



---

**Vozes pós-migrantes em tempos de hipervisibilidade**  
**Post-migrant voices at times of hyper-visibility**

Heike Graf

**Keywords:** Migrant media, mainstream media, connecting communication

Since the technical preconditions for speech, e.g. for participating in the public sphere are enhanced due to digital communication technologies, digital voices of marginalized groups, including immigrants, have the potential to counteract a dominant mainstream media discourse. The concept of “voice” means, having agency and the right to express an opinion (Tacchi 2012), and, therefore, being connected to the equal opportunity to speak. It is about inclusion into the public sphere and, hence, about participation as cornerstones of democratic societies. Inclusion means whether the voices of migrants are part of the public conversation, that is, “giving an account of one’s life and its conditions” (Couldry 2010, 67), which means discriminating against frameworks that undermine or neglect voice. Equality is enacted through terms of self-expression, or as Malkki (1996) explains, it is the “ability to establish narrative authority over one’s own circumstances and future” (Malkki 1996, 19).

In both Sweden and Germany, it can be observed that immigrants and their descendants claim the right to participate in the public sphere by, on the one hand, participating in mainstream media and, on the other hand, by producing their own media. For the latter, a plethora of voices can be heard, which are distributed via diverse media channels such as podcasts, YouTube, traditional print media, and community radio stations. These productions hold the idea that immigrants and their descendants make their own content, that is, they have editorial control, and tell their own stories purposefully and intentionally.



# Anais de Resumos Expandidos

## V Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais

ISSN 2675-4169

Vol. 1, N. 5 (2022)

At times of medialization, however, the challenge for today's marginalized communities is not necessarily being denied a voice but rather an audience that listens. In the medial pursuit of "hyper-visibility" (Georgiou 2022), we can speak of a "crisis of listening" (Macnamara 2016). I argue that these voices only matter in society when they are listened to and get response in, above all, mainstream media and with that go beyond their discursive borders. Because migrant media operate in the periphery of the media landscape, they are seldom noticed by mainstream media in contrast to other corporate media, as well as to the political and economic system (Graf 2009). Therefore, the concept of voice must be thought together with the concept of "listening" because it involves those who are addressed and embraces response (or not) (Dreher & de Souza 2019; Dreher 2009, 2010).

Recognition of migrants' capacity for communicative participation means that their voices are made relevant in the public sphere. According to Macnamara (2016) the term "listening" includes different levels of response such as recognition, acknowledgement, attention, interpretation, and understanding. Thereby, the mainstream media still play an important role because they expose their messages to a larger public. However, their "listening" is highly selective and based on their own mode of operations (Luhmann 1995/1984).

The presentation explores how migrant voices are made relevant in the public sphere by looking at connecting communications. I focus on topics because they represent what according to the producers can be of interest to the public. Topics have a factual aspect on the one hand and a temporal on the other. Here, Luhmann (1995/1984) distinguishes between topics and contributions. Contributions refer to topics, whereas topics live longer than the individual contributions do, and they combine the different contributions into a long-term or short-time nexus of meaning. Some topics provoke new contributions over and over again, however, others are exhausted quickly. In this study, I begin with exploring the topics and their contributions of diverse migrant media



# Anais de Resumos Expandidos

## V Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais

ISSN 2675-4169

Vol. 1, N. 5 (2022)

productions and then looking at mainstream media's "listening", that is, the follow-up communication by directly and indirectly referring to these media productions.

I have chosen podcasts produced in Germany that clearly express the urge to speak out, to address issues that usually are marginalized in mainstream media and focusing on the life in the multi-cultural society. With its Do-it-yourself approach, the medium is "an open platform for communication" and more specifically "an extension of the everyday discussions between the hosts", where they "can explore issues that interest or concern them" (Vrikki & Malik 2019, 285). By powerfully using the narrative forms of oral storytelling, the lines between entertainment, information, criticism and activism are blurred.

A strong motivation to start podcasting is the urge of being autonomous in production, that is, being independent from public service media, commercial forces as well as fixed broadcasting slots (Berg 2021). At first sight, it seems to be relatively easy to produce audio files and it is also inexpensive to publish. So, independence can be easily achieved. However, it takes time to develop a qualitative product that attracts listeners and especially mainstream media. Furthermore, a lot of unpaid hours are needed to keep running a podcast serial. Without funding, it will be difficult to continue (Berg 2021). In result, these independent podcasts often have relatively short lifespans.

In order to be heard also outside your own community and to take part in the wider medialized public sphere, you have to adapt media logics such as sticking out in some way as well as relating to established media narratives. Interestingly, in the explored podcasts the well-established and criticized mainstream media distinction, that is, the binary of "we" (the natives) and "them" (the others) is reversed by "we" the so-called others and "them" the natives. The addressed differences between the immigrants and the natives are both dealt with humor and/or seriousness. A central topic, that repeatedly provokes new contributions, is racism in society both within institutions and in everyday life. This issue is not new, but from the perspective of those affected, issues of everyday



stereotyping and hierarchization of cultures as well as the privileges of white people are hardly discussed within mainstream media.

The follow-up communication of mainstream media is, on the one hand a simple notification related to the producers by briefly describing the producers and their product. Interviews with the producers are also common by stressing their distinctiveness. It is rather more seldom and even more difficult to detect so called taboo-topics that are discussed by these podcasters and are taken up in mainstream media. By looking more in detail, there are contributions related to the overarching theme of racism that succeeded to circulate in the wider public sphere. They fulfil some requirements such as, on the one hand, to appear in the right time, that is, supported by other events as e.g., the Black Lives Matter movement and, therefore, fits the discourse. On the other hand, they can address a topic that is previously overlooked, relates to former contributions and is easy to pick up as novelty, which then can provoke further contributions.

The success of migrant media depends, with other words, on making sure that topics are followed up regardless of whether there is a positive or even negative response to them. Being part of the public sphere is finally about getting response.

## References

- Berg Adler, F. S. (2021): The tension between podcasters and platforms: independent podcasters' experiences of the paid subscription model, *Creative Industries Journal*, DOI: 10.1080/17510694.2021.1890417Berg 2021
- Couldry, N. (2010). *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*, London: Sage.
- Dreher, T. (2009). Listening across difference. Media and multiculturalism beyond the politics of voice. *Continuum. Journal of Media & Cultural studies*, 23(4), 445-458
- Dreher, T. (2010). Speaking up or being heard? Community media interventions and the politics of listening. *Media, Culture and Society*, 32(1), 85-103
- Dreher, T. & de Souza (2019): Beyond marginalized voices. Listening as participation in multicultural media. In: Thomas, T., Kruse, M., Stehling, M. (eds). *Media and participation in post-migrant societies*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield International, 165-179



**Anais de Resumos Expandidos**  
**V Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas**  
**em Midiatização e Processos Sociais**

ISSN 2675-4169

Vol. 1, N. 5 (2022)

- 
- Georgiou, M. (2022). Digital (in-) visibilities: spatializing and visualizing politics of voice. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 15(2), 269-275.
- Graf, H. (2009). *How do mainstream media communicate minority media? A difference-theoretical study on Radio Islam and AYPATV*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola.
- Luhmann, N. (1995/1984). *Social systems*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press
- Macnamara, J. (2016). *Organizational listening. The missing essential in public communication*. New York: Peter Lang
- Malkki, L. H. (1996). Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. In *Cultural Anthropology* vol 11, no 3, 377-404.
- Tacchi, J. (2012) Digital engagement: voice and participation in development, In: Horst, H.A & D. Miller. *Digital Anthropology*. London / New York: Berg, 225- 24
- Vrikki, P. & Malik, S. (2019) Voicing lived-experience and anti-racism: podcasting as a space at the margins for subaltern counterpublics, *Popular Communication*, 17:4, 273-287, DOI: 10.1080/15405702.2019.1622116