarily linked to the two key factors of time and cost. By the time the government had changed, the PRA and NPR were established, already demonstrating relatively low-cost improvements in communications across the prison estate. As PRA Trustee, HM Chief Inspector of Probation and former HMP Brixton Governor, McDowell, acknowledges, the longer that prison radio had been around, the more difficult it would be to remove (29.11.14).

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The examples discussed in the preceding chapters highlight the ways in which prison radio simultaneously supports and challenges governmental aims, relating to both control and empowerment of the prison population. The flexibility to balance these positions lies at the heart of continued prison radio development. From a governmental perspective, the major justification for prison radio is economic. It represents a relatively low-cost means of distributing information and keeping prisoners occupied, particularly within a contemporary prison crisis of under-funding and overcrowding. Furthermore, the expansion of privatisation and enterprise which facilitated the beginnings of the PRA has created an increasingly contractualised prison environment. Within this context, the role of NPR as a central point for the information on an increasingly dispersed range of rehabilitation and support services is more crucial than ever.

The institutionalisation of radio within the prison system can be seen as a new, more insidious way of controlling and managing the prison population, moulding prisoners into responsible, productive citizens through the broadcast of educational programming. Governmental acknowledgment and support for prison radio is indicative of emerging techniques of responsabilisation, empowering prisoners to make productive choices and invest in their future. In these terms, prison radio represents a neoliberal governmentality, engineering 'productive', socially responsible ex-offenders.

Yet from the perspectives of the people involved in working with prisoners to develop prison radio, activity remains firmly based in terms of empowerment and the potential to change lives. As argued throughout this study, the continued development of a quality, relevant radio service by and for prisoners is defined by the PRA's status as an

independent, alternative media organisation, committed to empowering prisoners with a voice. The accounts of the people involved in the establishment of the PRA and NPR highlight the principles of social justice and equality of opportunity which have driven the design and development of a service which reflects the needs of prisoners whilst working flexibly and collaboratively within the prison system with a range of partners.

The Prisoner Voice

Through this research, I set out to explore the unique political and institutional conditions through which the PRA was formed, in order to define which factors could be replicated. The complex contexts involved in the early development of prison radio were examined, presenting the PRA as the product of multiple, contradictory, political, economic and social conditions. Ultimately, I argue that prison radio is defined by the motivations, values and approach of the people involved in the process. PRA founders and practitioners have remained committed to the original aim of changing the lives of prisoners through radio by navigating and negotiating rapidly shifting institutional and governmental environments. It is a story which highlights transferable themes which can be applied to future project development both within prisons and in an increasingly diversified broadcast sector including a focus on:

- Content
- Independence
- Flexibility
- Collaboration
- Consultation

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The research findings highlight the ways in which participants remained focused on the production of quality radio whilst building key relationships and managing misconceptions about what they were trying to achieve. PRA founders and practitioners all highlight a commitment to recognising, respecting and responding to the needs of an underserved and underrepresented audience in order to produce quality, relevant and impactful radio. This approach extends to recognition of the needs of all stakeholders including prisoners, working flexibly and collaboratively to demonstrate the benefits of activity to a range of partners. The independence of the PRA is central, together with a flexible approach to bringing together and balancing stakeholder aims.

The continued growth of prison radio builds on the themes of independence, flexibility, collaboration, and consultation, and crucially, prioritising the prisoner voice in the process. The unique impact and potential of prison radio is dependent on the PRA's ability to provide prisoners with a voice, representing the needs of a complex and misunderstood target audience (Wilkie 28.11.14). Throughout the interviews, PRA participants all continue to be driven by a belief in radio to change lives and recognise prisoner participation as central to the provision of a relevant and effective radio service whether through direct presentation and production, listener feedback or music requests. Unlike other radio stations, listeners are unable to participate in programming through telephone, text message, email or social media. Instead, NPR listeners write letters to the station, making music requests and sharing how they are using time inside, and their hopes for life outside. In 2013, NPR received over five

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thousand letters from prisoners across the country (Inside Time 2013), many of which reflect the value and significance of the service.

This is most effectively demonstrated through a story told by the PRA Director of Radio, Andrew Wilkie, in a post-script to his main interview (28.11.14). The previous day, a letter had been received by NPR. A female prisoner wrote about her best friend who had been in prison with her and had been released two weeks previously. They had made plans for the future and were feeling positive about life on release. Within a week she received a letter from the friend saying that she was doing well. Yet later on the same day, a prison officer visited her cell to let her know that her friend had overdosed and died. The heartbreaking story reflects one of the key drug education messages regularly broadcast through NPR. As the prisoner writes, she wanted to get the message out to people about the dangers of overdosing after going through detox,

It's an incredibly sad story, but the fact that she chose to write to us, and wanted us to be the people to communicate this story proves to me that what we do has a real impact on the people who listen. She took the time to write that letter to us. She wrote to us because she trusts us and she knows that we are there to represent her, and knows that we have the prisoners' best interests at heart – we don't want them to go out and re-offend or to go out and start taking drugs again. And voices like hers, giving that warning, are really powerful. It's a powerful letter to receive. Every so often we'll have a moment like that, and that's just a really concrete example of why I think it's so valuable (Wilkie 28.11.14).

The account encapsulates a relationship that defines prison radio, framed in terms of mutual respect. PRA responses illustrate a commitment to providing opportunities for

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prisoners to change their lives, treating prisoners as individuals and recognising the complexities of criminal behaviour.

The PRA story relates to significant changes in the organisation and management of broadcasting, punishment and social welfare, marking the point at which three previously disparate, and often conflicting, discourses converge. I argue that the development of an independent, prisoner-led radio service represents resistance against the ongoing process of marketisation and managerialism across all three arenas. PRA discourse and practice continues to act as a crucial counterpoint to the retributivist, business-driven attitudes to prisoners and prisons. As shown throughout this research, such attitudes are perpetuated through simplified mainstream media portrayals of prison issues which contribute to the creation of punitive penal policy. In contrast, the PRA story shows that even within a context of neoliberal governmentality, where profit overwhelms all areas of social functioning, people still manage to find opportunities to work within the system to change the lives of others.

APPENDICES

1. UK Interview Schedule: November & December 2012

Date	Time	Meeting	Role	Venue
27.11.12	14.30	Mark Robinson	PRA Founder & Secretary	Bates Wells & Braithwaite, London EC4M 6YH
27.11.12	15.45	Roma Hooper	PRA Founder & Chair	Bates Wells & Braithwaite, London EC4M 6YH
28.11.12	09.00	Phil Maguire	PRA Chief Executive	Costa Coffee, Brixton
28.11.12	11.00	Andrew Wilkie	PRA Director of Radio	HMP Brixton
28.11.12	14.00	Kieron Tilley	PRA Director of Operations	The RSA, London WC2N 6EZ
29.11.12	09.00	Paul McDowell	PRA Trustee, NACRO Chief Executive & former Governor HMP Brixton	NACRO, London SW8 1UD
3.12.12	10.00	Jules McCarthy	Broadcast Journalism Senior Lecturer, Staffordshire University & former PRA Trainer	Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent
3.12.12	12.00	Phil Maguire	PRA Chief Executive	Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent

2. PRA Press Statement 11 May 2009 – Sony Radio Academy Awards



The Prison Radio Association's *Electric Radio Brixton*, a radio station based behind bars at HMP Brixton, has received four nominations for the 'radio Oscars', the Sony Radio Academy Awards.

Electric Radio Brixton supports rehabilitation by engaging prisoners in programming that addresses a range of issues related to offending behaviour. It also provides an innovative means of engaging hard to reach prisoners in education and training.

At the awards ceremony, hosted by Chris Evans at London's Grosvenor House on Monday 11th May 2009, the PRA picked up two Bronze Awards (The Interview Award and The Speech Award) and two coveted Sony Gold Awards - The Listener Participation Award and The Community Award.

QUOTES:

David Hanson, Justice Minister:

"I congratulate the Prison Radio Association on their achievements at the Sony Radio Academy Awards. This approved programming is made by and for prisoners tackling issues such as offending behaviour and addiction. It's clear their work is not only having an impact on prisoners, but can stand alongside professional broadcasts."

"The Prison Radio Association will provide the day-to-day running of the new National Prison Radio Service. Their work is a valuable addition to the education and training we provide in prison to reduce re-offending and help prisoners towards playing a constructive part in their communities."

Phil Wheatley, Director General, National Offender Management Service:

"This is good news for HMP Brixton and for the Service as a whole. The recognition of the positive and progressive work that is going on within prison radio is welcome, and helps to highlight some of the innovative efforts going into reducing reoffending and protecting the public across the Service. My congratulations go to all those who have helped make ERB the success it is."

Phil Maguire, PRA Chief Executive:

"I am absolutely delighted that the work of the team at Electric Radio Brixton has been recognised by the Sony Radio Academy Award judges. "Our work is inspired by our love of radio and our belief in its power to change peoples" lives for the better. The work we do at HMP Brixton has a real impact on the lives of many - supporting the rehabilitation process with the ultimate aim of reducing re-offending."

Andrew Wilkie, Station Manager, Electric Radio Brixton:

"It's fantastic to be acknowledged for the quality of our work by four separate Sony Award juries. The prisoners at Electric Radio Brixton are working hard to turn their lives around and address the roots of their offending behaviour. They have taken huge encouragement from this recognition, and it can only serve to increase their determination to turn their backs on crime and engage positively with society when they are released."

PRISON RADIO ASSOCIATION - BACKGROUND

The Prison Radio Association (PRA) is an award winning education charity that supports the rehabilitation of prisoners. The PRA provides support, guidance and expertise to existing prison radio stations and advises prisons interested in setting up radio stations and radio training facilities.

The PRA is currently working in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to develop a National Prison Radio Service that will deliver information and educational content to prisoners in their cells.

The UK's first prison radio project was established at HMP YOI Feltham in 1994 by current PRA trustee, Mark Robinson and PRA founder and chair, Roma Hooper. The PRA achieved charitable status in June 2006 and was established in response to a growing demand from prisons to engage in prison radio. There are currently around 20 prisons running their own local radio projects and / or delivering training courses.

The PRA launched *Electric Radio Brixton* at HMP Brixton in November 2007 and was awarded Best New Charity at the Charity Times Awards in September 2008.

The PRA is led by its Chief Executive, Phil Maguire. A former producer for BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine Show, Phil went on to become BBC Prison Radio Project Coordinator. In this role he managed a partnership project, setting up two prison radio pilot projects in the West Midlands. In 2006 he left the BBC to join the PRA.

The PRA is endorsed by a hugely respected group of patrons including the award winning presenter of Channel 4 News, Jon Snow who says of the charity:

"I have chosen to lend my support to the PRA because I believe this is innovative broadcasting to a quite literally captive audience... the potential in all sorts of ways is enormous".

WHY PRISON RADIO?

Prison radio supports rehabilitation through engaging prisoners in specifically targeted programming; addressing a range of issues related to offending behaviour. It also supports rehabilitation through providing an innovative means of engaging hard-to-reach prisoners in education and training.

Prison radio is not about giving prisoners the opportunity to be DJs. Prison radio is about giving prisoners the opportunity to gain qualifications and transferable skills whilst learning about producing meaningful speech-based radio programmes that deliver important, positive messages to their fellow prisoners.

The PRA believes that through its broadcasts, prison radio has the potential to reach a much greater audience – the listeners. It can assist in promoting a range of advice and support services and opportunities that complement existing education and training activity.

Broadcasts cover issues such as, education, employment and finance; mental and physical health; addressing drug misuse; maintaining family relationships – all factors identified as key to reducing re-offending.

ELECTRIC RADIO BRIXTON (ERB)

The PRA launched *Electric Radio Brixton* at HMP Brixton on 29th November 2007. The inaugural show was co-hosted by the BBC's Bobby Friction and featured interviews with, amongst others, Mick Jones from The Clash and Billy Bragg.

Electric Radio Brixton operates as a unique communications tool within the prison and has become the principal source of information for the prison population, particularly for the large numbers of prisoners with literacy problems.

Governor of HMP Brixton, Paul McDowell recently stated:

"...the station provides purposeful activity for prisoners, an opportunity to build confidence and to gain useful qualifications, and it provides a service that touches all who live and work here. Everyone can listen to, and benefit from the station. It is used to communicate, entertain, educate and inspire...in equal measure."

An Ofsted inspection (May 2008) identified *Electric Radio Brixton* as an example of best practice within the education provision at HMP Brixton. The project was also praised in the most recent HM Chief Inspector of Prisons report (October 2008), as it supports initiatives that aim to reduce re-offending.

Andrew Wilkie is Radio Station Manager at *ERB*. He joined the PRA in June 2007 to lead the development of the station. Previously he has worked as a programme maker for GCap Media, BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio Five Live, and BBC World Service. As station manager, Andrew works alongside prisoners producing content for the station.

The majority of content is inspired, developed and produced, under guidance, by prisoners and broadcast across the jail to prisoners in their cells. *ERB* broadcasts a blend of speech and music-based content and delivers information and educational programmes to its audience.

The station advertises educational opportunities and communicates key messages to the prison population on behalf of the prison and other agencies and organisations, such as the Samaritans and Alcoholics Anonymous.

At the prison, the PRA works in partnership with Kensington and Chelsea College. The college delivers radio production and key skills qualifications to prisoners at HMP Brixton.

Prisoners completing radio training courses gain recognised qualifications and develop a range of skills, including measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy and ICT. They also develop transferable life skills, essential to successful reintegration into mainstream society.

AWARDS

The Listener Participation Award - GOLD

The Daily Show - Prison Radio Association for Electric Radio Brixton

“...if truly great radio is a reflection of the love, passion and commitment put into making it, rather than the money spent on it, then the future of radio is safe. Electric Radio Brixton is an example of what can be achieved when radio is used for what it does best - an intimate connection to deliver powerful, meaningful content that targets an audience who have a genuine need to be fulfilled. Everyone interested in making great radio would do well to follow its example of powerful simplicity.”

Sony Radio Academy Award judges

Electric Radio Brixton’s „Daily Show“ is broadcast seven days a week at 5.30pm, and is formed almost exclusively of content generated by its audience. As prisoners do not have access to texts, emails and the internet, they communicate their ideas to the radio station via post boxes on the prison wings.

The compilation submitted in this category features a selection of interviews, editorials, reports and debates all generated by members of our audience. Prisoners talk candidly about their most personal thoughts, voicing feelings about family, criminality, faith, music, prison life and the consequences of their crimes.

A short clip (3mins 18secs) of this entry is available for download and rebroadcast.

The Community Award - GOLD

A Sound Fix - Prison Radio Association for Electric Radio Brixton

“An entry which combined powerful use of the medium in a highly effective and unusual way, combining high production values with real life experiences. The personal stories of those involved provided gripping and engaging radio which altered the perceptions of the listener and increased our understanding of prisoner rehabilitation. The judges were left in no doubt that this initiative made a significant difference to the prisoners involved.”

Sony Radio Academy Award judges

This on-air campaign delivers key messages to prisoners to inform and educate them about drug and alcohol misuse and to promote the drug and alcohol support services offered in prisons and in the community upon release. The campaign is designed to encourage inmates to recognise their needs and take the opportunity to seek help.

Recent research revealed that 55% of those received into custody are „problematic drug users“ and that in inner-city male prisons [such as HMP Brixton] 80% are found to have Class A drugs in their system on arrival. Offenders who receive drug treatment during their sentences are 45% less likely to re-offend than those who receive no treatment.

The Prison Radio Association worked in partnership with the Ministry of Justice Interventions and Substance Misuse Group and a range of voluntary organisations and individuals to support the production of this material.

The campaign covers a range of key issues including: the impact of drug use on the user’s family; self harm and its relationship with drug misuse; post-release support; and alcoholism.

The Interview Award - BRONZE

Electric Radio Brixton interview with Jonathan Aitken

“This was an impressive interview of Jonathan Aitken by Tis, a prisoner at HMP Brixton. The straightforward, unconditional questioning was well structured, eliciting a revealing and enthralling account of Mr Aitken’s prison experience.”

Sony Radio Academy Award judges

Jonathan Aitken was sentenced to 18 months in prison after standing trial for perjury and perverting the course of justice in 1999. Almost 10 years later he finds himself back inside – this time to talk candidly to a serving prisoner about his experiences.

“Defeat, disgrace, divorce, bankruptcy and jail” is how the only British cabinet minister to have been sent to prison describes his fall from grace during this intriguing interview.

Aitken now leads a task-force on prison reform for the Centre for Social Justice to help formulate Conservative policy.

The interviewer, Tis, is half way through a four year sentence and although these two men are socially, culturally and educationally poles apart, they find common ground in the *ERB* studio. Many people in Tis’ position might be intimidated interviewing this experienced politician yet he quickly demonstrates that he’s an affable and intelligent interviewer, very capable of asking personal and searching questions head-on.

Tis begins the interview by asking about Aitken’s first night inside – a question that resonates with *ERB*’s entire audience. His response, describing the fear he felt whilst “in the cage” at HMP Belmarsh, and the verbal abuse and “very anatomical” physical threats he received, clearly point to how affected Aitken is by his prison experience. The interviewer also elicits a response from the interviewee, re-told with an uncharacteristic humour, about how he won over the trust of his fellow inmates.

It’s surprising and interesting to hear this educated and eloquent individual casually dropping prison slang into the conversation. Tis clearly gains Aitken’s trust, but then wrong-foots him as he asks if he would choose to swim in the same „shark-infested waters” if he could live his life over again, leaving this experienced interviewee stumbling and struggling for an answer.

Tis reveals Aitken to be a wounded man and someone who has come to care about prison reform.

The entire interview (17mins) is available for download and rebroadcast.

The Speech Award - BRONZE

Prisoners' Voices - Prison Radio Association for Electric Radio Brixton

“The winner of the Bronze Award may broadcast to the country’s smallest and most captive audience. What that audience gets is a programme of searing, matter-of-fact honesty dealing with deeply personal subjects and brought to life by the voices of the listeners themselves.”

Sony Radio Academy Award judges

The compilation submitted in this category consists of highlights from *ERB*’s weekly strand, „*Prisoners’ Voices*“. Discussion of sensitive issues is rare in the prison environment, but each week *ERB* tackles some of the toughest subjects with those who have first-hand experience – subjects which address offending behaviour.

Prisoners openly discuss taboo topics such as self-harm, mental and sexual health, and the effects of drugs and alcohol. Other subjects covered include family, faith and criminal justice. Making these programmes can be an emotionally draining experience for those involved, but the atmosphere in the studio translates into compulsive radio for an audience who benefit greatly from listening to it.

It is because these programmes are driven by the audience that they are so important and make a real difference to people’s lives. „*Prisoners’ Voices*“ is unique in its ability to speak the language of its target audience, because it is made by and for a group of people in a unique situation, all facing the reality of living behind bars.

A short clip (2mins) of this entry is available for download and rebroadcast.

3. List of Illustrations

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