MEMORIES OF SOUNDS: RADIO AS SOUND REPRESENTATION AMONG THE
LATIN AMERICAN EXILED DIASPORA IN THE CANADIAN WEST COAST

by

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MEMORIES OF SOUND: RADIO AS SOUND REPRESENTATION AMONG THE LATIN AMERICAN EXILED DIASPORA IN THE CANADIAN WEST COAST

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Abstract

The 1970s and 1980s were decades of turmoil as political violence spread through different parts of Latin America in the context of the Cold War. Exiles from the Southern Cone made their way to the Canadian west coast, followed soon by Central American refugees. During this time, the emergent Pan-Latin American diaspora and local alternative media activists produce the radio program América Latina al Día [Latin America Today] or ALAD as a tool with which to create a sonorous space for discourse and praxis. Since its creation, the radio show has been bilingual, run by volunteers and has been on air for more than forty years from the Vancouver Radio Cooperative studios. This dissertation examines closely why and how different waves of Latin American exiles arriving in Vancouver in the last third of the 20th Century made use of bilingual radio. Through an oral narrative approach, this case study maps the radio experience as an everyday practice in the life of 10 former ALAD radio collective members during the 1980s. The author also weaves her own experience(s) as media activist, radio producer and exile.

The study’s interdisciplinary focus provides rich insights in four broad themes that emerged from the oral interviews: 1) radio as a social and connective medium and its impact on the lives of the participants, 2) radio seen as a new kind of Latin American public plaza, 3) the emotional and physical challenges brought into the lives of the interviewees due to their participation in the radio collective, and 4) the process of producing ALAD as a practice in motion. This case study sheds light into the ways exiles recreate communication media to maintain a link with their home countries, while rebuilding their political identity and re-creating trans diasporic communities.

ALAD is a unique example of a communication practice in motion (Rodriguez, 2001) and constitutes an exercise of cultural agency, not only for exiles and migrants from Latin America, but also for local activists who share the utopian conviction that alternative media can be a tool
for social transformation.
Lay Summary

In the framework of the Cold War, Latin Americans started to arrive in Canada in the 1970s. The majority came for political reasons as exiles first, and then as refugee claimants. Specifically, in Vancouver, there are some studies around the Chilean experience and Colombians as displaced refugees and their settlement process. This study examines the relationship between exiles and alternative media during the 1980s. The significance of this research is to contribute documenting the arrival of Latin Americans into the Canadian west coast from their own standpoints. Oral interviews were conducted with 10 former alternative radio producers. Their diverse experiences shed light on how radio, as an alternative medium, became a space to promote collectivity and solidarity towards social change in both Canada and Latin America. Furthermore, written scripts produced during this decade are included and are examples of the different political struggles Latin Americans were facing and fleeing from.
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, C. Miranda Barrios. Findings from interviews reported on Chapters 3, 4 and 5 were covered by UBC Ethics Certificate Number H15-01169-A004.

A version of Chapters 1 and 2 have been published in Miranda Barrios, C. 2017. “Can Bilingual Radio Be Utopian” in Performing Utopias in the Contemporary Americas edited by Kim Beauchesne and Alessandra Santos.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Spanish into English are the author’s.
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# 2.2 Methodology Framework

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<td>ALAD</td>
<td>America Latina Up Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coop Radio</td>
<td>Vancouver Cooperative Radio Station</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
<td>Radio: International Feminist Radio</td>
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<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>Martí National Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSNL</td>
<td>Sandinista National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIR</td>
<td>Movement of the Revolutionary Left</td>
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<td>LT</td>
<td>Liberation Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCA</td>
<td>Universidad Centroamericana</td>
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<tr>
<td>URNG</td>
<td>Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity</td>
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Glossary

Arpilleras: Traditional fabric folk-art made by Chilean women used as a tool for resistance.

Cassette: An analog magnetic tape-recording format for audio recording and playback.

Mic: Short for microphone

Reel to reel: Magnetic tape audio recording in which the recording medium is held on a reel.

To cue: Term used in radio production to have audio material ready to be played.
Acknowledgements

My returning journey to academia, many years after my arrival to Canada, has not been a lonely process. Throughout the different stages leading to this point, I have had the support and guidance of strong and intelligent women who- as friends, colleagues, family members and professors- have showed me with their own example that it is possible to do it. I will be forever grateful to my supervisor Dr. Alessandra Santos, who believed in my potential and encouraged me all along the way. To my co-supervisor Dr. Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, who instilled in me the passion for field work and the importance of learning from everyday life experiences. To Dr. Kim Beauchesne for deepening my analytical skills and encouragement to publish part of my scholarly work in both languages. To the thesis committee for taking the time to provide insightful comments that deepened my own analysis. To Dr. Dorothy Kidd, who opened the door for me to get behind the ‘mic’ along with other media activists.

I especially want to give my hundred and plus thanks to the Faculty of Arts for providing me with a Research Faculty of Arts Grant that made it possible for me to immortalize the voices of the ALAD radio collective members. The digitalized material is living proof of the effort taken by the Latin American diaspora to imprint their identity in the Canadian alternative airwaves.

To my peer graduate students, who became my friends in good and stressful times. To my extended families in both the South and the North. Through the years I received lots of encouragement from everybody, especially from my children who told me, every time when I was ready to give up, that they believed in me. To my partner in life, Steve, for all his love and solidarity. To my friends for being the rocks that I could lean on, especially to Ruth Leckie and Mehak Sharma.
And last, but not least, to the many ALAD collective members who have dedicated endless hours to produce alternative radio, especially to my interviewees whose commitment and belief in social justice imprinted the books of activism in this part of the hemisphere. Thanks to the current collective members Wendy Mendez, Katie Jackson, Murray Bush, Fili Celada, Ruth Leckie and Hector Paniagua, who as their peers in the 1980s, believe in the power of the human voice.
Dedication

To Ana-Camila, Diego and Steve for their resiliency despite all odds.

To Bruce, my brother-in law, for his courage and solidarity with human kind.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Locating myself: from radio listener to radio producer and scholar

In the framework of the Cold War, the 1980s was a decade of turmoil as the loci of political violence spread in different parts of Latin America. Exilic communities from the Southern Cone arrived first on the West Coast of Canada in the early 1970s. Central American refugees and displaced people followed soon fleeing from death squads ravaging their region. At that time and as Fernando Mata (1985) states, the Latin American migration, in general, tends to be related or linked specifically to the political situation in their country of origin. Once they took refuge in Vancouver, exiles found that this time was not only a time of crisis due to the political situation they left back home, but a time of bridging and connecting. It was a decade of transition where one of the meeting points for these incipient and heterogenous Latin American communities was the Vancouver Cooperative Radio station, better known as Coop Radio, specifically the America Latina al Día (ALAD) radio show collective.

This chapter starts by providing a brief contextual information that locates my positionality in relation to this dissertation. It introduces the main theme and the research problem that triggered the investigation. It provides the literature review conducted around the main topic and identifies the main research questions. It also formulates the main thesis and states personal and academic goals. It concludes with an overview of each of the chapters that follow.
My story is linked to the brief historical framework described above. I left my home country when the Guatemalan armed conflict was still happening (1960-1996). Years before fleeing to Canada, I recall that, as a student, finding official information in the media regarding the current situation in the country was very difficult. One way to make some sense of it was to listen late at night or before dawn in the lowest possible volume to *Radio Rebelde* (the Cuban state-run radio station) broadcasting via shortwave radio information about the Cuban revolution and other revolutionary struggles throughout the region. These voices from *Radio Rebelde* in Cuba, or occasionally, the faint signal from the Guatemalan guerrilla’s radio Voz Popular broadcasting from the distant Tajumulco volcano, provided a different perspective from what was reported in the censored mainstream media.

In those times, the army could go into any residence looking for “communists” or “communist material”. In this regard, Victoria Sanford writes that: “Ríos Mont took full advantage of the Cold War ideology foisted upon the country by the US-backed overthrow of democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, naming all who challenged his

1 In the framework of the Cold War, Guatemala faced decades of armed conflict that ended with the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords. According to reports such as *Memory of Silence: The Guatemalan Truth Commission Report* (2012), edited by Daniel Rothenberg, 200,000 Guatemalans were killed and 45,000 disappeared, the majority were victims of the Guatemalan Army. Currently, former de facto President General Efraín Ríos Montt is still facing charges of genocide for the murder of 1700 people from the Ixil Maya ethnic group. On May 10, 2013, Judge Yasmin Barrios ruled that Ríos Montt was responsible for genocide in the Ixil area in Guatemala; however, ten days later, her verdict was annulled. The case for genocide is currently back in the Guatemalan courts. See also Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico. (1999). *Guatemala, memoria del silencio*. (Ch. 5, pp. 21.) United Nations Office of Project Services.

2 See Hugh Thomas’s book *The Pursuit of Freedom* (1971). The author argues that Ernesto “Che” Guevara experienced the media disinformation campaign known as PBSUCCESS launched against Guatemala by the United States in the early 1950s at the time when Guevara worked in that country’s Ministry of Education. In this operation, the US launched a fictional radio station, *Radio Liberación* [Liberation Radio], that sowed chaos and uncertainty during the 1954 CIA-sponsored invasion that overthrew democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz. Thomas argues that this experience served as an incentive for Che Guevara to create a clandestine radio—*Radio Rebelde* [Rebel Radio]—when he joined Cuban exiles in the revolutionary movement in Cuba. *Radio Rebelde* became the state-run radio station after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.
authority ‘Subversives’ and ‘Communists’” (2014, p. 86). In fact, I recall my own family and neighbours burning books and music records for fear that soldiers might find them in their regular searches and consider them subversive. One book of the wrong poems could lead to a terrible and sad destiny for the reader. To speak openly with family and friends or colleague students about the daily news of citizens found dead and with signs of torture was risky.

At that time, it seemed to me that clandestine radio was the only medium ephemeral enough to leave no material trace, but still offered a different perspective on the situation in the country than the official narrative. Therefore, radio became for me a “connecting the dots” medium that penetrated the news blackout imposed by the state during the long years of the armed conflict in the country. It helped me to make sense of the situation, but I did not pay any attention to the details or mechanism of how it was even possible to broadcast in a clandestine way. The important part for me then was the content broadcasted, but through the process, I understood the power of radio as an alternative communication bridge that could reach great distances and listeners thirsty for information. It offered an in-depth analysis that was not provided by the mainstream and/or state media.

When I came to Canada and gradually made my way across from east to west at the close of the last century, I was surprised to find not clandestine but available publications in Vancouver on Latin American issues produced by groups of Latin Americans (that included not just exiles and refugees, but migrants in general) and local Canadians. Two print publications no longer in circulation were the Latin American Connexions newspaper whose main objective was to inform its readers of Latin American issues from a Canadian
perspective and the *Aquelarre Feminist Magazine*<sup>3</sup>, a joint effort between feminists in Mexico and Canada. Even though I collaborated with the former for a while, I also discovered the existence of radio programs that covered Latin American issues.

The metamorphosis from being a radio listener to becoming a radio producer started when I had the opportunity to work with a Latino and Aboriginal Youth group learning to produce aural media through radio documentaries with the *Sound Options for Youth Project*<sup>4</sup>. This opportunity opened the door for me to learn the mechanics of producing radio. Furthermore, it exposed me to the power of language(s) in the sense that I learned to produce bilingual radio documentaries carrying out research and interviews in the countries of Mesoamerica. Through this project, we met with different grassroots and media organizations to hear firsthand about their projects for several of these groups' members were producers of alternative radio. Radio served as a format for not just denouncing official abuses, but also as a platform to connect with others and debate their projects, their ideas, their utopian impulses for a better society. We witnessed first-hand why and how groups in different parts of Mexico and Central America used radio as a communicative medium due to its tremendous capacity to reach many listeners and provide them with different perspectives and proposals on several issues affecting their communities.

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<sup>3</sup> UBC Library holds *Aquelarre Latin American Women's Cultural Society* among its collections. See: [http://webcat1.library.ubc.ca/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=1234133](http://webcat1.library.ubc.ca/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=1234133)

<sup>4</sup> This project was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (formerly known as CIDA) in partnership with Vancouver Co-operative Radio. The project aimed to train First Nations and Latino youth in Canada to produce radio documentaries while traveling in Mexico and all Central American countries to work with their counterparts in the region. See the introduction to Dorothy Kidd’s doctoral dissertation (1998) for anecdotal information on this project.
These sonorous performances were carried out in specific Spanish speaking communities by locals with similar or homogeneous cultural characteristics. These community members took into their hands the production and broadcasting of radio programs in different formats: from clandestine, pirate, community, farmers’ markets-based, independent, including established radio stations at different university campus such as Radio Educación [Education Radio] in Mexico and Radio Internacional Feminista -FIRE [International Feminist Radio] in Costa Rica (Mendez, K. & Carter, C. 2008; Suarez Toro, M., 2010).

All these experiences linked to radio before and after I came to Canada shaped my life in two ways: First, as a communicator, in the sense that I decided to become a radio producer in an alternative media framework, a task that I have been doing for more than 16 years on a volunteer basis. Second, as a scholar, since many questions were triggered during my PhD in Hispanic studies to pay more attention to processes of communication practices performed by common and ordinary groups of people that become part of their daily lives. Specifically, and due to my political background as an exile, I was intrigued to study cultural practices linked to alternative communications that were not carried out in specific national or local Latin American communities per se. Rather, I wanted to examine actions taken by groups of diverse Latin Americans (with heterogeneous cultural backgrounds and diverse political experiences) who left or were forced to leave their communities, crossing national borders and ended up living in the same city in a foreign country. Could I link my scholarly work with my own activism? What kind of meaning does radio have for others who came as exiles before I came? How did exiles get involved in alternative media in Canada? What was their process of dialogue despite their diverse political backgrounds? These were among
the many questions that came out during my self-reflection process. Thus, I decided to critically approach and study the evolution, the making and the characteristics that defined one of the oldest communication mediums covering Latin American issues from the West Coast of Canada. Therefore, this research involves the perspectives of ALAD producers and collaborators who were part of the collective during the 1980s. It is the transnational experience of other exiles, migrants and activists in the solidarity movement along with my interest in alternative media that motivate and justifies this study.

1.2 América Latina al Día radio show and its uniqueness as the research problem

America Latina al Día [Latin America Update] radio show, commonly known as ALAD, began as a political project of South American exiles in 1976 (Palacios, 2011) and soon expanded to include other Latin American countries from the various waves of exiles, migrants and refugees who arrived in Vancouver in the last century (Miranda Barrios, 2017). Before the advent of the internet in the mid-1990s, América Latina al Día was one of the few regular sources of information on Latin American issues on the Canadian West Coast. Since its inception, this radio show has had a magazine format that includes brief news updates from the region, live or pre-recorded interviews with social or grassroots activists, political figures, academics, artists, etc.; music, and local community and cultural events. As reflected in its name, América Latina al Día or Latin America Update, has focused on current Latin American politics, culture and music from a social justice perspective.
The show broadcasts live on Saturdays at noon for an hour and a half from the studios of Vancouver Co-operative Radio (CFRO, 100.5 FM) located on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, also known as Vancouver, British Columbia. Vancouver Co-operative Radio or CFRO was established in April 15, 1975 by community and labour activists who were looking for an outlet to cover issues largely ignored by the commercial media. The station began broadcasting from the abandoned former Mercantile Bank building in Vancouver’s downtown eastside. Today, Vancouver Cooperative Radio has more than 30,000 members and approximately ninety production crews broadcasting ninety-one shows in sixteen different languages. The radio’s contribution to communities in Vancouver has even been recognized by the municipal government, which in 2015, proclaimed April 15 -the date of the first CFRO broadcast in 1975 -to be Co-op Radio Day. From all the shows, ALAD is one of the few that broadcast in a bilingual format.

I joined the ALAD radio collective at the beginning of this century and soon realized that ALAD had already been in operation for more than 20 years. I was impressed with its self-organizing process carried out by a collective of ordinary people from different Latin American nations and Anglo-Canadians, the formatting of the show, and the reporting methods. I noticed as well that it was not solely and strictly political in terms of airing counter-hegemonic content denouncing human rights abuses in the Americas and aiming for solidarity at the international level. It also aired different cultural aspects of the new emergent and heterogeneous Pan-Latin American-Canadian identity. I saw that both ‘on the

5 Before 2013, the radio station dial was CFRO 102.7 FM
6 On June 25, 2014, the City of Vancouver’s major Gregor Robertson formally declared that the City of Vancouver was founded on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.
air content’ and the ‘behind the scenes’ self-organizing process were interrelated and intertwined. For me, this was a new approach to produce alternative media through radio that went beyond the limited construction of counter-hegemonic messages to reach political goals. It was a place where it was possible to broadcast not just in-depth political analysis from the standpoint of social actors from the region, but also other aspects of the incipient Pan-Latin American-Canadian identity, such as their diverse cultural backgrounds, regional accents, individual and communal experiences on their political activism, local issues in the host country and memories related to their own individual and collective political struggles back home.

In summary, four unique characteristics of the way *America Latina al Día* is produced sparked my interest in this specific study and define the elements of the research problem: 1) Longevity: *ALAD* has been on air for four decades with no interruptions. As mentioned early, two other alternative communication practices on Latin American issues were in circulation in the 1990s in Vancouver (*the Latin American Connexions* newspaper and *Aquelarre Feminist Magazine*), but they ceased to exist a few years later before the end of the 20th Century. *ALAD* has not succumbed the same fate. 2) Work production done by a transnational collective: All these forty years the show has been produced and continues being produced by an eclectic group of Latin Americans and non-Latin Americans (many born-Canadians) working as a collective. Since its inception, part of the political project of *ALAD* included the participation of progressive Canadians who were involved in alternative media activism locally and/or in the solidarity movement. The latter joined the radio show as an action of solidarity with the struggles for social transformation in Latin America. Therefore, the organization of the show as a collective of work production with a mixed
membership is an element worth studying. Collective members were also Latin Americans who came as migrants. 3) Volunteer-run production crew: The work involved in producing the one and a half hour on air broadcasting has been done weekly all these years on a voluntary basis. 4) Bilingual broadcasting of content: Since its inception, the show has had a bilingual format. The Spanish and English format goes beyond the insular perspective of ethnic diaspora media, which are usually monolingual (whether alternative or mainstream). Since its beginnings in the mid-1970s, ALAD chose to broadcast in a bilingual format as a way to engage the host community with both Latin American diasporas and the home region. While there are several radio programs on Vancouver Cooperative Radio produced by Latin Americans such as El Bus de las 7 [The 7 O’clock Bus], Ecos de mi Pueblo [My Hometown’s Echoes] (these programs broadcast only in Spanish), and other broadcasters in Western Canada that seek to speak to diaspora groups and maintain links with their home countries and culture, ALAD is not and was not produced by Latin Americans only or aimed only at a Latin American audience. One of their goals was to reach a more diverse audience where English was used as the lingua franca. Thus, the radio functions as a real and concrete possibility of bilingual broadcasting that provides a different standpoint surrounding Latin American issues locally and internationally.

7 Karim H. Karim (2012) asserts in his article “Are ethnic media alternative?” that ethnic media programming has been present in Canada for more than half a century (p. 173). His paper focused on the production of ethnic media in third language (besides English and French). Karim mentions a number of ethnic media production in the Korean and Punjabi communities in British Columbia. However, the references the author has on Spanish speaking media refer to examples in the United States. Nonetheless, the author mentions that large ethnic media in Canada “appear in English or French” (p.173) but does not elaborate in how these two official languages are incorporated in the respective media examples.
In summary, the duration of the show, its governance by a collective with transnationalized practices, its production format and the linguistic element position \textit{ALAD} as a unique case of alternative communication. This research seeks an in-depth understanding of the process of how these four characteristics became to define \textit{ALAD}.

1.3 Research questions

The main research questions and sub-questions that guide this study are:

1) Why did exiles from Latin America turn to radio as a means of cultural production?

1.1 How did the use of radio shape their cultural values at some point in their lives?
1.2 In what ways was the use of radio a means to reimagine their cultural identities?

2) How did exiles turn alternative radio into a means to construct a transnational practice of doing politics?

2.1 How did exiles negotiate working together in a transnational setting?
2.2 What was their understanding of the link between radio and politics?
2.3 What was the meaning of involving members of the local community?

The following section introduces relevant literature review in three parts. The first provides a glimpse on some of the scholarly works that examine the role of radio in Latin America in relation to the different political processes happening in the region during the Cold War. The second part highlights research carried out on alternative media in relation to the research problem presented in the section above. The third one introduces briefly studies
on Latin American exiles in Canada, specifically exiles from Chile and Central America. A more in-depth discussion on the concepts of exile and refugees is presented in Chapter II.

1.4 Relevant Literature Review

1.4.1 Radio in Latin America

Studies on sound from Latin America are limited, as Alejandra Bronfman and Andrew Grant Wood (2012) state:

In some ways we know a great deal about sound in this part of the world, as the histories of the tango, samba, bolero, son mambo, and vallenato have demonstrated the power of music to build identities and communities […]. Nevertheless, music has practically drowned out other Latin American and Caribbean sounds. (xi-xii)

However, in the framework of the Cold War, as a result of the political upheaval that Latin America experienced in the twentieth century, there are some scholarly works that have looked into the role of radio as a key communicative medium during or after revolutionary processes (Tatum 1942; Barlow 1990; Remedi 1997; Mattelart 1980, 1986). These studies analyze the potential of radio as a way to communicate, either clandestinely or as a community medium. As I experienced, radio was a “connecting the dots” medium that provided me information with a different standpoint from what was happening in my country back in the 1980s.

Radio has also been used for political recruitment: a few examples include the revolutionary movements in Cuba in the late 1950s, Nicaragua in the 1970s, and El Salvador in the 1980s. In his book Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom (1971), Hugh Thomas documents Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s experience of the media disinformation campaign launched against Guatemala by the United States in the early 1950s when Guevara worked in that country’s
Ministry of Education. In this operation, known as PBSUCCESS, the US launched a fictional radio station, Radio Liberación [Liberation Radio], that unleashed chaos and uncertainty during the 1952 CIA-sponsored invasion that overthrew democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz. Thomas argues that this experience served as an incentive for Che Guevara to create a clandestine radio -Radio Rebelde [Rebel Radio]- when he joined Cuban exiles in the revolutionary movement in Cuba. Radio Rebelde later became the state-run radio station after the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959, broadcasting via shortwave information about this country’s revolution and other revolutionary struggles throughout the region. Radio, then, is a medium with tremendous scope that could be used for different purposes. Armand Mattelart (1980) studied the specific cases of Chile in the 1970s and Nicaragua in the 1980s where media played a decisive role in these two countries’ political processes.


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8 For more information on the role of the CIA’s Radio Liberacion in the surrender and exiling of President Jacobo Arbenz, see Thearle (2012), who focuses on the psychological war implemented through the PBSUCCESS operation.
9 In the international sphere, radio was used as a repressive tool during the genocide in Rwanda.
10 For a detailed account of these two countries, see also Raboy and Dagenais (1992).
There are other examples of alternative radio production in the region during this time that are not necessarily clandestine radio. This is the case of Radio Cooperativa [Cooperative Radio] in Chile, a progressive radio station that continued broadcasting after the coup d’état against President Salvador Allende in September 11, 1973. Carla Rivera Aravena (2008) documents the mechanisms this radio station used to continue broadcasting despite the censorship imposed by Augusto Pinochet’s regime. The author argues that Radio Cooperativa created a sonorous image of an “Other Nation” that included broad sectors of Chilean society.

For the present case study, it is important to point out that ALAD did not emerge under a dictatorship environment like in Chile or under a revolutionary process as in the case of Cuba. It emerged in the aftermath of heightened intergenerational conflict and violent state-suppression as expression of autonomous movements that had led to the creation of alternative media, such as Coop Radio and The Georgia Straight (Clement, 2008). Under these circumstances, the construction of alternative media in the city has similarities to that of the Southern dictatorships.

1.4.1.1 Radio in Vancouver, British Columbia

From the mid-1960s on, a new heterogeneous counterculture began to develop in the city with the rise of youth, environmental, women’s and various solidarity movements. As the Pacific terminus of the country, Vancouver was seen as Canada’s San Francisco, and “hippies” and counterculture activists arrived in the city from all over the nation (Hackett & Carroll, 2006). It was a time of social turmoil in Vancouver as the local establishment felt threatened by, and sought to suppress, the burgeoning counterculture, such as the Gastown
Riots in 1971 and the suppression of autonomous communities along 4th Avenue (Clement, 2008).

This new counterculture (or cultures) pursued media to express itself. Although conditions in Canada at that time compared to the Southern Cone were different, the exclusion of alternative voices in the mainstream media was not. The first successful effort was the founding in 1967 of a broadsheet entitled The Georgia Straight. Now a relatively tame weekly entertainment paper, for its first decade of existence, the Straight was fiercely anti-establishment and suffered the consequences with police raids on its offices and the jailing of its publisher.11 Other shorter-lived counterculture print publications, such as Open Road, were also founded, but the movement(s) still lacked a voice in the more flexible and wider-reaching medium of the airwaves.

In an attempt to overcome these obstacles, different threads of the counterculture movement came together in 1974 to fund a member-owned and community-run radio station. CFRO Co-operative Radio was born as the only community-owned station in English Canada (Hackett & Carroll, 2006). Dorothy Kidd’s doctoral dissertation (1998) documents the importance of different movements in making alternative radio possible in Canada and compares the situations and conditions of running an alternative radio space in both the south and north. Kidd states that “[i]n the early 1970s, Neighbourhood Radio and the Muckrakers or the Community Research Service came together to form Vancouver Community Radio.

Emanating in the nexus between the student left, youth and women’s movements, they […] applied for a non-profit FM licence which they received in 1974” (p. 132-33). According to the Co-operative Radio website, “In 1974, representatives of the first 231 shareholders of Vancouver Co-operative Radio presented an application to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and received their first licence to broadcast.”

On a national level, Kidd points out that “Vancouver Cooperative Radio is the longest-operating, non-profit, listener-supported community station in Canada outside of Quebec” (1998, p. 22). In this regard, Marc Rabboy (1984) has written at length on the experience of alternative media, especially the free radio, community radio, and handheld video in the province of Quebec as a way for social movements to make use of technologies in order to communicate their claims.

Given the Canadian context in relation to alternative media, Chilean exiles arriving in Vancouver joined the alternative media efforts. Their involvement in Coop Radio allowed them to continue doing political work, by sharing a space for their own voices and those of others who were ignored in their host country, whether by the mainstream corporate media or by the state-sponsored radio station, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation -CBC. This is an act of agency in the sense of identifying common objectives with the host community and working as a collective on concrete actions, such as the production of sonorous material.

1.4.1.2 Relevant literature in relation to the research problem

Studies on the relation between the Latin American diaspora and alternative media on the West Coast of Canada are scant. Nonetheless, in tracing back the origins of this radio
show and its purpose, I draw from the extensive and in-depth research done by Carolina
Palacios (2011). In her doctoral dissertation “Social Movements as Learning Communities:
Chilean Exiles and Knowledge Production,” Palacios documented the solidarity work
performed by exiled Chileans in Vancouver soon after their arrival in the mid-1970s. Her
work focuses on the Chilean social movement as a space of learning and knowledge
production (through a variety of cultural activities) that allowed exiled Chileans and
supporters to achieve their common goal to end Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile
(1973-1990). Palacios acknowledges the role of the Chilean community in establishing
ALAD, pointing out that “[a]fter Coop Radio went on the air in 1975, América Latina al Día
was among the earliest programs the station broadcast” (p. 296). One of the most relevant
interviews conducted for her study is from one of her interviewees who uses the pseudonym
of Pilar [as a way to protect her identity]. Pilar’s testimony provides a glimpse of the
challenging logistics of producing the radio show in Vancouver during the dictatorship in
Chile or, in other words, of broadcasting the south in the north:

You had to really search for the news, and we had a short-wave radio. We used to
listen to Radio Moscow, Escucha Chile… Radio Rebelde, Radio La Habana…Radio
France, a radio [station] from Holland, all in Spanish. … Every week my father sent
pages from the newspapers in Chile… to read between the lines… to contrast what
was published in Chile with what was broadcasted internationally and [we would]
draw conclusions that way… plus, we received reports through the party [MIR] and
with all that we put the program together. (Palacios, 2011, p. 279)

The initial purpose of the radio, as stated by Palacios’s interview subject Pedro, was to
inform listeners “of the solidarity activities Chileans planned…the latest news of what had
happened in Chile and all of Latin America” (p. 279). At the time of her research, she
observes (quoting the Cooperative Radio website) that “América Latina al Día is still
broadcast (as of June 2011) on Coop Radio and retains its roots as a ‘bilingual Spanish/English public affairs program focusing on current Latin American politics, culture and music from a social justice perspective” (p. 279). Her study mentions the characteristic of the radio show being bilingual but does not include either the participation of the host-community, nor the participation of the wider Pan-Latin American communities.

Luis Cárcamo-Huechante’s article “Indigenous Interference: Mapuche Use of Radio in Times of Acoustic Colonialism” (2013) highlights the importance of using radio as a connective medium. He observes that “any media connected to social and cultural movements should occupy a significant position in cultural politics. In particular, greater attention should be paid to radio as a sound technology that plays a key role in shaping ‘ways of life’ in contemporary media ecologies” (p. 54). He makes this observation based on his study of Mapuche communities in Chile and Argentina and their quest for self-representation and self-determination in Southern Cone airwaves through the production of bilingual radio programs (Mapuche/Spanish). The author also states that he accompanied their process for over ten years and in his view, the two radio experiences face what he calls ‘acoustic colonialism,’ a form of broadcasting that has silenced Indigenous peoples’ voices, agency and identity out of the Chilean and Argentinian pre-dominant Spanish language airwaves. These experiences linked to radio projects carried out in specific countries are similar to ALAD because Mapuche radio producers aim is to reach beyond their respective diasporas through a bilingual programming, that is to say, they voice their own perspectives to the rest of the societies they co-exist with by making use of the official language as well as their own mother tongue. In this way, the Mapuche producers have the ability to communicate directly with the Spanish-speaking audience on their own terms.
Cárcamo-Huechante mentions that he has been involved with the two Mapuche communication practices in the Southern Cone for a decade which suggests that these communication practices share the longevity aspect that characterizes ALAD. Over time radio production can become part of the everyday lives of the producers. Colombian scholar Arturo Escobar (2001) stresses the need for understanding and studying these everyday cultural practices, such as producing alternative radio on a weekly basis, as these could be seen as political practices that happen locally but can have a global impact. Even further, Escobar stresses that the field of Cultural Studies has not considered it important to study the ongoing social movements as vital agents of cultural production. Clemencia Rodríguez (2001) echoes this statement when she argues that “while Cultural Studies seems to be concerned with the media texts of the dominant and how audiences interact with them, the media texts of ordinary citizens have not achieved status as objects of study” (p. 4). More closely related to this research, Nicole S. Cohen (2014), in her article “From Alienation to Autonomy: The Labour of Alternative Media,” states that “thousands of people spend thousands of hours working for alternative media in Canada. They produce magazines, journals, websites, zines, broadcasts, podcasts, and newspapers” (p. 208). She adds, however, that despite the large number of hours people put into producing alternative media, there is not much research in the matter. Her article stresses the tensions, such as lack of sustainability due to self-exploitation that ends in volunteers burning out, non-existent or poor salaries in comparison with producing mainstream media. The author warns of the risks of “romanticizing” the real and often difficult work of producing. Cohen (2014) suggests having frank conversations as a way to identify key elements to become sustainable (p. 209). I can relate to the intense and stressful labour of producing alternative media on a volunteer
and ongoing basis. Before using the current digital technology, the time consumed with editing the reel to reel material in addition to producing the program was endless. Based on my own experience as a radio producer, I estimate that it takes ten hours per week to produce a one-hour show. Production includes the following tasks: deciding the topic(s), researching the topic and possible guests, contacting guests and sending possible questions for their feedback, writing introductions for the interview or interviews; researching possible news items, writing news items for a radio format, translating the news items, checking community events, selecting music that relates to the topic to be presented, and making sure different collective members will be on site the day of live broadcasting. Nick Couldry (2015) argues in his article “Alternative Media and Voice” that more studies are needed to understand the meaning or value that triggers the participation of people in creating alternative media (p. 43). What make individuals commit to endless hours of volunteer work to produce alternative media? What is the impulse that moves people into action?

1.4.2 Exilic communities in Canada

Studies on Latin American exile in Canada tend to focus on diasporic communities from specific countries and not from a Pan-Latin American perspective. The studies reviewed around Chilean exiles in Canada provide insight on the different experiences they have faced in different parts of the country (Baeza, 2004; Peddie, 2014; Sanhueza & Pinedo, 2010; Wright & Oñate Zúñiga, 2007). Many of these studies document the political work carried out by Chileans once in exile. However, only the doctoral dissertation of Carolina Palacios (2011) linked briefly the work of Chilean exiles with alternative radio. In relation to Central Americans, there were no studies found that linked diasporic Central Americans’
work to alternative media practices in Canada. The studies found focused on the difficulties and trauma faced by young Salvadorians and Guatemalans in adapting to their host country from a social work perspective (Smiley, 1988, for example).

In terms of media studies, Kozolana, Mapaza and Skinner (2012) provide an overview of a distinctly Canadian context in the mediascape that includes “ethnic media.” In their view, ethnic media allows the diverse migrant communities to stay in touch with their familiar traditions and communities, which in general are unavailable in Canadian mass media (p. 176). Links between exiles and media were not part of the examples provided. Nonetheless, all three authors stress out the need to research different communication practices set in place by diasporic communities.

1.5 Research focus and aims

This research is focused on ALAD as a case study of alternative communications from the perspective of collective members involved in the project in the 1980s. As mentioned earlier, this decade was marked by the spreading of political crisis and violence in Latin America. It was also a decade in which the collective of ALAD changed in important ways when Central American exiles, refugees and migrants in general, joined the radio collective as well as local activists involved in solidarity with Latin America.

As an active member of ALAD collective since 2000, my personal goals are: 1) to document and analyze this experience as part of the history of the Latin American diaspora living on the Canadian West Coast; and 2) to create a sonorous and digital archive from existing audio materials to make it available to the public.
From an academic perspective, there are many questions that have been discussed in the literature review, such as why ordinary people commit to endless hours of volunteer work? What motivates or trigger people into action? Why is it necessary to study communication practices that become part of the everyday lives of participants? Why is radio considered a connective medium, as stated by Cárcamo-Huechante (2013), that unites? Can ALAD be considered a connective medium? Did exiles and progressive Canadians involved in the project have a common understanding of the role of alternative media? Could these communications practices be seen through a lens of Cultural Studies? The studies reviewed on the role of radio in the different political processes happening in the region were focus-specific to those countries, but there were no studies found on collective media production from a Pan-Latin American perspective. Carolina Palacios’ (2011) doctoral dissertation introduces the experience of Chileans with alternative media in Vancouver from a pedagogical perspective. This research aims to expand on that research from a Pan-Latin American perspective linked to alternative media. The study aims to provide more in depth-analysis to understand the meaning of everyday practices of ordinary people, as suggested by scholars Arturo Escobar (2001) and Clemencia Rodríguez (2001).

This study’s main argument postulates that ALAD constitutes an exercise of cultural agency (Bourdeau, 1993). Cultural agency is understood as action(s) taken by people to become involved in projects to create movement and/or social change at their own will. ALAD is a kind of social movement in the alternative media framework that seeks to create change as all social movements do. The media texts produced by this collective of ordinary citizens make it possible to be in connection with other social movements in Latin America because one of their aims is to bring the voices and standpoints from social movements
activists in the South. Therefore, *ALAD* functions as an agent of cultural production that uses radio as a bridge to connect among social actors from the diasporic communities from Latin America and local media and solidarity activists and with their counterparts in both South and North. Through the years this project has kept the audience updated with common and diverse struggles carried out by social actors aiming for social and political changes in Latin America as well as on domestic issues in Canada.

The thesis for this study argues that *ALAD* represents a relational practice of alternative communications and politics that operates both as a communication producer and a type of social movement in the alternative media framework. In other words, due to the unique characteristics of the radio collective, *ALAD* emerged with new kinds of dialogue and action from a transnational perspective.

This research also seeks to bridge different academic disciplines, such as Latin American Studies, Alternative Media for Social Change Studies, Cultural Studies, Studies on Exile and Diaspora and Canadian Studies and contribute to a discussion on the ways media production practices dialogue or foster the re-creation of cultural identities and politics by ordinary social actors working collectively. This case study relates to migration and exile, cultural production, social movements, political identity and transnationalism and the utopian impulse, concepts that are intertwined and interrelated. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach is needed in order to examine this communication practice from different lenses. I am drawing from specialists such as Clemencia Rodríguez and Dorothy Kidd in the field of Alternative Media for Social Change; Arturo Escobar and Luis Cárcamo-Huechante in the field of Cultural Studies and Edward Saïd in the field of Postcolonial Studies on Exile,
Diaspora and Identity. In short, my project is original because of its interdisciplinary approach that combines different fields of study and methodologies that are interconnected.

1.6 Overview of the Chapters

Chapter II introduces the theoretical framework and methodology. This study is seen through an interdisciplinary lens and as such is guided theoretically by concepts, such as alternative media for social change, exile, diaspora, identity, political transnationalism, cultural agency, communications commons, media enclosures and the notion of communications practices in motion. The methodology used to conduct the oral interviews and the analysis to the transcribed interviews and the written data available is justified and explained. This chapter also clarifies the process of creating the research tools such as the questionnaire to carry out the interviews.

Chapter III introduces the ten former radio collective members who agreed to participate in this research. Along with their individual introduction, the first broad theme from four that emerged from the oral interviews is analyzed and discussed.

Chapters IV analyzes and discusses the following two broad themes that emerged from the oral narratives with radio collective members who were part of ALAD in the 1980s. It is important to highlight that the contextual framework to the dissertation is intertwined with the oral interviews throughout the research.

Chapter V introduces the last broad topic that emerged from the oral narratives. This chapter includes written material in the forms of news clips, ALAD’s written editorials and written media sources from the 1980s.
Chapter VI presents the conclusions in relation to the main research questions, limitations to the study and offers conclusive thoughts on the whole process. It also highlights suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is divided in two sections. The first one presents the theoretical framework that guides this case study. It introduces and justifies the different disciplines used to examine ALAD as a transnational communication practice. The second section provides in detail the methodology carried out to be able to work with primary and secondary sources. It explains the ethical review process necessary to interview former ALAD participants as subjects to the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Personal experience as ‘experiential data’

The first source of the conceptual framework for my research comes from my personal experience working with alternative media in exile. Joseph Maxwell (2005) points out that “Traditionally, what you bring to the research from your own background and identity has been treated as ‘bias,’ something whose influence needs to be eliminated from the design, rather than a valuable component of it” (p. 38). Maxwell argues, however, that to bring one’s personal background is relevant because it complements and enriches the research. Hence, my first conceptual source is what Strauss (1987) calls ‘experiential data:’ my experience of 20 years in alternative radio provides me with valuable knowledge in understanding the rationale and mechanics of producing radio for social transformation, but also provides me an insider’s standpoint that enables me to perceive or understand information that could be missed by an outsider researcher. Yet, as already mentioned, the
focus of this study is on the 1980s, a decade when I was not part of the production collective. Nonetheless, when I became part of the project years later, the structure built by the people involved in the formative years of the program was still clearly evident. Besides my own ‘experiential data,’ I am also guided by a theoretical interdisciplinary perspective that draws from Alternative Communication for Social Change Studies, Cultural Studies, and Studies on Exile and Identity.

2.1.2 Understanding the media landscape

In his book *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1992), Gramsci writes that media systems could be used as a tool for social control. Mainstream corporate and state media work as a closed circuit where the narrative and content of media are designed and produced with an agenda that aims to provide controlled, limited and enclosed information and content. In this regard, Clemencia Rodríguez’s rich study, entitled *Fissures in the Mediascape: An international Study of Citizen’s Media* (2001), provides a glimpse of what was going on in the 1970s in the media landscape or mediascape, when representatives of the so-called Third World countries brought up the issue of injustice or un-balance in the communications arena while attending a UNESCO gathering:

According to data gathered at the time by international communication scholars, most of the news media circulating around the world was produced by a handful of press agencies, mostly from First World countries: AP and UPI from the United States, Reuters from Germany, Agence France Press, and TASS from the former Soviet Union. Several negative consequences arising from the situation were emphasized. First, most information from Third World countries was gathered by First World international reporters who “objectively reported” the underdeveloped world from a very limited, First World perspective; conceived in terms of its backwardness, wildness, and poverty, the Third World, as a result, became an array
of images of violence, poverty, and natural disasters in the world’s information media. Second, even Third World countries themselves were consuming those same one-sided images of themselves, which was particularly ironic given their geographic, social and political nearness. Third, not only was the information about the Third World limited in its perspective, it was also restricted in terms of its quantity. The amount of circulating news items about the First World was incomparably greater than the number of items about the Third World. Thus, almost 40% of all foreign reporting in American newspapers was about Western Europe and North America, while Latin America is “conspicuously underreported.” (Frederick 1993, p. 132 cited in Rodríguez 2001, p. 5)

The description above presents a global radiography of media production in the control of a few hands in the 1970s. This media radiography emphasizes the very limited and misguided information on Latin America. It stresses the reproduction of images and narratives regarding the region as conceived in colonial times and perpetuated in a post-colonial framework as wild, poor, violent and backward, full of natural disasters. Furthermore, it points at how these limited narratives and images in the media were ‘ironically’ recycled and consumed by the same people in Latin America. In this regard, it is key to highlight that from the time of this media radiography (1970s), theoretical approaches to study media and its influence on the audience have evolved. Communication and Cultural Studies scholar Jesús Martín-Barbero (1998) challenged the idea of seeing [or conceiving] consumers of media as passive audiences. His ground-breaking theoretical approach argued that how people respond/interact/make sense of media texts depends on their cultural and social contexts. Martín-Barbero emphasizes that there is a mediation process where people interpret media according to their own realities, producing diverse meanings and interpretations.

After describing the imbalance in media production in the 1970s and the concern expressed at the UNESCO gathering, Rodríguez goes on to provide examples of several attempts to democratize access and production of media during the 1980s and 1990s.
Attempts to counter the hegemony of dominant media systems triggered all regions of the world, and not just the poor ones, to produce alternative media to reclaim the right to communicate. A perfect example of how this call was answered in western Canada is the creation of Vancouver Cooperative Radio in the mid-1970s, a radio station that arose from the counterculture movement in the city during those decades (Clement, 2008; Hackett & Carroll, 2006; Kidd, 1998). This example also serves to illustrate what Gramsci called a counterhegemonic effect, in the sense that the media system can be used by the people who are supposed to be dominated and controlled under the status quo, to revert and counter its hegemonic agenda. In other words, media has the potential to destabilize that closed circuit and disrupt the official and/or corporate narratives written by a handful of experts and provide “connecting the dots” information from different voices and standpoints that can create what Rodríguez perfectly calls ‘fissures’ in the controlled and closed-circuit media.

2.1.3 **ALAD: A communication practice in-motion**

Rodríguez documents and analyzes four cases where citizens in four different countries re-appropriate and re-take the making of media in their own hands (radio, TV and video). Rodríguez characterizes the process and practices exemplified by these experiences as communicative practices *in-motion*. This notion properly characterizes the work of **ALAD** because its process of production is dynamic and constantly evolving according to the different contexts and circumstances. Rodríguez’s argument is based on the rationale that each communication practice involves a complex process of constant negotiation among the people/citizens involved and this process goes beyond the mere fact of producing counter-
hegemonic content. I draw on Rodríguez’s idea that communicative practices should be studied from an understanding that they are fluid and not static. These practices in-motion involve dynamic interactions and discussions among the collective members that change and evolve constantly. By reflecting and examining my own experiential data from my involvement in the radio collective on and off air, I now recognize the constant negotiation among the collective members on a weekly basis whereas before embarking on this study, I simply considered this negotiation as part of the job. As a scholar, I understand and agree with Rodríguez’s position that it is imperative to develop theories and methods to be able to follow communication practices in the making (p. 64) such as this case study. Having established that ALAD is a communication practice in-motion, where else does ALAD fit theoretically into the global media framework?

2.1.4  ALAD: a ‘communications commons’ in the face of ‘media enclosures’

In order to understand the global media framework, I draw on the concepts of ‘communication commons’ and ‘media enclosures.’ Dorothy Kidd coins these two concepts in her doctoral dissertation entitled Talking the Walk: The Communication Commons Amidst the Media Enclosures (1998). Her work introduces a theoretical approach to the three models of media: the first one as corporate media, the second as state media, and the third as alternative media, dubbing the third option as ‘the global communications commons.’ The author traces back the term ‘commons’ to the commoners in Europe at the time when common land was shared among the people. Within a Latin American context, the shared land or common land could be related to the ‘ejido’ system, specifically in a Mexican context.
where ejidos were used collectively by commoners for agricultural purposes since the time of the Aztecs (Skidmore, Smith & Green, 2013). This distribution of land system was eradicated during the colonization of Mexico (1492-1821) but put back in place after the Mexican Revolution in 1910. In 1994 the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement also known as NAFTA—an agreement among Canada, United States and Mexico-, resulted in the repeal of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution that allowed the ejido system.  

In Europe, with the introduction of capitalism, common land transitioned into private land and was physically enclosed by the landowners. Nonetheless, Kidd remarks that “people fought off the enclosures of their common land” (p. 4). Kidd provides an analogy between the fight of the commoners to reclaim their common land and the efforts and utopian impulses of today’s media activists to claim media making as a democratic right - the right to communicate different standpoints, breaking through enclosures set by the owners of corporate and state media. Media ‘enclosures’ are represented by mainstream and state media where “media systems continue to be very centralized, with program production emanating from a central hub. The global commercial systems broadcast all over the world, but most of their ‘product’ comes from one or two entertainment production centers in the US” (p. 5). The result of this control in the media system is the production of a homogeneous narrative.

and information that lacks the balance of diverse points of view on different social, economic, cultural and political issues, regardless of the geographical region.

As an example of the media enclosures in an Anglo-Canadian context, the centralization and concentration of media production is described by Paul Fontaine (2013) who points out that in Canada’s English-language commercial media, Bell and Rogers companies account for 43 percent of all revenues. They are followed by Shaw and Telus. Fontaine stresses out that these four companies represent the 70 per cent of the media landscape. This example of media enclosures portrays how the production of media in the country is literally in a few hands controlling what to (and what not to) air and broadcast.

Regarding the second model of media in Canada, Kidd explains (1999) that the English language Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) was originally set up by an alliance of people who challenged the status quo. However, when it was institutionalized in the 1930s, the CBC was given the mandate to represent the nation state, focusing on national issues framed by a professional body of journalists who work in the centers of governmental and corporate power in eastern Canada (p. 5). Thus, state media aligns to the state’s agenda and follows the direction of the professional body of journalists who decided the angle of their media coverage. To counter these vertical media enclosures, communications commons projects create ‘fissures’ in the media system in order to open space for different perspectives, experiences and standpoints not taken into account in the mainstream and/or state media. The creation of communications commons projects aims for

13 Article published in J-Source The Canadian Journalism Project
See: http://www.j-source.ca/article/diversity-media-ownership-literally-non-existent-canada
social and political changes in many communities. The creation of Vancouver Cooperative Radio is an example of a communications commons effort. In the case of ALAD, both the Pan-Latin American diaspora and Canadians who experienced different political and social realities, had a common and clear idea of the need to use radio to pierce the media enclosures to break the silence regarding the Latin American issues not covered in the mainstream media.

In Vancouver, in the early 1980s, apart from ALAD and few other collective efforts such as the *Latin American Connexions* newspaper, it was impossible to find information about Latin America from an alternative and/or progressive perspective. But do all alternative media efforts aim for social change? And from a theoretical point of view, what exactly is alternative media?

### 2.1.5 The challenge of conceptualizing ‘alternative media’

Finding a straightforward definition of Alternative Media is a challenge. Mike Mowbray cites in his article “Alternative logistics? Parsing the literature on alternative media” that since the 1990s, Jassem had raised the question about the lack of clarity on what is mean by alternative media (2015, p. 21). Twenty-five years later, Chris Atton (2015) takes the reader into a ‘theoretical excursion’ (p. 5) through the different approaches to alternative media. The author highlights various terms offered by different authors to name this kind of media, such as alternative media, community media, radical media, citizens’ media (Atton, 2002; Fuller, 2007; Downing, 2001; Rodríguez, 2001). Alternative Media has been characterized as radical, independent, participatory, community, grassroots, citizens’,
autonomous, tactical, critical, or social movement media (Atton, 2002). As seen, what the term conveys is still a work in progress in the academia. Nonetheless and despite the ongoing discussions on theoretical approaches to its meaning, the concept of alternative media as used in this study needs to be defined taking in account its conceptual context.

In addition, there is a significant discussion on what characterizes a communication practice as alternative. It is important to highlight that not all alternative media has a role to ‘alter’ the media enclosures. Rather, their purpose is to bring distinct voices (not necessarily from the dominant or mainstream enclosures) with the aim of providing a space to communicate their communities’ cultural heritage and traditions. But these communication practices do not necessarily strive to challenge the hegemonic status quo, and yet they are not part of the mainstream spectrum either.

For the purpose of this study, I draw on Kidd’s approach to the term from a semantic point of view. In her article *The Value of Alternative Media* (1999), Kidd de-constructs the word: ‘alter’ which implies an act of countering and challenging. She states that “alternative radio has a crucial role as un-official opposition to mainstream media to the extension of public discussion and debate about a wide range of concerns and issues” (p. 1). Alternative radio provides a space to counter and question the narrative or discourse provided by mainstream media in the sense of being a vehicle to voice and to listen to different points of view, experiences, testimonies, and actions provided by social actors that question the content of the hegemonic media agenda. The aim of alternative media radio is not to make a profit, but to make audience(s) aware of other perspectives and standpoints that can disrupt hegemonic discourses.
Kidd (1999) states that the second part of the word alternative is ‘native,’ in the sense that alternative media “is valuable when it is native to the communities it serves” (p. 6) because these spaces have the potential to link regionally and globally. In her dissertation, the author maps specific examples of ‘communications commons’ from South, Central and North America to other parts of the world in the face of media enclosures. The communities documented were not simply saying ‘no’ to hegemony but acting and performing in creating something new and transformative.

Based on my own experience not just producing alternative communications, but before as a young Guatemalan university student (and as a listener who was thirsty for more in-depth information), I understand the concept of alternative media as one that is a collective effort, autonomous, not for profit, that voices standpoints from different social movements, providing a more in-depth analysis and information and different perspectives from groups excluded from the mainstream media. One recent example I can point out is the visit of Mexican President Peña Nieto to Ottawa in the framework of the so-called “Three Amigos Summit” on June 27, 2016. The Canadian state radio CBC dedicated large amounts of air time to the content of the menu for the state leaders’ dinner that consisted of “Beaver Tails, maple walnut gelato for dessert” and their recreational activities. The reports on the agenda items were very superficial and with no deeper analysis. The visit took place at a time when international human rights organizations were decrying state violence in Mexico, such as the case of the 43 forcibly disappeared student teachers from the Ayotzinapa teachers’

college in the state of Guerrero. Specifically, Amnesty International\textsuperscript{15} issued a report on human rights violations against teachers and students in the country. ALAD, in the same vein (as Amnesty International) carried out in-depth interviews with Mexican teachers whose colleagues allegedly had just been shot by Peña Nieto’s security forces. The perspectives from the point of view of the teachers affected provided a different picture of what was reported in the Canadian mainstream and state media. The pressure put by human rights activists in Canada along with alternative media coverage dogged the Mexican president in every Canadian city he visited to the point that the media enclosures were pierced. The social pressure had the effect that the Canadian Prime Minister publicly expressed to his counterpart his concern about the violence against teachers in Mexico\textsuperscript{16}. One of the fundamental characteristics of alternative media is that it provides the possibility to hear directly from people who are social actors aiming for change, and with their standpoints provide food for thought, debate and reflection that move listeners into action.

Robert Hackett and Willian Carroll (2006) examine closely the media activism landscape in Vancouver. Their study provides an ethnographic analysis of the emergence and development of the Coop Radio station. It also highlights different alternative media projects that emerged in Vancouver as examples of creative ways of producing alternative media to provide counter-information. Coop Radio is one of many projects covered in the book. The study does not engage with forms of alternative radio programs like \textit{ALAD} and with

\textsuperscript{16} See article on CTV: http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/trudeau-discusses-violent-mexican-teacher-strike-with-president-pena-nieto-1.2965465
questions on what happens when collectives from different cultural backgrounds and political experiences join in media production and solidarity work. Rather, their focus is on how citizens in Vancouver seen as “a self-consciously global city” (p. 18) create relationships between media-oriented and other kinds of activism as part of a broader social movement. Their analysis provides specific examples of democratic media activism processes. Hackett and Carroll carried out interviews with different alternative media projects collectives to hear first hand their struggle to balance what they called a media democratic deficit. In their view, Coop Radio is an important example of a community radio station that is also part of a larger democratic movement that seeks to put forward views underrepresented in the corporate controlled media. Their analysis on/of Co-op Radio focuses mainly on the radio station’s decentralized management structure and mentions briefly how the show developers (all volunteers) decide on their own content based on their radio show interests. Having established that ALAD is part of a communications commons it is now important to more closely examine the collective work process from a theoretical angle.

Building on the work of Kidd (1999) and Rodríguez (2001), I characterize the communication commons in this specific case as a collective effort that includes ordinary people with a diverse range of transnational practices, political experiences and cultural and linguistic backgrounds working together in a common alternative media project that undermines ‘media enclosures.’ These media enclosures are related to the historical context provided by Rodríguez in terms of how Latin American issues were underreported and unbalanced by a handful of ‘experts’ back in the 1970s. This lack of coverage led to the formation of a few other alternative commons communications experiences and practices:
“We founded Latin American Connexions in 1986, partly to fill that gap, and to serve as a counter-narrative to the misinformation on the Latin American region generated by the corporate media such as the New York Times and the Globe and Mail,” said Steve Stewart, former co-editor of the Vancouver based publication Latin American Connexions (personal communication). ALAD is another emergent example of ‘filling the gap’ that, from my point of view, fostered different ways of thinking and feeling about transnational solidarity and activism.

2.1.6 Radio as a platform for transnational activism, solidarity and dialogue

As Karen Kampwirth explains in the introduction on her book Women & Guerilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba (2002), if the 20th century was the time of revolutions, Latin American was indeed the region where revolutionary movements emerged most often. Among the many objectives of these revolutionary efforts were the overthrow of dictatorships and change to social and economic inequalities. The situation of terror and human rights violations against dissidents by the different regimes triggered actions of solidarity around the world. Peter Waterman and Laurence Cox provide a chronological overview of different actions that promote solidarity in their article “Movement Internationalism/s” (2014, p.1). The authors state that these actions of internationalism, which they define “as an act of relationships of solidarity between people and peoples across or despite national boundaries, inter-state conflicts and economic

17 Latin American Connexions was a bi-monthly publication in Vancouver BC that covered Latin American politics from 1986 until 2007, reaching at its peak a circulation of approximately 5,000.
competition,” has been characteristic of social movements for centuries. They provide different historical examples of international solidarity that stretch from 1649 to the 21st century. Their article outlines the different kinds of international(ism)/transnational solidarity movements according to different historical contexts. Between the 1970s and 1990s, the solidarity movement took a format of ‘transnational advocacy networks’ that campaigned for specific themes, such as the support for revolutionary movements like the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico (p. 3).

This perspective is important for this study because as other scholars have also stated, it highlights the importance of paying attention to the well-known figures of international solidarity, but also to the backroom, backstreet and grassroots figures. Citing Peruvian political thinker José Carlos Mariátegui’s observation that “communication is the nervous system of internationalism and solidarity” (in Waterman and Cox, 2014, p. 7), both authors highlight that each international movement, according to its historical context, has its ‘emancipatory medium’ such as free press, railways and telegraphs, political party newspapers, cinema, and radio. In this specific case study, the control and studio rooms at Vancouver Co-op Radio are the platform used by a broadcasting collective of transnational activists to dialogue and project their activism. Waterman and Cox categorize the ‘media activist’ as a figure of international activism proper to the 21st Century.

I argue that communications commons practices such as ALAD were already practices-in-motion carried out by media activists during the last decades of the 20th century, providing food for thought, learning, and discussion in a bilingual format that goes beyond the narratives provided by the commercial and state media. The dialogue carried out by the
transnational activists in this case study is important because even though they have a clear understanding of the need for a communications commons project such as this one, they are also part of a heterogeneous group of activists with different political experiences and cultural, social and even economic backgrounds. Therefore, there is a need to study experiences such as this from a Hispanic Studies and Latin American Studies perspectives to shed light on how Latin Americans create spaces of dialogue despite their differences at a time when international solidarity is key to change the political situation in their countries of origin.

I understand the notion of transnational solidarity and transnational activism as expressed by feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty in her work *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003). Transnational solidarity is viewed by Mohanty as a practice of political solidarity and common interests defined collectively among members of the Latin American diaspora and local activists across national boundaries with diverse political experiences, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The common effort based on a transnational activism and solidarity created innovative ways of dialogues fuelled by a utopian impulse and vision. Thus, as already mentioned, and following Rodríguez’s rationale, the radio was not just a space to produce counter-hegemonic content and analysis, but also used as a platform for creating new ways of organizing and performing a communications practice where identities and politics understandings were in constant negotiations. Chapter 3 introduces how this process was performed through the different experiences and testimonies given by the interviewees who took part of this commons communication project in the 1980s. But, as was already mentioned, what makes people
commit to endless hours of volunteer work? What drives ordinary people to commit to communications commons project such as this?

2.1.7 ALAD: a communications commons fuelled by a utopian impulse

Radio as a traditional, connective and emancipatory communication medium becomes a platform, a space where people with a varied range of transnational political experiences and different cultural backgrounds meet and dialogue, and put this communication commons practice in motion on a weekly basis. Radio becomes the bridge to connect the incipient Latin American community in Vancouver, not only with the social struggles of their home region, but also with each other in their new context in exile. Since the mid-1970s, the radio as a sound technology allowed exiles, immigrants and locals alike to cultivate awareness on issues of human rights among other Canadians and with the rest of the Latin American diaspora in order to promote public engagement with Latin America. But in order to achieve this objective, I am aware of the intense labour needed to produce and broadcast the content. Currently with the support of the internet and digital technology, the production of a radio show can be relatively smooth. In the 1980s, however, the work was more intense. The technology consisted in using reel to reel carts, tape recorders and manually editing recorded material, just to mention some of the time-consuming tasks. Adding the fact that many exiles and migrants had to start from zero trying to learn the English language, find employment and survive in their new city. From my standpoint, this cultural agency performed through the airwaves by the different crew members and voices
who represent ALAD - not just in the 1980s, but that extends for more than four decades of broadcasting - is fuelled by a utopian impulse.

I use the term ‘utopian impulse’ coined by Ernst Bloch in his book *The Principle of Hope* (1986) to refer to specific cultural manifestations and productions that aim to create change through specific actions, moving from a wish or a utopian desire for a new society to tangible and concrete actions that move in that direction. As Kim Beauchesne and Alessandra Santos (2011) in their edited book *The Utopian Impulse in Latin America* (2011) point out, the history of Latin America is related to different utopian impulses in different historical contexts of the region. They write that “the utopian impulse is a united force, a combination of individual dreams that form collaborative actions” (p. 5). This utopian impulse translates in this specific case to the creation of a medium that seeks to bring together members of the diverse Latin American diaspora and other Canadians in a common and collective effort to support struggles for social transformation in Latin America. Latin American exiles and refugees seized the moment and the opportunity to be part of the recently created Co-op Radio in Vancouver and produce an alternative communications channel to reach both audiences in English and Spanish. Therefore, the waves of ordinary people that become part of ALAD as a communications common transferred their utopian impulses along with their transnational political experiences and activism to their host city. Their utopian impulse to produce an alternative communication practice was also a common interest that merged with the utopian impulse of Canadians fighting for the right to the democratization of the media, resulting in a unique experience of alternative communications with a vision that can be translated to more of 40 years of broadcasting live. The interviews and analysis introduced in Chapter III tackle and provide a ‘close reading’ of the process of
creating an alternative communications outlet with tensions, challenges and new ways
members of the collective in the 1980s were able to negotiate and dialogue among a
heterogeneous collective of people, which include exiles, refugees and members of the Latin
American diaspora in general.

2.1.8 Latin American exiles as part of the diaspora in Vancouver

As mentioned, ALAD evolves from the presence and the voices of the Latin
American exile and diaspora in the Canadian west coast. The *Dictionary of Human
Geography* (2009) defines diaspora as ‘A scattering of people over space and transnational
connections between people and places. The term was first used to describe the forced
dispersal of the Jews from Palestine in the sixth century BCE, and often continues to refer to
forced migration and exile” (p. 158). Since the 1990s, Diaspora studies have applied the
term to the larger and wider notion of transnational migration. For effects of this study, I
draw on the use of the concepts by Edward Said.

Edward Said’s *Reflexions on Exile and Other Essays* (2000) attempts to bring into
words the painful experience of exile. The author cites different experiences reflected
through individual intellectuals’ aesthetic production in relation to exile. Said rightly uses the
image of being uprooted and in solitude. But his reflections also provide an ambivalent
image of this limbo situation when stating that whereas “perhaps [it] seems peculiar to speak
of the pleasures of exile, there are some positive things to be said for a few of its conditions.
(…) Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are
aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous
dimensions, an awareness that “to borrow a phrase from music -is contrapuntal” (186). The author adds that “for an exile, habits of life, expressions or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus, both the new and the old environment are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally” (p. 86).

As an exile this notion captures my own experience. I have experienced being in constant negotiation with two worlds, not just with the use of two languages, but also facing and renegotiating the way I understand things from a Latin American perspective, contrapuntally to the perspectives of my new surroundings, a work that is constantly in process. In other words, exiles undergo a process where two cultural systems meet as in a pendulum. In the case of Latin Americans, the urgency to flee and move to a new country allowed them to meet and learn not only from the host nation, but also from people from other parts of Latin America, initiating a heterogeneous Pan-Latin American community. In the case of the radio show, this pendulum I am referring to, could be seen or heard through the use of Spanish and English, which becomes an element of their identity. Adding a literary example to this stance, this phenomenon may be observed and reflected on the works of Chilean-Canadian author Carmen Rodríguez, who also chooses a bilingual format to publish her works -written by herself in both languages. This new characteristic is seen as a formation of her new identity when introducing herself as a Chilean-Canadian author in the Forward of her work collection of short stories and a body to remember with/De cuerpo entero (1997):

Back and forth I went, many times, until I felt that both tips of my tongue and my two sets of ears were satisfied with the final product. In many ways, this process mirrors my hyphenated existence. I live and work on a teeter-totter, moving back and forth between two cultures and languages. […] Working through this collection, I
have realized that what I have to tell is not only in the content of the stories themselves, but also in the process of their bilingual, bicultural creation. I live, struggle, and work here, but I cannot forget where I came from. My heart trespasses borders and stretches over a whole continent to find its home at the two extremes of the Americas: in Chile and in Canada. And my hand writes in two languages: Spanish, my mother tongue, and English, my adopted tongue. I am a Chilean-Canadian writer. (p.14)

This literary example can also be used as a critical reference to the experience of ALAD, in the sense that the creation of counterhegemonic messages in English and Spanish are not the only important aspect, but also the formation of a new cultural identity, where exiles are part of the process, but not the only actors. Exiles, refugees and the diaspora in general went through a process of engagement and knowing by recreating cultural identities, including the one of the local activists, known in a Canadian post-colonial context as settlers. The literary example provides a glimpse of a personal identity metamorphosis when that pendulum of living in the old and new environment starts ticking. For exiles, language, through sound, voice and words, becomes the main channel that marks their identity as social activists emerging and creating a new way to continue with their political work. Activists are piercing the media enclosures not just with the retaking of this medium, but also with the use of both languages that allows reaching a bigger audience and multilingual audience and promoting international solidarity from portraying a Pan-Latin American and Canadian identities.

Thomas Wright and Rody Oñate Zúñiga explain in their article entitled “Chilean Political Exile” (2007) that exile may be seen from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it is a political practice imposed by repressive governments to get rid of opponents to their regimes, with the aim of neutralizing any movement of dissidents that could oppose the implementation or rather say, imposition of political and social changes to the country, such
as the case of Chile with policies imposed by Augusto Pinochet’s regime. On the other hand, the authors argue that exile may also be an impulse to continue working against repressive government through re-organizing collectively from an international arena. In Canada, there are studies looking at experiences by exilic communities, where the emphasis is focused on one specific group of people from one specific country, such as the Chilean experience (Baeza 2004, Palacios 2011, Peddie 2014, Sanhueza and Pinedo 2010, Wright and Oñate Zúñiga 2007). Their studies document the agency taken by the Chilean diasporic communities in the different places they went. In Vancouver, Carolina Palacios’ (2011) dissertation provides a well documented study of many cultural activities and projects done by Chilean exiles as sites of learning from an education perspective. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, Palacios highlighted briefly the role of Chileans in the creation of ALAD in the mid-1970s. In this decade they were mainly Chilean and Argentine exiles who were part of the collective.

By the 1980s, the voices through ALAD represent a change of different waves of exiles and refugees from Central America, who made their way into the Pacific terminus of the country. Said makes an important distinction between exiles and refugees. “Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider.” In contrast, for him “Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word ‘refugee’ has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas’ exile’ carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality” (p. 144). Based on evidence, the majority of exiles who were part of ALAD in the 1980s were refugees who were political activists before coming to Canada, but not all
refugees who left the different Latin American countries were involved in political activism. Many communities like the Mayan community in Guatemala were displaced due to the armed conflict, some managed to reach Mexican soil, and then they came to Canada from the refugee camps set up in the south part of Mexico. In my case, my exit from the country was facilitated by the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala. My involvement in politics was my choice and I was aware of the repercussion, including exile. Many refugees and displaced communities did not have that option, and the only way to survive was leaving their communities. The collective of people involved in ALAD during the 1980s were political exiles who transferred their experience in their new environment. Others who came as refugees with no prior political activism and migrants in general, discovered progressive politics through their work on the radio. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study, both refugees and exiles are seen as persecuted people who found refuge in Canada. A distinction is then, the ones who already were skilled in activism from their countries, and the ones who decided to start being activists in their new country. However, both left their countries due to the repression imposed by the different authoritarian regimes in the Americas.

There are some studies that document the experience of Central Americans in Canada, such as the study done by William James Smiley (1988), entitled *Salvadorian and Guatemalan Youth in Exile: Adapting to Life in Canada*. This work documents the different challenges and perceptions to adapt to a new country as exiles from a youth standpoint. The study was done from a Social Work perspective and highlights the social struggle and emotional struggle youth face adapting to Canada, including racism and discrimination in their new country. During the 1980s, many exiles and refugees were part of the program, but also migrants in general. Different from exiles and refugees, migrants chose to leave their
countries due to personal reasons. In the field of Hispanic Studies, Hugh Hazelton, in his article “September 11, 1973: Latin America comes to Canada” (2014), argues that the coup d’état in Chile is key to the development and establishment of Hispanic Canadian Literature. Through their writings many refugees and exiles work on issues related to their experience from an aesthetic point of view dealing with issues of identity crisis, nostalgia and resiliency.

The conceptual framework introduced in this chapter seeks to contribute to the different disciplines mentioned already and to expand to the findings of other studies conducted on experiences faced by Latin Americans in Canada (Baeza 2004, Del Pozo 2009, Palacios 2011, Peddie 2014, Riaño Alcalá 2008, Sanhueza and Pinedo 2010, Wright and Oñate Zúñiga 2007). The interdisciplinary approach places the experience of Latin Americans into the study of alternative communication practices and political transnationalism. The next chapter provides testimonies from people involved in the project in the 1980s, and also an overview of the radio show content, that is, the counter-narrative produced by them as media producers and activists.
2.2 Methodology Framework

La vida no es la que uno vivió, sino la que uno recuerda y cómo la recuerda para contarla.

Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it

— Gabriel García Márquez

Introduction

The second part of this chapter discusses the research design and methodology I applied to answers the main research questions. I begin by introducing the rationale behind using a narrative qualitative research approach and the methods applied. Next, I describe the process of recruiting participants, as well as considerations around possible risks, benefits and ethical issues, followed by a brief description of the data gathering and analysis processes for both primary and secondary sources.

2.2.1 Why a Narrative Qualitative Research Approach?

This study is qualitative by nature and I draw strongly from a narrative qualitative research approach. Gudmundsdottir (2001) argues that narrative research is the study of how human beings experience the world in a specific period and narrative researchers collect these stories and write narratives of experience. Furthermore, Mishler (1986) and Reissman (1993) state that this methodology seeks to understand the stories (told from the participants’ point of view) in themselves taking as point of departure that the stories weave a narrative

\[\text{Epilogue taken from Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s autobiographic novel Vivir para Contarla, (2002).}\]

reality and become the main source for thematic data analysis and interpretation. Therefore, my rationale of going straight to the source through a narrative approach (through the conduction of 10 individual oral interviews) is to hear first-hand from the voices of the interviewees who were the protagonists in making *ALAD* to be a concrete action or a performing utopia through the airwaves. Spector-Mersel (2010) stresses that to increase an understanding of a social phenomenon as whole, narrative researchers need to focus on analyzing and interpreting each individual story that is shaped by the feelings, experiences, knowledge and values of each participant linked to their context(s). Hence, the combination of all the stories is in turn shaped by the cultural, historical and political settings where they occur (Elbaz-Luwisch 2002). In this specific case, the different experiences shared by the interviewees expand my understanding of how ALAD radio collective members built and maintained a transnationalized practice of doing politics through an alternative media outlet and the reasons why radio was chosen as means of cultural production.

### 2.2.2 Narrative methodology

With the understanding that oral stories/narratives are the main corpus of information and material for analysis and that “t(T)he strength of qualitative research derive[s] primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22), I follow Spector-Mersel’s (2010) two basic principles for the interpretation of the stories: 1) Stories are the data and must be examined in themselves through a thematic analysis, and 2) The narrative analysis should be holistic. The former implies that each story should be analyzed, describing each participant and key aspects of his/her narration individually before moving into identifying common
emerging themes. In other words, the first principle implies that stories should not be dissected or de-constructed into isolated sections, rather each story should be analyzed in its totality through a thematic lens. Each oral story/narration I was told by each participant was immediately recorded and transcribed.

The latter principle of analyzing the stories from a holistic angle is key to this analysis because the context of the stories is vital to my research -those of Latin Americans coming either as political exiles and/or migrants facing the realities of learning to survive in a new country and those of Canadian-born citizens working in international solidarity, all joined by a common effort of broadcasting their political work. The holistic and thematic nature of the narrative research provides the possibility of re-constructing some of the interviewees’ experiences and shed light on the ways they make meaning of their own experiences (Maxwell, 1992). In other words, it increases an understanding on how ALAD represents a new relational practice of alternative communications and politics.

2.2.3 Participants and researcher position and credibility

One of the main characteristics of the narrative process is the collaboration dynamic between the researcher and the narrators as research subjects (Moen, 2006, p.61). All 10 participants were seen as central and vital narrators that decided what to (and what not) to share with me. In García Marquez's words -mentioned in the epilogue above- people re-tell the stories of their lives based on how they wish to remember them. Nonetheless, I was aware that participants could have been influenced on what (and what not) to share with me because they all were aware that I have been involved in the radio project. Thus, I approach this study with the understanding that I am not far removed from the process, but with the
conviction that my position should not be seen as negative or biased. Rather, I see it as elements that provided me with insight during the research process. I became involved with ALAD in the year 2000 and once becoming part of the radio collective, I soon realized that there were some processes and structures to follow that were inherited from former radio participants who were involved as far as 1977. Thus, I conduct this research with the responsibility, respect and effort to understand what participants decided to share with me and paying special attention to the emphases they put on their stories. Therefore, I believe that my knowledge, experience and skills can deepen my understanding of the way the collective political work and broadcasting production were carried out during the 1980s. Their stories provide key elements to understand how ALAD was able to continue being a media space or outlet for political work for waves of Latin Americans and allies who kept joining the radio collective after its inception, like myself a few decades later.

### 2.2.4 Criteria and process for recruitment of participants

The criteria I followed to decide to include potential participants for this research started by narrowing the decade of ALADs broadcasting to the 1980s. Then, I created a list of potential participants and collaborators during those years that I was aware of, others were referred to me by those same potential participants I contacted for this study. I put special emphasis on the people who worked as radio producers. Being a radio producer myself, I am aware of the different tasks and immense responsibilities this position entails to make sure the show is ready to go on air. However, former participants who were not radio producers were also considered as a way to listen to their perspectives based on their lived experiences working as part of the radio collective. Through contacts with previous producers I met
through my work on the radio, I asked them to ask potential former members if they agreed for me to contact them. Thus, my inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: Former members of the América Latina Al Día radio collective who worked on the program during the 1980s as a) radio producers and b) collaborators.

Another element I considered for the recruitment process was not to restrict the participation only to those who came to Vancouver for political reasons as political refugees because the radio show, as mentioned several times, has been produced by an eclectic and diverse collective of ordinary people.

Potential participants who met the recruitment criteria were asked to commit to a one- or two-hour interview as well as let open the possibility of further contact for clarification purposes. I did not restrict the interviewees to speak only English or Spanish since both, research subjects and researcher, are bilingual. The interviews were conducted on the language the interviewee felt more comfortable in, but mostly the interviews were done in both languages, except for two that were conducted only in English.

Maxwell (2005) emphasized that qualitative research is usually conducted with a small number of individuals. I aimed to include a maximum of fifteen participants in the study and I was pleased that ten showed interest in being part of the process. As for general information, four came as political refugees or exiles from South and Central America - the former during the 1970s and the latter during the 1980s; three were born in Canada, and three migrated from Europe and Latin America respectively. Seven of them were key members of the collective in the sense that they took the role of radio producers, making sure every radio show was ready for live broadcasting every Saturday at noon.


2.2.5 Ethical issues

Before starting the process in contacting and inviting participants to be part of the project, I followed up the guidelines and procedures as specified by UBC’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board. An application was submitted attaching all relevant documents: 1) A letter of invitation to be part of the research. This document included the amount of time required for each participant's involvement, clearly stating that participants can withdraw at any time (Appendix B), 2) Consent Form that included information on the researcher, the researcher's supervisor, purpose and background of the research, the study procedures, potential risk, potential benefits and confidentiality issues, and 3) A list of themes and potential questions to use as a guide during the oral interview (Appendix A). All these documents are included in the Appendix section. The study went into full review by the Ethics Board and was successfully approved under the certificate number H15-01169.

2.2.6 Confidentiality

I was aware of my responsibility and duty as a researcher to protect the privacy of all research participants, to obtain an informed consent and to ensure to all of them confidentiality. I explained the confidentiality issue in the written documents sent to each of them and I repeated it again once we met before I started recording the interviews. Participants were in agreement of using pseudonyms for each of them. I removed all identifying details from the interviews as well. I assured participants that their names would not appear in the study, unless any of them informed me otherwise. The consent forms were dated and signed by the interviewees at the beginning of each conversation.
All of the interviewees were interested in me sending them the final version of the thesis for them to read.

2.2.7 Risks

Since I was aware that some of my participants went through the painful experience of exile and potentially the stressful and sometimes difficult experience of the settlement process once in the host country, I was careful when designing the questions for the interview. The questions did not address any of those events directly. Rather, my inquiry aimed to trigger stories of agency and personal resilience in relation to radio production and broadcasting as a tool for political work. I made sure to remind participants their right not to answer any questions that they did not wish to talk about, to stop, to withdraw at any time, or to re-schedule the interview if they felt like doing so.

2.2.8 Other sources of information

The oral interviews are used as primary sources of information. Reel to reel material, newspaper clips and written ALAD scripts from this time are used as secondary sources. Specifically, these secondary sources are in the form of six reel-to-reel units and two cassettes from this decade. The Faculty of Arts accepted my application and granted me a research award that allowed me to digitalize the audio material. The digitalization is a way to preserve the content of the radio shows as a sample of what was produced and aired in relation to Latin America in the alternative airwaves during the 1980s.
Along with the audio sources, four written scripts were found attached to the reel to reels. The written scripts are in both English and Spanish. They include a line up page, which is the order of how the content was distributed according to the time available on air. The written scripts also include 8 news pieces in total. After digitalizing the audio material and listening to it, I found out that some of it matched the written scripts and news pieces. This secondary source of information is used mainly in one chapter. Chapter V analyses and discusses one of the main topics that emerged from the thematic and holistic analysis of the primary sources. This secondary material provides complementary information or evidence of the kind of content that was broadcasted during that decade.

It is important to highlight that not all digitalized audio material was used as a secondary source for this project due to the high amount of information and/or the low quality of sound. The latter made it difficult to listen and to understand the utterances made by the speaker(s). As a result, the transcription process of three digitalized reel to reels became a difficult process.

### 2.2.9 Data gathering

The process of data gathering involved semi-structured individual and in-depth interviews with ten participants/narrators. The questions prepared for the interview were designed as a guideline to help navigate the conversation. I sent the questions prior to the meeting with the participants for them to read them over and decide if they wanted to be part of the process. I divided the questions in four main themes as a way to elicit stories in the narrative tradition. The interviews lasted from one hour to up to two hours and a half. The
majority of them took place in cafes along Commercial Drive in East Vancouver, once considered from my point of view ‘the heartland of the Vancouver's left.’ Smith (1993) describes that “In the seventies, Commercial Drive became the home of growing ‘counter-culture’ composed of students, feminists, artists, pre-, semi- and full-professionals” (p. 115). Located in the Grandview-Woodland district of Vancouver, Commercial Drive was historically known as the Little Italy, as Italians, along with Chinese and East European immigrants decided to settle and to establish in the neighbourhood after the First and Second World Wars (Paquette, 2004, p. 70).

When I was conducting the interviews, I realized that Commercial Drive had a strong historical connotation for the participants. Unintentionally through the different meetings in cafes along the area known as 'The Drive,' I realized that the narrators used geographical spaces in the area to retell their stories about their participation in the radio. The interviews became somehow a memory walking tour because participants identified and pointed to key places that in their view were indispensable for their political work performance on the radio. Participants felt comfortable to meet me in these public places, except for one who preferred to welcome me in the privacy of her house. The theme of public spaces and their meaning (and symbolism) will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Two of the participants no longer lived in the Lower Mainland, so the interviews were carried out by skype.

I began each interview by explaining my keen interest in listening to their stories in relation to their ALAD experience. I started my first set of questions around their experience(s) with radio in general, prior to joining the collective. This topic set the tone for
the interview and the stories started to flow. I restricted myself to only listen and to say short sentences to elicit more information or to deepen the conversation. My goal with this set of questions was to start from their individual experiences with radio overseas (if any) and then transition those experiences to their reasons for their involvement with ALAD.

The second set of questions aimed to have an understanding from the participants’ perception of the role, reception and functionality of the radio show. These were some of the questions: how do you think Latin America or Latin Americans were portrayed back then in the media? In ALAD? Did ALAD have an audience? How did you know people were listening? What was the feedback received? This set of questions triggered many of the participants -especially the ones from Latin America- to focus on identity. The stories and experiences on migration and forced migration came out in the conversation in terms of the role ALAD had in their lives at that specific moment. As mentioned, the questionnaire was used as a guide only; depending on the participants' answers and their emphasis, questions were changed.

To start the third set of questions, I asked them if they could recall any anecdote during their time producing the show. The anecdote set the tone to ask about the challenges and successes they may think the radio program experienced. This section aimed to understand the process of producing the radio show *per se*, knowing by fact that this alternative radio station always has had limited human and financial resources available to be able to broadcast. The answers varied; however, all had memories of the intense manual labour involved in producing the show. For example, the writing of the news segment entailed finding and gathering information that they considered reliable, analyzing the
sources and then proceeding to the writing of the news pieces for a radio format, without forgetting to translate all of them into English or Spanish. Interviewees also tackled issues of internal conflict among themselves in their relation to their points of view and the way those conflicts were (or not) resolved.

During the process of doing the interviews, I noticed that participants wanted to share not just the challenges of producing the show, but their own individual challenge that, as immigrants, they faced. I asked each of them about their reasons to endure such an intensive labour on a volunteer basis. My intention was to elicit their individual narratives to be able to understand why ordinary people commit to this kind of activity on a voluntary basis. For all of them, the involvement in the radio became part of their daily life activities. The collective had to think of many strategies to be able to tell their stories with content that to their eyes was well researched, analysed, discussed and approved by consensus among all the members of the radio collective.

The concluding set of questions stressed their points of view in relation to the relevance (or not) of radio back in the 1980s to the current times. For example, which lessons could be learned from your work in the radio? Is there still an audience for ALAD? My intention was to elicit in the participants a self-reflection on their experience. My last question for them was: Was it worth it? Will you do it again? The conversations with some of them stressed the issue of the advanced technology compared to a more intense manual process during the 1980s, others stressed the work of ALAD politically, but the surprising part for me was to listen to the narratives of some of the participants who at the time of their
involvement became mothers while also carrying out the responsibility of being radio producers.

It is important to mention that some of the participants sent me messages via email the following day or days after the interview. The messages contain information that they told me they forgot to mention and that they considered important. All that additional information was added to the data.

2.2.10 Data Analysis

I audio recorded the interviews in a digital tape recorder for sound quality purposes. As soon as I had finished conducting each interview, I downloaded the recording into my laptop, which for security purposes is password protected. While downloading the interviews and in order to enhance my memory, I started writing down my impressions of the interview process, the interview settings, themes, topics and/or any specific aspect(s) that caught my attention.

I follow Maxwell's (2005) approach on how to organize qualitative data. After a lengthy process of listening and transcribing each interview, I printed them all leaving enough space between lines for writing notes. First, I just listened to the whole interview, then I proceeded to listening it while reading the transcription. Then I started the process of thematic coding by reading each paragraph and writing annotations on the side with different colors. Under the compass of my main research questions, the colour coding analysis allowed me to identify the type of stories and potential emergent themes. After finishing the coding process, I proceeded to analyze sub-codes or topics under each code. I made sure to
take notes and to highlight any metaphor, figures of speech, words, phrases, oxymorons, for example, that participants used. I also highlighted specific anecdotes. Finally, I assigned a title to each transcribed and analyzed interview that could summarize what the narrator emphasized the most during the conversation, as a way to distinguish the type of stories. For example: "Friendship embedded in solidarity," or "Despite all the problems, I had to do it." These two quotes were taken from the interviews and I used them as titles because they capture two key themes that these and other participants repeated with similar statements.

During the transcription process, I transcribed the stories in the language they were told during the interview process (English or Spanish or a mix of both languages). However, during the coding process, I translated all the data into English.

2.2.11 A colourful Excel sheet

As I proceeded with the analysis, applying thematic codes and sub-codes to the data, I started to identify broader emergent themes that potentially can provide responses to my research questions. However, finding myself with so much information and to be able to proceed with the writing-up of the themes and sub-themes, and under the advice of my co-supervisor Dr. Riaño-Alcalá, I created an Excel sheet to organize the data.

The Excel sheet includes seven main colour code columns. These are: thematic code, thematic sub-code, voices (pseudonyms of participants), country of origin, key quotes during the interviews (relevant to the thematic code and sub-code), main broad emergent theme, years involved in ALAD, role in the collective and anecdotes (if any). The Excel sheet includes four main broad themes, and each of them includes the pseudonyms of the 10
participants. The quotes attached besides each code and sub-code were electronically copied and pasted from the transcriptions, according to the broader theme.

The Excel sheet provides a well-organized and concise visual support that allowed me to map the qualitative data in order to continue with the analysis and interpretation process. For the parts transcribed in Spanish, I translated the information into English. Therefore, all the quotes copied into the Excel sheet are only in one linguistic code.

As mentioned, each interview was subject to many layers of thematic and holistic analysis. The corpus gathered through the interviews was coded and organized accordingly through a rigorous and close reading and listening of the recorded and transcribed material. Through the process of gathering and analyzing the corpus, it was possible to distinguish four emerging themes. The findings to these themes are presented in Chapter III and Chapter IV and V.

2.2.12 Secondary sources analysis

2.2.12.1 Close reading and contextual analysis approach

The secondary sources analyzed in this case study were written scripts. This material included news clips, editorials and introductions to specific topics broadcast during the 1980s. I decided to take a close reading approach to the content of the texts. From a literary studies and cultural studies point of view, the close reading approach offers a variety of techniques on how to analyze cultural texts, such as the radio clips used in this dissertation. I draw on Celena Kusch’s (2016) argument that “a close reading means making an interpretive argument about a text or texts, through detailed attention to and critical reflection on textual form and detail” (p. 75). Furthermore, I share the author’s argument that analyzing only
words is not enough to understand the variety of meanings a text may produce. Therefore, the radio clips are also analyzed from a contextual point of view that links the media texts to the time and place when/where they were broadcast on air.

I analyzed three introductions to different topics broadcast in 1984, 1988 and 1989, one editorial and four news clips. The analysis of secondary sources is used only with the findings in Chapter V. This chapter focuses on the steps taken by the collective members in order to make and produce the show on a weekly basis. Therefore, the audio and written material complement the qualitative narrative data from the interviews. The cultural texts provide a sample of what was broadcast and how it was broadcast. Pictures of the material are included as well.
Chapter 3: Mapping the Radio Experience as an Everyday Practice in the Life of the ALAD Collective Members

I grew up with the radio. In Chile, we heard everything on the radio, football, contests, news, comedies, politics. I am from the radio generation.

Ana María - Interviewee

Introduction

As the title suggests, this chapter is the point of departure for mapping the varied experiences of the participants with the presence of radio as a common denominator. Participants spoke of their everyday life experiences linked to this medium prior to becoming part of the ALAD collective. Once in Vancouver, their diverse journeys converged in an alternative media space where everybody had to adjust and negotiate the way to work in a totally different context.

The present chapter introduces the first part of the findings and the interpretative analysis of the interviews conducted with the participants. Following the analytical process for a critical narrative qualitative study, all interviews were coded following an inductive process. Through the process of gathering and analysing the corpus, it was possible to distinguish four common threads that were brought up by several of the interviewees.

The first broad theme entitled “I am from the radio generation,” introduces each participant while narrating and analyzing the influence radio, as a social and connective medium, has had in their lives. The second section, “ALAD filling the space of a Latin American public plaza”, addresses what Latin American exiles and migrants found absent in Canadian cities such as Vancouver and how they re-invented spaces to fill this gap. The
third one, “A passion or an addiction, or just plain commitment,” explores the impact of the participation in ALAD on the personal lives of the collective members. The fourth broad emergent theme, entitled “Broadcasting the South from the North,” provides in detail the rationale of choosing this medium and the process that accompanies it.

Mapping the radio experience as an everyday practice in the lives of the ALAD collective members starts with the first broad theme that describes the impact of this medium in shaping the political and cultural values of the participants according to their contextual frameworks. I argue that their prior experiences with this medium provided them with skills, knowledge and understanding of how to create a new relational practice of doing political work in a transnational setting. This chapter focuses on the first broad theme only. Chapter IV examines the second and third broad themes, while Chapter V introduces the last theme that includes secondary sources.

3.1 I am from the radio generation

Through the different stories and experiences, I heard, it is evident that this medium played a key role in their everyday lives from childhood, adolescence and adulthood. This familiar and close relationship with the medium was forcefully articulated by the participants from Latin America as “growing up with radio” and to some extent to the participants born in Canada. Walter Benjamin (2003), who worked on public radio himself, believed in the tremendous and positive value of radio as a social medium. Benjamin envisioned that radio can, in fact, involve and engage listeners in their culture and politics, counter-arguing the hegemonic idea of seeing the audience as a mass of passive and obedient listeners. Martín
Barbero (1992) echoed this line of thinking arguing against the myopia of not recognizing the audience’s agency. In other words, the author believes that the audience(s) can appropriate media content and technology to re-create their own social, cultural, and political meanings. Drawing from these ideas, I introduce the participants along with their experiences with radio prior to joining ALAD. What kind of impact (if any) could radio have had in their lived experiences? Has the use of radio shaped their cultural values at some point in their lives? Was the use of radio a means to reimagine their cultural identities? What are their narratives in relation to this medium? Were these experiences of the everyday somehow connected to the ALAD collective members turning to radio as a means of cultural production in Vancouver? Specifically, this section approaches the corpus looking through the lens of one of the main research questions: Were these experiences of the everyday somehow connected to the ALAD collective members turning to radio as a means of cultural production in Vancouver?

As mentioned, the ALAD collective was made up of different people who came to Canada for different reasons, as well as local media and solidarity activists. To capture the diversity of the ALAD radio collective, I introduce participants under three different categories or groups: exiles or political refugees, migrants and Canadian-born activists.
3.1.1 Political exiles: Ana María, Amanda, Rosa and Valentina

*Look, I grew up with the radio. When I was a child in Chile, we didn’t have television, we heard everything on the radio (...)*

Jimena - Interviewee

Radio experiences from the Southern Cone

Ana María, my first interviewee, was involved in the radio show since its beginnings until the end of the seventies. Even though this study focuses on participants who were involved during the 1980s, Ana María’s experience and knowledge are key because she provides valuable insights on the evolution of the radio show from its inception to its transition into the eighties.

When we met for the interview, we were both surrounded by the rich aroma of fresh dark roasted coffee in a café on Commercial Drive, an area simply known as ‘The Drive.’ We started our conversation and she told me she was one among the several political exiles from Chile who came to Vancouver after September 11, 1973. Ana María, along with her exile peers, created and produced *América Latina al Día* in 1977. She produced and collaborated with the radio show until 1979, before leaving the province. In fact, the title of this section was taken from one of her quotes: “Look, I grew up with the radio. When I was a child in Chile, we didn’t have television. We heard everything on the radio (...).” I can sense that she is full of energy when highlighting “I am from the radio generation.” She then

20 Day of the coup d’état in Chile that ousted democratically elected president Salvador Allende.
paused to sip her coffee and proudly uttered, “I was the girl who worked on the radio, I was eight or nine years old,” she commented with a big smile on her face.

Amanda also came from Chile as a political exile. Amanda echoes Ana María’s statement in relation to the presence of radio in her life: “You know; I was born with the radio. In Chile, we had no TV at home. When I worked at my mom’s kiosk the radio was always on, I started to work at 7 years old and the radio was always on, as everywhere. That was the tradition. It was normal.” She repeated the statement that I already heard previously from Ana María: “I am from the radio generation, my mom was a union member, so at home we always listened to the news, political opinion programs, my mom’s music like ranchera, tango, bolero, and when I was alone, modern music from my generation of course!” she added with a giggle. Amanda joined the collective in 1985. She became one of the main producers for the rest of the decade and into the next one.

Amanda and Ana María spoke of the influence of their local radio stations in their everyday lives when growing up in Chile. Amanda grew up in the capital city of Santiago and Ana María in Valparaíso, one hour west from the capital city. Both brought into the conversation metaphors such as ‘growing up with the radio’ and ‘being born with the radio’ that reflect how this medium was embedded in their everyday lives since they were very young.

Arne Hintz (2011) provides some context to the centrality of radio in the everyday life of Latin Americans. Her works specifically focus on community radio. She states community radio “is the only media outlet offering local news, programs on local issues, and programs in local languages” (p. 4). Community radio, she explains, offers the following
benefits: it can be used collectively; literacy is not essential, the use of radio waves requires only limited investment and it is the most accessible media platform. As a grassroots medium, radio has been on air in the whole region, and its beginning are traced back to radio initiatives in Bolivia and Colombia earlier in the 20th century21 (Kidd, 1999; Rodríguez, 2001).

The accessibility and the immediacy of bringing the message to the audience is what positions radio in general as a central communication medium in the everyday lives of Latin Americans since the early decades of the 20th Century. Radio is popular in the region because it has been embedded in local society since the young decades of the twentieth century. Thus, it is not surprising to learn that both Amanda’s and Ana María’s childhood experiences are linked to this sonorous medium; as Amanda said, “it was normal, it was the tradition.” The surprising part is to learn how my interviewees negotiated the constant presence of radio in their lives regardless of the radio stations being alternative or mainstream.

Ana María’s experience below does not come from her involvement in any community or grassroots-based radio station, but provides a clear example of the scope, dimension and reach the local commercial radio station had in her community. After our second cup of coffee, she went over every detail on how she got a job at the radio: “I don’t remember how exactly, but I remember that the local radio station wanted to create a children’s show, the show was called La Caravana de Bilz [The Bilz’s Caravan]. Bilz, she explained, is a locally made beverage. The announcement was done by the radio station

21 In IN These Times inthisetimes.com/article/20510
Radio Cooperativa, which “was not like Co-op Radio in Vancouver, no, no. That Radio Cooperativa was a commercial radio, they wanted to sell the drink,” she quickly clarified, and then proceeded to explain how she ended up working at such a young age.

I was the girl who worked on the radio. I was 8 or 9 years old. I remember it was a call for children in public schools to come and do an audition. They [The radio station management] didn’t want a privileged kid. I went with my mom to the radio in Valparaíso. They even brought me a chair with several cushions, so I could reach the microphone. I got hired! We were an adult and me. We received letters from children, we answered them, we carried out art contests, we read poetry. I learned how to produce a radio show, that you don’t have to speak too much on the mic [sic], that you play music, that you have to balance, I learned about the kids in the community, all that kind of stuff. (Ana-Maria interview’s excerpt)

Ana María paused for a moment, “it was the only experience I had working on radio in Chile. But it was such an experience, kids listened to the show, it was very popular.” She then reflected on how her time on the radio taught her different skills like not to be shy when speaking in front of an audience, for example. I could see that she was full of pride when narrating this lived experience. “You know, when I started working in ALAD, I was not scared of speaking on the microphone. I was very confident. For some people, it was a little bit scary.”

An important detail that linked both Ana María’s and Amanda’s upbringing is that in their respective families, one of their parents was affiliated to the union labour movement in Chile. Amanda and Ana María learned about the importance of political organizing based on the experiences witnessed at home. Thus, the shaping of their political and cultural values came from different sources. Moreover, having their parents involved in politics could have influenced what they listened to on the radio. Amanda clearly stated that because her mom was a union member, the family listened to the news and political opinion programs.
Nonetheless, both interviewees considered radio as one of the key elements for their political training and political values, as Ana María stated, “We Chileans, [political exiles] came from a reality where radio was key in all our political formation and upbringing.” And indeed, in Chile in particular the final words of resistance from President Salvador Allende were heard on *Radio Magallanes*, a station sympathetic to his government. In his historical farewell speech during the coup d’État before his tragic death, President Allende addressed each sector of the Chilean society. At the beginning of his speech, he reported the violence taking place against two radio stations before assuring his supporters that he was not going to resign. The excerpt below taken from his resignation speech demonstrates the importance Allende placed on the role of radio at that time:

> My friends, Surely, this will be the last opportunity for me to address you. The Air Force has bombed the towers of Radio Portales and Radio Corporación. […] Radio Magallanes will be silenced, and the calm metal instrument of my voice will no longer reach you. It does not matter; you will continue hearing it.  

It was a predicament of terrible times, but it also conveyed the certainty and confidence in the cultural and political agency of Chileans to fight for the Chile he envisioned through his Marxist government. With these final words, Allende sent the message of his certainty that after his death, his voice would live on through the resistance of the Chilean people. David Spener (2016) recounts the events that took place and the role of popular Radio Magallanes:

> On the morning of September 11, Salvador Allende found himself trapped in the presidential palace known as La Moneda as the military launched its putsch. One of the first acts of the golpistas (coup plotters) was to silence all pro-Allende broadcast media and replace their programming with martial music and military communiques. By midmorning, Radio Magallanes, the station operated by the Partido Comunista de Chile (Chilean Communist Party), was the only loyalist station still transmitting its

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22 The Vancouver Music Folk Festival is an annual corporate-free music concert created in 1978. The Festival takes place at Jericho Beach in British Columbia the third week of July.
own programming. At around 9:00 A.M., Allende, el *compañero presidente* (the comrade president) delivered his now-famous final address to the nation on Radio Magallanes before giving his life defending his presidential palace from the military’s onslaught. The skeleton crew staffing the studios of Magallanes had the presence of mind to record Allende’s extemporaneous remarks and spirit the recording out of the country to be heard in the rest of the world. His words are still remembered by those Chileans who supported him until the end and who survived the years of repression that followed his ousting. (p.18)

Soon after he finished addressing the nation, the Chilean Armed Forces began bombing the presidential palace, and military personnel raided the studios of Radio Magallanes. The operation against radio stations pro-Allende’s government was a criminal operation never seen before in the history of the American continent (Largo Farias, 1977, p. 27). Amanda and Ana María were among the millions clinging to the sounds of Allende’s words and, as many, ended up leaving the country as exiles. Nonetheless, both continued performing practices of resistance through their everyday political work through *ALAD*. Onwards, similar repressive practices were carried over through the region against activists and any media critical to the different authoritarian’s regimes.

*Radio experiences from Central America*

My next two interviewees came from Central American countries whose recent histories are as Chile’s, shaped by revolutionary struggles. Valentina was already living in exile in Nicaragua before coming to Vancouver. She was part of a group whose work was to denounce human rights violations in Guatemala through another cultural medium: music. Her group performed internationally in different venues, including the Vancouver Folk Festival.

Valentina agreed to meet with me at another café at the end of Commercial Drive at early hours before she had to head to work. A nice strong coffee helped both of us to focus
and start our conversation. “Listen, I come from a family with background in radio, TV and theater. Radio runs in my blood. My older sister was one of the first anchors in Guatemala,” she told me at the beginning of the interview. She recalled her experience working on commercial radio and community radio stations: “I have experience in radio and TV, in different mediums in Guatemala, which is my home country of origin.” Valentina stated that she learned a lot of production on community programing: “I liked it because the work was towards community education on women’s health, for example.” She paused for a while recollecting her memories, “In the mainstream media, I also worked there, reading the news.”

There were not many people in the Café at that hour, but still, Valentina whispered in my ear making sure that I was the only person who could listen. “I also worked in clandestine radio in Guatemala.” —a revelation I was not expecting to hear since I used to listen to that clandestine radio. I never imagined meeting anybody who produced those shows despite the dangers that just listening implied, let alone producing it. I did my best to control my excitement because I was aware that, as a researcher, I needed to ensure that participants took control of their own narratives.

Valentina was one of the many invisible producers of *La Voz Popular*, the clandestine radio station produced by Guatemalan insurgency organized under the Guatemalan Revolutionary National Unity -URNG. Their aim was to break the censorship wall in the country and provide their left-wing point of view on the situation. Valentina explained her double life very carefully,
Back then, we were living a very, very repressive time, so the underground radio was more political, and we couldn’t share our names on air. I produced the radio shows along with other people. I also trained people on how to read and produce clandestine radio. But these clandestine radio shows were transmitted from the mountains, and we were never able to listen to them in the open. But we knew people listened to it. (Valentina, interview’s excerpt)

Her memories brought up my own memories and I could see myself listening, clinging to the sounds emanating from the short-wave radio, as many of my peer university students did, protected under the veil of the night and the silence.

Valentina explained that in her work in mainstream media, she was allowed “to read what was in front of me, nothing was done collectively, nothing was written from my own reflection. I had the same experience in community radio where I had to read also what was already produced, what was already done, but I loved to do it.” I could sense that she was full of mixed emotions: “Those times were so difficult, so difficult. I had to be very careful.” She later confided as well that violence hit her home at a young age. Her dad was a union labour leader and was killed as a result of his political work. She became part of the ALAD collective a week after landing in Vancouver in 1989. Her musical group was invited to be interviewed in the ALAD radio show. She became part of the radio collective and stayed volunteering for a whole year.

Rosa, on the other hand, had no experience in producing radio, like Ana María or Valentina, but as the rest of them, she reflected on her upbringing linked to radio: “Radio is so popular, so popular in El Salvador. You hear everything, music, soap operas, news, sports, comedies.” She preferred to meet me at a park where we both enjoyed a nice glass of homemade lemonade. After she recounted the happy memories of listening all kinds of programming, including football (we both mimicked the radio announcers who screamed
their heads off when announcing that a specific team scored and in unison, we both screamed ‘gooooool’); we laughed a lot. After that, came a long pause. I could sense that she was gathering her thoughts before she started talking about her time in her hometown prior to Monsignor Oscar Romero’s killing in March 1980.

Karen Kampwirth (2002) documents how Oscar Arnulfo Romero was chosen to be the Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977. She explains that during his priesthood years, he was a quiet and non-controversial figure, so many assumed that he would continue like that when taking the new position at the head of the Catholic Church. However, in the same year of 1977, the violent repression in El Salvador hit hard the church due to some priests following the Liberation Theology movement which resulted in several of them being killed and/or victims of the state’s violence. Monsignor Romero’s voice “would end up being the single most important voice of opposition to the political and economic violence of the time. Sunday mass said by Romero and broadcasted nationwide over the archdioceses radio station, was the most listened to show in the country” (Kampwirth, 2002, p. 68). The author adds that near the end of each Sunday Mass, Romero reported important information that included well documented cases of those who had been killed or suffered political violence during the week prior to the Sunday broadcasting. In his reports, Romero would include the name of the perpetrators of this violence either by the hands of the government or by the hands of the guerrillas. Since more people were victims by the hands of the right-wing than

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23 Lee Moerman (2006) states that the Latin American liberation theology movement mandates liberation in terms of emancipation from the oppression caused through institutions and structures that sustain abject poverty. In a Central American context, Karen Kampwirth (2002) argues that the message and the Theology Liberation Movement triggered the rise of revolutionary politics in Nicaragua, but it was in El Salvador that it really ignited, in large part because of the figure of Archbishop Oscar Romero. (69)
by the left-wing, the military government felt threatened by Romero’s radio shows broadcasting nationwide (Kampwrith, p. 68). He was killed while saying mass on March 23, 1980 by the Salvadorian state (Montgomery, 1995, pp. 92-97, Peterson, 1997, pp. 60-66).

Currently, Monsignor Romero is well known all over Latin America as a martyr and as Saint Romero of the Americas. Victoria-based lawyer and author Matt Eisenbrandt (2017) carried out a ten-year lengthy and well documented research into his murder and the trial to bring his killers to face the justice system. His findings are reported in his book Assassination of a Saint: The Plot to Murder Oscar Romero and the Quest to Bring His Killers to Justice.

Rosa was one of the thousands of listeners to Romero’s broadcasted speeches/homilies. Her experience of her collectively listening with her fellow citizens provides an image of listening in unison in the open space: “On my way to take the bus to university, I could hear his homilies because everywhere I went, zigzagging streets, crossing the market, in the bus, people had the same radio station on.” She made a long pause while her thoughts kept going back in time: “People knew who he was, you didn’t need to own a radio, you could listen to him anywhere, everybody was tuning in to hear, to listen his voice. My whole city was listening.” She continued explaining that after his assassination, the church radio station (Radio YSAX) that broadcasted his homilies was shut down by the repressive authorities. I sensed that she was full of conviction when saying very loud and clear, “Killing didn’t silence him at all.” Rosa then confided that “you know, I was not even religious, I always argued with my mother about how conservative the Catholic Church was, but I was all ears when Monsignor Romero spoke through the radio.” Rosa added that Romero’s Sunday Mass provided her with vital news and information about the situation in the country. She repeated the famous words that Monsignor Romero addressed directly to the
Salvadorian army and the state authorities before being gunned down during Mass on March 23, 1980: “Les suplico, les ruego, les ordeno en nombre de Dios: ¡Cese la represión!” / “I beg you, I implore you, I demand in the name of God, that you stop the repression!”

For Salvadorians, Oscar Romero was the embodiment of the emerging doctrine of the preferential option for the poor, which posited that when faced with a choice, the Church should always take the side of the underprivileged. This position was a revolutionary departure from the Catholic Church’s doctrine of previous centuries, which asked their followers to accept their luck in this life and wait for their reward in the next one. Romero’s stance effectively encouraged the millions of poor and marginalized to question their lot or situation and demand better. In short, Romero’s message was: the church is with you if you challenge the status quo—a message that resonated in Rosa’s own political activism as a university student.

After a long pause of silence to collect her thoughts, Rosa explained that after Romero’s assassination, some other radio stations, such as the one at her university campus at Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), continued re-playing his speeches and adding more programming critical of the regime. Rosa summarized the gravity of the situation in El Salvador in few lines: “The 1980s were critical years in my country, the authorities didn’t want another Nicaraguan Revolution in Central America. The state repression was heavy, censorship was in full swing, but Radio Venceremos managed to broadcast from time to time.” In this quote, Rosa is referring first to the Sandinista movement that through a revolutionary process, was able to overthrow the Somoza dynasty on July 19, 1979. The Somoza dynasty ruled the country for decades. The Sandinista National Liberation Front
(FMLN) governed Nicaragua from 1979 until the 1990s elections (Luciak, 2001, xx). As Rosa said, Nicaragua became the tangible utopia for the Central American region, that sent the message to Guatemalan and Salvadoran insurgent movements that change could indeed happen through revolutionary processes.

Rosa was referring to the media enclosures imposed by the regime, when stating that “censorship was in full swing,” a practice that also took place in Nicaragua before the triumph of the Sandinistas. Under the Somoza dictatorship, the National Guard persecuted any dissenting propaganda. Nonetheless, grassroots organizations kept on creating ways to disrupt the media enclosures and make sure their messages were available to the people. *Radio Sandino*, a clandestine radio station broadcasting from Costa Rica, became an important source of revolutionary information for Nicaragua (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 68). I would argue that this source was not just a source of information for Nicaragua, but to the whole Central American region where clandestine radio practices were emerging. These radio practices, in my view, became a regional source of forbidden information that kept people informed of the political tensions across the region. This cross-border sharing of information, to my knowledge, has not been studied yet. In short, radio became a transregional media tool that accompanied the different revolutionary processes taken place amidst the media enclosures imposed in each country.

Rosa mentioned the presence of the legendary *Radio Venceremos*. It was produced by members of the guerrilla movement organized under the Farabundo Martí for the Liberation
The FMLN became a political force in El Salvador after the signing of the Peace Accords in this Central American country on 1990. Currently, the FMLN party has won two presidential elections. The second term under the presidency of Salvador Sanchez Ceren will end in 2019.

Broadcasting the Civil War in El Salvador: A Memoir of a Guerrilla Radio is a memoir written by Carlos Enriquez Consalvi, known as “Santiago” was published in 2010. The memoir is told from the point of view of ‘Santiago’ one of the main voices and legends behind the microphone of this underground radio station about the Salvadorian conflict in the framework of the Cold War.
to communicate to anybody. And we, we couldn’t continue just taking over radio stations. It was something, but not much.

The quote above provides a snapshot of the censorship imposed to the media during the 1970s and 1980s in El Salvador. There is a reflection of why written media with revolutionary ideas was inefficient and dangerous for both the giver and the receiver of the information. It mentions the violence faced by some left-wing newspapers, including Monsignor Romero’s radio station. It explains the rationale of the importance of radio in the face of difficult times, emphasizing that it is impossible to confiscate voices. As a result, the rebels decided to start their own clandestine radio station project.

Rosa reflected on how these experiences with radio in general impacted her life later on. She puts it in a metaphor: “It was a time that I was trying to catch bits of information here and there, bits of information, like catching butterflies. I was a student. Those times left a mark not just in my life but also in the people of my generation.” Rosa was a university student at the time she had to leave her country; she came to Vancouver in the early 1980s. She participated mainly in several fundraising campaigns for ALAD and for Co-op Radio in general. Rosa stated that her work was mainly behind the scenes because she was aware of the importance of the fundraising efforts and logistics essential for the survival of the radio show.

Through the experiences shared by all four political exiles, it is possible to see the omnipresent force that radio played in their childhood, adolescence and adulthood that influenced and shaped their political values and perspectives. The presence of radio during times of conflict allowed them to have access to information and connection with their peer citizens to make sense of their harsh realities. Powerful metaphors such as being born with
the radio, growing up with radio and radio runs in my blood linked their experience with this acoustic medium as part of the metaphorical genetic gene inherited, which indeed proves that they all belong to the radio generation. Through this figurative language in relation to radio, interviewees witnessed their peers’ agency by using radio as a tool to change their realities.

Rosa and Valentina witnessed the proliferation of violence, but also the proliferation of radio stations defiant to the authorities. Both reminded me of the protests’ slogan in the Plazas in Latin America: “A mas represión, mas organización” (in the face of more repression, more organization). Through their shared experiences, it is clear that they, as individuals, had intense lived experiences with radio in their countries, which they will carry with them into their new realities in Vancouver.

Furthermore, Valentina, as well as Amanda and Ana María, shared that their fathers were labour union activists, inheriting the tradition of activism. All of them had a clear experience of radio linked to political activities prior to coming into exile. They all understood the use of radio as a tool for political organizing because they all experienced and witnessed in their own skin the enclosures to alternative media in their respective countries. They all witnessed, and in Valentina’s case, participated in the emergence of radio practices defiant to the authoritarian efforts of silencing voices. Radio practices that, in exile, were set in motion with the creation and production of ALAD.
3.1.2 The Migrants from Latin America and Europe: Jimena, Pilar and Ann

Experiences from Colombia, Mexico and England

After exchanging a few emails back and forth, I met with Jimena in another café also on The Drive. She told me that she used to lived closed by. After deciding what to order, we both found a quiet spot in the café to carry out the interview. Right away she told me she was aware of the importance of sound quality while using a recorder. As I did with the other former collective members, I asked Jimena about her relationship with radio before joining ALAD. Jimena spoke of the daily presence of radio in her country of origin: “You know that in Colombia, radio is very, very popular. People listen to it a lot, a lot.” She highlighted the impact of first hearing about key world events on the radio she listened to when in Colombia: “I remember hearing about the killing of Kennedy, […] I remember well what happened with Allende in Chile; I was young, I was 13 years old. I was so impacted by that. These are moments that are burned in my memory, such as the Sandinista triumph as well.” She characterized her life as “one of an ongoing back and forth.” She explained that since she was young, she started to travel back and forth from Colombia to Vancouver. Radio for her was both, a conduit of information that somehow shaped her understanding of the realities of the world she was living in at the time, but also a link to her Latin American roots: “When I was young and in Vancouver, I remember having a small portable radio and at night, I tried to find radio stations in Spanish.” She joined the ALAD collective in 1987 and became a producer for at least a decade.

Jimena was introduced to radio production in Vancouver through Co-op Radio: “I heard that a radio was providing workshops, so I went and learned the basics with big tape
recorders and how to edit with reel to reel. I found the process so fascinating, I loved it.”

This experience along with her academic training ignited her love for sound. Jimena explained that she learned to edit sound when she was a student at Simon Fraser University:

“I remember learning how to edit, our professor played a clip and we heard [President] Nixon saying, ‘I am not a crook,’ then she edited it in such a way that we heard him again saying ‘I am a crook.’” We both laughed at that. These experiences built her interest in producing radio documentaries and the sound technology that comes with it: “It was awesome to be able to create radio documentaries.” For her, the ability to produce sound in the form of documentaries was the main reason she decided to join the collective.

The only house I visited was Pilar’s. She did not want to meet in a café and instead treated me for coffee at her place (not far from Commercial Drive). As soon as I entered in her living room I felt at ease. Pilar was born and raised in Mexico: “I have heard radio all my life, more than TV. I used to listen to lots of music from Veracruz, music from Oaxaca, lots of tropical music. All kinds of programming really.” Pilar did not remember how she ended up volunteering for ALAD. She remembered that she did join soon after arriving in Vancouver in 1986 and stayed put until 1993 in her role as a producer. Pilar’s learning experience as a radio producer was also as part of her academic training as a Communications undergraduate, “I studied Communications at the UAM [Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana] Xomilco Unit (Unidad Xomilco). My department followed a Marxist model. You didn’t have to do exams, but to produce media products. For posters, we produced posters, for radio, we produced radio.” Pilar then recounted her experience working with indigenous communities in Mexico producing radio documentaries. She mentioned that this experience was similar in a way to her work with ALAD because she was working with a
collective of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I could sense some nostalgia in her voice when recounting one academic assignment that left a mark on her. The assignment was to develop twelve radio dramatizations on the indigenous Otomi community organizing. She proudly remembered that “The documentaries were so good, that the government prohibited broadcasting them all. I think we managed to air 6 of them only.” She explains in detail that, “I think that happened [the halt to the broadcasting] because one thing is to have community grassroots organizing in the community, but another one is to broadcast that community organizing to a state level or even to a national level.”

Pilar reflected on how this experience made her realize that the work done by her, her student peers and members of the Otomi community did on the radio was successful and could have a positive impact for change in the Mexican society: “It was prohibited because it was good. At university, we were told that the research carried out to make the documentaries, was of very high quality.” When asking her what other lessons, she got from this experience, she answered that “We were on the field all the time, we were in the communities. And I remember indigenous people we worked with telling us, you are not here to teach us, but to learn from us. We are aware of our own conditions. I was 18 or 19, but I learned so much from that.” Pilar’s experience reiterates the potential radio has of reaching communities, and the potential to open up experiences to young people like her at that time. Her experience is again another example of media enclosures that aim to control what should and what should not be made available to the public. Pilar told me that that experience left a big impression in her. After another cup of coffee, she told me that she joined ALAD right after landing from Mexico. Joining the radio collective was a smooth transition from her rural experience back home to a transnational scenario in Vancouver. Pilar was part of the
radio show for more than a decade. She remembered producing and working on the radio while being pregnant and after her baby daughter was born. Although she shared the political values of the collective, Pilar believed that connecting with the emergent and local Pan-Latin American community was as important as connecting with social activists down South.

I met Ann through Skype because she left Vancouver and now lives in Eastern Canada. Contrary to the other interviewees, Ann did not mention in detail her experience(s) with radio prior to joining the collective. She limited her responses to her relationship with radio as a conduit to enhance her listening skills in French. She was born in England and graduated from the London School of Economics. She migrated to British Columbia in the 1980s. As said, her connection with radio during her youth was linked to her linguistics needs: “In high school, I started to listen to the radio in order to learn French. I lived in the south of England.” This is the only experience with radio when growing up that she shared. Ann got involved in ALAD in 1988 after volunteering at the Vancouver Folk Festival where she learned about the existence of Vancouver Cooperative Radio. She highlighted that she studied Political Science at university. She finished a master’s degree in Soviet Politics: “I was passionate about politics, and Latin American politics were really interesting.” Given that the primary foil of revolutionary in Latin Americans were the United States, some revolutionary movements looked to the Soviet Union as an alternative or as a counter-weight to the United States hegemony in the region. Ann was fluent in Spanish when she joined the collective. She stayed for over a decade until she decided to work in Latin America. She became an ALAD radio producer and co-host of the English component of the program.
3.1.3 Progressive Canadian-born: Margaret, Maurice and Robin

For the Canadian members who were part of the collective, radio has also been present in their everyday lives, as Margaret indicates: “I was born in Vancouver and I don’t recall when my family switched from commercial radio to CBC, but I have been a listener for a long time. I recall the radio on in the kitchen. (…) For sure radio has always been part of my life.” I met Margaret not far from Commercial Drive. Our point of encounter was Trout Lake Community Center. We first walked around the park until we found a fine bench looking at the lake. An avid bird-watcher, Margaret pointed to some flinches, robins and other birds while we were getting ready to record. Margaret explained that prior to becoming part of the radio collective, she volunteered with Amnesty International, and later became an English language teacher. She mentions that some of her students were refugees mainly from Central America. Margaret became part of the radio collective in 1987, because some of her students and people from Latin America she knew were involved in ALAD. She made it clear that she never produced any show, but she was part of the writing news committee and a host for the English language section.

A few days after I met Margaret, Maurice and I met at Commercial Café, a cozy and locally owned coffee business located in the border between Commercial Drive and Cedar Cottage neighbourhood. Maurice worked as a mainstream newspapers’ journalist during the 1980s. When asked about his relationship with radio while growing up, he said: “I did grow up listening to radio. We had a little tiny short-wave radio, and I remember putting it under my pillow. My brother and I would get stations from Toronto and Detroit. […] I listen to CBC since I am 5.” Maurice was born and grew up in Ottawa but moved to BC eventually. He joined the collective at the beginning of the 1980s. He stayed for over a decade. Maurice
says that his involvement has been intermittent during all these four decades. Currently, he is still working with the collective. His role has been mainly to provide and write news pieces as well as host the show in English. He stated that he became a producer for a couple of years in the early 1980s.

Robin and I met at the Café Calabria, a well-known family-owned business on The Drive. The Calabria was bursting with customers and loud voices. We decided to sit down outside the café to conduct the interview. Robin, a freelance journalist born in Vancouver, made it clear that he became an avid radio listener during his teen years. He stated that his parents listened to CBC as well, but his generation was a generation more influenced by television. He contributed with the show providing news pieces. Robin provided some context on the role of radio had in his life, especially during his teenager years: “Radio stations were local in Vancouver, and people tuned in to hear about their bands, music groups and about youth culture. DJs were quite influential among youth.” Robin continued explaining that “commercial radios were local, not like now that the same DJ will be broadcasting all over North America, but in those years, there were different stations, CKLG 73 had contests and you never knew if they were going to call you. It was interactive, people phoned in.” Margaret provided a similar answer by saying that “It was all about DJs and rock music. CKLG 73 was big. It was about being cool.”

26 In his article “CKLG may resurface as new/talk radio: Once a leader, lowly rock station seems set for a makeover” published in The Province on 15 December 2000, Joe Leary emphasizes that this radio station was once a leader during the 60s, 70s and well into the 80s “while constantly battling rival CFUN for ratings supremacy among the local youth ranks, CKLG was widely acknowledged as being of the seminal Top 40 radio stations among the major North American radio markets. The previous statement is echoed on the website: http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/listing_and_histories/radio/chmj:- “About a year after the spring 1968
Besides, to keep up with the name and popularity of DJs, Robin shared his experience that included radio, rock and roll and police riots: “For a while, I think in Vancouver there was an overlap of politics and counterculture. The rock-and-roll genre was seen as subversive.” He tried to remember a police riot in Gastown in the downtown area, when police on horses dispersed young people in 1971. The youth were against the harsh laws imposed for the use of marihuana. He mentioned the Gastown riot to explain that when the Rolling Stones concert happened in Vancouver a few years later “some of the political youth wanted revenge for the Gastown riots and got a truck with rocks. These were anti-establishment activities done by youth, rock and roll turned subversive.” He continued explaining that at the time BC Premier Campbell arrested 20 ‘hippies’ using the War Measures Act invoked by Pierre Trudeau. He adds that “Radio stations were broadcasting all of this, live. That really impacted me during my teen years, specifically the live coverage.”

programming changes, Don Hamilton updated things, saying CKLG-AM-FM had a unique format aimed at the youth market and young adults. He said AM was probably the only station of its kind in Canada - fully involved in serving the dynamic and growing youth market (under 25). The format was very tightly disciplined. CKLG-AM first approached this type of market in 1964. Each hour (24 hours a day) CKLG-AM played a minimum of 16 pieces of music with a maximum of 12 minutes of advertising, blended with public service, interviews and community events. Hamilton said the station began using CHUM's Ottawa news service (Contemporary News) in the spring of 1968. It was geared to a young audience. Even ads on the station were geared to the young. As to CKLG-FM, it pioneered the approach of "The New Music" in Canada, starting in mid-March of '68. The programming policy generally revolved around three categories and allowed for a freedom for experimental approaches. The three general groups of music: electric (progressive rock groups), folk and a combination of soul and R&B. Heavy emphasis was placed on experimental jazz. The approach also allowed for music from East India, Japan, Spain and even classical."

28 The Canadian Encyclopedia states that: The War Measures Act or MA was a federal statue adopted by the Parliament in 1914, after the outbreak of the First World War. The MA allowed the Canadian Government to maintain security and order during the war. The MA was a state of emergency.
I could hear the excitement in his voice when explaining that the youth movement was growing, and their anti-establishment activities were showing a level of resistance that the radio hosts were openly talking about on their programming. Robin provided some context of what was happening in Vancouver: “During the 60s and 70s, there was a counterculture movement on the West Coast that attempted to remake society; it was a common desire, a common utopia.” This counter culture movement was aware that mainstream media was not going to provide the opportunity to communicate that to the general public: “There were groups involved in making efforts to democratize the media, they created *The Georgia Straight*, they created Co-op Radio.” His statement supports the research made by Kidd (1998) and Hackett (2011) who have documented the creation of alternative media in Vancouver as part of the counterculture movement on the West Coast. The fight to have access to media and produce media was part of many social movements taking place in Vancouver. Many strategies were put in place by left-wing activists from different positions (labour movement, feminists, etc.) to create social, economic and political changes in the province. Hackett and Carrol (2006) highlight the strategies carried out by media activists to counter the media democratic deficit during the last decades of the 20th Century. The authors feature the creation of Co-op Radio and other media projects as part of the many strategies and gains resulted by the work of media activists in the West Coast. I draw on the authors’ statement that media activism should be linked to other critical social movements as a way to form cross-movement links.

In its edition for its 50th anniversary, *The Georgia Straight* published on the week of May 4-11/2017 that from its beginnings and with the support of “hippies, Yippies, small-liberals, Diggers, Whole Earthers, freaks, nudists, radicals, revolutionaries, (...) the Straight
carried on and began to not only prosper but matter.” (p. 50). The article emphasized that: “with incisive news, withering commentary, and social justice issues that were absent from other papers, the Straight soon found itself at the tip of Vancouver counterculture spear” (p. 50). Among the topics included, the article mentions “a sharp focus on police -a common problem for members of the counterculture at the time- and citizens’ rights” (p. 50). The article offers a quick overview of the topics covered during the five decades, but the topic of exiles from Latin America landing into Vancouver since the 1970s does not appear among them.

For the Canadian interviewees, their experiences of listening were less diverse than those of the Latin Americans. Maurice, Margaret and Robin lived in a very different political and social context than their counterparts and, thus, were not exposed to community or clandestine radio stations. All three spoke of their parents listening to CBC radio broadcasting which made their experience more homogeneous, assuming that they were listening to the same programming nationally. Based on their experiences, radio was popular during their teenage years and involved some level of participation when calling in to the stations. Nonetheless, some of them, like Robin, experienced the media enclosures and the police brutality against his peers during the raids. Maurice and Robin became journalists. Maurice worked in both mainstream and alternative media outlets in Canada. Robin became an independent journalist and worked as such in Latin America. Robin was stationed in Mexico working for an independent Latin American News Agency and Media Research
Centre\textsuperscript{29} that was created to break the media enclosures imposed by the Guatemalan state and mainstream media during the armed conflict in the country.

### 3.2 Discussion

The narratives shared by the participants allowed me to map diverse and heterogeneous communication experiences of their real lives in their own historical and political contexts as they remember them. Regardless of where they tuned in and the different cultural and political scenarios they grew up in, it is evident that the act of listening to radio was not a passive performance, but part of their cultural agency. Regardless of the dangers and violence faced in their respective countries, participants witnessed and were actively aware of the importance of the role of radio and the effectiveness of the use of radio in difficult times. Therefore, I interpret the findings from a cultural agency lens and as a collective performance of listening.

### 3.2.1 Growing up with radio through a lens of cultural agency

For the Latin American interviewees and to some extent the Canadian-born participants, radio has been a central communication and an omnipresent cultural practice that has been embedded in their everyday lives since birth, childhood and adulthood. The

\textsuperscript{29} Also known as CERIGUA, the \textit{Centro Exterior de Reportes Investigativos sobre Guatemala}, was founded August 8, 1983 by exiled Guatemalan journalists as a project to inform the world about the deepening social struggles and massive human rights violations taking place in the country. The agency specialized in covering human rights, labour and land struggles, as well as the armed conflict.
expressions repeated several times by several of them—“I am from the radio generation,” “I heard radio all my life,” “In Ottawa, I grew up listening to radio,” and “I was born with radio”—trigger a first reflection to explore their communications practices from a cultural agency perspective. Doris Sommer (2006) points out that “Throughout the Americas, culture is a vehicle for agency” (p. 2); “Culture enables agency. Where structures or conditions can seem intractable, creative practices add dangerous supplements that add angles for intervention and locate room for maneuver” (p. 3). I include the performance of daily listening to the radio as part of that cultural agency. The daily active performance of listening opened the door to many possibilities of learning, from technical skills to reflections and produced meaning or made sense of current events, involvement in media making and understanding that radio was a vehicle for political organizing, resistance not just at a local level, but to an internationalist level. Radio entered the acoustic realm in Latin America in the early decades of the twentieth century and was soon used as a tool for political organizing like in the case of the miners in Bolivia (Kidd, Rodríguez 2006). Examples of these creative practices to disrupt the ‘intractable,’ as expressed by Sommer in the quote above, are found in the communication experiences narrated by my interviewees, such as the development of clandestine radio in times of authoritarian regimes.

Radio, for the majority of participants, was seen as part of their being to the extent that Valentina used the metaphor “radio runs in my blood,” which suggests how the everyday cultural practice of active listening (and in some cases of producing) is part of a sort of cultural DNA inherited and passed on since birth. I borrow the term DNA from Diana’s
Taylor’s essay *DNA of Performance*\(^{30}\) (2006). For the author, the DNA term provides a metaphorical and functional meaning because it allows to explore the transmission and dissemination of cultural practices (p. 56). Taylor refers specifically to the performance of protests that helps survivors cope with individual and collective trauma by using it to fuel political denunciation. For the present study, the cultural DNA of active listening to the radio has been disseminated and transmitted from generations not as a rigid and fixed way, but according to their historical context, where participants as listeners were in constant negotiation with? the immediate political and social current events that were occurring. Through the practice of everyday listening, radio became a medium to listen to and a mode in which the interviewees learned to consume and do politics. Their daily contact and experience with this medium fostered different skills, knowledge, reflection and meanings.

Their diverse everyday experiences with radio shaped their interest not just in this medium, but also in listening to their community and to the world. Ana María’s experience as a child instilled in her to reflect on the value of community engagement during her time as a child host in a commercial radio show. Amanda mentioned that she started to work at a young age of 7 and during her time working at her mom’s kiosk, the radio was on. She mentioned that she listened to everything, including political commentary programming. Pilar also shared her experience producing grassroots radio documentaries being a teenager, with the Otomi communities in Mexico. This experience was for Pilar: 1) a fine example of media enclosures by the State government authorities, and 2) the knowledge and interpretation of their own realities that indigenous communities already had. For Pilar, the

possibility of working along with Otomi community members was an eye opener to learn on community organizing at a grassroot level. She herself reflected on the experience: “What happened to me as an individual working in the field alongside with indigenous communities, that experience marked me for life at many levels.” She explained that working with a culturally and linguistically diverse group in Mexico was a similar experience when she landed to volunteer for ALAD. For Ana María, Amanda and Pilar, the DNA of active listening provided them with many tools for activism, political organizing, in-depth analysis of their different contexts, technical skills, etc. that they put in place when they willingly decided to act for social change. Similarly, for Robin as a teenager in Vancouver, listening to radio became a conduit to understand police repression of the youth movement in Vancouver in the 1970s. As he said, “the live coverage of the events impacted me because this wasn’t happening somewhere else, it was happening in my own city.” A similar experience had Jimena, who used radio as a window to learn about world politics that fostered in her an interest in sound technology. Her academic and volunteer training with alternative radio enabled her to become a radio documentary producer for ALAD.

I argue that the participatory element of the cultural performance of everyday listening: 1) shaped participants’ interests not just in radio as a medium but provided them with skills useful for their political organizing later on in their lives, and 2) shaped their political, social and cultural values. Going back to one of my main research questions: Were these experiences of the everyday somehow connected to the participants in this case study, turning to radio as a means of cultural production in Vancouver? Through the experiences each of them went through in their own context, radio was conceived as a mode to listen to their immediate realities and to the rest of the world since a young age. This daily practice of
listening was fundamental to their decision to get involved in politics. Specially in the context of political repression where violent enclosures to communications commons triggered the emergence of communication practices that disrupted the media enclosures on an ongoing basis. All their prior experiences converged when joining ALAD. Their lived experiences resulted in ALAD becoming a Pan-Latin-American communications commons that fostered cultural agency through political organizing on a transnational setting.

### 3.2.2 A Collective Performance of Listening

The second reflection triggered by the powerful vignettes of lived experiences from the narratives gathered shed light to understand the daily interaction with radio as an exercise of a collective performance of listening. In *Performance* (2016), Diana Taylor asked the question: “How would our disciplines and methodologies change if we took seriously the idea that bodies (and not only books and documents) produce, store, and transfer knowledge?” Since the voice is part of the human body, I draw from Taylor’s broadest possible way to conceptualize performance as “a process, a praxis, an episteme, a mode of transmission, an accomplishment, and a means of intervening in the world” (2002). In agreement with Taylor’s definition, Beauchesne and Santos (2017) clearly stated that their conceptualization of performance moves beyond, “from its more mundane usage as entertainment to its deployment as a medium in performing arts or embodied manifestations, to explorations in performative texts” (p. 4). For this study, I use the concept of performance from an everyday embodied manifestation through a communication practice. The cultural agency exercised through the performance of speaking in communion with the performance
of listening through sound is an everyday praxis, an everyday process that can disrupt the status quo. Several lived experiences shared by the participants provided powerful instances where the voice uttered through the radio airwaves triggered an acoustic resistance in the face of violent regimes.

Walter Ong’s words—“sight isolates, sound incorporates”—(1982, p. 72) are similar to the ones uttered by Margaret: “There is something to do with the human voice that engages you.” The sounds involve the listeners beyond only absorbing information, but as being part of the community. Amanda remembers listening to the radio when she was working at her mom’s kiosk at a tender age of 7, and Maurice listened to his small portable radio under his pillow trying to reach programs from Detroit while he was growing up in Ottawa. As a young girl, Jimena also had a small portable radio that connected her to her roots in Latin America. She provided that image of a young girl trying tirelessly to find radio programming in Spanish during her time living in Vancouver.

The narratives shared by Rosa, Valentina, Ana María and Amanda in times of political conflict in their countries provided the image of a collective performance of listening that triggered a common sense of what might be called ‘acoustic resistance’ and/or ‘acoustic solidarity’ despite the terror and violence taking place in the moment. The sounds were played in the open, as Rosa detailed her memory of walking through the streets of her hometown listening to Monsignor Romero’s voice being played in open, public spaces. Valentina’s story positioned herself not as a listener but as a producer of underground radio; even though the radio programming was aired underground, the ‘acoustic resistance’ was part of many Guatemalans’ cultural agency. Guatemalans took control of their situation by
consciously deciding to listen to their radios and tune in to the clandestine programming being broadcast from the far away mountains. The act of listening to the radio was a way for many to be aware of the situation beyond the controlled and censored media. Radio was the conduit that made it possible for people to be aware of and mediate their political context. Therefore, I conceive their different experiences not only as spaces of communication autonomy, but also as spaces for a collective performance of listening.

The habit of everyday listening to radio is not limited, as Diana Taylor (2016) explains, to mimetic repetition. It includes the possibility of change, critique and creativity within the frameworks of repetition. Through the oral stories shared by the participants from Chile and Central America, it is clear that radio was key to the development of events that led to different strategies to develop “an acoustic resistance” that became a source of information and political organizing regionally. In Vancouver, participants continued with the praxis of a collective performance of listening, but now in a transnational setting as their reality had changed. ALAD was a pan-American radio collective: it fostered and fueled (as many other political projects did) the solidarity movement towards Latin America from the Co-op Radio studios for forty years and counting alongside their Canadian peers.
Chapter 4: Laying Down Roots through the Emergence of a Communications Commons Practice

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.”

Simone Weil

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced the first of four broad themes that emerged from the analysis of the oral narrative interviews. In the section I am from the radio generation, I mapped, analyzed, interpreted and discussed each participant’s lived experiences and contextual background in relation to radio and linked those experiences to their involvement and participation in the ALAD collective. The interpretative analysis and discussion for the next two themes highlighted that they are linked to similar conceptual ideas, such as diaspora, exile, migration, social movements in the alternative media framework, political transnationalism and emotions. Therefore, in this chapter I introduce the interpretative analysis and discussion of these two interrelated themes: a) “ALAD filling the gap of a Latin American Plaza Pública”, which addresses what Latin American exiles and migrants found absent in Canadian cities such as Vancouver; and b) “A passion or an addiction, or just plain commitment”, that explores the impact of the participation in ALAD on the personal lives of the collective members.

The chapter starts by analyzing exiles’ experiences of being forcibly displaced and the general sense of up-rootedness felt by both exiles and at some point, migrants as well. Specifically, I examine the sense of loss shared by the interviewees through a metaphor that compares ALAD with the Latin American plaza pública, its meaning and functionality. Then, I look into the emergence of a transnational practice of doing politics from an alternative media framework. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the notion of nostalgia and other emotions that trigger the performance of re-imagining what was left behind in Latin America. This movement, I argue, constitutes an effort of laying down roots, despite the individual and collective challenges that both refugees and migrants faced and felt in their new country. The interpretative analysis and discussion presented in this chapter answers two central questions of this dissertation: why did exiles from Latin America turn to radio as a means of cultural production? and, how did exiles turn alternative radio into a means to construct a transnational practice of doing politics?

4.1 We are here now, but no sign of a plaza pública

In the epigraph above, I quote Simone Weil on the need for human beings to be rooted, to feel rooted as a way to be, to belong to a place, to a community. In the case of forced displacement as experienced by four of my interviewees, the right to be rooted in their communities was cut abruptly. In the following anecdote, that painful experience is described by Ana María, whose forced displacement and exile were experienced not just by herself, but by other members of her family. As the sunny afternoon and the ambience of the café was bursting with laughs and chatter of happy customers around us, Ana María omitted any details of violence and pain caused by the political situation in Chile that pushed her and
members of her extended family into exile. Instead, she fast-forwarded to the time her
brother landed in Vancouver with the following anecdote:

My brother was the first Chilean political refugee who came to Vancouver. He came
with 10 dollars in his pocket and he had no idea of anything. He didn’t understand the
part that the government puts you in a hotel once you arrive and gives you support.
What my brother had in his mind was to go straight from the airport to the
Vancouver’s public PLAZA, yes P-L-A-Z-A [she made sure to enunciate each letter
loudly]. He thought: ‘At the plaza I can sleep on a bench or something, and there, for
sure, I will meet people and, If I am lucky, I will get a job.’ Instead, he was taken into
a taxi and then to a hotel, but my brother was resistant to go into the taxi at first. He
had a pocket dictionary and said: esquar-ey, esquarey, for square. But of course,
obody understood what he meant. He was finally taken to a hotel for refugees in
Vancouver. (Ana María, interview’s excerpt)

As soon as she finished with the anecdote, silence fell for few long minutes between
us while the coffee drinkers were unaware of the profundity of her story. We both inhaled
and exhaled really deeply. Exile changes lives abruptly for those who go through it and adds
a new layer to their identities. Ana María’s brother became part of the incipient political
refugee community in the Pacific West Coast and a member of the emergent Pan-Latin
American diaspora in Canada during the 1970s, a community that she and her nuclear family
joined soon after.

Ana María’s anecdote provides a powerful twofold image: First, it implicitly takes us
back in time to the violence that followed the coup d'état against Salvador Allende’s Marxist
Government on September 11, 1973 in Chile. Allende’s followers were violently displaced,
and many left the country and went into exile. Ana María’s brother, who from her point of

32 Playwriter and former Chilean refugee Carmen Aguirre wrote a play called Refugee Hotel where she depicts
the arrival of Chilean refugees in Vancouver. She herself experienced living in the Refugee Hotel when she was
six years old. To read more about this play, see https://www.straight.com/arts/886751/playwright-and-director-
carmen-aguirre-caputres-exiles-pain-refugee-hotel
view was “the first Chilean political refugee who came to Vancouver,” entered the country not with his new identity as a political refugee, but as a migrant under a special permit.\(^{33}\) Waterman and Cox (2014) highlight the importance of international solidarity actions “that have been able to change the terms of politics” (p. 1), and the Chilean refugees seeking asylum post-September 11, 1973 was not the exception. The Canadian government’s response to allow political refugees from Chile to land inside its borders was possible thanks to the pressure on Canadian soil from civil society, churches and solidarity groups\(^{34}\) that were concerned for the safety of thousands of Chileans. Riaño-Alcalá & Goldring’s research “Unpacking Refugee Community Transnational Organizing: The Challenges and Diverse Experiences of Colombians in Canada” (2014) provides historical background on the active role of the Canadian civil society in solidarity work towards Latin Americans fleeing persecution, like that of Ana María and her family members. The authors document that as a result of the dictatorships spreading in the Southern Cone and Central America, many faith-based organizations, solidarity groups, unions, and human rights organizations were keen in supporting people from and in Latin America (p.13). Their research also documents that in Vancouver, “As in Toronto, the influx of Latin American immigrants reached its greatest height during the 1970s and 1980s, when refugees from Chile, Argentina, El Salvador and Guatemala arrived” (p. 15). ALAD collective membership in this study portrays a mini


\(^{34}\)The Canadian Council for Refugees states in its History section that in 1973: “Allende’s government in Chile was overthrown. Groups in Canada, particularly the churches, urged the government to offer protection to those being persecuted, but the Canadian response was slow and reluctant (long delays in security screenings were a particular problem). Critics charged that the lukewarm Canadian response was ideologically driven. By February 1975, 1,188 refugees from Chile had arrived in Canada. See: [http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/canadarefugeeshistory5.htm](http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/canadarefugeeshistory5.htm)
sample of that emergent and diverse Latin American diaspora that started to spread north since those decades.

Second, Ana María describes in detail how her brother landed with nothing more than ten dollars and a pocket English dictionary. Despite the few material possessions he had, he was resilient in the sense that he was already trying to figure out what to do once in the host country. He was thinking of a physical space that culturally for him was a referent of a common and public space of possibility and opportunity, such as the Latin American plaza pública.

In her edited book Ordinary Places/Extraordinary Events: Citizenship, Democracy, and Public Space in Latin America (2008) Clara Irazábal states that public spaces such as the plaza pública in Latin America have been essential to social, cultural and political life from the very beginning. Her work maps specific case studies on the notion of public spheres in several cities of South America and Mexico. Irazábal et al provide a multidisciplinary approach to understand the multi-uses and meanings of the plaza pública as a commons physical space focusing on its evolution throughout the centuries. One of her collaborators, Alberto Saldarriaga Roa (2008), whose work focuses on the Plaza de Bolívar of Bogotá (before known as City of Santafé de Bogotá), states that the plaza pública was part of the colonial project per excellence, an urban model imported to Latin America from Spain in the sixteenth century: “The main plaza became the centre of urban life and towns during the colonial era in Spanish America” (p. 130). The plaza, he indicates, became the center for both ordinary and extraordinary events, and its uses evolve along with the political, cultural and social events happening in the different cities through the centuries. In short, the plaza
pública has gone through many transformations of their symbolism and functionality through time.

As we continued with our conversation, Ana María explained why she metaphorically compared a plaza pública with ALAD: “Here, we live in a big city, and so disperse. In this society, there is no notion of a point of encounter, or a plaza pública, such as the Latin American plaza, like in Santiago [Chile].” She stressed the importance of this urban and physical space commons in her city of origin: “People go to the plaza all the time, if you want to see people, talk to people. On Sundays, for example, I recall that there is music, there is a band playing, and everybody goes there. To protest, you go to the plaza. América Latina al Día for me was that sonorous space that filled that gap.” I could sense some threads of nostalgia when she said: “Even now [referring to the current time] everybody knows that on Saturdays, we can listen to the show in Spanish. At that time, it gave me a sense of community and a sense to continue with the struggle like back home.” The importance of having a public space is discussed by Rodrigo Vidal Rojas and Hans Fox Timmling (2008), in their study on the Plaza of the Central Station in Santiago de Chile. The authors argue that “The use of urban space may facilitate cultural integration and the redefinition of meanings of urban images. (…) An urban image can definitely leave its mark in the identity of citizens” (p. 92). Ana María’s brother was also clinging to this cultural and political urban image that for him had the meaning of a place of opportunity, a place where his social, economic, political and cultural needs could be met as an exile, because from his standpoint all those factors were connected to this physical sphere.

Although the concept is distinct from the Latin American plaza pública, there does exist in North America the concept of a public sphere/public square both physical and
virtual, that in recent decades activists have fought to maintain open in the face of neoliberal privatizing pressures. However, the topic of lacking a public space to meet was concurrent with other interviewees. Valentina highlighted her disappointment about not having a public space when saying: “Here, we are so dispersed, we don’t have a Latin American Center or something like that. Even now, after so many years. In order to go to protests, Vancouver doesn’t even have a plaza.” She kept silent for a while and then uttered: “I think the Art Gallery could be that plaza, but no, no, no. It’s not the same. So, imagine during the 80s when we came here, there was not a common place to meet.” Valentina’s emphasis is on the absence of a public space in which to perform political activities collectively. Her cultural referent is the Plaza Central of Guatemala, which is surrounded by the Cathedral, the Government Palace and the Central Market as similar plazas were designed during the colonial period in different cities in Mesoamerica. Her description of Guatemala’s Plaza triggered my childhood memory of the huge water fountain in its centre. I remember that at night, the water reflected many colours that to my eyes meant that the fountain was magic. But as I grew up, I witnessed the plaza as a scenario of many violent repressive acts done by the police force and the army against students, campesinos, women and other social movements during the 1980s. As a young university student, I remember how students (when going to participate in protests) had to carry a handkerchief soaked with vinegar to diminish the effects of tear gas and had imprinted in their brains the many exits possible from the plaza to flee. For Valentina and Ana María, the plaza pública meant a place for collective resistance and dissent in the face of repressive governments. In the framework of the Cold War, the Guatemalan scenario I described above mirrors others in neighbouring countries because as Irazábal states, plazas públicas were used for the deployment and reproduction of
totalitarian regimes, such as Pinochet’s Santiago, Videla’s Buenos Aires, Strossner’s Asunción, and Pérez Jiménez’s Caracas. To this long list, I include Lucas García and Ríos Mont’s Guatemala. However, and despite the heavy repression carried out in all these countries, public demonstrations in the plazas played a key role in the eventual revocation of those dictatorial regimes (Prologue).

One of the most well-known examples of performing dissent in the face of repressive regimes in Latin America is the case of the Grandmothers and Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. The Mothers have been present in the plaza in front of the Casa Rosada (Pink House), as the presidential palace is known, every Thursday of the week to demand to know the whereabouts of their grandchildren kidnapped and disappeared since military dictatorships (1976-1983) were imposed in Argentina.35 Thus, the plaza is a place to meet and to be seen, but also a place to be heard. Ana María provided a well detailed account of what happened to her brother, but at the same time uses the metaphor of the Plaza Pública linked to the creation and production of ALAD, as an alternative way to say we are here now, and we want to be heard.

The need to be heard and identified was not solely experienced by the ones who came for political reasons. In the comfort of her living room where many details of beautiful decoration (including the table cloth and the coffee cups we were using) were reminders that the inhabitant of that apartment was from Latin America, Pilar sat in front of me and smiled while we heard many children playing outside her apartment. She tells me:

When I came here [referring to Vancouver], there was almost nothing on Latin America [she is referring to the media coverage on mainstream radio and television], maybe some on natural disasters. People didn’t believe me when I said, ‘in Mexico we are more than 20 million’ [she is referring to the 1980s]. I think for me, ALAD was also a way to show that we were here, and we had an identity. (Pilar, interview’s excerpt)

Her body language became focused, direct. She looked at my eyes directly and said with conviction, “I knew, we knew (sic) there was almost nothing in the media about us, about Latin America, without ALAD we did not exist, so I think we were trying to build our Latin American identity.” Pilar spoke of the importance of the radio show and the radio station as a public space for political organizing and to make visible the emerging Latin American community. In this way, ALAD became a kind of imagined _plaza pública_ that replaced that common physical sphere familiar to the emergent Latin American diaspora. Taking into account that the ALAD collective was not only made up of political refugees but by migrants who did not come for political reasons, what did they mean by a Latin American identity? Was the radio a platform for identity formation in a Canadian context? How did they want to be heard and identified through ALAD? I explore these questions in the next section.

4.2 The re-creation of a Latin American identity: Poetry, politics and Pedro Infante

For this section, I draw on Sharika Thirananga’s (2007) argument on the attempt of displaced people to create “new social and moral and physical landscapes” (p. 128) while still feeling emotionally rooted to their previous homes or sense of place. She studies the experience of thousands of Muslims from the North of India who after a violent forced displacement known as ‘The Eviction,’ try to cope with their new everyday reality in a
context of ongoing contradictions and dilemmas (p. 128). Similarly, but in a different geopolitical context, my interviewees created a new transnational political and communication landscape as a way to cope with their dilemma of: 1) facing the new reality of being forcibly uprooted and 2) wanting to continue to be connected with the political struggles in their home countries. On the other hand, the ones who came as migrants had the need to be recognized and identified. As Pilar said: “without ALAD, we did not exist.” At the same time, Pilar, Jimena and Ann all remarked that they shared the political values of the show and the need to denounce the human rights abuses in the South. All as well saw the importance of being part of the alternative media movement in Vancouver that defended the right to communicate. Rodríguez (2001) highlights the importance to study the everyday experiences of collectives of people or citizens that despite having diverse geographic, economic and cultural backgrounds, possess the cultural agency to join and work in initiatives to confront historical marginalizing (p. 63). In the case of ALAD, they all decided to be part of a transnational communication commons project that became, as Rodríguez quotes, “a media practice-in-motion” (p. 64) while trying to adapt to their new reality. Their actions of becoming active in the alternative media landscape in Vancouver resulted in creating a new way of doing politics and communications while recreating their own identities.

In my interviews with the non-Latin American members of the collective, I wanted to hear from their standpoint what they thought the radio was portraying in terms of the Latin American identity. I met with Margaret at the Trout Lake Community Center on Victoria Drive. I was expecting her to talk about what she thought the impact exile and migration in general had on the Latin American community, and how that was portrayed through the
airwaves. Although she enumerated issues that affected the community due to forced or not forced migration, she surprised me when indicating that: “For me, the important part was that culture merged with politics. We got so many phone calls, I think even people who didn’t share the politics listened because [sic] was a way to be closer to home through the Spanish language.” Margaret provided the following photographic reflection on how she conceived the role of the radio show in Vancouver at that time:

I think the show filled somehow the gap of isolation for Spanish-speaking people. I think back then the population was very small [She refers to the 1980s]. It has grown hugely now, but back then, the hearing in their own language was important whether they liked the politics of the show or not. I think it was serving a function, not just the alternative piece, but the language. Besides, something I was always fascinated with was [sic] my learning about Latin American culture, I mean, you can be extremely political and yet you have popular culture. There was a listener that we called La Abuela, she called all the time and she was hard core when speaking on air about the political stuff not just in her country El Salvador, but in all Latin America; but then she would request music by Pedro Infante. I think for older people who came here and who didn’t learn English, who came as refugees, learning English wasn’t a possibility or desire; how important it was to have a radio show that reflected the issues and reasons of why they left the country, but also the music and the culture. (Margaret, interview’s excerpt)

With this reflection, Margaret explains how the need(s) of that emergent Latin American diaspora of feeling somehow rooted was ameliorated by listening to the show in Spanish, regardless of being political refugees or migrants. She touches on the social isolation all experienced as a result of the sense of loss, especially for the ones who were by force displaced, but pays especial attention to what she learned about the Latin American identity in reference to the merging of culture and politics:

36 Pedro Infante was a Mexican actor and singer. He belonged to what is known as the Mexican Golden Age Cinema (1936-1959). He is one of the Ranchera music icon and well known in all Latin America.
I think the show wanted to portray an image of Latin Americans politically engaged, and as I said, there was an understanding in the Latin American context, an appreciation for poetry, and other things, as part of the tools of engagement. We interviewed the Minister of Education from Nicaragua. Later I found out [sic] was also a poet, that was so interesting to me! (Margaret, interview’s excerpt)

Margaret becomes animated as she tries to remember the names of other people who were writers and government officials at the same time, and musicians who were interviewed or played on air. The majority of those interviews were done with Nicaraguan government officials after the triumph of the Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979. Margaret was referring to recognized Nicaraguan writer and poet Sergio Ramírez.37

Pilar echoed Margaret’s statement and explained that one of the many roles of ALAD was to keep the audience and the collective connected with grassroots activists and intellectuals in the region who agreed to share their comments, ideas, analysis on the different geopolitical processes happening at that time. In the anecdote below, she tied ALAD’s objective with the difficulties of producing alternative media in Vancouver in general. One of those intellectual voices who were visiting the city was the well-recognized Mexican writer and journalist Carlos Monsiváis, “and who during the 60s, hosted a weekly radio program on cinema on Radio Educación” (Kraniauskas, xxii).38 The ALAD collective brought him to the Co-op Radio studios in the historical Downtown East Side39:

38 Carlos Monsiváis was the producer of the radio show” El Cine y la Crítica” aired on Radio UNAM. (National Autonomy University of Mexico Radio station). See article that was published in Mexican newspaper El Universal on Radio UNAM and Culture: http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/69069.html
39 The area is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Vancouver. It is known for its levels of poverty among their inhabitants, who face other barriers. Nonetheless, the area is well-known for its activism and community resilience. See: Cran, Brad; Jerome, Gillian (2008). Hope in Shadows: Stories and Photographs of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press and Pivot Legal Society.
ALAD’s role was also to bring the voices and points of view of well recognized intellectuals. Our studio was in a really old building, with rats and everything. We didn’t have much resources either, old carts, cassettes. Carlos Monsiváís came to Vancouver and we invited him for an interview. When he came into the station, he exclaimed: “This is very alternative! In Mexico our alternative stations have more resources, especially in the universities such as UNAM. (Pilar, interview’s excerpt)

We both laughed at the comment for a while. Then Pilar became pensive, and after a little silence, she shared that they [members of the collective] faced many challenges beyond the physical condition of the building. She pointed out that besides bringing those intellectual voices to the station, she also wanted to cover local issues affecting the emergent Latin American community in Vancouver: “I introduced a section on the show that was called ‘Serving the Community.’ I tried to do the show more local, more community oriented, [sic] I encountered some resistance even in the same collective. Our conversation shifted into the difficulties that she faced by doing the radio show as a migrant. Pilar echoed many of the difficulties migrants faced, that ranged from difficulties finding a job, not knowing the language, and lack of a social capital, that result in isolation.

As a migrant myself, I can relate at a personal level to those difficulties, especially because I had the need to continue doing some political work at an international level, but there were other needs such as surviving in a new country. In this regard, four of my interviewees who came as political refugees echoed my position of continuing with the struggle “like back home.”

Pilar mentioned that the collective was kind of divided in two groups: the ones who thought that all the time available on air should be solely focused on the struggle happening down South. However, she strongly believed that issues affecting the local community in Vancouver should also be covered. This tension was addressed through many and long meetings.
Amanda was virtually present in my kitchen thanks to the advances of technology. We met through Skype early in the morning and we were sure to have our coffee cups nearby. Amanda’s reply in relation to Latin American identity on the radio was right to the point: “We presented the Latin American struggle, we didn’t represent the stereotype of victims, we presented the resistance, the history of resistance, we were not victims, we denounced the human rights abuses.” Amanda continued explaining how her work in Vancouver was a continuum of the work she did in the South: “(…) we did denounce the horrors of what was happening, but we also presented what we would call today, the agency of resistance that had to do with our dignity as well.” For Amanda and Ana María from Chile, the struggle was transferred from ‘there’ to ‘here,’ from a local to an international scenario that through ALAD, became not just limited to Chile, but opened up to other stories of resistance of other countries in the region. In this regard, Valentina explained that:

We wanted to bring voices in the struggle from there. I came, as you know, from Guatemala and when I came into the show, it was lots on El Salvador and Nicaragua, but not much on Guatemala. I became the link with organizations down there, from the student movement (…) we were able to bring their voices. (Valentina, interview’s excerpt)

Her words echoed Amanda’s statement that ALAD was broadcasting the Latin American resistance, that from their point of view, was not getting enough attention in the Canadian mainstream media.

Maurice, the journalist working for a mainstream newspaper confirmed that in fact “ALAD basically was saying another side of the story that was not being told.” He added that: “When I joined, ALAD was a political refugee-run radio show, I was there to support in any way, but for me the important part was to be able to listen to live people from the South through the phone. It was difficult to get the interviews, but if the telephone link was
successful, it meant that it was a live connection with the struggle in the south.” He quickly clarified that he didn’t speak Spanish, as few others in the collective, but because the show was bilingual, he was able to understand the interviews when translated into English. He went further in sharing that: “Later, I travelled to Latin America and met people who wanted to be interviewed to speak about their struggles.” Thus, ALAD was portraying a political engaged identity. Yet, the diversity of the collective triggered contradictions, emotions and challenges.

Pilar already spoke about ‘some resistance’ in the same collective to focus part of the radio show on issues affecting the emergent Latin American diaspora locally. Pilar used the word some ‘resistance’ from within the same collective covering the ‘resistance in the South’ to new ideas and topics to cover. She said that her desire to do it came also from her experience of doing alternative community radio in Mexico. Pilar identified herself as a communicator who saw the importance of covering local issues. Pilar explained that the dilemma centered on two positions. The first one consisted in using all the time allowed on air to cover the political situation happening in Latin America only. This position came from a rationale that it was urgent to speak up and cover only what was happening down South in order to get support for the different social movements. The other position focused on covering issues affecting the incipient and new Latin American diaspora in Vancouver. Pilar wanted to introduce a segment to address this issue. She explained that after so much discussion and negotiation with the collective, her section finally was able to be broadcasted. But this was not the only challenge. Which other issues did they face? And how did they deal with them? How were these issues also impacting the formation of their identity on the West Coast?
4.3 Passion, addiction, or just plain commitment?

One of the elements that distinguishes *ALAD* as a unique and dynamic communications commons practice is the longevity of radio broadcasting. As mentioned in early chapters, other alternative communication projects that covered Latin America during the 1980s, ceased to exist even before the 20th Century. As per today, *ALAD* has been able to survive four decades and continues being produced by a collective of heterogeneous people. In this section, I list the diverse challenging issues brought up by the participants who made it possible to broadcast during the 1980s. Nicole S. Cohen (2014) pointed out that although thousands of people spend thousands of hours producing magazines, podcasts, broadcasts, journals, etc., in alternative media in Canada, there is not much research conducted on this area (p. 208). The author highlights the tensions and problems that could result in volunteers or non-paid collective members burning out due to the high and intense labour of producing alternative media. From a Cultural Studies perspective, Clemencia Rodríguez and Arturo Escobar have pointed out the need to study communication practices carried out by ordinary people in order to understand why they stay committed despite the challenges. Many of the participants in this study collaborated with this media project for less or over a decade. One of my interviewees still collaborates with the collective. The next section explores in depth the different reasons why participants joined the *ALAD* collective. Furthermore, through their different points of view, it highlights the meaning *ALAD* had in their lives to the point of including the production of the radio as part of their everyday lives. Was that a passion, an addiction or just plain commitment as stated by Ann? Was the making of ALAD a way to re-create a Latin American identity?
4.3.1 Experiencing exile: From time to struggle to struggle for time

“Surviving in a country as an exile can be difficult. Not knowing the language, not knowing what may happen or how to survive can be very stressful,” said Valentina. She summarized her situation with the following comment: “It was not easy. I had a lot of trouble finding a place where to stay. I was in limbo, I left Vancouver and went back to exile in Nicaragua in 1990, but I came back to Vancouver again after the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in that year.” She is referring to the presidential elections that took place in Nicaragua in 1990. The Sandinista government that was in power since the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution in 1979 was defeated. This situation put Valentina in a difficult position because the armed conflict in Guatemala was still in place. She could not go back to Guatemala, thus she decided to return to Canada. She literally “was having a lot of trouble finding a place where to stay.” She laughed when retelling how she learned the expression “couch surfing” because she was sleeping in different people's homes.

Ana María emphasized the everyday difficulty of trying to balance surviving and doing political work: “Our struggle was time, we were exiles, we had to work to survive as well, we had families, children, we always brought the kids to everything. They learned to play while we were doing our own political activities.” She smiles remembering how they also managed to work with the kids who performed several times for their parents, singing the songs learned through the activities. She stressed that all of them tried to adapt to their new reality: “The main problem was time; we came from a time to struggle to struggle for time to keep being politically active but also to be able to survive in this new environment.”

As mentioned already, I relate to these experiences. Survival and activism were my everyday companions during my first years in Canada. Whether in Halifax, Montreal, London, Ontario
or Vancouver, I was juggling between two or three minimum paying jobs in order to pay the bills, while also juggling for time to carry on with my political activities. I was involved in many solidarity activities and others were in the same position as myself. Balancing survival and activism became a normalized environment for myself and my peers. Rosa also mentioned that she did a lot of different jobs: “I did a lot of babysitting, I used to live with a family and took care of their child for a few years, but I was also committed to support Salvadoran political organizations who had many projects in Canada. I helped out with the radio as well because it was important to liaise with other political organizations working with Latin American issues.” Rosa, Valentina, Ana María and Amanda were clear about wanting to continue their political work in a transnational setting regardless of the challenges because they were members of revolutionary organizations in their respective countries. However, some of those organizations ceased to exist leaving their members abroad in a political limbo. Palacios (2011) documents the difficulties Chilean exiles had in Vancouver when trying to find paying jobs while also doing political activism. However, her study focuses on the spaces created by exiles as communities of knowledge and learning. This tension between survival and activism would need further study.

4.3.2 Political orphans and the traditional left

Amanda was very open about her participation with the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria – (MIR) [Revolutionary Movement of the Left], a group that formed in Chile in 1965. The MIR did not think a non-violent route to socialism was possible and did not join other political organizations such as the Unidad Popular –UP [Popular Unity] (Palacios, p. 21) that thought otherwise. After the coup d'état in 1973, MIR as a revolutionary
organization, had the objective to put an end to the repressive regime in Chile. Amanda explained that many of the exiles who came during the 1970s belonged to the MIR. She stresses that ALAD was created by MIR members because: “There was not much about Latin America in the news in that time, and the little it was, with no context. Plus, ALAD was a political project, so people who participated were either part of the MIR, or sympathizers of MIR or helpers, so we were a political collective.” Amanda explained that, in fact, she became part of the collective because she was following the orders of her organization, the MIR. Amanda joined the collective with the intention to continue her political work in a transnational scenario through radio in 1985, but her political organization ceased to exist a couple of years after she joined the collective. As she explained below:

The MIR dissolved as a political organization in 87, so we became a group of people without a central organization, but we decided to continue the work because we believed in the project, and because my country Chile was still under a dictatorship, the wars in Central America (...), the history didn't change, it was a moment of crisis in 1987, but the political commitment was there. I left the show in 1989, because I left the province. (Amanda, interview’s excerpt)

She reflects on the responsibility she took when deciding to be part of the revolutionary movement: “We have sacrificed our own life for the cause. We postponed our lives in exchange of change in our countries. When things started happening, we started thinking and deciding on what to do with our lives. I went back to university.” She then shared her

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Franck Gaudichaub (2015) states that the organization of the MIR was highly vertical, “compartmentalized and centralized” around political-military groups (GPM) and entered more and more into tension with the real dynamic of class struggle and the more horizontal forms of popular power being born, such as the cordones industriales [industrial belts] (above all starting in 1972). The author states that MIR started to decline in the years 1985-87. Many factors were in place that triggered the dissolving of the MIR- the result of the difficulties of adapting the organization in the face of local challenges (lack of internal democracy and participation in decision making in the political organization, as well as the traumatic dimension of state terrorism which resulted in more than 600 militants who were disappeared and tortured or were executed in the streets). The MIR split into three factions and eventually dissolved in 1987.
individual development in terms of accepting exile: “I felt like I migrated to Canada in 1993, even though I came as an exile in 1977. From 77 to 93, I was in exile because I wanted to go back to my country, so my political work was focused there. You live here, but your thoughts are there, emotionally and politically you are always there.” She goes further explaining her involvement in other struggles and the cultural shock going back to her country of origin years later: “I became an internationalist; I became involved with the struggle in El Salvador. I went back to Chile for 7 months, but culturally I was not a Chilean anymore, I didn't complete my university career, so I have to accept that I was a foreigner there and here.” She explains a kind of metamorphosis she went through at an individual level: “Then I came back here, I got married, and decided to settle. Now I am more involved with Canadian politics, it doesn't mean you are not interested with what happens there. I had to evolve as well at a personal level.” Her reflection on her lived experience is important because she talked about both her commitment to collective politics and her later decision to continue on her own terms guided by her own political values.

During the 1980s and after the Cuban (1959) and Nicaraguan (1979) revolutions, revolutionary movements were convinced that the only option to change the conditions in their countries was through armed struggle. Yet, Margaret told me that she felt very uncomfortable when she joined the collective because they were told that they were not supposed to do much self-critique of those revolutionary movements. She tells me that she was not sure to disclose that information to me or not, but she thought it was important:

I couldn’t sleep that night; I didn’t like that. But I believed that it was important to denounce the human rights violations happening, but I was also aware some countries like Cuba were not supportive of gay and lesbians' rights, for example. I continued in the collective, but I was not comfortable with those guidelines. (Margaret, interview’s excerpt)
Yet, she stayed contributing. She thought that the discussions the collective held were in fact long, but issues were talked over and the collective continued talking until consensus was reached. Eventually, she saw that more challenging topics were included in the content.

Pilar mentioned as well that there were members of the collective who were used to work in the traditional left, with a vertical discourse, not open to new ideas or self-reflection about the revolutionary movements abroad. She remembers with pride that she asked a member to leave the collective because he wanted to impose his ideas over the others: “I asked him to leave the collective, and he left. You know, I tried to work for other political organized groups here, but I was not in agreement with the old-left way of working things out. I left those groups. I joined ALAD”, she continued stating that: “I felt like I was able to use my skills and produce quality programs and communicate with the audience.” Amanda, Pilar and Margaret mentioned examples of those tensions and the way they faced them. The tensions faced by three of them were diverse. Amanda joined the collective because she was asked to do it by her political organization but became a political orphan when that organization ceased to exist. Pilar participated with other collectives at the beginning and decided that she did not want to use her energy and skills with groups working under a more traditional model. She mentioned that she did not accept the way a male from the collective was trying to impose his ideas and ways to work. In fact, she made sure the person left the collective. From a gender point of view, Pilar is sharing the way she confronted a ‘machista’ attitude that was also the norm in organizations from the left. Margaret was concerned with the idea of self-censorship as a way to avoid criticism against the Cuban government, for example. Her strategy was to continue going to the meetings as a way to see how things
would develop. The three women activists described their different challenges, the way they faced it and the reasons behind their decision to stay in the radio collective.

4.3.3 Family tensions: My little child used to repeat ‘I hate Coop Radio. I hate it’

“My daughter was born when I was still producing the radio. I used to breastfeed her while I was talking on the mic[rophone]; if she cried, all of that was broadcasted. She is an adult now, but she remembers that... [sighs]” A long pause followed that I could hear the silence: “I am talking of a radio station that was so dirty..., we had lots of mice.” Pilar remembered and repeated over and over that: “I neglected my family, I know I did.” She becomes teary when repeating the last sentence. Her experience is similar to Ann’s. Both of them did not experience forced displacement as their peers in the collective did but faced difficult situations as immigrants. Both had younger children, including newborn babies: “The radio was a big commitment. I neglected my family. I remember being pregnant and breastfeeding my daughter in the studio,” recalls Pilar. I sense some sadness in her voice. She joined the collective before getting pregnant with her child and left after that same child gave her an ultimatum: “Choose, me or the radio,” she told her. I can sense that for her, that was a difficult decision to make: “I was torn out, I got burned out, I left the show, but first I called previous participants and told them that I was leaving, but somebody had to step in.” Pilar decided to leave the show, but she was strategic about what to do, so the show would continue. She explained that she did not want to feel guilty for ALAD to end.

Ann shared a similar experience with her only child: “My son used to say, ‘I hate Coop radio. I hate it.’” She shared that despite her son complains she managed to continue for quite a few years before leaving the province to work overseas. She explained that she felt
bad as a mother, but she also needed to be part of the collective: “[…] for me, not sure if it was a passion, an addiction or just plain commitment. I used to bring him to the studio, and he got so bored. I remember that so well.” As Pilar did, Ann was also emotional when sharing this experience. She said that her son is already an adult, and he stills remember those years and once in a while reminds her about it. I relate to Pilar and Ann’s experiences. Despite the feelings of guilt, Pilar and Ann expressed that producing the show gave them also a sense of pleasure and they felt free to be able to produce something on their own terms.

4.3.4 Mics and mice, plus long hours of radio work production

The physical conditions of the radio station were already mentioned above. The building had a community of pretty healthy mice. I trained myself not to scream when seeing them running, while speaking on the microphone. All the participants brought up the mice in the station as well as the long curvy stairs to get to the studio. Everybody remembered them. Maurice can summarize the poor physical conditions of this studio/control room with this incredible anecdote: “the building was falling apart, it was raining so hard and we ended up literally broadcasting in the studio using umbrellas.” We laughed for a long time with this anecdote. Then he asked himself, “how did we do it?”

The challenges came at every level and in all forms for those migrants, mothers and communicators: “We [speaking on behalf of the collective] did the radio, but we tried to survive as well; I was working as a nanny, I was doing cleaning jobs, and I was pregnant, I had my child, and I continued doing the show! How did I do all of that?” Amanda laughs when she speaks of her current situation: “Now, I work a little and I get tired quickly. How I
managed to do so much back then. I worked on the radio, but I was also involved in other projects and activities.” She recalls the time when she organized an exhibition of the *Arpilleras*. Amanda explained that the work of the *Arpilleras* was so important during the dictatorship in Chile because women depicted images of what was happening in Chile on pieces of cloth and other material. The art became a medium to break the silence around the repression and the poverty Chilean women were experiencing. Amanda stressed out that she worked very hard to get the University of British Columbia agree to exhibit the *arpilleras* made by the wives and widows of the victims of the repression in Chile: “The project happened in 1987 at the UBC Museum of Anthropology. I don’t know where I got so much energy and time. I used to work and study, plus my political responsibilities.” Amanda estimated that she worked on the show for at least 30 hours a week. This number of hours of work mirrors other collective participants’ experiences, including the ones who did not produce but with research, analysis, deconstruction of mainstream news clips and information, the process of rewriting and translating the whole material in both languages. Chapter VI covers the process of producing the radio in depth. The whole process of radio production was an exhausting task. There were many issues that participants had to face day by day, from the poor condition of the building symbolized with the presence of rodents in the studio. Nonetheless, all these obstacles did not deter the conviction shared by all involved of the importance of having and keeping this alternative media outlive in motion.

*42 Arpilleras are traditional fabric folk art produced by women form Chile that became use as a tool for resistance under the Pinochet dictatorship. Women produced woven mosaics that raised awareness of the human rights violations happening in this Southern Cone country. Arpilleras was a form of a silent resistance through art (Agosin, Marjorie, 2008).*
4.3.5 Thick and thin times

Margaret witnessed, from her position as a support person in the collective, the impact of the heavy work load had on her peers:

I never saw or see myself as a core person, I saw and still see many of my friends to dedicate incredible time. What I observed was the big challenge of mainly women producing, and that was the time commitment involved; when those things are happening in challenging ways, it is super stressful, and sometimes it comes to one person carrying on with the show. (Margaret, interview excerpt)

Maurice echoes this statement when referring to the highs and lows of participation:

“I say there were thick and thin times. I preferred the thick times, when we had around 12 people in our meetings, but the thin times were hard. I had to produce the show for 2 years, and that was time consuming. But the show had to go on.” All participants spoke of the struggle to find time to do the show, and how for some years, one of them ended up doing the show by himself. Pilar was one of them, she did not want to feel guilty for the show ending for good. Feeling guilt and not wanting to be the one responsible for the show’s demise was also shared by others who became the sole producers in those thin times.

4.4 Why the drive?

Listening to all the challenges faced by the participants at both levels, individually and collectively, I asked for the motor or drive to continue with ALAD. Some of the answers were similar. Amanda explained that “It has to do with your ideological formation, your political commitment, it is a commitment that comes from the soul, that is agency, it is a process that liberates you. Nobody made us do it, it was a conscientious process.” She made it clear that: “We were not volunteers. We didn’t want volunteers for the sake of
volunteering. We didn’t want charity. If you wanted to work, you needed to learn about the struggle of our countries, of the whole region. We were in a time where the only solution was the armed struggle. So, it was your responsibility to understand that and to let people know what they were getting into. […]? My work at the radio was also to provide political education, that was key for the collaborators, for the collective. In that way, they respected us as peoples, even though we didn’t have to agree with everything.” This last point is very important, because she is saying that it was not a rigid political collective, but because it was an alternative project in-motion, space for discussion and dialogue to reach some consensus was seen as important by the collective.

“For me was the desire, the drive, the responsibility to communicate. Plus, I think people had the right to know,” said Pilar. She expresses her passion for communicating, for being able to provide people with content not covered in the mainstream. Jimena recognizes that “it was a lot of work, but when you had a good interview, a good documentary, you felt really good. You forgot all the hard work and the hours invested. I always thought that this was worth it.” Margaret, who acknowledges that she didn’t volunteer for too long during this decade due to her working schedule on Saturdays, shared her observations: “I think for people who produced it, who did that great interview, it was such a positive feeling. I didn’t have that, but I just felt at a personal level so privileged to hear all those interviews.” She distinguished the value of using radio: “It has to do with power of the human voice that somehow engages you. You can read quotations, or even watch videos, but I think hearing people, especially in conversational style, is something I enjoyed. I found it a meaningful way to learn about things like that.”
All participants spoke of the social capital they created through this collective. That is the many and diverse social relations that flourished through the years. Margaret reflected on the issue of friendship: “The collective became my friends; some of the long-lasting friendships I have now were born from this political work.” For those who came as migrants or exiles with no family, the collective members became part of it. Jimena spoke of the social aspect while producing the show. They met at different places along Commercial Drive: at La Quena, at Britannia, at cafés, and at Santos pub. From all these places, La Quena was an important one for the Latin Americans. Palacios (2011) documents that La Quena Coffee House on Commercial Drive was founded in the early 1980s mainly by exiles associated with the MIR together with left-wing Canadians. La Quena became a hub of political and cultural activity that lasted two decades. Fundraising and solidarity activities were carried out in this place that supported not just the Chilean struggle but the ones in Central America as well (p. 272). Every participant spoke of the importance of La Quena because this coffee house had a typewriter and tables that were available to the collective at any time. In this space, they met to read, to discuss, to re-write news, editorials, content, etc. Participants mentioned that at the end of the day, usually a Friday evening (when the show was already planned), they usually went to Santos, a tavern-like place where they could have a drink together. The making of the radio included the routine of visiting these places prior to broadcast live the following day. The making of the radio became a weekly routine.

The radio was a collective work that brought them a sense of stability and let them put down roots through a feeling of being part of a community. All of them mentioned all the places they had to go in order to produce the radio program. Each place they went had an objective for the radio production. It became a routine to start at the Britannia Public Library
as a point of reunion and discussion of possible topics to broadcast, then going to La Quena in order to read the mainstream news provided by Maurice and (other mainstream journalists who he befriended along the way) and to re-write that same news from a different political angle. At the end, participants shared as a group, they socialized at Santos. The practice of going from one place to another became a weekly routine, a sort of a ritual that involved hard work, but also a time where their relationships were strengthened. They created social networks with businesses, cafés and non-profit organizations that allowed them to use manual typewriters, for example. It was a weekly ritual that ended every Saturday at 1:00 pm.

When asking Ana María why did she become involved in working endless hours in producing the radio? She answered me with a question: “If we didn’t do it, then who? We gave soul and body to the cause. Many of our comrades couldn’t survive. But we did.” Amanda finished the interview on a positive and hopeful note: “I don’t want to die without hope. In *ALAD* we started as a small group, we were never a majority, but changes happen in the margins, never in the middle. I got upset when I found out about the corruption in the traditional left, but that is not the left politics I fought for. You always have to have hope that something will change for the positive. I think that as long as people want to get involved, things can happen.” Margaret finished her interview saying that “One small group of people can do amazing work in a radio station. It is hard work, but the finished product matters. I think the radio show proved that if there is a need, there is a way to get the message out.” As I have already mentioned, all came from different walks of life, nonetheless and despite the challenges, they managed to keep the production of the radio show going for many years.
4.5 Discussion: An imagined and felt Latin American Plaza Pública on air

Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar.

(Traveler, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks.)

— Gloria Anzaldúa

Anzaldúa’s quote reformulates famous verses from Spanish poet Antonio Machado\textsuperscript{43}. This quote summarizes the different journey stories shared through the oral narratives by the participants. Metaphorically, the different bridges each had to build in order to continue walking came in the forms of challenges, emotions, political values and individual/collective commitment. In this section, I discuss the findings from a social movement, political transnationalism and identity formation lens and I link these dimensions of their practice to the emotional labour that accompanied each of them in their journey. The discussion is guided by the two main research questions.

3.5.1. Why exiles from Latin American turned to radio as a means of cultural production?

One short answer to this question is that they turned to radio because they found an absence of a public space (as they used to have back home) to be visible and identified. They needed a public space for multiple reasons, including the need to continue with the struggle. Their stories shed light on the Latin American diaspora formation in Vancouver, from the first political exile who arrived during the 1970s, to the ones who kept coming, such as Valentina who arrived a decade after, in 1989. I draw here on Stanford Friedman’s (2007)

\textsuperscript{43}The poem “Caminante no hay camino” was written by poet and exile Antonio Machado. It was published in 

\textit{Campos de Castilla in 1912.}
argument that, “Diaspora is migration plus loss, desire, and widely scattered communities held together by memory and a sense of history over a long period of time” (268). My participants all shared feelings of loss and used the term ‘uprooted’ to the point of saying, “without ALAD we did not exist.” Yet, I argue that this heterogeneous diasporic group of Latin Americans made use of their cultural agency to become involved or create their own social movement from an alternative communication framework. Ana María’s brother came already with a plan in his head that could help him to face his new reality—a plan that collided with a reality where he did not find that plaza pública he was looking for.

Anzaldúa, in her seminal work Borderland/La Mestiza (1987), writes:

Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incomparable frames of reference causes un choque, cultural collision” (p. 85).

Participants narrated those choques and cultural collisions as part of their everyday experiences of ‘living in more than one culture’ both at the individual and collective levels—not just in their new environment but also inside the same radio collective. For the participants who came as exiles, all spoke of having experienced feelings of uncertainty. In this regard, Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said (2000) referred to exile as that limbo state of feeling uprooted and in solitude. Said described it as “[t]he unhealable rift forced between human being and a native place, between the self and its true home, its by-product ‘essential sadness’ never to be surmounted” (p. 137). Valentina shared that she felt in limbo because she was constantly moving and “having difficulty of finding a place where to stay.” I experienced exile and shared those feelings of uncertainty expressed by my interviewees. I arrived in Halifax on a Sunday September 8th; I remember the beauty of the trees with their
yellow, red and orange leaves, but my own mind was confused. I felt lonely for the first time in my life. Nothing around me was familiar and I remember crying for a long time. It is hard to describe with words the feeling of being uprooted and lonely. Once I got familiar with my new surroundings, I focused my energy on trying to figure out how to continue the struggle from far away.

Said reflected on the paradox of exile for the ones who are prevented to return to their native places as the possibility where “both the new and the old environment are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally (p.186). In other words, exiles undergo a process where two (or more) cultural systems coexist. The participants in this study were active agents who took control of their situation in exile. As Valentina mentioned that once she joined the collective, she was able to link the student movement back home to the radio as a way to expand and to reach to more voices in the struggle, besides the ones being covered. In this sense, I take on Said’s reflection on the possibilities of exiles to be aware of two cultures, two languages, two settings, and two homes that in turn provides a plurality of visions. The experience of exiles has different characteristics from the experience of migrants. Migrants leave their places of origin because they make that decision. Migrants do not face political barriers that prevent them to go back to their places of origin. Yet, immigrants also go through the same process of negotiating the environment they left intersected with the new one. The diverse narratives shed light on how participants negotiated their everyday presence in their new reality as a way to put down roots in their own terms. In other words, exiles shared experiences and their feelings at different moments of their situation. Valentina spoke of the feeling of not belonging to any place. She spent many nights in different places until she managed to have control of her own situation. The
migrants spoke of the need to be identified as a Latin American community. Having a radio show produced by themselves allowed them to do so. Their own terms could be translated metaphorically into creating their communicational bridge in the form of a *plaza pública* on air.

### 4.5.1 How exiles turned alternative radio into a means to construct a transnational practice of doing politics

David Harvey (2003) argues that it is essential to have public spaces to promote democratic processes of communications between two or more people. He warns of the dangers of losing public spaces commons due to the expansion of privatizing public places. His statement is echoed by other academics who also argue that any public space is the prerequisite for the expression, representation, preservation, and/or enhancement of democracy (Sassen, 1996; Holston, 1989, 1999; Caldeira, 2000; Low, 2000 in Irazábal’s Prologue).

Nonetheless, Irazábal believes that studies on contemporary uses of public spaces have been centered on European and North American cities that, from her point of view, create an imbalance in the literature. Her edited work provided specific case studies on the uses and cultural meanings of the *plaza pública* in Latin America. The oral narratives shared by the participants provided a new dimension on how to see the meaning and functionality of a public space such as the *plaza pública* in a transnational setting. This cultural image was imprinted in the mind and identity of their users. Ana María’s brother was sure that once making his way into the *plaza*, his needs could somehow be met. The plazas as physical spaces made out of concrete were left behind, but the cultural mark on its meaning and functionality becomes part of the users’ identity. Borrowing the concept from Anderson
Imbert, *ALAD* becomes an acoustic ‘imagined community’\(^{44}\) where its users start re-creating what has been lost or left behind. The radio (its physical and airwaves space) becomes that public space where the diasporic identity of a group of political engaged activists start evolving into a social movement in the alternative media landscape in Vancouver.

Stephania Milan’s (2013) study on *Social Movements and their Technologies* revised main concepts such as movement formation and identity building. The author argues that in order “to understand an identity building process it is important to know how people make sense of their self and the world around them” (50). Similarly, the *ALAD* collective became a social movement in the alternative media sphere. In order to survive as a collective, the collective members had to dialogue and negotiate among them. Although some were already activists and belonged to political organized revolutionary movements in the South, they had to learn how to work with a diverse group. It was a social movement because all its members had in mind the aim to contribute to social change. Each member of the collective who came as exile or migrant went through a process first of understanding themselves and then sharing their experiences. The radio show opened the possibility for migrants and exiles alike to make sense of those experiences and proceed to build an identity as a Pan-Latin American collective. Milan highlights that the point of departure to build identity is to first make sense of one’s self and the surroundings, each person in the collective went through his/her/their own process of understanding their own situation. In the meantime, the participants desire to contribute for social change did not change. All of them shared a utopian impulse to push for

\(^{44}\) Benedict Anderson (1983) coined the term “imagined communities” in his book *Imagined Communities*. Anderson argues that ‘nation’ is a social constructed community imagined or thought by the people who see themselves as part of that imagined nation.
social justice either locally or internationally. As stated, four of them came from revolutionary organized groups that had the clear mission of continuing their political work for specific changes in their respective countries. But the others were also involved in different initiatives that had the same goal of social change. Through the narratives, it is possible to see the movement formation with its own nuances while re-imagining their identities.

The fact that ALAD was a bilingual radio program was key, regardless that some of the participants who came from abroad were faced with the challenge to learn a new language and to start from the bottom in order to survive. Nonetheless, they understood the importance of making links with the host country and foster solidarity efforts and reaching a bigger audience. Producing in a bilingual format doubled the workload, but the members of the team were all in agreement of the need to do it. Also, the possibility of broadcasting in both English/Spanish allowed them to move away from an insular position that would only have reached the Spanish-speaking diaspora. Maurice did not speak Spanish, but that was not a deterrent for him to become involved. Being bilingual in their activism in the radio reflected as well how their identities were being shaped and built. ALAD developed a way to produce alternative communication that was unique in the West Coast of Canada. Hackett and Carroll mentioned briefly that Coop-Radio provides media space for “multicultural (minority languages) programming” (p. 168). Their study on the different media projects in Vancouver does not analyze any of the characteristics of any minority language programs broadcasted on Co-op Radio.

Karim. H. Karim (2012) rightly points out that not all ethnic media is alternative media because “not all ethnic media demonstrates an attachment to progressive causes” (p.
Furthermore, Karim states that even though this kind of media has had a long history in the country, “relatively little research exists on Canadian ethnic media” (p. 175). His work includes some studies carried out by Yu and Murray (2007) on Korean media in British Columbia, Mazepa’s study (2003) of the Ukrainian press in the first half of the twentieth century and Tatla (1991) on the role of Punjabi-language newspapers in the early twentieth century. For Karim, “A primary goal of most ethnic media seems to be to provide cultural and informational programming related to the respective community, which is generally unavailable in Canadian mass media. Once this goal is met, the medium can use additional available time or space for discussions about Canada-related public affairs” (p. 175). From my point of view, ALAD went beyond this primary goal. It provided a space for the diaspora to continue their political activism through the airwaves and become part of a larger social movement. Yet, the fact that ALAD was part of a social movement is not the original or new factor that characterizes this media production project. In that sense, I draw on Karim’s argument that the multiple manifestations of media produced by ethnic communities provide new hybrid ways of engaging with the large society. ALAD recreated a new way of media production in Canada. Its bilingual format at the time of its creation in 1976 was innovative because the ALAD collective decided to direct its communication to the Latin American diaspora and the broader Canadian community in both English and Spanish. Furthermore, the collective involved members of the local community who were media activists engaged in solidarity with the Latin American community. In this way, ALAD recreated a new style of broadcasting that broke with the traditional way of thinking about alternative communications among the migrant’s communities. Participants shared that there were other politically oriented collectives producing radio shows in other parts of Canada. Jimena
explained that by the end of the 1980s, they received news clips from a radio collective from Toronto. The radio was part of the FMLN and many political projects in Canada, but they just broadcasted in Spanish. Jimena mentioned that the ALAD news team, the exiles and migrants, had to do the translation of the pieces. By having a bilingual format, they were also fostering new ways of seeing and doing solidarity. Not speaking Spanish or English was not a deterrent for people who wanted to join the collective and/or get involved in local solidarity activities. Many local activists became involved in the radio show and through it joined other causes. Having a diverse and heterogeneous collective provided a wealth of diverse points of view. The way the show developed and changed through the years proved to be effective as its longevity can attest to.

This study provides key insights into the reasons these people become part of a political transnational engagement and decided to stay being involved for a long time. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) expanded on this topic when studying the experiences of Colombian refugees in Canada from a holistic lens. They provide specific examples of how some groups become politically engaged in transnational solidarity projects while others do not, even though they come from the same communities. Their study emphasized the need to move far away from generalizing and to look more closely at peoples’ everyday experiences. Their shared experiences were not limited to only learning their reasons to join, but also expanded into the role of the different emotions that accompanied their decisions, as explained in the next section.
4.6 Felt theory and identity formation

While conducting the analysis of the interviews, participants expressed many emotions or feelings. I was not expecting that the interviews were going to provide such rich data of knowledge from an emotional lens. While searching for literature to understand and analyze the role of emotions in social movements, I found out that recent social movement literature links the everyday nature of activism and emotional labour (Milan, 2008, 2008, Madison & Scalmer, 2006). Dian Million (2009), an indigenous and feminist scholar, states in her work *Felt Theory: An Indigenous Approach to Affect and History* the importance to acknowledge emotional knowledge in the testimonials of indigenous women who were affected by the Canadian government’s racist policies. Her work explores the “real multilayered facets of their histories and concerns by insisting on the inclusion of our lived experience, rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean now in our pasts and futures” (p. 54). The author insists on the importance of felt experiences as community knowledges and warns of the danger of the scholarly and general community not seeing these experiences as knowledge at all. Through the oral interviews and when reflecting on their radio experience, participants thread their experiences in a rich emotional fabric of sadness, nostalgia, guilt, satisfaction, and hope. I agree with Million that those feelings are forms of knowledge because they provide insights on how individuals become agents and subjects when recreating their identities and their collectivities.

The oral narratives of the participants who were in their majority women and performed during their time in *ALAD* as radio producers, shed light on the intersectional tensions and emotions in their identity formation as mothers, volunteers, communicators, political activists, and social change makers. Sarah Ahmed (2004) looks into the role of
emotions in social movements participants. Ahmed’s study closely examines the emotions that could play critical roles in making or breaking political collectives and social movements. The author poses questions such as: what gets people to sit in the streets together in defiant acts of civil disobedience? What connections, relationships, and feelings are forged in those moments that might constitute another world? Margaret, Pilar, Jimena, Ann, Amanda, Rosa, Valentina, etc.—all of them spoke of the friendships created through the collective. The radio collective became part of their social and political capital. Many spoke of the long discussions held about a variety of issues, being aware that they were not going to agree with everything but expressed that those long discussions were sites for dialogue and political analysis. Their intense work every week was filling several of their needs. While denouncing human rights abuses, linking with political activists who remained struggling in their respective countries down South and creating links with solidarity groups, they were recreating their own public spaces left behind and a unique political identity that despite the challenges, moved them to action in making sure ALAD was able to broadcast weekly.

In conclusion, the two themes presented in this chapter examine how the collective members of the radio reimagined and recreated their own common and public space as a way to ‘exist.’ Jimena and Pilar both expressed that “without ALAD we did not exist.” Drawing from Thirananga’s statement that displaced people create their own social and cultural surroundings, the Latin American diaspora reimagined and recreated a new social, cultural and political landscape. Their re-creation of a sonorous public site allowed them to re-organize and re-imagine their own identities as a diasporic and transnational Pan/trans-American (including Canada) community. Participants expressed experiencing a variety of feelings that went through stages of nostalgia, sadness, loneliness and pain created by the
loss of not being in their home countries, to feelings of satisfaction, conviction, courage, 
comradery and sense of belonging. In some instances, mainly for the women who were 
mothers, the feelings of guilt were profound. They felt responsible for looking after their 
children, but at the same time, their work at the radio became as important as being mothers. 
Ann and Pilar ended up deciding to leave the radio, but before doing so, they did it in a way 
that ensured the survival of ALAD.

The radio show became the answer to what participants considered as the absence of 
public space. The radio became their ‘imagined plaza pública’ that recreated the way to 
produce radio in a unique and creative way. The bilingual broadcasting broke the traditional 
paradigm of producing ethnic media only in the target language of the specific cultural 
group. Moreover, the show did not limit its broadcasting to only one struggle. Participants 
spoke of the long meetings carried out in order to reach consensus. Maurice mentioned that 
with the show being bilingual and with some of the participants being monolingual as 
himself, the whole translation (news) and interpretation processes made the whole process 
even longer and double the amount of work. Yet and despite of the intensive manual labour, 
the collective members expressed their reasons, feelings, and the impact that this radio show 
had in their everyday lives and their decisions to stay for many years. Despite the range of 
emotions felt during their process of settlement in Canada, ALAD became a space where their 
political identity was being reimagined as a trans-diasporic community through the radio 
format (being bilingual, being a diverse collective, etc.), but also through the different ways 
of building solidarity among the local activists. As Robin and Margaret explained, many 
Anglo-Canadians learned a good deal about Latin America through the radio show. People 
who went to Latin America came back and reported their experience on air. Many political
activities were covered by *ALAD*. In short, the radio was for the people who joined a space for engaging in political and cultural agency.
Chapter 5: On and Off Air, Broadcasting the South from the North
by Joining the Communications Commons Movement

We were information scavengers, we were pirates.

Valentina - Interviewee

Introduction

The present chapter introduces the fourth and last topic that emerged from the oral narratives: Broadcasting the South from the North. This broad theme explores in depth the mechanics and the process of how the radio collective produced the show on and off air. In other words, besides introducing the lived experiences shared by participants in relation to their work in the radio, the chapter also analyzes the production-reception process that includes text analysis of a sample of news clips, line ups and themes that were covered and broadcasted during the 1980s.

The first section of the chapter maps the creation and evolution of the radio show in relation to the historical context of the host country. The second one introduces the process of radio production along with the challenges faced not just in terms of the media enclosures, but inside the same collective due to diverse political stances. Written material from the 1980s is analyzed through a close reading that helps identify the political position of the collective and the process of producing content in a pre-internet era. Thus, the material is intersected with the oral narratives’ analysis as a way to provide concrete examples of the final product broadcasted on air. The chapter finishes with a discussion from a theoretical lens of the commons, the building of the commons or communing and the workings of alternative media for social change.
5.1 Creation and evolution of ALAD: Strategizing the struggle through media

In the long quote below, Ana María expresses the feeling of disappointment felt by Chilean exiles like herself when landing into a city lacking (from her point of view) political action and engagement from their citizens:

We have fought and struggled with our whole mind and body; but when we came here, we had to adapt our ways of struggle. As you well know, to organize a protest here, not many people go, if one thousand show up, that is great. We came from a Chile where on September 4th, 1973, one week before the coup, we were celebrating the third anniversary of Salvador Allende’s presidential election. There were one million people just in the streets of Santiago, one hundred thousand in my little city, so when we came here…. well, you have to learn not to be disappointed. (…) One had to learn not to get depressed because we were not going to be able to call on the masses [she laughs], but we had to work in a more minimalistic way, more realistic to our new reality. (…) we were always thinking that we must keep moving, and any kind of medium was important. There were Canadians working in solidarity with us, they helped us to make the connection to produce the radio show. (…) At the beginning we all were Chileans, we had our own committee, Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos [Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Chile] and the radio was essential for our political work. (Ana María, interview’s excerpt)

Ana María’s statement visualizes how in exile, Chileans came up with strategies to transnationalize their struggle from one political and geographical region to their host country. As she stated, the political scene in Vancouver was different from South America and she stressed her disappointment about not being able to organize “the masses” as in the pre-coup d’état scenario in Chile. Nonetheless, her account included that as Chileans, they ‘kept on moving,’ meaning that they continued their organizing through different political activities in Vancouver. As mentioned in previous chapters, Palacios’s (2011) doctoral dissertation focused from an education lens, on the many projects Chileans carried out in order to continue with their struggle in exile. Ana María stressed that Chileans had connections with people in the solidarity movement in Vancouver who were also involved in
local political organizing. As a result, Chilean exiles became part of an alternative media movement that was already in motion in the city by joining *Vancouver Cooperative Radio*.

To my surprise, and contrary to Ana María’s statement, Amanda remembered that “there were massive marches in Vancouver. I joined marches with thousands and thousands of people.” Both shared contrasting experiences in terms of political activism in Vancouver. When trying to understand why these two contrary standpoints existed, I realized that the former came just a couple of years after the coup d’état in Chile while the latter came four or five years later.

Robin’s oral narrative helped me to understand Ana María’s and Amanda’s positions by providing historical information from those decades: “There was a big social movement that picked up in 1968 through 1973 in British Columbia, and then it started to slow down. But during those years, the counterculture movement flourished... I mean it defied the mainstream culture with alternative initiatives in music, media and ways of life.” Robin got so excited enumerating the different issues that led or triggered the political organizing initiatives in the province: “people were fighting against the war in Vietnam, the fight for the legalization of marijuana\(^4\), the fight for cultural spaces, the fight for the environment and against nuclear testing.” He said that by 1981-1982 all the political activities started to grow again: “The solidarity movement for peace was huge, massive (…) the government introduced neoliberal practices here and started privatizing things and closing public institutions and the labour and community movements started to form an alliance called

\[^4\text{The legalization of marihuana became a reality in Canada in 2019.}\]
Solidarity....” Robin’s accounts are supported by scholarly work focused on the history of political organizing in Vancouver. Phillips (1967) [in Hackett] documented that since the 1930s, Vancouver has been an urban stronghold of labour militancy and socialist advocacy in the country. Hackett (1991) documented the largest annual peace rallies that the city hosted during the 1980s. The waves of activism that happened in different years in the province explain, in some way, the different experiences that Ana María and Amanda shared. Ana María came into exile when Co-op Radio had just started to broadcast as alternative media in 1975. She left the country to continue her struggle back in the Southern Cone by 1979 along with other Chilean exiles. Amanda came in 1978, stayed in the city and witnessed the massive mobilizations that took place during the first years of the 1980s. Amanda joined the ALAD collective in the mid-1980s.

As Robin mentioned, part of the demands in the first wave of the political movement was the right to communicate. Hackett and Carroll (2006) compiled a good number of interviews with media makers and media activists from the different media initiatives that were carried out in the 1970s. The authors conclude that Vancouver “has been an incubator for media activism. It is home to a number of alternative media, including Co-op Radio, a listener-supported station closely identified since the 1970s with critical social movements” (p. 164). Vancouver Cooperative Radio is one of the cases highlighted in their book. They emphasized the diversity of radio programming, including being a space for multicultural or minority language groups. Hackett and Carroll did not analyze the kind of programming Coop Radio has in detail. Therefore, there is no mention of programs such as ALAD with a bilingual programming format and a heterogeneous media collective. Exiles from the Southern Cone created links with local media activists that resulted in solidarity actions such
as landing a spot in the Canadian airwaves. This was possible thanks to the work of media activists who fought the media enclosures in Vancouver. Furthermore, the links that exiles created with local media activists resulted in many more solidarity actions that resulted in the inclusion of local activist as part of the ALAD collective. In other words, ALAD went beyond being a space targeting only its ‘minority language group.’ Instead, it sought to raise awareness among the broader Canadian society by also broadcasting in English, but also recruiting members among local social and media activists to work on its political projects. Thus, ALAD was not a media space used by a minority group to target only a minority group but emerged as a transnational bilingual media space. Based on my research into archival documents from Coop Radio, ALAD was the only radio show broadcasting bilingually during the 1980s. Currently, bilingual broadcasting is not a category in the program schedule and ALAD is placed under public affairs shows in English language46. The next section addresses the process of expanding the collective from only exiles from Chile to the inclusion of others into the collective.

5.1.1 From being a Chilean political project to becoming a Pan-Latin American air space (the arrival of more refugees and others)

Many of the collective participants who joined the radio during the 1980s were clear that Chileans were the ones who created the radio program, but as Robin states: “Many of the Chileans who started the show were gone by 1979-early 1980s, so yes… we knew ALAD was

46 See full programming of the station at: http://www.coopradio.org/content/cfro-1005fm
started by them, but at the time I joined, there were people from other Latin American countries in the collective.” Ana María in fact mentioned that other Latin Americans who came after the Chileans joined: “I don’t remember what happened, how other people started being involved, but obvious things started happening in other countries.” She goes on and lists the different political scenarios in different countries: “Argentine just had a coup d’état [1976], there was a change in Uruguay [1973], then the Central Americans started to arrive [1980s]. I left Vancouver in 79, and other Chileans left as well, so others took responsibility of the radio show like Central Americans, Mexicans, Colombians.” Her statement maps the spread of state violence happening in the region, and in consequence, the formation of the Pan-Latin American diaspora on the West Coast that included others who came as migrants.

Pilar recalls that the show was mirroring the situation in Latin America: “I think that if people talked about the Latinos, their point of reference was Chile and Argentina, but then Central Americans came. It was an impact somehow because people started coming in hordes, and we did reflect that. Historically, ALAD was the only show talking about that.” On this point, Margaret reflected: “At the time, there was no other source of alternative media in the way we know it now. There were no other sources. I think it was a way to offer a perception of Latin America and politics. The show had a strong community.” All interviewees linked the reason for the arrival of Latin Americans in Vancouver to the political conjuncture in the region.

Pilar provided the following metaphor that captures the political conjuncture in those times: “There was like a political earthquake in Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Nicaragua… that was moving the continent.” A ‘political earthquake’ is a perfect metaphor to summarize
what was happening, as explained in Chapter I and Chapter II through the introductions of
the four former exiles who participated in this project. From all the interviewees, Pilar is the
one who uses many metaphors to make sure her point has been understood. The next one is
in relation to her joining the collective: “I became involved right after I landed. I don’t
remember how, who I met first, but it was like a skin or a glove that once you put it on, it
stayed.” Pilar’s own political formation was aligned to the one of the collective: “My
political values were like the Marxist Leninist they had.” Pilar was not part of any political
organization but shared the show’s political values. She was an immigrant who came because
she wanted to come to live in Vancouver. Her involvement in the radio show demonstrates
that the collective was not rigid in accepting new members only affiliated to traditional
political organizations such as the FMLN, or URNG. Pilar continues explaining how she
became part of the collective right away: “I arrived here, and I believe the radio show was a
continuation of my work in Mexico. I was used to work with people from different
cultures…” Pilar was very aware that such diversity included different political standpoints:
“the radio collective had people from different political tendencies, I defined myself as a
political militant. My place was with the radio collective and I believe it was due to the
conjuncture at the time.” Those words made echoes in the ears of local activists such as
Robin: “In Canada, even though with the whole solidarity movement, eh…it was nothing
like revolutionary politics…we had a tinkering system, as little adjustments were done, but
no real change. Over there [in Latin America], they were fighting for real changes at the level
of power.” Robin was part of the communications commons movement in Vancouver and as
such he saw the work with the Latin Americans as a way to work together: “at the ALAD
collective we talked about common issues, it wasn’t like because so and so is from
Colombia, we are just going to cover Colombia. It was more working on actual issues, current issues impacting at a regional scale.” He provided an important observation on how the members of the collective started to get interested in local issues: “One interesting thing, when people just came here they were connected with their countries, but the longer people stayed in Canada, they got involved in local issues here and with issues in other parts of Latin America.” He explained that he noticed how when people just arrived, they had fresh information and connections in their countries, but it doesn’t take long to get involved with issues here or somewhere else.

Although the majority of Chileans in the collective left at the end of the 70s, others as Amanda joined the collective a decade after the creation of Vancouver Co-op Radio. She explained that ALAD was initiated by members of MIR, and as such, the radio show was a political project, yet she acknowledged that “our link with MIR was not open, we didn’t put a flag outside the station, but it was so obvious from the way we made the arguments, and we were clear that we were not mainstream or middle of the road. Our political role was open.” As Pilar mentioned, she shared the political values portrayed by the show and that is why she decided to join.

5.2 The production process: A huge commitment of time and energy

This way of doing alternative media and becoming a unique radio show required hours and hours of discussion and production. Ann stated that the amount of work was heavy because everything had to be produced, translated and written for radio formatting: “It was a lot of work, but we were committed to that.” Below there are two samples of scripts for radio
produced by the collective. The first one is the intro script to welcome listeners to the show. It introduces the topics to be covered during the one-hour time on air. Although just a few lines, this introduction details all the topics that had to be prepared beforehand for the show of that day. The second media text is part of a script that focused on a peace march in Central America which took place in 1988. The March started in Panama and people/activists who joined were local and international activists who walked through all the Central American countries as a way to demand peace in the region.
BUENOS DÍAS AMIGOS, BIENVENIDOS A AMÉRICA LATINA AL DÍA
HELLO AND WELCOME TO THIS EDITION OF AMÉRICA LATINA AL DÍA
BROUGHT TO YOU BY CO-OP RADIO ON 102.7 FM
PARA HUY LE TENEMOS UNA ENTREVISTA CON TONO CADIMA DE CHILE
Y UN TRABAJADOR DE LA CULTURA QUIEN TRABAJA CON EL TALLER SOL
EN SANTIAGO.
WE HAVE TODAY AN INTERVIEW WITH TONO CADIMA OF TALLER SOL
WHO VISITED US FROM CHILE.
PERO PRIMERO LOS TITULARES
BUT FIRST THE HEADLINES
sandinista government approved their first constitution
DOS PERSONAS MUEREN DURANTE LA HUELGA GENERAL
EN HAITI.
WILL BANKS APPROVED LOANS TO CHILE
200 MUERTOS EN MANIFESTACIONES EN MEXICO
WE WILL BE BACK IN A MOMENT WITH THE NEWS
VUELVE REGRESAMOS EN UN INSTANTE CON LAS NOTICIAS

Image 5-1. Script I. Introduction to radio show to be read on air
5.2.1. Script I analysis: Introduction to ALAD

The first radio clip showed above introduces the show of the day. The introduction has been written on a mechanical typewriter in red with some corrections done by hand. From the appearance of the page, it seems to have been written on recycled paper. As mentioned by interviewees, resources were scarce, and the present script is an indication that they used and made the most of what they had available. The English and Spanish languages are interspersed. The messages are written in short sentences. It is brief and provides key information to the listener. It identifies the radio station, the radio frequency and the bilingual format. It provides the audience with a brief summary of the radio content and highlights the main topic for the interview planned for that day. The person to be interviewed is a Chilean activist who lives in Santiago, Chile and is visiting Vancouver. The introduction also provides the week’s news headlines. The issues covered in the news items are related to the different political, economic and social processes happening in different countries from Latin America and the Caribbean. One example is the headline about the approval of the first Sandinista constitution that took place in 1987. The other issues featured in the news segment are Haiti’s general strike and protests in Mexico which resulted in death and injury. Translation of all the information is not included. I have to note that single pages like this were found in the old building of the radio station, and the information was not complete. However, the headline on Nicaragua suggests that this was produced in 1987.

The introductory script is written in a collective voice through the use of the pronoun ‘we.’ Also, there are no names for the hosts of the show, despite the script being read by two people, one in each language. The arrows that appear on the left beside each sentence in
Spanish tell the Spanish-speaking reader/host the lines to be read on air. The only name identified in the script is the name of the guest for the day. This is a script produced by an alternative media collective. It has a collective voice, and features political and cultural issues important to the emergent diaspora. The Chilean guest provided a fresh point of view from a person who was living in Chile and was sharing his cultural and political work with the audience.

The amount of work that radio production entailed can be seen through this simple script. The collective had to have the news researched, re-written and translated. The guest on the show had to be lined up and all logistics dealt with. The introductory script had to be typed out as well in both languages. This script is simple and short; however, the amount of work that went into producing it shows a huge commitment of time and energy.

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TAPE TIME: 2:48

ENGS: "...LESS SECURE THAN EVER."

SCRIPT SPANISH ENTRE OTRAS ACCIONES EN EL SALVADOR, LOS INTERNACIONALISTA JUNTO A SUS COMPAÑEROS SALVADOREÑOS OCUPARON UNA CATEDRAL, REALIZARON UNA VIGILIA DE PROTESTA FRENTE A LA CASA DEL PRESIDENTE, Y TRATARON MAS DE UNA VEZ A ENTRAR AL TERRITORIO LIBERADO EN EL NORTE. CADA VEZ XXXXXX INTervinieron LAS FUERZAS XXXXX GUBERNAMENTALES.

SCRIPT ENGLISH THE PEACE MARCHERS ALSO TOOK PART IN OTHER ACTIONS WITH THEIR SALVADORAN COUNTERPARTS, SUCH AS XX THE OCCUPATION OF AND A CATHEDRAL IN SAN SALVADOR/ THE VIGIL TO PROTEST THE TREATMENT OF THE INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE MARCH, WHICH WAS HELD OUTSIDE DUARTE'S HOUSE, XXXXXX... THE MARCH TRIED ONCE MORE TO ENTER THE LIBERATED ZONES IN THE NORTH, BUT WERE AGAIN TURNED BACK BY GOVERNMENT FORCES.

SCRIPT SPANISH EN HONDURAS, TAMBIEN EL GOBIERNO FUE INHOSPITABLE, PERO LA MARCHA RECIBIO BASTANTE APOYO POR PARTE DEL PUEBLO. HABIA TAMBIEN UN CUESTIONAMIENTO DE LAS ACCIONES DEL GOBIERNO EN LA PRENSA HONDURENA.

SCRIPT ENGLISH IN HONDURAS, THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO HOSTILE, BUT THE MARCH RECEIVED QUITE A BIT OF SUPPORT FROM THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES. ALSO, THE PRESS WAS CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO ALLOW THE PEACE MARCH TO ENTER. FROM HERE THE XXXXXX MARCH DELEGATION WENT TO GUATEMALA, TO MEET AND RE-GROUP WITH THE REST OF THE MARCH.

SCRIPT SPANISH EN GUATEMALA, LAS DELEGACIONES, Y LOS OTROS PARTICIPANTES SE REUNIRON PARA SEGUIR A MEXICO, EN GENERAL A TRAVES DE CENTRO AMERICA.
Image 5-2. Script II. Reporting on "The Peace Caravan in Central America."
5.2.1 Script II Analysis:

The script II showed above is part of the material produced to cover the International Peace March that took place in Central America during the late 1980s. First, the script format shows the amount of manual and intense work needed to be able to produce these short paragraphs. ALAD members had to type the content manually. It had to be translated and corrections were made on the material. The collective had to be aware of the limited air space to decide how much information to include. The material covered had to be enough to be broadcasted in a one-hour radio show. As the format indicates, tape recorded interviews were part of the radio production. In the first line, it says “tape time: 2:48,” which indicates to the radio host/reader that once that time was reached in the tape interviewed, she/he had to start reading live. This first line suggests that the production process included pre-recording interviews and translating those interviews into English. The written script had to go hand in hand with the recorded material beforehand. In terms of the bilingual format and contrary to the previous script analyzed, this one clearly states, “Script English and Script Spanish,” which eases the way to identify the two languages with both readers. Second, the topic covered in the script is the Peace March for Central America, a transregional action that took place in 1988 by different local and international activists to demand peace openly. The ALAD collective introduces the term ‘internacionalistas’ [internationalists] in the script in Spanish. Waterman and Cox (2014) point out that since 1968, new forms of social movement internationalism multiplied globally. Specifically, the authors mention that “Between the 1970s and 1990s such processes took many forms: grassroots labour networking; ‘transnational advocacy networks’ campaigning around specific themes; support for specific revolutionary movements such as the Zapatistas” (p. 3). This script shows that the ALAD
collective focused as well on political actions carried out by internationalists who believed in peaceful marches and not just in the actions carried out by the revolutionary groups. The countries featured in this script are El Salvador and Honduras. The script mentions a ‘liberated territory,’ which implies this script was written during the time the FMLN was an insurgent force in the country. It includes the last name of the president at that time, “Duarte." The second country featured in the script is Honduras, a country that did not have an open armed conflict, but its government(s) and army had strong links with the United States’ politics. Joseph Nevins (2018) provides an account of the United States’ involvement in Honduras since the beginning of the last century. Through his account, Nevins states that during the Reagan government in the 1980s, part of the efforts of his administration was to ‘roll back’ the region’s leftist movement. As a result, he stationed hundreds of U.S. soldiers in Honduras and also trained and sustained Nicaragua’s ‘contra’ rebels on Honduras’ territory, while also increasing military aid and arm sales. The script mentions that unwelcome reception the internationalists received when arriving in Honduras, but at the same time highlights the warm welcoming received by the Honduran people.

The written script is the final product of a long production process. This process consists in several steps, such as reading, researching, discussing, analyzing, writing, rewriting, taping, recording, editing, and organizing the whole material in written form, while making sure every second and minute on air will work in unison with the written and taped material. The process involved in radio production is long and the scripts show that the

47 José Napoleón Duarte was president of El Salvador from 1984 to 1989.
collective members took their work in alternative media seriously although the amount of work took a lot of time and energy.

Image 5-3. Script III. Editorial on "March for Peace in Central America"
5.2.2 Script III Analysis: Editorial

The script is an editorial on the same topic introduced in the previous script on “The Peace March in Central America” from the late 1980s.

Reading the original script, the first thing that may be noticed is the format. It was written on a manual typewriter. The document has many corrections, which shows a process of producing and editing the final piece. It has words written by pen on top of different words along the whole document. The editing process indicates that the script went through several readings to make sure sentences were clear and correct to be read on air. The editing process indicates as well that the people in charge of production were aware that time in radio was very limited. Therefore, they had to make sure content and time were in agreement. Furthermore, the editing process also indicates that the people in charge of production were serious with the work they were doing. By editing the pieces, producers had to make sure information was corroborated, organized, written from their political angle and ready to be conveyed through the airwaves.

As already mentioned, the topic of the script is peace in Central America. In the first sentence, the opposite concepts of peace and violence are introduced. It is an editorial piece by the ALAD collective. It is not written in the first person singular, but in the first-person plural, which shows that the position on the topic comes from a collective agreement. The editorial raises the issue of defensive violence that aims to halt or counter state-sponsored violence.

In the third line, a question is asked: “How do we develop every form of struggle necessary to win a lasting peace? The editorial provides the answer based on history—
perhaps implicitly referring to the military coups in Chile and Guatemala in 1973 and 1954, and ensuing mass state violence to suppress popular dissent. Both countries went through democratic processes to achieve progressive governments but were unable to carry out their programs due to foreign-sponsored violence. But Latin American countries whose revolutions were achieved through armed struggle, like the cases of Cuba (1954) and Nicaragua (1979), did. The editorial is not dated, but it is from the late-1980s. The Sandinistas were still in power in Nicaragua and, as Sergio Ramírez (2018) wrote: “La revolución Sandinista fue la utopía compartida” (26) [“The Sandinista revolution was a shared utopia” (my own translation)]. I interpret that the armed struggle was seen by the ALAD collective as the principal avenue to end the dictatorships and repressive governments predominant in the region at the time.

The editorial invites listeners to be aware that violence comes in all forms. Nonetheless, through the editorial, the collective acknowledges and recognizes that the movement for peace in Central America is also a valid form of struggle, with the understanding that their position has already being stated. This editorial communicates the collective political position on the topic yet demonstrates a pluralistic position in indicating that there are multiple avenues to seek lasting peace in the region, including the pacific activism that some people began to demonstrate through the Central America Peace March. In this particular time, armed struggles were seen as the only way to overthrow repressive regimes by the Left movement(s). The democratic processes of electing Marxist-oriented governments such as the case in Chile (1973) and the case of Guatemala (1954) and their eventual violent endings were examples of how those processes were easily disrupted.
This editorial piece demonstrates that ALAD collective was in fact, as Amanda stated, ‘politically open’ because of the way they made the arguments. The Latin American revolutionary projects were inspired by Ernesto Che’s Guevara affirmation: “… I believe in armed struggle as the only solution for those peoples who fight to free themselves, and I am consistent with my beliefs” (1970) [no page number]. However, it also shows that the collective was not rigid in its position to follow just one way of struggle. Through this editorial, the team is reflecting on and covering the changes that started to happen in the region by the end of the 1980s. The following section focuses at the media coverage produced by the mainstream media on Latin America from the point of view of the participants.

5.3 A look back at the media enclosures: The Latin American coverage

One characteristic of alternative media is to provide listeners with information that is contextualized. One of the many characteristics of ALAD as part of a communications commons project was to fill the gap in analysis and media coverage on relevant issues regarding Latin America. This section introduces the participants’ points of view on how they perceived the role of alternative media at that time. What was the mainstream media coverage intended on Latin American during the 1980s? Were reporters sent to cover the different political conflicts? Interviewees provided their thoughts and first-hand experiences with regard to North American mainstream media and Latin American politics coverage back then. Ana María provided an analysis of how she saw at that time and still sees the role of the mainstream media until this day in the 21st century: “One of the big problems with
mainstream [media] is that besides giving you distorted information, they give you info that is up there... in the air, it is a media that is based on the concept of crisis.” When asked what she meant by that, she explained: “It must be something that they [mainstream media] consider a crisis, so they will publish it or broadcast it, but with no historical context. So, they keep you in the crisis, this crisis passes and then nobody remembers, and nobody understood anything.” She then goes ahead and provides a current example to illustrate what she means: “Take the situation of Crimea, they talk about that and I don’t understand anything. But what I see is that people learn that Russians are the bad guys and the poor people are suffering, but there is no context, no analysis.” She insisted in repeating that this is the way the media work: “in a cycle of keeping the audience in that crisis stage, then another crisis comes by, but nobody understood anything.” Ana María stated that ALAD was filling the gap of providing contextualized information and analysis not provided by the mainstream media.

Maurice recalled, as a mainstream reporter and editor at the time, that “the mainstream covered stories on Nicaragua and occasionally on Guatemala, but it was very sparse. When I visited those countries, I realized that they didn’t send reporters there. I discovered that it was just one reporter to cover all of Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador, and occasionally it would be one story.” He provided a picture of how mainstream media from other countries covered the situation in Central America compared to Canada: “The American wires services had more people; British wires sent more people than Canada did. They were covering some of the political stuff, but more natural disasters… earthquakes were big.” When asked about the coverage of the political context at the time: “As I said, the coverage on internal politics was very, very sparse. They covered Nicaragua because of the
Sandinista Revolution, a little bit of coverage on that, especially the contras... without a lot of context. So, you would get some stories, but they were not always used.” Robin, who worked as a journalist for an independent news agency in Mexico, had the privilege of seeing how his peers gathered and covered the different issues. He shared instances when he witnessed the way some international correspondents/reporters got their first-hand information that was used later as content for their stories: “Reporters came to Guatemala and looked for analysts or critics for an interview. Most of the times, these critics or experts spoke English. They met them in the lobby of their hotels; and then... the reporters left the country.” His observation stressed the lack of coverage from the point of view of the social activists/actors involved in the different social movements.

Amanda provided another element that partially explains how difficult it was to break the media enclosures: “everything in terms of media was really controlled; in Mexico you could get some alternative information from La Jornada newspaper, for example, but down south the media censorship was heavy.” Nonetheless, all interviewees mention how their creativity allowed them to have access to any information, including mainstream, that would be studied, analyzed and re-written to become their own media content material. The section entitled “Solidarity” provides specific details on creative strategies used by the collective to break the media enclosures.

5.4 To speak of ALAD is to speak of La Quena or viceversa

The creation of other projects also involved La Quena, the coffee house on Commercial Drive\textsuperscript{49}. As mentioned previously, La Quena was another successful political project also put in place by the exiled Chilean community and became a Latin American project like ALAD. Jimena recalls: “I think La Quena and ALAD were parallel processes, not sure which one started first.” The show broadcasted on air and was the product of a weekly process that started on Commercial Drive, where places like La Quena were key to the production of news, editorials, etc., in a bilingual format.

The production of the radio became a weekly collective ritual that involved a well-established routine, despite the amount of time that the whole production of alternative media demanded. Pilar made sure to let me know the following information: “We have to talk about La Quena, in order to talk about ALAD (…). We had a little room at the back, maybe with a window. We had 2 or 3 manual typewriters, that most of the time didn't have any ink. We produced the news in Spanish first on a quarter page, then somebody had to translate them into English.” She mentioned that usually they would meet around 5:00 pm and finished at 9 or 10 pm writing the news—adding that “then we go straight to Santos to have something to drink and then home, to be able to go to the radio the next day. This program was a big commitment. I am talking about the work we did in 1987 and 1988.” Ann echoes similar statements: “Tons of hours to produce the show, writing news, but every time somebody from Latin America was here, we invited him/her to the show and then we proceeded to line the guests up if they accepted. We interviewed Miguel de Soto, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, 

\textsuperscript{49}Origins, mission and ways to operated were mentioned in Chapter IV, page 123.
Ernesto Cardenal, etc.” She remembered that one of the main collaborators of the show was Nora Patrich, a well-known Argentine artist, feminist and exile who settled in Vancouver at that time. Amanda recalled that Patrich interviewed Mercedes Sosa on ALAD. Margaret mentioned during her interview that she was always amazed by the show’s combination of politics and culture. She also described her surprise when learning that people in government positions in Nicaragua, for example, were recognized poets. Inviting personalities in from the Latin American left was seen as important by the collective. The role of the show was to bring analysis and context to the different events happening, but also to give space to the voices of key personalities and learn about their positions and thoughts on specific issues.

During my time producing ALAD, I have had the opportunity of interviewing intellectual writer Marta Harnecker, who came to the Co-op Radio studios in Vancouver, and Evo Morales, president of Bolivia, who agreed to give me an interview back in 2002 when he was not yet president. Actress Ofelia Medina from Mexico came to the studio as well and recorded a Public Radio Announcement (PRA) for ALAD. The collective members who were part of the show during the 1980s saw it as part of their mandate to bring the voices of the left that included not only the voices of social actors in the grassroots movements, but also of people who were part of the struggle in their own way (music, writings, paintings, etc.). The show was an outlet to stay connected with the different expressions of cultures in the region. The collective members were serious and professional about their work in alternative media.

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50 Chilean Marta Harnecker was an intellectual and author of the famous book “The Basic Concepts of the Historic Materialism” published in 1969. Her book was part of the readings at university level during the 1970s and 1980s. This book was among the many the army burned during the dictatorships all over the region. She died recently in Vancouver.
and managed to provide *ALAD* with a public presence and recognition that attracted the eye of main figures from the Latin American left.

Besides the routine radio production, Margaret also recalled that as a radio collective, they used to go to different solidarity events as well, especially to the *Russian Hall*, a multi-use community hall and performance space in the historic Strathcona neighbourhood in Vancouver. Robin shared that the Russian Hall was managed by a group of Russian-Canadians who supported the many causes and struggles in Latin America. Many of the fundraising dances, cultural events like *peñas*, were carried out at the Russian Hall. Besides *ALAD*, other projects were happening, as Ana María stated Chileans had the publication of the newspaper *Venceremos* [We shall win] and a musical band: “Our musical group was called *Resistencia* (Resistance). We had *peñas* as well. We used to go to several places in the province; when we went to play to places, people talked to us about the radio program, that was how we knew *ALAD* reached many places and had an audience.” All these activities that Ana María spoke about portray a time with lots of movements and activism happening in the city. The arrival of the first Latin Americans to Canada was the result of political repression and violence in their countries of origin. As seen through the interviews with the participants, exiles and migrants alike wanted to re-create their identities as political and cultural agents. They also wanted to recreate the loss of public spaces. Furthermore, the urgency to put a halt to the human rights violations in the region triggered the effervescence in pro Latin America activism in Vancouver. The radio was key to this process, but it also shows that exiles used every single medium possible to send their message across the province on their political struggles. It also sent the message that the Latin Americans were an emergent diasporic community present and visible in their new country.
5.5 **Solidarity (in both languages)**

As Ana María mentioned earlier, the contacts Chileans had with Canadians since they came into exile to Vancouver allowed them to have half an hour of air time on Co-op Radio: “We started with the show just in Spanish, but soon after, we went bilingual.” She explained that “once the show became bilingual, Canadians played an important role.” Her recollection includes at least 8 names of progressive Canadians, in their majority journalists who worked in mainstream media, but also university professors who were key in ALAD’s weekly production and broadcasting. Among those early participants of the show, she mentioned Bob Everton. Everton was a well-known activist and a Simon Fraser University scholar, who among other foreign nationals, experienced detention and torture among hundreds of Chileans in the football Stadium of Santiago de Chile\textsuperscript{51} during the coup d’état in September 1973.

Amanda made sure to explain that the Canadians working on the show “were not volunteers for the sake of volunteering.” She stated that: “The Canadians who worked in solidarity with us were not recruited from the mainstream; they belonged to the progressive social movement in Canada, they already had a level of political analysis.” In fact, Amanda went further explaining what, from her point of view, was the aim of having the radio show: “Our purpose was not to keep people updated with the situation in Latin America. That was an additional consequence of the work. Our task was to create a communication bridge

\textsuperscript{51} *The Guardian* newspaper published on its online edition of November 12, 2011: “Bob Everton, a Canadian activist who had been among thousands detained and tortured at the football stadium in Santiago.” See full article: https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/nov/12/carmen-aguirre-chilean-resistance-childhood
See more about Bob Everton: https://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/blog/year/2015/11/BobEverton-Communication.html
between the Latin American reality and what was perceived here as a Latin American reality.” She also explained that: “Our goals were to expand our communication with the Canadian mainstream public, to recruit people, and to run campaigns.” The campaigns she was referring to were fundraising events needed to support many actions taken by the grassroots organizations down South. She also mentioned support with political actions carried out in Vancouver, such as press conferences when key personalities were in town. She referred to recruit people to join in participating in different political actions, including becoming part of the radio collective. Amanda put a lot of emphasis when saying that without the participation of the progressive Canadians, none of these projects such as ALAD could have flourished. When asked how they recruited them, Amanda mentioned that: “We didn’t have resources really, but every Saturday we made a call for people to help in any way. That was how journalists approached us and helped us.” She reflected on the fact that: “In that time, The Province and The [Vancouver] Sun were two independent newspapers; there was not a monopoly like today. They had different sources. Journalists from both papers provided us with news and wires that we could use. We also counted with the support of two professors from the Latin American Program at Simon Fraser University. They monitored news in other radios stations.” The ALAD collective created a solidarity network that supported the production of the program. The collective members were not the only ones producing the show per se, but the allies were key agents in the existence of the show as well.
5.6 Behind the mic(raphone): The process of producing a radio show in exile

Below there are two original line-ups from 1980s. The line-up is the outline that details minute by minute the production of one hour of air broadcasting. The line-up helps the sound or control technician and the hosts to know the exact time and length of time for every segment. The producer of the show is the one responsible for the creation of the line-up.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>EQUIPMENT</th>
<th>ITEM AND CONTENTS</th>
<th>LENGTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme + Intro + Herrizo</td>
<td>2:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nicaragua News + Sektor + Havana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:02</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sting</td>
<td>1:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chico + Brazil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intro + Eng</td>
<td>1:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intro + Spanish</td>
<td>1:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clip + Script</td>
<td>20:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Columbia News + Mexico</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>News</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Music + Argentina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Line up 1 analysis:

The first line-up is from November 22, 1986. It is written on the form used by all radio producers at Coop Radio. The form has a box at the top right corner that requests the names of producers, reporters, hosts and control operators/technicians. All these positions are essential for the overall production of a radio show. Below this information, the form requests technical and content information, leaving a column for time tracking. This first line-up is brief yet provides an opportunity to see the structure of the show described in general terms: music, news, interviews and community events segments with the assigned times for each section. This very brief description starts with the “Theme-Intro-Theme” which refers to a music clip used by the collective to identify the show on air. The “Intro” refers to the welcome to the show segment that introduces the show to the audience. The news segment section introduces the countries covered in that specific week. El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras are the first countries covered. The radio show paid a lot of attention to this region in Latin America due to the political context at the time; for example, Nicaragua was still governed by a Sandinista government. The “Sting” section refers to a few seconds of music played every two or three news clips as a way to keep the flow of the show going smoothly. Each news piece was read in both languages. “Intro Spanish” refers to the main topic to be covered that specific Saturday, followed by music and more news clips. This line-up also includes a calendar of events segment. That time it was used to promote cultural and political activities going on throughout the city.

It is written on the form used by all radio producers at Coop Radio. The form has a box at the top right corner that requests names of producers, reporters, hosts and control operators/technicians. All these positions are essential for the overall production of a radio
show. Below this information, the form requests technical and content information, leaving a
column for time tracking. This first line-up is brief yet provides an opportunity to see the
structure of the show described in general terms: music, news, interviews and community
events segments with the assigned times for each section. This very brief description starts
with the “Theme-Intro-Theme” which refers to a music clip used by the collective to identify
the show on air. The “Intro” refers to the welcome to the show segment that introduces the
show to the audience. The news segment section introduces the countries covered in that
specific week. El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras are the first countries covered. The
radio show focused a lot of attention on this region in Latin America due to the political
context at the time; for example, Nicaragua was still governed by a Sandinista government.
The “Sting” section refers to few seconds of music played every two or three news clips as a
way to keep the flow of the show smoothly. Each news piece was read in both languages.
“Intro Spanish” refers to the main topic to be covered that specific Saturday, followed by
music and more news clips. This line-up also includes a calendar of events segment. This
time was used to promote cultural and political activities going on throughout the city.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:00:00</td>
<td>T T</td>
<td>Music: Intro</td>
<td>2:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00:00</td>
<td>CSTR</td>
<td>Music: Del Color DEL AMOR Side A, 1</td>
<td>3:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>Peru / El Salvador</td>
<td>3:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:08</td>
<td>T T</td>
<td>Music: 2 DE ALGIDAD SE TRATA</td>
<td>4:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:33</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>Nic / Wash.</td>
<td>4:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:57</td>
<td>T T</td>
<td>Music: 3 Side B Cut 3</td>
<td>3:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:57</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>Interview en - esp.</td>
<td>15:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45:00</td>
<td>T T</td>
<td>Music: 4 Side A Cut 1</td>
<td>3:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>Brasil / Honduras + cut</td>
<td>3:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50:30</td>
<td>CSTR</td>
<td>Music: 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54:30</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>News: CHILE</td>
<td>2:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calendar Music Cut 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.2 Line up II Analysis:

This line-up was made by hand. The month and date are identified but not the year. It has similar information to the previous one, but this one is more detailed. Minutes are assigned to each segment and under ‘Equipment’ it states clearly who is in charge of each activity. ‘TT’ means that the sound technician is in charge of music and music stings. “CSTR” means cassette with the number of songs already cued or ready to play, including Side A or Side B. “Studio” refers to the studio room where hosts broadcast live. The control technician is the main person who operates the radio console, according to the line-up. Music with social content is identified as well at the bottom of the page. Each song has a number. These numbers are distributed through the line-up identifying when the control technician had to play the music chosen for that Saturday. Among the songs are: “Canción Urgente para Nicaragua” [Urgent song for Nicaragua] by the famous Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez of the Nueva Trova music movement. Other artists include Nicaraguan duo Guardabarranco, Argentinean Mercedes Sosa, the Colombian group “Latin Brothers” and Panamanian singer Rubén Blades. The main interview topic is not identified, but it states that it will be presented in both English and Spanish.

All the people involved in the radio collective had to be familiar with the line-ups. This radio format was developed by the ALAD collective and to this day, the weekly format is very similar to these two examples.

The line-up structure is based on a variety show or magazine format that allowed the collective to provide in-depth analysis on a specific topic as well as news from or about Latin
America. Both line-ups include news pieces from Washington, USA and London, England. It also included time for alternative music and promoted local activities.

5.6.3 Behind the line-ups

In order to understand the process of radio production, Ana María went over every single step needed every Saturday: “I will explain to you how to produce a radio show in exile.” She stressed the importance of doing the work in a collective way and enumerated the following:

1. Gather the stolen news from the mainstream newspapers. (She meant the cables given by journalists’ friends who worked on mainstream media.)

2. Read the official line from the mainstream newspapers, including those mailed by relatives weekly from Chile.

3. If possible, have telephone conversations with representatives of the social movements.

4. Monitor Radio Moscow, Radio Habana, etc. to have a different perspective than the official one.

5. Read between the lines and analyze the mainstream information.

6. Re-write the news and include the show’s political angle when writing them.

7. Translate all from Spanish into English or vice-versa.

8. Write an editorial to be read at the beginning (“This used to happen during the 1970s, but not sure if that continued during the 1980s.”).

9. Make sure to have a main topic to be discussed during the show.
10. Pray that if you are doing a telephone interview with a representative of the social movement, the connection works; otherwise, have a plan B.

11. Select music with social content.

12. Make sure to open the phone lines if the audience wants to talk on air.

13. Have the written line-up ready for the show, which states the times and everything that goes, including news pieces, etc., in both languages.

When explaining the rationale of these steps, Ana Maria reflected on the importance and responsibility of the radio producer and the collective in presenting the content well researched, organized and analyzed for the audience. She made the analogy of producing a quality radio show with a quality lunch meal: “it was a lot of work, but the task of the show was to find all the information possible, to connect it, to analyze it and then present it to the public in a way that they could understand it, with in-depth context. People were so busy working all day. The show was like a well-prepared meal with dessert.” Pilar, who joined the radio show ten years after, echoed this responsibility of delivering a professional radio show: “I think we always worked at that level; when we had news, we had to corroborate, we just didn’t repeat the news we got from the mainstream. Perhaps our analysis was complicated, but we needed to do research, read between the lines and then rewrite them with our own criticism. We never broadcasted anything commercial.” The interviewees reflect the level of commitment and understanding of the responsibility to have an alternative media outlet.

Drawing from Rodriguez (2006) and her call to study media practices carried out by ordinary citizens that contributes to social changes. ALAD as a communication practice in motion,
evolved and embraced a practice of alternative journalism with a clearly defined production vision and clarity of how it could offer a different and informed perspective.

Below, I included an example of how ALAD covered the topic of Liberation Theology that was so relevant in the region during those decades. The following three pages are parts of a script with the introduction on the topic. Unfortunately, it is the only written material available. The script and the taped material completed the coverage of this topic. The audio material is not available either, but these three pages are evidence of how the collective approached the topic of Liberation Theology by interviewing a key person from Chile to talk about how this sector of the church that agreed with LT was facing the situation in Chile.
The Liberation Theology Conference held at Simon Fraser University last weekend was an exciting event, bringing together popular theologians from the Philippines, Germany, the U.S. and Canada, and from South and Central America. The conference provided a forum for Christians and non-Christians alike, to explore and exchange ideas on the relation between the church and popular needs, struggles and culture.

La conferencia sobre la teología de la liberación la que tomó lugar el fin de semana pasado a la Universidad de Simon Fraser, fue un evento interesante, concentrando los teólogos y sacerdotes populares de las Filipinas, Alemania, los Estados Unidos y Canadá, y de América del Sur y Central. La conferencia provee una ocasión para el intercambio y una exploración, de parte de cristianos y no-cristianos, de la relación entre la iglesia y las necesidades, las luchas y la cultura de populares.

Given the diversity and breadth of the presentations, we decided, rather than giving a generalized overview of liberation theology, we would present an in-depth discussion with one of the participants, a Chilean priest named Ronaldo Muñoz.

Dada la amplitud y la diversidad de las presentaciones, decidimos presentar una discusión profunda y particular con uno de los participantes, en vez de un resumen más superficial y general de lo que es la teología de la liberación. La conversación siguiente es con Ronaldo Muñoz, de Chile, un cura que ha pasado una década o más, viviendo con los pobladores de una comunidad marginal de la capital chilena. También es versado en el argumento teológico.

Muñoz, while he has spent a decade or more living among the...
WHILE HE HAS SPENT A DECADE OR MORE LIVING AMONG THE EXTREMELY POOR PEOPLE OF A SANTIAGO SHANTY-TOWN, MUNOZ IS ALSO WELL-SCHOoled IN THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. THE FOLLOWING IS PART OF A CONVERSATION WE HAD WITH HIM BEFORE HIS RETURN TO CHILE. HIS CAREFULLY CHOSEN COMMENTS ON THE PRESENT SITUATION IN HIS COUNTRY ARE ENLIGHTENING AS AN EXAMPLE OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE.

TUVO QUE VOLVER A CHILE DESPUES DE LA CONFERENCIA, PERO SUS PALABRAS SELECCIONADAS CON CIUDADAN, SOBRE LA SITUACION ACTUAL DE SU PAIS, SERVIRAN COMO UN EJEMPLO DE LA TEOLOGIA DE LA LIBERACION, EN LA PRACTICA.

THE Pinochet DICTATORSHIP HAS HISTORICALLY USED THE ULTRA-RIGHT OF THE CHURCH IN CHILE FOR ADVICE ON LAW, ECONOMICS AND THE MEDIA. A THINK-TANK CALLED THE INSTITUTE OF GENERAL STUDIES, WHICH WAS CREATED BY THE SECRET "OPUS DEI" SECT, WAS CLOSELY TIED TO CIA ACTIVITIES IN CHILE, AND SERVED AS THE BRAINS BEHIND THE FIRST GOVERNMENT JUNTA.

LA DICTADURA MILITAR DE Pinochet HISTORICAMENTE HA UTILIZADO LA ULTRA-DERECHA DE LA IGLESIA CHILENA COMO ASESORES EN LAS AREAS DE LA LEY, LA ECONOMIA, Y LAS COMUNICACIONES. EL CENTRO DE PENSAMIENTO Y DE INVESTIGACION "INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS GENERALES" FUE CREADO POR LA SECTA SECRET "OPUS DEI", Y TUVO VINCULOS ESTRECHOS A LAS ACTIVIDADES DE LA CIA EN CHILE. ESTE INSTITUTO SERVIÓ COMO EL CEREBRO DE LA PRIMERA JUNTA DE GOBIERNO MILITAR.

In the popular communities of Chile, the church has acted as a refuge and a place to meet for many organizations of the people under the repression. Even given the risks inherent in allowing anyone to enter, the church has provided a place to reconstruct these organizations, after the 1973 coup. For a while, this even created a dependence on the church for those groups, unions and political parties with no other safe place.

EN LAS COMUNIDADES POPULARES DE CHILE, LA IGLESIA HA SIDO UN REFUGIO Y UN LUGAR PARA DONDE COMUNICARSE Y REUNIRSE PARA EL PUEBLO Y SUS ORGANIZACIONES. AUN DADAS LAS RIESGAS DE PERMITIR LA ENTRADA DE CUALQUIERA PERSONA, LA IGLESIA HA PROPORCIONADO UN ESPACIO PARA LA RECONSTRUCCION DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES POPULARES DESDE EL "CULPE MILITAR" DURANTE LOS PRIMEROS OCHO AÑOS, AUN CREO QUE ESTO UNA DEPENDENCIA DE LA IGLESIA POR PARTE DE LOS GRUPOS SOCIALES Y CULTURALES, LOS SINDICATOS, Y LOS PARTIDOS POLITICOS, QUE NO TENIAN OTRO LUGAR SEGURO. ESTE SITUACION VA CAMBIANDO, PERO TODAVIA EXISTEN VINCULOS IMPORTANTES....

TAPE TIME: 1:51

ENDS: INSIDE THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE, ALSO FOR THE FUTURE...CONSTRUCTING TOGETHER A NEW SOCIETY.

HACE DESDE LAS PROTESTAS NACIONALES DE 1983, LAS ORGANIZACIONES POPULARES HAN RECONQUISTADO UNA CIERTA AUTONOMIA DE LA IGLESIA. PERO A LA VEZ, SE HAN DESCubierto COMO
5.6.4 Summary and analysis of script on Liberation Theology:

In this script, from February 15, 1986, ALAD was covering a conference on Liberation Theology that took place at Simon Fraser University. The first paragraph of the script provides detailed information on the importance of this conference and on the experts, who came to share their perspectives from countries such as the Philippines, Germany, Canada, USA, South and Central America. ALAD saw this conference as an opportunity for Christians and Non-Christians alike to discuss “the role of the church in relation to social needs, popular struggles and culture,” as stated in the script’s introduction.

The radio collective stated that trying to cover the presentations of all the guest speakers would result in very general coverage of this important topic. Thus, ALAD decided to provide a more in-depth analysis of the practice of Liberation Theology in Chile by interviewing Ronaldo Muñoz, a priest who had been living for more than 10 years in marginalized communities or shantytowns in Santiago. Muñoz was also an expert in theology. By providing more in-depth coverage, the ALAD collective managed to contextualize the role of the traditional Church and its links with the dictatorship in Chile. In one sentence, the influence of the Church is specified: “The dictatorship has historically used the ultra-right of the Church in Chile for advice on Law, Economics and the Media.”

Furthermore, the script provides more detailed information on the profound links between the conservative Church and the United States’ intervention that fueled the first military junta in Chile, which took power after the overthrow of President Salvador Allende.

After providing information on the influence of the conservative Church in Chile, ALAD mentions the division in the Church provoked by members who preferred to defend the poor and oppressed. The script does not elaborate on this division in the Catholic Church.
It focuses on the situation faced by popular communities in Chile and how the Church became “a refuge and [...] a place to meet for many organizations under the repression.” ALAD highlights how for a while after the coup d’etat in Chile, activists from the labour movement, political parties and others became dependent on the Church because it became the only place to feel safe. However, the script mentions that after 8 years, popular organizations had gained some autonomy outside the refuge of the Church.

With the interview provided, ALAD was offering an in-depth analysis of the role of Liberation Theology in Chile from the perspective of a priest with the experience of living with oppressed people in the shantytowns in Chile. The guest speaker spoke not only about the theory of Liberation Theology, but also about how it was being carried out in practice. In one paragraph, ALAD explains to the audience that Muñoz was not able to provide a live interview, but he was able to do a pre-recorded one, in which “his carefully chosen comments on the present situation in his country are enlightening as an example of Liberation Theology in practice.” The situation in Chile during that time could explain why the collective stressed that Father Muñoz was very careful when referring to the situation in his country.

Making sure to invite potential guest speaker to the show such as the case with Father Munoz was one of the many tasks carried out by the ALAD collective.

Ana María provided a list of steps to produce the show. In following these steps, interviewees recount stories on how they managed to put together a one-hour show that later increased to one hour and a half: “We were information scavengers, we were pirates,” said Valentina laughing. She recalled as well that people came to the station and provided information as well, or they just phoned and let them know who was coming into town.
Maurice admits that he took telex/wires from *The Province* newspaper: “probably I gave them [ALAD collective] 150 pages every week, it was tons of paper. I gave them to the news committee, and they had to read them all, then to rewrite the news with their own political perspective.” He explains that after a while of just providing the news, he joined the news writing committee: “I ended up doing it too. We divided the pages, and it took at least 3 hours for three of us to go over the whole thing.” Jimena in fact recalls: “When I was part of the show, I worked minimum 30 hours a week on putting together the show. The news section was lots of work. But also, people came and told us information. Visitors came to Vancouver and we interviewed them.” Others talked of working 40 hours a week when producing the show as well. Below there are two news clips produced during that decade. These are two short news pieces that were the final product of many hours of reading, translating, editing and writing to be ready to broadcast on Saturday.
5.6.5 News clips from Mexico and Colombia

CIUDAD JUAREZ:
A blockade of the Pan American Highway in the southern part of the State of Chihuahua is causing millions of dollars in losses to Juarez businessmen, officials said Wednesday.
The blockade, in its third day, is part of a protest by farmers who are seeking a reduction in the price of fuel and fertilizer and an increase in government-guaranteed prices for their crops. Nearly 2,000 farm vehicles and more than 4,000 growers and farm workers, mostly from the rich agricultural areas of Delicias and Camargo, about 350 miles south of El Paso, Texas, have joined the blockade.
Front leaders said current loan interest rates and the scarcity of farm credit are driving up their production costs.
The protest was the third highway blockade in Mexico over the past two months. Two other farming groups have staged demonstrations along highways near Mexico City and in the central state of Queretaro.

Meanwhile, in other news from Mexico, on Thursday, the 76th anniversary of Mexico's revolution, protesters throwing rocks clashed with police, and more than 200 people were injured in Juarez. On Thursday night, 500 protesters took over the international bridge joining Mexico and Texas. The demonstrators blocked the traditional parade to protest the fraudulent elections earlier this year.
COLOMBIA

THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT SAID TUESDAY IT HAS NO EVIDENCE JOURNALIST PATRICIA LARA IS A MEMBER OF A TERRORIST GROUP OR AN AGENT OF THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT, AS A TOP U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ALLEGED.

Colombian Foreign Minister Julio Londoño said "we don't know where the U.S. government obtained such information about Lara", who was barred from entering the U.S. last month without explanation.

Elliot Abrams, U.S. State Undersecretary for Inter-American Affairs, said in an interview aired Sunday night on CBS's 60 Minutes that Lara has been "a member of some of the ruling committees, some of the administrative committees" of the M-19.

Lara, a reporter for El Tiempo, a right wing newspaper in Colombia, has been part of the negotiating committee set up during Betancourt's peace dialogue.

Abrams offered no evidence for his statements, but said they are based on intelligence information dating back 10 years. It seems unlikely that the Colombian government would defend any known member of the M-19.
5.6.6 News clips analysis:

ALAD tried to cover as many countries as possible weekly. News clips provided snapshots of the different struggles and relevant news happening in the region. The news clips above are covering Mexico and Colombia. There are no dates given to the news clips. The first news clip is covering the actions taken by farmers against government measures. It states the farmers’ arguments to their actions through a blockade. This news clip includes the angle from the farmers’ movement in Mexico, illustrating a production practice of alternative media of opening communication avenues for social movements. Part of news from Juarez, Mexico was done in a typewriter, while the other piece was written by hand. One of the aims of Alternative Media is to provide the social movement members a space to voice their concerns.

This editing process suggests that the pieces of information received by the radio collective were like an information puzzle that needed to be organized. The job of the news team was to properly organize the news, as in this case in which the political actions of the farmers were paired with the political actions taken in the same city to protest the alleged presidential elections fraud.

The second news clip refers to the case of Patricia Lara, a Colombian journalist who was part of the peace talks negotiations implemented by former President Betancourt. She worked for a right-wing newspaper. Lara is accused by the CIA of working for the M-19 [April 19th guerrilla movement], an urban revolutionary organized group in Colombia. During the editing process, the ALAD news team decided to quote the positions of both the American and Colombian government officials by citing declarations given to the
mainstream media. The quotes evidence the opposite positions held regarding Lara’s political affiliation. The last sentence included in this brief news clip provides the position of the radio collective: “It seems unlikely the Colombian government would defend any known members of the M-19.” In this short, brief sentence and by including the adverb ‘unlikely’, the ALAD collective is inviting the audience to reflect and question the motives of the Colombian government in defending Lara.

5.7 Airplanes and media enclosures

Jimena found paid work overseas, but that did not stop her commitment to support the radio show: “I worked for a while in Mexico in an air travel agency, and I used to send La Jornada daily newspapers with my work colleges who came to Vancouver. Every week, the collective received the newspapers.” Pilar repeated that in fact: “In Mexico we could find more concrete resources less partial to the repressive systems, but more south, besides what the underground movements could produce in terms of clandestine media, everything was very controlled”. Ann explains that they used everything they got, even from the mainstream media: “We used some of the mainstream material, but we had to really squish to find something useful.” Maurice also talked about the information gathered through organized groups working in Canada. On this situation, Amanda made sure to explain that there were other organized groups that shared internal information, but “ALAD was not allowed to say it ahead of time. Until the day of the show, people found out what we were going to cover that Saturday. It had to do with protecting our sources as well.” Amanda mentioned that the collective did not say their names on air as a way to protect their identities too. Protecting the
identities of all involved highlights a practice of alternative media ethics developed in the collective. Valentina mentioned how she was part of the underground radio movement in Guatemala in a clandestine way. In Vancouver, ALAD was not broadcasting in that format, yet the sensitive and highly political nature of the material covered required the collective to protect their sources. It became an alternative media ethics practice of protecting themselves, their guest speakers and other people who participated in the radio show. The collective had big challenges every week; however, they were resourceful in making sure the show went on. Pilar stated that: “We were really creative to find information. People who had plans to travel south came and asked us what we needed from such and such country.” The audience was part somehow of the production team, offering to bring information if possible. Amanda commented that ALAD created a network of supporters that included university professors, journalists working in mainstream media, etc. She also mentioned that the radio collective asked for in-kind support every Saturday to be able to carry on with the production of the show. The collective was open to inviting potential ‘volunteers’ to work on the show. As Amanda said, the radio show was a bridge to connect with others. As seen in Chapter III, through the pre-ALAD experiences of the collective members in their respective countries, I believe that the ALAD audience was engaged in a collective performance of listening. The audience was active and answered the call for support.

Ana Maria also provided a sense of how they organized the work: “We had two teams, and one general meeting every month. The producer had to decide what to do—either a documentary or an interview. The news committee had to create ways to get the news. We had journalists whose names I won’t mention because basically they stole the cables from the
The collective members talked about a variety of strategies that they used in order to get information.

In order to agree on what to produce, Margaret described the work involved and commitment “we used to have lots of meetings, every week lots of meetings, because everything we did it collectively. Sometimes there were long meetings.” Maurice also agreed with this, “he said that the meeting became intense, but at the end, they managed to get consensus on something.” Based on the answers, it seems like the meetings could go on and on until consensus was reached. The process of reaching consensus involved a lot of time, in addition to the time assigned for the production work needed. In short, the ALAD radio broadcasting style required a consensus-based collective work focused on the provision of contextualized information from a variety of sources (primary and secondary). This process was accompanied by an ethical practice of protecting the sources. Furthermore, the collective also protected its members by making sure that their own names were not said on air, as explained in more detail in the following section.

5.8 A partial radio show on air

Moving from the intensity of the work entailed behind the microphone, the participants talked about their work as a collective and how they presented themselves on air. Amanda explains that “We were a collective; we didn’t provide any names on air. It had to do with security reasons.” She stated that: “even in Canada, we had to be careful. People from the different consulates and embassies of governments we criticized on air, called the station and denounced that we were biased.” Amanda explained in detail the way they
presented the show on air: “We always said, we are not impartial, we are partial, we are form the left, and we want to bring the voices of the people in struggle in Latin America.” She recalls interviewing key people in the different struggles down South: “We interviewed people from the left such as Ernesto Cardenal, one of the martyrs in UCA [The University of Central America], in El Salvador, the leader of the Workers Party from Brazil, leaders form different organizations from Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.” She is keen in reiterating that “for me, our work with the radio was in what today's term will be an agency of the struggle. Our main objective was to educate Canadians, the news was not the main issue, but it was an additional consequence.” The aim? of the show, in her view, “was to create a communication bridge with the progressive Canadians to show the Latin American reality from our perspective and compare it to the Latin America portrayed in the mainstream media here, that by the way, was almost null. The idea was to recruit all the support possible to help with our campaign.” Amanda is clear about one of the many objectives of the show, not just to inform as an alternative media outlet, but also recruit potential candidates to support their different political projects and processes.

Jimena mentioned that even though the title of the show means Latin America Update, “the news segment of the show, it was never updated sister (laughs), news were not that fresh, but with the years, we started to get news from a group of Salvadors trained by the FMLN that got organized in Toronto. They started to send us their cassettes with their news. That helped us a lot.” Jimena’s experience showed the transition from manual typewriters to computers: “After a while, my partner managed to buy a computer, it was a DOS, the program was EUDORA; it was like email, but without graphics.” She laughed
when saying that probably more than a decade after the show started, “the news section was finally updated.” I joined laughing with her.

5.9 The internal political position(s) of ALAD collective

Since the collective gathered many people from different countries and political organizations, it was important to ask about internal political positions and if they were an issue. Amanda stressed that “We were not united, we were divided based on our own organization’s political line.” She got serious when commenting that: “I get annoyed when I hear this romanticism that we were all united, no we were not. We had long discussions. I think our Canadian partners got tired of the long discussions. But somehow, I admired the capacity of the Canadians of not getting involved, but to have a clear analysis and see the big picture.” She tried to explain how the program managed to survive: “I think having the radio as a medium, we understood that we all had differences, that the Communist Party had differences in all Latin America. I saw all the strategic divisions from the movements in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, but somehow we reached a common understanding of keeping ALAD afloat.” She continued the reflection saying that “I was impressed with how the collective saw the big picture, and we didn’t stay in our own little boxes. We had a common understanding in terms of the ideology. Any decision was consensual; if somebody said no, we discussed further, but if still no, we didn’t do it.” In order to agree on what to produce, Margaret described the work involved and commitment: “we used to have lots of meetings, every week lots of meeting, because everything we did it collectively. Sometimes there were long meetings.” Maurice also agreed with this, he said that the meetings became
intense, but at the end, they managed to get consensus on something. If somebody did not agree, the meetings continued until everybody was fine with the final decision.

For Margaret, the involvement with the radio show provoked some discomfort: “At the time I came in, people were still following a kind of hard line, in the style of leftist politics; we were asked to swear allegiance to Cuba, promised never say anything bad about Cuba. That pushed my buttons, because I didn’t like they are being told what to do with Cuba.” She explained that this kind of requirement made her reflect on Cuban issues that she was not in favour of: “I think they tried to make me understand the rationale of why they were asking that, but for me the death penalty -coming from Amnesty International was not a right thing, and I was concerned with the treatment of gay and lesbians as well. I found it weird.” Margaret continued to explain how that affected her: “I remember myself one night being freaked out about that in my first meeting. That was all spoken, though; you didn’t have to sign anything. After that first time, it was never mentioned after.” Pilar explained that in order to be part of the collective, the potential participants “had to have some ideological training or formation. They didn’t have to know the technical stuff. We trained them on how to produce radio.” Potential participants were aware and knew ahead of time about the political angle of the show. Pilar mentioned that “people who did not agree stopped coming. We had to be clear from the beginning with everybody.” The clear position of the show worked as a magnet for the ones with similar political values and understanding of the way ALAD produced alternative media.

Maurice recalls that: “There were lots of internal struggles with personalities and egos, like everywhere. Occasionally we had people involved in the show that they were not
in agreement with our perspective and they left the show. Sometimes contentious, but most of the people who worked on the show had come from Latin America as political refugees, so they were already politically aware.” Ann mentioned a concrete situation: “This guy wanted to take the radio by force, but we as a collective kicked him out.” Pilar was the producer, and this person was not happy with the way she was producing the show. He was a very extreme leftist.” In fact, Pilar also remembers the episode: “I just had a bad experience with a guy who wanted to take the radio show by force. He was more extreme left, and I kicked him out. That was one of the most intense moments I recall.” By extreme left, Pilar was referring to the vertical and centralized way that characterized several of the left-wing organizations in Latin America. The decisions were made by a small group of men who were the leaders and the rest only needed to carry out the orders assigned. Decision makers were not usually women. That does not mean women were not part of the revolutions, but men were the ones ‘leading’ the actions. ‘Extreme leftist’ refers as well to the lack of gender equality and gender analysis of those left-wing organizations. Pilar and Ann rejected the ‘male’ authority this individual wanted to impose on them and on the whole collective. They

Ann continued explaining that despite the differences in the collective, “we all tried to work hard; of course, we had people with strong personalities, but we managed to continue. On air, we always said ‘We are people from the left,’ we said it openly, ‘this is our point of view, we are pro-Sandinism, pro-socialism in Chile, pro people fighting in Guatemala’; in all those struggles, we were against the oppressors, against the dictatorships, and most of all, we were against capitalism.” She went further explaining her political training and tendency: “I am a Marxist and I had a Marxist analysis, and not everybody was like me, but they had their positions on the current situations at that time, critical of the
system; not everybody had the same analysis, but we had a common understanding.” All the interviewees spoke about the differences, and despite of all of them, were the ones who stayed and continued producing the show for several years.

5.10 Daring topics (for both left and right)

Ann stressed that the collective agreed on the role and responsibilities of the producer(s). The producer of the show was the person who took the decision about what topics to cover with the input of everybody else. She recalls that during her time as a producer, she decided to interview three Lesbian Latinas about the topic of lesbianism. She remembers that this topic created a lot of controversy: “People from the left phoned complaining and demanding that we do not cover those kinds of topics. One caller, I believe he was from the MIR in fact, said: ‘You think that while Latin America is bleeding, this is important?’” Ann explained that even people working for social justice at that time “didn't understand that the relation with the civil society and the politics are not different.” Ann explained that it was important to trigger any discussion of those controversial issues on ALAD because for her, everything was linked.

Amanda believed it was important to challenge herself and others on these “uncomfortable” issues: “I tried to be auto-critic in the show, and that brought lots of trouble. But I understood the importance of being auto-critic.” She narrated her experience of witnessing the situations in the different countries of Central America: “I walked in the streets of El Salvador, of Managua, and I knew that people where not happy with the movements sometimes, so we had to respect the voice of the people. It was hard for me to
accept not to do auto-criticism.” Through those daring topics and positions, ALAD producers had a clear understanding of the role of alternative media as an outlet to open discussions that included self-criticism to the left on their silencing of gender and sexual identity issues and the presence of patriarchal and homophobic discourses.

5.11 An active bilingual audience

“We had a big audience. We had people who phoned as far from Oregon, from Washington, Seattle, from all British Columbia. I think we were known for being a unique program in that time,” that is how Amanda remembers the impact and reach of the show on the West Coast.

Robin recalls that when Co-op Radio was carrying out the fundraising campaigns, “people called us, they let us know of different events and the different organizations called us to let us know people/guests were coming into town.” The fact that the show was bilingual opened the possibility of reaching a greater audience. Maurice, who always read the news in English, remembers that: “We had quite a following, I used to read the news, I went to lots of events for the FMLN, FSLN or other groups, Cuban support groups. People usually recognized my voice. I was happy when the collective insisted to keep the show bilingual.”

For Pilar, however, the fact of having the show in a bilingual format had to do no just with promoting the struggles in Latin America: “I imagine that from an ideological and ethical point of view, we were in a country where the majority spoke in English. One of our aims was to inform people who were internationalists to support the struggle as a common one, with no barriers.” Her words highlighted the fact that the collective saw their participation in
the radio show as a way to fight their right to communicate as a global struggle, not just as a Latin American one.

The bilingualism part of the show is reflected on by Margaret who said: “At that time, it was unique, I think. Why in English is a good question, right?” She reflects on the lack of coverage of the mainstream media or the poor way it was covered “the gap in information was huge. Canadians not knowing anything about their neighbours from the same continent. That was an important reason to have it in English.” But her reflection extended to her background as a language teacher. She spoke about the linguistic impact of the bilingual show specifically for the English-speaking population: “Many people said they used it as a way to learn the language, progressive-minded English speakers who wanted to support the show, but also realized they could test their listening skills in Spanish.” When asked if she thought the same medium could have the same effect on Spanish-speaking listeners, she said: “Maybe, but I don’t recall many Spanish speakers to say ‘I am improving my English,’ I think they listen to the show for other reasons. I go back again to what I’ve already told you. People phoned to request music and to speak and listen to the Spanish language. There was no other way to do that.” The ALAD radio project became a source to fill many needs, from information on what was going on in the region through in-depth analysis, to connect the community, to build bridges with the host community, and continue with the struggle back South, as was the intention of their founders. Those bridges continued being built by the collective members of this new century.

ALAD also promoted cultural and political activities in the city. The calendar below provides a snapshot of the many events to promote solidarity between the south and the
north. Through this calendar, it is possible to have a sense of the many political and cultural activities planned in the city in support of Latin America and many of those were also produced by the ALAD radio collective members. Social movements were struggling in the south, but also a movement of solidarity and action was taking place in the many places of the city, especially weekly along Commercial Drive and in Downtown East Side where a collective of ordinary people started their way into producing a one-hour radio show to be broadcasted live from Co-op Radio on 102.7 FM. Below is a sample of a calendar of events that shows the many activities planned linked to Latin America.
TOMORROW NOV 16 THERE WILL BE ABAAZZAR TO RAISE FUNDS TO HELP OUT THE VICTIMS OF THE EARTHQUAKE IN EL SALVADOR AT ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH, 3271 FLEMING ST AT 18TH AVE. THERE WILL BE SALVADOREAN FOOD AS WELL AS MUSIC. TIME: 12 TO 6PM

MANANA 16 DE NOVIEMBRE HABRA UNA FERIA PARA REUNIR FONDOS PARA LAS VICTIMAS DE EL TERRMOTO EN EL SALVADOR. EN LA IGLESIA DE SAN JOSÉ, 3271 FLEMING Y 18 AVINIDA. DE 12 MEDIO DIA HASTA 6 EN LA TARDE.

TOMORROW NIGHT NOV 16 PATRICIO SANTERAS WILL PERFORM AT ROBSON SQUARE MEDIA CENTRE AT 7PM. PLAYS CLASSICAL GUITAR RECITAL FROM BACH-ALBENIZ-BARRIOS.

DONATION: $35
ORGANIZED BY COMMITTEE OF SOLIDARITY WITH CHILE SALVADOR ALLENDE

DOMINGO, 16 DE NOVIEMBRE EN LA NOCHE PRESENTARA EN EL ROBSON SQUARE MEDIA CENTRE A LAS 7PM UN CLASICO RECITAL DE GUITARRA. DE BACH-ALBENIZ-BARRIOS

DONACION $5
ORGANIZADO POR EL COMITE DE SOLIDARIDAD CON CHILE SALVADOR ALLENDE

SAT NOV. 22 DANCE TO SANTIAGO AT THE RUSSIAN HALL 600 CAMPBELL ST AT 8PM. THERE WILL BE CHILEAN EM Panadas, REFRESHMENTS, ETC. COST IS $5

ORGANIZED BY COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILE.

SABADO 22 DE NOVIEMBRE BAILA AL RITMO DE SANTIAGO EN EL RUSSIAN HALL, 600 CAMPBELL ST A LAS 8PM. COMIDA CHILENA, EM Panadas Y BEBIDAS.

ENTRADA ES $5 ORGINIZADO POR EL COMITE PARA LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS CHILE.
SALE 3 WILL BE PERFORMING AT THE WATERFRONT NOVEMBER 20 AND 21
686 FOWEL STREET TO PROMOTE THEIR LP FODER LATINO ENTRANCE IS $3

SALE 3 SE PRESENTARAN EN EL WATERFRONT, 686 FOWEL STREET EN 20 Y 21
DE NOVIEMBRE PARA PROMOVER SU DISCO "FODER LATINO" ENTRADA ES $3

ON NOVEMBER 23 THE FILM "CHILE: HASTA CUANDO" WILL BE SHOWING AT LA QUENA
COFFEEHOUSE AT 8PM ENTRANCE IS $3

EN EL 23 DE NOVIEMBRE LA FELICULA "CHILE: HASTA CUANDO" SE PRESENTARA
EN LA QUENA A LAS 8 PM. ENTRADA ES $3

Dec. 22
Tonight at "El Camino" Restaurant, 1305 Commercial
Drive, the Almec Cultural group will
be holding a dinner with music by
the classical girtner player, Eulogio Davalos.
It starts at 7pm. Donations $20.

Coming up on Dec. 6, La Quena is holding a
fund raiser for the latin American Women's Conf.

We welcome any offers of crafts &
we are asking people to donate a bottle
of anything - of sharpors, chanel, or
champagne - whatever you have left over in
your cupboards - to help us raise enough
money to bring women leaders from Central &
Latin America to this conference.
5.12 Calendar of events script: Analysis

This calendar was written in November 1986. It includes seven events, ranging from fundraisers to cultural and political activities. The first fundraising event is to support victims of the earthquake that affected El Salvador in 1986. The second is to support the Committee for Solidarity with Chile Salvador Allende. Musical concerts and film screenings were also included. The film *Chile: ¿Hasta cuándo?* [Chile: Until when?] was shown at La Quena Coffee House. The calendar included an invitation to attend a Crafts Fair where listeners could donate valuable items as a way to raise funds for a Latin American Women’s conference planned for February 1987. The collective also included information on donations for Tools for Peace, a Vancouver-based organization that promoted solidarity with Nicaragua during the 1980s. A fundraising dance, with Chilean empanadas for sale, was also promoted.

The variety and number of activities included in this calendar of weekly events shows how active the Latin American diaspora was during this decade. The different kinds of events provide a snapshot of the connections being made and the many spaces being opened by the community. As mentioned by the participants, the radio was one of the many projects carried out in the city. Other groups were organizing other political and cultural events, but ALAD was one of the few spaces where information was disseminated about events.

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52 The City of Vancouver archives states that Tools for Peace was a voluntary organization established in 1981 to collect and send material aid to the people of Nicaragua. The organization began in Vancouver, but quickly grew into a national network of regional committees. Besides collecting and sending aid to Central America, Tools for Peace also engaged in activities to increase public awareness about the revolution in Nicaragua and to pressure the Canadian government in developing a peaceful solution to Nicaragua’s problems.

(https://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/tools-for-peace-fonds)
happening. The arrival of Latin Americans in Vancouver was caused mainly by political reasons, and the activities carried out by the community often reflected that reality.

5.12 Discussion: The performance of commoning in the face of the media enclosures

The discussion to this broader theme is led by one of my two research questions: How did exiles turn alternative radio into a means to construct a transnational practice of doing politics?

Based on the oral narratives shared by the participants, I draw from the understanding that ALAD was built on the foundations of established alternative media initiatives that emerged in Vancouver in the early 1970s. Therefore, I discuss the findings from a performance of commoning, communications commons lens and alternative media for social change.

Scholars have connected the concept of commons and commoning to anti-capitalist movements (Kidd, 1999, Korsgaard, 2018, De Angeli, 2010, Jefrries, 2007). The commons are spaces to be together outside of the realm of marketization and ownership. Korsgaard (2018), who has studied the concepts of commons and commoning from an education lens, understands that these concepts refer to creating social relations and the production of common values that emerge through a process of interaction and cooperation. Kidd (1999) coined the term to the communications field and mapped the different communications commons initiatives, south and north, that were created from processes of social interaction and cooperation, such as the case of Vancouver Cooperative Radio.

ALAD collective members became part of that communications commons movement in the making or in motion in Vancouver since their arrival. The fact of having a relationship
through the solidarity with local social activists is a sign of cooperation essential for the construction of the commons. The oral narratives of how to produce the radio shed light to the processes of everyday life of being and working together on a daily basis.

Korsgaard states that in the current political theory, the concept of commons and commoning is connected to anti-capitalist movements and ideas and point to what has been coined post-capitalist. This movement’s central idea is that spaces are common and the processes of creating them, or commoning, are ways to resist capitalism, but also ways to strengthen social relations and bonds created through the day-to-day experiences. The creation of ALAD was one of the many results triggered by the commoning process carried out by media activists in Vancouver. By joining the commons, the Latin American diaspora managed to regroup and started a unique relational practice of alternative communications and politics that operated both as a communication practice in motion and as a part of a social movement in the alternative media framework. The bonds and social relations created through solidarity actions among exiles, migrants and local activists were key to finding ways of working together. Inside the collective, Ann, Pilar, Jimena, Margareth spoke of the ritual of producing the radio that started on Commercial Drive. From La Quena, to Santos, to the radio station. That was a weekly ritual that created social relations and bonds among all the members through the years, as it has already been mentioned.

5.12.1 The ALAD way to produce alternative media in motion

The ALAD collective members were challenging the silence in regard to the political processes in Latin America during the 1980s. There were news pieces from the region; as Maurice stated, “earthquakes were big,” but no in-depth discussion on the ‘political
earthquakes,’ as stated by Pilar, that were also devastating the region. *ALAD* was challenging the media enclosures in its own way. Kidd also refers to the word ‘native’ in alternative media because she sees it as valuable when it is native to the community it serves because it has the possibility to link regionally and globally. *ALAD* was/is a medium that was formed by the diaspora of Latin Americans, the radio show was native to their communities, but since its inception it was linked to a local alternative media initiative that triggered a regional and international reception. Participants spoke of places where the radio show reached audiences in Seattle and Oregon, for example.

Participants also spoke of the way listeners helped out with the radio production. The links made locally among the audience shows that the listeners were not a passive audience whose role was just to tune in at 12:00 every Saturday. Listeners became supporters of the collective and made sure to offer any help possible to cover as many issues as possible. The interviewees also spoke of the production-reception process. The building of the commons of collaboration included listeners, university scholars and anybody else who could support the radio station.

I argue that *ALAD* fits in the category of a ‘communication practice in motion’ (Rodriguez, 2006) because it is an emergent media practice unique in that time. *ALAD* as a media practice was a collective of people with shared values, who cooperated and created their own emergent and new way of doing alternative media, according to their political historical context. *ALAD* emerged with a unique way of communicating through the bilingual formatting and by the inclusion in their collective of local activists and non-politically organized Latin Americans as the rest of exiles were.
The construction of the commons through ALAD made possible that people with similar political values worked in cooperation and collaboration. The interviewees spoke of the differences in the collective and how they were not united; nonetheless, they managed to continue broadcasting and present the show as a collective because they were aware that their main objective was to support the different struggles down south. Robin was very knowledgeable on the history of activism in Vancouver, and yet he recognized that for him Latin American activists were struggling to change the system(s). He agreed with this struggle and saw it as a common one. He saw the work of the radio as a common action to change the system, and not as an isolated struggle.

Ana María stated the steps to create a quality radio show in the realm of alternative media. She provided the analogy of preparing a good lunch as a way to state that alternative media activists have to have the responsibility of creating content in a responsible way. She characterized the mainstream media as lacking in-depth analysis and keeping the audience in a ‘crisis mode’ without really providing contextual information to the listener for discussion and critical thinking. Written material presented in Chapter V provides evidence of the work carried out by the collective.

Alternative media, from an ALAD point of view, involved reading between the lines of mainstream information, and research to corroborate and to provide the political angle of the collective. As Amanda said, ALAD was a partial radio show because one of their aims was to cover the struggles in the south and their fight against capitalism and dictatorships. They were open about their political tendency both on and off air with potential ‘volunteers’ who wanted to be part of the show. Moreover, the ALAD way of producing media involved intense hours of work because they wanted to broadcast in a responsible way. The intense
hours of reading, of monitoring other radio stations, of analyzing and rewriting etc., implied that they had a commitment and felt responsible for the content aired every Saturday.

Being heterogeneous was another element that made ALAD distinct from other groups. Jimena mentioned that at some point they started to get news from a FMNL media group from Toronto. They had to translate those news clips sent to them by cassettes. ALAD was made up by people from different walks of life, and not necessarily organized in a social movement. Amanda recognized that ALAD was created by MIR members in the 1970s, but by the 1980s, many of those members left the province, and as Ana María stated, others took care of the radio show. She said she didn’t remember how people started to join ALAD; it happened. I believe that this diversity in the collective was key to keep the radio show afloat because ALAD created their own ways to do politics without following any established political organization. The fact of deciding by consensus is another characteristic that is worth mentioning. The collective members decided collectively how to work any controversial issue. This process took a lot of time, as expressed by all of them; they mentioned the words ‘intense and long’ hours of discussions, but consensus was reached at some point.
Chapter 6: Conclusion: ALAD, a Transnational Communications Commons Practice in Motion

One small group of people can do amazing work in a radio station. It is hard work, but the finished product matters. I think the radio show proved that if there is a need, there is a way to get the message out.

Margaret – Interviewee

Introduction

This research sought to investigate and understand actions that took place after exile in an alternative communications practice framework. This section aims to review this case study, its findings in relation to the main research questions, and to draw conclusive thoughts pertinent to the different disciplines considered for this dissertation. This chapter also highlights limitations of the research and provides insights on future research.

6.1 Review of the study

The purpose of undertaking this research was not only to document the alternative media production practice carried out during the 1980s, but also to understand from the radio collective participants’ standpoint, the meaning of their everyday involvement in ALAD. This was accomplished by conducting interviews with ten former collective members. The participants in the study represented the diversity of the ALAD collective: four were exiles from South and Central America, three came to Canada as migrants from Latin America and Europe, and three were Canadian-born progressive activists. Another source of information was printed material from the 1980s in the format of bilingual news clips, editorials and radio line-ups. The oral interviews combined with the printed material from that decade provided
abundant and rich data for investigating the main research questions. The conceptual tools were drawn from an interdisciplinary lens that allowed for a clearer understanding of the interconnection among alternative media for social change, identity, exile and diaspora, political transnationalism and cultural studies.

6.2 Summary of the research findings and conclusions

Two main research questions guided the study. The first one sought to understand why exiles from Latin America on the West Coast turned to radio as a means of cultural production. In Chapter IV, participants were introduced by mapping their radio experience prior to joining the ALAD collective. The experiences linked to radio went back as far as their childhood. “Growing up with radio” was a recurrent expression among the participants. Their shared stories highlighted the omnipresence of radio as a cultural everyday practice. Furthermore, exiles considered radio as an extension of their being. By listening to radio every day, participants had the possibility to learn skills and to shape their political, cultural and social values. This everyday practice allowed them to rebuild lost spaces, re-imagine their cultural and political identities, while promoting transnational resistance and solidarity through the airwaves. Through their work in ALAD, this acoustic resistance was put in practice in the form of a transnational media project. The former collective members knew of the value of radio in an alternative media for social change framework and its potential to continue with their struggle like it was back home. It is important to stress that through the oral narratives, the creation of ALAD was linked to the solidarity movement that connected the first exiles arriving in Vancouver (Chileans) with alternative media activists in the city. The creation of ALAD became an extension of the communications commons practice and in
process in Vancouver in the 1970s. The interviewees’ previous knowledge and experience with radio, their diverse political backgrounds and the knowledge they gained about and among themselves allowed them to use radio as means of cultural production.

Chapter V introduces the individual reasons for joining the collective, including the tensions and challenges attached to the commitment of alternative radio production. The diverse reasons for joining are discussed in the framework of the cultural agency that went beyond producing political content to be broadcasted from their own political positioning, but also allowed them to re-create their own identity and their own social capital. As the title of this broad topic suggests, “A passion, an addiction or just plain commitment,” participants spoke of their individual challenges, but their narratives were full of emotions and feelings when explaining how they had to juggle the many activities they had to accomplish every day in order to survive, as mothers, workers, activists and radio producers, etc. Yet, they spoke of the need to be involved because being part of the collective was also part of their political identity.

Furthermore, exiles and migrants from Latin America found an absence of public and shared spaces such as the traditional Latin American plaza pública. The creation of ALAD had the aim to recreate this space as a way to be visible and to be identified. As part of the Latin American diaspora, interviewees spoke of the sense of loss and the feeling of being uprooted (regardless of their arrival as exiles or migrants). The fact of becoming part of the ALAD collective provided them with the sense of sharing a common and public space which was being built as they went. Their commons communication practice in motion was a process in constant negotiation and dialogue that allowed them to recreate their identities and their own political collectives.
The second main question focused on understanding how exiles turned alternative radio into a means to construct a transnational practice of doing politics. “ALAD filling the gap of a plaza publica” provided insights as well to answer this question. By analyzing in depth, the concept of the plaza pública and its cultural significance imprinted in Latin Americans, it was possible to see a new dimension of the meaning of this public and shared space in a transnational setting. ALAD became an acoustic ‘imagined’ plaza pública where engaged activists carried out their political work that evolved in a social movement in the alternative media framework in Vancouver. The construction of their imagined acoustic plaza pública mirrors the practice and presence of social movements in Latin America that carry out diverse and visible performances of resistance in public spaces such as plazas públicas.

Chapter VI focuses on how ALAD became part of the communications commons in process in Vancouver. The chapter maps the creation and evolution of the radio show from its beginnings in 1977 through the 1980s in a communications commons framework. As one of the participants put it, “Without ALAD, we did not exist,” when referring to the mainstream media coverage on Latin America at that time. Former ALAD members mentioned that mainstream media often covered natural disasters, but if political situations were covered, it was without much context. Furthermore, two of the interviewees were journalists, one working for mainstream media in Vancouver at the time. He described in detail how reporters got their information when being sent to the countries they were supposed to cover. Similar comments came from the other participant who was working as a freelance journalist. The ALAD project was in tune with the objectives of local media
activists that were creating their own media spaces as a way to counter mainstream media and break the media enclosures.

Through the narratives, participants stressed the importance of the role of the international solidarity that was essential for exiles who came to Vancouver during the 1970s to reach and create their social relations with local activists. The creation of the commons through social interactions and cooperation among diverse communities and individuals gave way to the emergence of ALAD as an alternative radio show that as of today is still characterized for its longevity (40 years of broadcasting and counting), its transnational scope, its volunteer run-production and its bilingual format, which are the four elements that sparked interest in this case study.

6.3 **Significance of the study, scope and future research**

This case study was by nature interdisciplinary. The findings contribute to expand our understanding of actions taken by exiles and migrants once they arrived in their host country. Palacios’s (2011) doctoral dissertation conducted an exhaustive research on political activities carried out by Chilean exiles in Vancouver and briefly mentions the creation of ALAD as a place of knowledge and learning. This research expands on the study of the impacts or ripple effects of those initial political activities carried out by Chileans, along with local activists that allowed new waves of exiles to join the work on the radio station. Exiles, and eventually others who joined, had the possibility to have access to a plurality of visions and diverse political background that resulted in an emergent and unique way of producing alternative radio for social change. The findings contribute to the study of Latin American exiles and migrants from a Pan-Latin American perspective that enrich previous studies on
specific communities from Latin America who arrived in Canada (Baeza 2004, Palacios, 2011, Peddie 2014, Riaño-Alcalá & Goldring 2014, Sanhueza and Pinero 2010, Wright and Oñate Zúñiga 2007). The experiences narrated by the participants also highlight their re-creating of their Latin American identity, their cultural agency and their political transnationalism. Furthermore, the findings made visible the importance of considering their narratives on feelings as a rich form of knowledge (Million 2009) because the different emotions triggered by their involvement in the radio provided insight on how individuals become agents and subjects when recreating their own identities and their collectives. Participants spoke of how, when being in their countries of origin, their struggle included “their bodies and minds in the streets.” While in their new countries, they spoke of the emotions that the whole process triggered in them.

Latin American scholars in the fields of Cultural Studies and Alternative Media studies, like Arturo Escobar, Clemencia Rodriguez, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, Jesús Martín-Barbero, have stressed the need to carry out research focusing on ordinary people who consciously decide to embark in projects aiming for social change. ALAD’s case study is a contribution to those fields because the study involved the perspectives and experiences of the people who were part of this collective during the 1980s. Their experiences and the meaning of those experiences from their points of view, provide valuable knowledge and insights on processes of working together through constant negotiation and dialogue. ALAD former members spoke of their involvement with the radio show that became part of their daily lives despite the challenges. Their involvement with the collective defined their political identity. Despite the challenges inside and outside the collective, their participation is an example of what Rodríguez called a communication practice ‘in motion’. This
communication practice in motion was part of the building of the communications commons already ‘in motion’ in the city of Vancouver. This study expands on previous work (Kidd 1999, Korsgaard, 2018, Jeffries, 2007) about the theoretical concept of the commons which may be understood as the way people interact and cooperate in a common space or common project towards a common goal. *ALAD* is an example of a process of transnational interaction and cooperation that includes constant negotiation as part of participants’ everyday lives. All participants had a clear perspective that alternative media is essential to counter capitalism and the mainstream media imposed by the system.

This case study and its interdisciplinary focus provide rich insights and knowledge on the different processes taken by each participant. From the moment they arrived in Vancouver, exiles and migrants in the diasporic Pan-Latin American community saw the need to recreate a public space in which to continue their political dialogue and actions in a transnational scenario with the solidarity of local activists. At the same time, they felt uprooted and nostalgic for the communities they had left behind. The radio offered the possibility of recreating that public sphere and a communication commons practice was put in place through a politically and culturally diverse collective that defined their political identity. It is important to highlight that the majority of producers at the time were women. This study can also contribute to the studies on gender and communication, especially the narratives on their constant negotiation as mothers, workers, activists and radio producers.

### 6.4 Limitations of the study

There are many limitations to this study. First, it was not possible to include the digitalized audio material in the dissertation because the process of conducting the oral
interviews as well as the transcription process, analysis and discussion that resulted from the identified four broad themes turned out to be more time consuming than expected. However, the seven reels to reels which were digitalized are available for future research. Secondly, there was only a limited number of written texts available from the 1980s to analyze and they are included in Chapter VI. Nonetheless, much more material is available from the 1990s and 2000s which can be used, along with the digitalized material, as a rich source of information to continue documenting the communication experience of Latin Americans in Vancouver. Third, archival scripts I included are not complete; there are no dates on many of those, but I included them as examples of the final product read on air. Fourth, the reception process of the radio show in those times was not covered. Therefore, the study did not include testimonies directly from radio listeners as a way to understand in depth their reception process.

6.5 Future Research

There are many shows that broadcast from Co-op Radio in Vancouver. In fact, other programs that are produced only in Spanish language have requested research on the history of their programs as well. This dissertation provides theoretical framework, methodology and in-depth analysis that could guide other work on alternative media for social change. This study included a diversity of disciplines that provide different angles to understand the process of producing an alternative media production. The fact that the show continues broadcasting live from the studios of Co-op Radio every Saturday, as it started to do more than forty years ago, proves that, as Margaret said, when there is a need, there is a way to do it. For future research, it could be interesting to conduct an oral narrative approach with the
current collective members in this new millennium as a way to understand the meaning of their involvement from their own voices and compare it to the earlier ones who committed hundreds of hours to ensure that ALAD would continue to imprint the airwaves in Vancouver. As I finish writing this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that América Latina al Día was the recipient of the 2018 Annual International Solidarity Award given by Co-Development Canada, an International Development Agency rooted in the British Columbia Labour Movement. The award is presented to individuals or organizations that have distinguished themselves by constructing solidarity or building bridges between Canadian and Latin American struggles for social justice. Their recognition reads:

Through the decades, ALAD has carried the voices and struggles of teachers, maquila workers, union leaders, indigenous activists, migrant workers and communities threatened by Canadian transnationals to listeners in Vancouver and around the province – many of them representatives of CoDev’s Latin American partners. As a bilingual program, ALAD serves both local Latin American communities and English speakers with a thirst for social justice and Latin American and Caribbean culture. Listening to ALAD is also a great way to improve your Spanish! (Excerpt of the recognition given to ALAD on 2018)

One of the main objectives of this work was to learn about the process of people working together as a way to create their communications practice in motion. ALAD is a branch of an established communications commons in the city. Through studying and doing a close reading of participants’ experiences in their everyday lives, it is possible to see the way ordinary people created and produced alternative media. Those practices of creating radio put in place in the 1980s are still used in the 21st century. The show continues to be bilingual and diverse, with the only difference being that new technology has replaced the old typewriters, cassettes and reel to reels and social media makes it easy to connect with social activists down south. Yet, the media enclosures are still in place, and spaces like
ALAD continue being as relevant as in the 1980s as a way of bringing a more in-depth analysis of the many factors affecting the region. *ALAD* was created as a transnational site for political action and dialogue among activists who shared the utopian impulse to work tirelessly for social change, while re-building their political identities and public spaces.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Themes and Questions Guide for the Oral Interviews

Sounds and Memory: Radio as Sound Representation Space to Exiled Latin Americans Diaspora in the West Coast of Canada since 1970s Research Project

Themes and questions guide for the audio-taped interview:

a) The participants’ personal history or trajectories of their involvement with alternative media either in Latin America and/or Canada, specifically with América Latina al Día radio show (ALAD).

Can you recall when did you start listening to the radio? How did you get involved in a media space? Did you have any experience of producing radio before joining América Latina al Día? Did you have any experience working in a collective of people from different nationalities? Did you have experience of working in a bilingual show? When and why did you join the production crew? Were there main events happening at the time of you joining the radio, either in Vancouver or in Latin America that you can remember? Are you still involved or not, and why?

b) Participants’ perception of the roles and functions of América Latina al Día.

What do you think about the role and/or function of the radio back when you joined? What do you think of the roles and functions of ALAD? Did the radio have an audience at the time which you were part of? What kind of feedback did the audience give you that you can remember? How do you think the Latin Americans were portrayed through the radio show?

c) Participants’ observation of the success and challenges of ALAD.

At the time of your participation in ALAD, could you remember any challenges? How was it to produce a radio show during a pre-internet time? How was the process of producing? How were the topics decided? How was it to work with people from different parts of Latin America? How was it to work with people from the local community? Any success story or stories you would like to share?

d) The relevance (or not) of ALAD in the twenty-first century, compared to the last three decades of the 20th Century

Since information can be obtained in seconds from the web, do you think ALAD is still relevant nowadays? Which lessons could be learned from the work on the radio? Can you recall historical events that were critical in the 20th century, compared to the ones nowadays? Is there still an audience for ALAD? Is radio still relevant from your point of view nowadays? Which impact do you think the radio has now, compared to the previous decades in Latin America and in other communities in Vancouver?
Appendix B: Letter of Initial Contact

Letter of Initial Contact

Vancouver, June, 2015

Dear former/current member of the America Latina al Dia Radio collective,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am a PhD Candidate in the French, Hispanic, and Italian Studies Department at the University of British Columbia. Currently, I am working on my thesis dissertation on the creation, development and the current state of America Latina al Dia (ALAD) radio program on Vancouver Cooperative Radio (100.5fm). As you may be aware, this community radio station turned 40 this past April 15. Among many programs this radio station airs, ALAD is one of the oldest shows that stills broadcasts after 38 years thanks to the work of many volunteers. One of the main objectives of my research is to look at and document ways Latin American exiles managed to maintain engagement with social justice issues back in their countries of origin, through creating a bilingual (English/Spanish) community media space with the support of members of their host community.

Based on the information provided by the current production crew and the radio station, you were (are) part of this media project at some point during these almost four decades of America Latina al Dia bilingual radio show existence. This is an invitation for you to share your experiences during your time producing a bilingual media space in Western Canada on a voluntary basis.

Your participation is STRICTLY voluntary. Only if you agree to be part of this study, will you be invited to participate in the meeting and answers the questions presented to you. The interview would last no more than two hours and would be audio recorded with your permission. Please note that you can OPT-OUT at any time during the process.

Let me know if you are interested in participating either by contacting me at 604-871-9078 or carmen.mirandabarrios@ubc.ca, or I will be giving you a phone call in a couple of weeks to find out if you are interested or not. More details on the research are available in the CONSENT FORM attached for you to consider your participation.

The name of my Supervisor is Dr. Alessandra Santos, and she is the Principal Investigator of this study; however, I will be the only one carrying out the interviews. It is my hope that this study titled Sounds and Memory: Radio as Sound Representation Space to Exiled Latin Americans Diaspora in West Coast Canada since 1970’ will contribute with the Historical Memory of ways Latin Americans are agents of their own representation in British Columbia since their arrival to this country.

I look forward to speaking with you soon!

Regards,

Carmen Miranda Barrios

Version 1: June 8th, 2015
Carmen Miranda Barrios  
PhD Candidate  
French, Italian, & Hispanic Studies

Sounds and Memory: Radio as Sound Representation Space to Exiled Latin Americans Diaspora in the West Coast of Canada since 1970s 
Research Project Summary

Abstract 
In mid-1970s Vancouver, the effervescent politics of Latin America began to intersect with the new promise of Canadian Multiculturalism as Latin American exiles made use of bilingual (Spanish-English) alternative radio to engage with broader Canadian society. Before the era of the internet, the América Latina al Dia (ALAD) radio program provided one of the only sources of ongoing information on Latin American culture and social processes for both Latin American diaspora and the broader Canadian public. Almost 40 years later, ALAD, the bilingual program of news and culture the exiles created continues to engage a culturally diverse production crew and audience in issues related to Latin America and Canadian realities. In the framework of the Latin American diaspora, my research attempts to answer how and why did different waves of Latin American exiles arriving in Vancouver in the last third of the 20th Century make use of bilingual radio as a tool for interchange with the broader Canadian community. The results will shed light into ways exiles adapt communication tools to maintain a link with their home countries, while building community in their new one.

Research objectives: My research will explore, document, listen and analyze the way Latin American exiles along with members of the host community made use of alternative radio in a bilingual format in Vancouver in the third decade of the 20th century. Specifically, the study will (1) carry out tape interviews with former members and current members of the América Latina al Día radio show crew production who have been producing the show on a volunteer basis. The interviews will allow (a) to learn how exiles were able to open a space in the radio waves in the western Canada, (b) to document how and why Anglo-Canadians took part of this radio project through an alternative media space. (2) The study will also analyze audio material from radio programs broadcasted through Vancouver Cooperative Radio (100.5fm). My research questions are centered on how and why Latin Americans along with Anglo-Canadians made use of radio as a connective medium in their refuge country? What was happening in Vancouver that made possible to have an audio space for exiles? How exiles shaped their own identity in Canada west coast?

Theoretical Framework: My research embodies an interdisciplinary approach that links Cultural Studies and Media Studies from a historical and political perspective. The main theoretical concepts in this study are cultural agency, radio as a connective medium, bilingualism and exile.

Research methodology: The study will require two research methods: (1) A qualitative research approach that will allow the researcher to document and analyze the involvement of social actors (15 Latin American immigrants and members of the host community) and their experiences, observations and constructions of the world from their standpoint. Therefore, audio-taped semi-
structured interviews will be carried out with a maximum on 15 participants (Latin Americans and Anglo-Canadians who have taken part on the production of the radio show through different decades). The interviews will provide an opportunity to have a closer look at the history of alternative radio in Vancouver and the common trends this format could have with similar media projects in Latin America. The audio-taped interviews will enrich the project because through the testimonies of participants, the study will obtain in-depth information on ways exiles manage two adapt in a new country while working together with members of the host community in a media space. (2) The compilation and digitalization of audio material dates back from the mid-1970s, 1980s, and some from 1990s. At the time the show started to broadcast (1976) from downtown Vancouver, internet was not an option. My research will analyze the content of the radio shows in both languages, as a way to map the arrival of Latin Americans in Vancouver and their reasons for coming. Through a semantic analysis of the audio material (reel-to-reel and cassette) I will categorize themes, trends, and content.

Anticipated outcomes: Through the oral interviews and the analysis of the digital material, the study will (1) map geographical groups of exiles and possible refugees from Latin America coming to western Canada since the mid-1970s. (2) Identify the involvement of members of the host community in a common alternative radio project. (3) Identify ways exiles made use of their skills, knowledge and experiences to be able to cope with their situation and create a community in a media space.

The significance and expected impact of the research: Latin Americans started to arrive and settle in Canada in the 1970s. The majority of Latin Americans came for political reasons as exiles first, and then as refugee claimants (1980s, 1990s, 2000s). Even though there is some scholarly work that focused on the experience of exiles in Canada, there is not much documentation on their relation with media. Specifically in Vancouver, there are some studies around the Chilean experience and Colombians as displaced refugees and their settlement process in Canada. The significance of this research is to be able to contribute with the historical memory of the arrival of Latin Americans into this part of the country through their voices, regional accents, and their own standpoint on the political and social processes in their countries. Also, through this documentation, members of the host community will hear how the radio show became a link to promote working together, and creating a solidarity movement among regions.

The impact of the research: The possibility of (1) compiling and digitalizing audio content that was aired almost 40 years ago, thanks to the advance in technology. (2) To have the testimonies of the actors involved in the radio project, especially when the radio show was created almost 40 years ago, and is still broadcast live in a bilingual format. This material will serve for future generations to learn about how and why Latin Americans made their way to Canada, and became part of the diverse social fabric that this country stands for. It is my intention to provide the digitalized material to the University of British Columbia archives.