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The popular music heritage of the Dutch pirates: illegal radio and cultural identity

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Abstract

This article explores how cultural identities are negotiated in relation to the heritage of illegal radio in the Netherlands. The term ‘pirate radio’ commonly refers to the offshore radio stations that were broadcasting during the 1960s. These stations introduced commercial radio and popular music genres like beat music, which were not played by public broadcasters at the time. In their wake, land-based pirates began broadcasting for local audiences. This study examines the identities that are constituted by the narrative of pirate radio. Drawing on in-depth interviews with archivists, fans and broadcasters, this article explores the connection between pirate radio, popular music heritage and cultural identity. Moreover, it considers how new technologies such as internet radio provide platforms to engage with this heritage and thus to maintain these local identities. To examine how the memories of pirate radio live on in the present a narrative approach to identity will be used.

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Introduction

By illegally using radio frequencies which belong to licensed broadcasters, pirate stations in Europe (e.g. England, the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden) were pivotal in the introduction and dissemination of music genres like rock’n’roll in the 1960s (Chapman, 1992) and black music genres during the 1980s (Hebdige, 1993). Although rock has achieved artistic legitimacy (Van Venrooij and Schmutz, 2010) and is now considered cultural heritage (Bennett, 2009; Kong, 1999; Van Dijck, 2007), the illegal radio stations had to struggle to raise awareness of this genre. Public broadcasters largely ignored commercial popular music in the 1960s, because it was seen as ‘lowbrow’ culture and could undermine the authority of the political establishment by stimulating the rebellious fervor of the youth (Chapman, 1992; Dolfsma, 2004; Rutten, 2001). In this article I consider how the technologies for illegally distributing popular music become part of narratives of cultural heritage next to the music itself. In this context heritage will be defined as the collective memories, traditions and customs that live on in the present and are recognized as belonging to the cultural identity of a group of people (Bennett, 2009; Graham and Howard, 2008; Kong, 1999; Van Dijck, 2007).

The article will explore the proposition that technologies for listening and distributing music are concurrently part of people’s cultural memories and also help to shape these recollections (Neiger et

al., 2011; Van Dijck, 2007). As I will discuss below, memories often take the form of coherent stories that constitute cultural identities (Somers, 1994). I will examine how the remaining pirates and on-line radio stations that disseminate memories of the history of pirate radio bind people together by feeding into shared narratives of musical experience: how do current legal and illegal radio stations engage with the heritage of Dutch pirate radio to construct local cultural identities? Before turning to the theoretical section of this article, I will give a brief introduction to the pirate radio phenomenon by making a distinction between the period of offshore radio, the local land-based pirates that followed on from them and the current period, in which active engagement with the memories of the previous periods can be seen.

The emergence of pirate radio in the Netherlands

Although illegal broadcasting already existed before the Second World War the term 'radio pirates' commonly refers to the offshore radio stations that were broadcasting during the 1960s, such as for instance the Dutch Radio Veronica and English Radio Caroline (Kok, 2008; Rudin, 2007). By anchoring outside territorial waters these stations circumvented the laws that prohibited commercial radio. From their vessels they broadcasted rock'n'roll music, which could scarcely be heard on public radio stations at the time. Frith argues that in Britain the record industry supported them, because 'as the pirates developed their own musical ideology, so record companies had to start supplying the appropriate records' (Frith, 2001: 40). For the Dutch situation Kok (2008) finds that offshore radio station Veronica also liaised with music industry representatives. With their rebellious character the pirates appealed to youngsters who were exploring the then emerging Anglo-American oriented 'beat culture' (Rutten, 2001). Stations like Veronica and Radio Northsea International gave a voice to young people and thus intensified the generation gap between adults and youth. In 1974 the Dutch government finally put an end to offshore radio when they ratified the Marine Offences Act (Van Elteren, 1994; Kok, 2008).

In the period following the closing down of offshore radio, the Netherlands saw the advent of land-based illegal broadcasters. During the 1970s and 1980s these land-based pirates wanted to recreate the sound of the offshore stations, were dissatisfied with the content of the public stations or used illegal radio to give a voice to local identities (Lijfering, 1988; Van Elteren, 1994). While the offshore radio stations of the 1960s and 1970s exercised a national appeal, introducing commercial and new music styles like beat music, the land-based pirates also became a platform for the construction of local identities. They often focused on local popular music and presented their programmes in dialect. According to estimates of the Radio Communications Agency, between 10,000 and 60,000 stations were active in 1985 (Van Elteren, 1994). While the majority of these stations were small-scale local amateur initiatives, this number also includes professionally organized commercial pirate stations in the cities. In 2003 the Radio Communications Agency tried to 'clean up the airwaves', which led to a 73 percent reduction in the number of pirates (Lelieveldt and Van Leeuwen, 2006).

The succeeding period brought initiatives like legal internet radio stations, which try to recreate the sound of old pirates in the regions where illegal radio has disappeared. At the same time, illegal broadcasters in the Dutch countryside, where pirate radio has a long tradition (Lelieveldt and Van Leeuwen, 2006; Lijfering, 1988), try to resist the enforcement measures of the Radio Communications Agency. Remarkably, a young generation of pirates is continuing this local cultural heritage. This third period, in which the heritage of the preceding periods of illegal radio is appropriated, will be the focus of this study. I address the following research question: how do current legal and illegal radio stations engage with the heritage of Dutch pirate radio to construct local cultural identities? The emphasis is on the connections between past and present in local settings since, especially in the case of the land-based pirates, the limited range of the transmitter implies that the pirates cater for audiences in circumscribed areas.

Theory: the narrative constitution of musicalized identities

To explore how pirate radio stations construct mediated spaces of belonging, the cultural practices by which the heritage of illegal radio is appropriated in specific localities need to be uncovered. The links between past and present in these cultural identities can be theoretically conceptualized by drawing upon the concept of narrativity (Brockmeier, 2002; Somers, 1994). Somers (1994: 614) contends that social life is storied because 'people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives'. According to Somers, the narratives that constitute identities consist of relationships of events, which are connected in a causal way and embedded in time and space. In this manner the identity of the pirates and their listeners can be unpacked as a meaningful engagement with a sequence of cultural happenings and social relations, in order to understand the personal and cultural significance of illegal radio.

To guarantee the continuity of a group, community, subculture or even society, collective memories are of paramount importance since they bring together past and present in the cultural identity of a given collective (Brockmeier, 2002; Connerton, 1989). I consider the pirates as such a mnemonic community (Zerubavel, 1996) with their own narratives that inform particular identities. Members of these groups share stories that account for their founding myths and place in social life (Nelson, 2003). Thus, from the perspective of narrative identity, stories are the medium for mnemonic practices. Therefore narration is how meanings are attached to events, on both personal and collective levels. Hence, individuals weave their life-experiences together in a coherent story. This 'presentation of self to self, the ability to mobilize and hold on to a coherent image of "who one knows one is"' is what DeNora (1999: 45) calls 'introjection'. This fits an understanding of identity as a reflexive project of identity-work (Giddens, 1991). Individuals hold on to stories of the self for a sense of continuity in their lives, but also exchange these stories with family and friends, as a means of expression and self-definition (Nelson, 2003).

DeNora (1999: 45) sees popular music as one of the means for the construction of autobiographical memory: 'Music can be used as a device for the reflexive process of remembering/constructing who one is, a technology for spinning the apparently "continuous" tale of who one "is".' This is why music memories often have very personal meanings, related to life changing experiences like death, birth or former partners (DeNora, 1999).

Van Dijck (2007) finds that the technologies for listening to music also become part of these memories. For instance, the apparatuses which were used to listen to music during one's youth might have a specific personal meaning or, as in the case of a record player, signify a particular era. These recollections are 'technologically enabled' (Van Dijck, 2007), which means for this study that the technologies of pirate radio (e.g. transmitters and transistor radios) are part of the narratives which constitute cultural identities, but also that digital platforms like internet radio make it possible to engage with these narratives.

This points to the social practices that allow people to share memories of the heritage of illegal radio. As Van Dijck (2007: 91) explains: 'Memories attached to songs are hardly individual responses per se; recorded music is perceived and evaluated through collective frameworks for listening and appreciation.' Owing to this 'cultural embedding' of the narratives, the stories attached to recorded music are hardly ever solely of our own making, because personal biographies interact with public narratives, for example those that are disseminated by the mass media or shared with others (Van Dijck, 2007; Wang and Brockmeier, 2002). This means that memory is social; personal recollections

of events are affected by those of others (Jedlowski, 2001; Zerubavel, 1996). This illuminates how individual recollections relate to collective memories. Our personal memories of popular music might coalesce with historical accounts or the memories of a community. Moreover, by transmitting stories from generation to generation, either in everyday conversations or in mediated accounts, we can feel connected to events we did not actually experience ourselves. One can, for instance, have well-articulated ideas about popular music in the 1960s, while having been born after this period. Before turning to the narratives that sustain the cultural identity of the pirates, and the social-cultural practices by which these stories are shared, I will outline the methodological aspects of this study.

Background to the study

In order to explore the cultural identities constituted by the narrative of pirate radio I have conducted qualitative interviews with 22 people. These semi-structured interviews lasted around an hour. Two shorter interviews were carried out by telephone. With the consent of the interviewees I recorded the interviews, which enabled me to transcribe the conversations. Given the clandestine character of pirate radio, I have agreed to use only the first names of the respondents in this publication.

For the analysis of the interview data I have applied the procedures of the grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). By coding the transcripts with Atlas.ti the data could be explored to find patterns and compare the different interviews. At first the codes were open, to make the variety in the data visible. In a later stage codes were grouped in order to examine emerging patterns in the interview data. The interaction between analysis and data collection in the grounded theory approach allowed me to test my own interpretations of an interview by incorporating these aspects into the topics for the next interviews. This method of continuously comparing concepts and their instances reduces the risk of biased interpretations by the researcher (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The respondents for the interviews were selected on the basis of theoretical criteria. The interviewees had to represent the different aspects of the pirate phenomenon, to look at the findings from different perspectives. This resulted in a sample (see appendix A) comprising archivists of the history of pirate radio, fans, a representative of the Radio Communications Agency, an editor of a popular pirate website and broadcasters themselves. The latter group contains both (former) pirates and internet radio stations.

In the next four sections I will show how the legal and illegal radio stations engage with the heritage of pirate radio to construct local cultural identities. I will first consider the relation of the narrative of pirate radio to specific music genres. Thereafter the connection between pirate radio and local identity construction will be explored, followed by a discussion of the personal and cultural meanings of pirate radio. These sections shed light on the relation between the personal biographies of listeners and collective memories of illegal radio. Finally, the cultural embedding of the narratives will be analysed. Here I will focus on the ways in which these narratives are shared to allow for an ongoing engagement with the heritage of pirate radio.

The dominant narrative of the pirates: playing disregarded genres

This section of the article considers how the remaining pirates legitimize and give meaning to their practices by building upon a long tradition of illegal radio. Over the past 30 years the Dutch government has struggled with measures to put a halt to the pirate phenomenon, but the radio pirates are surprisingly persistent (Agentschap Telecom, 2010). Although, after years of enforcement measures, the authorities have managed to put an end to pirate radio in the western parts of the Netherlands, illegal radio continues to thrive in the less urbanized parts of the country, as will

become clear hereafter. The most recent estimate of the Dutch Radio Communications Agency (Agentschap Telecom, 2010) shows that there are still about 1800 pirates on air. Ironically, the risk this hobby entails, like large fines and seizure of the equipment, is a driving force behind the pirates' ongoing investment of time and money. One of the main appeals of illegal broadcasting is the possibility of 'the knock on the door', the idea that at any moment the Radio Communications Agency could raid the studio. As Frank explains, this is a big difference from the internet radio streams he uses nowadays for broadcasting, because the pirates were banned from the air in the part of the country where he lives.

They can no longer get you, since you pay for the music rights and all that. But I would rather run the risk of a sudden raid. I have had it quite a few times that I lost everything, because they took all of my equipment. But that is ... well, you have to experience it, I find it hard to explain. It is the excitement: are they coming tonight or not? (Frank, 43)¹

Before I was born, my father was a pirate on the medium wave. He has had several raids and has been imprisoned for this [laughs]. This was still possible during the 1950s. Because of his stories about this period I, as a boy of 11 years old, became curious. In the end you see the aerials and you ask yourself the question: what is this? (Johnny, 49)

These 'visits' of the agency have a pivotal role in the histories of the stations and in the stories that are shared among the pirates or between generations, as Johnny indicates. This raises the question of what it is, besides the excitement of engaging in an illegal activity, that motivates the pirates in the eastern parts of the Netherlands to continue their practices while they face ever rising fines. For this reason I will now turn to the narratives by which the pirates are socialized into their cultural identity.

The dominant narrative for the illegal radio broadcasters is that they play music which gets less attention on the regular stations. Obviously, this claim goes back to the heyday of pirate radio during the 1960s, when the offshore radio broadcasters played music that could not be heard on the public stations. This is a sequence of events that gives meaning to the activities of the remaining illegal stations. Thus these arguments form a narrative that is shared between pirates, voiced in journalistic accounts and disseminated in popular culture (Brockmeier, 2002).² The individual pirate stations appropriate these cultural narratives in local settings to legitimize their own practices. The following quote, from a history page on the website of former pirate Radio Stad Den Haag, shows how they construct their identity by locating themselves in the public narrative of pirate radio.

When new legislation forced the offshore radio stations to stop in 1974, many youngsters who were enthusiastic about music were left empty-handed. Nothing to choose from and those who wanted to discover new music, and of course tape it, were dependent on public radio. [...] But on Friday morning they even broadcast classical music on the national popular music channel! Once again, different music was completely ignored. The younger generation rebelled against this, which led to the introduction of land-based pirates. During the 1970s Radio City Interlokaal was the first station that broadcast disco music.³

The successor to this station, Radio Stad Den Haag, is typical of the other stations that were active during the heyday of the city-based pirates in the 1970s and 1980s. While these city-based pirates were progressively trying to attract attention to foreign music and new genres like dance, nowadays the same narrative of illegal radio is still being appropriated by the remaining pirates, who focus on the more traditional Dutch-language repertoire. These local illegal radio stations legitimize their activities by claiming to step into the void left by public and commercial broadcasters. Because, in

their opinion, the regular stations do not play enough Dutch-language music, the pirates take up this task.⁴

It is in particular the music I like. Of course the pirates occasionally play English music, and I don't mind some hard rock in between, but there is so much Dutch-language music that I do not hear elsewhere. (Henk, 59)

You've got Radio NL [Commercial Radio Station-AvdH] and that is getting closer to what we are doing. But then you are already talking about the well-known artists. [...] But there is a lot more.... Because every week about 20 new songs are released, but these are not played by them! (Frank, 43)

I: So it was because of the illegal radio station of your parents that you became a pirate. Are there any other reasons?

P: No, not really. Well, it is also because of the love for the music you do not hear on the regular radio stations. (Pedro, 33)

The perceived lack of attention to their favourite music is a recurring theme in the interviews. The remaining pirates in the Netherlands describe this as 'defending Dutch-language music' (Lijfering, 1988). This style of music is so strongly intertwined with the medium of illegal radio that it is commonly referred to as 'pirate music'. These are schmaltzy songs, dealing with sentimental topics like love and loss, and have lyrics that are easy to comprehend with simple song structures and orchestration (Van Eijck and Lievens, 2008). They come close to the so-called schlagers, which are also played by the pirates. Van Eijck and Lievens find that the social values of people listening to this genre are more traditional, with a distrust of complexity. The social aspect is central in this style of music, hence the focus on the local community and the ways music can bring people together. In contrast to the more complex music genres, of which audiences expect an aesthetic experience, the music played by the pirates is rooted in everyday life. As the next interview fragment illustrates, it is the sheer simplicity of the music which appeals to Otto and which he connects to his social attitudes.

I think you have to be quite ordinary to like this music. Although I do not want to label myself [laughs], but yeah, there is ordinariness involved. It is about not questioning everything in life. There is no need to argue about everything, there is an easy way as well. A lot of the records I played reflect this attitude. (Otto, 30)

This putative simplicity of the music could also explain the lack of attention for this genre. In a study of classification processes in the music industry Hitters and Van de Kamp (2010) showed that the major record labels are not very keen on working with the artists in this genre. Generally, this style of Dutch-language music is perceived as lowbrow, because of its strong ties to working-class cultures. For a long time it was 'not done' to listen to Dutch-language music, although during the mid 1990s it has become more popular (Achterberg et al., 2011). As a reaction to this, some new radio and television channels that focus on Dutch music have commenced broadcasting.

Nevertheless, the attention to local grassroots artists remains the domain of the pirates. Despite the possibilities of setting up legal on-line radio stations, the pirates still prefer the tradition of illegal broadcasting, because it arouses more excitement and reaches more people. Older listeners, in particular, are not familiar with on-line radio.

P: Illegal broadcasting is better.

I: Why?

P: Because of the sensation it gives you and I have the impression that more people listen to it. [...] Not everybody knows your internet radio station, but someone who turns on the radio will hear you right away. (Pedro, 33)

Moreover, other broadcasters seem to lack the strong links to local communities that the pirates have. As mentioned earlier in this article, the meanings people endow radio with need to be understood in relation to local contexts. Because of the limited range of the transmitters pirate stations always cater for local audiences. For this reason I will now turn to the ways in which the technology of pirate radio has contributed to feelings of belonging in local communities by offering a platform for the construction of cultural identities.

Place and identity

During the 1980s local public radio was introduced as a reaction to the popular demand for radio that connects to local identities (Van Elteren, 1994), but the respondents feel that these public stations are too much restricted by rules about the content of their programmes. The 'free radio' of the pirates has its own distinctive style, not offered by the regular stations. It is their identity of amateurism (e.g. lots of echo), greetings from listeners and approachability which makes them so popular (Van Elteren, 1994; Lijfering, 1988). By playing local artists and announcing them in regional dialects a shared mediated space is constructed. The customary greetings to neighbours that follow on from audience requests for songs further illustrate how pirate radio is embedded in local communities.

These ties to cohesive local communities also explain the pirates' persistence despite the raids of the Radio Communications Agency. The pirates work together to circumvent the regulations of the agency, and this has become a popular local pastime with a long tradition. When pirates receive notification of a fine at a certain address, they move the mobile aerial – for this reason often built onto a car – to a neighbouring piece of land, which means that the agency has to send out a new warning. Thus the wide availability of land and the strong social networks in these rural parts of the Netherlands are beneficial in resisting the enforcement measures of the Radio Communications Agency. In addition, a younger generation is socialized in the narratives of the pirate identity, which further explains their continuity.

Although, for these reasons, the pirate stations remain rooted in local communities, the internet also enables a trans-local orientation. Together with transmission over the air some stations stream their signal on the internet. Guestbooks on their websites show that Dutch people who have emigrated use these streams to keep the ties to their birthplaces alive. For other pirate stations, especially those in the urban parts of the Netherlands, internet radio is an alternative to broadcasting over the air. Due to the strict enforcement measures of the Radio Communications Agency against pirate radio stations, internet radio remains the only way of supporting the music of Dutch-language artists. Generally the pirates regret that audiences are no longer able to find them by tuning in to the radio. As Lelieveldt and Van Leeuwen (2006: 5) explain, the community aspect of pirate radio 'disappears in the complex mishmash of (niche) Internet radios'. Interestingly, although their activities on the internet are no longer illegal, these stations maintain their pirate identity. For instance, visual cues like the pirate logo are indicators of an illegal past, but also their names are often derived from the narrative of radio piracy. Often this is substantiated by a separate page with a story and photos to give an account of the history of the pirate station. The continuity in the narrative of pirate radio means that old and new media gradually converge. For this reason the practices on the internet derive their meaning from a history that stretches back at least 50 years.

Over the years this has resulted in strong links between pirate radio and particular local cultural identities, as the case of Dutch-language 'pirate music' has illustrated.

Another example of this relation between place and illegal radio is the popularity of Italo disco in The Hague. During the 1980s a local music collector specialized in Italo disco records.⁵ He made this genre popular by creating his own weekly Italo chart (*I Venti d'Azzuro*), which was broadcast by pirate station Radio Stad Den Haag. Eventually local record stores and parties also came to focus on this imported music. This dominant place of the charts in the format of Radio Stad Den Haag is illustrative of the commercial illegal radio stations that were active during the 1970s and 1980s. Contrary to the smaller pirates who play Dutch-language music, the larger pirate stations worked in the form of a commercial logic, in which the 'sales charts become the measure, and the symbol, of "good" pop music' (Frith, 1990: 99). Together with record stores and venues the pirates perpetuated this predilection for Italian music in The Hague. The next quote illustrates that the pirate stations, with their own musical style, became a marker for a local cultural identity.

During the 1980s Radio Stad Den Haag was different from just listening to the radio, it was part of being young. Every day you would listen to this station, because they had their own style. Moreover, you knew they were illegal, which made it even more exciting to listen. Even as listener you felt involved with this channel and all the disc jockeys were local heroes. (Edward, 38)

As a result of the local popularity of Italian music, this sequence of events is a common element in the personal narratives of people who grew up in The Hague at the time. For them it is a shared experience and part of their collective identity. This is further reflected by the regular Italo-parties in The Hague and its surrounding villages, where people who grew up at the time have the chance to relive these musical memories of their youth. In relation to this, the next section of the article considers how pirate radio has become part of the cultural identities of their audiences.

The personal and cultural meanings of illegal radio

To further explore the relation between pirate radio and identity I will now examine the devices for listening to illegal radio. The notion of 'enabling technology' (Van Dijck, 2007) clarifies how, for example, the apparatuses used for listening to the pirates can take on specific cultural meanings. These technologies are part of the narrative of pirate radio because they signify a certain era. For instance the transistor radio allowed young people to take 'control over one's sonic space' (Van Dijck, 2007: 88). Rudin (2007) contends that the transistor radio turned radio into an 'anytime, anywhere' medium, because this device enabled young people to listen to music outside the space dominated by their parents (Dolfsma, 2004; Van Dijck, 2007). For this reason the transistor radio is a symbol of the freedom and independence that young people gained in order to negotiate identities revolving around their own musical subcultures (Fickers, 2009). When the aforementioned Radio Stad Den Haag, after several raids, was forced to collaborate with a local licensed radio station and broadcast via cable, it subsequently lost a large share of younger listeners:

The youth at the time usually did not listen to cable radio, because then you had to sit with your mum and dad in the living room. (Han, 54)

The illegality of pirate radio only added to the excitement and feelings of liberty. Part of the glamour of the pirates was that they did something they were not supposed to do. In the 1960s this was particularly interesting to a generation that was rebelling against their parents and politicians and claiming their own identity (Rutten, 2001). In this context the public broadcasters, with which the pirates competed, were considered a representation of the political establishment (Dolfsma, 2004).

For these reasons the offshore radio phenomenon is closely related to the cultural memories of people who grew up in the 1960s. These radio stations brought seminal music to a young audience. The next interview fragments illustrate how these cultural experiences coalesce with personal narratives of the listeners of pirate radio.

The pirates were interesting to me, because they played the music you liked. So when someone mentions one of those stations, it immediately takes me back to the time when I was between fourteen and sixteen and picking beans in the field. (André, 48)

C: No, the last broadcast of Veronica I will never forget. It is simply something that is part of you and you still fondly remember.

I: Was it an important part of your daily life?

C: Back then definitely, because I lived and breathed Veronica. And yes, there is something else; this was the first sign of a declining trust in politicians. Because they had promised to do something about the end of Veronica, but eventually nothing happened. (Chris, 53)

These autobiographical experiences are a determining factor in remembering popular music (Barrett et al., 2010). Musical tastes developed during late adolescence or early adulthood have a particular capability to last and provoke fond memories or nostalgia during later years (Davis, 1979; Holbrook and Schindler, 1989). Holbrook and Schindler (1989) suggest this might be because musical preferences reflect periods of heavy involvement with social and political causes. Tellingly, the second respondent relates his memories of Radio Veronica to his political attitude. He mentioned earlier in the interview that he had participated in the strong protests that followed on from the government plans to put an end to offshore radio (Kok, 2008). For this reason, he associates these particular musical memories with his political socialization. This connection between music, illegal radio and youth culture during the 1960s and 1970s is illustrative of the intriguing relationship between personal and cultural narratives (Van Dijck, 2007). The final section of this article considers how these narratives are shared over time.

Memory practices: sharing stories

Although all the bigger pirate stations have ceased broadcasting, the memories of their shows live on. Given their personal and cultural significance, it is not surprising that there are myriad ways for audiences to relive or reminisce about these listening experiences. Hereafter I will examine the cultural embedding of the narrative of pirate radio. Digital platforms and festivals will be consecutively discussed as cultural practices by which shared identities can be kept alive.

Technology is not only part of people's memories (Van Dijck, 2007), as the case of pirate radio illustrates, but also makes it possible to share these recollections. The internet has ample opportunities for re-enacting and appropriating the narrative of pirate radio, and allows individuals to relate their personal experiences to wider cultural memories. An example of this is the next quote, taken from a participatory platform dedicated to youth sentiments, where visitors have created pages dedicated to illegal radio. This leads to a lively discussion in which memories are shared.

I also remember that my brothers and I would wake up early on Saturday morning to listen to a particular show. Unfortunately, sometimes we had come out of our beds to find out that there was nothing on the radio or that the pirate was on another frequency. But that also made it very special if you could hear them.⁶

People involved with the heritage of pirate radio recurrently point out how various initiatives to share memories of illegal radio would have been impossible without the internet. These interviewees refer to Web 2.0 applications such as social networking sites (Napoli, 2010) that bring people and old material together. Former employees and listeners of the pirates are a rich source of old recordings of radio shows, jingles and fan-mail. I consider these informal networks in which people negotiate their own understanding of what constitutes popular music heritage as an instance of Bennett's (2009) concept of DIY (do-it-yourself) preservationism. These DIY preservationists draw attention to (local) cultural phenomena which are overlooked in more 'official' narratives like books and documentaries. The internet enables them to exchange 'mediated memories' (Van Dijck 2007) to tell the story of pirate radio in the Netherlands. Fans and other people involved with pirate radio collaborate to secure this heritage for future generations by digitizing and sharing it on the internet.

A common means to 'exhibit' this heritage of pirate radio is by utilizing what I would call 'heritage streams'. These are internet radio streams that broadcast old tapes or breathe new life into former pirate stations that were forced to close down years ago. Since on-line radio stations are relatively cheap to set up, it is an easy way to target specific local audiences with nostalgic content (Wall, 2004). Although for older audiences internet radio stations do not have the same personal meaning as transistor radios, they offer a platform to evoke memories of old technologies for listening to music. This attachment to devices of the past is what Van Dijck (2007: 87) describes as technostalgia: 'People who use recorded music as a vehicle for memories often yearn for more than mere retro appeal: They want these apparatuses to reenact their cherished experience of listening.' The heritage streams recreate the sound of the former pirate stations with old jingles, commercials and the particular music genres of that period or locality. So when listeners tune in to these internet radio stations they hear the familiar tunes of their youth. In the next quote a disc-jockey explains he still uses vinyl, clearly visible on the webcam for listeners, to create the atmosphere of the old times:

Our listeners like it that we spin these old vinyl records. It has the feel of disco music during the 1980s. [...] We are a retro radio station, so we live in the past when we do this. A lot of our listeners have experienced this time, so they like to reminisce about old memories and stories. (Edward, 38)

In some cases the heritage streams even use sound processing tools to replicate the sound of old equipment like radio-transmitters.

The radio broadcasts that allow audiences to engage with their musical memories and their attendant technology are an example of the social-cultural practices in which memories are shared and cultural identities celebrated. A musical about offshore radio station Veronica is aptly titled 'Do you remember this one?!', which refers to an expression of one of their disk jockeys. Cultural events like concerts, festivals and reunions – for example the previously mentioned Italo-parties in The Hague – are the frameworks in which identities that connect to the narrative of pirate radio are perpetuated. Hence, these events usually mark specific dates in the history of the pirate stations. The organization that secures the heritage of Veronica, for instance, organizes live broadcasts on 31 August. This is the date on which the offshore radio station was forced to stop broadcasting in 1974. For the occasion the former DJs of Veronica use the old studios, which are exhibited in the RockArt museum, to once more find an audience with their shows. This museum, a private initiative that turned from a form of DIY preservationism into an official museum, uses Veronica as a focal point in their collection to chart the development of Dutch popular music. In this setting the narrative of pirate radio becomes familiar to younger generations.

While this exhibition looks back upon the history of pirate radio, the remaining pirates in the countryside continue their struggles to illegally broadcast their favourite music. In order to keep a

long tradition alive, they retain their social-cultural practices and resist the strict enforcement measures by the Radio Communications Agency. Instead of daily or weekly broadcasts, more and more stations opt for occasional 'radio marathons'. Thus they pick a few consecutive days on which to broadcast, usually in conjunction with a festival where local artists perform. In some cases the Radio Communications Agency issues a temporary frequency for these radio marathons. Besides a social event, this is also a form of techno-stalgia, because of the feelings that broadcasting over the air evokes. Remarkably, a lot of these pirates are younger than 25 and have learned the tricks of the trade from their parents. Despite new technologies such as internet radio, they are still interested in this local heritage of illegal radio.

For Fickers (2009) it is no coincidence that technical radio terms like 'fine-tuning', 'wavelength' and 'interference' have found their way into everyday language. The pirates themselves struggle to find words to explain the excitement they feel when they turn on the transmitter and risk a raid by playing their favourite songs. Of course this piece of technology is nothing more than a few electronic components, but from the narrative of pirate radio it derives its special cultural meanings.

Conclusions and discussion

My main aim in this article was to explore how both current illegal radio stations and internet radio stations appropriate the heritage of pirate radio to negotiate cultural identities. To understand this relation between past and present I have drawn upon a narrative approach to identity (Brockmeier, 2002; Nelson, 2003; Somers, 1994). The theoretical assumption underlying this article is that identities are derived from narratives which place actors in relation to events that are embedded in time and space. Within this theoretical framework I considered the cultural narratives that give meaning to the current practices of the remaining pirates, on-line radio stations and the memories of their audiences.

Because the pirates introduced particular musical styles to local audiences their histories are a common reference point for the people who grew up with the illegal radio stations. This implies that not only has popular music become part of the heritage discourse (Bennett, 2009) but also the technologies for distributing this music. The audience members feel attached to the medium which enabled them to discover new music when they were younger. Especially during the 1960s the excitement of illegal radio appealed to a young generation that was struggling to negotiate their own identity against the background of the then emerging beat culture (Rutten, 2001). As a consequence of these personal and cultural meanings of pirate radio, various platforms for sharing memories have been established in the places where the pirates have ceased to broadcast.

I have examined pirate festivals, museum exhibitions and radio broadcasts as the cultural embedding of the narrative of pirate radio. These are the cultural practices by which the story of pirate radio is passed down to new generations in order to preserve this heritage. Those parts of the Netherlands where the Radio Communications Agency has managed to get the pirates off the air, have seen the advent of mediated platforms for sharing the musical memories of this period. Except for offshore radio, which was a more national phenomenon, most of these platforms are instances of DIY preservationism (Bennett, 2009). Because of their local and illegal aspects, the pirates are not readily accepted as a part of popular music heritage, despite their influence on the popularization of particular music genres. Nevertheless, in informal networks fans and other enthusiasts preserve these 'small heritages' (Harvey, 2008). For instance, former pirate stations set up what I have called on-line 'heritage streams' to broadcast old tapes with programmes, jingles and commercials. Technologies such as internet radio streams facilitate an ongoing interaction with the narrative of pirate radio and thus provide a means to engage with musical memories and the diverse identities constituted by these recollections.

The theory of narrative identity made it possible to disentangle how these ongoing practices evoke memories of the past by building upon a long tradition. I have shown how old and new technologies constitute communities by feeding into shared cultural narratives. The radio broadcasts of the stations discussed resonate with the personal biographies of the listeners because it gives them the opportunity to relive particular experiences of their youth. This illustrates how music memories are concurrently very personal and also widely shared. The findings of this article thus corroborate the theory that individuals define who they are through the consumption of popular music (DeNora, 1999). However, frameworks through which cultural narratives are disseminated shape how people conceive of their own experiences (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Somers, 1994). Further research could shed light on these processes, in which personal understandings of popular music's past are negotiated in relation to more established cultural narratives from sources like books, documentaries and journalistic accounts.

Appendix A. Respondents

Name	Role
Andre	Internet radio station (Dutch language music)
Otto	Former pirate
Frank	Former pirate / Internet radio station (Dutch language music)
Pedro and Rob	pirate radio / internet radio station
Ad	Former employee Radio Veronica, now archivist
Chris	fan of Radio Veronica / Owner personal archive off-shore radio
Gwen, Herman, Han	Internet radio station (heritage stream)
Edward and Marcello	Directors Record Company / Presenters on an internet radio station (heritage stream)
Berry and Petra	Former pirates / Internet radio station (Dutch language music)
Frank	Former pirate / Internet radio stations (Heritage stream)
Johnny	Former pirate / Editor pirate website
André	listener off-shore radio
Joyce	Representative of the Radio Communications Agency
Jaap Schut	Director Museum RockArt

Henk	Fan of pirate radio
Martin & Vincent	Former pirates and organizers Italo parties

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Notes

1.
All interview quotes are translated from Dutch by the author.
2.
The film *The Boat that Rocked* (2009) is an example of how the narrative of pirate radio is shared in popular culture.
3.
See: <http://www.radiostaddenhaag.com/about-us> (accessed July 2012).
4.
Interestingly, research (Ofcom, 2007; Schlosberg, 2011) shows that pirates in the United Kingdom have the same way of legitimizing their activities by pointing at their unique musical content. Although in the United Kingdom this narrative is appropriated by minority groups in the cities instead and revolves around emerging black music genres.
5.
For the history of this station see: <http://www.radiostaddenhaag.com/iventicharts.php>. Marcello now runs several record labels which release Italo music from the 1980s.
6.
See: <http://jeugdsentimenten.net/2005/09/16/radio-piraterij-ii-illegale-radiostations/> (consulted July 2012).

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