

Call for Papers

“Radio Soundscapes in (Post)Colonial Settings”

Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon, 7-8 July 2022

Over the last century broadcasting has played a central role in the construction and dissemination of national cultures and shared identities. Employed to promote the idea of nation within state borders, for Imperial nations this role was extended overseas, where the audio medium became central in the effort to unite the home countries with those expats living in the far reaches of empires. In many territories under European rule, namely in Africa, this led to the creation of what were at first white soundscapes in which local cultures and languages were absent from the airwaves.

In the late 1950s, as the winds of decolonization swept through the African continent, state and private-owned imperial and colonial stations opened up their programming schedules to African languages and cultures. In some cases, such as the BBC, this was aimed at safeguarding the station’s listenership in the context of increasing competition from stations set-up by the nascent African states (Potter, 2012; Ritter, 2021), while in others, namely in the Portuguese Empire, programmes in African languages were used to indoctrinate the black population on the supposed benefits of colonialism (Ribeiro, 2017). State-funded broadcasters coexisted with private stations that developed commercial radio style and programming, where new jingles and music genres created a novel and parallel irresistible (sonorous) empire (di Grazia, 2005; Domingos, 2021). But in this radio ecosystem that emerged in the mid-20th century in different regions of Africa there were also other stations operated by independence movements that resorted to broadcasting to promote independence from colonial powers and to foster new national identities. In the postcolonial era, broadcasting was instrumental in fostering new cultural and political identities, with the new independent states also resorting to the audio medium to create their own sound identity.

The conference “Radio Soundscapes in (Post)Colonial Settings” aims to bring together scholars researching the history of colonial and postcolonial

broadcasting and sound, in order to shed light on the role of radio and music in forging audible and sonorous empires and new-born nations. Thus, the conference seeks papers that discuss technologies, programmes and audiences in both colonial and postcolonial settings, including those focusing on the construction of new soundscapes and radio ecosystems following decolonization. Among many questions that may be addressed, the conference welcomes papers including, but not limited to, the following topics:

- Radio and national identities (namely in postcolonial nations);
- Soundscapes in colonial, decolonial and postcolonial settings;
- Imperial, colonial and postcolonial broadcasting institutions and professionals;
- Reception of imperial, colonial and postcolonial broadcasts;
- Technologies used for crossborder broadcasting;
- Radio, ethnicity and race;
- Radio and practices of resistance;
- Broadcasting and colonial subjectivities;
- Radio and colonial independences;
- Radio and decolonization;
- Media entanglements in imperial contexts;
- Intermedial approaches to radio history in colonial contexts;
- Media systems in colonial, decolonial and postcolonial settings;
- Radio and music markets in colonial and postcolonial contexts;
- The challenges of oral history;
- Sources and archives dealing with broadcasting in colonial and postcolonial settings.

Selected presenters will have a 20-minute slot in which to present their work, followed by Q&A.

How to Submit?

Please send a title and a 400-word abstract in Word or Pdf format before 20 April, 2022 (deadline) to broadcasting.empire@gmail.com.



Author name(s), institutional affiliation(s) and contact information should be sent on a separate file or on the body of the e-mail.

Authors will be notified of acceptance on 6 May 2022.

Conference fee

Full fee: 100€ (early bird) / 130€ (standard fee)

Reduced fee for students: 50€ (early bird) / 65€ (standard fee)

Lunch and coffee-breaks included.

The conference will be hosted by the Research Centre for Communication and Culture (CECC) at Universidade Católica Portuguesa and will take place within the framework of the research project “Broadcasting to the Portuguese Empire: Nationalism, Colonialism, Identity” funded by FCT and FEDER. For more information about the project visit: <https://www.broadcastingempire.com>

The conference will be held at the Lisbon campus of Universidade Católica Portuguesa, which can be easily accessed via metro (30-minute ride), bus or taxi (10-minute ride) from the Lisbon airport. Participants who are unable to travel to Lisbon will be offered the possibility of participating online.