

Radio STIMME – Minority broadcasting

Author of the case study

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English abstract

“Radio STIMME” (Radio VOICE) is a radio programme broadcasting on different independent radios stations in Austria and dealing with topics concerning minorities. Following the idea of the mother organisation “Initiative Minderheiten”, the term minority includes everybody who is marginalized and discriminated whether for ethnical, religious, sexual or social reasons as well as for being disabled. The aim is to find out common interests among different groups and to establish an alternative organ for minorities. In doing so Radio STIMME provides information, reflection, and discussion about current minority issues.

Abstrat in Italiano

“Radio Stimme” (Radio Voice) è un programma radio trasmesso in diverse radio indipendenti in Austria e collegato ad argomenti concernenti le minoranze. Seguendo l’idea dell’organizzazione che la sovrintende “Initiative Minderheiten”, il termine minoranza include tutti coloro che sono emarginati e discriminati per ragioni sia etniche, religiose, sessuali o sociali, sia a causa del loro essere disabili. Lo scopo è quello di trovare interessi comuni tra i differenti gruppi e stabilire un organo alternativo per le minoranze. Nel farlo, Radio Stimme provvede alle informazioni, alle riflessioni e alle discussioni circa le attuali tematiche sulle minoranze.

Area

Media

Kind-category of project

Radio

Kind-category of actor

Registered association

Country

Austria

Year

1998

5 key-words

radio, minorities, minority alliance,

1. THE PROJECT

Actor

Initiative Minderheiten

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www.initiative.minderheiten.at

1.1 Description of the project (*objectives, activities and results*)

The idea behind – alliances beyond single issues and fixed identities:

"Radio STIMME" is a product of the Initiative Minderheiten and hence follows the same basic principles. It is remarkable that the term minority is considered so broadly that it includes migrant, religious or social minorities as well as people with non-heterosexual orientation or disabled persons. To Cornelia Kogoj, the executive director of the Initiative Minderheiten, there is an important question to ask: "how societies deal with minorities in general?"

This leads to the perception that acting which goes beyond the limits of single issues and confirmed identities could better support the interests of minorities. If there is similarity in society's excluding mechanisms, it seems to be logical and advantageous to articulate interests together. Finally, it might be more beneficial to work with alliances.

"If one had to characterise the idea behind Initiative Minderheiten, intercultural or inter-minority would fit best" states Hakan Gürses the chief editor of the "STIMME".

The Initiative Minderheiten stands for:

- a society where different and individual conceptions of life are accepted as equal and which furthermore enables and supports them;
- overcoming of confirmed and from dominating society defined issues and identities;
- establishing alliances between the single groups in order to articulate their interests better.

The radio's intention

To support the basic aims, information of relevant groups of people and reaching the public has central meaning for the organisation. Besides the magazine STIMME the radio programme plays an important role in the media. According to Cornelia Kogoj, "Radio STIMME" follows a similar conception as the written journal [see CASE STUDY STIMME].

Radio STIMME and its goals:

- presenting topics which among mainstream media almost don't exist or are presented in a rather negative way;
- contributing to a differentiated view on ethnic, social and religious minorities;
- encouraging to reflection about the relations between majority and minorities in society;
- providing a platform for different ideas and opinions concerning minorities and discrimination;
- focussing on overlapping projects and topics;
- initiating and strengthening of alliances between different minorities.

Form an content

"Radio STIMME" is broadcasted every two weeks; thus it is more up-to-date than the magazine STIMME that is published every three months. It is broadcasted on Vienna's independent Radio Orange 94.0. Also, one can listen to "STIMME" on a couple of independent Austrian radio stations: FREIRAD, Radio AGORA, Radio HELSINKI, and Radio FRO. Moreover, the broadcasts since 2003 are available in an online-archive on the website of the Initiative Minderheiten.

Like the magazine STIMME, the radio programme features a central theme, which tries to connect aspects and views of different minorities. Furthermore, the programme consists of studio talks, discussions, single contributions and features. Besides the main topic, reports about current projects or events as well as books and CD reviews are regular parts of the program.

Some examples of previous main topics:

- "Forced German speaking at school" (2006-03-30).
- "Listening with eyes" (2006-03-02).
- "Female consequences – pop music and feminism" (2006-02-02).

1.2 Time, structure and steps of the project

"Radio STIMME" was founded in 1998. It was the time when the first independent radio stations in Austria officially went on-air. Due to the state monopoly in the field of public broadcasting being over. A group of students took advantage of the new possibility offered by Vienna's free Radio Orange 94.0.

Now, the originally rather experimental project is well established within the regular programme of Radio Orange. Furthermore, Initiative Minderheiten gradually achieved and broadened its broadcasting range by using airtime at other independent radio stations in Austria, where the "Radio STIMME" programme is rebroadcasted.

1.3 Place and context

The social background, which the "Radio STIMME" as well as the Initiative Minderheiten itself focusses on and relates to a large extent the specific understanding of the term minority (see 1.1 Description of the project). In short, it is society's structural discrimination on the one hand and the mainstream dominated media landscape on the other hand.

Firstly, the organisation understands the issue of discrimination mainly as a structural problem in society which does not only appear in singular and subject matters like a concrete discrimination of a single minority by other people. According to Cornelia Kogoj, asking and showing which excluding mechanisms are deeply imprinted in the structure of the society and in legal and political practises would be very important in order to identify the political and historical reasons. One of today's most obvious examples might be the debate about transposing the European Union's anti-discrimination directive into national law.

Given this point of view, the media obviously plays an important role. Mainly the question of representation and participation is a problematic factor in a mainstream dominated media culture. According to the opinion of Cornelia Kogoj, public media is a place where positions of power would be fixed. Moreover the media creates a social

reality by shaping the majority's perception of minorities and also by shaping the self-perception of groups of minorities.

Two main problems can be found especially concerning the role of ethnic minorities and migrants in the media. On the one hand, mainstream media shows a rather negative attitude towards migration topics. According to Tulay Tuncel, the Vice-President of the Foreigner Integration Council of Linz, Austria, sometimes there is a xenophobic attitude and most of the time a deficit in objective reports about ethnic minorities in Austria.

Conversely, "ethnic minorities are almost not existent in the media at all, although they've been living in Austria for years", says Helga Schwarzwald from Vienna's Radio Orange who criticises the contradiction between social reality and the press coverage. The public media is mostly criticised for not serving its purpose of adequate information to the public, since it doesn't address all cultural themes and interests. Lately, the Austrian public media station ORF was sharply attacked by one of its own most famous reporters because of lacking of plurality in internal structures and being under permanent pressure of politicians.

The other dominant factor on Austria's media landscape is the "Kronenzeitung" which is said to be one of Europe's biggest tabloid press newspapers in relation to the country's total population and has, hence, an enormous, almost monopoly position in influencing opinions.

Considering this background, the "Radio STIMME", in cooperation with Austria's independent radio stations, tries to change the situation by its approach of enriching the media landscape by a new perspective and another kind of delivering information.

1.4 Target

Listeners of the radios in general; related and otherwise interested people.

1.5 Methodology

Some remarkable points are:

- Mediation between different minorities. Online availability of most of the broadcasted programmes.
- Online access to most of the broadcasted programmes.
- Anti-discrimination structure also within internal structures.
The organisation developed a special anti-discriminatory statutory framework for the rights of employees at their place of work that may serve as a model for other companies and organisations and which has already been implemented by the Initiative Minderheiten– the document is also available on the website.
- The rise of many independent radios in different parts of Austria allows an almost countrywide broadcast.

1.6 Authors, funding and networks

Authors

Ten voluntary radio editors. "Radio STIMME" always searches for people who want to contribute to the programme.

Networks

The Initiative Minderheiten regards itself as a supporter of networking in order to establish inter-minority alliances. The main cooperations, however, would find a place within the scope of different single projects.

2. COMMENTS AND HINTS FOR AN EVALUATION

2.1. Strengths and Critical Points

One of the most remarkable aspects of the "STIMME" and the organisation behind it as well is the inter-minority thinking. It might seem a little bit confusing and questionable to connect migrant and disabled people's issues but it proved to be good practise to look at society's excluding mechanisms in such a holistic way. The idea of alliances has to be appreciated highest.

Winning the 8th Radio Award of Adults' Education in 2005 shows the high quality and appreciation of the work of "Radio STIMME". Alexander Pollak's contribution to the Republic of Austria's 60th anniversary in 2005 "Das Gedenk-/Dank-/Gedanken-Jahr 2005" (The year of commemoration/thanks/thoughts 2005) won first prize in the category "interactive/experimental." (see here and here).

Real intercultural practise is not the intention of "Radio STIMME". It serves rather as a basis for intercultural exchange by reflecting existing structures and principles in society like the relations between minorities and majorities.

3. LINKS

<http://o94.at/>

Homepage of the independent radio Orange 94.0 which broadcasts the Radio STIMME program.