

## **AN UNHEARD STORY? - THE ONCE AND FUTURE CHALLENGES TO RADIO STUDIES IN ITALY**

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**Abstract.** This article intends to provide a survey of the sparse research done on Italian radio, within an historical framework, and in particular to investigate the reasons why so long it has been subjected to specific "high brow" academic interests and areas. Whilst in Britain and in the Us the debate about radio has seen an opposition of public service vs. commercial broadcasting, Italy has seen before a dichotomy between literary and humanistic culture and broadcasting, later between radio and television. Now deregulation, globalization and new technologies provide or require new models of communication and are offering a good chance for researchers to bridge this gap in a wider multidisciplinary and transnational academic community.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The study of Italian radio is in fact an undeveloped area and has a marginal position in international debate. None of the several Italian works about radio has been translated into other languages, or not occasionally quoted, save an essay by Umberto Eco, which has been included in a few foreign collections. Out of this has come a great over-evaluation of Italian radio of the Seventies as a political phenomenon, and an unfortunate and very large lack of knowledge about the real story, past and present. This clearly emerges, for instance, from the very scant references to Italy in recent and brilliant David Hendy's *Radio in the Global Age*.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the unique television landscape in Italy, dominated by the properties and the leading political role of Silvio Berlusconi, has attracted general attention, neglecting Italian radio broadcasting which is very different from TV and somehow opposite to it. Political and cultural reasons explaining this situation will be introduced in the following.

### **2. THE SCHOLARLY BACKGROUND OF MEDIA STUDIES IN ITALY UP TO THE 70S.**

Studies of the Italian media got under way rather late. Since the Italian intellectual and academic climate privileged the humanities — literature, philosophy and history, seen as the only legitimate heirs of classical humanism — over social sciences, the most widely circulated communications studies were those originating in the School of Sociology of Frankfurt. Horkheimer and Adorno expressed themselves rather disparagingly about electronic media, in their eyes mere propaganda tools of governments where state-owned, or of capitalist interests where privately owned. These views garnered a wide following and served more as deterrents than incentives to serious critical studies in Italy— nor must we forget the cumulative effect of the disdain heaped on electronic media by the literati who then dominated the cultural sectors of the press. Later Marcuse's theories were interpreted in the same way.

Post-war Italian intellectuals would have found in the works of Antonio Gramsci a powerful stimulus for studying popular culture. Gramsci while in jail under Fascist regime had studied deeply

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<sup>1</sup> David Hendy, *Radio in the Global Age*, London, Routledge, 2000.

social functions of *feuilleton* — the part of popular newspapers carrying serialised fiction. —, but he had never really come to know radio because of his imprisonment in 1926. Italian scholars continued assiduously to study the socio-political sides of the *feuilleton*, whilst no one thought it worthwhile to waste time and effort on studying light radio entertainment, the *feuilleton*'s latter-day equivalent from about 1930 onward.

Gramsci's revision of Marxism omits radio (and, obviously, television), so Italian intellectuals used the Frankfurt School of Sociology as a guideline to analyse electronic media and bridge this gap. For much the same reasons Italy did not spawn academic disciplines similar to Britain's cultural studies (though there was awareness of these by reflection), whilst the cultural affinity with France led to favouring the ideas of Lévi Strauss, Barthes and Foucault well into the Seventies — but their significance for the media sciences was never well understood, nor were any ever put into practice. Whilst in other cultural experiences the debate on “quality” and “popular” is shaped as a dichotomy between public service and commercial broadcasting, in Italy has meant for long an opposition of humanism versus broadcasting, of written culture versus visual and audio.

### 3. AN HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Before exploring these problems further, we need to sketch out the main milestones in the history of Italian radio itself. Scheduled radio broadcasting began in Italy in 1924. After a brief initial phase, the State granted a monopoly of all transmissions to a formally private company, the Ente Italiano Audizioni Radiofoniche, or EIAR. It was officially constituted as ‘a body formed in the national interest’ and kept under strict government surveillance. Investment capital flowed from the powerful industries of Piedmont, Fiat among them. Fifty years later, when Italian airwaves were first opened to private television, Italian industrialists showed no such enterprising spirit, quitting the field in favour of the politically well-connected building magnate Silvio Berlusconi.

Thus Italian broadcasting began as a Continental variation on the British ‘public service’ concept, and the passage from early experiments to the EIAR is reminiscent of that of the BBC from company to corporation. Fascism, as a dictatorship, had some reasons more to curtail open access to airwaves and to establish a central social and economic control as in Britain and in the Us. Because of its demagogic, populist and plebiscitary tendencies, Fascism (in power since 1922, formally a dictatorial regime since 1925) bestowed great emphasis and ample funds on radio, which often was used as a megaphone for Mussolini's oratorical spectacles and as a technical instrument for a politically controlled collective listening.

In fact Italian radio can be considered an “authoritarian variation” of the principles of Sir John Reith, invented with the determinant cultural mediation of Italian Futurists and subsequently perfected by German National Socialism under the leadership of Joseph Goebbels, a personage without parallel in Italy. After 1935, Italy too installed short-wave transmitters and machinery needed for international broadcasting, indispensable for the outside dissemination of propaganda. The fact that Guglielmo Marconi happened to be Italian by birth was not relevant in the development of Italian broadcasting. His discoveries of the Eighteen-Nineties went unheeded at home. It was only in London that he found — thanks to a Scottish mother of Irish ancestry — backers who could grasp the potential of radiotelegraphy, especially for naval and transatlantic use. His company was and still is founded on British law. Only in the Thirties Fascism recovers Marconi's Italianness, while he did play a decisive role in the creation of the Radio Vaticana network in 1930-31.

Still, the country's modest standard of living prevented radio's growth into a mass phenomenon with a receiver in every home, as had been happening steadily throughout the Thirties in Britain,

North America, Germany, France and Scandinavia. At the end of 1939 there were only 1.1 million paid-up subscribers to the EIAR among a population of 42.9 million divided into 9.7 million households.<sup>2</sup> Academic or private research on social aspects of broadcasting is totally missing in this period in Italy, reflecting the predominance of Italian humanistic disciplines over the social sciences, under the influence of the idealistic philosophers Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile. The sole exception is the early translation of the classic 1936 work *Rundfunk als Hörkunst* (Broadcasting as Aural Art) by Rudolf Arnheim, fleeing from Nazi Germany.<sup>3</sup>

During the war, Italians listened intensely to radio; clandestine audience of forbidden international senders, above all Radio Londra, was quite widespread. After the Allied landings in Italy in 1944, the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) set up radio stations in many liberated cities, meeting a large popularity among listeners, especially the young. PWB's radio stations created a new generation of Italian journalists and deeply influenced popular taste and subsequent radio programming as wartime Forces Programme in Britain. EIAR was replaced in 1944 by a new agency called Radio Audizioni Italiane, or RAI, with headquarters in Rome, still broadcasting today. This body preserved the essential structure of the EIAR as a formally private monopoly subjected to public control, like the BBC, shaped and filed to Italian needs. Post-war Italy is an almost destroyed country, with weak democratic tradition, where a Catholic party in power, heavily supported by the Us, faces a large Communist Party. In terms of broadcasting, it means that a bipartisan attitude on programme contents seems impossible, while non orthodox voices are emarginated and control over production, earlier set up in several cities, is now firmly centred in Rome.

Television began scheduled broadcasting in 1954. As in most countries, it grew out of established radio institutions, within state-controlled RAI monopoly. Television rapidly gained influence, more than in most other European countries, since radio had grown up in the severely depressed social and economic climate of the Thirties, whilst TV became an icon of alluring prosperity never known before: possession of a TV set became a status symbol and television programmes represented a popular socialisation to modernity. The progress in viewer-licence subscriptions is relevant. 1958 marked the top of radio subscriptions: fully 6 million, whilst at the same time TV subscriptions, which automatically included radio, came to a mere million. Ten years later, radio-only subscriptions had shrunk to 2.5 million whilst television-cum-radio had soared to 8.3 million.<sup>4</sup> Television was the nation's first true mass medium, given that high illiteracy rates — still nearly 13% in 1951<sup>5</sup> — and a weak tradition rendered printed media ineffectual on a mass level. Whilst post-war radio broadcasting in Italy had been shaped under a British influence (Italian journalists had been despatched to Great Britain to reproduce in Italy the BBC newly established three-channel system), now an American appeal prevails. Italian television appears as a blend of British monopoly and American contents.

In 1954 radio seemed, incorrectly, an antiquated, indeed obsolete thing, while audiences turned to television viewing as a mainstream family practice. Most of RAI funding was allocated to television in preference over radio, and this generated a lasting “inferiority complex” of radio professionals. Italy was, musically speaking, a very melodic milieu and has not known musical pirate radios, whilst influence of pop music on RAI's programming has been rather slight. The only example of a musical station was Radio Monte Carlo, situated in the Principality of Monaco close to the French-Italian frontier, whose Italian-language programmes are launched in 1967. This minstrel of the

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<sup>2</sup> *Sommario di statistiche storiche, 1926-1985*, Istituto Centrale di Statistica, Rome, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, *La radio cerca la sua forma*, Hoepli, Milan, 1937. First published in Great Britain in 1936 (Rudolf Arnheim, *Radio*, Faber & Faber, London).

<sup>4</sup> *Sommario*, cit.

<sup>5</sup> *Sommario*, cit.

French border became a sort of melodic Radio Luxembourg and the first alternative to monopoly channels. Later, between 1974 and 1976 first private radio and television stations began to appear and then everything really changes.

#### 4. THE BEGINNINGS OF RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

It had only been as late as in the 1960s that academic research about broadcasting began to develop in Italy. Commissions came chiefly from the state broadcasting corporation and research was directed to foster the role of TV elites in Italian public sphere. Social scientists, working on RAI's commission, overestimated television's impact and effectiveness. A widely-hailed study was undertaken in 1959 among peasants in a poor part of the rural South where electric current was still lacking. It told how folk would walk for miles every evening to watch television in a community social centre.<sup>6</sup> From this the author concluded that television was their only way to join modernity, simply ignoring the fact that in many dwellings she had found small transistor radio sets, that had no need of the electric net: an example of the recurrent invisibility of radio in the public sphere and of the difficulty, for the researcher, to understand listening practices happening in the private and closely woven into farmers' daily lives. With that private listening, indeed, radio too contributed to modernisation and to public sphere.

Among other ventures, RAI conducted, with in-house resources, a "Servizio Opinioni" that sought to evaluate the quality of radio and TV transmissions through interviews. It also sought to enlist the support of intellectuals for the diffusion of television, a social process greeted with snorts and sneers by the daily press, the intelligentsia generally, and the Communist opposition — the last not only because they disapproved of the general cultural tenor but because they sensed their exclusion from programming and the selection of key contributors. The research *Televisione e vita italiana*, edited by the sociologist Francesco Alberoni in 1968,<sup>7</sup> well sums up this 'call to the colours'. As the title proclaims, all is focused on television, to the detriment of radio, not only as part of the world-wide tendency to exalt the awesome new mainstream medium but specifically as part of the RAI's governmental mission: a controlled modernisation through television. Alberoni's own essay in the volume gives short shrift to both radio and cinema. A similar undervaluation appears in an essay by Pierpaolo Luzzatto Fegiz, who takes up the radio and television ratings published in 1965 by the Doxa (a sort of Italian Nielsen company) but ignores the fact that radio listeners then still far outnumbered TV watchers.<sup>8</sup> In another essay, Tullio De Mauro, a prominent philologist, advances the notion that the rather informal, not very standardised, large-spectrum and often regional speech of television would help 'the formation of a national language' in a nation then still rife with illiteracy, whereas radio's more stilted and codified 'official' idioms are not considered able to do anything of the sort.<sup>9</sup>

#### 5. "BARBARIANS ARE COMING": PRIVATE BROADCASTING IN ITALY

In 1976 a decision of the Italian Supreme Court legalised local use of public airwaves by private citizens. Radio and television stations began to grow everywhere presenting themselves as "free", according to a well known American rhetoric argument, even when they were "commercial". In fact television rapidly concentrated at national level, formally illegal, thanks to political connivance:

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<sup>6</sup> Lidia De Rita, *I contadini e la televisione. Studio sull'influenza degli spettacoli televisivi in un gruppo di contadini lucani*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Francesco Alberoni (ed.), *Televisione e vita italiana*, Eri, Turin, 1968.

<sup>8</sup> Paolo Luzzatto Fegiz, *Dimensioni del fenomeno tv in italia*, in *Televisione e vita italiana*, cit., p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Tullio De Mauro, *Lingua parlata e tv*, in *Televisione e vita italiana*, cit., pp. 245-294.

important sectors of ruling elites regarded private television as a factor of modernisation (or Americanisation) or gained support and exposure.

On the contrary small FM stations with limited local ranges were less expensive to set up, and many were managed by young people. They devoted much time to chat and to pop music for which they pay no copyright fees, but also act as promoters. Some high-profile stations were politically active, inspiring also French “radios libres”. In 1977, far left riots in Bologna were put down by the national police and a politically motivated sender, Radio Alice, was raided and closed by the police. Umberto Eco, professor at Bologna University, wrote in favour of free radio in Italy’s most prestigious newspaper, *Il Corriere della Sera*.<sup>10</sup> This is the most known period of Italian radio, perhaps a ‘radio guerrilla’ similar to Michael Shamberg’s ‘Guerrilla Television’,<sup>11</sup> but political radios met a early crisis after abduction and killing of Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978, which changed dramatically Italian public sphere and popular beliefs.

Later on commercial radio prevails, beginning to concentrate nationwide following the TV example. Pop music (mainly Anglo-Saxon) and DJ’s light talk bring to private radio most of young audiences, while public radio maintains a “high brow” attitude shared with the press, which refers to private radio, now without any political alibi, as to the “barbarians”. Daily radio audience slowly but continuously grows: from 24 millions in 1986 to 36 millions in 2003.<sup>12</sup> First Gulf War in 1991, a war without images, covered with talk and sound reportages sent through mobile phones, drew new attention to radio (in Italy, 1 million daily listeners rediscovered radio in 1991).<sup>13</sup>

In television an audio-visual landscape *à deux* soon came to exist, where two networks, the public-service RAI and the strictly commercial Fininvest-Mediaset of Silvio Berlusconi, between them mopped up 90 per cent of the audience and the available resources. On the contrary, radio has a larger variety of broadcasters, a little but active non-profit sector dedicated to politics or religion, as well as to important thematic, local and community issues that the nationwide networks neither could nor would treat. Today, the three channels of Radio RAI capture only less than 25 per cent of the potential audience. 50 per cent turn to between ten and twelve nationwide broadcasters, some of them relevant, by now, also for their radio news. The rest crumble away among more than 400 small local or regional stations. Aside from a few time-honoured RAI cult programmes, modern format radio and the major innovations of contents were pioneered by private enterprise, including a recent return to spoken programmes, introducing all-news formats and a shift from musical radio to talky light entertaining with music inside. Thanks to the telephone, and especially to mobile ones, as well as to the mobility and easy portability of sets, in Italy also radio has now become the first personal medium, highly interactive and capable of knitting together communities of listeners that will long stay loyal to a particular sender. For these qualities, and certainly not just because audio files pass more easily through the web than video ones, radio has also shown a remarkable affinity for the Internet.

## 6. RADIO RESEARCH AFTER PRIVATISATION

The coming of private radios introduced in the Italian audio landscape the American and the British

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<sup>10</sup> Umberto Eco, *Radio locali: ora il pubblico partecipa*, in ALTRI MEDIA, Nr. 1, September 1976; *La comunicazione sovversiva nove anni dopo il Sessantotto*, in IL CORRIERE DELLA SERA, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1977, p. 3; *Con qualche radio in più*, in IL CORRIERE DELLA SERA, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1977, p. 3; Umberto Eco, Paolo Fabbri, Pietro Favari, *Appunti di studio per una ricerca sulle radio indipendenti in una situazione di tensione*, in COMUNICAZIONE VISIVA, Nr. 1, 1977.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television*, New York, Raindance Corporation, 1973.

<sup>12</sup> Enrico Menduni, *La radiodiffusion en Italie: 25 années d'«anomalie italienne»*, actes du Colloque de Bordeaux, «Radios, Services, Publics... La radio à quoi ça sert ?», 1-3 April 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Enrico Menduni, *Il mondo della radio. Dal transistor a Internet*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2001, p. 157.

model at the same time. Academic community began thinking in terms of differences (in contents, in taste, in policies) between public and private broadcasting instead of confronting with literature, drama, cinema and newspapers. Rai's attention to radio was still missing: In 1978 the RAI began the publication of a prestigious series of essays called VQPT (for Verifica Qualitativa Programmi Trasmessi - A Qualitative Appraisal of Transmitted Programmes), by now grown to 170 volumes — but only three of them deal with radio.<sup>14</sup>

The more competitive milieu transmitted to researchers a sort of homesickness for old time wireless. First serious studies of radio were historical in nature (as predictable) and dealt with Fascist propaganda. The works of Franco Monteleone, Alberto Monticone and Antonio Papa appeared in brief succession between 1965 and 1970: all were dedicated to Mussolini's airwaves.<sup>15</sup> Maura Piccialuti Caprioli worked for a long time on the pre-war and wartime Italian-language programmes of the BBC;<sup>16</sup> several other studies of radio in war appeared shortly after.<sup>17</sup> Franco Monteleone, a RAI official, and dedicated historian, traced the evolution of Italian radio from the voice of the Regime to that of the victorious Allies and then to the nascent Repubblica Italiana.<sup>18</sup> Monteleone crowned his labours in 1992 with a hefty *Storia della radio e della televisione in Italia*,<sup>19</sup> which perhaps undervalues the impact of private broadcasting.

All these studies concentrated on the history of broadcasting, and particularly on its political backgrounds, with little space dedicated to programmes, to social uses of the media, to their effects on the audiences. Most authors hadn't planned it that way, but any other approach has been made difficult by the lack of audio-visual archives, or by the bureaucratic inaccessibility to them where any existed. Wire and tape professional recorders arrived in Italy only at the outset of the war in 1939-40 from German manufacturers and were largely used only in the Fifties with the advent of portable machines, notably with the Nagra model. Only very important political broadcasts, such as the proclamation of Mussolini's removal from office on 25th June 1943, were recorded, but always on gramophone discs; all minor speeches and events were sent out live and not recorded in any way. Both pre-war EIAR and its post-war successor RAI were frenetic in the destruction or dispersal of discs and scripts and in the reuse of tapes, over and over again until physical disintegration. Only recently has the RAI set up systems for the conservation, restoration and sometimes also commercialisation of broadcasts.

Hence historians have had to draw mainly on indirect sources in contemporary specialised journals, in odd documents found here and there, and in the archives of state and private bodies far removed from the world of broadcasting. Virtually no direct material is available. This is made abundantly clear in the many works of the late Gianni Isola when he says that he is not treating the history of radio broadcasting but of 'radio listening', as reflected in letters to newspapers and in printed

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<sup>14</sup> The most significant is Barbara Fenati, *Fare la radio negli anni '90*, Roma, Nuova Eri, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Franco Monteleone, *La radio italiana nel periodo fascista. Studio e documenti (1922-1945)*, Padua, Marsilio, 1976; Alberto Monticone, *Il fascismo al microfono. Radio e politica in Italia (1924-1945)*, Rome, Studium, 1978; Alberto Papa, *Storia politica della radio in Italia. Volume I: Dalle origini agli anni della crisi economica 1924-34; Volume II: Dalla guerra d'Etiopia al crollo del fascismo 1935-1943*; Naples, Guida, 1978.

<sup>16</sup> Maura Piccialuti Caprioli (ed.), *Radio Londra, 1940-1945. Inventario delle trasmissioni per l'Italia*, 2 volumes, Rome, Ministero per i Beni Culturali ed Ambientali (Pubblicazioni degli archivi di stato), 1976-1982; and, by the same author, *Radio Londra (1939-1945)*, Bari, Laterza, 1979.

<sup>17</sup> Peppino Ortoleva and Chiara Ottaviano (eds.), *Guerra e mass media. Strumenti e modi della comunicazione in contesto bellico*, Naples, Liguori, 1994; Mario Isnenghi, *La guerra dell'etere*, in *Intellettuali militanti e intellettuali funzionari. Appunti sulla cultura fascista*, Turin, Einaudi, 1979, pp. 242-245.

<sup>18</sup> Franco Monteleone, *Storia della Rai dagli Alleati alla Dc*, Laterza, Bari 1980.

<sup>19</sup> Franco Monteleone, *Storia della radio e della televisione in Italia. Società, politica, strategie, programmi (1922-1992)*, Venice, Marsilio, 1992.

reviews of broadcasts.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately his labours were interrupted by his premature death in 2000, still in pre-television times, when mainstream radio was at its height. Alas, he can tell us nothing about today's radio which, chased from the family sitting room by television, has instead become a mobile medium strong in music, services and interaction with the telephone. The same can be said of Anna Lucia Natale's *Gli anni della radio, 1924-1954*.<sup>21</sup>

Thus until recently the approach to radio studies has been historiographical even where the authors haven't been professional historians, as for example RAI director Monteleone and sociologist Natale, after a large pamphleteering about political radio,<sup>22</sup> or Roman Catholic religious stations.<sup>23</sup> As a Leitmotiv, analyses of Fascist times have always attracted excellent writers, followed by reconstructions of radio's pre-television mainstream glories. Exhibition catalogues have followed this scheme, the first having been held in Turin, Italian radio's cradle, in 1984 on radio's fiftieth anniversary, the second in Rome in 1995 for the centenary of Marconi's invention.<sup>24</sup> The appeal of the wooden radio sets of the Thirties has made them desirable antiques and has forever fixed the image of the Thirties and Forties as radio's Golden Age.

When private television and radio stations sprang up all over Italy, radio is considered by the printed media and the public opinion an example of good taste against trivial commercial television. Private radio was considered trivial too, a nonsense flow of silly mundane talks, inappropriate even from a linguistic point of view. As we can see, criticism meant more to judge than to analyse. This has led to a reappraisal of radio by many scholars. Roberto Grandi, Doglio and Richeri, Simonelli and Taggi have published monographs on radio in the Eighties and Nineties.<sup>25</sup> Radio has been treated more generally by Abruzzese, Morcellini, Wolf and Bettetini.<sup>26</sup> The Nineties saw a sprightly leap forward in communications studies and in 1992 a university-level curriculum was dedicated to this area. In recent years, radio studies have been advanced by Barbara Fenati, Franco Monteleone, Aldo Grasso and the present writer.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gianni Isola, *Abbassa la tua radio, per favore... Storia dell'ascolto radiofonico nell'Italia fascista*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1990; *L'immagine del suono. I primi vent'anni della radio italiana*, Florence, Le Lettere, 1991; *Cari amici vicini e lontani. Storia dell'ascolto radiofonico nel primo decennio repubblicano*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1995; *L'ha scritto la radio. Storia e testi della radio durante il fascismo (1924-1944)*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Lucia Natale, *Gli anni della radio (1924-1954): contributo a una storia sociale dei media in Italia*, Neaples, Liguori, 1990.

<sup>22</sup> Stefano Di Segni, *Radio, rabbia alternativa*, Rome, Savelli, 1975; Marco Gaido, *Radio libere? La prima vera inchiesta e storia delle radio libere in Italia e nel mondo*, Rome, Arcana Editrice, 1976; Collettivo A/traverso, *Alice è il diavolo*, Milan, l'Erba voglio, 1977 (reprint, with a CD of the broadcasts, Milan, Shake, 2002); Giuseppe Macali, *Meglio tardi che Rai*, Rome, Savelli, 1977; Paolo Hutter (ed.), *Piccole antenne crescono. Documenti, interventi e proposte sulla vita delle radio di movimento*, Rome, Savelli, 1978; Francesco Siliato (ed.), *L'antenna dei padroni*, Milan, Mazzotta, 1978; Massimo Cirri e Sergio Ferrentino, *Via etere*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1978; Andrea Borgnino, *Radio pirata. Le magnifiche imprese dei bucanieri dell'etere. Storia e istruzioni per l'uso*, Rome, Castelvechi, 1997.

<sup>23</sup> Giuliano Coacci, *Radio e tv locali, una nuova formula per la cultura*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1978; Giampiero Gamaleri, (ed.), *Un posto nell'etere. Le radio locali in Italia*, Rome, Edizioni Paoline, 1978; Laura De Luca, Walter Lobina, *Tu, piccola scatola... La radio: fatti, cose, persone*, Cinisello Balsamo, Edizioni Paoline, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> Franco Monteleone e Peppino Ortoleva (eds.), *La radio ieri oggi domani. Catalogo della mostra di Torino Lingotto*, Turin, 1984. Maria Grazia Janniello, Franco Monteleone, Giovanni Paoloni (eds.), *Cento anni di radio. Da Marconi al futuro delle telecomunicazioni. Catalogo della mostra*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Daniele Doglio and Giuseppe Richeri, *La radio. Origini, storia, modelli*, Milan, Mondadori, 1980; Roberto Grandi, *Radio e televisione negli Stati Uniti. Dal telegrafo senza fili ai satelliti*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1980; Giorgio Simonelli and Paolo Taggi, *I fantasmi del dialogo. Il telefono nella radio e nella televisione*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1985.

<sup>26</sup> Alberto Abruzzese, *Flussi radiofonici*, in: *Il corpo elettronico. Dinamiche delle comunicazioni di massa in Italia*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1988; Mauro Wolf, *Teorie delle comunicazioni di massa*, Milan, Bompiani, 1986; Mario Morcellini, *Passaggio al futuro. La socializzazione nell'età dei mass media*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 1992; Gianfranco Bettetini, Fausto Colombo, *Le nuove tecnologie della comunicazione*, Milan, Bompiani, 1984.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Fenati, *Fare la radio negli anni '90*, Turin, Eri, 1993, and, with Alessandra Scaglioni, *La radio. Modelli, ascolto, programmazione*, Rome, Carocci, 2002; Enrico Menduni, *La radio nell'era della tv. Fine di un complesso di inferiorità*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1994, and *Il mondo della radio. Dal transistor a Internet*, cit.; Franco Monteleone (ed.),

A need for some kind of network within the small Italian academic community dedicated to radio began to be felt after 2000, some years later similar activities in Britain and other countries, but without any support from the radio industries. The year 2001 saw a professional congress at the University of Teramo and the highly demanding and well-attended 'Giornate di lavoro sulla radio' at the University of Siena (home of Italy's only campus radio).<sup>28</sup> In 2003 Siena hosted a Radio Summer School with gathered Italian scholars and graduate students with some international presences, while universities of Siena and Milan – IULM were among the founders of the European Radio Network IREN, supported by the EU and based in France at University of Bordeaux III. In July 2004 a new international radio summer school will take place in Siena, jointly promoted by IREN and British Radio Studies Network.

In 2002, the business organisation Federcomin commissioned a report on the evolution of Italian radio.<sup>29</sup> According to this report, thanks to phone, and especially to mobile ones, as well as to the mobility and easy portability of radio sets, in Italy also radio has now become the first personal medium, highly interactive and capable of knitting together communities of listeners that will long stay loyal to a particular sender. For these qualities, and certainly not just because audio files pass more easily through the web than video files, radio has also shown a remarkable affinity for the Internet that permit to go beyond any sense of place, binding together local and global broadcasting, and probably leading international operators to highly promising market, as the Italian one, which could so lose in future its idiomatic peculiarity.

## 7. CONCLUSION

By tracing this history of Italian radio research, this article has tried to show limits of an humanistic (and generic) approach to radio broadcasting, while historical studies, even if accurate, have dealt more with broadcasting institution in the framework of Italian social and political life, than to real contents, text and para-texts, audiences, also due to the state of archives. Academic social research emerges only with a competitive audiovisual milieu in the 80's, with a significant shift in methodological practice, but much is still to be done. Private broadcasting has been comparatively less studied than public, commercial less than community radio. Previous judgements of taste, and political issues, have evidently conditioned researchers' choices.

Two kind of research are specially needed. First, systematic investigations on contents, on real proportions of the blend of talk, music, jingles and advertising that constitutes radio flow of various stations and in different times, trying to support by documentary evidence shifts and variations during the years and from a broadcaster to another. Second, a vast display of audience studies in various typical locations and listeners' ages and social groups.

These developments are now in the reach of fast growing radio academic community in Italy, but constitute only prerequisites in order to take part in most needed international research projects about radio contents and audience habits in various parts of the world, as a consequence of newly established international radio studies networks. In the time in which broadcasting, thanks also to new technologies and the Internet, cross all boundaries and begins to lose some of its national

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*La radio che non c'è. Settant'anni, un grande futuro*, Rome, Donzelli, 1994; Roberto Grandi (ed.), *Il pensiero e la radio. Cento anni di radio. Antologia di scritti classici*, Milan, Lupetti, 1995; Aldo Grasso, *Radio e televisione. Teorie, analisi, storie, esercizi*, Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> The minutes of the Teramo meeting are collected in Italo Moscati (ed.), *Radioattivi. Il grande ritorno delle onde*, Venice, Marsilio, 2001; for the Siena congress, Enrico Menduni (ed.), *La radio. Percorsi e territori di un medium mobile e interattivo*, Bologna, Baskerville, 2002. The Siena college radio website is [www.facoltadifrequenza.it](http://www.facoltadifrequenza.it).

<sup>29</sup> Produced by Enrico Menduni, Stefano Gorelli, Barbara Fondelli, Luca Picchi, Gianluca Betello, in [www.federcomin.it](http://www.federcomin.it).



idiomatic characteristics, researchers cannot be dropped behind.