The Role of SANZ, a Migrant Radio Programme, in Making Sense of Place for South African Migrants in New Zealand

Reviewed by Michael Meadows
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THESIS REVIEW

The Role of SANZ, a Migrant Radio Programme, in Making Sense of Place for South African Migrants in New Zealand
by Antoinette Wessels

Unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of International Communication

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This study is a detailed, qualitative exploration of the role played by a South African migrant radio programme, SANZ Live, in supporting its audience to create a sense of place in Auckland, New Zealand, through a range of on- and off-air activities. The thesis concludes that SANZ Live contributes to the creation of opportunities for South African migrants to find a sense of place through producing media content, participating in face-to-face communication through the off-air activities of SANZ Live, participating in SANZ Live social media and perpetuating aspects of South African culture through various programme-related activities. This multi-layered participation works to establish a new routine and a hybrid culture that enables South African migrants to establish new individual, group and collective identities – becoming ‘South African Kiwis’ – in their new home of choice. In her exploration of this important topic, the author has used a wide range of relevant academic and industry sources to outline the role of Auckland community radio, and the station SANZ in particular, in creating a new hybrid sense of identity for the city’s South African community. It builds on earlier work elsewhere that has explored similar topics (Downing, 2001, 2003; Downing & Husband, 2005; Forde et al, 2009). But importantly, the study has revealed the critical role being played by the radio programme in smoothing South African immigrants’ transition into New Zealand society – an important dimension of the settlement process. The author offers strong support for her argument and conclusions in a wide-ranging and appropriate literature review. She relies in the main on the seminal work done in this area by Jo Tacchi and others in developing and employing the concept of ‘communicative ecology’ to encompass the multifaceted roles being played by local radio in varied cultural settings (Tacchi, 2000, 2005, 2006; Hearn & Foth, 2007). She also appropriately enlists notions of discourse as articulated and developed by British sociologist Stuart Hall and his associates (Hall, 1990, 1997; Hall et al, 1996). This powerful analytical tool still retains its relevance and the author has used it carefully and well in including the multifarious elements of community radio production and practice relevant to this particular case study: SANZ Live.

The author provides a high quality, contextual argument based on the data she adduced from a range of sources, and it advances our knowledge and understanding of the role of community radio in yet another cultural setting. In doing so, her research findings build on the growing archive of research across the globe that reinforces the often unacknowledged yet critical role played by local radio in creating and sustaining cultures. In addition – in this case – such cultural practices contribute significantly to enhancing levels of cross cultural respect and knowledge that are lamentably absent from mainstream media (Meadows et al, 2007; Forde et al, 2009). The researcher’s analytical approach is measured and meticulous, demonstrating a superlative ability to synthesise from the array of scholarly literature a coherent and cohesive theoretical framework. It clearly demonstrates her ability to plan, synthesise and to present an argument of high quality, enlisting a range of appropriate scholarly research, and relating this to the data she has gathered in a systematic way. The conclusion she offers, strongly supported by the evidence, is that SANZ plays a highly significant role in ‘bridging the ethnic divide’ experienced by South African immigrants.
Community radio in Auckland creates fulfilment for participants in sharing a media space with people from varied ethnic backgrounds in South Africa. This dynamic media environment enables a continuation of the nation-building process amongst diasporic South African audiences.

The study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods to achieve its goal – a questionnaire, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with station directors and presenters. This produced a wide range of data for the author to explore and enabled her to establish trends, the emergence of particular production processes and practices, and to draw well-supported conclusions from this array. The project was very well designed, implemented and presented and was ideal for the research questions she sought to explore. Combining qualitative and quantitative data meant she was able to make far stronger arguments in relation to the themes she identified.

The topic was original, appropriate and extremely well presented. The author clearly identified an important research problem and its significance, pursued an approach that was both coherent and cohesive, and produced a compelling argument. She has advanced our knowledge and understanding of the multiple roles that community radio and its associated processes can perform in varied cultural settings.

References


Review Author bio

Dr Michael Meadows worked as a journalist for 10 years before moving into journalism education in the late 1980s. His research interests include representations of indigenous people and indigenous media audiences, policy and practice along with the history, development and reception of community broadcasting in Australia. He has published numerous journal articles and three books: Songlines to Satellites (with Helen Molnar), Voices in the Wilderness and Developing Dialogues (with Susan Forde and Kerrie Foxwell). He is Adjunct Professor of Journalism with the Centre for Social and Cultural Research, School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia.
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Antoinette Wessels has recently completed her master's degree in International Communication (Unitec) and has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Political Science and International Politics (University of Pretoria, South Africa) and a Bachelor of Technology (Business Information Systems), (Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria). Her professional and academic career includes lecturing on different software applications and on business and communication programmes. Since arriving in New Zealand, she has developed an interest in migrant matters and hybrid cultures.
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