About ACONTRA-LAMA

About the project:

The ACONTRA-LAMA platform was developed as part of the project "The Affective Construction Of National Temporalities in Austrian Post-War Radio" (ACONTRA), a collaborative project between the University of Music and Performing Arts, the University of Vienna, and the House of Austrian History. ACONTRA focuses on the role of radio as a mass medium in the process of constructing national consciousness during the early years of the Second Republic (1945–1955).
Auditory primary sources for this period have so far been poorly catalogued or not at all: The collections are highly fragmented and so diverse in structure and content that they must first be made accessible for (scientific) processing. Through the further development of the annotation software LAMA (Linking Annotations for Media Analysis), which was conceived in the predecessor project Telling Sounds, existing collections are recorded, merged, and finally, connections between the documents are established at both the production and content levels. For this purpose, a corpus had to be researched and defined from the existing collections. The existing metadata of the documents were standardised. Additionally, the documents were annotated to varying degrees with both descriptive and interpretive annotations. This enables the preparation of the material with regard to specific research questions.

How to use the platform:

The ACONTRA-LAMA may be used in three different ways:

1. There are various search functions to search the available documents according to specific parameters: there are filter and search functions in the "Clip List" to find specific clips; a quote search to find specific words and phrases in quotes; and the more complex "Query Function" to discover similarities between the clips.

2. The "Detailed Analysis"-tool may be used to break down and annotate the sound, music and speech layers of our audio documents according to your own research questions. If you are interested in using the "Detailed Analysis"-function, you will need access-data, so please contact: Birgit Haberpeuntner (birgit.haberpeuntner@univie.ac.at) and/or Elias Berner (elias.berner@oeaw.ac.at). We also offer a brief orientation re: how to best use this tool!

3. If you are interested in the source code, e.g., to index and research other archival collections, you will find it here: https://github.com/tellingsounds/acontralama. If you have any questions please contact Julia Jaklin (julia.jaklin@tuwien.ac.at).

Radio landscape and archival situation in Austria, 1945–1955

The outlines of the Austrian post-war radio landscape were already drawn in 1945 through the Allied invasion routes: the British *Sendergruppe Alpenland,* with transmitters in Graz and Klagenfurt, was founded on August 31, 1945 after the British army took over Styria from the Soviets (Falböck/Feldinger 2016, 6); in July 1945, after Tyrol had also become part of the French occupation zone, *Radio Vorarlberg* and *Radio Innsbruck* broadcast together under French administration as *Sendergruppe West* (Falböck/Feldinger 2016, 7); in June 1945, the US-American troops announced the establishment of a radio station in Salzburg under the name *Rot-Weiß-Rot*, and also initiated the construction of stations in Linz and Vienna (ibid.) The Soviets had no plans to operate their own German-language station: in April 1945, they took over the city of Vienna and with it, the building that housed the broadcasting corporation at Argentinierstraße, which had been built in the 1930s for the *RAVAG* (Radio Verkehrs AG) and became the headquarters of the *Reichsender Wien* from 1938. They contented themselves with monitoring *RAVAG*'s immediately resumed program, as well as creating a regular series of broadcasts entitled *Russische Stunde* (Pensold 2018, 96). Although *RAVAG* had to comply with the censorship regulations of the Soviets, it served as the mouthpiece of the provisional government under Karl Renner (Falböck/Feldinger 2016, 4; Pensold 2018, 99).

The available archival holdings of radio documents from 1945–1955 are as fragmented as the radio landscape of the post-war period, and they consequently spread across different archives. Holdings of various broadcasters and broadcasting groups may be found in the ORF Archives, the Österreichische Mediathek ([Austrian Media Library](#)), the DokuFunk ([Radio Documentation Archive](#)) and the MDW (University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna). However, most of the documents available there are recordings from the two institutions with the widest reach, i.e. *RAVAG* and *Rot-Weiß-Rot*. Occasionally, documents from *Sendergruppe West* or *Sendergruppe Alpenland* have also found their way into these archives, but in order to supplement these holdings, the regional archives of what has later become the provincial studios would also have to be researched. In our project, we concentrate on the holdings from 1945–1955 available in the ORF archives and in the *Mediathek*, mostly from the *RAVAG* and *Rot-Weiß-Rot*. As our source materials, we defined the tapes that were added to the *UNESCO World Heritage List* in 2016 under the title "[Historical Radio Recordings *RAVAG* and *Rot-Weiß-Rot*](#)": There, the number of tapes from the ORF archive is listed as 620, and from the *Mediathek* as 215.

What really happened: The data sets we have indexed

However, the holdings from the UNESCO collections also turned out to be porous. For one, it was no longer possible to reconstruct in detail which 620 documents from the ORF archives were actually picked to be included in the UNESCO list. As a team, we therefore decided to expand the corpus at this point, and to include all available documents from the ORF archive for the period 1945–1955 in

our database. Therefore, we did not work with 620 archival documents from the ORF, but with 1695. This resulted in 1856 entries in our database, as we split up collection tapes into individual entries.

On the other hand, the *Rot-Weiß-Rot* collection of the *Mediathek* was easy to reconstruct, as it was a self-contained purchase of 213 physically existing broadcasting tapes (two signatures were given out twice, hence the 215 in the UNESCO collection). However, more detailed research revealed that at least 49 of these 213 tapes had to be re-dated to after 1955; thus, they not only lie outside the period under investigation, but they cannot be *Rot-Weiß-Rot* recordings at all, because the last RWR station was discontinued on July 27, 1955. However, as we have expanded our corpus from the ORF archive to account for additional findings, we did the same thing at the *Mediathek*: In addition to the 164 tapes we were able to attribute to *Rot-Weiß-Rot* from the UNESCO-collection, we have also included documents that could be found in the *Mediathek* under the search term "radio" for the period 1945-1955. During our research, we also became aware that a further 200 or so documents could be found by searching for the corporation "Rot-Weiß-Rot" for our period of investigation (1945–1955), which are not part of the above-mentioned *Rot-Weiß-Rot* collection and are not concert recordings of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (which is its own collection with approx. 2000 documents). These approx. 200 we were *not* able to include in the database due to our limited capacities. We have, however, managed to include a total of 463 entries from the *Mediathek* in our database: 235 entries for the search term "radio" for the period 1945–1955, and 220 entries for the *Rot-Weiß-Rot* collection (collection tapes with different pieces of music were broken down into individual entries).

In addition, we have created separate entries – in a separate collection category – for all documents used in the exhibition accompanying our project, in order to optimise the selection and cooperation process. As a result, an additional 30 or so entries have been added to our corpus, which *do not* fall within the period 1945–1955.

The indexing process

The imported documents were indexed with our own metadata in 4 steps in increasing depth.

Step 1: Automated import of title, signature and specified production or creation date

Step 2: Translation of the descriptive texts into machine-readable entities: persons, institutions, locations, topics.

Step 3: Descriptive detailed analysis of the individual levels of a document: speech, sounds, music (for this step, the documents had to be listened to)

Step 4: Interpretations (i.e., a distinct relation) based on the entities created in the descriptive detailed analyses, which can be "merged" into an interpretation.

Steps 1–2 involved the translation and standardisation of the information found in the archives, in accordance with linkable, machine-readable standards (linked open data). These steps were carried out for all imported documents (basic data collection).

Steps 3–4 were only carried out for a select number of documents (currently 45, as of September 2024). The selection process was guided by our research questions about the connection between nationhood and temporality; by crucial emphases set by the exhibition; and by the collected materials themselves through basic data queries.

Reservations: A note for users and future projects

- We can, by no means, lay claim to complete coverage of all radio documents available in the above archives from 1945–1955. There is still a lot to be found, especially in the *Mediathek*, but possibly also in the ORF. In particular, we assume that there is plenty of interesting material recorded by amateurs on private devices, some of which may be hidden in archival holdings at the *Mediathek* that may not yet have been listened to.

- We have not had the time to listen to all the documents for ourselves. Thus the preliminary work of the archivists is crucial in finding relevant documents for our detailed analysis, as the quality and quantity of our basic metadata reflects what has already been entered in the archives as descriptions of the documents.

- Distinction between basic metadata annotation and "analytical annotation" / interpretation is nowhere near clear-cut. Tags assigned during basic annotation are, at times, just as subjective or interpretative (e.g. the keyword "Austrianness" requires a concept of what Austrianness is and what the tag refers to in the respective clip).

- Certain annotations have only emerged as relevant during the processing of the material and as research progressed. They have, consequently, been used less frequently and accurately for the previously annotated documents.

Literature:

Falböck, Gaby/Feldinger, Norbert P. »Vier Zonen, vier Konzepte, Akteure mit Vergangenheit – eine besondere Geschichte vom Anfang. Die Medienregulierung der Alliierten in Österreich«, in: Jan Krone/Tassilo Pellegrini (eds.), *Handbuch Medienökonomie*, Wiesbaden 2016, p. 1–25.

Pensold, Wolfgang, *Zur Geschichte des Rundfunks in Österreich: Programm für die Nation*, Wiesbaden 2018.