TECHNOLOGIES, TECHNOLOGISTS & NETWORKS

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Origins, Structures and Models of Italian Broadcasting

Untold history of broadcasting: telephone as a way to transmit entertainment, talk shows, information, news, etc. from a central station to different receivers
Since its birth (ex. Reiss and Bell) and first experiments the telephone was either a point-to-point medium or a broadcasting one (these 2 concepts could not be distinguished by actors in the past):

- Link between telephone and phonograph (registration and emission of phone calls, music, etc.)
- Habits of eavesdropping
- **Occasional** telephone concerts
Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

Théâtrophone

- Experiment at the International Electrical Exhibition in Paris (1881): Clement Ader and Tivadar Puskas
- Link from Paris Opera to several “public hearing points” (in which people could listen together)
- 5 francs for 5 minutes: pieces of music
- Unscheduled technique: random listening
Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

Telefon Hírmondó

- The most famous and regular example of the circular telephone
- In Budapest from 1893, idea of Tivadar Puskas (co-worker of Edison)
- An example for other “heralds”:
  - The name: Hírmondó, Araldo, Herald
  - Contents at home: alarm time signals
  - Precise schedule with different “genres” (importance of news)
  - Subscribers of high society
  - Low cost
Institutionalizing 
Telephone Programs

Telefon Hírmondó

Unlike other “heralds”:

- Long-lived technology (the Hirmondo Company secured a Hungarian radio license in 1926): it closed only in 1944!
- Popularity: a) subscribers before WWI peak in 1899 (at 7,269) and after the War in 1930 at 9,170; b) geographical distribution in the city: it could be listened to everywhere; c) almost indispensable
- Complex structure of the editorial staff (stentors-announcers, business manager, editor in chief, assistant editors, reporters)
- Why this success? Solymar and Briggs
Electrophone

- First experiments during 1892 Electrical Exposition
- Telephone concerts institutionalized in 1894-1895
- Close association with National Telephone Company and telephone (same network, 2-way system)
- Between Théâtrophone (entertainment, little space for news) Hírmondó (distribution at home, dressing clothes)
- It died in 1925, but it retained “nostalgic listeners” in the Bournemouth area
Institutionalizing Telephone Programs

Telephone Herald

- Unsuccessful attempts in the 1890s and early 1900s
- Launched in 1911 in Newark (New Jersey), after a legal fight against New York Telephone Company
- Schedule similar to Hirmondò (a lot of stock exchange information)
- Popular in a short period of time (in 3 months 2,500 sub), but 3 main problems:
  - financial instability
  - quality of reception
  - it appeared late: concurrence of “radio music box idea”
Araldo Telefonico
Before World War I

Luigi Ranieri

- Italian engineer, representative for the Swiss company Escher Wyss & C. of Zurich
- Interested in telephotography and, later, radiotelegraphy
- In the 1900s, he asked for licenses in Milan, Naples, Rome (1909)
- The service of Araldo Telefonico was launched in 1910
Araldo Telefonico
Before World War I

First schedule (later Ranieri obtained new collaborations)

Similar to Hirmondò:
- Time signal (very important in Italy also later in radio days)
- News (agenzia Stefani)
- Concerts from popular theaters
- Stock exchange and Parliament
- Horse races
- Language Courses
- Various programs (religious, fashion, children’s programs, etc.)
Subscribers

- 100 in 1910; 1100 in 1912; 1315 in 1914
- Social classes:
  - High nobility (Queen Elena and Margherita)
  - Roman politicians (a listening station at “Camera dei deputati”)
  - Men of culture
  - Lawyers
  - Engineers
  - Doctors
  - Clerics
  - Journalists
  - Roman well-known places (theatres, clubs, hotels, etc.)
The trial (Ranieri v. Post Office)

- Ranieri was unable to pay fees for first 3 years
- In February 1914, Ministry revoked his license
- 1917: final decision of Rome City Court. Birth of distinction between point-to-point and broadcasting
Araldo Telefonico
After World War I

Fonogiornale in Milan

- 1917: Roman Araldo closed (World War I and financial problems)
- 1918: Fonogiornale in Milan
  - Famous journalist Beniamino Gutierrez
  - Schedule based on melodramas and public concerts from the best Milanese theaters (no news)
  - Financial problems (it closed in 1928)
From Araldo Telefonico to Radio Araldo

- 1922: Araldo Telefonico reintroduced in Rome
- Technological innovations (isolated lines v. unauthorized use; Improving warning signals: classify genres)
- From 1922-1923, Luigi and Augusto (his son) Ranieri conducted experiments in radio transmissions
  - The birth of Radioaraldo
  - They managed these two services at the same time (ex. Advertisements)
RadioAraldo and first public radio (URI)

- 1924: Ranieri involved in negotiations with two other companies:
  - SIRAC (Italian subsidiary of Western Electric; connection with FIAT and new Communication Ministry)
  - Radiofono (connection with G. Marconi)
- Government issued a license to these 3 companies
- August 1924, one day before the creation of URI, Radioaraldo ceded its rights (financial and “political” problems)
Araldo Telefonico didn’t perish after advent of radio: reasons of superiority

- Warning signal: audience informed about new shows
- Better quality of sound
- Portability of devices / immobile radio devices
- More reliable technology
- Rights for rebroadcast from most important theaters
Araldo Telefonico in Bologna

- At the end of 1921: Italo Pellizzi and Augusto Rigoni
- Program based on Roman Araldo before the war (time signal in collaboration with the University of Bologna Observatory)
- The longest running telephone news service in Italy
  - 1935: EIAR (later RAI) decided to revoke an agreement with Araldo (retransmissions of programs via telephone lines)
  - 1943: subscribers and the telegram to Mussolini
- Why this audience fidelity?
Conclusions

The untold history of broadcasting?

- Why was the circular telephone ignored by scholars?
  - 1) research on mass media only after the 1920s
  - 2) telecommunications and mass media: two different disciplines
- Differences between “heralds” and radio broadcasting:
  - 1) one-to-all v. one-to-many
  - 2) infrastructure costs
- Inheritance:
  - 1) the schedule
  - 2) management model