

## Archiving Trash Radio in Québec City

*The Soundwork of the Coalition Sortons les radios-poubelles*

---

**ABSTRACT** Québec City's talk radio stations have been the subject of controversy for decades. For nearly 10 years now, consistent grassroots efforts have been made to regulate the media discourse that circulates in the city. The coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles* (which can be translated as Let's Take Out the Trash Radios) has created an online archive that compiles thousands of audio documents about this controversial radio style. With a few postings per day both on its website and on social media, the coalition's media activists put into context—sometimes with a mocking, ironic, and provoking tone—the deprecating remarks of radio hosts. In the course of recent events, these activists are now being prosecuted for their criticism of the trash radio culture. This commentary highlights the main aspects of the archival practice of these media activists. It seems important to recognize these alternative archival practices for social justice, for media regulation, as well as for understanding a social phenomenon over time. **KEYWORDS** documenting talk radio discourse, radio archiving, trash radio, *Sortons les radios-poubelles*, nonconventional archives, media criticism

---

### INTRODUCTION

The cultural phenomenon of “trash radio” has been a reality in Québec City, and a subject of controversy, since the 1980s. The style of trash radio is a degenerate form of speech-oriented radio, known as “talk radio,” or “confrontation talk.” Trash radio is defined by the Québec Office of the French Language as: “A radio station broadcasting programs that include telephone call-ins during which the hosts make provocative remarks often considered to be vulgar or ‘trashy.’”<sup>1</sup> Initially, talk radio was part of the well-known genre of opinion journalism where the line between the mandate of information and entertainment is blurred. Hosts presented their “facts” in a way that did not always distinguish between factual content and value judgments.

For the past 10 years, I have witnessed a particular archival work in Québec City, the work of a coalition called *Sortons les radios-poubelles* (which can be translated as “Let's Take Out the Trash Radios”). Over time, the anonymous activists of this coalition have succeeded in building up an archive of certain private radio stations in Québec City. By relying on comments from radio hosts circulating on social media and specifically on audio documents, this radio archive allows us to objectify the cultural phenomenon identified as Québec Trash Radio. In this paper, I aim to describe the archival intervention of this coalition and to place this reflection in the broad field of archival and radio studies.

In the article “Locating the Radio Archive: New Histories, New Challenges,” Shawn VanCour, assistant professor of media archival studies at the University of California, Los

---

*Resonance: The Journal of Sound and Culture*, Vol. 2, Number 4, pp. 636–649. Electronic ISSN: 2688-0113 © 2021 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/res.2021.2.4.636>

Angeles, invites us to consider nonconventional archives, those produced in do-it-yourself archiving processes by amateur enthusiasts. As part of the work of the Library of Congress's Radio Preservation Task Force, he discusses the various sites for the production of counter-memory, sites that produce, curate, and preserve "alternative forms of audio heritage that are otherwise lost to history and can help challenge existing ways of knowing the past."<sup>2</sup> VanCour's analysis can be applied to trash radio archiving and can benefit media historians, radio scholars, and, first and foremost, media watchdogs who ensure that there is no abusive or discriminatory speech on the radio.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, academic research on private radio stations in Québec City has multiplied.<sup>3</sup> This is mainly because there have been much defamatory speech, negative media coverage, and numerous lawsuits. Diane Vincent, professor of linguistics at Université Laval, and Olivier Turbide, professor of communication at the Université du Québec à Montréal, were among the first university researchers in the province of Québec to specifically take the style of "confrontational radio" as an object of study.<sup>4</sup> Their research, some of which was conducted with Marty Laforest, professor of sociolinguistics at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, focuses on the analysis of discourse and the circulation of deprecating (insulting, denigrating, hateful, etc.) remarks on trash radio.<sup>5</sup>

The 2020 award-winning book by Dominique Payette, *Les Brutes et la Punaise: Les radios-poubelles, la liberté d'expression et le commerce des injures*<sup>6</sup> (Brutes and Bedbugs: Trash Radio, Freedom of Speech and the Trafficking of Insults), describes more precisely this phenomenon of trash radio in Québec City. In this work, Payette, professor in the Department of Information and Communication at Université Laval, questions media regulations through her analysis of trash radio discourse. She identifies numerous recurrent targets of deprecating remarks, among them Aboriginal people, students, members of LGBTQ+ communities, Muslims, leftists, the poor, immigrants, unions, and cyclists. Her book also underlines the presence of Islamophobic discourse in these radio stations and their implication in the 2017 attack on the Québec City mosque.<sup>7</sup>

On the first page of the book, Payette dedicates her work to the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles*:

For the activists of the *Sortons les radios-poubelles* website ([sortonslespoubelles.com](http://sortonslespoubelles.com)), who have constituted, with determination and perseverance, an open-access corpus without which this research would not have been possible.<sup>8</sup>

*Sortons les radios-poubelles* has created an online archive that compiles thousands of audio documents about this controversial radio style. In line with the contributions of Michele Hilmes,<sup>9</sup> the archival intervention of this coalition can be defined as an ethical form of "soundwork." For the benefit of readers within and outside the field of radio and archival studies, it is necessary to understand the nature of the soundwork of the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles* and the emerging effects of such alternative archival practices. Payette acknowledges the coalition's work as instrumental to her study, their having created an open-access archive of radio recordings that were used as analysis corpus.

In her book, Payette deplors the passivity, and even negligence, of Canadian media watchdogs such as the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) and the Conseil de Presse du Québec.<sup>10</sup> The CBSC has the task of receiving complaints, reviewing them, and determining whether they are admissible. For Payette, however, the complacency of the council's decisions has reached an unprecedented level in that radio hosts who are the subject of complaints are not punished, making the violence of their words seem acceptable. Furthermore, the other authority in the matter, the Press Council of Québec, is a self-regulatory body that has no coercive power. It acts as an honorary tribunal for Québec media and receives complaints from citizens. Its decisions are public but are not restrictive: They are only moral reprimands whose eventual consequence is solely to affect the reputation of radio hosts and, indirectly, their advertisers.

Considering this lack of public oversight, the archival intervention of *Sortons les radios-poubelles* is essential to provide sources for analyzing systematically, discussing, and denouncing the incitement to hatred emanating from these radio stations. This is all the more important considering that the audio recordings published by these stations on their websites are often incomplete, especially when they know the recordings are controversial. By collecting and archiving traces of oppressive speech (with audio clips and social media posts), *Sortons les radios-poubelles* ensures that remarks made on the airwaves and on social media do not vanish.

In addition to the academic work done on this subject, this grassroots archival intervention seems necessary to grasp the magnitude of the phenomenon. No genesis of Québec trash radio has yet been written that would allow us to understand its link with the capital of the province, Québec City. As historian and trade unionist Sébastien Bouchard wrote in a review of her book, Payette's contribution does not solve the famous "Québec City mystery"—that is, how Québec City's "right-wing populism became an influential, enduring and mass phenomenon."<sup>11</sup> This populism and radio style are linked to Québec City's history, and there are chapters still to be written about Montréal and the Saguenay region.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the public broadcast station ICI Radio-Canada Première (106.3) and the community radio stations (CKIA 88.3, CKRL 89.1, CHYZ 94.3, CIHW 100.3), two of the most important players among the private radio stations in the landscape of Québec City, FM93 (93.3) and CHOI Radio X (98.1), have generated a lot of criticism.

FM 93 was launched in 1979. Having run into problems with the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) in the early 1980s following complaints,<sup>13</sup> the station hired the controversial host André Arthur at the end of the 1990s.<sup>14</sup> Other radio personalities of the same genre succeeded him in the 2000s, such as the polemical hosts Sylvain Bouchard and Éric Duhaime.<sup>15</sup> A radio station cannot be defined solely by its hosts; nonetheless, a culture was established by their presence that persisted in the *longue durée*.

Older than FM93, CHOI Radio X was founded in 1949 with other letters of designation (CHRC) and other owners. However, its setbacks with the CRTC began in the early 2000s. Broadcast on this radio station, the morning show of Jean-François "Jeff" Fillion, an archetype of the Québec City trash radio model whose idol is Howard

Stern, accumulated a mass of complaints about offensive comments and personal attacks.<sup>16</sup> The year 2004 was, for this station and the city of Québec, a time of complaints, public audiences of the CRTC, and popular demonstrations (tens of thousands of Radio X listeners) to defend radio hosts' freedom of expression. It was on this occasion that the slogan of the campaign the station would undertake for its survival was launched: "*Liberté, je crie ton nom partout*" (Freedom, I shout your name everywhere).<sup>17</sup> A few years later in 2006, Radio Nord Communications acquired Radio X, which allowed the station to renew its license and continue broadcasting despite numerous complaints and several civil court cases that had imposed penalties of several hundred thousand dollars.

Aside from their frequent remarks tainted by denigration, defamation, racism, sexism, and general hate, the discourse analysis of these radio stations reveals populism and consumerism culture,<sup>18</sup> conservatism, libertarianism, and right-wing ideologies.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this type of speech and ideology found a niche not covered by other radio stations in Québec City, which could explain their popularity. It is within the context of this radio climate that we see how the act of recording trash radio and collecting it in an online sound archive can be beneficial to an entire community.

#### THE SOUNDWORK OF THE SORTONS LES RADIOS-POUBELLES

Active since April 2012, *Sortons les radios-poubelles* aims to "observe and act against racism, sexism, homophobia and ordinary anti-journalism."<sup>20</sup> Formed by a group of volunteers from student groups, women's groups, political associations, and trade unions, the coalition acts in three different and complementary ways:

1. Documenting talk radio discourse
2. Archiving it
3. Managing the website and social media accounts<sup>21</sup>

When the coalition was founded in 2012, there were no accessible broadcasting archives on the website of FM93 and CHOI Radio X. These stations have their own broadcasting platform; in recent years they have made the entirety of previous programs available, but it is not possible to say strictly speaking that they are records or archives, because the audio documents are not preserved in the long term. The record-creating and record-keeping processes assumed by *Sortons les radios-poubelles* are done autonomously, without any consent or collaboration of these private radios. The online archive created by *Sortons les radios-poubelles* is thus independent. As the result of archival activism, the archive is on the margins of governmental archival repositories and mainstream institutions; all of the work done by this coalition would not have been possible without the efforts of dedicated activists.

Two events are at the origin of the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles*. During the Québec student protests in April 2012, a senior official at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Bernard Guay, wrote an opinion letter that, according to one member of the coalition, was strongly influenced by the trash radio model. In this letter, according to the

activist, “Bernard Guay encouraged the green squares [those in favor of increasing tuition fees] to face the red squares [those opposed to increasing tuition fees] like the Brown Shirts (*Sturmabteilung*) of the 1930s. Radio host Sylvain Bouchard of FM93 had taken up the text, saying that he supported it 100% ‘except for the end on the 1930s.’”<sup>22</sup> The second event that led to the formation of this coalition was a comment by host Carl Monette of CHOI Radio X, who had suggested sending the poor to work, forcibly, and castrating them “behind a wall in the north.”<sup>23</sup>

The way this coalition documents the language of these radio station hosts is straightforward: Screenshots are taken from social media pages (Facebook and Twitter) and extracts from live radio programs are recorded from home. Audio recordings (from April 2009 to May 2021) are archived on the Internet Archives platform, where hundreds of radio recordings from Québec City stations can be found.<sup>24</sup> Generally, the extracts archived are the ones in which there is offensive language (targeting populations that are denigrated or humiliated, or are objects of derision).

The archival description itself is minimalist: It identifies the date, a keyword indicating the theme of the remark, as well as the host’s or a target’s name. The names of radio stations are rarely added, but it is very easy to identify to which radio show a host belongs. The accessible radio extracts on Internet Archives range from less than a minute to more than 15 minutes. As noted by a member of the coalition:

At the beginning the extracts available were short, like those available on *Le Club des mal cités*.<sup>25</sup> But since we don’t want to be accused of not taking the context into account, we put in longer extracts. It serves as proof for what we are interpreting.

If you don’t believe what they’re saying, go listen to the audio yourself.<sup>26</sup>

By consulting the archives of the early years of the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles*, we notice the short duration of the extracts. During the CRTC’s public audiences in 2004, the station owners intended to deny the validity of the complaints received, which were based, according to them, on remarks quoted out of context, and which neglected to consider the humorous character of the programs broadcasted on the airwaves of CHOI-FM. Considering that the radio recordings are now generally longer, the coalition seems to have understood the importance of the context of the audio segments they record.

The coalition’s goal is to record trash radio so that people can make up their own minds about what has been said on the airwaves. Personal archiving practices therefore make it possible to produce accessible archives as evidence. This is consistent with the vision of Jacques Derrida, for whom the politics of archiving requires effective democratization and therefore access to archives and the possibility of interpreting them.<sup>27</sup>

With a few postings per day both on its website and on social media, *Sortons les radios-poubelles* puts into context—sometimes with a mocking, ironic, and provoking tone—the deprecating remarks of radio hosts. The posts are generally accompanied by screenshots or audio extracts and even, sometimes, transcripts of the audio from radio shows. These provide additional access to the archived speech, which allows a search by keywords or directly within the text.

In the previously mentioned article, Shawn VanCour warns not to overvalue audio documents to the detriment of textual documents and their creation context. He is one of the few authors who provide this archival precision in the field of radio preservation studies, by mentioning the types of documents to be preserved and by questioning the excessively restrictive nature of the conservation policy that results in conserving only “broadcast content.”<sup>28</sup> For him, it is important to also consider non-audio materials (such as digital content from social media or transcripts) as “radio archives.”

#### A CALL FOR ACTION AND THE COURSE OF ONGOING EVENTS

The coalition also encourages listeners to write to advertisers directly by providing a pre-defined form for them to send. This is a way of notifying the advertisers of the problematic nature of the language used on air and underlining the fact that they indirectly support these messages. This practice echoes the work of Kathy Newman, Carnegie Mellon University associate professor of English, in *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism*,<sup>29</sup> in which she presents the use of letter-writing campaigns to bring changes in radio content. This approach is used throughout the United States by the group Media Matters for America.<sup>30</sup>

Between March and September 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, hosts of Radio X regularly featured on their radio segments conspiracy leaders, people who spread disinformation and people close to the anti-mask movements. In September 2020, this misinformation had an impact on compliance with health regulations, making Québec City the center of the epidemic in the province. This led the Québec City administration to withdraw all its advertising from this station, creating a domino effect among other companies that were buying advertising slots on their airwaves. These companies wanted to avoid being associated with such conspiratorial talk.<sup>31</sup>

Among the people interviewed on Radio X during the pandemic was a gym owner, Dan Marino, who was particularly lax on sanitation measures. In April 2021, the gym was responsible for an outbreak of over 500 cases of COVID-19 in Québec City, and one of the gym’s clients died. In response to this situation, the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles* called for a coroner’s inquest to investigate this private radio station’s role in the gym outbreak.<sup>32</sup> In the media turmoil, the coalition accused Radio X of deleting from their website audio segments about these issues, and the director-general of the station responded by stating that “our system removes, by automation, the vast majority of segments broadcast on our air after a certain period of time.”<sup>33</sup> From that moment on, Radio X made requests to Facebook and the Internet Archive to remove certain postings containing excerpts for which the station holds property rights. The coalition understood that these procedures came from the radio station manager and its owners Radio Nord Communications (RNC Media). As mentioned in a Facebook post by the coalition:

RNC is in offensive mode against our blog and our page.

Why, if they are not guilty of anything?

Is freedom of speech only for trash radio owners?

We invite our subscribers to go to our page and save on their personal computers, from 2012, the audio files . . .

With the help of thousands, we'll get there!

If they want to make the evidence disappear, it's because they have things to hide.<sup>34</sup>

The coalition's asking its subscribers to download endangered audio documents strikingly reveals that the radio archives—which had initially been assembled collectively—must, once again, be constituted individually. As a result of copyright requests made by employees of one of the stations, a significant amount of audio material preserved on Internet Archive is no longer accessible.<sup>35</sup> The use of the archives by the coalition, in their opinion, is covered by “fair use,”—i.e., the use of the audio documents of a medium in order to criticize it. Since coalition members are anonymous, having therefore no legal identity, they cannot plead the case for fair use in any legal document or proceedings. Considering the removal of many audio documents from the Internet Archives, the coalition is looking for another secure, foreign host that does not respond to copyright claims.

These events took place at the end of a 10-day campaign to make advertisers aware of what was being said on these stations' airwaves. The saga continued with the public release of a collective called *Liberté d'oppression* (which can be translated as “Freedom of Oppression”), which aims to denounce misinformation and media intimidation.<sup>36</sup> The collective aims to better inform and equip the population to understand defamation and to provide the procedures to file a complaint with the media regulatory institutions in Québec and Canada. The different courses of action proposed include: denouncing defamatory behavior personally on social media, filing complaints with the various regulatory bodies, and directly contacting the advertisers listed by the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles*.

At the beginning of the summer of 2021, RNC Media, the owner of the Radio X station, went to court to find out the identity of the activists behind the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles*. The members of the coalition are thus accused of “identity theft, harassing communications and public denigration with the avowed aim of harming the legitimate commercial activities of CHOI Radio X and causing damage to the reputation of its advertising partners.”<sup>37</sup> In the press release, Robert Ranger, president and CEO of RNC Media, says, “We have always been advocates for freedom of speech. We do so because our hosts express their opinions in plain view.”<sup>38</sup> Coalition activists, who are considered “trolls,” are criticized for “hiding behind anonymity to orchestrate offensives that result in harassment, defamation, and even threats.”<sup>39</sup> In response to this still unsettled lawsuit, the coalition responded that “this company is not new to lawsuits, injunctions, or threats of this nature.”<sup>40</sup>

On the same day that the injunction was sought, June 21, 2021, subscribers to the *Sortons les radios-poubelles* Facebook page were thus invited to share their commitment to the cause by posting a Facebook banner, “Je suis *Sortons les radios-poubelles*” (I am *Sortons les radios-poubelles*). Following this, a post on the coalition's page included the following message: “There are people who support us and decide to show it with images like this, or with messages identifying themselves as the admins of our page. Thank you for your support, it is heartwarming.”<sup>41</sup>



FIGURE 1. Screenshot from the Facebook account of the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles*, June 22, 2021.

If the court order asks to identify the members of the coalition, this identification with the coalition—“*Je suis Sortons les radios-poubelles*”—is a way to disseminate or blur the attribution of responsibility. Operating under the cover of anonymity, “for security reasons” as mentioned on their website, these media activists make a call for support, asking their supporters to share responsibility for their actions—a mixed form of media criticism and archival praxis.

In the course of these belligerent events, we can see that the positionality of *Sortons les radios-poubelles* is not that of a journalistic observer. By naming the stations they monitor “trash radio,” the activists of this coalition define, in a logic of confrontation, those they consider to be their ideological adversaries.

#### SOUNDWORK THAT RESONATES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE ARCHIVAL MULTIVERSE

The archival practices of *Sortons les radios-poubelles* highlight the importance of homemade broadcast audio recordings to compensate for the inaccessibility, or incompleteness, of certain archives, such as those of private radios. Recording radio broadcasts in the private sphere and sending back audio documents to the public sphere in an archive is thus an archival form of soundwork. As renowned Dutch archival professor Eric Ketelaar has stated:

Archiving is a “regime of practices” which varies in any given time and in any given place. People create, process, appraise and use archives, influenced consciously or unconsciously by cultural and social factors.<sup>42</sup>

By recognizing these alternative and anonymous archival practices, the archival intervention of this coalition stretches the traditional boundaries of archival science. Ketelaar mentions, in another contribution, that “there are as many collective memories as there are collectives and social groups.”<sup>43</sup> As has been briefly illustrated, the archival intervention of



*Sortons les radios-poubelles* focuses on the trash radio culture of certain stations in Québec City. It is therefore not the entire cultural heritage and collective memory of these private radio stations that is being archived by the coalition, but only the unethical side, the portion of the comments that are disinformation or defamation. By listening to trash radio, recording radio broadcasts at home, and uploading the audio documents to the Internet Archive, *Sortons les radios-poubelles* activists thus assume ethical responsibility for others. They produce the digital materiality of sound from which it is possible to speak and debate about the ethics of broadcast language and the formation of a particular collective memory. Inspired by the work of David Barker, assistant professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh, who wrote a history of the talk radio community in the United States,<sup>44</sup> the contributions of *Sortons les radios-poubelles* could be used to write the cornerstones of Québec City trash radio history.

The term “soundwork” put forward to describe this “burgeoning world sound culture” that is “less ephemeral and invisible”<sup>45</sup> leads us to reconsider the notion of soundwork as proposed by Michele Hilmes. If the *stricto sensu* definition rejects the raw materials to privilege their combination and their “sonic construction,” a consequent reflection about this notion could initially be concerned with the modes of production, of conservation, and exploitation of the sound materials. It would be only from these basic materials, sound materials, “elements of aural expression (voice, actuality sound, music),”<sup>46</sup> that we could understand how the soundwork is elaborated. The degree zero of soundwork is then fundamentally linked to the processes of record making and record keeping. First and foremost, the record making as soundwork is a form of mediation and representation of the realm of discourse on the airwaves of Québec City. And, secondly, the fact of transferring audio documents from the private sphere to the public sphere to preserve them in an archive is thus an archival form of soundwork. As mentioned previously, the soundwork of the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles* is also about the transcription of radio excerpts, which could turn an audio document into a textual record if it is properly archived. This has the consequence of making accessible radio archives that otherwise, as Michele Hilmes mentions, would remain non-eye-readable archives.<sup>47</sup>

This form of archival activism is part of the emergent field of radio preservation studies.<sup>48</sup> More broadly, for almost 10 years now, we have seen the emergence of a coherent research community around the Radio Preservation Task Force of the Library of Congress. Radio is then understood through cultural and archival dimensions, and radio recordings are therefore considered for what they are: primary sources and research objects in and of themselves.

#### LISTENING OUT AND ARCHIVING TRASH RADIO, AN UNFINISHED RESPONSIBILITY

Since the end of 2017, several stickers have appeared in the urban landscape of Québec City, on which one can read “*Ferme ta radio*” (Shut your radio up).<sup>49</sup> Like the sticker suggests, the hip-hop duo Dead Prez sings a refrain evoking the same idea: “Turn off the radio! Turn off that bullshit.”<sup>50</sup>



FIGURE 2. Photo of the sticker "Ferme ta radio" close to the Québec City harbor, June 2020.

Unlike these two examples, *Sortons les radios-poubelles* takes an interventionist archival approach. The following Q&A appears in the “frequently asked questions” section of their website:

Why don't you change the channel?

Because trash radio is not just an individual problem. It affects the whole city. Thousands of micro-aggressions are caused or inspired by the trash radios.

The air in Québec City will not get better by simply “changing the channel.”<sup>51</sup>

By operating on social media and relying on radio archives, the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles* acts as a freedom of speech gatekeeper. Trash radio is not just a local issue, linked to Québec City, but a matter of greater importance for our democracies. Verified and reliable information of quality is essential for a healthy democracy, and this example of autonomous and independent community archives shows the relevance of media monitoring, fact checking, and disinformation flagging.

The reason why trash radio has found a home in the province's capital is part of the “mystery” frequently associated with Québec City. Located only 250 kilometers east of the cosmopolitan Montréal, Québec City has often been associated with mystery, particularly because of the electoral behavior of its citizens who vote strongly conservative compared to other regions of the province. The ethnic homogeneity of the population and the concentration of provincial and federal government ministries could explain this reality. For Dominique Payette, there is in fact no mystery associated with Québec City. Defined as a typically North American city,<sup>52</sup> it harbors an ideological polarization, and

positions taken, similar to what can be observed in the United States and Australia. Also, as Payette points out, some of its citizens adhere to “an ultra-individualistic right-wing ideology, libertarian even in some cases, denying the beneficial—or even merely useful—role of the state and public services, personal attacks, etc.”<sup>53</sup>

In popular language, to speak about Québec City radio is to speak about trash radio stations. Historical and sociological explanations are needed to provide an understanding of the prevalence of trash radio in the province’s capital. Among the many local factors that would allow us to explain this phenomenon, the Québec City/Montréal rivalry and a Québec culture that is Montréal-centric seem relevant. Some Québec City radio hosts seem to be imbued with an arrogant and outrageous sense of distinction, and this phenomenon can only be explained by historicizing it through alternative archival work. Once the relevance of this alternative archiving work is recognized, the use of radio archives seems necessary: on the one hand, to objectify this social phenomenon, and on the other, to criticize the media and the language that emanates from these radios in order to avoid further controversy and ideological polarization. Since Canadian media watchdogs are criticized for their passivity, complacency, and even negligence, we must seriously question whether the weight of this collective responsibility should be assumed by the grassroots and anonymous media activists of *Sortons les radios-poubelles*. ■

---

SIMON-OLIVIER GAGNON is a PhD student in archival studies in the Department of Historical Sciences at Université Laval. He has participated in community radio stations in France, Scotland, Québec, as well as in Canadian Northwest Territories. His research interests relate to archives, memory, and community radio stations.

#### NOTES

1. Office Québécois de la Langue Française (website), Radio de confrontation, [http://gdt.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ficheOqlf.aspx?Id\\_Fiche=26502526](http://gdt.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ficheOqlf.aspx?Id_Fiche=26502526) (accessed October 21, 2020), (my translation).
2. Shawn VanCour, “Locating the Radio Archive: New Histories, New Challenges,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 23, no. 2 (2016): 398.
3. Patrick Couture and David Fiset, *La radio à Québec et ses auditeurs: Rapport final présenté à la Ligue des droits et libertés* (Québec: Université Laval, 2005), 118; Jean-Michel Marcoux, Jean-François Tremblay, David Dupont, and Lysanne Rivard, *Le néopopulisme de CHOI-FM: De l’expansion de la logique consumériste: profil socioéconomique et sociopolitique des auditeurs mobilisés* (Québec: Centre d’études sur les médias, 2005).
4. Diane Vincent and Olivier Turbide, eds., *Fréquences limites, la radio de confrontation au Québec* (Québec: Éditions Nota Bene, 2004).
5. Diane Vincent, Olivier Turbide, and Marty Laforest, eds., *La Radio X, les médias et les citoyens: Dénigrement et confrontation sociale* (Québec: Éditions Nota Bene, 2008); Vincent, Turbide, and Laforest, “The Circulation of Discourse: The Case of Depreciating Remarks on Trash Radio,” *Discourse Studies* 12, no. 6, (2010): 785–801.
6. Dominique Payette, *Les brutes et la punaise: Les radios-poubelles, la liberté d’expression et le commerce des injures* (Montréal: Lux, 2019).
7. Jonathan Montpetit, “After Mosque Attack, Calls to Clean Up Quebec City’s Radio Waves,” *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, February 3, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-city-radio-poubelle-mosque-attack-1.3964005>; Alan Freeman, “After Mosque Attack in Canada, Critics Point to Anti-Immigrant ‘Trash Radio,’” *Washington Post*, January 31, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/after-mosque-](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/after-mosque-)

- attack-canadian-muslims-point-to-anti-immigrant-trash-radio/2017/01/31/d34f7db2-e7d2-11e6-903d-9b11ed7d8d2a\_story.html?noredirect=on.
8. Payette, *Les brutes et la punaise*, 5 (my translation).
  9. Michele Hilmes, "The New Materiality of Radio: Sound on Screens," in *Radio's New Wave: Global Sound in the Digital Era*, Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 43–61; Hilmes, "On a Screen Near You: The New Soundwork Industry," *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 3 (2013): 177–82; Hilmes, "Soundwork: Something to Work With," *Resonance* 1, no. 4 (Winter 2020): 340–43.
  10. Payette, *Les brutes et la punaise*, 141 (my translation).
  11. Sébastien Bouchard, review of *Les brutes et la punaise: les radios-poubelles, la liberté d'expression et le commerce des injures* by Dominique Payette, *Nouveaux Cahiers du socialisme* 23 (2020): 217.
  12. The discourses of radio hosts such as Gilles Proulx of Montreal and Louis Champagne in the Saguenay have been qualified as "trash radio." These hosts have been criticized on several occasions by the Québec Press Council. There was the beginning of a coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles* in the Saguenay region. Coalition Sortons les radios-poubelles de Saguenay (website), <http://coalitionsaguenay.blogspot.com/> (accessed October 21, 2020).
  13. Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), *Decision CRTC 84-209* (Ottawa: CRTC, 1984), <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/1984/db84-209.htm>.
  14. Although the late-1990s era of FM93 (also known by the letters CJMF) was characterized by the presence of André Arthur, his career had started in July 1970 at CHRC. As the journalist Jonathan Montpetit said of him, "Arthur is arguably the godfather of *radio poubelle*" in Québec City. Montpetit, "With Jeff Fillion and André Arthur Gone, Is This the End of *Radio Poubelle*?" *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, May 2, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/the-end-of-radio-poubelle-1.3561392>. See also Amor Ben Amor and Veronique Dorval, "André Arthur en ondes, la constitution d'un personnage dominant," in *Fréquences limites, la radio de confrontation au Québec*, Diane Vincent and Olivier Turbide, eds. (Québec: Éditions Nota Bene, 2004), 137–52.
  15. Among all the complaints addressed to the Conseil de Presse du Québec for misinformation or insulting remarks of these two radio hosts, we can highlight their discriminatory remarks toward Québec City's Muslim population. The year before the Québec City Mosque shooting, radio host Éric Duhaime ridiculed the fact that a severed pig's head had been left at the doorstep of the mosque. In the wake of the attack, radio host Sylvain Bouchard delivered a mea culpa, acknowledging misinformation on the subject of Islam and a lack of dialogue with Muslim communities. Kevin Dougherty, "Talk Radio, Intolerance in Focus as Québec Seeks Answers after Shooting," *Reuters*, January 31, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-mosque-shooting-city/talk-radio-intolerance-in-focus-as-quebec-seeks-answers-after-shooting-idUSKBN15F2P2>.
  16. Dan Bilefsky, "Quebec's 'Trash Radio' Host Fires Up Outrage, and Big Ratings," *New York Times*, August 18, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/18/world/canada/quebec-trash-radio-jeff-fillion.html>.
  17. Olivier Turbide, Diane Vincent, and Marty Laforest, "Les 'X' à Québec: La construction discursive d'un groupe exclusif," *Recherches sociographiques* 49, no.1 (2008): 87–112.
  18. Marcoux, Tremblay, Dupont, and Rivard, *Le néopopulisme de CHOI-FM*.
  19. Payette, *Les brutes et la punaise*; Sébastien Bouchard, "Le populisme de droite en action," *Nouveaux Cahiers du socialisme*, February 2015, <https://www.cahiersdusocialisme.org/radios-poubelles-et-populisme-de-droite/>.
  20. Sortons les radios-poubelles (website), <http://www.sortonslespoubelles.com/> (accessed June 6, 2020).

21. Mainly the coalition's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/radiopoubelle/>), Twitter accounts (@Sortirpoubelles), and website (<https://sortonslespoubelles.com/>).
22. Étienne Lanthier, email message to author, October 21, 2020 (my translation).
23. Sortons les radios-poubelles, "La radio-poubelle: tisonnier de la haine," April 17, 2012, <https://sortonslespoubelles.com/la-radio-poubelle-tisonnier-de-la-haine/>; Sortons les radios-poubelles, "Monette reçoit le prix poubelle," April 1, 2013, <https://sortonslespoubelles.com/monette-recoit-le-prix-poubelle/>.
24. See the different accounts of the coalition *Sortons les radios-poubelles* on the Internet Archives, <https://archive.org/details/Radio-poubelles>; <https://archive.org/details/Radio-poubelle2>; <https://archive.org/details/Radio-poubelle3>; <https://archive.org/details/radiopoubelle4>; <https://archive.org/details/radiopoubelle5>; <https://archive.org/details/radiopoubelle6>; <https://archive.org/details/radiopoubelle8>.
25. Le club des mal cités (website), <https://leclubdesmalcites.com/> (accessed October 21, 2020).
26. Étienne Lanthier, email message to author, October 21, 2020 (my translation).
27. Jacques Derrida, "Archives Fever: A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 10, n. 1. "Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation."
28. Shawn VanCour, "Locating the Radio Archive: New Histories, New Challenges," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 23, no. 2 (2016): 395–403.
29. Kathy Newman, *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism, 1935–1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
30. Media Matters for America (website), <https://www.mediamatters.org/>.
31. Sean Gordon, "Quebec's Political Class Takes on Radio Station That Gives Voice to the Anti-Mask Movement," *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, September 30, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/anti-maskers-conspiracists-public-health-1.5743789>.
32. Caroline Montpetit, "Un groupe réclame que le rôle de Radio X soit évalué par le coroner," *Le Devoir*, [https://www.ledevoir.com/culture/598700/coronavirus-un-groupe-reclame-que-le-role-de-radio-x-soit-evalue-par-le-coroner?fbclid=IwARInELAEjVeWZziQmRkGbwBoiLwk\\_vs\\_\\_a\\_VW78ApeoXswhY7tzRFQU9BI](https://www.ledevoir.com/culture/598700/coronavirus-un-groupe-reclame-que-le-role-de-radio-x-soit-evalue-par-le-coroner?fbclid=IwARInELAEjVeWZziQmRkGbwBoiLwk_vs__a_VW78ApeoXswhY7tzRFQU9BI).
33. Quoted in Gabriel Béland, "Radio X se défend d'effacer les traces de Dan Marino," *La Presse*, April 13, 2021, <https://www.lapresse.ca/covid-19/2021-04-13/eclosion-au-mega-fitness-gym/radio-x-se-defend-d-effacer-les-traces-de-dan-marino.php>.
34. Sortons les radios-poubelles (Facebook post), <https://www.facebook.com/radiopoubelle/posts/5557987774241628> (accessed April 13, 2021) (my translation).
35. For the moment, the accounts (<https://archive.org/details/radiopoubelle5> and <https://archive.org/details/radiopoubelle6>) are no longer available.
36. As mentioned on the website, the signatories of the Freedom for Oppression Declaration "denounce misinformation, hateful, insulting, defamatory and/or discriminatory comments in certain Quebec media, whether they are made against individuals, categories of individuals or organizations. We unite and raise our voices against this way of doing things that devalues the work of journalism and invite all those who wish to add their voice to ours to sign this declaration." Collectif Liberté d'oppression (website), <https://www.libertedoppression.ca/> (accessed April 30, 2021) (my translation).
37. Kassandra Nadeau-Lamarche, "RNC Média veut une injonction contre Sortons les radios-poubelle," *Société Radio-Canada*, June 21, 2021, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1803470/choi-radio-x-demande-injonction-coalition-sortons-radios-poubelles>
38. <https://www.newswire.ca/fr/news-releases/rnc-media-depose-une-procedure-contre-la-coalition-sortons-les-radios-poubelles—841387397.html> (my translation).
39. Ibid.

40. Thomas Thivierge, "Radio X demande aux membres du collectif Sortons les radios poubelles de s'identifier," *Le Soleil*, June 21, 2021, <https://www.lesoleil.com/actualite/la-capitale/radio-x-demande-aux-membres-du-collectif-sortons-les-radios-poubelles-de-sidentifier-ba4ca6c793a49ab3d9e3e75ac7bfe78b> (my translation).
41. Sortons les radios-poubelles (Facebook account), June 22, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/radiopoubelle/posts/5900967313277004> (my translation).
42. Eric Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives," *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (2001): 136.
43. Eric Ketelaar, "The Archive as a Time Machine," in *Proceedings of the DLM-Forum 2002. @ccess and Preservation of Electronic Information: Best Practices and Solutions*, Barcelona, May 6–8, INSAR European Archives news, Supplement VII, p. 576–81, (Luxembourg, 2002), 3.
44. David Barker, *Rushed to Judgment: Talk Radio, Persuasion, and American Political Behavior* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
45. Hilmes, "Soundwork," 340–41.
46. Hilmes, "Soundwork," 341.
47. Michele Hilmes, "Radio Studies and Soundwork," *Radio Survivor* no. 297 (podcast), <http://www.radiosurvivor.com/2021/05/podcast-297-radio-studies-and-soundwork/>.
48. Carolyn Birdsall, "Can We Invent a Field Called 'Radio Preservation Studies?'" *FLOW Journal*, <https://www.flowjournal.org/2015/05/can-we-invent-a-field-called-radio-preservation-studies/> (accessed October 19, 2019).
49. Sortons les radios-poubelles (website), "Ferme ta radio," January 5, 2018, <https://sortonslespoubelles.com/ferme-ta-radio/>.
50. Dead Prez, "Turn Off the Radio," 2002, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5MRQO-ExVk>.
51. Sortons les radios-poubelles (website), <https://sortonslespoubelles.com/faq-quelques-reponses-aux-questions-frequemment-posees/> (accessed June 6, 2020) (my translation).
52. Gérald Fortin, "Une ville américaine moyenne, unique en son genre," *Recherches sociographiques* 22, no. 2 (1981): 187–203.
53. Dominique Payette, *L'information à Québec, un enjeu capital*, Université Laval, November 2015, 18.