Tampere University

ARI HAUTANIEMI

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The Organisational Culture of European Student Radio

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the organisational culture of European student radio stations through a multi-level cultural analysis influenced by Edgar Schein's model of organisational culture. Despite the long-standing presence of student radio as a space for alternative media production and student participation, particularly in North America, the European context has received limited scholarly attention. This study addresses this gap by examining how student radio organisations across Europe express their culture through visible artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions, as well as the extent to which these cultural features show unity or divergence across national contexts.

The theoretical grounding of this research is twofold. First, it draws from organisational culture theory, particularly Schein's tripartite model, which conceptualises culture as a layered phenomenon: surface-level artifacts (visible structures and processes), espoused values (stated strategies and goals), and basic underlying assumptions (taken-for-granted beliefs that guide behaviour). The dissertation also engages with relevant discussions on cultural tightness and looseness, organisational identity, and organisational management in flux, situating student radio as a context where cultural resilience and adaptability are paramount. Second, the study engages with the limited but growing literature on student and college radio. This literature has historically focused on American stations and emphasised their role as training grounds for future media professionals and as platforms for alternative expression. However, such accounts have rarely explored student radio as an organisational culture, nor have they sufficiently considered the European experience shaped by different media systems and institutional environments.

The empirical foundation of the dissertation comprises three original peer-reviewed articles. Each article relates to one of Schein's cultural layers and is based on qualitative or mixed-method data. The first article explores artifacts through survey responses from 51 managers across 46 student radio stations in 19 European countries. It reveals a high degree of systematicity in management practices, structures, and content strategies, suggesting that these organisations emphasise professionalism and consistency despite being largely volunteer-driven. However,

cultural variation emerges, not primarily along national lines but in relation to local institutional contexts.

The second article employs the Competing Values Framework to investigate espoused values, identifying Clan and Adhocracy cultures as the dominant value types. These cultures reflect a preference for collaboration, flexibility, and innovation, aligning with the participatory, transient, and creative nature of student radio. Although some aspects of Hierarchy and Market cultures are observed, they are less central and often emerge in response to external demands or funding pressures.

The third article examines underlying assumptions through interviews conducted with staff from three European student radio stations in Finland, Austria, and Ireland. It identifies shared, implicit beliefs regarding radio as a medium for creativity, community engagement, and personal development. These assumptions reflect a deeper cultural identity that distinguishes student radio from commercial broadcasting, highlighting its role as a space for experimentation, inclusivity, and authenticity.

Synthesising the findings across all three articles, the dissertation concludes that European student radio embodies a coherent organisational culture shaped by a commitment to alternative media, student empowerment, and informal learning. While cultural expression varies locally due to institutional and national differences, the core identity remains remarkably consistent across borders. The findings challenge the assumption that national culture is the dominant factor shaping organisational culture in student media, instead suggesting that shared conditions, such as volunteerism, educational missions, and marginal positioning within broader media landscapes, play a more significant unifying role.

The implications of the study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to organisational culture scholarship by demonstrating how Schein's model can be applied in transient, non-commercial, and creative contexts. It also enhances the field of media studies by presenting a European perspective on student radio, complementing and complicating dominant American narratives. Practically, the findings provide insight for those managing or establishing student media organisations, emphasising the importance of fostering values that align with core assumptions and supporting flexible yet structured environments. The study further equips decision-makers in higher education with evidence of the learning potential and civic value of student-run media.

Ultimately, the research illustrates the significance of cross-national organisational studies, revealing how cultural frameworks can highlight both unity and diversity within loosely affiliated yet value-driven organisations.

Keywords: Sociology of organisations, organisational culture, values, beliefs, organisational behaviour, organisational identity, student radio, college radio, Europe, comparative studies, media studies, radio research, alternative media, community media

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja tarkastelee eurooppalaisten opiskelijaradioasemien organisaatiokulttuuria hyödyntäen Edgar Scheinin kulttuuriteoreettista mallia. Vaikka opiskelijaradiolla on pitkät perinteet ruohonjuuritason vaihtoehtomediana, uusien bändien ja kokonaisten musiikkityylisuuntien esiin nostajana, palkittujen ammattilaisten kasvualustana ja opiskelijoiden osallistumiskanavana, varsinkin Euroopassa se on saanut vain vähän tutkimuksellista huomiota, etenkin organisaatiokulttuurin näkökulmasta. Suurin osa aiheesta tehdystä tutkimuksesta keskittyy pohjoisamerikkalaiseen college radioon. Tämä väitöskirja paikkaa tätä aukkoa analysoimalla, miten eurooppalaisten opiskelijaradioasemien kulttuuri ilmentyy näkyvien artefaktien, ilmaistujen arvojen ja syvälle juurtuneiden perusoletusten kautta. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, missä määrin nämä kulttuuripiirteet ovat yhtenäisiä, vai vaihtelevatko ne kansallisesti tai alueellisesti.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehyksenä on Scheinin kehittämä organisaatiokulttuurin kolmikerroksinen malli, jossa kulttuuri jäsennetään artefakteiksi (näkyvät rakenteet, organisatoriset valinnat ja toimintatavat), ilmaistuiksi arvoiksi (strategiat, painopisteet ja tavoitteet) sekä perusoletuksiksi (hiljaiset, usein tiedostamattomat uskomukset, asenteet ja oletukset, jotka ohjaavat käyttäytymistä ja toimintaa). Organisaatiokulttuuria arvioidaan myös kulttuurisen, normatiivisen tiukkuuden ja löyhyyden, sosiaalisen identiteetin ja muutoksen johtamisen näkökulmista. Opiskelijaradion toiminnasta vastaavat usein kokemattomat opiskelijat, joiden osaaminen ja osallistuminen vaihtelevat. Aiempaan tutkimukseen ja aiheeseen liittyvän kirjallisuuden valossa opiskelijaradio näyttäytyy jatkuvan muutoksen ja resurssiniukkuuden keskellä toimivana ympäristönä, jossa kulttuurinen sopeutumiskyky ja kyky säilyä toimintakykyisenä niukkojen resurssien ja jatkuvien muutosten puristuksessa ovat keskeisiä ominaisuuksia. Tutkimus pyrkii keskustelemaan ja tuomaan uutta tietoa sekä opiskelijaradiosta tehtyyn, toistaiseksi varsin niukkaan tutkimukseen että organisaatiokulttuurista käytävään akateemiseen keskusteluun.

Tässä väitöskirjan yhteenvedossa yhdistän kolmessa vertaisarvioidussa artikkelissa tehtyjä löydöksiä organisaatiokulttuurin eri tasoilla ja luon katsauksen eurooppalaisen opiskelijaradion kulttuuriin näiden kerrosten muodostaman kuvan kautta. Kukin artikkeli tarkastelee yhtä Scheinin kulttuurikerrosta ja pohjautuu

laadulliseen tai yhdistettyyn tutkimusmenetelmään. Ensimmäinen artikkeli analysoi näkyviä artefakteja 51 opiskelijaradioaseman johtavassa asemassa olevan vastaajan kyselyvastausten pohjalta kattaen 46 asemaa 19 eri maasta. Tulokset osoittavat, että vapaaehtoisvoimin toimivilla asemilla on yllättävän järjestelmällisiä hallintokäytäntöjä ja sisältöstrategioita. Kulttuurista vaihtelua esiintyy, mutta se ei jäsenny selkeästi kansallisten- tai kulttuurirajojen mukaan vaan peilaa enemmän paikallisia institutionaalisia olosuhteita.

Toinen artikkeli tarkastelee organisaatiokulttuurin toista tasoa, julkilausuttuja arvoja Competing Values Framework -mallin avulla. Artikkeli tunnistaa kaksi hallitsevaa kulttuurityyppiä, klaani- ja ad hoc. Klaanikulttuuri korostaa yhteisöllisyyttä, luottamusta ja jatkuvuutta, ad hoc puolestaan projektimaista joustavuutta ja innovatiivisuutta – arvoja, jotka ovat keskeisiä opiskelijaradion osallistavassa, muuttuvassa ja luovassa toimintaympäristössä. Toisaalta, myös markkinakeskeisiä ja etenkin hierarkkisia piirteitä havaitaan jonkin verran, mikä kielii siitä, ettei perinteiset johtamiskäytännöt ja toimintaohjeet ole vieraita opiskelijaradioillekaan.

Kolmas artikkeli syventyy organisaatiokulttuurin syvimpään tasoon, perusoletuksiin. Artikkelin aineistona on kolmen eurooppalaisen opiskelijaradioaseman aktiivisten jäsenten ryhmähaastattelut Suomessa, Itävallassa ja Irlannissa. Tulokset tuovat esiin jaettuja hiljaisia uskomuksia, joiden mukaan radio on ennen kaikkea luovuuden, yhteisöllisyyden ja henkilökohtaisen kasvun väline. Nämä oletukset vahvistavat käsitystä opiskelijaradiosta vaihtoehtoisena mediana, jonka toimintaa leimaavat kokeellisuus, inklusiivisuus ja aitous. Toisaalta ne paljastavat myös sen, että opiskelijaradioiden tekijöiltä odotetaan itseohjautuvuutta, vastuullisuutta, oma-aloitteisuutta ja yrittäjämäistä asennetta, jonka keskiössä on radion perimmäisen roolin kunnioitus ja uskollisuus sille.

Väitöskirjan yhteenvedossa syntyvä organisaatiokulttuurin kolmen tason analyysi osoittaa, että eurooppalaisilla opiskelijaradioilla on yllättävän yhtenäinen organisaatiokulttuuri. Vaihtoehtoisuuden, opiskelijalähtöisyyden ja epämuodollisen oppimisen arvot yhdistävät asemia kansallisista eroista huolimatta. Tulokset haastavat oletuksen, että kansallinen kulttuuri olisi merkittävin organisaatiokulttuurin muovaaja. Sen sijaan tutkimus viittaa siihen, että yhteiset rakenteelliset piirteet, kuten vapaaehtoispohjaisuus, sivistyksellinen tehtävä ja marginaalinen asema valtamedian kentällä, toimivat tärkeinä yhdistävinä tekijöinä ja antavat näille organisaatioille niiden keskeisen mission. Samalla se toimii sosiaalisen identiteetin lähteenä, vaikuttaen organisaatiokulttuuriin kaikilla sen tasoilla, näkyen arvoissa, asenteissa ja artefakteissa, jotka tukevat ydintehtävää ja radion paikkaa maailmassa.

Tutkimuksella on sekä teoreettista että käytännöllistä merkitystä. Se osoittaa, että Scheinin kulttuurimalli soveltuu myös epämuodollisiin, ei-kaupallisiin ja luoviin ympäristöihin. Lisäksi se tuo eurooppalaisen näkökulman opiskelijaradiotutkimukseen, täydentäen ja haastaen aiempaa tutkimusta ja etenkin pohjoisamerikkalaista painotusta. Käytännön tasolla tutkimus tarjoaa työkaluja opiskelijamedian johtamiseen ja ymmärtämiseen. Lisäksi se antaa kaikille aseman perustamista tai kehittämistä miettiville näkökulman siihen, miten keskeistä on tuottaa tekijöille kokemus merkityksestä tukemalla arvojen ja käytäntöjen yhteensopivuutta sekä joustavaa, itseohjautuvaa, mutta selkeää rakennetta. Monessa paikassa opiskelijaradioita uhkaa rahoituksen leikkaus tai lakkauttaminen. Väitöskirja auttaa myös korkeakoulupäättäjiä ymmärtämään opiskelijamedian oppimiseen ja yhteiskunnalliseen osallistumiseen liittyvän arvon.

Lopuksi tutkimus korostaa vertailevien organisaatiotutkimusten potentiaalia: kulttuuriteoreettiset mallit voivat paljastaa sekä yhtenäisyyksiä että eroja löyhästi verkottuneissa, mutta vahvasti arvolähtöisissä organisaatioissa.

Avainsanat: organisaatiososiologia, organisaatiokulttuuri, arvot, uskomukset, organisaatiokäyttäytyminen, organisaatioidentiteetti, opiskelijaradio, college radio, Eurooppa, vertaileva tutkimus, mediatutkimus, radiotutkimus, vaihtoehtomedia, yhteisömedia

CONTENTS

ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

Publication I Hautaniemi, A. (2024). Organizational artefacts in European student radio: Exploring the organizational culture of student radio in Europe. *The International Communication Gazette*, 86(2), 146–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485221141607

Publication II Hautaniemi, A. (2024). Balancing the Turbulence: Organizational Values in European Student Radio. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, 31(2), 294–313. https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2022.2150193

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1 INTRODUCTION

I first discovered a student radio station in the early 2000s. At the time, I was working as a communications intern at a communal environmental bureau, spending my days in a windowless office, doing graphic design on a Pentium PC using Microsoft Publisher. This was before smartphones and streaming services existed. The ambience consisted of the constant, silent hum of the air conditioner and the arhythmic tapping of keyboards, which were typically loud back then, making it a challenge to inspire the creativity of my then-young-adult mind. The radio in the corner, muted in respect for our shared space, provided only the standard diet of Top 40 hits, hardly appealing to my tastes. In search of something more engaging, I installed Winamp on my computer and stumbled upon its online radio feature. After scrolling through a lengthy list of unfamiliar names and places, I randomly clicked "URY, University Radio York."

I did not realise it at the time, but that click would initiate a lengthy journey that ultimately led me to this thesis.

The show I heard was raw, unscripted, and unlike anything on mainstream Finnish radio. At one point, the hosts mentioned that listeners could send a message through their online messaging system, so I did. To my astonishment, after less than a minute, the pair, audibly thrilled, read my message on air, amazed that they were heard in Finland of all places. This genuine excitement and unfiltered connection left an impression unlike any other media experience. It was a moment of unscripted authenticity and immediate connection. Unlike most other media, this was a personal experience. It made me feel like I was part of something.

Years later, in 2013, I was a graduate sociologist working as a project manager, planning and executing various research and development initiatives for Lahti University of Applied Sciences. Thanks to the accommodating attitude and great patience of my coworkers in the same office, I was still able to maintain the habit of listening to the radio while working. This time, TuneIn.com, an online radio hub service, opened the doors to thousands of radio stations streaming online. Once again, in a moment of lost inspiration, I sought something to lift my spirits. After browsing various categories from “drum and bass” to “decades”, I discovered one named “college radio”. There were all these American student-led stations playing

bands I had never heard of, alongside alternative tunes that would never receive airtime on primetime radio, introduced by the voices of audibly inexperienced yet dedicated DJs.

Unlike the constant stream of hit music, this sounded both chaotic and inspiring. After listening to such content for a few weeks, my colleagues and I began to wonder why we didn't have these stations in Finland. This eventually sparked an idea: what would it take to establish a campus radio station here at our university? After cautiously obtaining approval and a modest budget from the university rector, eight students tasked with the project managed to set up a makeshift studio made from loaned equipment in a campus cleaning closet. With a couple of bags of CDs from the public library, the first eight hours of Limu Radio were streamed in April 2014.

My journey from listener to initiator and organiser of an international student radio conference, and eventually becoming a researcher, has deepened my understanding and fascination with this medium. Over the following years, I collaborated with student radio stations across Europe and beyond, visiting them and learning how student radio operated in both the United States and various parts of Europe. Despite their different contexts, these stations all shared something beyond equipment or mission statements: they operated in a state of constant change while managing to maintain a clear sense of purpose and direction.

This thesis stems from that insight. Student radio is not merely an alternative form of media; it is an organisational phenomenon. Moreover, like all organisations, it depends on a culture that gives it shape and meaning.

While many media studies focus on output, content, audience, or influence (e.g., Sayers 2017; Long et al. 2022; Hallin & Mancini 2017; Brüggeman et al. 2014; Büchel et al. 2016), this research looks inward, using organisational culture as a lens to explore student radio. Volunteers often staff these stations, which are often underfunded, rely on the motivation and skills of inexperienced students, and experience constant turnover. What makes them resilient? What defines their internal life, and how do they maintain coherence amid turbulence?

Historically, student radio has been associated with radicalism, experimentation, and cultural uplift. Scholars such as Sauls (2000), Fauteux (2015), and Raymond (2013, 2016) have documented these aspects, particularly the educational and alternative roles of campus and college radio in North America, where it has existed for over a century. However, European student radio remains under-researched, particularly as a cultural organisation rather than merely a media outlet. As Kemppainen (2001) notes, European radio research has generally lagged behind

other media. Numerous researchers (Raymond, 2013; Wall, 2007; Schnitker, 2016) have noted that studies of student radio are scarce, even within this genre.

Existing literature concentrates on U.S. college radio, often depicting it as inherently "alternative," yet it rarely investigates the values and assumptions that define this alternativeness. As Wall (2007) observed, being "alternative" is frequently a premise of research rather than a subject of investigation. Moreover, the American model does not necessarily align closely with the European context. Licensing systems, funding structures, and public service traditions differ markedly across European countries compared to the American market-driven model. Nonetheless, based on the limited research conducted on student radio stations across Europe, these institutions typically share core characteristics: they are usually non-commercial, student-led, and embedded within educational institutions (Laor 2019; Scifo 2007; Doliwa 2015; Wilson David 2015; Komankova 2023; Quicke 2024).

Samuel Sauls's seminal work (2000) on the culture of American college radio focuses primarily on the “culture” at the most visible level: college radio artifacts, such as practices, content choices, and technical features, describing this medium as an “alternative.” However, it does not delve into the core question of why it is an alternative, what values drive college radio, and the fundamental assumptions that have led to this alternative stance.

This thesis explores the following questions: What is the organisational culture of European student radio stations? What kind of organisational culture allows student radio to endure despite instability? And do European student stations share a common culture, or does national context primarily influence them?

The constant change characterising student radio is not incidental but structural. Students graduate, funding shifts, volunteers lose interest, listeners change their tastes, and institutions reorganise. As I observed through Limu Radio and in conversations with dozens of station managers across Europe, no station operates under the assumption that things will remain the same. Instead, they are engaged in a continual process of adaptation. This condition mirrors broader trends in contemporary organisations, which are also marked by environmental turbulence, the erosion of long-term stability, and demands for rapid responsiveness (Clegg & Walsh 2004; Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024). In student radio, this reformation occurs once per academic year.

Organisational culture becomes central in such contexts, not merely as a slogan or empty words, but as a powerful structuring force. Culture influences how members perceive change, prioritise goals, and sustain purpose during times of instability (Schein 2004; Cameron & Quinn 2011). As Alvesson & Sveningsson (2024) argue,

no change process is culture-free, and culture often either enables or resists transformation.

Student radio stations offer a compelling site for investigating these dynamics because they exemplify what might be termed "improvised permanence." They are intended to be temporary, operated by students, and continually in transition; yet, many have existed for decades. How is this possible? I argue that the answer lies in culture: not just the visible artifacts of station life but also the values and assumptions that underpin their identity and purpose.

Using Schein's (2004) tripartite model of culture, which includes artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions, this thesis examines how European student radio stations define and differentiate themselves. It is based on three original articles, each analysing a different cultural layer. Together, they create a coherent picture of a phenomenon that, while diverse in form, appears surprisingly unified in spirit.

To date, there has been no Europe-wide effort to map the organisational cultures of student radio. There are also no comprehensive statistics on how many stations exist, let alone their operational methods. Wikipedia's (2025a; 2025b) listings provide a loose estimate of 170–200 stations, but a closer inspection during this research process suggests many are inactive. In contrast, national associations in Sweden (SRS 2024), the UK (SRA 2024), France (RadioCampus 2024), Italy (RadUni 2024), and Spain (ARU 2024) collectively report over 200 active member stations, suggesting a more vibrant, albeit unevenly documented, field.

Many stations define themselves as part of community media, public service, or educational ecosystems (Cavanagh, 2009; Coyer & Hintz, 2010). Others trace their roots to political activism (e.g., Komankova 2023; Planšak 2010), DIY culture (Quicke 2024; Bôtošova & Brnik 2023; Unearthing The Music 2020; Waits 2009; Waits 2015), or simply a desire to provide students with a platform (Quicke 2024; Laor 2019; 2020; Waits 2015; Scifo 2007; Wilson David 2015). Yet across these different models, what I have observed, and what this research investigates, is a shared cultural DNA: one that values participation and enthusiasm over polished quality and consistency.

Similarly, as Henrich et al. (2010) have stated, many behavioural science theories about human action and psychology are primarily based on a narrow set of Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic countries (often English-speaking college students). Much of the student-led radio literature and its perceptions are also rooted in the American model of college radio. Although Americanization has undoubtedly influenced business, culture, politics, and the everyday lives of Europeans (e.g., Purhonen et al. 2018), it is debatable whether student radio in

Europe imitates college radio. Research from a comparative European perspective is necessary to accurately and broadly portray student radio as a phenomenon, especially regarding the organisational cultures it embodies.

This dissertation aims to provide a cultural anatomy of European student radio. It addresses a gap in the literature, not by idealising student radio, but by examining it with a hypothesis: an organisation in flux, held together by shared meanings, shaped by structural constraints, and driven by organisational culture.

The structure is as follows: the next chapter introduces key perspectives on organisational culture, particularly the framework developed by Edgar Schein, which underpins the analytical approach. It also reviews theories related to organisational identification and change. Following this, a chapter examines existing research on student radio, situating it within the broader media and academic landscape while highlighting its historical roots and the lack of studies focused on Europe. The subsequent chapters present the research questions, data, and ethical considerations related to the study of student-run radio stations that rely on external funding. The following three core empirical chapters explore European student radio through the lens of artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions, with each chapter based on an original peer-reviewed article. After these, a synthesis chapter analyses the interconnectedness of these cultural layers and highlights the broader organisational identity that emerges. The final chapter offers conclusions and reflections, summarising the main findings, situating them within the existing literature, and broadly discussing their implications for student radio and organisational culture research.

2 BUILDING MEANINGFUL GROUPS: CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND STRUCTURE

In sociological terms, culture refers to the shared values, symbols, and norms that provide meaning and coherence within a social system. For Émile Durkheim (1995), culture resides in the collective conscience, a set of shared beliefs and moral attitudes that form the glue of social solidarity. Rituals, symbols, and shared practices are mechanisms through which societies maintain cohesion and regulate individual behaviour. Talcott Parsons (1952) frames culture as an essential subsystem of social action. It performs the function of pattern maintenance, ensuring continuity and internalisation of societal values through socialisation. For Parsons, culture is a symbolic system that shapes and guides human action by providing meaning and value orientations. Similarly, Mary C. Murphy (2024) describes culture as a meaning-making system that helps individuals make choices in day-to-day situations, personal encounters, teams, and organisations.

Groups and culture are intrinsically linked. People form groups based on various interests. The classic concept of the minimal group paradigm shows that even seemingly trivial and random ways of classifying oneself, such as a preference for a painting or a coin toss, are enough to distinguish between those similar to you and others. Even without meaningful differences or prior interactions, participants regularly favour their in-group over the out-group by giving more resources or positive evaluations to their group members. As a result, group membership alone can affect behaviour and decision-making, with important implications for understanding prejudice and social identity. (Billig & Tajfel 1973.)

The tendency for individuals to form groups precedes organisation. In contrast to arbitrary collectives, organisations are structured social systems designed to achieve specific goals. Talcott Parsons defines organisations as goal-oriented systems that operate within a larger societal framework. Unlike informal gatherings, organisations require a legitimised value system that justifies their purpose, ensures stability, and aligns them with societal norms (Parsons 1956a). For instance, a university exists to educate students, while a hospital provides medical care; both must be formally recognised and regulated by accreditation bodies, government policies, or

professional standards to be considered legitimate. In other words, organisations require and create culture.

To function effectively, an organisation must manage three key processes: resource procurement, decision-making, and institutional integration (Parsons 1956b). Firstly, resource procurement is vital as organisations rely on inputs such as funding, personnel, and infrastructure. For example, a student-run radio station requires financing and access to broadcasting equipment to operate, much like a business needs investors.

Secondly, decision-making affects internal operations. Parsons (1956b) classifies decisions into policies, allocation, and coordination. A university makes policy decisions by introducing new degree programmes, allocative decisions by distributing funds for research and teaching, and coordination decisions by resolving faculty conflicts. Similarly, a student-run radio station determines its programming, allocates resources for production, and fosters collaboration among its members.

Finally, institutional integration ensures that organisations function within broader social structures through contracts, legal authority, and adherence to societal rules (Parsons 1956a). Businesses must comply with laws, military units must follow government directives, and student-run radio stations must adhere to university and broadcasting policies. Without this integration, organisations risk losing credibility, funding, or legal recognition.

While Parsons' framework explains how organisations operate structurally, it does not fully capture their cultural behaviours. For example, a student-run radio station may formally adhere to university guidelines (institutional integration) and have designated managerial roles (allocative decisions). However, traditions, informal leadership, and an independent creative ethos shape its operational style. Organisational culture includes shared values, informal norms, traditions, and identity, influencing how individuals interact beyond formal rules. It also gives meaning to those deciding whether to stay in a group.

Organisational culture is a complex and multifaceted idea that has been studied extensively. Different theories and models have been proposed to understand and examine how organisational culture works. These theories and research can be grouped into three categories: first, the integration focus emphasises the shared values and beliefs among an organisation’s members. Second, the differentiation perspective suggests that although various groups share cultural values, each has unique subcultures that may differ from the dominant perception of an organisation’s culture. Third, the fragmentation view argues that the cultural interpretations of

individual members do not necessarily lead to shared values and beliefs. (Martin 2002.)

Geert Hofstede's (1984) organisational culture theory suggests that national culture greatly influences organisational behaviour, shaping workplace practices and values. This leads to differences in cultural priorities and values between countries. The theory evaluates cultures through six key dimensions that explain how people from different countries approach work, relationships, and decision-making within organisations.

Power Distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal power distribution. High Power Distance cultures tend to tolerate hierarchy, while low Power Distance cultures value equality and prefer flat structures. Individualism vs. Collectivism distinguishes societies that emphasise individual achievements and independence from those prioritising group harmony, loyalty, and collaboration. Masculinity vs. Femininity refers to the degree to which cultures emphasise traditional “masculine" traits, such as competition, assertiveness, and material success, versus “feminine" values, including care, quality of life, and consensus-building. Uncertainty Avoidance measures how comfortable people are with ambiguity and risk. High uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to prefer structured environments and rules, whereas low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more tolerant of change and innovation. Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation contrasts long-term-oriented cultures, which value perseverance, future planning, and delayed gratification, with short-term-oriented cultures that focus on immediate results and respect for tradition. Finally, Indulgence vs. Restraint contrasts societies that encourage the free expression of desires and enjoyment with those that regulate gratification through strict social norms. (Hofstede et al. 2010.)

The Competing Values Framework, developed through research on organisational effectiveness and originally created by Robert Quinn and John Rohrbaugh (1983), is a model for understanding organisational culture, leadership, and effectiveness. Updated by Cameron & Quinn (2011), the model highlights four competing cultural values or quadrants based on two dimensions: flexibility versus stability, which considers whether an organisation prioritises adaptability and innovation or consistency and control; and internal versus external focus, which dictates whether the organisation emphasises internal processes and cohesion or external positioning and competition.

The four resulting quadrants represent different organisational cultures. The Clan Culture, which falls under the categories of flexibility and internal orientation, emphasises collaboration, teamwork, and a family-like atmosphere, with leaders

serving as mentors. In contrast, the Adhocracy Culture, characterised by flexibility and external orientation, prioritises innovation, risk-taking, and dynamic growth driven by visionary leaders. The Market Culture, associated with stability and external orientation, focuses on results, competition, and goal achievement, with leaders acting as drivers or taskmasters. Finally, the Hierarchy Culture centres on stability and internal orientation, values efficiency, structured processes, and consistency, with leaders functioning as coordinators or organisers. (Cameron & Quinn 2011.)

2.1 Edgar Schein's model of organisational culture

One of the most influential and foundational theories of organisational culture is the layered model proposed by organisational psychologist Edgar Schein (2004). This model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the underlying dynamics of culture within organisations. Edgar Schein (2012) defines culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and address these problems. It shapes members' views, ideas, and feelings regarding their work environment and influences their interactions and decision-making processes. According to Schein, organisational culture consists of three layers and can only be fully understood through careful examination of each one. These layers are interconnected, with deeper levels shaping and influencing the more visible manifestations of culture, while feedback from the surface layers reinforces or challenges the underlying beliefs.

According to Schein, organisational culture manifests at interconnected levels that vary in the extent to which they reveal cultural phenomena to the observer. The three primary levels of cultural analysis are artifacts [sic], espoused values, and beliefs and underlying assumptions.

Artifacts represent the surface level of culture, encompassing all visible organisational structures and processes, including the physical environment, organisational practices, systems, the way people dress, express emotions, and their actions and speech, along with the norms that govern everyday life in the organisation. Although this is the easiest aspect to observe, interpreting the artifact level is challenging, as visible elements alone do not disclose their significance to the organisation's members or the rationale behind them. To understand their meaning, one must delve deeper. (Schein 2004.)

The next level of organisational culture comprises espoused values and beliefs, which include the strategies, goals, and philosophies that can be consciously articulated by the members of an organisation and are socially validated through trial and error. These values and beliefs, in turn, affect the artifacts of a given organisation, such as how conflicts are resolved. Espoused values inform decision-making and legitimise the organisation's practices. Sometimes, statements about values and beliefs reflect only aspirations for the future or merely rationalise why things are the way they are. For example, an organisation might assert that it values innovation (an espoused value). However, if employees view risk-taking as unsafe, the deeper underlying assumptions could contradict the stated commitment. When these values and beliefs accurately reflect how the organisation operates and predict the behaviour of its members, they align with the deepest level of organisational culture: the underlying assumptions. (Schein 2004.)

At the core of Schein's framework lie fundamental underlying assumptions that represent unconscious, deeply ingrained beliefs and mental models shaping how members of the organisation perceive, think, and act. These assumptions form the foundation of organisational culture, often functioning so naturally that they go unquestioned. They are learned and adapted as instinctive responses to different situations, evolving over time when acting upon them yields sufficient results. (Schein 2004) For instance, a fundamental assumption might be that "success is achieved through collaboration," which influences espoused values such as teamwork and leads to artifacts like open office spaces and collaborative practices.

The relationship between these layers is dynamic and reciprocal. Basic assumptions shape an organisation's espoused values, which, in turn, influence the design and implementation of artifacts. For instance, the belief that employees thrive in a flexible environment might lead to the value of work-life balance, manifesting as the artifact of remote work policies. Simultaneously, feedback from artifacts, such as the effectiveness of remote work policies, can prompt the organisation to reevaluate its espoused values, ultimately challenging the underlying assumptions and ensuring they remain relevant to the changing context.

Understanding the interaction between layers is crucial for diagnosing organisational culture, especially during periods of change. Misalignments among layers can cause cultural dissonance. For example, if the stated value of innovation is not reflected in the promotion of diversity and intra-organisational debate (artifacts), it may suggest a misalignment with the organisation's underlying assumptions. Addressing such inconsistencies involves examining how artifacts, values, and

assumptions relate and ensuring they align to support the organisation's mission and objectives. (Schein 2004.)

Schein's theory emphasises that organisational culture is not static but evolves through continuous interplay. It operates as a living system where artifacts provide feedback on espoused values, and both surface layers challenge or reinforce foundational assumptions. This interconnected structure shapes culture by influencing organisational behaviour, adaptability, and identity.

Schein's model has faced criticism for overlooking the symbolic and processual elements of culture and for assuming too much cultural uniformity. Hatch (1993) argues that Schein's model is overly linear and fails to adequately capture the dynamic interaction of cultural layers. Her Cultural Dynamics Model builds on Schein's framework by introducing a fourth layer: symbols. Intangible cultural assumptions are expressed through values, which are then transformed into artifacts representing organisational social and material realities. Artifacts acquire symbolic meanings; proactive symbolisation links them to broader interpretations, while retroactive symbolisation reaffirms or creates new meanings. Symbols are contextualised through assumptions, with proactive interpretation conveying meanings from assumptions to symbols, and retroactive interpretation either reinforcing or challenging basic assumptions (Hatch 1993). For example, a company's headquarters with departments on separate floors, as a physical artifact, may symbolise efficiency and a practical division of labour, but it can also represent the disunity within a corporate culture.

As Schein emphasises the cultural role of founders and leaders, particularly in the early stages of organisations, Ogbonna & Harris (1998) argue that organisational culture theories place overt emphasis on the role of leadership in forming, managing, and changing an organisation's culture, as managers can exert coercive control that leads to compliance rather than internalised values. Murphy (2024) underscores that organisational cultures are not created solely by their leaders, but by all members, whether they intentionally engage in the task or influence it incidentally. According to her, this results in micro-cultures within broader meaning-making systems that may differ from the larger cultural framework. Martin (2002) argues that cultures are not homogeneous and consensus-driven, even at the level of core assumptions, but are often fragmented, with subcultures that may diverge from the values and beliefs of management. She also critiques Schein's research emphasis on a deep understanding of organisations, which requires time-consuming ethnographic examinations, observations, and lengthy qualitative analyses in organisational settings, a task that many scholars find practically impossible.

Despite criticisms of its simplicity, Edgar Schein's Organisational Culture Model remains a valuable heuristic for exploring and describing organisational cultures. Its structured approach, which categorises culture into artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions, provides researchers and practitioners with a comprehensive framework for analysing both the visible and hidden aspects of culture. This stratification is especially effective at revealing the deeper layers of organisational dynamics and identifying misalignments between stated values and underlying assumptions—a critical step when diagnosing cultural challenges and initiating transformation (Yilmaz 2014; Schein 2004). Furthermore, the model has demonstrated adaptability across diverse organisational settings, affirming its relevance in various cultural and operational contexts. It has been empirically tested and applied in multiple studies, from developing the culture of a winning sports team (Cole & Martin 2018) to understanding corrupt behaviour within companies (Campbell & Göritz 2014), examining the permanence of changes in organisational culture (Canato & Ravasi 2015), and serving as a tool for business leaders to evaluate and better influence organisational culture within their industries (Westover 2024). In addition to its practicality, it also acts as a foundation for more complex or nuanced cultural analyses, supporting both theoretical exploration and practical application (Collins 2021; Hogan & Coote 2014; Coghlan 2023). For instance, its focus on deep-seated core beliefs and assumptions has been utilised in examining different mindsets within organisations (Murphy 2024). Schein's model functions as a magnifying glass into organisational cultures, systematically deciphering the core values and assumptions underpinning collective behaviours.

2.2 Organisational culture and identity

Organisational culture can be described as the glue that binds a group of people together (Ogbonna & Harris 1998). The resilience of an organisation depends on the components of that glue. According to Schein (2004), an organisation’s cultural strength relies on four key elements: stability, depth, breadth, and integration. Stability, defined as the temporal endurance of cultural elements, is evident when the culture and its values remain consistent and resistant to change, even amidst staff turnover (Katz 2001; Schein 2012). Leung et al. (2005) assert that high stability facilitates the effective assimilation of new team members. Breadth refers to the extensive cultural elements across the organisation, encompassing all levels from management to lower ranks (Schein 2012). This breadth can enhance group synergy

and foster a strong shared purpose, increasing productivity (Adler & Heckscher 2018; Carton et al. 2014). Cultural integration occurs when culture is deeply embedded in all group activities, with values unconsciously shaping decisions. A well-integrated culture ensures that values and assumptions do not conflict, fostering a shared understanding of "how things are done," which supports unity, coordinated action, and facilitates onboarding for new team members into the group (Schein 2012; Weinberg & Gould 2007).

Organisations require not just formal structures and objectives but also processes of integration and legitimisation (Parsons 1956a; Lewin 1935). While forming groups is simple, maintaining them requires effort, especially in organisations with voluntary participation, where members must see the group as more important than their competing interests to stay committed. The longevity and cohesion of such organisations mainly depend on how individuals identify with the group and internalise its goals, norms, and values. This process, known as social identification, describes the extent to which individuals see themselves through their membership in a collective (Tajfel & Turner 1979).

When identification is strong, it boosts motivation, performance, loyalty, and the willingness to act in the group's interest, even at a personal cost (Van Vugt & Hart 2004; Van Bavel & Packer 2021). Optimal distinctiveness theory suggests that individuals seek both inclusion and differentiation (Brewer 1991). The differences between “us” and “not-us” are crucial for group identity, creating self-referential meaning through contrast with others (Pickett & Brewer 2001; Van Bavel & Packer 2021). Cultural identification ensures members internalise the organisation's purpose and adjust their behaviour accordingly. This is especially important in voluntary settings like student radio stations, where loyalty, rather than contracts, sustains participation.

Organisational culture plays a vital role in this process. Core beliefs and assumptions serve as the foundation of organisational identity. Traditions, informal norms, and shared values create a distinctive organisational culture that fosters a sense of belonging. According to Schein (2004), culture provides structural stability by embedding shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that cultivate a sense of identity and coherence. Once a group identity is established, culture can withstand transitions in membership, preserving continuity. Social identity theory explains how individuals' self-concepts become intertwined with their group memberships, influencing behaviour through shared expectations, norms, and symbolic values (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Hogg & Terry 2000; Hogg 2000), which, in turn, are passed down, both intentionally and unintentionally, to new members. Tacit knowledge

transfer is more effective in organisations where individuals share similar cultural traits that encourage trust, open communication, collaboration, and mutual support, and where team orientation surpasses individual competition (Busch et al., 2004; Borges, 2012; Young, 2001).

As individuals internalise organisational identity, they adjust their cognitive and emotional responses to match group prototypes: flexible mental models embodying the group's values, behaviours, and attitudes (Hogg & Terry 2000; Hogg 2000). These prototypes are sensitive to context and adapt in response to prominent outgroups. For instance, a student radio station might emphasise its creative autonomy compared to formal university communications, while highlighting professionalism when contrasted with more casual student societies.

Members' sense of cohesion and belonging enhances creativity and performance (Ashforth & Mael 1989; He & Brown 2013; Hirst et al. 2009). Strong identification with an organisation fosters organisational citizenship behaviours. These are voluntary actions, such as mentoring peers, resolving conflicts, or "going the extra mile," which improve group performance and cohesion (Organ et al., 2006). Such behaviours arise not from external incentives but from a deep internalisation of group membership and purpose (Greco et al. 2022). However, this loyalty can also create ethical grey areas. Highly identified members may overlook organisational faults or act questionably to protect or promote the group (Umphress et al. 2010; Campbell & Göritz 2014). When the ends justify the means, a long-serving student radio member can, for instance, discriminate against a new member wanting to contest the station's traditions to protect the organisation's legacy.

Notably, strong social identification does not always lead to blind conformity. Those most invested in the organisation may challenge internal practices or leadership decisions if they perceive them as betraying core values (Täuber & Sassenberg 2012; Packer & Chasteen 2010; Dahling & Gutworth 2017). Such actions, though disruptive, can arise from loyalty and an effort to protect the organisation's cultural integrity. For example, a veteran radio member might resist a majority vote to play current commercial hits that attract broader audiences in order to maintain the station's grassroots ethos.

Ultimately, organisational culture and identity are dynamically intertwined. Identity affects how individuals interpret and practice cultural norms, while culture provides the symbolic framework through which identity is formed and maintained (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024). This interaction shapes how organisations respond to challenges, retain members, and foster a shared sense of purpose.

2.3 Intentional or unintentional evolution of culture?

The link between organisational culture and group performance is not a new idea, nor is managing culture to adapt to changing needs. Alvesson & Sveningsson (2024) observe that the urgency for change management has existed for at least twenty-five years, driven by factors like globalisation, technological innovations, and market pressures requiring organisations to rethink quickly. They state that this overarching change discourse has created a virtual industry dedicated to understanding and managing change, involving consultancies, leadership experts, business schools, corporate leaders, and politicians providing solutions. Contemporary concepts of change highlight that managers need to be skilled at handling planned organisational change while staying responsive to environmental shifts. Culture is often seen as a vital element to address or an important factor in enabling change. If change is not managed effectively, the organisation risks failure.

Alvesson (2016) notes that while the past two decades have seen a range of agile leadership, organisational learning, and cultural change programmes, from Just-in-Time (JIT) to total quality management (TQM), most solutions promising concrete results often encounter high failure rates, sometimes even worsening the situation, as change initiatives can disrupt other organisational activities. There is usually more beneath the surface. Some change may take place, but it may simply serve to comply with management's new demands (Ogbonna & Harris 1998). People within organisations often resist cultural change, finding ways to revert to traditional behaviours when top-down pressures no longer govern the newly implemented practices. This resistance is especially strong when changes threaten core values that are deeply ingrained in the organisational identity (Canato & Ravasi 2015).

Managing culture during change requires a combination of tangible and symbolic actions that signal to the organisation the necessity to reevaluate its values and priorities. The success of organisational leaders in fostering cultural change depends on their ability to create a sense of urgency, articulate a compelling vision for the future, and implement change through meaningful and symbolic measures (Canato & Ravasi 2015; Smith 2003; Schein 2004).

A weak culture that the organisation's members do not embrace may cause them to abandon it. Conversely, a shared culture that its members accept tends to be more resilient. Harris & Ogbonna (2011) claim that firmly held values are beneficial only if the culture is oriented towards the external environment rather than prioritising internal consistency, as seen in bureaucratic or community cultures. According to their study, competitive and innovative cultures that are responsive and adaptable to

external contingencies significantly and positively influence organisational performance.

Such a notion is intriguing when examining organisations that focus not on competition or innovation, but rather on responding to the changing realities of their external environments, such as student radio stations. In these cases, the organisation is managed by young amateurs who are not well-versed in change processes, nor do they possess the leadership skills to effectively redesign operations and culture. Is this not a task that many scholars and organisational leaders see as the ultimate test of leadership skills? (Schein 2004; Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024; Ogbonna & Wilkinson 2003). Here, performance must rely on something else.

Managing voluntary organisations is undoubtedly a challenging task. These organisations are distinguished not only by their nonprofit status but also by a governance structure centred on reciprocity, trust, and resource sharing for mutual or public benefit. Unlike profit-driven companies or hierarchically organised government bodies, voluntary organisations rely heavily on collective action, democratic processes, and intrinsic motivations. (Enjolras 2009; Young 2001.)

Managers in these contexts face unique challenges. They must navigate various coordination methods, such as external funding and voluntary reciprocity, while also maintaining trust and organisational legitimacy (Young 2001). This requires them to manage various stakeholder expectations and avoid governance failures like inefficiency, goal displacement, or resource misappropriation.

A key challenge, particularly for managers without formal management training, is to sustain and foster trust and reciprocity among participants. These managers must cultivate a culture where members contribute not out of contractual obligation, but because of shared values and mutual benefits. (Enjolras 2009; Young 2001) This is especially important in student radio, where volunteers are often driven by passion, creativity, or a desire for media experience rather than external rewards. Recognising the importance of internal governance structures is crucial. According to Enjolras (2009), effective leadership depends on transparent decision-making, accountability through democratic participation or board oversight, and the development of a collective identity that encourages long-term volunteer involvement.

The effectiveness of voluntary organisations depends on aligning organisational practices with the normative expectations of their members and stakeholders. In such contexts, organisational culture becomes the foundation of permanence by significantly influencing volunteer commitment and satisfaction (Young 2001). Community culture fosters both affective and normative commitment, whereas

bureaucratic culture tends to detract from affective commitment. An innovative culture boosts job satisfaction. Servant leadership - an approach where the leader's primary goal is to support, empower, and serve others to help them grow and succeed - partially mediates the connection between community culture and volunteer commitment but does not affect the relationship between organisational culture and job satisfaction. (Erdurmazlı 2019; Chen et al. 2013.)

In the context of student radio, this means that new or inexperienced managers must quickly learn to balance creative freedom with organisational coherence. They must inspire unpaid contributors, resolve conflicts, and manage limited financial and technical resources, all while upholding and conveying a sense of mission and inclusivity. Without these governance practices, even passionate and well-intentioned initiatives risk collapsing due to coordination failures or the erosion of trust.

Contemporary ideas of change emphasise that managers must be skilled in implementing planned organisational change while also being responsive to environmental shifts. (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024; Schein 2004; Cameron & Quinn 2011; Ogbonna & Harris 1998). Many organisational theorists highlight the roles of founders, managers, and leaders as the most crucial actors in the evolution and management of an organisation’s culture (Schein 2004; Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024). However, numerous case studies have shown that attempts to manage organisational culture often fail and result in unintended consequences (Ogbonna & Harris 2015; Wankhade & Brinkman 2014; Clegg & Walsh 2004; Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024). Evidence from the operations management, sociotechnical, and organisation development literature indicates that change initiatives are common, yet their outcomes are frequently disappointing. This discord suggests that, despite extensive experience, many organisations struggle with effective change management. (Clegg & Walsh 2004)

Thus, an organisation's culture evolves with or without intentional guidance. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2024) argue that organisational change is often emergent rather than planned, shaped by everyday interactions, informal adaptations, and shifting interpretations of norms. Organisations evolve continuously rather than in discrete, pre-set change episodes, as new members bring different perspectives, technologies shift, and local practices develop. This progress contributes to everyday reframing, resulting in subtle, incremental cultural changes that emerge naturally rather than through formal strategies. Even when leadership imposes structural reforms, deep-seated cultural norms often resist or reinterpret

these efforts, leading to unintended outcomes. Small, grassroots initiatives frequently shape organisational evolution, sometimes more effectively than top-down policies.

This perspective is particularly significant for student-run radio stations, where generational turnover, informal leadership, and creative autonomy encourage a dynamic yet unpredictable cultural evolution. This evolution often takes place outside formal institutional directives and lacks the management expertise typically deemed necessary.

2.4 Organisational cultures and cross-cultural comparison

Organisational cultures are often seen as unique. Organisations often highlight what sets them apart in mission statements, branding, or internal communications. This sense of distinctiveness in individualistic societies aligns with wider cultural values that prioritise personal identity and exceptionalism (Gelfand 2018; Packer & Van Bavel 2021). However, as Martin (2002) suggests, such views of being special are seldom tested against other cultures, leading to the uniqueness paradox—a belief that one's culture is special even when its features are similar to those in other cultures (Martin & Siehl 1983). Shared rituals, stories, and values, such as those focusing on creativity, teamwork, or freedom, may appear exceptional in one context but are often very similar across different cultures (Trice & Beyer 1984; Martin & Siehl 1983).

As Will Storr (2018) has illustrated, our understanding of identity and what it means to be a successful member of society varies according to our broader, constantly evolving cultures. While individualism, being exceptional, and striving for self-actualisation are central in the Western world, in Asia, for example, the emphasis is more on community and collective needs rather than the individual. Culture influences individuals, whose primary aim is to get along and improve relative to others. As people establish organisations, the goals, values, beliefs, and assumptions about the self and others shape how these organisations are organised and their culture. The narratives we tell about ourselves influence the communities we engage with, ultimately fostering a culture that reflects these core assumptions over time. (Storr 2018.)

Thus, it is reasonable to assume that organisational cultures vary from country to country. Being alternative, for instance, cannot be taken for granted among European student radio stations, despite this narrative being the defining aspect of college radio in North America (Sauls 2000).

Organisational cultures often mirror the national traditions and values of their respective countries, resulting in a complex relationship between local customs and global practices. Hofstede et al. (2010) state that distinct mental patterns greatly influence societal behaviour. For example, Eastern European countries generally show higher power distance and uncertainty avoidance than Scandinavian nations, where egalitarian values and a tolerance for ambiguity are prevalent and thus reflected in organisations. Cultural differences shape organisational norms, practices, and interpersonal interactions.

By examining national differences through the lens of media systems, Hallin and Mancini (2004) further explore this cultural interplay by emphasising the influence of journalistic professionalism, market dynamics, and governmental roles on the diverse media landscapes across various European regions. This model highlights how countries approach media and journalism, reflecting their unique cultural values and traditions. Although it may oversimplify cultural complexities (Syvertsen et al. 2014), it demonstrates how media systems impact radio practices and content distribution, resulting in three ideal types of media systems with observable patterns: the Liberal, Democratic Corporatist, and Polarised Pluralist (Hallin & Mancini 2004). Hallin and Mancini (2017) emphasise that these clusters are not fixed categories but represent fluid groupings based on shared characteristics. Moreover, some countries may transition between clusters over time due to political and economic changes, as noted in more recent analyses (Brüggeman et al. 2014; Büchel et al. 2016) that have identified four distinct clusters of European media systems. The Southern Cluster, which includes Italy, Greece, Spain, and France, is characterised by high political parallelism, lower journalistic professionalism, and significant state influence, reflecting the Polarised Pluralist model. The Northern Cluster encompasses Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland, known for strong public service broadcasting and high journalistic standards, aligning with the Democratic Corporatist model. The Central Cluster includes Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, with unique state involvement and media regulation differing from the traditional Democratic Corporatist model. Finally, the Western Cluster consists of the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal, which are characterised by a market-oriented approach and limited state involvement, consistent with the Liberal model. (Brüggeman et al. 2014; Büchel et al. 2016.)

Hallin & Mancini (2017) believed that rapid advances in communication technologies would lead to a cultural convergence of media, especially towards the liberal model typical of the United States. The concept of convergence describes the significant similarities among organisations resulting from shared cultural influences.

These influences, often driven by policy and technological advancements, promote unified narratives and encourage social engagement across borders (Jenkins 2006). Since the 20th century, the U.S. has served as a benchmark for advocating a commercially driven media model (Fenton 2010) and shaping corporate organisational practices (Barley & Kunda 1992). Hallin and Mancini (2017) revisit their convergence thesis, suggesting that while global forces, such as commercialisation and professionalisation, have led to partial convergence in media systems, notable national differences still exist. Political parallelism, regulatory frameworks, and the role of the state vary. Instead of uniform convergence, they propose a hybridisation process where global trends interact with national contexts, resulting in diverse adaptations of media systems. On a broader scale, using data from the World Values Survey, Kaasa & Minkov (2020) challenge the idea that the world is uniformly converging towards Western liberal values. While some evidence of convergence exists, particularly in child-rearing practices that emphasise independence and self-expression, this trend does not apply to all cultural domains. In fact, on moral issues such as attitudes towards homosexuality and abortion, divergence is more apparent: liberal societies are becoming increasingly permissive, while more conservative ones are not liberalising at the same pace. This results in widening gaps rather than uniformity. Therefore, the idea of a global move towards Western liberalism is too simplistic; cultural change is uneven and specific to different domains.

Cultural elements within an organisation encompass various aspects, including work ethic, dress code, task significance, time management, and the balance between staff initiatives and compliance. These norms are not solely developed within the organisation; they are initially influenced by external factors such as family, education, and prior work experiences. Leadership establishes the cultural tone, encouraging members to adapt existing norms to align with the organisation's standards. This adjustment can present mental challenges, requiring a departure from familiar norms, depending on the organisation and the boundaries allowed within a broader culture. (Gradstein 2024.)

Countries and organisations vary along the cultural tightness and looseness spectrum, which relates to the quantity and strength of norms they hold, how these norms are followed, and how non-compliance is addressed. Michelle Gelfand (2018; 2012; Gelfand et al. 2006) explains that tight or loose cultures are neither good nor bad, as both have their advantages, disadvantages, and trade-offs. Loose cultures tend to be more open but can also become more chaotic. In contrast, tight cultures

offer greater predictability and reassuring discipline, which may, in turn, lead to less tolerance for deviance and diversity.

Loose cultures generally embrace change and welcome new, potentially improved ideas. In contrast, tight cultures exhibit greater social control, with members more synchronised and closely adhering to stability, resulting in slower acceptance and adaptation to change. The downsides of cultural looseness include social disorder, lack of coordination, and impulsiveness, which can complicate the management of such organisations. While more predictable and controllable, the drawbacks of tight cultures may stifle innovation, as these cultures tend to be close-minded, conventional, and resistant to change, even when external circumstances demand it. (Gelfand 2018; 2012.) In examining organisational cultures within a Swiss and an American company seeking to merge, Schein (2004) illustrated how clashes between tight and loose norms, rooted in deeply held assumptions about professionalism and innovation, can lead to unwanted consequences, misunderstandings, and a lack of trust. These differences, arising from core assumptions regarding the external world and people, influence organisational practices and culture, which may prioritise either stability or innovation.

Traditionally, most tight cultures have developed in response to constant threats that require coordination and conformity, such as disaster-prone Japan and Pakistan. In contrast, loose cultures thrive in environments with significantly fewer perceived external threats, like Greece or the United States, allowing for the exploration of new ideas, acceptance of newcomers, and broader tolerance of behaviour. For organisations operating under continuous turbulence, scarcity, and external pressures, strict norms, rules, and conformity provide stability, predictability, and manageability. At a societal level, this emphasis results in lower crime rates, higher synchrony, and increased self-control compared to looser cultures. However, when innovation is essential, less strict norms and initiatives to relax rules foster openness to diverse perspectives, thereby encouraging exploration, experimentation, and acceptance of various individuals. (Gelfand 2018.) A meta-analysis of 598 studies found that organisational cultural values have a stronger impact on emotions, attitudes, and behaviours in culturally tight societies, indicating that individuals in such contexts are more likely to adhere to national cultural norms (Taras et al. 2010).

Creativity involves out-of-the-box thinking and recognising that new ideas may breach established norms. Furthermore, studies indicate that entrepreneurship is a more attractive and promising career option in loose cultures compared to tight ones. Conversely, when a group's survival depends on limited resources, managing those resources in a controlled and coordinated way becomes crucial. A sense of threat

fosters tightness. As a result, cultures can rapidly change when a danger — whether real, imagined, temporary, or manipulated — necessitates stronger norms and a more disciplined culture. Conversely, as the sense of threat lessens, cultures tend to relax. (Gelfand 2018.)

This distinction prompts important questions in situations where creativity and independence are central values, yet resources and institutional support remain precarious. For example, the literature on American college radio suggests a sense of cultural looseness: these stations promote free expression, alternative content, and a do-it-yourself ethos (Sauls 2000; Tremblay 2003; Waits 2008; 2009; 2010; 2015; McKenzie 1993). However, they often operate under tight constraints and instability, such as limited funding, high staff turnover, and reliance on unpredictable institutional goodwill. This contrast creates a core tension from the perspective of tightness and looseness: How can an organisation foster a relaxed, open culture while maintaining enough structure to survive in environments with scarce resources or uncertainty? Gelfand (2018) reminds us that tightness and looseness can depend on the situation. Even in relaxed cultures, key values are often governed by stricter norms and sanctioned more severely than in other areas. Nevertheless, in tight cultures, these punishments tend to be more rigid and numerous.

3 OVERVIEW OF STUDENT RADIO

Many initial impressions of student-run radio come from anecdotes about media luminaries who began their careers behind campus microphones. Howard Stern is one such figure in the United States, having started his on-air career at WTBU at Boston University (Laskowski 2016). Similarly, David Letterman (Marshall 2014) and "Weird Al" Yankovic hosted college radio shows before reaching widespread fame (Pemberton 2014). Steve Albini, the prominent musician-producer who collaborated with the Pixies, PJ Harvey, Nirvana, and other influential bands, had an early stint at Northwestern University's WNUR (Krimstein 2024). In Europe, Stephen Merchant, known for co-creating The Office and various other television hits, was involved with Warwick University's student radio (Pierce 2011). Meanwhile, musician Thom Yorke and journalist Jon Kay spent time at the University of Exeter's Xpression FM, alongside future Conservative MP James Brokenshire (XpressionFM 2024). In Finland, Radio Moreeni, the Tampere University radio station, has served as a training ground for individuals such as Liisa Riekki, the Communications Director of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, and Mervi Leino, the Assistant Director of the National Audiovisual Institute of Finland. Radio scholar Marko Ala-Fossi hosted an afternoon show at Radio 957 in 1986, when the university students' union owned it (M. Ala-Fossi, personal communication, 3 June 2025).

Although these well-known, diverse alumni highlight the role of student stations as pathways for future professionals, the daily operations and culture of student-run radio remain relatively underexplored. The list of media professionals with a background in student radio is undeniably impressive. While student-run radio stations have significantly influenced the lives and careers of many and are often cited as breeding grounds for various professionals, student radio as an organisation remains somewhat mysterious, affecting the futures of alumni who work not only in the media industry but also across many other fields. 'College radio', 'Student radio' and 'university radio' are mentioned, if at all, only as locations of incidents. Scholars studying student radio frequently point out the persistent lack of research on the topic (e.g., Schnitker 2016; Raymond 2016; 2013; Wall 2003; Waits 2010; Quicke 2024). Raymond (2013) also notes that studies about college radio are largely outdated; for

example, technological advances and the rise of social media have made previous studies and the realities of the field very different from those explored decades ago.

Depending on the geographical location, the term used for student-led radio varies. ‘Student radio’ is commonly used in the UK, Germany, Austria, and Scandinavia, while in France it is known as ‘campus radio’. In Italy, Spain, and Portugal, student-led radio is often called ‘university radio’ (radiofonici universitari (Raduni 2024), radio universitaria (ARU 2024). In the USA, it is referred to as ‘college radio’, whereas in Canada it is called ‘campus radio’. In Mexico, it is also known as ‘university radio’.

Student radio stations are generally classified as non-commercial educational radio stations located on university campuses and owned by academic or non-profit entities, such as universities or student associations, or by stations closely linked with and run by students from a particular higher education institution (Sauls 2000; Quicke 2024). In this dissertation, “student radio” typically refers to either streaming or broadcasting radio stations that are at least partly managed by students and primarily feature content created by students affiliated with a specific higher education institution. In this research, I mainly use the term “student radio” but also interchangeably refer to the other previously mentioned terms, depending on which is more suitable for the geographical context.

In the United States, college radio is regarded as an alternative to commercial radio. It fosters greater diversity of music and open-format programming that distinguishes it from mainstream stations. College radio provides students with practical broadcasting experience through a hands-on approach, allowing for errors and experimentation (Priestman, 2002; Waits, 2010; Sauls, 2000).

Similarly, in Europe, student radio acts as a practical training ground for future media professionals, enabling students to explore new formats and activities that might otherwise be inaccessible. These stations often prioritise alternative music and focus on issues faced by underrepresented social groups, which typically do not receive widespread media coverage. Some student radio stations place greater emphasis on representing these social issues than on media and journalism education. (Scifo 2007; Doliwa 2015; Laor 2019; Quicke 2024.)

3.1 Different radio histories

US radio has a distinctly different history from that of most European countries. External factors such as societal, economic, and political circumstances have

significantly shaped the development of student radio and its environments. An overview of these prior circumstances is crucial for understanding the context of the college radio model and the background for European student radio.

American radio has been predominantly commercial since its early days, whereas European radio has undergone a lengthy and robust period of state-led public control. The paradigm shift in European radio differs significantly from the American model. While the European approach has only recently embraced a commercial model in the past 30 to 40 years, American radio has a distinct history characterised by a focus on small local stations, commercial public radio, and a limited number of large national corporations.

Due to the lack of regulatory bodies or practices, the USA experienced exponential growth in radio transmissions at the start of the 1920s. The 1927 Radio Act and the establishment of the Federal Communications Commission provided the government with the necessary tools for overseeing and regulating broadcasting stations. However, funding for radio broadcasts through advertisements has been customary from the beginning and continues to this day. Since the early 20th century, all American media outlets have become commercialised, and their ownership has consolidated. In the competition for audiences and advertisers, American radio has focused on music and news, leading to the rapid rise of format radio since the 1990s. (Horowitz-Aslama 2015; Aslama & Marko 2019; Walker 2001; Humphreys 1996.)

The European narrative has taken on a distinct tone. From the 1920s until the late 1970s, European radio could largely be characterised as an ideal type of national public broadcasting monopoly, controlled by the state in organisational and financial matters, yet relatively independent regarding content policies. Radio was viewed as a means of cultural uplift and education in the West and as a tool for control in the East. The monopoly ensured that only one radio company possessed a licence to broadcast within a defined geographical area. Following a brief period of unregulated activity at the beginning of the 20th century, the government-regulated monopoly was justified by asserting, for instance, that radio demands special attention as it would become a powerful influencer among the entire population. It was also believed that a state monopoly would guarantee affordable radio content production compared to competition. Demands for public service supported the monopoly: radio should be accessible throughout the country, different demographics should be served equitably, and programmes should be impartial, appropriate, respectful, and of high quality. Interwar broadcasting in Europe was additionally linked to projects aimed at uniting the continent. (Picard 2014; Kemppainen 2001; Lommers 2012.)

As Europe's monopolised public-service radio systems offered little popular music and provided no opportunities for broadcast advertisers, demand for alternatives increased. The first 'pirate radio' stations appeared offshore Denmark in 1958, using transmitters built into small ships. Swedish and UK pirate stations followed in 1961, and soon, shipboard stations emerged off the coasts of Italy and France. Despite countries passing laws to restrict the operations of such pirates, transmissions continued, and their audiences expanded. Land-based pirate stations appeared in several countries, with some dying out due to strict legislation, while others persisted longer as they were overlooked in smaller communities. The recipe for success for most pirate stations was American Top 40 music, with DJs presenting fast-paced music-and-talk formats that were unavailable on national radio in Europe. The first official response to popular demand came from the BBC in 1967 with the launch of Radio 1, which focused on popular music. The first approved commercial radio station began operating in the UK in 1973, followed by the emergence of more popular radio channels and the introduction of advertising on licensed stations in many other countries. (Coyer et al. 2007; Dawes 2017.)

Demands for deregulation arose from the business sector, which saw media as a promising new market, and from various political, cultural, and social groups, which viewed it as a means to boost democratic participation. Deregulation facilitated the creation of licensed, community-based radio stations, enabling ordinary citizens to express themselves and promote local involvement and communication. (Van Cuilenberg & McQuail 2003; Humphreys 1996.) The concept generally refers to self-organised, participatory, not-for-profit media focusing on local, geographic communities or communities of interest (Coyer & Hintz 2010; UNESCO 2011).

Since the 1970s, European radio has undergone numerous transformations that reflect broader societal ideological shifts. Technological advances have made radio listening easily accessible and affordable, transforming it into a commonplace activity in everyday situations, from homes to workplaces and from commutes to public spaces. The economic foundation of radio production has evolved in tandem with changing legislation. (Kemppainen 2001; Van Cuilenberg & McQuail 2003; Humphreys 1996.) The transformation was so profound that conditions in radio before the 1980s are referred to as The Old Order, while the period that followed is known as The New Order. The former was characterised by public service, a national focus, and a political and non-commercial nature, whereas the advent of the New Order, particularly after European integration, introduced more commercial alternatives and competition that often transcended national boundaries (McQuail 1990; Humphreys 1996). This shift also marked a shift towards the industrial

production of radio, with business logic and the pursuit of commercial success paving the way for concentrated ownership and the emergence of multinational media corporations. This has reduced public radio to just one among many media outlets, all striving to adapt their operations to better meet productivity challenges and the evolving demands of diverse audiences (Humphreys 1996; Papathanassopoulos 2001). This new framework has involved viewing the listener as a consumer rather than a citizen, hastening the transition towards an industrial and business-oriented perspective where radio content becomes commodities that can be branded and 'sold' to specific target audiences. Since the 1980s, youth have been recognised as a key marketing segment, resulting in an increase in content and dedicated channels tailored to the preferences of younger audiences. (Kemppainen 2001; Ala-Fossi 2005.)

The transformation from a state-regulated radio monopoly to business-focused enterprises led to the development, or the European adaptation, of format radio. This change contributed to a shift in listening habits from following specific programmes to tuning into formatted radio channels. This model had been the basis of American radio since its inception, but it represented something new for European radio. In the commercial model, a channel is designed to have a distinctive profile. This identity should be sufficiently distinguishable from its competitors to attract particular demographics, often using carefully categorised music genres. (Kemppainen 2001; Papathanassopoulos 2001.)

Additionally, listeners can begin or end their radio experience at any point, resulting in the common format of continuous radio streams. Youth-focused commercial stations, in particular, uphold strict music policies, offering a limited selection of choices. This causes audience fragmentation, which remains sustainable as long as the target listener segment is sufficiently large. To maximise listenership, content is crafted to be as enjoyable as possible for the intended demographic or at least not irritating. As media companies strive for commercial success and longevity, the formats that endure are the most widely imitated. Under pressure to attract new audiences while retaining existing ones, public radio has also had to adapt its operations accordingly. By the 1990s, most European public broadcasting companies operated three to four channels aimed at different audiences, such as the youth, featuring diverse spoken content and music genres. (Kemppainen 2001; Papathanassopoulos 2001.)

Owing to market competition, both commercial and public broadcasters have adopted industrial quality management cultures, which influence their music selection and programming. Individual stations and DJs have less control over their content,

as centralised programming relies on audience research, risk minimisation, rotation clocks, and tested playlists. This focus favours content that aligns with the channel's brand and audience demographics. (see e.g. Ala-Fossi 2005.) In most European countries, commercial broadcasting is largely dominated by a small number of large groups that control the commercial radio and television sectors. Given that the majority of the largest commercial media are owned by a conglomerate with a set quality culture, fewer independent stations are employing diverse operational methods, leading to diminished content diversity, whether talk or music. (Jenkins 2006; Doyle 2002; Tomaz 2024.)

The concentration of ownership has raised questions about media pluralism and diversity. At the European decision-making level, the European Commission has emphasised that member states should support community media, which is non-commercial media created by local communities, as it fosters intercultural dialogue and media pluralism, and plays a positive role in social cohesion as part of civil society and democracy. (Council of Europe 2009; European Parliament 2018). Howley (2005) defines community media as grassroots initiatives that emerge from discontent with mainstream media. These efforts promote free expression, participatory democracy, and aim to strengthen community relations and solidarity. Howley describes this third type of media as a space for social communication within and between communities that also offers participatory democratic venues for expressing local identities, issues, and concerns, thereby challenging the dominance of mainstream media institutions. The European Parliament's (2008) resolution on Community Media recognised community media as a vital "third sector" alongside public service and commercial broadcasters, calling on member states to support these non-profit, participatory outlets with appropriate legal frameworks, funding, and digital access, highlighting their importance for marginalised groups and as training grounds for young people.

Still, community media across Europe face enduring structural and operational challenges. Chronic underfunding, difficulties in securing frequencies, and the heavy reliance on volunteers are key barriers limiting the sector's stability and growth. The 2022 Council of Europe report emphasises that the lack of formal recognition as a third sector within media systems further undermines its legal standing, while project-based and insecure funding continue to threaten its long-term sustainability. The contribution of volunteers, while central to the identity of community media, remains undervalued, with insufficient support for skills development and capacity building. Thus, despite the acknowledged role of community media in fostering diversity, inclusion, and democratic participation, policy and regulatory frameworks have yet to

address the structural weaknesses that leave the sector marginalised. (Peissl et al., 2022).

The media systems model, discussed in the previous chapter, can be used to examine differences in the current state of media across various countries. Initially formulated by Hallin and Mancini (2004) and subsequently refined and expanded by, for example, Brüggeman et al. (2014), the model provides a framework for understanding how political and economic systems influence the media, focusing on four key dimensions: the development of media markets, political parallelism (the extent to which media reflect political divisions), journalistic professionalism, and the state's role in media regulation and funding.

Within this framework, the United States, with its strong commercial radio sector and long-standing tradition of market-driven media, has often been seen as the archetype of the liberal model, characterised by limited state intervention, low political parallelism, and a relatively small public media sector (Hallin & Mancini 2004; 2017). College radio stations in the U.S. have thus emerged as an alternative, often non-commercial voice within a predominantly commercialised media landscape. In contrast, as the following chapter details, European student radio has developed within more diverse political, economic, and cultural contexts, with distinct and shifting media systems across different regions. For example, using Hallin & Mancini's (2004) original categories, in democratic corporatist countries such as Germany, Belgium, and Finland, student radio has evolved alongside strong public service broadcasting systems and educational institutions. In polarised-pluralist countries like Italy and Greece, student radio often emerged amid diversely politicised media environments and institutional challenges. The same applies to Central and Eastern European countries, which have experienced socialist regimes in the past. (Brüggeman 2014; Hallin & Mancini 2004; Castro-Herrero et al. 2017.) Research confirms that, in Europe, no single model fully captures the continent's complexity. As the following chapters will show, the contexts in which student-led media have developed vary from one region to another.

3.2 History of college radio

The history of student radio is most thoroughly documented in the United States, which arguably has the longest tradition of student-operated radio through college stations, dating back to the early 20th century. The Radio Act of 1912 allowed several universities to acquire transmission rights (Raymond 2016). According to Hugh

Slotten (2008), the recorded history of radio reflects the stories of the victors, where large commercial networks triumphed over smaller, non-commercial stations in the early phases of media development, thereby largely overlooking the narratives of university radio, many of which have been lost. Instead, broad histories tend to focus on the American system of commercial radio run by large networks as either inevitable or the best system available. In Europe, research on student radio stations is even more limited, and a comprehensive account of this type of media is absent, making it impossible to establish a conclusive roadmap for its development.

Slotten (2008) describes how the non-commercial commitment to public service shaped early American college-based radio stations, which were dedicated to disseminating research and uplifting local communities, particularly rural listeners, through innovative educational outreach. Many of these stations originated from the land-grant tradition, which encouraged universities to extend the latest scientific and technical knowledge beyond campus boundaries (APLU 2020). Faculty and extension officers embraced radio as a powerful tool to modernise agricultural practices, enhance home economics routines, and promote cultural enrichment for farming families, thereby expanding existing outreach through printed bulletins and in-person visits. (Slotten 2008.)

According to Slotten (2008), the earliest stations were often run by engineering professors and student enthusiasts who built their equipment and studios from the ground up, highlighting both the technical ingenuity and amateur nature that marked college broadcasting in the 1920s. This semi-amateur status helped keep costs low. Students volunteered or earned modest wages, gaining practical experience in technology and on-air announcing. However, the informality that fostered a sense of local authenticity sometimes drew criticism from listeners, who compared the homemade sound to the polished broadcasts of major commercial stations.

Despite occasional complaints regarding classical or semi-classical music schedules, universities emphasised cultural enrichment and educational discussions over populist entertainment. They tailored topics to local interests, such as weather updates, market reports, and lectures on agriculture or home economics. In doing so, they sought to introduce progressive ideas in agricultural management, household science, and the arts, emphasising listening clubs, correspondence discussions, and other participatory strategies that, although top-down in intention, were responsive to audience feedback. This method of broadcasting created, at least in principle, a more interactive relationship with listeners, allowing rural communities to exchange knowledge and feel connected to the colleges providing it. (Slotten 2008; Schnitker 2016.)

Slotten (2008) underscores that many of these stations represented a genuine alternative to the advertising-based model that would subsequently dominate American radio. As commercial outlets gravitated towards sponsored shows and national networks, college stations largely remained true to their non-commercial roots and localised mission. Their goals focused on fostering an informed citizenry, enhancing rural livelihoods, and nurturing an intellectual curiosity that might not thrive under profit-driven pressures. Wall (2007) has also noted the espoused public-interest goals, progressive agenda and cultural "uplift" endeavours of the early stations, which diminished over time as regulation and market pressures favoured profit-oriented stations. However, by the late 1920s and early 1930s, regulatory changes and the expansion of commercial radio increasingly marginalised smaller non-profit broadcasters. While most institutions confronted funding hurdles, those committed to extension education found inventive ways to persevere, insisting that the public-service ideal remained crucial to cultivating an engaged, modern audience. (Slotten 2008.)

Many campus stations embraced the counterculture, opposing mainstream for-profit stations' musical and programming repertoire during the 1960s and early 1970s. They harnessed student enthusiasm to provide airtime for political debate, underrepresented communities, and musically adventurous freeform playlists (Schnitker 2016; Wall 2007). Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, some stations became training grounds for journalists and industry professionals, while others led a new wave of music discovery. Notably, in the late 1970s and 1980s, college radio gained public recognition for helping to launch the careers of alternative and independent artists who struggled to secure airtime on more profit-driven channels (Schnitker 2016). Schnitker (2016) and Wall (2007) note, however, that this popular narrative, focusing solely on music, "college rock", oversimplifies a deeper tradition of experimentation, community engagement, and student-run broadcasting with roots stretching back much farther.

Indeed, American college radio stations have historically featured alternative or "indie" music programming, specifically contrasting their content and practices with those of larger, commercial broadcasters. Samuel Sauls (2000), the author of one of the most influential and cited works, The Culture of American College Radio, notes that college radio has traditionally served as an alternative to for-profit radio by offering greater diversity in music than mainstream media and utilising open-format programming. College radio stations have provided a platform through which independent bands and unknown acts can gain attention and build a fanbase, while

the stations have maintained their status as an “alternative”, unique in their offerings and unlike anything else available.

Rubin (2015), exploring the evolution of college radio from the 1960s onwards, identifies four key discourses often associated with college radio activities, intentions, and industrial functions: college stations expose artists who lack access to commercial airplay; support marginalised or alternative musical styles; favour independent labels while disregarding major labels; and sometimes endorse college radio before mainstream success. Rubin explains that the last point often reflects the dual relationship between college radio and major record labels, as the mainstream media frequently views success among college radio audiences as a stepping stone or a signal of potential for bands overlooked by commercial interests.

Wall (2007) illustrates that each station draws on its combination of freeform and format-based programming to forge an identity that diverges from mainstream commercial practices. While their diverse approaches highlight distinct interpretations of alternativeness (ranging from strict freeform to semi-professional schedules and playlists), all are united by a dedication to listener-focused programming, a musical repertoire not dominated by “hit” singles, and an ethos shaped by earlier concepts of education, community service, and a resistance to profit-driven formula radio. Curated music cultivates a sense of authenticity and being “alternative”. Additionally, there remain residual influences of the progressive mission and the uplift agenda of the early university stations and noncommercial broadcasting, reinterpreted through the sensibility of popular music rooted in the 1960s’ counterculture. (Wall 2007.)

3.3 Student radio in Europe

Examining the extensive history of student radio stations in Europe is a challenging endeavour that warrants dedicated research. Consequently, the following depiction of the early days of student radio predominantly draws from non-academic studies. It offers only fragments of the events that have shaped European student radio today.

Student-run radio stations have a unique European history, shaped by the continent’s changing political and social landscape. Unlike in North America, where college radio began in the 1920s, European universities did not fully adopt student broadcasting until much later, despite university students’ early involvement in developing and testing the new technology. For example, in Finland, students and engineering enthusiasts were pioneers in building equipment and creating content as early as the 1920s. This early involvement helped establish the Finnish Radio

Amateurs Union and later the Finnish Broadcasting Company, reflecting a national effort to use radio for educational and cultural development (Kemppainen 2016; Keskinen 2014). Nevertheless, students were recognised as changemakers capable of fostering cross-national connections through radio in the early days of European broadcasting. At a League of Nations conference in 1933, Arthur Burrows, the Secretary General of the International Broadcasters Union (IBU), urged students to use broadcasting to promote international understanding rather than nationalism. He saw students as vital voices in their home countries, encouraging a sense of global citizenship through radio (Lommers 2012). However, the practical realisation of student-led radio varied widely across Europe and was often not politically or financially supported. After World War II, most European countries maintained strict state monopolies over radio (e.g., Van Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). This meant that early efforts at student radio were often informal, underground, or limited to campus-only audio systems. Yet, from the 1950s onwards, as the political and cultural climate evolved, European students gradually found a place on the airwaves.

Europe's broadcasting landscape was tightly controlled in the early decades following World War II. In Western Europe, public broadcasters such as the BBC (UK), ORTF (France), and RAI (Italy) dominated the airwaves, leaving little space for independent voices. In Eastern Europe, communist regimes viewed radio as a state instrument, enforcing even stricter central control. Student radio initially appeared in minimal forms. (Doliwa 2015; Picard 2014; Kemppainen 2001.) For example, Poland's earliest student stations emerged in the early 1950s, operating solely as closed-circuit systems within university dormitories. These DIY networks were not officially recognised as part of public broadcasting, which gave students more freedom to discuss campus topics and play new music than was allowed by the state-controlled stations. With too many campus stations to monitor, Polish authorities granted them de facto concessions. (Doliwa 2015) Even under a repressive regime, university radio studios thus became small havens of free expression.

Meanwhile, early student broadcasting efforts in the West were often outside the law due to government restrictions. Resourceful students resorted to pirate transmissions in Britain, where the BBC's monopoly persisted into the 1960s. The first student radio station in the UK, Campus Radio Hatfield at the University of Hertfordshire, began in 1960 as an unlicensed pirate outlet. In 1967, Radio Heslington (currently University Radio York) became the country's first legal independent student station, broadcasting solely on campus. Over the next few years, other British universities, such as Swansea in 1968 and Stirling in 1970, followed suit, operating on tiny frequencies or carrier-current systems under strict

limits. (Wikipedia 2025b.) These early stations were small and experimental; yet, they demonstrated that students could successfully run their stations within stringent regulatory confines.

In Southern Europe, the trajectory of student radio was significantly shaped by authoritarian rule. In Spain, Franco's regime tightly controlled radio, ensuring that only state-approved voices could be heard. University radio emerged cautiously in the 1940s, with Radio Barcelona and Cadena SER featuring educational programmes. The first Spanish university radio station was established in 1972. It was not until 1987, following Spain's transition to democracy, that the first fully independent university radio station, Radio Universidad de La Laguna, was founded (Bonet & Arboledas 2011; Marta-Lazo & Mártin Pena 2014; Contreras-Pulido & Aguaded 2018).

The spark that ignited student radio stemmed from student activism. Across Europe, 1968 witnessed widespread campus protests, cultural upheaval, and calls for greater freedom, creating fertile ground for the emergence of independent media. In several countries, student radio stations emerged directly from the turmoil of 1968, serving as instruments of information and resistance. A landmark example is Radio Študent in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia (present-day Slovenia), which began broadcasting in May 1969 from a university dormitory basement, as one of the oldest community radio stations in Europe (Buckley 2011). Radio Študent operated outside the state radio network, making it the first student-run station in Europe to broadcast legally beyond campus confines. The state administration permitted this experiment, hoping that a student voice might quell youth unrest. However, the station swiftly evolved into a platform for debates and demands that were often overlooked by state media, providing an independent outlet for student expression. Throughout the 1970s, Radio Študent aired political content that public broadcasters would not entertain, fostering a diversity of opinions and greater freedom under the regime (Unearthing The Music 2020; Komankova 2023; Planšak 2010). This pioneering station exemplified the political power of student radio in an authoritarian system in the Eastern Bloc.

In Western Europe, student radio gained momentum in the late 1960s and 1970s, often intertwined with broader social movements. In France, the May 1968 student revolt in Paris underscored the need for alternatives to state media. Almost immediately afterwards, French universities witnessed the birth of campus radio. For instance, students at the University of Lille launched Radio Campus Lille in 1969 – an unofficial station that would become one of the first in France (Walfisz 2024; Ortíz Sobrino et al. 2014). A similar dynamic unfolded in Italy, where the economic boom and counterculture of the 1970s stimulated a proliferation of ‘free radios’. University

students and young activists were at the heart of this phenomenon. A notable case was Radio Alice in Bologna, a student-founded free radio station that began broadcasting in February 1976 using a repurposed military transmitter. Radio Alice became the voice of anti-establishment news, alternative music and art in an experimental format that rejected commercial venues and mainstream styles, despite alienating audiences accustomed to more traditional radio. Authorities shut it down after only a year, raiding the studio in March 1977, but by then, it had become a symbol of youthful resistance (Briziarelli 2016). In Italy, the involvement of politically active students played an essential role in the diverse group of thousands of small community or interest group stations, especially after the state broadcasting monopoly was abolished in 1976. For students, radio offered a tool for discussing political issues, promoting their ideas and culture, and communicating during demonstrations (Scifo 2007; Biagi 2019; Briziarelli 2016).

Even under dictatorships, students turned to the radio as a tool of dissent. During the military junta (1967–1974), university students built a station amidst protests in Greece. In November 1973, students occupied the Athens Polytechnic and established an impromptu radio transmitter on campus to broadcast live messages calling for an end to the dictatorship. Their pirate voice and revolutionary message were heard across Athens for several days. While the uprising was brutally suppressed, the junta fell the following year, with student activism hailed as a defining moment. (Walfisz 2024; Metallinos & Meimaris 1996.) These episodes underscore that by the early 1970s, radio had become an accessible tool for European student movements: a means to instantly reach thousands beyond state censorship.

By the end of the 1970s, student radio had established itself across various regions of Europe, albeit often unofficially. Whether broadcasting legally, semi-legally, or covertly, these stations were products of their political context and responses to external realities. In repressive societies, they expressed dissent; in open societies, they pushed the boundaries of youth culture. Students yearned for their voices on air and were making it a reality. For instance, Slovakia witnessed the emergence of student radio in the late 1970s and 1980s, with dormitory-based "Dormitory Radio Studios" serving as an alternative to state-controlled media. The transition from mono to stereo technology in national broadcasting enabled students to repurpose decommissioned state equipment to create their own stations (Bôtošova & Brnik 2023).

The 1980s marked a turning point that enabled student radio to shift away from the fringes towards official recognition. Several factors converged: government policy reforms, democratic transitions in Southern and Eastern Europe, and new

broadcasting technologies. In Western and Northern Europe, the early 1980s witnessed the dismantling of state radio monopolies that had long stifled independent stations. (e.g., Van Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). These changes fostered an environment where student stations could grow and operate openly rather than as pirates or exceptions.

In the Nordic countries, where state broadcasters long held a monopoly, the early 1980s saw policy shifts that enabled the emergence of local non-commercial radio. In Sweden, K103 at the University of Gothenburg began in 1979. It expanded throughout the 1980s, followed by Lund University's launch of Radio AF in 1982, which became Sweden's first student radio operated by a student union. (K103, 2025; Wikipedia 2025a). The first student station in Norway, Radio Nova (Oslo), commenced transmissions that same year, becoming Norway's first non-Christian, non-state local radio. Radio Nova and other student radio stations in Bergen and Trondheim later championed the cause of indie and alternative music by providing a student radio playlist. (Wikipedia 2025b.) In Finland, small, graduate engineer-driven campus-network radio experiments had already been occurring since the 1960s (Lindroos 2012). Still, the first official university-based and owned radio station, Yliopistoradio (now Radio Moreeni), started broadcasting from the University of Tampere in 1989 (Radio Moreeni 2025). However, it functioned more as a community radio station than as a student-run initiative.

Student radio stations emerged across Europe from the 1980s to the 1990s, spanning from Ireland to Portugal and from Switzerland to Spain (Wikipedia 2025a). In Prague, student dissidents involved in the pirate press and theatre quickly transitioned to radio. By 1990, they aided in the launch of Radio Student (later renamed Radio 1), which became one of the first independent stations in post-communist Czechoslovakia (Kománkova 2023). In Poland, many dormitory-based radio clubs and pirate stations suddenly had the opportunity to operate legitimately as the early 1990s allowed non-commercial and community-oriented stations to apply for legal status for the first time. However, as the Polish legislation did not recognise other than public and commercial radio, the licenses obtained meant that these stations were subject to the expectations and regulations of commercial stations, e.g., in selling advertisements. (Doliwa 2015; Doliwa & Dorociński 2022; Doliwa 2019).

The changes in the broader media landscape have had both positive and negative effects on European student radio. In Italy, most of the early-established stations failed to endure the commercialisation of the radio sector in the 1980s and 1990s, making it nearly impossible for students to participate in licensed radio broadcasting at a local level due to regulatory constraints. At the beginning of the 2000s, regulatory

reforms in the higher education sector motivated students to enhance universities' internal communication through radio. However, a significant barrier continued to obstruct broader university radio broadcasting. Regulators did not issue new licences, and there were no specific provisions for educational or student broadcasting. This situation, along with the high costs associated with acquiring a licensed frequency, has effectively limited new stations from commencing FM broadcasting. Some stations have managed to operate with restricted broadcasting hours on local radio stations, but the most common solution has been web radio (Baccarani et al. 2012; Scifo 2007; Biagi 2019). A similar transition to online has occurred in Spain, where student radio stations have emerged following relatively recent advancements in information and communication technologies. Growth has been rapid, as establishing a streaming station has become simpler and more affordable (Pena et al. 2012; Marta-Lazo & Mártin Pena 2014).

In Poland, contemporary student radio can be categorised into two groups: licensed and non-licensed, which includes online streaming radio. Significant differences exist in the organisational structures and social functions of these groups. Nevertheless, according to Doliwa (2015), student radio is one of the few media outlets in contemporary Poland that broadcasts spoken word programming and alternative music, promoting participation, dialogue, and marginalised voices. Similarly, in Slovakia, streaming student radio continues to provide a platform for learning technical skills, fostering creativity, and training future journalists by offering a safe space for experimentation and audience engagement (Bôtošova & Brnik 2023).

Studying the connection between community and student radio in the UK, Wilson David (2015) states that many university-based community radio stations initially started as student-run operations, organised and managed by student unions. Other university stations have been set up by academic staff to offer industry-level training for students with professional broadcasting ambitions. Student radio stations face difficulties in fulfilling Ofcom's FM licence requirements by providing enough content throughout the year, which can be especially challenging during holiday periods. Some student-led stations have opted for an easier solution by continuing with unlicensed online-only streaming (Harris & van Schooter 2019).

These historical events illustrate the varying circumstances from which and within which student radio stations have endeavoured to establish their purpose and models of engagement with the external world. In North America, where privatisation and a business orientation in radio have been present from the outset, the ethos has consistently been to counter the commercial model by focusing on music classified

as indie or alternative rather than adhering to the mainstream operational models of larger media outlets. History has unfolded differently in Europe, as state-controlled radio monopolies have left little room for independent stations and non-government-driven radio to emerge. In this context, student radio has carved a niche within the small remnants that remain unmonitored by the state, whether in dorm rooms or semi-legal makeshift studios, concentrating on issues and content that resonate with young people, such as music preferences or societal, anti-establishment themes. They have also opposed not only the mainstream but also the sole media available. Only later did student radio stations in Europe need to seek ways to counter the rapid growth of media privatisation. This ultimately led to another concentration of airwaves, albeit through large media conglomerates. Thus, in Europe, the space left for student radio has existed between commercial and public radio.

3.4 Dominant characteristics and roles

Although student radio stations have been part of the European media and university landscape for at least 70 years, there remains a lack of comprehensive research on the fundamental features of student radio from a European perspective. Consequently, the following overview of the predominant characteristics is primarily based on North American college radio literature.

Based on previous literature on student radio, the hallmark of this medium, frequently cited, is its alternative outlook. This encompasses everything from a non-mainstream music repertoire to organisational frameworks prioritising freedom over efficiency, rigid schedules, or predictable content (Wall 2007; Waits 2008; Wallace 2017; Fauteux 2015; Quicke 2024). Rubin (2015) has stated that “being alternative” is assumed in every study on college radio, rather than being the actual crux of inquiry. In Canada, campus radio transcends eclectic playlists to embrace decentralised management and volunteer-based practices that reinforce its alternative character, extending “being different” beyond content choices to organisational practices (Fauteux 2015). The notion of being “alternative” and a focus on independent music is also addressed in studies by Baker (2011), Raymond (2013), Nikolić (2016), Smallwood et al. (2018) and Quicke (2024). These studies also emphasise the significant role of music in college radio. This link can be well understood from the perspective of music's role in adolescence and youth cultures in general (Raymond 2013; Holbrook & Schindler 1989; Schramm 2006).

Nonconformity is not evident everywhere; Laor (2020) and Wilson David (2015) have demonstrated how some students may gravitate towards mainstream media, where they frequently adopt and emulate traditional broadcasting techniques and styles. This choice reflects a desire to conform to the established norms that dominate the industry.

Student radio also serves a pedagogical purpose. It functions as a training ground where novices learn through hands-on experience to produce shows, manage schedules, and experiment with all aspects of operating a media outlet. This grants them the autonomy to highlight underrepresented groups, student issues, and cultural phenomena often overlooked by mainstream media, frequently in real-time (Priestman 2002; Sauls 2000; Scifo 2007; Raymond 2013; Laor 2020; Baccarani et al. 2012). Student radio operates similarly to a problem-based learning model, where outcomes are open-ended, problems have multiple solutions, and students take charge of their learning while utilising available resources (Savin-Baden 2003; Hanney 2009; Laor 2019). This experience provides student managers with a valuable opportunity to identify and develop leadership skills (Hannam et al. 2019), such as negotiating through various challenges (Raymond 2013). Laor (2019) has found that participating in student radio fosters a sense of self-fulfilment, belonging, and intrinsic motivation, enabling students to assume various roles with a sense of authority and prestige, which cultivates their ambition for professionalism (Laor 2019). This educational aspect aligns neatly with broader academic goals, transforming each studio session into a lab where error and experimentation are essential for development.

Additionally, many stations emphasise community service. Canadian campus radio stations strive to establish a mandate that reflects a community focus and independence from contemporary commercial or mainstream cultural industries that 'treat music as a commodity,' paying attention to a diversity of local musical and cultural expressions (Fauteux 2015). In Europe, community commitment sometimes manifests in close similarities with or classification under community media, highlighting local issues or giving airtime to social groups often overlooked by commercial outlets (Scifo 2007; Coyer & Hintz 2010; Bôtošová & Brnik 2023; Wilson David 2015). Doliwa (2015) notes how Polish student stations have historically taken pride in representing voices neglected by the state-run media. In Spain, student radio similarly embodies the characteristics of non-commerciality and social purpose (Marta-Lazo & Mártin Pena 2014; Pérez-Alaejos et al. 2016).

Student radio can be viewed as a branch of community media, sharing essential principles with this broader category, such as a non-commercial focus, participatory

production, and giving a voice to groups often overlooked by mainstream channels (Cammaerts 2009; Scifo 2007). Similar to community radio, student stations prioritise inclusivity, education, and creativity, allowing participants to hone their skills and cultivate a sense of belonging. Wilkinson (2015) emphasises that community radio plays a crucial role in amplifying youth voices, offering young people a platform to express themselves, explore their identities, and assert agency in ways that traditional media seldom allows. This sentiment resonates deeply with student radio, which also creates spaces for informal learning, civic engagement, and cultural involvement.

However, a significant distinction lies in the way the academic calendar influences student radio: the constant influx and outflow of volunteers, as students graduate or move on in their studies, leads to high turnover. This presents challenges for maintaining continuity while simultaneously providing opportunities for fresh perspectives and innovations. In contrast to community radio, which typically serves geographically defined communities over extended periods, the identity of student radio is shaped by the enthusiastic but transient participation of diverse student cohorts. These aspects support the view that student radio is a unique yet related subset of community media.

Research on organisational practices in student radio is limited, but it suggests that a community focus, although prevalent in descriptions, is not always straightforward in practice. Raymond (2013) notes that the management of student-led college radio stations varies significantly, with decision-making often resting in the hands of a student management team rather than a single student manager or a faculty advisor. Significant differences exist between stations regarding audience or staff size, operating budgets, institutional support, management principles, and organisational goals and priorities (Raymond 2013; 2016). Wallace (2017) characterises this disparity among college radio stations in the USA. Some are smaller, intermittently broadcasting freeform stations with unclear organisational structures and low levels of ambition, primarily serving the personal enjoyment of the freeform DJs, with little or no interest in or engagement with external campus audiences. Conversely, some stations strive to maintain consistency and professionalism in their content. Conflicting ambitions between undergraduates, who view their station primarily as a training ground and social hub, and local community members, who focus more on extra-university outreach and professionalism, suggest a polarised or suboptimally functioning organisation (2015). Wilson David (2015) also observes such dynamics in the UK, illustrating how internal conflicts may arise when

the goals and preferences of university students do not align with the more community-oriented content of non-student members.

Despite being categorised as student radio, the literature indicates that stations differ significantly in terms of professionalism, reach, technology, size, university support, financial stability, and community involvement (Raymond, 2016; Wall, 2007; Freeman, 2022). Furthermore, although North American and European student stations possess attributes such as volunteerism, alternative content, and a focus on community, their developmental paths have diverged. Despite these contrasting backgrounds and varying degrees of development, the stations seem to articulate similar missions of fostering creativity, providing a voice to local communities, and training the next generation of professionals.

3.5 Student radio, challenges and organisational culture

A Delphi Study conducted in 2003 predicted that college radio stations would undergo several trends that would significantly influence how student-led radio would be organised and operated over the subsequent 15 years. These included the diminishing prestige of college radio and its advisors within college and university communities, a reduction in institutional financial support for college radio, an inevitable shift to digital production and transmission, substantial changes in the composition of students involved in college radio, and a continual reliance on locally produced alternative music and sports programming. (Tremblay 2003.) Nearly twenty years later, the accuracy of these predictions was examined in a study conducted by Freeman (2022), wherein he reviewed them in relation to a broader international body of literature on college and campus radio. Of the five trends, most were nearly accurate, although rapid technological changes that resulted in new ways of producing and consuming media content were entirely unforeseen.

The list of items that successful student radio stations must manage is far from easy. They should continually survey their environment and monitor the current zeitgeist to remain relevant to the student participants and their social circles. They must innovate new methods to engage with their networks, various subcultures, and “neo-tribe” of listeners. At the same time, the stations should recognise that audience fragmentation may lead to smaller numbers driving engagement while ensuring listener loyalty to authentic content. They must be flexible and adaptable to amplify the conversations that the community needs to have with itself. Lastly, they must

remain true to their original mission of bringing otherwise unheard voices on air. (Freeman 2022.)

Freeman (2022) concludes that “proper management is crucial to the successful operation of a campus radio station,” supporting Sauls’ (1997) earlier argument that views regarding the functioning of a student radio station are entirely dependent on the ideals upheld by the managers. As Raymond (2016) has noted, college radio stations are primarily managed by student teams who oversee daily operations, with assistance from a faculty advisor. These managers provide support and guidance on technical issues, equipment, discipline, and regulatory compliance. Often lacking previous management experience, such a burden for the station’s success seems substantial.

Adding to the challenge, student-run radio stations contend with financial, regulatory, and operational difficulties. Funding often relies on institutional support, student fees, or small grants, putting these stations at risk when universities face budget cuts (Sauls 1998; Raymond 2013; Tremblay 2003; Smallwood et al. 2018). Frequent licensing hurdles arise in countries where FM or AM frequencies are expensive or limited, forcing some stations to depend entirely on online streaming or share allocated airtime with local community broadcasters (Scifo 2007; Bôtošová & Brnik 2023; Doliwa 2015). Technological shifts further complicate the issue, as the digital landscape is oversaturated with podcasting and music streaming, increasing competition for listeners (Freeman 2022; Tremblay 2003). As students ultimately graduate or move on, the high turnover of volunteers adds another layer of instability (Wallace 2017; Raymond 2016). Sauls (1997) describes this turbulent environment:

> “To further the dilemma, natural academic attrition provides that a quarter of your staff will graduate yearly. Of course, this provides college radio with one of its unique features - they're all different and constantly changing. Thus, though, the challenge remains with the manager constantly dealing with a changing staff. Turnover - even in the middle of the semester - is guaranteed!”

According to Sauls (1997), stations must constantly explain or “educate” their audiences about their purpose, whether it is the university administration, faculty members, or the student body, who may not understand what the station is trying to accomplish.

These challenges, coupled with the fragmented nature of audience attention, require student stations to adapt and consistently reinforce their unique cultural value. In other words, these organisations must contend with two key aspects of a resilient organisational culture: internal integration and external adaptation, maintenance and locomotion (Schein 2004; Lewin 1935).

Although the literature reviewed on student radio rarely frames its findings through the lens of organisational culture theory, many accounts and descriptions provide significant entry points for interpreting the cultural dynamics of student radio stations, particularly when viewed through Edgar Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture. While the existing literature does not directly analyse student radio using this model, numerous observations can still be assessed in accordance with the theory. It is essential to emphasise that any interpretation of culture based on this model remains speculative when applied to sources that did not set out to explore student radio from an organisational culture perspective. What follows, then, is a hypothetical reading, an attempt to view previously published studies through a cultural lens to raise questions and highlight patterns that warrant closer empirical exploration, forming the backdrop for my evidence-based analysis of the organisational culture of European student radio.

At the most observable level of artifacts, student radio often reflects improvisation, creative autonomy, and resourcefulness. Several studies have noted the presence of self-built or repurposed broadcasting equipment, studio walls adorned with band posters, handwritten schedules, and music archives compiled from eclectic vinyl or digital files (e.g., Waits 2008; Doliwa 2015; Sauls 2000; Wallace 2017; Rubin 2015). These visual cues signal an ethos that values individuality, informality, and do-it-yourself (DIY) solutions, traits that contrast with the standardised aesthetics of commercial or public broadcasters. Such artifacts speak volumes about how the stations operate and present themselves to members and outsiders.

At the level of espoused values, some stations are presented as "learning laboratories," emphasising their commitment to student education and personal development (Priestman 2002; Sauls 2000; Laor 2019; Quicke 2024). Others define their purpose through a social or civic lens, highlighting the promotion of underrepresented voices and local issues over commercial appeal (Marta-Lazo & Mártin Pena 2014; Doliwa 2015; Coyer & Hintz 2010; Quicke 2024). A recurring emphasis is placed on independence from corporate and market influence, with the belief that passion and experimentation matter more than professional polish (Scifo 2007; Fauteux 2015). Mistakes on air are not framed as failures but rather as part of the learning process, central to the pedagogical ethos of student radio (Baccarani et al. 2012; Scifo 2007; Sauls 2000; Laor 2019).

In this environment, success is often defined not by audience size but by educational and cultural contributions (Wallace 2017; Briziarelli 2016; Bôtošová & Brnik 2023). Nevertheless, not all participants share an "alternative" approach; some prefer to mirror commercial broadcasting, aligning their practices with mainstream

industry standards (Wilson David 2015; Laor 2020). These tensions reveal that values can differ among members and subgroups within the same organisation, echoing critiques of Schein's model that caution against assuming uniformity across all members (Martin 2002).

Reviewing the existing research to uncover clues about the deepest level of organisational culture, the underlying assumptions present the most significant interpretive challenge, especially when relying on second-hand sources. These assumptions are typically unconscious, deeply held beliefs that guide behaviour without being overtly recognised and would require in-depth interviewing and ethnographic observations to be understood by a researcher (Schein 2004). Consequently, they are seldom directly addressed in the literature. Nevertheless, patterns identified across studies enable us to hypothesise their existence. For instance, a widely shared tolerance for high volunteer turnover may reflect an implicit belief that organisational identity is preserved through values and rituals rather than individual continuity. Likewise, the emphasis on autonomy and experimentation may indicate a foundational assumption that creativity and participation matter more than efficiency or professionalism.

The existing literature depicts organisations that often maintain a coherent set of values and practices, despite limited resources and fluctuating membership. This coherence may suggest a form of cultural resilience that enables stations to adapt to their environment without losing their core identity. However, it raises questions: Are these cultural traits consistent across countries and media systems? Do they evolve under different institutional constraints? Furthermore, are the deeply held beliefs of today's station managers shaped by the same assumptions as those of previous generations?

Framing the organisational dynamics of student radio through Schein's model, based on existing literature, does not provide definitive answers; however, it aids in structuring the hypotheses and the foundation of my research. It opens avenues for deeper inquiries into how student radio sustains itself culturally and what insights it may offer regarding creativity, autonomy, and group identity within evolving institutional landscapes.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Research questions

In this dissertation, I examine the organisational culture of European student radio stations, using Edgar Schein's layered model of culture as a guiding heuristic. My research seeks to understand the complex dynamics of these stations by analysing their cultural artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. I also take a comparative approach, investigating whether the cultural characteristics of these stations are shaped by their geographical or national origins, or whether they share similarities that cross borders.

The primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How is the organisational culture of European student radio stations conveyed through cultural artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions?

- This question addresses the core aim of the thesis: to provide a comprehensive depiction of student radio culture by analysing the three layers of culture as defined by Schein. It examines how visible elements, such as management practices and content choices, align with the stations' values and deeper, often unspoken, assumptions about their purpose and role in society.

2. To what extent do European student radio stations share a unified organisational culture, and in what ways do their cultures differ based on geographical or national contexts?

- This question adopts a comparative lens to explore the commonalities and differences among stations. It investigates whether shared principles and practices foster a cohesive cultural identity across Europe or whether cultural attributes are shaped more strongly by national, regional, or institutional factors. This includes analysing management styles, content priorities, and engagement strategies.

I address these questions through findings from my three peer-reviewed articles, each focusing on a specific layer of Schein's cultural model. The first article examines the visible artifacts of student radio stations, including operational structures and content strategies, employing quantitative cluster analysis. The second article investigates espoused values, utilising the Competing Values Framework to analyse

organisational priorities and cultural orientations. The third article explores underlying assumptions regarding identity, purpose, and mission through qualitative content analysis.

By synthesising insights from these original communications, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the organisational culture of European student radio stations. Additionally, I seek to contribute to the broader discourse on organisational culture by highlighting how unique and shared cultural attributes coexist within these dynamic, volatile, and volunteer-driven organisations. The perspective of this dissertation is both descriptive and interpretative. As this marks the first exploration of the organisational culture of European student radio, this stance offers a solid foundation for further research.

4.2 Research data

The data used in this dissertation consists of a combination of survey responses and thematic group interviews that focus on various aspects of organisational culture within European student radio stations. The survey data, collected in 2018 via the online platform Webropol, targeted station managers, faculty advisors, and editors—individuals in decision-making roles presumed to have a comprehensive understanding of their station's operations, values, and organisational practices.

Given the absence of a centralised register for student radio stations in Europe, a list of potential stations invited to respond to the survey was compiled from several online sources, including Wikipedia, Internet-radio.com, www-listenlive.eu, and Tunein.com. National student radio organisations in Sweden (SRS 2024), the UK (SRA 2024), France (RadioCampus 2024), Italy (RadUni 2024), and Spain (ARU 2024) provided lists of their members, which were used to gather station contact details. This search resulted in a list of over 260 European student radio stations. Those with digital contact details (e. g., a fill-in form or email address) received a cover letter explaining the research and inviting them to participate in the survey. Unfortunately, 30% of the emails failed to reach the respondents for various reasons, such as incorrect addresses on the website or the stations being no longer operational. Some stations lacked public contact details, a website, or information regarding their current status. Ultimately, the survey collected 90 responses from 21 countries, with 51 managers representing 46 stations in 19 countries forming the core dataset analysed. Although the dataset captures approximately 35% of possible responses, the number of unique stations reflected is lower, at 18% of the 260

identified stations, due to multiple respondents from specific organisations. The response rate is thus lower than the typical education-related online survey rate of 44%, despite efforts to remind the stations of the forthcoming research (Wu et al. 2022).

However, given the challenges in reaching potential respondents, with one-third of emails failing due to inactive addresses, the population size was likely smaller than 260. This indicates a possible undercoverage bias, a common issue when no central registry exists for the target group. Nonresponse bias is another concern, as those who chose to participate may systematically differ from those who did not. Such biases impact the generalisability of findings, particularly if participating stations share common characteristics that distinguish them from non-respondents (Dillman et al. 2014).

From a statistical perspective, a sample of 46 stations yields an estimated margin of error of ±12-14% at a 95% confidence level, assuming random sampling (Saunders et al. 2019). However, the risk of self-selection bias remains because respondents were not randomly chosen but rather self-selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. While the data provide insight into the organisational structures and practices of European student radio stations, it should be interpreted with caution when drawing conclusions about the sample studied.

The diversity of participating stations influences the external validity of the study. The dataset used covers 19 countries and reflects various geographical and cultural contexts. However, some countries with evidence of student radio, such as Switzerland, Denmark, and Hungary, are absent from the dataset. This uneven participation may skew results towards specific national contexts, particularly as Spanish stations appear overrepresented. This limitation reduces the ability to generalise findings across the European student radio landscape, rendering the study more suited for identifying trends and making comparative observations rather than drawing definitive inferences.

Despite these limitations, the sample remains highly valuable for exploratory and descriptive research. Given the lack of comprehensive studies on European student radio, the dataset provides a robust foundation for understanding organisational practices, decision-making structures, and the role of student radio in various contexts. As Yin (2018) suggests, capturing a broad cross-section in studies of niche populations is often more valuable than achieving strict statistical representativeness. Including in-depth qualitative interviews in one of the manuscripts further enriches the research by offering a more nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics within these organisations.

Qualitative thematic group interviews at three student radio stations in Finland, Austria, and Ireland complemented the quantitative survey findings by providing deeper insights into cultural assumptions and identity formation. These stations were chosen through my professional networks to represent diverse European contexts. The interviews involved station managers and active volunteers, offering a more nuanced understanding of how members perceive their station's core mission, relationships with external stakeholders, and internal group dynamics. Combining survey data with qualitative interviews yields comparative breadth and interpretative depth, facilitating the exploration of structural characteristics and underlying cultural beliefs within European student radio.

4.3 Research methods

In this chapter, I will briefly outline the research methods employed in the three peer-reviewed articles that form the basis of this thesis. Each method corresponds to the specific focus of the respective article on different levels of culture, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the organisational culture of European student radio stations. The methods used include cluster analysis, Competing Values Framework (CVF)-based sum variables, and qualitative content analysis.

Cluster analysis

In the first article, I employed cluster analysis to examine how student radio stations from various European countries group based on their organisational artifacts. This method helped to manage the complexity of the dataset. It explored whether distinct cultural configurations could be observed within the diverse organisational practices and choices surveyed among European student radio stations. Cluster analysis provided a structured perspective for assessing similarities and differences among organisational settings.

Cluster analysis is a statistical technique used to classify objects or cases into relatively homogeneous groups based on selected characteristics, without prior knowledge of group membership. As an exploratory method, it identifies patterns or structures in data that may not be immediately apparent (Vehkalahti & Everitt 2018). Its applications span various fields, from market segmentation to disease outbreaks, phylogenetics, and linguistic families. For instance, in market segmentation, businesses can categorise customers based on purchasing behaviour, and in

phylogenetics, cluster analysis assists in grouping organisms based on their common ancestor (Jaeger & Banks 2022). In this research, cluster analysis proves particularly useful for examining differences and similarities among student radio stations based on variables that reflect cultural attributes, choices, practices, or other cultural artifacts.

The central concept of cluster analysis is to maximise similarity within clusters while maximising dissimilarity between them. This is achieved by calculating the distance (or dissimilarity) between each pair of observations and applying a clustering algorithm to group the data. Various clustering methods are available, with hierarchical and partitioning techniques most commonly used. Hierarchical clustering constructs a tree-like structure (dendrogram) that illustrates how observations are progressively merged into clusters based on similarity. The quality of the calculated cluster solution is assessed using a silhouette plot, which helps differentiate clear-cut clusters from weaker ones, ultimately determining the most appropriate number of clusters. (Everitt et al. 2011.) In the article exploring student radio artifacts, the Two-Step Cluster Analysis algorithm with Schwarz's Bayesian clustering criterion, suitable for handling categorical data, was selected for cluster formation. The two-step procedure serves as an exploratory tool that reveals natural groupings within a dataset that are otherwise not apparent (IBM 2020; see Tkaczynski 2016).

One strength of cluster analysis is that it does not require predefined group labels or dependent variables, making it suitable for uncovering latent typologies. This is particularly beneficial in studies of organisational culture, where cultural patterns may emerge from the data rather than be imposed by the researcher. However, cluster analysis also necessitates careful methodological decisions, including the selection of appropriate variables, standardisation of data, choosing suitable measures, and validating the resulting clusters by confirming and analysing whether they align with the research focus. The selection of the number of clusters can also be subjective and may significantly influence the outcomes. Additionally, cluster analysis is sensitive to noise and outliers, which can distort the clustering results. Scalability is another concern, as some clustering algorithms may struggle with large datasets due to computational constraints. (Vehkalahti & Everitt 2018; Jaeger & Banks 2022.)

Recent methodological reviews (e.g., Jaeger & Banks 2022) emphasise the growing sophistication of clustering techniques and their incorporation into mixed-methods research. In cultural analysis, clustering can either support or challenge qualitative interpretations by demonstrating whether data-driven groupings correspond with theoretical expectations or emerging themes. This enhances the robustness of comparative or cross-national studies, especially when the research

context encompasses diverse organisational forms or practices, rendering it a valuable tool for analysing student radio stations across Europe. Furthermore, as the dataset used in the research comprised responses from 51 student radio managers, there were no issues with computational constraints.

Organisational culture assessment instrument (OCAI)

The second article explores the espoused values of student radio stations by utilising the Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), a widely used tool for assessing organisational culture, developed by Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn (2011). The OCAI analyses organisations along two dimensions: internal versus external focus and stability versus flexibility, based on the Competing Values Framework (CVF). The assessment requires participants to allocate points across six key cultural aspects: dominant characteristics, organisational leadership, employee management, organisational glue, strategic emphases, and criteria for success. (OCAI Online n.d.). The results, a cumulative variable calculated from the responses, highlight the organisation's dominant cultural profile: clan, adhocracy, market or hierarchy (Cameron & Quinn 2011).

In the original OCAI, respondents must allocate 100 points among four statements for each cultural dimension, assigning more points to the option that best represents the organisation (Cameron & Quinn 2011). For this research, I replaced the original OCAI instrument's ipsative scoring of 0 to 100 with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagreeing” to “strongly agreeing” with a given statement. This change allows for greater adaptability in future statistical analyses and is more respondent-friendly (e.g., Kalliath et al. 1999; Teräväinen et al. 2021; Heritage et al. 2014; Iarossi 2006). Furthermore, I left out the original statement concerning employee management to better reflect the volunteer-based organisational structure of student radio stations.

The reliability of the construct, which refers to the extent to which the individual dimensions consistently measure culture types, was assessed by conducting a Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. Despite its imperfections and potential misuse (e.g., selecting and re-selecting variables that yield the highest alpha score), as well as misinterpretation (Cho & Kim 2015; Sijtsma 2009), Cronbach's alpha evaluates the internal consistency of a test or scale. This means it assesses how well all the items in a scale measure the same concept or construct and the interconnectedness of the items within the scale (Tavakol & Dennick 2011). The closer the alpha coefficient is

to 1, the higher the internal consistency of the items in the scale. George and Mallery (2003) proposed the following cutoffs: values > .9 are considered excellent, > .8 good, > .7 acceptable, > .6 questionable, > .5 poor, and < .5 unacceptable. This evaluation adheres to the widely cited cutoff value of .7 from Nunnally (1978). However, as Cho & Kim (2015) caution, one should avoid applying a specific cutoff value mechanically or automatically to approve or reject any results without proper interpretation and careful consideration. Additionally, Nunnally (1967) suggested that values between .5 and .6 would be adequate for exploratory research.

Although not perfect, OCAI has been validated as an accurate measure of organisational culture across various contexts, from comparing businesses and public sector organisations (e.g., Balková & Jambal 2023) to analysing how value emphasis affects well-being in healthcare (D'Silva et al. 2024) and within sports team cultures (Choi et al. 2010). However, the model has also faced criticism. Jung et al. (2009) critique OCAI and all measurement tools that tend to typify organisational cultures, arguing that such an approach truncates cultural nuances and assigns value to different types of cultures. Hartnell et al. (2011) warn against overinterpreting results in organisational change efforts, which may lead to superficial interventions that overlook structural or historical influences. Despite its shortcomings, confirmatory factor analysis has demonstrated that OCAI effectively measures the four types of organisational culture it aims to reveal (Heritage et al. 2014).

Qualitative content analysis

The third article examines the fundamental assumptions underpinning student radio stations, illustrating the most profound aspect of organisational culture. This analysis draws on semi-structured interviews I conducted with station managers, student volunteers, and faculty advisors from three student radio stations: case studies in Austria, Finland, and Ireland.

I transcribed and analysed the interviews using qualitative content analysis (QCA), a common method for identifying recurring themes and uncovering implicit beliefs and assumptions. In simple terms, QCA is particularly well-suited for analyses that require interpretation to make sense of research data. This is somewhat self-evident, as data does not inherently convey meaning; recipients assign meaning based on their perceptions and backgrounds. This process involves integrating the interpreter's knowledge of a subject, the context in which the data is encountered, their emotions, and various other factors. Meaning is not predetermined but actively constructed through interpretation. For this process to be systematic rather than open to diverse

interpretations, QCA is guided and refined by specific research questions that limit the scope of interest. On one hand, this reduces the data; on the other, it makes conducting research feasible: qualitative data is often very rich, and failing to limit the inquiry's scope would render coherent analysis impossible. (Schreier 2012; Yin 2018)

QCA facilitates a systematic description of the meaning of qualitative material, such as interviews, by categorising content according to a coding framework. In this instance, my coding framework concentrated on the core assumptions regarding the station's purpose and the individuals within the organisation. This approach provides rich, context-specific insights into how stations perceive their mission, identity, and relationship with their broader environment, complementing the quantitative methods employed in the other articles (Mayring 2021). This interpretative nature ultimately relies on the subjective reflection of the interpreter, which has been the crux of the critique towards QCA as a research method (Schreier 2012).

4.4 Ethical considerations

Researching student radio stations, particularly those relying on external funding and volunteer efforts, presents distinct ethical challenges. Key concerns include the generalisability of results, the effects of participation on individuals and organisations, and the potential for unintended consequences on operations, such as future volunteer recruitment or funding stability.

A critical ethical issue arises from the limited scope of most studies, which typically involve a small sample of stations. This raises questions about the generalisability of the findings. To address this, I strive to be as transparent as possible regarding the scope and limitations of this research study. The findings ought to be contextualised rather than making broad claims to avoid overgeneralisation. As mentioned in the chapter on research data, the stations included may potentially represent only a subset of stations that could differ from one another within countries. Diverse methodologies, for instance, combining surveys with in-depth interviews, can enhance the validity of the conclusions (Silverman 2024; Bryman 2008). I have therefore explored the organisational culture by using quantitative survey data and in-depth group interviews, which has rendered the cross-interpretation of the findings more reliable.

Another important consideration is the potential for social desirability bias during interviews. Social desirability bias refers to the tendency of respondents to report traits and behaviours that are socially acceptable while denying those that are not

(e.g., Holtgraves 2004). Participants may have felt pressured to present their views positively, especially if they perceived me, the researcher, as an outsider whose findings could impact the station's reputation or funding. Options for anonymous participation, such as surveys, can help mitigate this bias (Patton 2015). In my interviews, I assure participants that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers and that every opinion and insight is valuable. I also remind them that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw mid-interview if they wish to do so for any reason.

Studying organisations can also unintentionally reveal internal challenges, exacerbating existing tensions and risks for both the organisation and the university. To address this, the research findings should be framed constructively, focusing on solutions and opportunities rather than merely identifying weaknesses. Emphasising strengths alongside areas for improvement can help maintain morale and ensure that findings are perceived positively, thereby not eliciting negative consequences for the respondents (Tracy 2010).

Drawing on my personal and professional background in student radio across Europe, I have cultivated professional relationships with some respondents, necessitating specific ethical considerations. This familiarity has shaped the research relationship and may have influenced the openness of their responses. Some respondents, being acquainted with me, may have felt more comfortable sharing sensitive information, while others might have been reluctant to offer critical perspectives to preserve our relationship. To address these challenges, I communicated my role and the study's purpose, ensuring that participants understood the distinction between our professional connections and the research context. I emphasised confidentiality and the participants' right to withdraw at any time, thereby reinforcing ethical integrity. To minimise bias, I avoided leading questions during interviews, refrained from making value-laden statements, and abstained from taking sides in discussions, ensuring an as unbiased interaction as possible. I have also engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process, critically reflecting on how my familiarity with participants might shape data collection, analysis, and interpretation. (Tracy 2010; Israel & Hay 2006.) This combination of proactive strategies and reflective practices has helped maintain scientific impartiality and ethical rigour.

Another concern is the potential impact of findings on volunteer recruitment. Emphasising issues such as high turnover or resource constraints may deter prospective volunteers. This issue can and has been partially addressed by highlighting the unique opportunities presented by student radio, such as skill

development, creative freedom, and community engagement. These insights have emerged from the research data and previous studies.

Furthermore, findings that expose vulnerabilities may damage a station's reputation or its funding relationships. Anonymising data and avoiding station-specific details where applicable in publications can help mitigate these risks. I have thoroughly checked and interpreted the research findings multiple times, carefully selecting language and phrasing that do not exaggerate potential conflicts or animosities between the stations and, for example, the institutions upon which they rely, nor overstate the positive aspects of student radio. This ensures that findings are understood within their proper context and do not inadvertently jeopardise the organisation's standing (Silverman 2024).

Ultimately, regular self-assessment and consultation with experienced research peers have helped address potential issues. As I have also been part of the student radio community, ongoing self-reflection has enabled me to identify any biases and attitudes towards the research subject, ensuring my impartiality and scientific rigour as a researcher. (Tracy 2010; Israel & Hay 2006.)

5 SUMMARY OF THE ORIGINAL ARTICLES

In this chapter, I will succinctly introduce the three articles (studies I-III) that I have authored. These articles examine the three layers of organisational culture within European student radio stations: organisational artifacts, espoused values, and core beliefs and assumptions. I will outline the research aims, methods, key findings, and conclusions before providing a synthesised summary of their results.

5.1 Organisational artifacts (study I)

This article examines the organisational artifacts of European student radio stations, focusing on the most visible and tangible elements of their organisational culture, as depicted in Edgar Schein's model. Based on data collected through a survey of 51 student radio managers representing 46 stations across 19 European countries in 2018, the analysis explores management structures, decision-making practices, content choices, and external competition. It also evaluates whether these stations exhibit convergence in their organisational artifacts or diverge along regional or national lines.

The study used a descriptive and comparative approach to analyse the organisational artifacts of student radio stations. I collected the data through an online survey aimed at station managers, faculty advisors, and editors. I chose these individuals as information sources because they possess a comprehensive understanding of their station's operations and decision-making processes. The survey examined various organisational attributes, including management practices, codes of conduct, content choices, and external competition.

I analysed the data using a two-step cluster analysis. This statistical technique grouped responses based on the variance within selected variables. The method assessed natural groupings within the data without predefining the number of clusters, employing the Silhouette measure to evaluate the cohesion and separation of the clusters. This approach facilitated the understanding of whether organisational artifacts clustered regionally or if other factors influenced divergence and convergence.

The analysis revealed several key insights into the organisational artifacts and structures of European student radio stations. These findings provide a nuanced understanding of how these stations operate and interact with their internal and external environments.

Systematicity in management

As previous writings (e.g., Wallace, 2017; Sauls, 2000; Raymond, 2016) on college radio suggest that student radio would be based on anything-goes or DIY policies, I focused significantly on evaluating the systematicity of station management, defined through variables such as the presence of a management structure, explicit strategy, performance standards, and quality monitoring. The results indicated that European student radio stations generally exhibit high systematicity. For instance, 75% of stations reported having a management structure, 63% had an explicit strategy, and 73% monitored the quality of their programming. Despite this overall trend, cluster analysis identified five distinct groupings, ranging from highly systematic to more ad hoc management styles. Interestingly, these clusters were not regionally bound, as stations from various countries were evenly distributed across the groups.

Rules of conduct

Explicit rules of conduct were another key artifact analysed. These rules reflect the efforts of station managers to regulate staff behaviour, both on-air and in organisational interactions. Over 82% of stations reported having formal rules of conduct, indicating a widespread emphasis on maintaining a professional and orderly environment. The cluster analysis revealed two groups: those with explicit rules and those without. Again, no regional patterns emerged, underscoring the diversity of European organisational approaches.

Content and purpose

The content produced by student radio stations and their stated purposes also revealed critical aspects of their organisational artifacts. Stations primarily emphasised education (71%) and entertainment (53%) as their main objectives, with smaller proportions focusing on public service (33%) or cultural content. Music played a significant role in programming, accounting for 40–79% of content in most stations. Individual DJs selected music in 49% of cases, while 28% relied on music directors.

These findings suggest a balance between creative freedom and structured oversight in content curation.

Audience engagement

The level of audience engagement varied significantly among stations. While 63% of managers reported tracking listener numbers, only 35% monitored audience demographics. This variation suggests that some stations prioritise internal operations over understanding their audience, reflecting a focus on educational or creative goals rather than audience-driven programming.

Comparative insights

The study investigated whether organisational artifacts clustered along regional or national lines. Contrary to expectations based on cultural typologies, such as those proposed by Hofstede (1984), geographical and national influences proved to be insignificant determinants of organisational artifacts. Cluster analyses revealed a mixed representation of countries within each group, suggesting a broader European convergence in organisational practices.

For example, competition was one dimension where notable variations occurred. While 39% of managers stated that their stations had no competitors, others identified commercial radio (35%) and individual podcasts (26%) as their primary competitors. Interestingly, Spanish stations frequently reported having no competition, potentially reflecting the high prevalence of podcasts in that country. Similarly, while student radio stations in the UK and Ireland often viewed podcasts as competitors, Scandinavian stations perceived commercial radio as their primary rival. These variations illustrate how specific local factors, such as media consumption trends, may influence perceptions of competition.

Conclusions

The analysis of artifacts provides insights into the operations and dynamics of European student radio stations at the most observable level of their organisational culture, addressing questions about their activities and communications. These stations exhibited a considerable degree of systematicity and professionalism, challenging the notion that volunteer-run organisations are inherently less structured. The widespread presence of codes of conduct and organised management practices

reflects an effort to uphold operational stability and professionalism, even amidst high turnover and limited resources.

While the cluster analyses indicated some divergence in practices, such as competition and content orientation, these differences were not closely tied to regional or national factors. Instead, the findings suggest a convergence among European student radio stations, potentially influenced by shared values within the academic and student mobility frameworks promoted across Europe.

The research highlighted the need for further exploration into the deeper layers of organisational culture, including values and assumptions. Understanding the motivations and beliefs that underpin these artifacts could provide a more comprehensive perspective on how student radio stations navigate their unique challenges and opportunities within the broader European media landscape.

5.2 Organisational espoused values (study II)

This study examines the espoused values of European student radio stations through Edgar Schein's model, serving as the intermediary layer of organisational culture. The research aims to identify the values that influence these stations' operations and their capacity to function effectively amidst turbulence. By employing the Competing Values Framework (CVF), the study categorises values into four culture types (Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy) based on survey data collected from 51 managers representing 46 student radio stations across 19 European countries.

The research draws on a 2018 survey that employed the Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). Unlike the traditional ipsative scoring method, the survey utilised a 5-point Likert scale, providing a more flexible and respondent-friendly approach. Respondents assessed statements associated with the four culture types across five dimensions: dominant characteristics, organisational leadership, organisational glue, strategic emphasis, and criteria for success.

Employing statistical analyses, including mean calculations and Cronbach's alpha reliability tests, the study established cultural profiles and visualised them within a CVF quadrant. This approach enabled both individual and aggregated assessments of cultural traits.

Fundamental values using the competing values framework

The study revealed that Clan culture is the most dominant organisational type among European student radio stations, with an overall mean score of 4.2 on the 5-point scale. This culture emphasises loyalty, mutual trust, and human development. High scores were particularly evident in dimensions such as organisational glue (mean 4.4) and strategic emphasis on human development (mean 4.4). These findings suggest a strong focus on fostering a sense of community and personal growth, aligning with the participatory and volunteer-driven nature of student radio.

The Adhocracy culture ranked second, with a mean score of 3.6. This type is characterised by innovation, flexibility, and a project-oriented structure, which aligns well with the transient nature of student radio, where participants and projects change with academic cycles. Notably, the dimension of strategic emphasis scored 4.1, reflecting a shared commitment to novelty and adaptability.

The Hierarchy culture, boasting a mean score of 3.4, exhibited an unexpected prominence in stations typically associated with creative and alternative media. This culture's emphasis on structure, control, and coordination may indicate a pragmatic response to the operational challenges posed by limited resources and high turnover among student staff.

Ultimately, the Market culture received the lowest score, with a mean of 2.4. Although competitiveness and goal orientation were less central, the relatively high standard deviation of these scores indicates significant variability across stations. Some stations displayed competitive traits, potentially influenced by external pressures or localised conditions.

Comparative findings and patterns in values across stations

The findings demonstrated substantial consistency in Clan and Adhocracy values across European student radio stations, reflecting shared goals of community-building and innovation. However, variations emerged in Hierarchy and Market cultures, suggesting localised influences and diverse management styles. For instance, stations with closer ties to university administration or regulatory frameworks appeared to exhibit higher hierarchical values, emphasising stability and accountability.

Interestingly, the study revealed that while Clan and Adhocracy cultures dominate, elements of Hierarchy and Market cultures coexist, illustrating the complex and multifaceted nature of student radio organisations. This balancing act reflects their need to maintain internal cohesion and external relevance in a constantly evolving environment.

Conclusions

The dominance of Clan and Adhocracy cultures highlights the role of student radio as a collaborative, flexible, and community-driven medium. However, the presence of Hierarchy and Market values reveals adaptive strategies that enable these stations to manage challenges related to volunteer management, limited funding, and institutional oversight. The study underscores the resilience and adaptability of European student radio organisations, showcasing their ability to balance competing cultural values to maintain operations and fulfil their mission.

Future research could investigate how these competing values influence managerial strategies, volunteer satisfaction, and long-term sustainability. Furthermore, qualitative studies may uncover the nuanced dynamics that quantitative approaches cannot fully capture, thereby deepening the understanding of organisational culture in student radio.

5.3 Organisational core assumptions (study III)

This study examines the fundamental assumptions underpinning the organisational culture of three European student radio stations: Radio Tutka (Finland), CCR 94.4 (Austria), and Flirt FM (Ireland). It specifically addresses the challenges of internal integration and external adaptation. These core assumptions represent the stations' collective identity and purpose, emphasising how they respond to external pressures while maintaining internal cohesion. Semi-structured interviews with station managers, staff, and volunteers were analysed using qualitative content analysis to uncover the foundational beliefs and principles.

The research utilises Schein's framework, focusing on internal integration (identity and group cohesion) and external adaptation (mission and role in the external environment). Interviews explored participants' perceptions of their station's culture, examining how shared assumptions influence interactions, decision-making, and organisational objectives. Content analysis was used to identify themes related to social identity, purpose, and adaptation strategies across the three stations.

Insights on mission and identity

Creativity, community engagement, and freedom of expression are central to the identity of all three stations. However, these concepts are articulated differently

according to local contexts: Radio Tutka emphasises its role as a learning environment for media students, fostering creativity and professionalism. While practical skill-building remains central, there is an aspirational aspect to positioning the station as a meaningful contributor to the media landscape. The station values autonomy and responsibility, encouraging members to take the initiative while upholding accountability.

CCR 94.4 highlights inclusivity and diversity, fostering a family-like atmosphere in which creativity thrives within a supportive framework. The station emphasises productive freedom, encouraging members to create content that aligns with its mission while enjoying substantial autonomy.

Flirt FM offers an alternative to mainstream media, celebrating individual expression within a collaborative and inclusive culture. Volunteers are encouraged to develop their unique voices, contributing to a vibrant and diverse programming mix that challenges traditional media norms.

Differences and commonalities in deep-seated assumptions

Despite their differing contexts, the stations share core beliefs that prioritise innovation, collaboration, and audience engagement:

1. Creativity

Creativity is a unifying value across all three stations, fostering an environment for experimentation and individuality. However, this value is tempered by a commitment to community norms, ensuring that creativity does not undermine group cohesion.

2. Community engagement and inclusivity

Each station views itself as a platform for underrepresented voices actively engaging with their communities. Radio Tutka seeks to connect with its university and local audience, CCR 94.4 integrates students and community members, and Flirt FM emphasises marginalised perspectives both within and beyond its academic setting.

3. Freedom of expression

All stations emphasise freedom of expression as a defining characteristic, allowing volunteers to create content that reflects their interests and passions. This value is

balanced by a collective understanding of the station's mission, ensuring alignment between individual contributions and organisational goals.

Although their manifestations may differ slightly, the overarching themes of creativity, community, and expression remain consistent. Radio Tutka emphasises professional growth alongside thought-provoking content. CCR 94.4 prioritises media diversity and inclusivity, offering a spontaneous alternative to structured media. Flirt FM embraces experimentation, celebrating content that is "the weirder, the better."

Conclusions

The study highlights a convergence of core values among European student radio stations, with creativity, inclusivity, and freedom of expression forming the foundation of their organisational culture. Nevertheless, local differences illustrate how each station tailors its mission to suit its specific environment. These shared yet divergent assumptions emphasise the resilience of student radio as a cultural entity capable of navigating external challenges while preserving its distinct identity.

The findings enhance our understanding of how deeply ingrained assumptions sustain organisational culture in dynamic, volunteer-driven environments. Future research could expand this comparative framework to encompass additional stations, investigating the historical and contextual factors that shape these core beliefs.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Organisational culture of European student radio (research question 1)

Understanding organisational culture – essentially, making sense of why people do what they do and say what they say – involves looking beyond surface-level practices to explore the interwoven layers that provide meaning and coherence to how members think, act, and relate to one another. Edgar Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture, which identifies surface-level artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions as nested levels of analysis, offers the framework for this exploration. When applied to European student radio, this tripartite lens not only aids in mapping the structure and surface features of these organisations but also facilitates a deeper interpretation of their internal logic, operational norms, and shared belief systems. Drawing on the three research articles presented in the previous chapter, each examining a distinct cultural layer, this chapter synthesises their findings to create a comprehensive picture of the organisational culture of European student radio.

This overall analysis addresses both core research questions of the thesis: What kind of organisational culture of European student radio is manifested through artifacts, values, and assumptions, and to what extent are these cultures unified or divergent across European contexts? Analysing the three articles as a whole reveals how deeply held core beliefs and assumptions influence the artifacts and how the espoused values mediate between the two layers.

At a superficial level, the exploration of artifacts, the visible manifestations of culture such as organisational structures, practices, and content choices, reveals student radio as an environment shaped by improvisation, creativity, and a notable degree of systematicity. As discussed in the first article, many European student radio stations have clearly defined management structures, performance standards, and rules of conduct. These include explicit policies for staff behaviour and mechanisms to monitor programming quality - features that mirror the "way things are done here," a phrase often used to describe how artifacts reflect deeper cultural patterns (Schein 2004). For instance, 80% of stations reported the existence of formal rules of conduct,

and most apply at least some form of strategy or goal-setting. Rather than existing as a freeform laissez-faire environment where no one intervenes in anything one wishes to do, these artifacts reflect a conscious desire for order and professionalism, suggesting that these volunteer-based organisations are not merely informal or chaotic but strive to balance autonomy with operational reliability. This aligns with Ogbonna and Harris's (1998) suggestion that culture is the glue that holds organisations together, particularly in contexts such as voluntarism-based student radio where contracts or financial incentives are absent.

The day-to-day operations of student radio reflect cultural artifacts rooted in specific functional choices. For instance, some stations empower individual DJs to select music freely, while others employ a music director to curate content or utilise rotation software. These decisions are not only operational but also symbolic. When DJs are granted complete autonomy, the station signifies a value placed on personal expression and trust. In contrast, when content is centralised or scheduled, coherence and professionalism may be prioritised. These practices directly correspond to Schein's model, as the artifact layer displays the visible outputs of invisible norms and beliefs. It is essential for decoding how an organisation maintains its identity and direction. As Trice and Beyer (1984) note, even the most mundane or habitual practices, like playlist design or studio décor, can carry meaning, reinforcing what a group values and how it understands itself. Each artifact acquires and holds a symbolic significance that exposes more fundamental cultural levels (Parsons 1952; Murphy 2024; Hatch 1993).

These visible elements connect directly to the espoused values examined in the second article, which elucidate their purpose. Across the stations studied, a shared set of values emerges, particularly in regard to autonomy, inclusivity, education, and participation. Many stations explicitly describe themselves as platforms for learning-by-doing or as alternatives to mainstream commercial media. Schein (2004) cautions that espoused values do not always reflect the fundamental drivers of behaviour unless underlying assumptions and congruent artifacts support them. They may be mere rationalisations or aspirations of how things should be (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024). Viewed through the interconnected cultural layers, these value statements are not merely rhetorical “slogans” or catchphrases in the context of the European student radio stations that were researched. Instead, they are embodied in the organisational choices previously discussed. The commitment to a decentralised structure, participatory governance, acceptance of imperfection, and programming diversity indicate that these values are enacted, not just declared. Consistency between espoused values and organisational practice signifies cultural

coherence, a sign of a strong culture (Schein 2012; Weinberg & Gould 2007). In a figure of speech, student radio stations really seem to put their money where their mouth is.

For example, the emphasis on experimentation and failure as valid learning experiences, a value stated by many respondents in the third article and reiterated across numerous previous studies (Sauls 2000; Wall 2007; Raymond 2016; Fauteux 2015; Scifo 2007; Laor 2019), mirrors the tolerance for on-air mistakes and the willingness to let novices lead programmes. In contrast to commercial stations, where minimising errors is more critical (e.g., Ala-Fossi 2005), student radio often regards trial and error as central to its identity, which embraces human messiness. This aligns with educational values. Schein's (2004) observation is that cultural learning occurs when solutions to recurring problems become embedded in routines. Although seemingly counterintuitive, when viewed through the lens of values and core beliefs, the absence of audience tracking in many stations begins to make sense. It points to a set of values that prioritise process over performance or intrinsic over extrinsic measures of success. Here, the value lies not in scale or in pleasing the masses but in authenticity, echoing the ethos of alternative media, where success is judged not by reach but by representation, participation and eccentricity (e.g., Wall 2007; Rubin 2015; Coyer & Hintz 2010; Briziarelli 2016). Being deeply concerned with audience demographics and composition may be seen as a sign of adopting mainstream measures that conflict with the core value of challenging the listener and educating the audience, rather than merely satisfying their cravings, just what “the others” in the media landscape are perceived of doing. As Van Bavel & Packer (2021) and Brewer (1991) have pointed out, the lines between us and them are crucial elements of group belonging and identity.

These values are based on deeper assumptions discussed in the third article. Although these assumptions are seldom articulated, they significantly influence the stations' decisions and priorities, as well as the artifacts, and espoused beliefs. Interviews revealed that active radio participants often felt that student radio's primary purpose was to serve as a platform for student development and amplify the voices of underrepresented groups rather than as a competitive media outlet. This belief underpins the values of autonomy and inclusivity, elucidating the flexible and, at times, informal practices observed in the artifact layer. While these practices may result in less predictability, they provide a more human touch, characterised by surprises, bloopers, unplanned randomness and, as futurist Douglas Rushkoff (2019) would describe, the messiness of human interaction that the modern data-driven market logic aims to eradicate to make us more predictable as consumers. This

organisational value connects to the student radio's core mission of being the "authentic", organic alternative to such a process.

Similarly, the belief that radio should act as a safe space for creativity rather than a tool for institutional branding influences the types of content aired, the level of oversight, and the tolerance for deviation. These assumptions reflect what Schein (2004) and Hofstede et al. (2010; Hofstede 1984) refer to as taken-for-granted truths and cognitive maps that shape members' perceptions of what is proper, natural, or necessary. As Alvesson (2016) has observed, these assumptions are often among the most stable elements of culture, lasting even through periods of change or leadership transition, especially if they are deeply embedded in the socially constructed organisational identity shared by members (Hogg & Terry 2000; Schein 2004).

An intriguing and intense dynamic exists between the listener and the student radio station. Unlike more mainstream media, the lack of focus on monitoring who (and often how many) listens to the station creates the impression of indifference, as if the station were only for insiders. At the same time, the outside world seems to matter little. This idea is sometimes reflected in previous studies that focus on surface-level practices and choices of college radio stations (Wallace 2017; Raymond 2013; 2016). Initially, the profile of clan culture supports this view, with the main aim being internal coherence, stability, and community permanence (Cameron & Quinn 2011). Since every organisation needs some external focus to adapt to environmental changes for survival and success (Harris & Ogbonna 2011; Schein 2004), such an approach does not appear reasonable or feasible for a media organisation. These artifacts make sense when examined through the lens of core assumptions. A key assumption that emerges across the interviews is that radio should be a relational and transformative medium, challenging listeners rather than merely entertaining them. The goal is to produce content that demands full attention, invites reflection, and involves the audience in dialogue and active thought. Therefore, while the stations seem indifferent to the crowds, they are eager to connect with the individual listener.

This ethos differs from the background noise model of radio, where passive listening is common, aiming to attract as many listeners as possible with content that is easy to digest, focusing on current, commercially successful hit songs, and avoiding irritation. Rather than soothing or pleasing the audience, student radio seeks to provoke, question, and engage, as one of the interviewees in the third article states: "In short, we make good radio when someone stops and really listens to what we are saying."

This assumption intriguingly links back to the early ideals of broadcasting in Europe and North America, where radio was regarded as a tool for enlightenment, civic engagement, and social uplift (Slotten 2008; Wall 2007; Doliwa 2015; Picard 2014; Kemppainen 2001). The belief that radio can elevate the level of discourse, tolerance for difference, and participation reflects a moral dimension to student radio's identity, suggesting that these stations do not merely function as media outlets but also as educational and cultural institutions with a mission, directly influencing their external adaptation and internal integration (Schein 2004), both in the diversity of content, the expected behaviours and ultimately the ideal members they wish to attract.

This core belief, or internalised mission (Schein 2004), manifests in prioritising authenticity and depth, emphasising the full spectrum of diverse experiences and audience engagement. For instance, stations explicitly highlight shows and schedules that do not fit into neat categories or a constant stream of predictable content. These values, in turn, shape tangible artifacts, such as focusing on "the weirder the better" content that symbolises creative independence, rather than just hit music, granting individual DJs the freedom (and the expectation) to express themselves instead of sticking to a fixed format. This also translates into practices that promote the DIY spirit, where new volunteers are encouraged to learn the technical aspects of broadcasting, explore their voice, and engage meaningfully with their audience.

These artifacts also connect to questions regarding internal integration, particularly concerning who the (ideal) individuals making the radio are and which type of members are most appreciated. In the third article, the respondents value an open-door policy that allows anyone to join the station and pursue their interests, signalling a strong sense of openness and welcome. However, there is a caveat: while individuals within groups strive for inclusion, they may also engage in exclusion (Brewer 1991; Pickett & Brewer 2001; Van Bavel & Packer 2021). Although everyone can participate, certain attributes are valued more highly. The freedom and airtime provided should be used purposefully, enabling individuals to discover and express their unique voices without imitating the celebrities who have already established themselves in mainstream venues. Simultaneously, everyone is expected to contribute, benefit the radio community, and take the initiative. Being entrepreneurial and creative is highly esteemed, as these qualities are directly related to the deeply held belief that the station serves as an active and inventive alternative – again echoing the early days of radio with resourceful students building equipment and taking matters into their own hands (e.g., Briziarelli 2016; Slotten 2008; Doliwa 2015;

Walfisz 2024). Aligning with the clan culture, anyone acting against the community by, for example, being excessively self-centred or neglecting their responsibilities undermines the norm of reciprocity and organisational citizenship behaviours (Organ et al., 2006), which are essential for organisational permanence in a volatile environment. Such instances may lead to potential conflict. These behaviours do not arise from external incentives but from a profound internalisation of group membership and purpose (Greco et al. 2022; Schein 2012). In an environment characterised by constant change, where resources are scarce, these deeply held values and assumptions are vital for the organisation's survival and resilience, reinforcing stringent normative expectations and, in some cases, even hierarchical structures and other advantageous artifacts that help maintain effectiveness while defending these core beliefs, thus supporting Gelfand's (2018) notion of domains of tightness within loose cultures, which often reveal the most significant values.

These core assumptions help explain the variations observed between stations in the first two studies, particularly in the layers of artifacts and espoused values. For instance, while some stations operate with high levels of systematicity and hierarchical organisation, others are more anarchic or peer-managed. These differences may reflect situational constraints and divergent beliefs about what constitutes effective leadership, meaningful learning, or valid content. In other words, although many values seem to be shared, the assumptions underpinning them are sometimes plural and localised, aligning with Schein's (2004) argument that different environments foster different solutions to the same problems (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024; Hofstede et al. 2010). This also relates to Martin's (2002) insight that culture is not always integrated but can exhibit differentiation or fragmentation depending on context. A degree of hierarchy and control may become relevant in defending the deeply held beliefs regarding the station's purpose and its members' expectations for desirable behaviour. The interview responses of active student radio members and managers in the third study about management and conflict resolution highlight the delicate balance between encouraging individuals to fulfil their roles willingly while also allowing them the creative freedom and autonomy that keeps them engaged with the station, not out of external rewards or fear of punishment, but from internalising the shared values and mutual benefit (Enjolras 2009).

6.2 Unified or divergent culture(s) (research question 2)?

Based on our findings so far, is it justifiable to speak of European student radio culture? A relatively consistent cultural pattern emerges when considered across all three levels. Despite their differing national contexts, European student radio stations share a recognisable ethos: decentralised governance, a commitment to education, elevating and alternative content, and a culture of learning through experimentation for both members and listeners. This convergence suggests the existence of a shared student radio identity across Europe, driven not merely by national culture but by common structural conditions such as volunteerism, limited resources, and the educational mission of higher education institutions. The findings indicate that while Hofstede et al. (2010) and media system models (e.g., Hallin & Mancini 2004; Brüggeman et al. 2014; Büchel et al. 2016) predict cultural divergence along national borders, European student radio presents a more nuanced picture where similarities outweigh the differences.

The first article's cluster analysis shows that stations do not neatly follow national boundaries. Instead, cultural divergence appears in more subtle operational choices, such as levels of systematicity or public service orientation. However, these do not break the wider cultural coherence. This supports the view of Kaasa and Minkov (2020), who argue that while convergence happens in some value dimensions globally, divergence remains in others, depending on the context.

The framework of cultural tightness and looseness introduced by Gelfand (2018) further enriches this interpretation. While student radio cultures generally exhibit looseness in their openness to diversity, flexibility in rules, and high tolerance for ambiguity, many also display tightness in specific domains. For instance, artifacts such as rules of conduct, structured schedules, or curated playlists suggest islands of tightness amidst a broader loose culture. This mix may reflect a survival strategy: in environments marked by limited funding, institutional scrutiny, and high volunteer turnover, some degree of rule enforcement and predictability becomes essential. Schein (2004) notes that organisational resilience often depends on a culture's ability to adapt to external demands while maintaining internal integration, a challenge that student radio stations address by selectively blending tight and loose norms. As mentioned earlier, domains that are closely tied to an organisation's identity (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004; Van Bavel & Packer, 2021; Brewer, 1991) face questions of “who we are” and “what is our purpose,” which are accompanied by higher normative expectations. The cognitive map guiding behaviour embodies a strong ethos of being the enlightening and invigorating alternative to passive one-way media, alongside

expectations for an entrepreneurial spirit, taking initiative, being resourceful, and not adhering to the norms of the mainstream.

The cultural layers analysed reveal a distinct organisational identity, reflecting a sense of "who we are" and "who we are not," crafted and upheld through cultural practices. As Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Turner et al. (1979) have argued, social identity is rooted in individuals' psychological attachment to their group. Within the context of European student radio, this identity seems to be shaped by a shared commitment to non-commercial values, creative freedom, and informal learning. Student radio volunteers are not just broadcasters; they are part of a cultural initiative that positions itself against professionalised, commercial media, which many interviewees in the third study find dull, passive, and uniform, serving as easy-listening background. The recurring focus on "doing things differently," "providing space for unheard voices," and embracing trial-and-error approaches all underscore a self-image founded on authenticity, autonomy, and inclusion. This aims to connect with the individual on the other end, awakening them from passive consumption and fostering a reflective, engaged relationship. This sense of mission is shared in the stories and future ambitions expressed by the respondents in the third study, highlighting the legacy of their station.

This identity also clarifies what student radio is not. It does not aim to imitate commercial media practices, chase ratings or profit, or compete with similar outlets. Instead, it opposes standardisation, welcomes experimentation, and remains proudly imperfect despite the potential loss of large audiences, all while nurturing future media professionals. Organisational identity is shaped through stories of distinctiveness, heritage, and continuity, which stem from the assumptions and values shared by European student radio actors. For them, student radio is primarily an autonomous, value-driven community of practice focused on producing meaningful, participatory, and transformative media with a place and a future within the media landscape. Their identity extends beyond broadcasting to include facilitating thoughtful dialogue, providing a platform for marginalised voices, and stewarding an alternative media space that values authenticity over popularity and reach. Their core identity is not defined by audience size, commercial success, or technical perfection but by a collective commitment to active listening, creative freedom, critical engagement, and social reflection. Even when stations adopt some professional practices for strategic or educational reasons, they are usually justified by the station's broader mission rather than seen as ends in themselves. The shared identity also has a practical aspect: a strong ethos enhances motivation, loyalty, and

a sense of belonging, especially in voluntary organisations where formal incentives are limited (Van Bavel & Packer 2021; Van Vugt & Hart 2004; Enjolras 2009).

Further supporting this view, the findings align with optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991), which suggests that individuals aim to balance belonging and uniqueness. European student radio stations offer an ideal environment. On one side, they provide a community - a shared culture - where members can find inclusion, purpose, and identity. On the other side, they enable differentiation: personal expression through individual programmes, experimentation with formats, and even internal debates about professionalism versus freeform creativity. These dual drives towards integration and distinction help explain why the cultures of the stations are cohesive and appealing to new members.

The student radio station's alternative stance provides elements for differentiation within the broader media landscape. Based on the interviews and survey data, members of the student radio draw boundaries between 'us' and 'them', distinguishing their ethos from commercial, institutionalised, or overly controlled, faceless media environments with varying crowd-luring agendas. This maintenance of boundaries reinforces a shared identity and provides what Pickett and Brewer (2001) describe as self-referential meaning through contrast. Whether defined by a rejection of top-down editorial control, informal social norms that value authenticity, or a scepticism of metrics like audience size, these contrasts help members understand their place within the broader media landscape (Hogg 2000).

This also explains why certain organisational artifacts identified in these three studies and discussed in previous research (e.g., Wall 2007; Fauteux 2015; Rubin 2015), such as improvised studios, DIY branding, alternative music, and decentralised programming, are more than mere practical choices. They become symbolic affirmations of distinctiveness, reinforcing the group's creative, autonomous, and grassroots-oriented identity. At the same time, many stations' rules of conduct, mentoring practices, and dedication to quality control reflect the need for cohesion and a shared sense of purpose, essential components for belonging. Ashforth and Mael (1989), Enjolras (2009), Hogg (2000), and Schein (2004) argue that such identification boosts individual and organisational performance by aligning personal meaning with group objectives. For student radio resilience, this is crucial.

Thus, the organisational identity of European student radio, as revealed across all three cultural layers, embodies an optimal distinctiveness: embracing communal values and institutional belonging while fiercely guarding its cultural uniqueness and creative freedom, along with a sense of purpose as a haven for humane voice aiming for "cultural uplift". This balance likely contributes to the stations' resilience, appeal

to volunteers, and capacity to sustain operations amid fluctuating resources. By navigating between the poles of conformity and innovation, structure and spontaneity, student radio carves out a distinct organisational niche, neither entirely professional nor purely amateur, but something proudly in between. This hybrid identity enables these stations to meet both the internal needs of integration and external adaptation through the core cultural fabric that defines who they are and who they are not.

The organisational culture of European student radio stations appears as a cohesive yet dynamic interplay among artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions that support the idea of being relatively unified across the continent, with slight variations. These layers collectively foster an environment of creativity, community, and adaptability, ensuring the stations' resilience despite challenges such as high turnover and limited resources. Understanding the interdependencies within Schein’s model highlights how the visible and invisible aspects of culture support and sometimes challenge each other, offering a roadmap for maintaining and developing these vibrant organisations.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this dissertation, I have examined the organisational culture of European student radio stations through Edgar Schein's layered theory (2004), analysing artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. The findings, based on survey data from 51 student radio managers representing 46 stations across 19 countries and qualitative group interviews with station representatives from three different nations, offer new empirical insights into a long-neglected area of radio research. In this concluding chapter, I will summarise the main findings by aligning them with the broader literature on student radio discussed earlier, while reflecting on their relevance to the theoretical discussions surrounding organisational culture. I will also briefly consider the practical implications of this work and potential directions for future research.

7.1 Main findings and previous literature

The organisational culture of European student radio appears as a layered and adaptable system. At the artifact level, stations display both creativity and structure. Their main aim is to educate, entertain, and act as a social community, although a public service element is also recognised. Many see no competition, which enhances their focus on internal integration and the ingroup. Competing with no one, or with mainstream media in general, underscores the station's perceived role as something more than "just another radio station", positioning itself outside the norm. These empirical findings reinforce and confirm previous literature on the key attributes of student radio (Priestman 2002; Sauls 2000; Scifo 2007; Fauteux 2015). While many practices, freeform content choices, and a disregard for who and how many listeners there are reflect a DIY spirit and autonomy, the stations also operate within various formal rules, scheduled programmes, and management structures that ensure continuity and reliability, indicating that a degree of systemic hierarchy also restricts the freedom of station members.

When examining the value orientations at the mid-level of espoused values, the internal orientation becomes even more evident, as the stations predominantly

express a commitment to shared values, common goals, collectivity, empowerment, and human development; namely, clan culture, which emerges through a relatively long shared history and close interactions among members (Cameron & Quinn 2011). The stations are also firmly oriented towards adhocracy culture, characteristic of a more temporary institution that disbands when its job is completed and rebuilds rapidly when new goals emerge. This type is typical of many creative fields but also connects to learning, inclusivity, and non-commerciality, further reinforcing the internal orientation. These values align with collaborative and decentralised modes of operation, supporting the image of radio as a learning laboratory - a perspective echoed in earlier studies of college radio in the US as well as in Europe (Priestman 2002; Sauls 2000; Laor 2019; Scifo 2007). Importantly, these values are not merely rhetorical or aspirational "ideal states" of the organisation (Schein 2004). They manifest as artifacts in the student-led decision-making processes, autonomous and alternative content priorities, and educational and social purposes.

There are exceptions as well. While accommodating mistakes and fostering a learning environment where creativity can flourish, my research also reveals the presence of strictness and normative control within European student radio. In contrast to clan cultures that focus internally on maintaining the group, adhocracy is more oriented towards the external world and differentiation, embracing novelty while inviting change and diversity. In this context, the surprising presence of hierarchy, with clear organisational structures, standardised rules and procedures, strict control, and well-defined responsibilities, fosters a sense of stability and order that may balance these two extremes. As Cameron and Quinn (2011) have pointed out, cultural values emerge as a continuum, with various attributes present simultaneously (see also Martin 2002; Schein 2004), linking back to the theory of tight and loose cultures (Gelfand 2018), which explains that within normatively loose cultures, there are still areas of tightness. Regarding artifacts and espoused values, European student radio thus emerges as a mixed space of creative freedom and organisational boundaries.

As Schein (2004) has suggested, these findings only provide a basis for speculation unless examined through the lens of core assumptions, the deep-rooted and often unconscious beliefs that emerge as espoused values and manifest in behavioural choices. Only then can we understand why such organisational values exist and why things are done as they are.

At the level of underlying assumptions, the thesis reveals a shared belief that the station's primary audience is not merely external but also internal; producing radio holds intrinsic value, regardless of audience size or commercial success. It further

identifies that the organisation should prioritise authenticity over the polished, saleable compromises offered by mainstream media (see Ala-Fossi 2005). Central to their identity is the aim to be an open platform for all, giving voice to individuals and social or cultural phenomena that might otherwise go unheard. This again supports previous findings on student radio (Sauls 2000; Priestman 2002; Doliwa 2015; Wall 2007; Raymond 2016; Fauteux 2015; Scifo 2007; Coyer & Hintz 2010). Perhaps most intriguingly, the stations interviewed see themselves as having a broader mission to educate not only those involved in radio but also their audiences, offering a cultural uplift that requires conscious effort from the listener to genuinely appreciate and connect with both the content and the sender, harking back to the early days of 20th-century radio (Wall 2007), which the members are likely unaware of. Their mission, values, and content serve almost as a homage to Radio Alice (Briziarelli 2016) of the 1970s: the stations strive for experimentation while rejecting the commercial and mainstream polish, even when it alienates larger audiences.

Nevertheless, this core belief instils a strong identity in the station that clarifies how it adapts to its external environment, positioning it within the broader media landscape. As one interviewee in the third article stated, “The media landscape needs us. We are a big part of media diversity.”

This core assumption helps in understanding the value orientations of prioritising the ingroup while simultaneously championing novelty, creativity, and diversity, both in content and among the individuals involved. As the essence of the European student radio organisation’s identity is to be self-driven, innovative, and an inclusive alternative that aims to engage its listeners, it necessitates certain types of individuals with specific mindsets (Hofstede et al. 2010). As Schein (2004) and van der Berg and Wilderom (2004) have noted, to keep the organisation functioning, its members must respect, adapt to, and commit to its culture. This issue of internal integration leads us to the second finding concerning the individuals engaged in student radio. The third article results present a prototype (Hogg & Terry 2000) of the most valued student radio member: entrepreneurial, self-driven, creative, open to diversity, caring for others, and someone who goes the extra mile to ensure that the venue provides a space to express a unique voice, contributing to the station’s alternative ethos. Gelfand (2018) explained that tight norms often reveal the most deeply held values. In European student radio stations, these norms manifest when one of the prototypical attributes supporting the core identity and mission is under threat. If a member fails to contribute, prioritises individual interests over the community, or wishes to replicate mainstream media, it poses a risk not only to resources but also to the organisation’s fundamental purpose. To address this threat, European student

radio stations demonstrate value orientations towards hierarchy, which lead to organisational behaviours and other artifacts that ensure accountability and adherence to the station's ethos while fostering the freedom inherent in these creative, experiential, and educational organisations. In environments where volatility is high and resources are often limited, strong identification (and conformity) become essential for survival, success, and continuity (Gelfand 2018; Gelfand et al. 2006). This finding supports the idea that in organisations where members share values of trust, open communication, collaboration, and mutual support, and where community orientation outweighs competition, the transfer of tacit knowledge ("the way things are done here") to new members is facilitated (Busch et al. 2004; Borges 2012).

A strong group and organisational identity boosts motivation, performance, loyalty, and the willingness to act in the group's interest (Van Vugt & Hart 2004; Van Bavel & Packer 2021). As Brewer (1991) explains, individuals need both inclusion and exclusion, requiring to differentiate "us" from "not-us." Group membership, therefore, must provide enough differentiation to create self-referential meaning through contrast with others (Pickett & Brewer 2001; Van Bavel & Packer 2021). The fundamental beliefs of student radio stations regarding their identity and purpose effectively use their core identity for both internal cohesion and external adaptation. As Schein (2004) states, culture consists of a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has developed while facing its external and internal challenges. These assumptions lead to values and artifacts, such as norms of organisational behaviour. Such mental models and meanings are passed on to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and solve problems, and to understand the world around them and the organisation's role within it.

Observing the interconnectedness of the three levels reinforces the idea that organisational culture acts as a compass and anchor for student radio stations navigating uncertainty and resilience. It is the glue that holds the organisation together. As The Smiths, one of the bands first heard on student radio, sing, "There is a Light that Never Goes Out". To its members, student radio is that light, a beacon with a legacy and mission to be the messy, yet humane voice, enlightening the community both internally and externally. Such shared belief is pivotal to organisational resilience and permanence.

Neuroscientist Dean Burnett (2018) explains that, at the level of neurochemicals, human happiness occurs at the intersection of experienced novelty and predictability. True happiness lies in the balance between familiarity and surprise. If something is too familiar, it often becomes dull and offers no stimulation, whereas excessive unpredictability causes fear and anxiety. Similarly, student radio organisations strive

for the sweet spot between chaos and structure, where individual creativity can flourish within the organisation's mental boundaries. Too much randomness could cause the group to disband, while overly strict rules might alienate volunteers.

On a spectrum of tightness versus looseness in cultures, European student radio stations exemplify looseness at their core, flourishing through experimentation, innovation, and challenging conventional approaches to radio. They are inclusive and value openness. As Michelle Gelfand (2018) has explained, being tight or loose is often specific to a particular domain. There are tight norms within loose cultures that are linked to and reveal their most cherished values. Based on my research on student radio stations, these domains centre around a community focus (clan culture, in contrast to individual gains and market culture), entrepreneurial attitudes, organisational citizenship behaviours, and the balance between novelty and mainstream. Social identity theory suggests that identification with a group is stronger when the group's prestige and distinctiveness are pronounced (Brewer 1991; Pickett & Brewer 2011). This identification fosters pro-social and organisational citizenship behaviours that are vital for the station's success and longevity. Identity stems from core values, beliefs, and assumptions about the nature of the world and the organisation's purpose. When contradictory behaviours undermine this purpose, they trigger defence mechanisms and invoke norms that protect the deeply held core, such as the tight norms that come into play.

The findings align with many insights from North American college radio research, especially its focus on alternative content, creative freedom, and decentralised organisation (Fauteux 2015; Wall 2007; Rubin 2015). However, notable differences are evident. The European stations examined here emphasise formal management practices, rules, quality control, and strategic planning, indicating a more hybridised grassroots and structured governance model. Unlike the almost mythologised narrative of US college radio as solely freeform and rebellious, European stations appear to aim for credibility, accountability, and continuity through systematic methods. Of course, this comparison remains highly hypothetical, as no similar studies have been conducted on American college radio, apart from the somewhat related work of Raymond (2013; 2016) and Sauls (2000; 1997), which date back over a decade.

This study also expands the predominantly US-focused literature on student radio by offering a comprehensive cross-national analysis that examines student radio from a European perspective. Previous research rarely extends beyond national case studies or anecdotal accounts (Raymond 2013; Wall 2007; Sauls 2000; Doliwa 2015; Laor 2019; Wilson David 2015). The current work, drawing on empirical data from 19

countries, uncovers cultural convergence, shared assumptions about education, participation, non-commercialism, and cultural divergence, especially in management approaches and views on competition, which are not easily explained by national or regional borders.

7.2 Theoretical and practical implications

The investigation into the organisational culture of European student radio began with a personal encounter and expanded into a broader academic inquiry. This thesis contributes to research on organisational culture by demonstrating how student radio, a voluntary, resource-limited, and transient form of media, sustains a coherent and functional culture. This contrasts with certain assumptions in mainstream organisational theory that link a strong culture to professional stability or managerial control (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024; Martin 2002). The student radio model suggests that organisational cohesion can develop without centralised authority, instead being upheld through shared values, meaningful rituals, and identity markers, such as internalised purpose.

It also supports Michelle Gelfand's (2018) work on tight and loose cultures, confirming that even within the loosest cultures, there are pockets of tightness. Student radio reflects cultural looseness, demonstrating a tolerance for experimentation, improvisation, and deviation from mainstream norms. However, strict norms in key areas, such as shared values, responsibility, and volunteer expectations, restrict this looseness. These dynamics help balance autonomy with coherence.

Finally, the thesis supports the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991), illustrating how European student radio balances integration and differentiation. Volunteers see their stations as centres of belonging and as platforms for distinctiveness, creativity, anti-commercialism, and proud niche identity. These findings also connect with Ashforth and Mael's (1989) work on organisational identity: when identity is clear and aligned with values and behaviours, it boosts motivation and resilience.

Reflecting on the numerous scholars, experts, and management gurus who suggest that management expertise and leadership skills are crucial for successful organisations, and that managing culture is a complex, demanding task requiring a wide range of skills and knowledge that only the best leaders can acquire through experience and by adopting various tools, methods, and solutions (e.g., Price &

Chahal 2006; Worley & Mohrman 2014), the findings of this thesis seem contradictory. Student radio stations operate in volatile circumstances with fluctuating resources, constantly changing staff, varying skill levels, and ongoing scrutiny, all of which generate unique organisational challenges. Yet, these stations are run by non-professional, inexperienced students who manage to cultivate resilience and oversee daily operations. Enjolras's (2009) framework offers a valuable perspective for understanding managerial demands in voluntary settings. It indicates that success depends less on technical and organisational expertise and more on creating participatory, trustworthy environments rooted in shared purpose and reciprocal engagement. This insight is particularly relevant for student radio, where formal management experience may be absent, but strong values, peer accountability, and democratic governance can uphold organisational health and influence. In this way, managing a student radio is not about managing change but about maintaining the culture. As Busch et al. (2004) and Borges (2012) have noted, transferring tacit knowledge (in other words, culture) is easier in organisations that excel in trust, transparency, collaboration, and peer support.

An important question arises: Is this process of culture-building and maintaining intentional? According to scholars and experts, maintaining and managing organisational culture demands significant intentional effort, experience, and leadership expertise (Schein 2004; Alvesson & Sveningsson 2024). Student radio management is rarely, if ever, in the hands of qualified, experienced management professionals (Raymond 2013; Sauls 1997; Freeman 2022). Instead, organisations are run by students and volunteers who enact and enforce organisational choices, principles, norms, and practices that align with what empirical research has confirmed as vital for successful organisational cultures. Does this suggest that management expertise is overrated and that even a student can accomplish it?

The question may need to be reframed. What if, instead of intentional choices by managers, the prevailing organisational culture unconsciously guides managers and other members towards citizenship behaviours and actions that reinforce the culture's resilience? If the culture governs its members in European student radio stations, where does it originate?

The analysis of my dissertation findings affirms the power of organisational culture as a force that unites individuals and provides the group with meaning and a shared mental framework to sustain itself over time, even amid staff turnover. However, it does not clarify why and how this cultural composition of artifacts, espoused values, and core assumptions develops in European student radio stations. This dilemma necessitates an evolutionary perspective on organisational culture. As Alvesson and

Sveningsson (2024) have argued, organisational culture evolves through everyday interactions, informal adaptations, and changing interpretations of norms, not solely through deliberate actions.

My work also demonstrates that, despite slight differences, student radio stations across Europe share numerous similar artifacts, values, and a fundamental sense of identity. This allows us to assert that a European student radio culture exists, one that closely resembles the American college radio culture.

Finally, this thesis demonstrates the utility of Edgar Schein's layered theory as a valuable tool for examining, explaining, and understanding organisational cultures in various contexts. This study employs it to explore European student radio stations for the first time, enhancing the understanding of cultural artifacts and espoused values while uncovering the deeply held core assumptions.

On a practical level, this dissertation offers insights for those considering whether to support their local student radio station, including university administrators and student unions. Although student radio is seen as an alternative to more established, standardised, and rule-bound mainstream media and often contrasts with the constrained university environment in which it operates, its core aims are notably similar. Martin and Siehl (1983) identified three categories of subcultures within larger organisations. Countercultures embody values that directly oppose the dominant organisational values. The second type, orthogonal subcultures, accept the core values while promoting different values that do not threaten the existing ones. Lastly, enhancing subcultures support and reinforce the organisation's core values. When considered within a wider media landscape and societal context, the primary purpose of student radio stations, encouraging audience engagement, active reflection, and the promotion of culture through challenging, “alternative” content, positions them as enhancing subcultures. This is akin to universities that aim to educate and equip students and society with knowledge and lifelong learning skills that foster active citizenship. Student radio thus functions as an engaging, self-motivated organisation that bolsters broader university goals through grassroots participation, requiring minimal administrative oversight.

The findings and conclusions presented here highlight the need for further research into student radio. Firstly, from a structural viewpoint, I have not examined how the legal status and licences of a station affect its culture, nor how station ownership might influence its daily operations and expectations. Secondly, there are cultural artefacts that remain unexplored. For example, the selection process of the editor(s) and key staff are artifacts that mirror broader values and assumptions about power and participation. Thirdly, how cohesive are the organisational cultures of

student radio stations? Are there tensions between different subgroups within stations, between station management and other staff, or between station goals and academic expectations? These are potential areas for future investigation.

Finally, younger audiences from Generation Z onwards are replacing radio with more interactive and personalised content. Podcast consumption is steadily increasing among young people, whose media preferences are characterised by flexibility, an on-demand nature, and alignment with their digital habits (e.g., Galán-Arribas et al., 2022; Laor & Galily, 2022). Podcasts have also gained popularity among the general public and have quickly become the new normal rather than a niche medium (Tobin & Gualango, 2022; Götting, 2023). This trend influences not only the listeners but also the creators of student radio, for whom podcasts are a significant part of their daily routines. Twenty years ago, media scholar Richard Berry (2006) asked, “Will the iPod Kill the Radio Star?”, referring to the rise of podcasts. This question is perhaps more relevant now than ever before, as new generations of students interested in media balance their motivation and preferences between live radio and podcasts.

7.3 Limitations

This research has several important limitations that restrict the generalisation of the findings. Firstly, the research data reflects only a snapshot of the vast European student radio landscape. As explained in the previous chapters, creating a comprehensive database of student radio stations across Europe has proven impossible, since there are no European or national statistics, and some stations listed appear to exist only on paper. As detailed in the chapter on research data, I identified 260 stations during the initial investigation into online sources. I received responses from 46 stations across 19 countries, which is only a small part of the overall phenomenon. This indicates a potential under-coverage bias, a common issue that arises when no central registry exists for the target group. Nonresponse bias is another concern, as respondents may systematically differ from non-respondents. Such biases limit the ability to generalise the findings, especially if participating stations share particular characteristics that distinguish them from non-respondents (Dillman et al. 2014). Future research could improve the reliability of results by increasing the sample size through better outreach strategies, conducting follow-up analyses to evaluate nonresponse bias, and using more mixed-method approaches to combine qualitative insights with larger-scale quantitative data.

Although the sample size does not allow for strong inferential statistical conclusions, it still provides a valuable descriptive dataset that significantly contributes to the study of European student radio, especially considering that no such project has been conducted before.

Following this critique, a qualitative analysis of deep-seated assumptions in three student radio organisations across three countries offers a somewhat limited basis for inferring meanings and understanding the organisational practices, choices, and other artifacts, alongside the espoused values encountered when examining the outer layers of organisational culture. Interpretation is always the result of the cognitive effort of the analyst, which may differ from one context to another (Tavory 2020). Furthermore, as Van Bavel and Packer (2021) have explained, we embody multiple identities that arise depending on our context. A student radio researcher interacts with the interviewees as active student radio representatives. This inevitably influences their responses, which might have varied if they had been speaking to a radio peer complaining about poor microphone quality. They may hold various identities even within the radio setting, as any organisation can contain subcultures with differing values and beliefs (see Wilson David 2015; Laor 2020; Martin 2002; Waits 2008).

Second, the data for this thesis were collected from 2018 to 2022, which restricts the potential for longitudinal analysis. Organisational culture is a dynamic system continually in flux. It is characterised by the ongoing mixing, mutation, retention, and reshaping of its elements, influenced by how the organisation adapts to its external environment (Weeks & Galunic 2003). Therefore, describing an organisation's culture through a limited temporal perspective can provide only a restricted view. Focusing on a snapshot of culture at a specific time may lead to a biased interpretation of an organisation, revealing only its current state without understanding the reasons behind it. Zheng et al. (2009) remind us that, for example, examining an organisation during its startup phase often results in a completely different perception of its culture compared to an assessment after ten years. Cultural evaluations often overlook the organisation’s history, including influences from both micro-level internal interactions and macro-level changes within its operational environment and society. During each phase, the organisation faces different challenges, from the startup phase, which involves inspiring newcomers and transmitting the original core assumptions and values of the founders, to the growth stage, where values are embodied in tangible forms and symbolic artifacts, the maturity stage, involving the negotiation of meanings and values, and finally the revival stage, which transforms old values and meanings into new ones (Zheng et al. 2009). According to Zheng et al. (2009),

organisations operating in turbulent external environments experience more phases of inspiration and transformation, as seen during the startup and revival stages. Evaluating the impacts of these changes during the organisation's evolution would provide a more nuanced understanding of how the culture has been altered in European student radio. It would also reduce the impact of survivorship bias, which often results from focusing solely on successful and long-standing stations (Brown et al. 2006).

Thirdly, the inferences drawn from the quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews condense, summarise, and generalise findings across countries. Schein (2004) has suggested that exploring the culture of a given organisation in depth by examining its artifacts, investigating its espoused values, and engaging intensively in the organisation’s day-to-day life would produce a more nuanced, complete, and multi-faceted impression of its organisational culture. Methodologically, this involves surveying the station, exploring its cultural artifacts and values, and enriching perception through ethnographic observation and member interviews. Although comprehensive, this approach is practically unfeasible for anyone wishing to investigate and explain European student radio without the opportunity to dedicate significant time and resources to travel across countries, examining one station at a time.

Scholars exploring organisational cultures have observed that peeling away one layer only reveals numerous concealed dimensions, demonstrating the ubiquitous nature of culture and subcultures that may never be fully understood (Schein 2004; Ogbonna & Wilkinson 2003; Ogbonna & Harris 2015; Martin 2002). Therefore, this research should be regarded as merely scratching the surface of a phenomenon with many aspects yet to be uncovered. I hope that this exploration will inspire and encourage future research. It is also impartial, as it does not assert that the organisational culture of student radio stations is necessarily good or bad, and it may lead to behaviours that could be interpreted in either way (Umphress et al. 2010; Campbell & Göritz 2014). My research indicates that it is sufficiently robust to support even the earliest ambitions of radio and student radio as media.

The perspective presented in this dissertation is neither all-encompassing nor does it claim to be; however, it provides a starting point for further inquiries into student radio and the cultures of voluntary organisations in unstable conditions. Consequently, it calls upon the research community across disciplines to fulfil its duty to challenge, critique, attempt to replicate, and build upon the work initiated by this dissertation.

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Organizational artefacts in European student radio: Exploring the organizational culture of student radio in Europe

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Organizational artefacts in European student radio: Exploring the organizational culture of student radio in Europe

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Abstract

Organizational culture manifests in core beliefs, values and cultural artefacts. This study examines the organizational artefacts, for example, management practices, stance with the outside world, and content choices of European student radio stations, based on survey data gathered from radio managers in 19 countries. Student radio stations are non-commercial media outlets connected to higher education institutes, at least partly managed and operated by students. Previous research on organizational culture and media systems are heuristics for this study in examining whether European student radio stations cluster regionally based on the observed cultural artefacts or whether they show convergence. In contrast to these studies, findings suggest that the region of the station does not determine its cultural artefacts. The studied stations give freedom of choice to individual station members and lean towards alternative content but are also systematic in their management. If any, mainstream media and podcasts are seen as competition.

Keywords

Student radio, organizational cultures, cluster analysis, Europe, cultural artefacts, sociology

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Introduction

The terms used to refer to student-run radio differs geographically. 'Student radio' applies in UK and Scandinavia (SRA, 2019; SRS, 2019). In France and Canada, 'campus radio' is standard (NCRA/ANREC, 2022; RadioCampus, 2019). In Southern Europe, the term 'university radio' (ARU, 2016; RadUni, 2019) is used, and in the US, it is known as 'college radio' (Collegeradio.org, 2022). In this research, 'student radio' generally refers to either streaming or broadcasting radio station that is at least partly student-managed and with content mainly produced by students from or connected to a particular institute of higher education.

The US student radio has a long history, where 'college radio' is subsidized within the public education system. Students were part of the early days of radio in Europe as well. In many countries, following the American model has been curbed by a lack of external subsidies or more restrictive licensing (Priestman, 2001: 22). In the US, college radio has constituted an alternative to commercial radio with a drive for more diversity of music and open-format programming, distinguishing it from the mainstream. It has trained students for a future in broadcasting in a learn-by-doing platform, allowing mistakes and experimentation (Sauls, 2000: 103; 168). In Europe, student radio has also been a hands-on training ground for future professionals in media, providing students with opportunities to explore new formats and activities otherwise out of their reach. It emphasizes alternative music and underrepresented social groups whose issues do not otherwise surpass the threshold of publicity. Some stations focus more on the latter than media and journalism education (Scifo, 2007: 233–234, 237; see also IJIE Consortium, 2014). In Canada, the 'alternativeness' has extended into relationships with the community, internal policies and organizational practices (Fauteux, 2015: 150–187). Being led by students without previous management experience is challenging for student radio stations. They also face the loss of personnel due to annual graduation, leading to a current demand to recruit replacements and a yearly variation of skill levels, personal characteristics and leadership potential (Raymond, 2016: 204).

Sometimes student radio stations are categorized or self-identify (e.g., Cammaerts, 2009; CSRFM, 2020; Limu Radio, 2019; Demon FM, 2020) as 'community radio', which have been characterized by Coyer and Hintz (2010) as having (1) ownership and control in the hands of self-organized and independent citizens' groups and non-profits, (2) access to non-professional media makers, (3) transparent and open decision making, favouring collective structures, (4) skill-sharing, individual and collective empowerment and capacity-building, as training is essential both for continuity and personal development of volunteers and (5) a voice for cultures not represented in the mainstream media.

Organizational culture

Culture is a system of meanings that includes norms and conduct rules that form distinct ways of being (Gregory, 1983: 364). Culture is a shared and implicit understanding of a group's (e.g., organization's) accepted and desired behaviours (Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983).

According to Schein (2004), culture combines values, beliefs, ideologies and organizational policies. In his well-known 'onion model', an organization's culture is a layered structure in which different tiers affect each other. At the often-subconscious core are basic assumptions about, for example, human nature and relationships. These assumptions affect the mid-layer, consisting of espoused values expressed in the organization. At the top are the artefacts that embody the deeper, implicit layers of organizational thought. Artefacts are the most easily viewed, heard and felt characteristics of an organization and at the highest consciousness level, and they can sometimes steer people's behaviours and attitudes (Adam and Galinsky, 2012; Schein, 2004: 25–27). The artefacts are thus the manifestations of the underlying assumptions (e.g., Irwin and St-Pierre 2014). They can be intangible notions, such as names (Glynn and Marquis, 2013) and contracts (Kaghan and Lounsbury, 2013), or tangible, like inanimate objects (Yanov, 2016). Artefacts such as symbols, heroes, rituals and organizational practices reflect its core values (Hofstede et al., 2010: 22–23). Artefacts in a student radio context may include parlance, clothing and outside appearance, organizational structures, set rules, musical choices, technical facilities and members' behaviours. Artefacts are also the explicit mission or other proclamations of an organization's primary purpose, hanging on a studio wall, stated on its website or in the vocabulary of a station manager. To keep the organization operational, its members must respect and adjust to its culture, promoting crucial commitment and internal integration (Schein 2004: 112–120). For a student radio, this can manifest in spending one's spare time doing radio instead of other activities and communities.

Past experiences on what practices produce desirable results establish these as 'our way' of doing things, obliging new members to comply (Schein, 2004: 70–84). A radio station's explicit artefacts, such as management structure, operational practices, production processes and selected content, represent how the station reacts and interact with the outside world.

Region as a taxonomy

Organizational cultures can reflect the broader cultural customs, values, beliefs and actions witnessed nationally and may manifest on a group and individual level. The Hofstede model examines the influence of national culture on an organizational level. It identifies six value dimensions: (1) Power Distance (the different solutions to the fundamental problem of human inequality); (2) Uncertainty Avoidance (the stress level in a society when facing an unknown future); (3) Individualism versus Collectivism (the integration of individuals into primary groups); (4) Masculinity versus Femininity (the division of emotional roles between women and men); (5) Long Term versus Short Term Orientation (people's focused efforts towards the future or the present and past); and (6) Indulgence versus Restraint (the gratification versus control of desires related to enjoying life) (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede et al., 2010; Minkov, 2007).

Hofstede et al. (2010) assume that each society has distinctive integrative forces, mental patterns of thinking, feeling and acting learned through life experiences. The highest level of power distance and uncertainty avoidance are found in Eastern and

Southern Europe and the lowest in Scandinavia and North-Western Europe. These attributes, in turn, influence organizational decision-making and structures and what are seen as the normal ways of acting and solving problems (19; 35–36; 319–353).

The model has been criticized for oversimplifying many facets of cultures (Venaik and Brewer, 2013). Cultural typologies should not be taken as exhaustive taxonomies but as adaptive models that can partly explain why different cultures impact organizational practices, management structures and goals (Hofstede et al., 2010: 315–323). Culture can impact how, for example, media practices and journalistic roles have evolved and how they can differ from one country to another (see, e.g., Hanusch 2009: 621–622).

The media systems model offers another taxonomy emphasizing regional differences. Initially developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) and later refined by further studies (e.g., Büchel et al., 2016; Brüggeman et al., 2014; Castro Herrero et al., 2017; Jakubowicz, 2007), the paradigm asserts media landscapes through journalistic professionalism, the media markets, the extent of parallelism in media system and political interest groups and the role of the state. Based on these variables, certain countries cluster together to form different media systems that seem to notably follow the Southern, Central, Northern, Western and Eastern European regions. Even though criticized for forcibly clustering countries with distinct cultures and economies (Syvertsen et al., 2014), one can assume that the broader media system partly affects the choices, practices and values of a radio station.

In contrast to differences, the idea of convergence highlights similarities between organizations. Convergence happens on various levels. First, geographically distant cultures intertwine through adopting policies and influence through media and other cultural products, often witnessing conglomerated ownership. Content and stories spread from one media to another, increasingly so through information technology. A cultural shift in which individuals are encouraged to seek new information, make connections and engage in social interaction accelerates convergence (Jenkins, 2006: 3–4).

The flood of international influences has led some scholars to argue that media universally favours the liberal, commercially oriented model witnessed mostly in the US. (e.g., Dawes, 2017; Fenton, 2011; Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 2017; McChesney, 2001; see also Ala-Fossi, 2005). Convergence occurs in organizations as they adopt different management styles, practices and values. During the 20th century, the unprecedented success of the US economy and its supremacy in the political sphere made the American endeavour for rapid growth the benchmark for organizations worldwide (Barley and Kunda, 1992: 364–365; Bains, 2015: 1–2, 20).

For a university-based student radio, the setting is two-folded. On the one hand, there are differences in national histories, cultures and educational models. However, after WWII, a political project of European unification emphasized uniting people (Bruter, 2005). The travelling youth making connections have built grassroots integration, promoted by governmental initiatives encouraging Europeanism (e.g., Jobs, 2017; Mummendey and Walduz, 2004). EU funding has encouraged European universities to boost student and staff mobility (European Commission, 2021). This leads one to expect European student stations to exhibit certain international similarities.

Study design and data

This research explores the cultural artefacts of student radio organizations, examining whether they group or differ based on European regions. Studies on media systems and Hofstede's cultural typologies are used as a preliminary taxonomy justifying the hypothesis that the clusters found in this research follow the regional typologies of the more broadly studied models (see Brüggeman et al., 2014: 1037). When explaining culture, typologies should be used with caution as they may oversimplify categories and emphasize unity instead of diversity within each culture (Martin, 1992: 304–307; Schein, 2004: 200, 214–215). Here, typologies are used merely as a heuristic for hypothetical case grouping. It guides the analysis of how European student radio stations in different countries cluster, whether there is divergence or convergence among the cases at hand and whether regions have any significance in defining their organizational artefacts. Based on several case studies and on the assumption that regional, societal, historical circumstances and the social construction of national cultures, in general, affects organizations, the premise is that region is a practicable stencil for clustering European student radio stations. As suggested by previous studies on organizational culture and media systems, this article presupposes that regional differences and clustering will occur, especially in the part of Europe where the organization is situated: North, South, East, West and Central. This research answers two questions:

1. What kind of cultural artefacts are present in the European student radio organizations?
2. Do European student radio stations show divergence or convergence on these artefacts and cluster based on their nationality and geography?

The focus is descriptive and comparative. The research is based on a survey conducted within European student radio stations in 2018. The data was collected using an online survey software Webropol. The survey investigated the practices, choices and views on the station's role and was aimed at station managers, faculty advisors and editors (later referred to as 'managers'). The managers were chosen as respondents because they have decision-making capacity and a presupposed comprehensive view of their station's organizational practices and choices.

As there are no Europe-wide registers on student radio, the potential stations were gathered through various online sources, such as Wikipedia (2017), Internet-radio.com, www.listenlive.eu and TuneIn.com. Listings from national student radio organizations in Sweden (SRS, 2019), the UK (SRA, 2019), France (RadioCampus, 2019), Italy (RadUni, 2019) and Spain (ARU, 2016) were also used. The initial search produced a list of over 260 European student radio stations. Those with online contact details (e.g., a fill-in form, email address) were sent an invitation link with a cover letter to take the survey. Unfortunately, one-third of the emails failed to reach the respondent, which could mean that the address found on the website was wrong or the station was no longer operational. Some of the stations also had no contact details, website, or any indication of whether they still existed or not.

After sending out invitations in three rounds, data of 90 respondents from 21 countries were gathered. Fifty-one were managers, representing 46 individual stations from 19 countries. Especially active were student radio stations in Spain, but most countries are represented by just one station in the data. Some countries with online evidence of student radio (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Luxembourg and Switzerland) did not participate despite several attempts to contact the found stations.

There are a couple of pragmatic reasons for the timeframe of the data used for this paper. The author of this paper was the main organizer of the first global student radio conference, 'Alternatives', sponsored by the Finnish Cultural Foundation in 2016 in Lahti, Finland, where student radio makers, experts and academia were invited to participate (e.g., Quicke, 2016). During preparation and marketing for this conference, an initial list of contact details from various student radio stations was gathered. After the conference, in 2017, the author was appointed the president of World College Radio Day (Collegeradio.org, 2022), an international network of volunteers responsible for organizing an annual global event celebrating student radio. This two-year time frame gave leverage in attracting student radio stations to participate in the survey. It allowed the researcher to gather the data for this study following the significant date of the first global student radio conference up to a year later when the author was appointed World College Radio Day president. As the data is nearly five years old, one should remember that some of the artefacts observed here could be outdated. Nevertheless, the analysis provides a relatively recent snapshot of European student radio (Table 1).

Table 1. Student radio stations and managers in the data.

Country	Stations	Manager responses
Austria AT	1	1
Belgium BE	1	1
Croatia HR	1	1
Finland FI	3	5
France FR	4	4
Germany DE	2	2
Greece EL	4	6
Ireland IE	2	2
Italy IT	3	4
Netherlands NL	1	1
Norway NO	1	1
Portugal PT	1	1
Russia RU	1	1
Slovakia SK	1	1
Slovenia SI	1	1
Spain ES	11	11
Sweden SE	1	1
Turkey TR	2	2
UK	5	5
Total	**46**	**51**

In some of the questions, not all respondents answered. The missing data has been imputed with a mean of the item, thus not affecting the sample average. In questions where the respondents provided an ordinal value, standard deviation has also been computed to see whether there is much variation. A high value suggests a notable difference and a low value a high correspondence among respondents.

This research has two layers. First, it views the characteristics of the stations in general, forming an overall image of the artefacts of the European student radio organizational culture based on the managers' answers. Second, it tests if the responses form meaningful clusters based on geography, whether nationality or region influence the organizational artefacts or whether there are no significant differences, suggesting a more convergent European student radio culture. A cluster analysis was conducted using the statistical analysis software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) with the selected variables to analyze whether the cases group based on nationality. Cluster analysis is a statistical method for grouping responses based on the variance within the selected variables' data (e.g., Romesburg, 2004). As the variables are either categorical (yes, no; multiple choice) or ordinal (1–10 scale), the Two-Step Cluster Analysis algorithm with Schwarz's Bayesian clustering criterion, suitable for handling categorical data, was chosen as a method for forming the clusters. The two-step procedure is an exploratory tool that reveals natural groupings within a dataset, otherwise not apparent (IBM, 2020; see Tkaczynski, 2016). The model quality was assessed with a Silhouette measure that calculated an object's cohesion with others in its cluster and against other clusters (Rousseeuw, 1987). For predictor importance, if a selected variable is significant in crafting the following clusters in the model, a default cut-off value is 0.4. The analysis produces a cluster membership variable. This variable enables one to examine whether the stations from the same countries and regions group together or not. The analysis was conducted by not setting a fixed number of expected clusters. If natural groupings arise, the cases diverge and form different clusters. If the analysis only provides one cluster, this, on the other hand, suggests more convergence in that variable.

Results

The literature on European student radio is scarce, especially in English, although a few studies have tried to depict student radio from various perspectives. Most of the research is done in Spanish about university radio in Spain, from asserting its pedagogical values and skill-development opportunities (Zúñiga et al., 2016), its content and programming policies (Martín-Pena and Narvaez, 2014) and evaluating the composition of its content as a public radio (Peña and Pérez-Alaejos, 2016). From a historical perspective, Doliwa (2015) has explored the vicissitudes of Polish student radio from the 1950s to the 2000s, its comparatively high level of freedom of speech, its challenges compared to the 1990s emergence of commercial media, and its newly found opportunities in the digital age. Some studies focus on case studies on individual stations. Mariano Giorgi (2017) has examined the phases of an online university radio project at the University of Limoges, France, and done a semiotic analysis of the reasons for its abolition. From an organizational culture perspective, there are no studies. Wilson David (2015) explores a

community radio station's empowering and learning effects on a university campus. She scratches the surface of organizational practices by depicting tensions between the academic goals and Ofcom (the UK's government-approved communications regulator) license requirement and the managerial solutions for solving them.

The following analysis measures organizational practices, crafted policies, emphases and choices that become visible through an organizational culture's artefact layer. As noted, student radio stations have three distinct features based on previous literature, the organizational practices influenced by student involvement, an alternative stance towards more mainstream media and the emphasis on alternative music. Thus, the selected variables for this analysis focus primarily on these aspects, reflecting the research focus, European student radio culture's artefact layer. The examined artefacts are (1) the purpose of the station at the moment, (2) the level of systematicity of station management, (3) does the station have explicit rules of conduct for its staff, (4) who, if any, are the station's primary competitors in the radio sector, (5) the balance between music and other content (e.g., talk), (6) does the station follow the number of its listeners or (7) who its listeners are, (8) the proportion of music, (9) who gets to choose the music played and (10) what is the balance of alternative or marginal music and more mainstream or 'hit' music?

Questions 2, 3 and 9 are about decision-making and organizational structure. As Hofstede et al. (2010: 317–318) put it, organizing always requires answering two questions: who has the power to decide what, and what rules or procedures should be followed to attain the desired ends? The answer to the first is influenced by cultural norms of power distance and cultural norms about uncertainty avoidance to the latter. Decision-making procedures and rules of conduct are crucial elements of any rational organization (Weber and Parsons, 1947) and thus a critical feature of any organizational culture. It implies involvement, equality and hierarchy in any organizational structure. Questions 1, 4, 6 and 7 reflect how the station views its relative position with the outside world; questions 5, 8 and 10 refer to a student radio station's selected content, the most perceivable artefact to the public.

Decision making

Level of systematic management. Here, the level of systematic management refers to the goal-oriented and organized manner and means of managing different radio operations aspects. These systematic management efforts are evaluated through the following questions: Does your station have (1) an official management structure, (2) an explicit strategy, (3) any performance standards and (4) a method for monitoring the quality of programming? These variables reflect the level of goal-directedness, organized character and seriousness the station has set on its operations. Saying yes to all these questions (value 4) gives the highest level of systematic management while having none (value 0), resulting from answering either 'no' or 'I don't know', is interpreted as having a low level of systematicity. The construct of management's systematicity was initially tested using principal components analysis (PCA) to see whether these variables and an additional variable of 'Has your station set any explicit rules of conduct?' would

measure the same latent phenomenon. PCA produced two components: the first including variables 1–4, the other including only the rules of conduct, which can be understood to measure something other than the systematicity of management. One must be cautious to avoid making strict conclusions, though, as Cronbach's Alpha for the variable is only 0.489, which implies a low correlation between items and makes creating or using a sum variable unwise.

Seventy-five percent of the respondents mention that their station has a management structure, 61% performance standards, 63% explicit strategy and 73% quality monitoring. It should be noted that the respondents might have different perceptions of what the above themes mean. For example, the 'quality' in the question about quality monitoring of programming may have been understood as meaning, for example, the audio's technical quality or the quality of the content. Nevertheless, these variables are not intended to map the actual processes or their varying aspects but the overall aspiration to operate in an orderly, goal-directed and quality-oriented fashion. The relatively high proportions of all these elements can be interpreted to reflect that European student radio stations have at least a drive for station management's systematicity.

The resulting cluster analysis produced a model with five clusters and a good 0.6 Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation. Looking at the predictor importance, the question about performance standards is the lowest at 0.39, which is still acceptable for the model with a good Silhouette measure. These clusters can be understood as representing the level of systematicity, with cluster 1 having the highest level with all the factors present. It is also the largest, with 33% of cases. The second in size (22%) is cluster number 4, with no management structure or explicit strategy but with performance standards and a quality monitoring method. Third in size (20%) is cluster number 3, with a management structure and explicit strategy. Fourth in size (14%) is number 5, with all other elements than explicit strategy, and the smallest in size (12%) is cluster 2, with all other elements than performance standards (Table 2).

All in all, as the initial frequencies of the entire data suggest, the level of systematicity is relatively high, and the clusters suggest that there are only slight differences in which methods or elements are present. The clusters have been named accordingly as high (1), medium-high (2 and 5) and medium (3 and 4). Perhaps the most distinctive are clusters 3 and 4, with two elements present. Cluster 4 has no management structure or strategy, and cluster 3 has no quality monitoring method or performance standards. The divergence infers different ways of managing the station: Cluster 4 suggests a more ad hoc operation and cluster 3 hints at a more freeform way of doing things. The table here shows the countries within each group. The stations from different countries are somewhat evenly mixed in different clusters, and nationality or region does not seem to matter as much on the level of systematicity. Again, Nordic countries are spread across all the clusters, as are South-European stations. In cluster 1, there are stations from all parts of Europe, implying that high systematicity is not particularly tied to a particular region.

Rules of conduct. Explicit rules of conduct can be viewed as part of the organizational culture by regulating the station staff's behaviour. Again, there is a chance of different interpretations for this variable, as rules of conduct can refer to how one acts towards

Table 2. Student radio clusters based on the level of systematic management.

	High ($N = 17$)	Ad hoc ($N = 11$)	Freeform ($N = 10$)	No strategy ($N = 7$)	No standards ($N = 6$)
Management structure	■	□	■	■	■
Quality monitoring method	■	■	□	■	■
Explicit strategy	■	□	■	□	■
Performance standards	■	■	□	■	□
	EL	ES	AT	DE	BE
	EL	ES	EL	EL	DE
	ES	ES	EL	FI	ES
	ES	ES	EL	FR	FR
	ES	ES	ES	FR	IT
	FI	ES	FI	SE	NO
	FI	FI	FR	UK	
	IE	HR	IT		
	IE	IT	TR		
	IT	NL	UK		
	PT	UK			
	RU				
	SI				
	SK				
	TR				
	UK				
	UK				

other organization members or on-air, for example. Still, this question evaluates if the organization tries to influence how its members act in certain situations or not. This does not mean that the station with no set rules does not monitor its staff members' behaviour. Every organizational culture affects at least partly how its members act and react within its boundaries.

Asking whether the station has set any rules of conduct for its staff, over 82% say yes. Cluster analysis produces two clusters. The smaller cluster has 'no rules of conduct' with eight respondents, two from Finland and one from Russia, the Netherlands, the UK, Turkey, Germany, Spain and Greece. Again it seems impossible to form clear-cut national or regional clusters based on this variable.

Relative position

Station purpose. The station's primary purpose implies a given organization's stance towards its operations, the audience and the outside community. In this question, the

station managers were given the option to choose multiple primary purposes. For nearly 71% of the stations, the primary purpose was education. The second most common response (for 53%) was entertainment, then to be a social club (37%) and public service (33%). In 12%, the prime purpose was other than the above with open-ended answers like 'alternative to other media', 'culture', 'social service' and 'support and promotion of unknown and young artists'. Cluster analysis with all other choices produced three different clusters, with a fair silhouette measure predicting cluster quality being 0.4. Looking at the predictor importance, one sees that 'educational purposes' and 'other' have values less than 0.4, referring to their frequential proportions in the data. The three clusters can be described as follows: (1) student life-oriented, which covers 41% of the stations; (2) public service-oriented, 22% of the stations; and (3) educationally oriented, 37% (Table 3).

As one can see from Table 3, Spanish stations are strongly steered towards educational purposes with a public service orientation. Scandinavian stations, like French ones, are

Table 3. Student radio clusters based on their primary purpose orientation.

	Student-life oriented ($N = 20$)	Educationally oriented ($N = 19$)	Public service oriented ($N = 11$)
Education			
Entertainment			
Other			
Public service			
Social club			
	AT	DE	EL
	BE	EL	ES
	DE	ES	ES
	EL	ES	ES
	EL	ES	ES
	EL	ES	FI
	ES	ES	FI
	FI	ES	FR
	FR	FI	RU
	IE	FI	SI
	IT	FR	UK
	IT	FR	
	NL	HR	
	NO	IE	
	PT	IT	
	TR	IT	
	TR	SE	
	UK	SK	
	UK	UK	
	UK		

divided relatively evenly into all groups. Stations from the UK, Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands are mostly student-life oriented. There is also a strong representation from South-European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal). Generally, no clear-cut regional differences suggest that one part of Europe concentrates more on a specific purpose than others.

Major competitors. The question of who (if any) are their biggest rivals in the radio sector reflects the managers' perception of the outside world and their place in the media landscape compared to other content providers, be it public radio, commercial stations, or other student radio stations.

Respondents could select multiple options from the following choices: Commercial stations, public broadcasting stations, individual stations (e.g., online podcasts), community stations, other student radio stations, no competition, other or I don't know. 39% of the respondents say that they do not have any competitors. Thirty-five percent mention

Table 4. Student radio clusters based on their perceived competition.

	Mainstream radio ($N = 24$)	No competition ($N = 18$)	Podcasts, etc. ($N = 9$)
Public radio			
Commercial radio			
Podcasts, etc.			
	DE	BE	AT
	EL	DE	ES
	EL	EL	ES
	EL	EL	ES
	ES	EL	FR
	ES	ES	IE
	ES	ES	IT
	FI	ES	UK
	FI	ES	UK
	FI	ES	
	FI	FI	
	FR	FR	
	FR	IT	
	HR	PT	
	IE	RU	
	IT	SI	
	IT	TR	
	NL	UK	
	NO		
	SE		
	SK		
	TR		
	UK		
	UK		

commercial stations as their main competition, 28% say public broadcasting, 26% other individual stations, like podcasts, 12% other student radio stations, 10% community stations and 8% other than any of the ones mentioned here.

Initial cluster analysis produces a three-cluster model with a good Silhouette average of 0.6. Predictor importance shows that 'Other', 'Other student radio stations' and 'I don't know have' relative importance of less than 0.1, so they were left out of the final cluster solution. 'Public radio' and 'community stations' also had less than 0.4 importance levels. When these choices were removed from the analysis, the second iteration produced a three-cluster model with only a slightly better Silhouette value of 0.7. The original model was chosen for further analysis, considering the limited predictor importance. The most defining predictors are 'We don't have competition', 'Individual stations' and 'Commercial stations'.

The largest cluster (24 respondents) consists of stations that see commercial and public broadcasting as their biggest rivals. This cluster can be thus called 'Mainstream radio'. The second largest (18) are the ones who see their station having no competition, and the smallest (9) are the ones who see online podcasts and other individual content providers as the most significant competition. As seen in the table, there is rather interesting national and regional clustering (Table 4).

Table 5. Student radio clusters based on the level of audience monitoring.

	Amount and demographics ($N = 18$)	Amount ($N = 17$)	Don't follow ($N = 16$)
Listener number			
Listener characteristics			
	EL	BE	AT
	EL	DE	EL
	ES	DE	ES
	ES	EL	ES
	ES	EL	FI
	ES	EL	FI
	FR	ES	FI
	IE	ES	FR
	IT	ES	FR
	IT	ES	HR
	NO	ES	IE
	PT	FI	IT
	RU	FI	NL
	SI	FR	TR
	SK	IT	UK
	TR	SE	UK
	UK	UK	
	UK		

There is a relatively high concentration of managers from the British Isles who see, for example, online podcasts and individual stations as their biggest competition. However, some see commercial stations as competition as well. Interestingly, the Spanish station managers mostly see no competition or individual podcasts as the most significant competition, which may be because podcast penetration among listeners over 18 was highest in Spain at just over 40%, followed by Ireland with nearly 38%, with the European average being 28% (Feldman, 2019). For most Scandinavian managers, the commercial stations are the biggest rivals even though Sweden is third in the Statista statistics with over 36% penetration, and Northern Europe is high in podcast listening in general (Coppola, 2020). Again, all of Europe is represented in all clusters, although East-European stations are not present in the podcast cluster. Again, the data used may paint an outdated image, as there is a current tendency in Eastern Europe to steer community media voices to rapidly growing podcasts (e.g., Community Media Forum Europe, 2022; Götting, 2022).

Listener following. Sixty-three percent of the managers state that their station follows the number of listeners their station has, but only 35% report that they monitor their listeners. Cluster analysis based on these two questions produces a three-cluster model

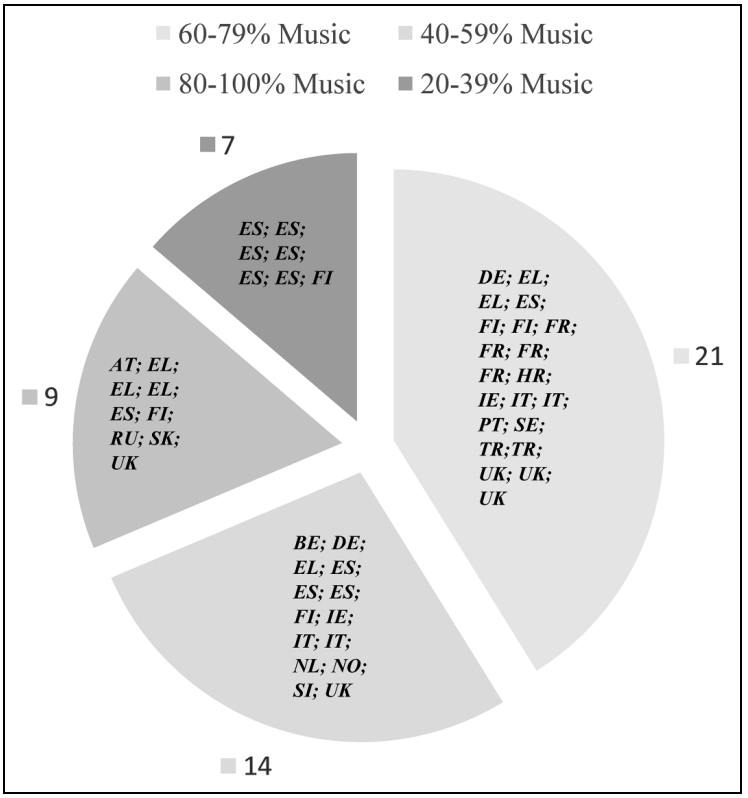

Figure 1. Student radio clusters based on the percentage of music in all content.

with a good average Silhouette of 0.9. The clusters, almost similar in size, can be seen to represent the level of interest the stations in each group have in monitoring their listeners, with the largest cluster (18 respondents) following both the number and demographics, the second largest (17) only the amount and the third not following either (Table 5).

There seems to be an even distribution of different regions in each cluster. Most European student radio stations seem to follow their listeners at least to some extent, but interestingly a third of the respondents do not follow them. Possible implications vary from not being that interested in the listeners but more of other aspects of doing radio. However, it can mean that these stations do not have the means, either the technology or know-how, to do so. Whatever the reason, this group is interesting, given that student radio falls under the community media category. The listeners should be a pivotal part, both as recipients and content makers.

Selected content

Proportion of music. This part of the results looks at content as a cultural artefact of a student radio organization, reflecting its values and stance. Student radio and music are tightly connected. Research about the importance of music in adolescence (e.g.,

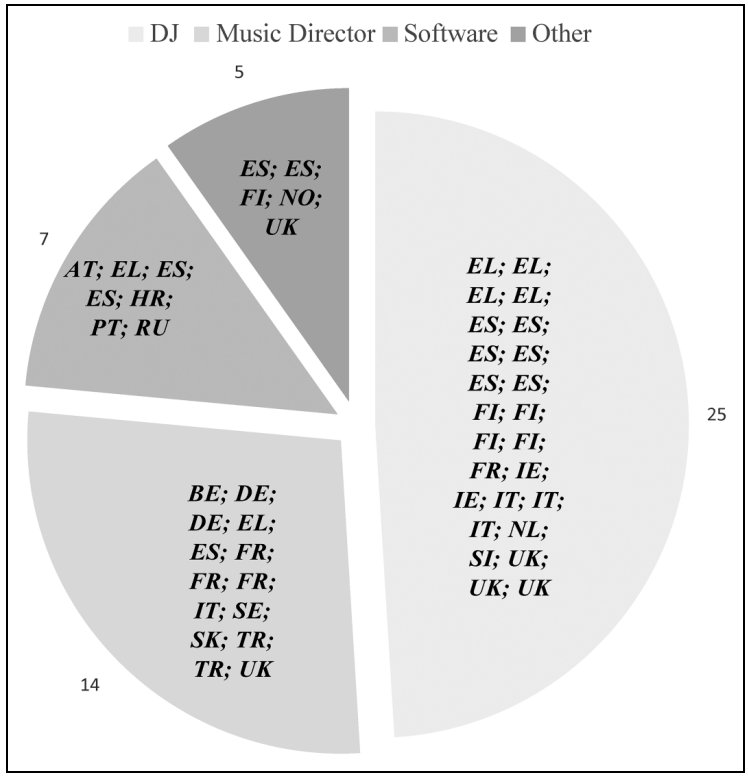

Figure 2. Student radio clusters based on who selects the music played.

Laughey, 2006; Miranda et al., 2015) underlines the role of music in the life of the expected listeners of student radio. Music seems to drive audio listening in Europe (Coppola, 2020) generally. Asking about the proportion of music, 41% of the respondents say that music makes 60–79% of their shows' content. In 28%, the proportion of music is 40–59% and 18% over 80%. Clustering the data with this variable produces four groups with a Silhouette value of 0.9 (Figure 1).

The amount of music is the lowest in Spanish stations, which can partly be explained by the purpose of these stations being more towards education and public service than student-life oriented (see question 1 in this article). Again, there is representation from all parts of Europe in all clusters, and no clear-cut regional differences can be made.

Choice of music. US College radio is said to be about individual DJs handpicking the music played instead of, for example, an automated playlist dominating the rotation (e.g., Kerr, 2020; Mastrogiacomo, 2018). When European station managers were asked about selecting the music played, 49% reported individual DJs. Twenty-eight percent report that there is a music director, and 14% report that there is automated software that selects music. Ten percent report that the choices are made in some other way. Interestingly, none of the respondents says that listeners get to choose the music. Clustering the responses produces a model with a Silhouette value of 1.0 and four clusters (Figure 2).

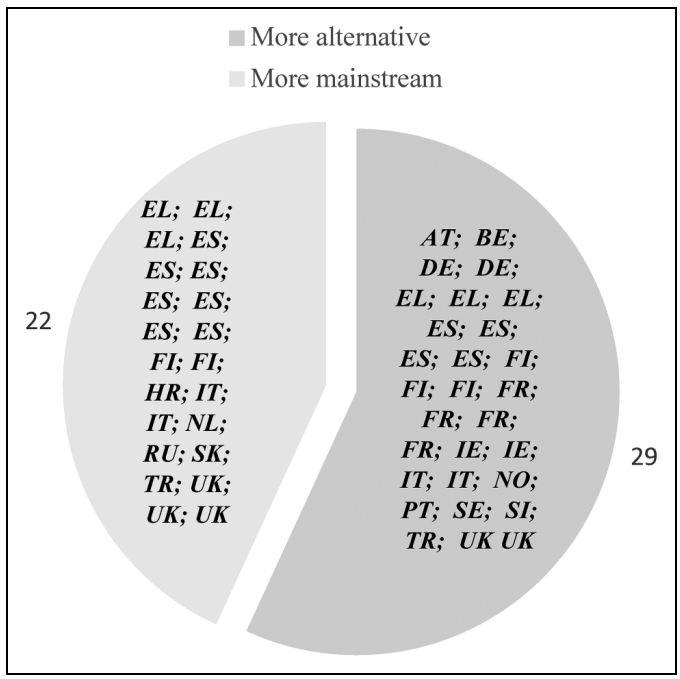

Figure 3. Student radio clusters based on music preference.

The French seem to group in the Music Director Cluster, as do German and Turkish managers. Other than that, there do not seem to be any clear national or regional patterns in the data.

The choice of marginal never heard of and indie music over contemporary mainstream hits is one of the medium's key features (e.g., Dolan, 2020; Raymond, 2016: 201). When asking the European student radio managers whether their station prefers marginal or mainstream 'hit music' on a scale from 1 (alternative only) to 10 (hit music only), the mean sets at 4.3, with the standard deviation being 2.0. The result suggests that European student radio stations generally favour music not classified as 'hits' but not strictly. When treating the 10-step scale as a continuous variable (e.g., Zumbo and Zimmerman, 1993), the cluster analysis produces two clusters with a good Silhouette measure of 0.7. The first cluster (29 respondents) median value is 3, suggesting an emphasis on more marginal and perhaps less-heard music. In the second cluster (22 respondents), the median sets at 6, implying more mainstream music choices (Figure 3).

Comparing the clusters, one can see that countries in Eastern Europe are more mainstream-oriented than in other parts. Other than that, there is a mix of countries from different regions in both clusters.

Conclusions

This article aimed to examine the artefact layer of European student radio organizations and present a picture of this phenomenon. It also set out to see if these organizations diverge and cluster based on region or nationality. The premise was grounded on the results found in previous studies on organizational cultures by Hofstede et al. (2010) and similar taxonomies found in research done on media systems which imply that national cultures affect and are perceived in the organizational cultures that differ from one country or region to another. The focus was on the most visible and easily communicated layer of organizational cultures, their artefacts. In the student radio context, these were organizational structures and decision-making practices, clear views about the station's position related to the outside world, and selected media content. Based on data from 51 student radio managers representing 46 individual stations from 19 countries collected in 2018, one can, of course, only scratch the surface of the phenomena. However, as there are no comprehensive European studies about student radio stations' organizational cultures or this form of media, the findings shed light on a relatively unknown subject and call for further investigations.

In the seminal studies on European media systems and organizational cultural differences based on national cultures, it has been shown that geographical, political, historical and societal aspects affect how and why organizations form and value their ways of doing things. Specific regional differences can be seen in these studies, with Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central Europe forming diverging regimes. In this article, clear-cut divisions of student radio cultures within these regional boundaries are not found. One cannot say that European student radios are alike. However, the differences are slight, and the clusters found in the analysis propose that nationality or region

of Europe is not the critical defining factor when it comes to differentiation, not in most of the examined variables at least.

Even though the frequencies of different attributes produce a relatively unified picture, the conducted cluster analyses produce 2–5 clusters in all inspected variables instead of only one. Thus, it would be incorrect to say that European student radio shows strong convergence in the selected dimensions. Other factors in play make stations diverge from one another, but these differences are found throughout Europe despite nationality in most cases.

Based on student radio managers' responses, an overall image of the artefact layer of European student radio's organizational culture can be described. European student radio stations are primarily for educational purposes, especially in the South, where stations have a public service orientation. However, all in all, many of them emphasize entertainment and student-life orientation.

The level of systematicity in station management is assessed by having an official management structure, an explicit strategy, performance standards and monitoring the radio programming quality. This is the dimension in which there is the most divergence. Still, it is fair to say that the level of (or at least an endeavour towards) systematicity is high in European student radio stations, with slight variations in the present elements' different aspects. Countries' distribution is somewhat mixed, making it impossible to infer that certain regions would have higher aspirations for systematicity than others. Four in five stations have rules of conduct for their staff. It can be said that these organizations take their operations seriously enough not to create a laissez-faire or 'anything goes' environment with no explicit norms to govern the way the members of the organization behave – again, despite the region of the station. One can speculate whether these choices reflect student management's efforts to secure that the university does not cut station funding due to uncontrolled, non-goal-directed behaviour or whether they project the station's values on an efficient, smooth-running organization (see, e.g., Cameron, 2006).

Three in five student radio managers perceive their station as having competition, mainly with mainstream media, especially commercial stations and private podcasts. This is understandable as nearly all surveyed stations stream online; for many, the internet is the only channel. One noticeable feature of European student radio stations is that two out of five managers do not see their station having any competition, implying that a station's driving force is something other than competing with others.

If perceived as part of a community media definition, student radio stations should serve their close community, give voice to people from that community, and listen to this audience's needs. Two of three European stations follow at least how many people tune in, and one-third also know their audience. Interestingly, though, one-third seems to follow neither the number nor the demographics of their listeners. Does this imply a more inward-looking take, focusing on doing radio instead of making it heard?

North American college radio prides itself on giving individual DJs the freedom to select the music they want to play in their shows. This content is often viewed as the most defining attribute of college radio. However, the data shows that European counterparts emphasize alternative music more than hit music and the freedom of a DJ to choose – but not necessarily as strictly as the US discourse would imply. The hundred-year linkage of American college radio and alternative music has made it an

acknowledged steppingstone for new bands (Wall, 2007), making 'being alternative' a more significant cultural artefact than in Europe. Here, providing alternatives for mainstream media might mean playing, for example, older hits not heard elsewhere.

Furthermore, in half of the stations, individual DJs choose the music, but nearly a third leave these choices to a music director, others to automated software or other methods. Music plays a big part in European student radio throughout the continent, as music consists of nearly 60% of all content in nearly ¾ of the stations. Apart from Spain, where the proportion of music is the lowest, this emphasis on music can be seen throughout Europe.

Limitations and future implications

As mentioned, the data used in this article dates to 2018 and is somewhat limited, with many European countries with active student radio missing from the analysis, narrowing the generalization of the observations and causing concern for reviewing the findings in a more recent light. As most of the countries involved are not English speaking, one should also bear in mind the possibility of misinterpretation of the questions and the concepts used in gathering the data through an online survey. Countries with strong traditions of student radio, such as Poland, which was one of the first countries to test student-driven radio on university campuses (see Doliwa, 2015) and Denmark, where there are over 30-year-old traditions of student radio (XFM, 2019), are not represented in the data, leaving room for future research to test whether the findings hold with more comprehensive data.

This article has examined whether nationality or the region of Europe has significance in how student radio stations differ from one another or how they cluster together based on organizational artefacts. The results suggest that, at least in the selected variables, nationality or the region of the station is not as significant as in previous studies on organizational cultures and media systems. One can hypothesize that we might be seeing the effects of Europeanism, experienced especially in the realm of student and academic mobility within Europe mentioned earlier, where influences travel with exchange students from one country to another. The deduction does not necessarily hold when these stations are examined using different variables. One of the significant limitations of this article is that it does not answer *why* the radio stations cluster based on the selected artefacts, what are the reasons why a station would emphasize systematicity of management, see competition in mainstream media or choose to give freedom of musical choices to an individual DJ?

These questions are not the scope of this article, though, as the focus was on examining the artefact layer of the organizational culture of this type of media that lacks general research altogether. As Schein (2004: 220–223) has said, artefacts do not reveal the more profound dimensions of the organization's culture, that is, the values, meanings and beliefs. Extracting values from artefacts alone is risky. Future research, preferably by using mixed methods of research combining ethnographical case studies, content analysis of stories, rituals and symbols and further quantitative analysis with more recent data, is needed to dig deeper into the organizational culture. Student radio, after all, is a phenomenon that affects thousands of students, hundreds of universities, student communities and other audiences throughout Europe, in addition to being a part of the media landscape's alternative, community and third sector, which according to the Council of Europe (2019) is a vital indicator of media pluralism.

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Balancing the Turbulence: Organizational Values in European Student Radio

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Balancing the Turbulence: Organisational Values in European Student Radio

1. Introduction

An organisation based entirely on student labour is a perfect example of a system that must constantly reconstruct and re-evaluate its activities. A large part of the staff will either leave or change the level of involvement during the academic year. This puts pressure on organisational continuity as effective management must deal with constant flux. The culture of an organisation binds members together and helps to cope with such turbulence (Martin 2002; Cameron & Quinn 2011; Schein 2004). This article explores the organisational culture of European student radio stations on the level of espoused values, examining the value systems that impact their practices and choices. First, a literature review summarises student radio and organisational culture. Then, an analysis based on the Competing Values Framework designed to evaluate organisational effectiveness (Quinn & Rohrbaugh 1981; Cameron & Quinn 2011) is conducted on European student radio survey data, revealing dominant value systems and their implications.

Student radio stations are often managed by students without previous management experience or education, struggling with the constant need to replace and train personnel due to graduation (Raymond 2016: 204). In an organisation where people with diverse skills work together for a limited period, transferring contextual information and processing it into behaviour might be challenging (e.g., Ajmal & Koskinen 2008: 7; Infield 1997). Nevertheless, student radio persists in an environment where students' motives, resources, and interests alter. According to Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995), knowledge is created through the interplay between explicit, documented, structured, and externalised information and tacit knowledge that emerges in people's perceptions, interactions, and behaviour in organisations. These elements' interaction is connected to the organisation's culture. Culture provides a cognitive map by which the organisation steers through its challenges. Culture creates stability and adaptability by enforcing continuity and consistency through adherence to a set of consensual values and doctrines to follow when adjusting to new conditions. (Denison 1990; Cameron & Quinn: 2011.) When organisations face changes and operate in complex or unpredictable environments, analysing organisational cultures becomes prevalent.

Schein (2004) states that organisational culture manifests on three interacting layers. The most observable is the external layer of artefacts, visual organisational structures, such as management practices and ways of interaction. At the core are the often-unconscious underlying assumptions and beliefs. Between the two are the espoused values conveyed through strategic emphases, goals, and philosophies. This study focuses on exploring the European student radio culture at this level. It examines what kind of culturally held values the stations exhibit. The premise is that

these values affect the organisational choices, strategies, and goals, and thus the ability of the station to remain operational and balance effectively through turbulence.

2. Student radio

In this study, the term ‘student radio’ refers to a radio station, either streaming or broadcasting, that is at least partly managed and operated by students from a particular associated higher education institution. Not all student-involvement stations fit this definition, as some have given management authority to other entities, such as the college-owned NPR or community stations in the US (Raymond 2016: 197).

In the US, the first university-based radio stations began experimenting with technology in the 1910s. During the following decades, noncommercial educational radio established its role within the media landscape. Since the late 1960s, ‘college radio’ has described a broadcast sector with an emphasis on non-mainstream independent and local artists and labels, experimentation, progressive, free-form programming and serving the student community and those in range (Rubin 2015; Waits 2015; Sauls 2000; Slotten 2008). In Europe, student radio has been part of the rise of student and youth culture in various countries (e.g., Doliwa 2015; Planšak 2010; University Radio York 2022). Yet, much less is written about its decades-long history.

Literature on student radio elicits some of the values often linked to this media. Student stations are mostly perceived as providing alternatives to commercial media

through content and music covering all forms and genres, not merely mainstream hits. (Wall 2007; Kruse 1993: 33-35.) Sometimes alternativeness stretches onto organisational practices, policies, and community relationships (Fauteux 2015: 150-187). Nonconformity is not predetermined, though, as some students may pursue careers in the mainstream media, adopting and emulating more traditional broadcasting styles (Laor 2020; Wilson David 2015).

Student radio is a training ground for future professionals in journalism and broadcast. Still, it also allows participants to experiment with new formats and activities otherwise out of their reach, giving space to under-represented social groups whose needs and issues do not surpass the threshold of mainstream media. (Scifo 2007; Sauls 2000; Priestman 1999; Raymond 2016). Student radio participation can lead to feelings of self-fulfilment, belonging and intrinsic motivation. It allows stepping into various roles with a sense of authority and prestige, developing ambition for professionalism. (Laor 2019: 349-350.) As issues are dealt with as they occur, student radio resembles a problem-based learning model, in which outcomes are open-ended, problems have no pre-determined solutions, and students determine their learning and utilise available resources (Savin-Baden 2003; Hanney 2009; Laor 2019). For student managers, it provides ground for identifying and developing leadership skills (Hannam et al. 2019).

Student radio emphasises locality and highly depends on unpaid participants (Reilly & Farnsworth 2015: 11). Occasionally, stations operate in conflicting environments, with internal and external tensions affecting the practices and managerial solutions (Wallace 2015; Wilson David 2015). Serving the student community, student radio

has been connected to the public service realm. In many European countries such as Sweden, Spain, and Ireland, it is categorised and organised as community media, which refers to participatory, not-for-profit media focusing on local or community interests (Cavanagh 2009; Unesco 2019). It has five core characteristics: 1) ownership and control in the hands of self-organised citizens' groups, associations, or non-profit organisations, 2) access to not professional media makers, 3) transparent decision-making and non-hierarchical, collective structures with community representation 4) skill-sharing, empowerment, and capacity-building, essential both for sustainability and personal development, and 5) giving voice to groups, ideas, and cultures not represented in mainstream media. (Coyer & Hintz 2010.)

There are significant differences in regulation and funding arrangements. For instance, in Spain, stations can gather funds through grants, donations, and unlimited advertising. In the Netherlands, student radio is entitled to collect funding from various sources, including ads, but the government still funds it under the community media category. In Germany, strict regulations have slowed community and student radio evolution. In Ireland, student radio is operated by volunteers and funded primarily with student fees. (Cavanagh 2009; Reilly & Farnsworth 2015: 11.)

These portrayals imply some of the underlying values that influence the choices and aspirations of student radio organisations: serving close communities, emphasising educational and capacity-building objectives, and often providing alternatives for mainstream media.

3. Cultural values in organisations

Organisational culture can be seen as a long-standing set of values, beliefs, and assumptions that characterise and affect organisations and their members. The core level beliefs impact the espoused values expressed in the organisation. Values, in turn, affect attitudes, which impact behaviour and, thus, the effectiveness of an organisation in various contexts. Like individuals, organisations hold core values that are more paramount than others. These value systems are prominent when those in leadership positions share them, affecting their behaviour and comprehension of how things are done in the organisation. (Chatman 1991; Stackman 2000 et al.: 46-47; Schein 2004.) The dominant value systems can be assessed using the Competing Values Framework, CVF, initially developed by Quinn & Rohrbaugh (1981), accompanied by the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (later referred to as OCAI), elaborated by Cameron & Quinn (2011). CVF suggests that values can be evaluated on two dimensions, one being a continuum between flexibility (e.g., adaptability and dynamism) and stability (e.g., order and control), and the other emphasising either internal (e.g., integration, collaboration, and unity) or external orientation (e.g., differentiation, competition, and rivalry). When these dimensions cross, organisational cultures can be divided into four categories with particular and idiosyncratic characteristics. Cameron and Quinn (2011) named the four types Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy. The term ‘competing values’ implies that the different types compete on a continuum in which clan and adhocracy emphasise flexibility and discretion in contrast to hierarchy and market, which focus more on stability and control. Moreover, clan and hierarchy have more internal focus on

integration, whereas adhocracy and market show more external focus on differentiation (see figure 1). (Cameron & Quinn 2011.)

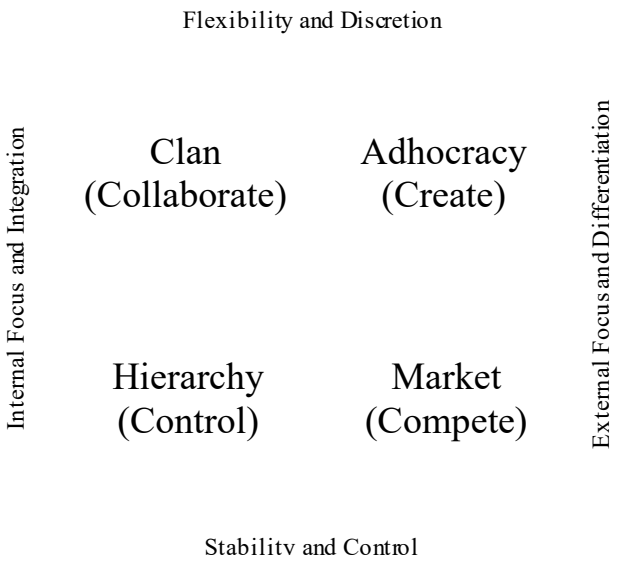

Figure 1: The Competing Values Framework, according to Cameron & Quinn (2011).

Cameron and Quinn (2011) describe each type as follows:

- The clan culture is characterised by shared values, common goals, collectivity, empowerment, and human development. It emerges through a relatively long history, regular membership, the absence of institutional alternatives, and close interactions among members.
- The adhocracy culture is a more temporary institution that disbands when its job is done and rebuilds rapidly when new goals emerge. This type is characteristic of, e.g., filming and software development.
- The market culture focuses strongly on transactions with the outside world instead of internal management. It emphasises profits and winning through competition.

- The hierarchy culture has a clear organisational structure, standardised rules and procedures, strict control, and well-defined responsibilities, resembling the Weberian (Weber et al. 2001) depiction of bureaucracy.

The CVF model's validity and reliability have been verified in various case studies (Yu & Wu 2009) but not in the student radio context. Grabowski et al. (2015: 919) have examined the applicability of CVF in voluntary organisations, discovering that uncertain and scarce resources (money and people) lead management to focus on means and processes rather than outcomes, with an emphasis on “getting the job done”. Felipe et al. (2017: 17-18), studying creative technology companies, found that the adhocracy type positively correlates with an organisation’s ability to handle changes, arguably due to being flexible enough to reconfigure resources and processes. This positive impact was also found in the clan culture, but more surprisingly, in hierarchical culture. The authors speculate that stability, formalised structures, control, and order are beneficial in crises and uncertainty. Also, there seems to be a constant need to balance soft skills with discipline and instructions (Holzmann et al., 2020).

CVF does not rank value systems, nor does it rate value effectiveness. Nevertheless, there seems to be an apparent discrepancy between the preferred (clan or adhocracy) and current (hierarchy) organisational cultures. In contrast to hierarchy culture, clan and adhocracy cultures often positively impact job satisfaction (Lund 2003; Belias & Koustelios 2015; Cucek & Kac 2020). However, Lund (2003: 228) has noted that the latter does not imply that performance levels would be higher than in market and hierarchy cultures.

Goals can be met by taking many routes. As student radio is in a transient state, it makes it an exciting target for examining the values that help them survive in this volatile environment.

Research Design and the data

Comparing the findings mentioned above with the various depictions of student radio leads to two hypotheses:

H1) The dominant category for student radio organisations is the clan culture, emphasising human resource development through cohesion and collectivity.
H2) As students come and go as their situations change, student radio stations display adhocracy cultures, with a project-focused organisation that assembles whenever the semester and new broadcast season begins.

This research is based on a survey conducted within European student radio stations in 2018, mapping their characteristics and aspects linked to their organisational cultures. The data was collected using an online survey tool Webropol. As there are no official Europe-wide statistics on student radio, the list of potential respondents was gathered through Wikipedia (2017) and internet radio databases, such as Internet-radio.com, www.listenlive.eu and TuneIn.com. National student radio organisations provide some data in Sweden (SRS 2019), the UK (SRA 2019), France (RadioCampus 2019), Italy (RadUni 2019), and Spain (ARU 2016). The initial search produced a list of over 260 stations. Those with identifiable contact details (e.g., a fill-in form or an email on their website) were approached with a cover letter

and a survey link. One-third of the emails failed to reach the respondent, meaning either the address on the website was wrong or the station was not operational. Some stations had no contact details, website, or any indication of whether they still existed or not.

This study focuses on the responses of station managers (N=38), faculty advisors (N=6), and editors (N=7), later referred to as 'managers' (N=51). The managers were chosen as the respondents because they have decision-making capacity and a comprehensive view of their station's organisational practices, choices, and values.

After sending out invitations in three rounds, 90 respondents from 21 countries were gathered, of which 51 managers represent 46 stations from 19 countries (Table 1). Especially active were student radios in Spain. Most countries are represented by just one station. Despite several outreach attempts, some countries with student radio websites (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Switzerland) did not respond.

COUNTRY	STATIONS	MANAGER RESPONSES
Austria AT	1	1
Belgium BE	1	1
Croatia HR	1	1
Finland FI	3	5
France FR	4	4
Germany DE	2	2
Greece EL	4	6
Ireland IE	2	2
Italy IT	3	4
Netherlands NL	1	1
Norway NO	1	1
Portugal PT	1	1
Russia RU	1	1
Slovakia SK	1	1
Slovenia SI	1	1
Spain ES	11	11
Sweden SE	1	1
Turkey TR	2	2
UK	5	5
Total	46	51

Table 1: European student radio stations and managers in the data.

The survey was divided into two sections. First, it examined the respondent characteristics, the general organisational practices, policies, choices, and, e.g., the media content of the stations. Based on the responses, a brief overview of European student radio features can be drawn. Students are the primary staff in 42 of the cases. In the rest, they are the prominent secondary voluntary staff. Based on the managers' estimate, a participant is involved for an average of 3.8 years. Forty-nine

stations are available online, and 22 have an FM frequency: Forty-four air or stream content daily, six weekly. The average amount of weekly listeners is 3500, but there is a variance from 0 to 30000 listeners. Of the managers, 21 were women, and 29 were men. One did not identify their gender. More than half were 30-49, 20 were 18-29, and four were 50-64-year-old. Four out of five managers had been involved with the station for three or more years and seven for 1-2 years, so the respondents should have a relatively comprehensive view of their station. The respondents' fields of study varied: A third studied majors connected to media, journalism, broadcasting, radio, or communications. Others included various majors, e.g., sociology, political science, culture, arts and design, medicine, engineering, history, education, computer sciences, and law.

The second part of the survey focused on organisational values with adapted questions from the OCAI. The OCAI-derived statements indicate the four culture types: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy (Cameron & Quinn 2011). The original instrument has six items: dominant characteristics, organisational leadership, management of employees, organisational glue, strategic emphasis, and success criteria. From the original six, five were selected and slightly modified to precisely match the state of the radio station by changing the wording (e.g., the original being 'The glue that holds the organisation together is an emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment,' and the altered version 'The glue that holds our station together is the emphasis on achievements and goal accomplishment.'). The question about employee management was left out: student-run stations primarily operate on unpaid participation of students and other volunteers, not paid employees, which is the focus of the original OCAI question on employment, with, e.g., a statement on

security of employment. Also, the part for preferred culture in the future was left out. Each item has four statements. In the original OCAI, a respondent should divide 100 points among these alternatives, allocating most to the option reflecting one's organisation (Cameron & Quinn 2011). Instead of this ipsative scoring, a 5-step Likert scale is selected, with a value of one meaning strongly disagreeing and five strongly agreeing with the statement.

The alterations are pragmatic: the respondents might find the original OCAI instrument laborious. As the survey included general questions about the station, answering everything with thought could have been too arduous for the respondents, resulting in less accuracy or discontinuation. The survey design aimed to provide an easy-to-fill-out form with questions applicable to the respondent's current situation and position (e.g., Iarossi 2006: 48).

Also, as the survey includes Likert-scale questions about topics other than organisational values, altering the original OCAI to match the measurement style of these questions makes it easier to use the data for later purposes and statistical analysis.

Likert scale for OCAI has been found reliable before (e.g., Kalliath et al. 1999). Teräväinen et al. (2021) used Likert scaling in scoring the current and preferred culture typologies in Finnish construction sites, referring to Bellot (2011), who, in analysing culture assessment tools, concluded that the Likert scaling is more useful in statistical analysis than ipsative scaling. Heritage et al. (2014) also used a 1-5 Likert scale in examining the validity of the OCAI in assessing organisational

cultures. Their findings provide further evidence of the psychometric properties of the OCAI and the instrument's validity as a viable method of culture evaluation.

The means for Likert values of each item statement are added together and then divided by a total of five, producing an overall mean from 1 to 5 for the given statement. A value closer to five indicates a dominant, and a mean under three suggests a not-prevalent cultural feature. The overall mean is then plotted on a quadrant form with two crossing axes with dimensions on internal vs external and flexibility vs stability. First, individual elements are examined through means and standard deviations. Second, the means from each item statement representing a particular cultural type are added together and divided by five. This results in an altogether mean plotted on a quadrant, creating a sum variable labelled 'The Organisational Culture Type', reflecting an overall image of the organisational culture of student radio in Europe. Even though not following the original OCAI questionnaire with its ipsative scoring on six dimensions, forming such a sum variable is justified as the validity and reliability of the CVF and OCAI are well tested in various empirical studies (Howard 1998; Yu & Wu 2009; Lamond 2003; Heritage et al. 2014). The sum variable reliability is then tested using Cronbach's alpha (e.g., Tavakol & Dennick 2011).

In some of the questions, not all respondents answered. The missing data has been imputed with a variable mean, thus not affecting the sample average.

4. Results

The individual items with means and standard deviations and their connectedness to a particular culture type are represented in table 2, and the overall organisational culture profile of European student radio in figure 2. As standard deviation measures how dispersed the responses are concerning the mean, a higher standard deviation score refers to a more scattered and a low score, a more unified view, respectively.

	Mean	*Std.Dev.*	*Type*
Dominant Characteristics			
The station is a very personal place. For example, it is like an extended family and people seem to share a lot of themselves.	**4,0**	**1,10**	Clan
The station is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. For example, people are willing to do extra hours and take risks.	**3,6**	**1,08**	Adhoc
The station is very results-oriented. For example, a major concern is with getting the job done and people are very competitive and achievement-oriented.	**2,2**	**0,97**	Market
The station is a very controlled and structured place. For example, formal procedures generally define what people do.	**2,6**	**1,12**	Hierarchy
Organizational Glue			
The glue that holds our station together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organisation runs high.	**4,4**	**0,75**	Clan
The glue that holds our station together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.	**3,6**	**0,85**	Adhoc
The glue that holds our station together is the emphasis on achievements and goal accomplishment.	**3,2**	**1,01**	Market
The glue that holds our station together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organisation is important.	**3,2**	**0,93**	Hierarchy
Leadership			
The stations management is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.	**4,2**	**0,71**	Clan
The stations management is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovation, or risk taking.	**3,4**	**1,16**	Adhoc
The stations management is generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, or results-oriented focus.	**2,4**	**1,43**	Market
The stations management is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.	**4,1**	**0,69**	Hierarchy
Strategic Emphases			
The station emphasises human development. For example, high trust, openness, and participation persist.	**4,4**	**0,69**	Clan
The station emphasises acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. For example, trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.	**4,1**	**0,68**	Adhoc
The station emphasises competitive actions and achievement. For example, overachieving targets and winning prizes and attention are dominant.	**2,5**	**1,04**	Market
The station emphasises permanence and stability. For example, efficiency, control, and smooth operations are important.	**3,5**	**0,96**	Hierarchy
Criteria of Success			
The station defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, for example teamwork, staff commitment, and concern for people.	**4,2**	**0,71**	Clan
The station defines success on the basis of having the most unique or newest shows or services. For example, it is an innovator in program planning.	**3,4**	**0,97**	Adhoc
The station defines success on the basis of winning and outpacing the competition. For example, being the best station out there is important.	**2,4**	**1,11**	Market
The station defines success on the basis of efficiency. For example, trustworthiness, smooth scheduling, and low cost production are critical.	**3,5**	**0,98**	Hierarchy

Table 2: Organisational Culture Item means and standard deviations, according to CVF, in the European Student Radio Stations.

Based on the means, the clan culture seems to be the predominant feature in each item, especially concerning the organisational glue with loyalty and mutual trust (mean 4.4) and strategic emphasis (4.4) on human development. These item statements also have a relatively low standard deviation score (0.69-0.75). The same is valid with claims about leadership and criteria of success (0.71). Interestingly, in the clan type statement about the dominant characteristic, the mean is still the highest of the four, 4.0, but the standard deviation is relatively high, 1.1. This might imply different views on whether the station feels as personal as stated. The

standard deviations for all the statements indicate dispersion in the data, perhaps reflecting the multitude of features dominating the organisation.

Examining the individual means, statements that imply an adhocracy culture have the second-highest score on three of five items: the dominant characteristics (3.6), the organisational glue (3.6), and most clearly in the strategic emphasis (4.1), with its statement regarding novelty and looking for challenges. This statement also has the lowest standard deviation (0.68) of all the statements in the data, implying a somewhat clustered view about this being a key emphasis in European student radio. The adhocracy culture statements have the second-highest mean scores in dominant characteristics and organisational glue statements.

The hierarchy culture type has the second-highest mean scores in two individual items, the leadership (4.1) and the criteria of success (3.5), and the third highest in the other three items. Especially notable is the leadership item, in which the standard deviation is as low as 0.69. As the respondents are managers, the leadership style that emphasises coordination and maintaining a smooth-running organisation seems typical, even though not perceived as the defining factor or the glue that holds people together.

Based on means, market focus is the least dominant form of organisational culture in European student radio stations. The statements have the lowest scores in all five items, except for organisational glue, whose score equals that of hierarchy (3.2.). Still, statements implying a market culture have the highest standard deviation scores (1.01-1.43) in all but one item, i.e., dominant characteristics (0.97). This implies that goal-oriented competition and achievement elements still exist even

though not high on average. One can argue, though, that the questions on competition-oriented values might be understood ambiguously, as the OCAI instrument does not clearly define what ‘achievements’, ‘result-orientation’ and ‘winning’ in this context means.

After reviewing the individual item scores, one can calculate the overall mean and standard deviation scores for each culture type-based sum variable calculated for all four culture types. These scores are presented in table 3. The mean scores can then be plotted on a quadrant (figure 2).

Culture Type	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Dev.
Clan Culture	51	3.04	5.00	4.22	0.49
Adhoc Culture	51	2.20	4.60	3.59	0.60
Market Culture	51	1.00	4.40	2.56	0.76
Hierarchy Culture	51	2.00	4.80	3.38	0.62

Table 3: Overall scores for organisational culture types.

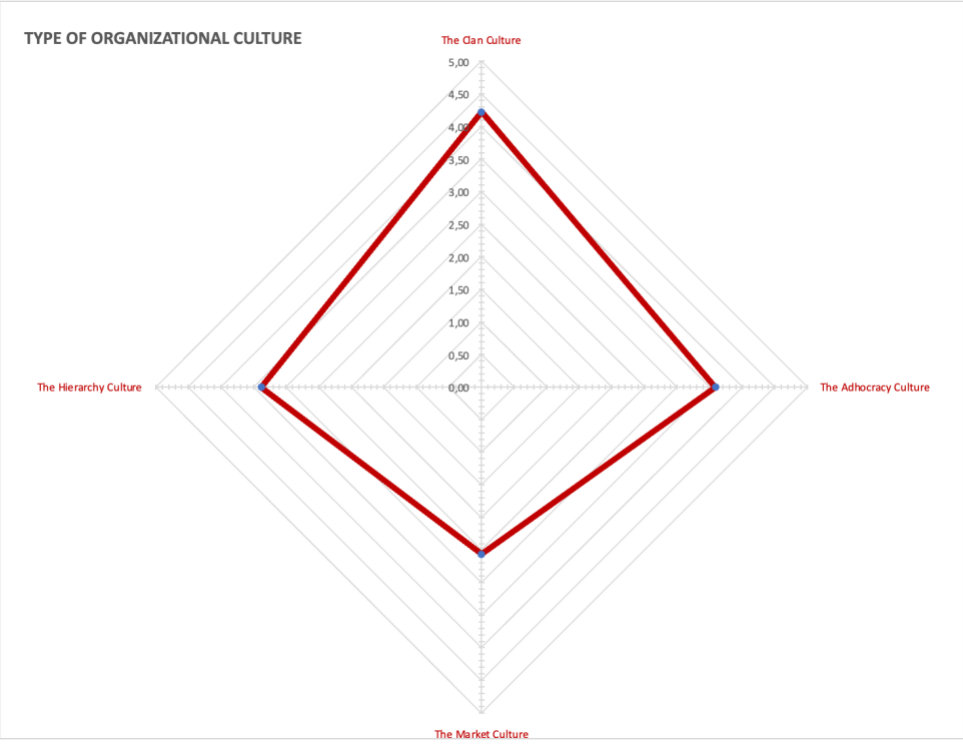

Figure 2: Overall organisational culture type of European student radio.

Figure 2 visualises the overall organisational culture values by displaying the mean levels of the four cultural types. As stated earlier, the Likert scale values 1-2 refer to disagreeing, and 4-5 agreeing with the statement. As seen in the quadrant, the dominant culture in the European student radio organisations seems to be the Clan Culture, with a mean score of 4.2. This is not surprising when considering the depictions in community media and its objectives and aspirations (Coyer & Hintz 2010). The lowest standard deviation score of all four types (0.49) in table 3 also implies relatively little debate on whether this is a typical form of culture in student radio stations. The second highest is the Adhocracy Culture (3.6). Cameron & Quinn (2011) have described it as "…like a temporary institution, which is dismissed

whenever the organisational tasks are ended and reloaded rapidly whenever new tasks emerge." Because student radio often follows the academic year or years with students coming in, participating for a while, and leaving after their course is over or after graduating, this type of culture fits well with this volatile environment. A bit more surprising is the relatively high level of Hierarchy Culture (3.4), which opposes the adhocracy culture of agility, transformation, and constant change, focusing on control, consistency, and uniformity. The mean level of Market culture is only 2.4, which implies that aggressive competition and customer focus are not essential student radio values. Still, the highest standard deviation score of all four types (0.76) hints at the presence of market culture, but the stations vary the most on this dimension.

The reliability of the construct, the extent to which the individual dimensions measure culture types consistently, is tested by running a Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis (table 4) on statistical analysis software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

Sum Variable of Culture Type	Cronbach's alpha
Clan Culture	.565
Adhocracy Culture	.602
Market Culture	.706
Hierarchy Culture	.671

Table 4: Sum variable alpha scores.

The alpha scores for the sum variables are between .57 and .71, making them sufficient for this exploratory research (Nunnally 1967). Still, only the construct of

Market Culture has an acceptable reliability score based on the cutoff values presented by George & Mallery (2003).

The reasons for low alpha vary, but especially two are significant here: The low number of items in the scale (5 per each construct) and the possibility that the structure measures more than one dimension, the premise of a high alpha score (Gliem & Gliem 2003: 87). As the original OCAI is intended to measure four distinct categories, one assumes that the internal consistency should be higher. Still, the scores may imply the presence of several elements of different cultural types, not ruling each other out. Thus, the low alpha scores may indicate more than four latent dimensions. An exploratory factor analysis would be an interesting next step, but it is not in the range of this study, inviting future research.

5. Conclusions, limitations, and future implications

Concerning the two presented hypotheses, findings support both:

H1: The dominant cultural category for European student radio organisations is clan culture.
H2: European student radio stations display adhocracy cultures.

Student radio consists of volunteers, mostly students, focusing on the close community and being alternative, with an educational and empowering approach. There is a project-oriented take, as students come and go throughout the academic year to produce, experiment, and create content. When examining the quadrant figure and the means for different items of organisational culture of European student

radio, it seems puzzling that there are elements of hierarchical culture and even cues of market competition. After all, in the CVF model, these represent the different ends of the continuum concerning internal focus and integration versus external focus and differentiation, stability and control versus flexibility and discretion.

These competing values may reflect the multidimensional nature of student radio organisations, with many unique facets that are hard to find in other, more stable organisations and difficult to simplify using metrics perhaps not designed to include such an outlier in the organisational universe. Student stations depend on the motivation of and simultaneously exist for the volunteers, thus emphasising the strong sense of community and 'us' versus, e.g., market-oriented commercial media (e.g., Coyer & Hintz 2010). Still, the stations must deal with the constant shifts in expertise and readiness, resulting in diverse ideas, group dynamics, and skills. Often the stations, unable to finance themselves independently from the university or other entities, end up having their expenditures scrutinised or budgets cut under the economic pressures of their owners (Sauls 2000; Raymond 2016; Wallace 2015). To stay relevant, attractive, pedagogically sound, and thus perceived as worthy of investing time and money, stations must constantly update their content and ways of being.

At least three things may cause ambiguity in the results. First, the data is limited in size, causing the variance in the responses to affect the statistical analysis more than in a larger dataset. Therefore, one should be careful not to draw universal conclusions but treat this study as a first probe into an understudied subject. Second, European student radio stations are diverse, demonstrating various organisational

cultures rather than uniform types, even though the literature on community and student radio (Coyer & Hintz 2010; Cavanagh 2009) stresses clan culture. National cultural differences influence organisational practices and priorities (e.g., Hallin & Mancini 2004; Hofstede et al. 2010). Thirdly, rather than being limited to distinct categories, culture emerges as a continuum, with various attributes present simultaneously, as the competing values framework suggests (Cameron & Quinn 2011; see also Martin 2002; Schein 2004). Fitting organisations into predetermined typologies simplifies their complexity.

Group values are not the critical prerequisite for group cohesion. Being part of a straightforward goal-oriented team can strongly motivate its members to commit to it, even more so than members' perceived similarities. (Anderson 1975: 73-75; Laor 2019). Intergroup competition can also boost cohesion, especially by thriving or facing disappointments. This might be caused by the volunteers' unwanted feelings of cognitive dissonance. When the group membership is chosen willingly, identifying with the group becomes more robust, even when the group performs poorly. Evidence suggests that cohesion based on the group task more accurately predicts group effectiveness than interpersonal attraction. (Brown 2000: 49-50.)

Student radio managers operate on limited resources, with the student community in constant flux (Raymond 2016: 204-205). In conditions like these, adopting established organisational structures, management principles, or the 'default mode' management paradigm of hierarchical structures requires less experience and maintenance (Raymond 2016: 205; Tunstall 2007; Weber et al. 2001). Hierarchy is also in line with the clan type in that it focuses more on internal processes than

external ones (Cameron & Quinn 2011). One can thus confirm that the findings of this study are closely in line with previous research on CVF in voluntary and creative organisations (Grabowski et al. 2015; Felipe et al. 2017), with the emphasis being on clan and adhocracy cultures, but with the surprising presence of contradicting hierarchy culture present, bringing stability and predictability in constantly changing and turbulent situations and circumstances.

The findings call for future research. First, does the level of involvement and advisory control of university staff affect the perceived level of the hierarchy and management styles of student managers? **The survey data for this study is too limited to offer notable or statistically significant differences between station managers, faculty advisors and editors.** Broader data is needed to examine possible correlations. Second, traces of market culture imply some achievement orientation in the otherwise clan-based student radio. The wording in the survey questions linked to market culture might be off-putting for student radio participants resisting business-oriented connotations (e.g., Wallace 2015: 51). Revealing the possible competitive mindset requires a more qualitative exploration, allowing conversation and explanation. Thirdly, the standard deviation scores suggest that the stations differ most in the market culture value position. Where are the most competitive stations, who are they competing against and why?

The findings suggest that student radio managers must balance between being a mentoring and team-building facilitator, an entrepreneurial innovator, and a monitor coordinating day-to-day operations. This supports the view of student radio as a multi-faceted, problem-based learning environment which involves developing

management and leadership strategies (Laor 2019; Sauls 2000; Hannam et al. 2019). Being able to cope in a complex environment with simultaneous push and pull forces, it is more efficient and malleable to switch gears than firmly fixate on one set of organisational values (e.g, Raymond 2016: 206). As the competing values framework suggests, a single cultural archetype seldom truly reflects or encapsulates the variety of aspects and dimensions a cultural landscape within an organisation entails. As Cameron & Quinn (2011) have noted, "Rather than seeing collaboration and competition as being opposed, master managers must be able to harness the power of both these approaches.

Similarly, the need for control cannot be allowed to overwhelm the need for creativity and change." Peter Drucker has stated that knowledge-intensive organisations cannot rely on differing hierarchies, with bosses and subordinates, but instead more like teams of equals who find the organisation's values and mission to fit their personal views and values. Otherwise, they will leave. Thus, such organisations always compete for their core resource, qualified and knowledgeable people. They constantly need to market membership and attract, hold, recognise, reward, motivate and satisfy people. Especially within an organisation that does not provoke pay, people's loyalty must be obtained by proving that it provides them exceptional opportunities for putting their knowledge to work. (2009: 63-65.) Student radio permits such self-fulfilment and ambitions (Laor 2019). As survival is key to every organisation, such organisations focus primarily on internal focus and integration, though through creative inputs, they differentiate and remain flexible (Cameron & Quinn 2011).

Finally, even though OCAI proves to be a helpful tool in the student radio context, categorizing mostly voluntary organisations that live in highly volatile environments is challenging. Student radio stations must deal with a significant amount of uncertainty and change. According to the findings, they cope with this through various partly competing cultures. Typologies help to simplify and guide the analysis of cultures by providing categories. Still, by doing so, they also oversimplify the complex realities of organisations that include dimensions outside the stencil of a given instrument of analysis (Schein 2004: 199-200). To sharpen the view of the organisational culture depicted here and to delve into the deepest level of basic underlying assumptions of a given culture that makes the espoused values more understandable and interpretable (see Schein 2004: 36), this study encourages more studies on this subject with both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering and analysis and with more recent data.

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PUBLICATION III

Against the machine – Deep-seated beliefs about the purpose and identity of European student radio

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Against the Machine

Deep-seated beliefs about the purpose and identity of European student radio

Abstract

This study uses Edgar Schein's organisational culture theory to analyse the organisational culture and identity of three European student radio stations in Finland, Austria, and Ireland. The research aims to uncover the core cultural assumptions influencing these stations' internal integration and external adaptation. Schein's model of artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions provides the theoretical framework to examine how student radio organisations sustain continuity and adapt to external pressures. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with station managers, student volunteers, and faculty, followed by qualitative content analysis. The findings reveal that, despite geographical differences, all stations share core assumptions emphasising creativity, community engagement, and freedom of expression. Each station fosters a sense of belonging and distinctiveness from mainstream media.

1. Introduction

Organisational culture serves as a guiding force that unites individuals within an organisation, providing a framework for decision-making, interaction, and adaptation

in various situations (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). A strong organisational culture becomes vital for student radio stations, dynamic, student-led organisations with high personnel turnover and limited management expertise. These stations face unique challenges, such as a lack of professional continuity, fluctuating resources, and the constant influx of new volunteers. However, despite these obstacles, many student radio stations have managed to maintain their identity, mission, and operational effectiveness over time (Raymond, 2016; Smallwood et al., 2018).

Exploring the deeply rooted cultural assumptions governing their behaviour is crucial to understanding how volatile organisations remain resilient. Edgar Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture provides a comprehensive framework for this inquiry. According to Schein, organisational culture consists of three interrelated levels:

- artifacts (visible elements like structures and processes)
- espoused values (stated principles and norms)
- underlying assumptions (the often unconscious beliefs that shape an organisation's worldview)

While an organisation's artifacts and values may be easily observed, its underlying assumptions form the core of its culture and influence its long-term survival and adaptation.

Student radio stations offer a unique case for studying organisational culture in turbulent circumstances. These stations often serve as platforms for experimentation, education and alternative expression, positioning themselves against the more homogeneous landscape of mainstream media (Sauls, 2000; Wall,

2007; Fauteux, 2015). However, the challenge lies in sustaining these values while constantly integrating new members and adapting to external pressures, such as financial constraints and the evolving media environment (Reilly & Farnsworth, 2015; Freeman, 2022).

Schein's (2004) model emphasises the importance of understanding both internal integration (how members perceive their and their group members' roles and interact within the organisation) and external adaptation (how the organisation defines its purpose and navigates its external environment). This research applies Edgar Schein’s (2004) three-level model of organizational culture, focusing on how underlying assumptions shape both internal integration and external adaptation at Radio Tutka (Finland), Flirt FM (Ireland), and CCR 94.4 (Austria). Examining these stations, we aim to uncover the core beliefs that govern how student radio organisations sustain continuity and adapt to changing conditions while maintaining their mission and identity.

Beyond the specific yet understudied case of student radio organisational culture's core assumptions, a research topic worth its own, this study contributes to broader discussions on how organisations in dynamic and unpredictable environments - such as those driven by volunteerism and high turnover - cultivate resilience. The findings offer insights into the role of core assumptions in shaping group cohesion, fostering innovation, and ensuring long-term sustainability in such contexts (Schein, 2004; Van Bavel & Packer, 2021).

2. Organisational culture and identity

Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture provides a framework for exploring the often-hidden dynamics of culture that affect its actions. This study focuses on the

foundational core assumptions that unconsciously govern how an organisation perceives itself and its mission.

Schein's model has been widely applied across various organisations and contexts, including studies of innovation, performance, and leadership (Hogan & Coote, 2014) and team culture (Cole & Martin, 2018). It has also guided analyses of European student radio stations' organisational artifacts (Hautaniemi, 2022a) and value systems (Hautaniemi, 2022b). Here, it provides insights into how core assumptions shape their practical choices.

Kurt Lewin's (1935) group dynamics theory suggests that every group must balance achieving goals (locomotion) and maintaining the group (affiliation). Organisations must adapt to their external environment while maintaining the internal integration of their members. These responses depend on core assumptions about human nature and the external world (Schein, 2004; 2012; Cole & Martin, 2018).

Internal integration involves defining group boundaries, norms, and member expectations, addressing ‘who we are.’ This process intertwines with external adaptation, as external pressures influence acceptable behaviours. A radio station, for example, must find consensus on its ‘reason to be’ to avoid fragmentation (Schein, 2004). Cultural assumptions about control, self-actualisation, or acceptance steer how organisations value and treat different people (Gurbuz et al., 2014). If assumptions contradict reality, the organisation may struggle (Schein, 2004).

Core beliefs, values, and assumptions build organisational identity. Members' cohesion and belonging positively affect creativity and performance (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; He & Brown, 2013; Hirst et al., 2009). According to the optimal distinctiveness theory, individuals seek inclusion and differentiation (Brewer, 1991). Boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are crucial for group identity, creating self-

referential meaning through contrast with others (Pickett & Brewer, 2001; Van Bavel & Packer, 2021).

Organisations like student radio stations exist within broader cultural contexts that affect their practices and values (Hofstede et al., 2010). National culture shapes strategies by influencing relationships within the organisation and its environment (Schneider, 1989). For instance, individualistic cultures like the U.S. and the U.K. emphasise personal merit, while Nordic cultures value group cohesion and equality (Schein, 2004). This should be considered when comparing Finnish, Austrian, and Irish student radio, which may exhibit culturally specific traits. According to the World Values Survey (WVS), Austria, Finland, and Ireland prioritise self-expression, diversity, and equality but differ in other ways. For example, Ireland values religion and national pride, while Finland is more secular-rational (World Values Survey Association, 2023). Hofstede's data show Austria scores high in achievement motivation, Finland values work-life balance and flexibility, and Ireland emphasises personal success and creativity (Hofstede Insights, 2024). These traits represent national averages and should not be considered universal truths, as individual subcultures and contexts vary (Van Bavel & Packer, 2021). In addition, young Europeans broadly support diversity, freedom of expression, and democratic participation (Ross, 2020).

Cultures also differ in their adherence to social norms. Tight cultures enforce strict norms and discourage deviance, leading to greater self-regulation and conformity, while loose cultures allow more freedom (Gelfand, 2018). Tightness can vary by domain; for example, a student radio station may encourage experimentation while sanctioning those who fail to demonstrate it.

3. Student Radio and Organisational Culture

Student radio research primarily focuses on North American college stations, which have a history spanning over a century, with more than a thousand U.S. stations supporting emerging bands, media innovation, and providing a non-commercial alternative (Rubin, 2015; Slotten, 2008; Wall, 2007; Sauls, 2000; Fauteux, 2015). Despite challenges like inexperienced leadership, high volunteer turnover, and inconsistent funding (Reilly & Farnsworth, 2015; Raymond, 2016; Smallwood et al., 2018), student radio continues to be an influential educational tool, enhancing student satisfaction and offering practical learning opportunities (Laor, 2019; Berryman, 2021; Freeman, 2022).

College radio has long upheld an 'alternative' identity characterised by cultural uplift, progress, and distinct lifestyles. This identity, rooted in the 1920s United States, contrasts with commercial radio and has become a central premise for student radio research (Tremblay, 2003; Wall, 2007).

Internationally, student radio diverges from the U.S. model. In Latin America, university radios are more neutral and government-influenced (Valencia, 2022), while Eastern European stations have focused more on free speech and minority issues (Doliwa, 2015; Planšak, 2010). U.K. stations are more technologically experimental and offer youth-oriented programming, distinguishing themselves from the BBC (Bailey, 2023). However, not all student radios pursue an alternative identity, with some mimicking mainstream media instead (Wilson David, 2015; Tufan et al., 2021; Laor, 2020). On organisational artifact level strategies and programming, European student radio prioritises education, entertainment, and systematic operations, not emphasising, e.g., indie music as much as the American college radio (Hautaniemi, 2022a).

Content choices often reflect broader organisational values not always shared by all stakeholders (Wall, 2007; Waits, 2007; Wilson David, 2015). Hautaniemi (2022b) found that European student radios exhibit community, clan, and project-oriented cultures, thriving on volunteerism and empowerment while maintaining structured management.

The core assumptions of student radio stations remain underexplored. These assumptions likely play a key role in shaping how organisations balance continuity and adaptation to external pressures. Understanding these assumptions can provide insights into how student radios maintain cohesion, foster innovation, and engage with their broader communities despite their challenges. This exploration also deepens our understanding of the more visible cultural artifacts, organisational choices, and values expressed by student radio.

4. Research hypotheses and design

Based on Edgar Schein's (2004) organisational culture theory, this study explores the core cultural assumptions of internal integration and external adaptation at three European student radio stations: Finnish Radio Tutka, Austrian CCR 94.4, and Irish Flirt FM. The study addresses three primary research questions, the first two grounded on Schein's (2004) model and the third allowing international comparison:

Q1 What basic assumptions are concerning social identity and who we are (internal integration)?

Q2 What are the basic assumptions about the core purpose of being (external adaptation)? Q3: Do student radio stations from different parts of Europe differ based on their basic assumptions?

4.1. Research subjects

As geographical, political, historical, and societal factors shape organisations' values, means, and goals (Hofstede et al., 2010), the stations were chosen for their geographical diversity and unique organisational characteristics, allowing international comparison. Radio Tutka is an online-only student radio station of Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS), an institute of higher education with 12,000 students, situated in Turku, the regional capital of Southwest Finland, located at the mouth of the River Aura. With a population of about 200,000 and a metropolitan area of approximately 311,000, it is Finland's 6th most populous municipality and the third most populous urban area (Turku AMK 2024; Turun kaupunki 2024). Tutka, established as a student-run radio in 2016, streams five days a week during semesters. It has been the practical learning environment for TUAS media students, who carry out the day-to-day operations. Two lecturers are in charge of overseeing and tutoring the 20-30 students involved annually. Tutka invites media majors and other students with a burning passion to experiment with radio production, aiming for a professional creative outlet. (Tutka, 2022.)

Campus & City Radio 94.4 (later referred to as CCR 94.4) is an FM and online radio station operating at St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences, Austria, which has over 4,000 students. St. Pölten is the capital and largest city of the State of Lower Austria in northeast Austria, with 55,538 inhabitants (Wikipedia 2024a). CCR 94.4, established in 2002, is the educational radio station of FH St. Pölten and a free community radio for the city's residents. It serves as a training ground for journalism and audio production students. Still, students from all disciplines can participate through practical courses, with roles in music planning, social media, and technical support. The station has an overseeing body of faculty staff, but student volunteers

and a station manager run the day-to-day operations. The number of student volunteers varies from 10 to 30 at a time. Teachers and staff from other faculties are also involved by implementing radio in various courses. CR 94.4, a non-commercial, impartial, and inclusive Association of Free Radios Austria member, offers citizens free radio workshops and a place to create their own shows. CCR 94.4 thus integrates students and community volunteers, offering diverse programming and hands-on experience in creative, technical and administrative roles. It broadcasts seven days a week to engage 'non-traditional' audiences. (Campus & City Radio 94.4, 2020; F.H. St. Pölten, 2022.)

Flirt FM 101.3, established in 1995, airs at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Galway is a city in County Galway on the River Corrib between Lough Corrib and Galway Bay. It is the most populous city in the province of Connacht and the fifth most populous in Ireland, with a population of 85,910 (Wikipedia 2024b). The university has a student population of 18,000. Flirt FM is a licensed station within the Community Radio Ireland network, broadcasting a mix of music and talk from Monday to Saturday, emphasising Irish music and current affairs. Flirt FM broadcasts on FM and streams online. It has one full-time and two part-time paid staff looking after station operations and tutoring 150 student volunteers annually. Radio is not connected to any specific subject or degree programme but is open to anyone interested. (College Campus Radio DAC, 2022; NUI Galway, 2022.)

As the stations varied in their structure and connectedness to education and host universities, each group of station representatives varied from one station to another. The interviewees were gathered by a contact person for each station, who was given an essential requirement for selection: despite age, gender or role at the station, each participant should be actively involved in the radio, thus having grounded and

encompassing views on their station's culture. Participants included station managers, radio staff, students, and lecturers. Interviews were conducted in late 2019 for Radio Tutka and CCR 94.4 and via video conferencing in early 2022 for Flirt FM. Tutka's interviewees were student station managers Jussi and Mari, media student Timo, and senior media lecturer Anne. CCR featured four media management students: Alina, Karin, Julia, Anna, paid station manager Max, and social work lecturer Johann. Flirt FM's interviewees were paid staff Laura, Kerry, and Linda, who guide students and community members. The names of the respondents have been changed.

Multiple individuals were interviewed to mitigate bias, and efforts were made to build rapport and ensure an unbiased stance (Trull, 1964; Trainor & Graue, 2013; Seidman, 2013). Interviews followed a semi-structured yet consistent format, allowing open-ended responses to explore participants' perceptions and beliefs, resulting in rich interview data.

4.2. Content analysis

The transcribed interviews underwent qualitative content analysis (QCA) to make valid inferences from texts (Weber, 1990, p. 9). Instead of focusing on specific questions or limiting the analysis to preset categories (aka, concentrating on music, organizational practices or other artifacts), QCA was used to interpret the fundamental assumptions of student radio representatives based on the entire interview data. The foundation of QCA was Schein's (2004, pp. 88-112) framework for internal integration, focusing on member characteristics and expectations and external adaptation, examining the station's primary and latent purposes and

relationship with the outside world. Repeated analysis comparisons were conducted over four months to enhance the reliability of the single-researcher analysis (Schreier, 2012, pp. 3-8; Weber, 1990, p. 17). According to Schein (2004), internal integration emphasizes how organizations develop shared assumptions, values, and norms to foster group cohesion, define membership, and manage internal conflict. These cultural elements are crucial in maintaining student radio identity and ensuring members understand their roles and responsibilities within the station. Schein's (2004) theory on external adaptation explains how organizations define their purpose concerning their external environment and navigate external pressures while maintaining their identity. For student radio stations, this involves adjusting to environmental demands, ensuring the organization's survival, and sustaining its mission over time.

5. Results

5.1. Internal Integration – Who We Are

Radio Tutka. The station managers, Jussi and Mari, note that while their staff may vary in personality, from social to introverted, they share fundamental values that underpin internal cohesion. Enthusiasm, curiosity, and trustworthiness are essential, reflecting Schein's focus on the importance of shared norms for group stability. Trustworthiness and fulfilling commitments are crucial for Radio Tutka's group cohesion. Conflicts typically arise when individuals do not meet these expectations, creating friction within the team. Self-determination and creativity are highly valued, but these must coexist with a strong sense of personal responsibility. This aligns with Schein's view that internal integration relies on group members meeting their responsibilities and understanding their organisational roles. Thus, for the sort of people who would not fit in, the response is 'the kind who does nothing'. Shared assumptions about responsibility and participation are central to the station's functioning:

> *As said, if you do nothing, if someone in the group does not function, it creates friction. The team is coherent, and everyone knows their role and takes responsibility. That is the starting point for everything. - Timo, Finland*

Schein (2004) suggests that when internal integration is strong, individuals internalize the organization's expectations, which reduces the need for direct intervention by leadership. At Radio Tutka, while the station values self-determination and individual creativity, the expectation to deliver is inherent. Student managers like Mari model this commitment by regularly contributing beyond their formal obligations,

reinforcing the cultural norm of responsibility through example. She often drops by the studio after her lectures and is swept along in something urgent, suddenly noticing that it is 8 p.m.

The value of a self-imposed initiative is underlined further in the lecturer Anne's response: even though it is nice to have students hanging around at the studio, they are not necessarily the most needed. Individuals are expected to be proactive, self-driven and personally responsible without extensive handholding. At Radio Tutka, members are expected to be proactive and resourceful, turning ideas into action - further illustrating how strong internal integration is marked by a shared understanding of expectations, where members act autonomously within agreed-upon norms. Even though student managers are there to provide guidance and support, the value of resourcefulness and adaptability is prominent, and the onus is on the individuals to make the most of the opportunities and resources at their disposal.

Mari's answer surreptitiously reveals a preferred stance when discussing current mainstream radio. While Jussi and Timo criticise the constant stream of uninflected content and monotonous music, she states, 'I like it. I guess I am not as enlightened as you are', carrying a tone of self-awareness and possibly irony. It suggests the awareness of the general perception among her peers that appreciating mainstream radio is less sophisticated or discerning regarding what is considered 'good' or 'enlightened' taste in content.

Flirt FM. At Flirt FM the emphazis for offering an alternative to Irish commercial radio is more prominent than at Radio Tutka, encouraging members to explore creative freedom and individuality within the bounds of the station's values. Creativity is not

unfettered; the station's cultural assumptions stress the importance of community, collaboration, and respect for others. This reflects Schein's (2004) idea that internal integration involves balancing individual expression with group cohesion. Everyone can and should find their unique voice. New members are encouraged to express distinctiveness and avoid imitating mainstream media:

> *We want people to express themselves rather than feel they must fit into something. Every year, a young guy suddenly wants to be Joe Rogan. You have to explain that Joe Rogan exists. You cannot be him. You must be yourself. - Kerry, Ireland*

The mix of motivations and input is diverse. Some want to advance their career in broadcasting, and some want to share a passion for music. Some strive to be influencers, and others join to be in the alternative music community. The station's spirit is emitted and communicated within the aesthetics of the studio and emerges when different people mix, often creating friendships in the studio. The respondents feel that the ones who want to join the radio have already gone through many motivational trials, firstly by wanting to study in Galway and then finding their way to Flirt FM. This filtration leads to a pool of dedicated volunteers from the get-go and creates a community of motivation.

Internal integration depends on shared values that define membership and for Flirt FM, the core assumption is that all members can learn and grow as long as they show dedication. For Flirt FM, enthusiasm and initiative, open-mindedness, and respect for diversity are critical. The station's commitment to inclusivity and collaboration reinforces the cultural belief that no one show or individual is more

significant than the station, ensuring that personal ambitions do not override collective goals. Even though uniqueness is encouraged, being overly individualistic is not, as community spirit runs strong. This focus on group cohesion reflects Schein's view that internal integration involves maintaining harmony and preventing conflicts through shared norms and values, e.g., balancing self-promotion and community focus. Linda and Kerry describe how Flirt FM may be a stepping stone for reaching bigger stations, and on rare occasions, combined with a preformed ego of a student, this conflicts with the station's values: No one show or individual is more significant than the station. In Flirt FM, one must understand that they are part of a collaborative community and are expected to contribute their bit for the station to work, as highlighted in Kerry's point:

> *What keeps the station alive is everybody. And if everybody is high level and peer to peer all the time, the place runs beautifully. If people step above or below that, it causes friction. - Kerry, Ireland*

CCR 94.4. Like Flirt FM, CCR 94.4 places a high value on community and collaboration, creating a "family-like" atmosphere where mutual respect and open-mindedness are central to the station's culture. Successful internal integration requires members to develop a sense of belonging and alignment with the group's values (Schein, 2004; Van Bavel & Packer, 2021) and CCR 94.4 fosters this through expectations of initiative, curiosity, and self-motivation.

The station manager, Max, highlights the balance between freedom and responsibility, which mirrors Schein's (2004) notion that internal integration depends on clearly defined expectations and norms. While the station provides space for

creative expression, it also expects members to use that freedom to develop meaningful content:

> *Although having fun is essential, it is not like 'do what you want and have fun'. When you have this space, ideas can develop. - Max, Austria*

Max's emphasis on using freedom productively aligns with the assertion that organizations develop internal norms to ensure individual autonomy is exercised to support the group's goals (Schein, 2004; Gelfand, 2018). At CCR 94.4, while anyone can join, members must demonstrate commitment, passion, and a willingness to push themselves out of their comfort zones, resembling the values witnessed in Tutka and Flirt FM. Alina, Karin, Julia and Anna emphasize that even technical and anxiety-provoking skills, such as speaking into a microphone, can be learned if the individual has the right mindset. Here, internal integration relies on formal abilities and shared cultural assumptions about motivation, commitment, and willingness to learn.

5.2. External adaptation – Purpose of Existence

Radio Tutka. When asked why Radio Tutka exists, respondents initially describe it as a learning environment where students gather skills to help them enter the media industry. This reflects the station's external adaptation role as a practical training ground. However, the respondents soon express that this characterization feels dismissive. They view the station as having a broader purpose, aspiring to reach beyond its educational role and make an impact on the outside world. The long-time

volunteer Timo explains with pride how the station has raised great talent and professionals and produced high quality shows, promoting willingness to grow:

> *I might be utopistic here, but we have much more potential than just being a learning environment. To grow, we need long traditions. Nevertheless, in a large student city, with such high-class radio people we have had, we have the potential to reach whatever. - Timo, Finland*

Timo's reflection indicates that Radio Tutka is seen not just as a place for skill-building but as a breeding ground for professionals who can shape the media landscape and have an impact. This aligns with Schein's (2004) idea that organizations often develop a deeper sense of purpose through their interactions with their environment. Therefore, Radio Tutka's external adaptation includes positioning itself as a creative force that goes beyond immediate, practical goals.

Respondents recognize the challenges of attracting listeners in a digital age, where easy-access playlists dominate. However, they emphasize the importance of personal connections, e.g., being interviewed or otherwise involved with people doing radio, in building a committed audience, which echoes Schein's (2004) point that successful external adaptation requires fostering strong relationships with key stakeholders - in this case, the university community and listeners. The station's niche focus and deliberate avoidance of competing with mainstream media reflect its clear external role: offering thought-provoking content and fostering personal connections rather than broad commercial appeal.

The value of freedom of expression and the eclectic diversity of content aligns with the idea that organizations define their external roles through their unique

contributions to their environment (Schein, 2004). Radio Tutka's programming, which can shift from pop to thrash metal in a single show, may alienate some listeners, but this eclecticism is part of its core mission. The station’s purpose is not to attract large audiences but to create meaningful, engaging content that resonates personally with those committed to listening. This focus on niche, reflective content demonstrates how Radio Tutka navigates its external environment by aligning its mission with the needs of a smaller, committed audience, simultaneously challenging the larger community.

Tutka members feel success in these communions between the host and the listener. They don’t merely want to entertain but create thought-provoking content that impacts on a personal level. The respondents value the ability to raise issues from various perspectives and topics. Lecturer Anne sees their mission to make the community feel that the radio makes a difference. This implies a value of community service and engagement, intending to be a positive force within their audience's lives, evoking emotions and fostering a platform for discourse instead of one-way communication. There is a common desire to have even more courage and initiative, suggesting that Tutka values boldness in their programming, aiming to leave a strong impression on their listeners. The goal of exposing the audience to insights and feelings of different people, cultures and groups suggests an appreciation for the complexity and variety of human experience. All the respondents underline the importance of engaging content that makes the listener think deeply about what is being said. These values suggest that Tutka’s goal is to be a meaningful and influential part of their listeners' lives, encouraging active participation, attention and reflection, which is promptly stated in the following station manager’s statement:

> *In short, we make good radio when someone stops and really listens to what we are saying. - Mari, Finland*

This statement illustrates the station's mission of fostering active listener engagement, a key aspect of external adaptation that prioritizes quality interaction over quantity.

The station's legacy and its role as a long-term institution are also central to its external adaptation strategy. The continuity of making an impact is crucial, and socializing the newcomers to carry on the work initiated by earlier student generations is vital. Timo speaks at length about gradual progress within the radio station and a desire to see the station endure decades into the future. He appreciates the sense of history and tradition emitted through the physical environment of the studio, with its old writings and posters of past events on the wall. This signifies respect for the evolution as part of the station's journey, indicating a commitment to improvement and adaptation over time, reflecting the dynamic nature of the radio station.

Flirt FM. If Tutka doesn't see clearly position itself in competition with established media outlets, Flirt FM respondents highlight its core mission as providing an alternative to more conventional, formatted mainstream broadcasting. Laura, Kerry, and Linda describe the station's emphasis on content as 'the weirder, the better'. Their views align with Schein's (2004) concept of external adaptation through differentiation. Flirt FM positions itself as a space for creative experimentation and marginalized voices, offering content distinct from commercial media's structured, formulaic output. This positioning illustrates how Flirt FM adapts to its external

environment by providing something mainstream outlets cannot. To them, Flirt is about giving a voice to those not represented on their terms in the mainstream media, such as community groups and students who want to do a show about something personally meaningful.

Individual freedom and access for anyone to broadcast within the confines of legality and respect for others override aims for homogenous quality or consistency, both descriptive of conventional media. If a volunteer wants to do a show, the management team advises to focus on their desired listener or niche instead of trying to please the masses. The station encourages individual freedom, giving volunteers the liberty to create content that is meaningful to them. However, this freedom comes with a responsibility to contribute to the community, reinforcing Schein's (2004) assertion that successful external adaptation often involves balancing autonomy and alignment with the organization's overarching purpose. Volunteers are advised to focus on creating niche content that resonates with specific audiences rather than attempting to imitate mainstream media, reflecting Flirt FM's attempt to differentiate itself and defining it's identity (Pickett & Brewer, 2001) by offering something unique within the larger media landscape.

Making mistakes and lacking in quality is accepted. The homelike atmosphere where every volunteer feels safe and accepted is highly valued. As Kerry explains, the station is a 'port-in-the-storm' for all who want to put effort into creating content, emphasising the importance of inclusiveness. This approach attracts newcomers, which is pivotal in ensuring continuity within the external adaptation issues such as the constant flux of students. The station appears to prioritise the well-being and comfort of its volunteers, recognising that a supportive atmosphere is crucial to their commitment and motivation. The willingness to challenge listeners with diverse,

sometimes unconventional content reflects Flirt FM's external adaptation strategy. The station aims to foster exploration and engagement, encouraging listeners to discover new perspectives. For Flirt FM, external adaptation involves acknowledging current audience expectations and pushing boundaries to offer new experiences, again, enforcing the station identity.

Although the station may not initially appeal to all audiences, respondents describe Flirt FM's gradual influence within the university community, showing how the station is slowly gaining recognition. Like Radio Tutka, Flirt FM's external adaptation strategy involves building personal connections with stakeholders. The respondents believe they are being valued more and more within the larger university community, even though they are positioned mentally and physically at the fringe, at the end of a corridor in a windowless studio. Flirt FM is gradually influencing and winning over stakeholders, such as the university management. The key to building mutual trust has been providing merit-based, university-acknowledged results, e.g., media awards, successful graduates and impactful shows. This indicates persistence and a norm of working diligently to prove the station's worth and impact in one's terms rather than expecting immediate recognition or external support.

The respondents feel that, eventually, the content may surprise and touch a composed listener if given a chance, as described in the following statement:

> *We are trying to give a radio space for different people. The same goes for listeners. Even if they chew into one thing and say, 'No, I didn't like that', try again later and go: 'Oh my god! You are in my brain right now'. That is what I love. - Laura, Ireland*

The willingness to experiment with different content types and encourage listeners to explore diverse offerings indicates a norm of openness and exploration. The respondents underline integrating with and contributing to the broader community, showing the value of community engagement and collaboration. The members see Flirt FM as integral to the larger social and academic environment. This gradual process of gaining acceptance reflects Flirt FM's long-term external adaptation strategy, where persistence and patience are key to building lasting relationships with the university and the broader community.

CCR 94.4. Like Radio Tutka and Flirt FM, CCR 94.4 defines its external role by offering content that diverges from mainstream media. Respondents describe their station as providing a 'wild' and unstructured alternative to Austrian commercial radio's more polished, homogenous offerings. External adaptation often involves fulfilling unmet needs in the environment (Schein 2004), in this case, offering diversity and spontaneity in content. Alina, Karin, Julia, Anna, and station manager Max describe their content as diverse as their people, with no strict prescription for what gets on air. They say CCR 94.4 differs from Austrian mainstream media in output and operation. Even though some students are responsible for introducing new tracks to the station playlist, like in Tutka, each host can play whatever, be it hip-hop, metal, or Austrian music. Specific external regulations govern what is expected and not accepted by the station. Still, within the studio walls, the students tell how internal policies are crafted without interference, making CCR 94.4 differ from more conventional stations and the university.

The same freedom extends to the content, where liberty to express oneself exceeds other goals and achievements, such as the number of listeners or receiving great feedback. CCR 94.4 is more about students and community volunteers sharing what is important to them. The dynamic interplay between the transmitter and the receiver should be respected, but not by renouncing the host's message. Not making compromises for anyone is transparent in the following rationale:

> *Listeners are important for the host wanting to be heard. That is the reason why they are here. Listeners are essential, but you do not make the content for the listeners. You make the content for yourself for them hear. - Karin, Austria*

This statement underscores CCR 94.4's core assumption that authenticity and self-expression are more important than conforming to external expectations, which is central to their external adaptation strategy. By prioritizing creative freedom over audience numbers, CCR 94.4 positions itself as a platform for underrepresented voices, filling a gap left by mainstream radio, which the respondents deem mainstream radio bland and homogenous. In contrast, CCR 94.4 offers diversity, an unchained and spontaneous alternative. The radio is also seen as an equal platform for people from all walks of life to get their voices heard, met, and acknowledged by those who otherwise would dismiss them, enforcing their position as a community of diversity.

Like in Tutka and Flirt FM, CCR respondents understand that their inconsistent variety might confuse and overwhelm those accustomed to coherence. Nevertheless, they feel the student community underappreciates the station. Some peers either do

not know or care about having a radio station at the university. Understanding the nature of the station demands conscious effort and patience from the listener. According to Karin and Anna, exploring it only briefly makes one underestimate or dismiss the radio in favour of something more effortless, and respondents feel this happens too often. Still, like Flirt FM, CCR 94.4 does not want to make compromises but continues to challenge its audience.

Despite alienating potential listeners, inclusivity and the following content diversity are pivotal to CCR 94.4. Similarly to Tutka, success is celebrated when this approach elicits a response, and the station moves its listeners. Being recognised like this generates pride through positive feedback for a show, attention from a more prominent media outlet, or a student who finds the courage to ask to get involved.

Pondering the core purpose of the station elicits the respondents to connect CCR 94.4 to the larger media landscape. The station's role as a platform for diverse perspectives and marginalized groups demonstrates how CCR 94.4 adapts to its external environment by focusing on community service and media diversity, linking to external adaptation, where organizations develop distinct identities by responding to gaps in the broader media landscape. Respondents express pride in the station's ability to offer more in-depth interviews and foster trust with artists, where they believe mainstream media falls short. This illustrates CCR 94.4's external adaptation as a mission-driven organization that contributes to media diversity by offering content that mainstream outlets cannot:

> *The media landscape needs us. We are a big part of media diversity. We bring up points that others cannot cover because they are restricted to something, and we can give people a voice that would not otherwise be*

heard. That is why we are important. We just have to bring our purpose to the listeners' minds. - Anna, Austria

Like Radio Tutka, CCR 94.4 is described as a place of learning where students and volunteers develop critical communication and problem-solving skills. The station's external adaptation includes being there to prepare its members for future roles, not just in broadcasting but in other professional fields as well. Despite limited external resources and recognition from the university, CCR 94.4 adapts creatively, finding ways to remain productive and relevant to its community. This resilience and innovation in the face of external challenges are hallmarks of effective external adaptation as described by Schein (2004).

6. Conclusions

This research applied Edgar Schein's (2004) organizational culture theory to analyze the underlying assumptions of three European student radio stations: Radio Tutka (Finland), CCR 94.4 (Austria), and Flirt FM (Ireland). Despite different national contexts, these stations share numerous commonalities centred around creativity, community engagement, and freedom of expression. These core assumptions shape internal integration and external adaptation, fostering a sense of belonging while distinguishing themselves from mainstream media.

Regarding *internal integration*, volunteers at all stations value creativity, enthusiasm, and initiative. They are encouraged to take risks and contribute to the station's content and mission. This reflects Schein's (2004) model, where fostering collective responsibility and trust ensures group cohesion despite ongoing changes.

Regarding *external adaptation*, the stations aim to offer an alternative to mainstream media, promoting underrepresented voices and fostering community engagement. Radio Tutka focuses on thought-provoking content, while Flirt FM and CCR 94.4 prioritize inclusivity and creative freedom, offering platforms for unique perspectives.

There are minor national differences. Radio Tutka reflects Finland's consensus-driven culture, while Flirt FM emphasizes personal expression, and CCR 94.4 balances structure with creative freedom, mirroring Austria's cultural traits (Hofstede Insights 2024). However, the similarities override differences as all stations share a core mission of promoting media diversity and self-expression, indicating a convergence of values across European student radio stations, witnessed in previous studies (Hautaniemi, 2022a; Hautaniemi, 2022b; Ross, 2022).

Through the lens of optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991; Pickett & Brewer, 2001), the stations position themselves on the fringe within the media landscape and their universities. While not directly opposed by external forces, they operate independently, reciprocating university trust through results like graduation and employment outcomes. Like North American college stations, they take pride in being alternative and promoting individual freedom of expression (Slotten, 2008; Wall, 2007; Sauls, 2000; Freeman, 2022; Fauteux, 2015).

Van Bavel & Packer (2021) argue that group identification is more about in-group love than hostility toward outsiders, which applies here. The respondents welcome diversity but value initiative, open-mindedness, and creative liberty as essential traits. Even in explicitly permissive student radio environments, some norms reflect core values like uniqueness and risk-taking, making the ideal student radio maker innovative and taking full advantage of autonomy. As Gelfand (2018) notes, even

loose cultures celebrating openness have key domains with strict norms highlighting essential values. The stations promote a mindset where volunteers are encouraged to take risks, be creative, and provide unique content, dismissing members that merely want to imitate more mainstream media.

In response to *research question 1 about internal integration (who we are)*, volunteers at the three stations share attributes like enthusiasm, creativity, and a community-focused ethos, blending individuality with a collective spirit. This supports existing research on European student radio culture being driven by ad-hoc project-orientation and clan emphasis (Hautaniemi, 2022b) and the convergence of youth values across Europe (Ross, 2020). Even though non-profit in goals, the ideal student radio maker is entrepreneurial: constantly taking risks, finding solutions, solving problems and charting new opportunities by being self-driven and taking initiative (Benz; 2009; Sarasvathy, 2001).

Regarding *research question 2 on external adaptation (why do we exist)*, the stations share common purposes: promoting freedom of expression, diversity, and community engagement. Radio Tutka emphasizes thought-provoking content and professional development, while CCR 94.4 and Flirt FM focus on providing an inclusive platform for diverse voices. Although the execution varies, these overarching themes of diversity, education, and community involvement are consistent.

For *research question 3 on international differences*, the findings suggest that while there are slight national differences mentioned earlier, the core values and goals are shared across the stations. A recurring theme across interviews is the importance of legacy and having an impact. Respondents emphasize the need to maintain creative freedom and continuity despite changing student populations,

suggesting that this sense of history and purpose is key to the station's endurance (Schein 2004: 87; Schein 2012: 314). The studied stations prioritize media diversity and freeform content, offering a challenging alternative to homogenous mainstream radio, demanding the listener to commit, as the ones doing the radio commit. They aim to engage listeners as active participants, with success measured by engagement quality, not listener numbers. This philosophy mirrors the ideals of early American university radio, which encouraged exploration beyond mainstream offerings and attempted to uplift the listeners (Wall, 2007).

The findings can be linked to the mass culture and art debate (Strinati, 1995). Student radio stations value diversity, authenticity, and creativity in contrast to the mass production models and methods of mainstream media ‘machine’. These stations offer a more humanized and engaging approach to radio by resisting standardised content and focusing on creativity and inclusivity. In artisan fashion, they produce unique, handcrafted content that requires attention, challenging passive consumption and promoting active engagement.

6.1. Future Implications and Limitations

The studied student radio stations emphasise education but on their own terms. Based on previous research (e.g., Laor 2019; Sauls 2000; Freeman 2022) and interviewees' views, student radio is for many a stepping stone for a career in the media industry. To gain clear-cut, industry-relevant competencies, one would expect student radio stations to emulate public and commercial media as much as possible, doing preformatted radio for clearly defined target demographics. Instead, the studied student stations value being different from the mainstream, challenging and uplifting the listener with their unique, thought-provoking shows. Where does this

alternative stance originate, and how is it transferred from generation to generation? As Wall (2007, 52) notes, the uplifting agenda was played out by recent American college radio broadcasters who

…had only slight understanding of the rich history of university-based radio, and yet were readily participating in agendas of radio that were set in the 1920s, and practices around music radio that were forged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It is even more interesting to see these agendas in Europe, where the histories, societal influences and motives for student-run radio are shorter, diverse and different. As this study reveals only some of the underlying core assumptions by examining case examples, more research is needed to find the historical roots and upholding forces of the culture of European student radio.

The research presented here has its limitations. Firstly, the interviews are not recent, which may not give the most up-to-date perspective of these organisations. It should be noted that organisational culture lies in deeply ingrained values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours developed over a long period. As Schein (2004; 2012) has pointed out, changing cultural elements, even intentionally, takes time and effort. Similarities with current findings can be found in two decades-old college radio studies (e.g., Waits, 2007; Wall, 2007; Wallace, 2008; Sauls, 2000). Second, we embody many identities that awaken as social situations change (Van Bavel & Packer, 2021). The respondents were primed to embrace their roles as student radio representatives. Their responses might have differed if they were reminded about other group memberships (e.g., marketing students, women, Finns). They might have varying identities even within the radio context, as any organisation may inhabit

subcultures with varied values and beliefs (see Wilson David, 2015; Laor, 2020; Martin, 2006). Thirdly, comparing stations in three countries merely gives a glimpse of European student radio, which would require comprehensive data and cross-method research covering more countries to understand it thoroughly. Finally, the findings do not explain student radio stations' permanence and their culture's resilience, as causalities can not be derived from these case studies. Future research should examine the cultures of unsuccessful or dismantled stations to avoid survivorship bias.

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