

4. Pilot implementation

...we each leaped and **fell now on the United States's** side.

...all of us running, **crouching all the time**

...**that run**, we started it like at about 11 and we finished it, I think, at about 4 a.m. because **it was still a little dark**

...finally when we reached San Isidro **they stuck us in a garbage container**

...and later two cars arrived and **they stuck us in the trunks...**

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—now that I remember—it was an address, **really ugly, the place**. There were only, like 2 or 3 buildings—in a 15-block area—that were inhabited and **to one of those buildings was where we were headed**. We got there, and all quiet, **we knocked and it turned out that my sister didn't live there anymore...**

[Carmelo Maceda. *Voyage from Tulcingo to NY*.
(Audio piece translation)]

This chapter contains the pilot implementation process of the eRadio project. The implementation followed the structured design of a process meant to be iterative and adaptive. Despite various factors that stretched the notion of adaptability far beyond the original design, the pilot implementation was successful in terms of process, product and of the eRadio model.

Implementation

The implementation is designed to be recursive because simplicity is necessary for inexperienced communicators of journalistic and artistic audio pieces. It is designed to be adaptive because the implementation must adjust to the characteristics of each of the groups, taking into account their lifestyles, their people, and other overall constants. However, adaptability is also necessary to handle unexpected or changing events. The researcher and the participants are constantly evaluating situations, making decisions, and acting upon them. The information here presented is taken from audio recordings, observations, interviews, and other spoken and written sources.

First Steps Towards Implementation

Searching on the Internet, I came across with what I was looking for to implement the eRadio project: the Tulcingo community, a transnational community that has its hometown in Tulcingo in the state of Puebla, Mexico but approximately 7 000 of its members live in New York City [Borden, 2001]. At www.tulcingo.net I got in touch with Jesús Perez, native of Tulcingo now living in New York, current administrator of the page, and who was to become my New York contact in what concerned the pilot implementation of the eRadio project with the Tulcingo community. Jesús connected me with Don Carmelo Maceda, current Vice-president of *Casa Puebla New York*, and also a native of Tulcingo who ventured to New York at the age of 14, and with Salomón Virafuentes, in charge of the Cultural Center in Tulcingo, who was to become my contact in the town of Tulcingo. During my conversations with the three of them, I learned that the Tulcingo community, with its hometown in Mexico and its enormous emigrant population in New York City, seemed to be in need of and ready for the benefits that could stem from the eRadio project. Moreover, the feasibility of the implementation quickly became apparent. The reasons that stood out were their diaspora situation, the contact they had strived to maintain, the infrastructure we could count on in New York and in Tulcingo, their enthusiasm with the idea of constructing a bridge for participative and interactive communication between both populations, and, above all, their willingness to try out this particular project which relied as much on community participation and involvement as on technology.

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During further talks with members of the Tulcingo community in New York and in Tulcingo, we discussed and decided on the implementation plan. They pointed out the great strategic advantage of web-casting first from Tulcingo to New York on March 28 which was in the week of Saint Gabriel's festivities, their patron saint, thus the most relevant religious festivity in Tulcingo; that is, popular enthusiasm would be at its highest in Tulcingo.

They also pointed out that the New York to Tulcingo web-cast would be best positioned on May 5, the most important historical date for the New York community, a day of a big celebration in New York, organized by Mexicans mostly from Puebla and Tulcingo; that is, popular enthusiasm would be at its highest in New York and, of course, in Puebla too.

After everything was agreed on and ready, the first concrete step that we took towards implementation was to promote the project by word of mouth and by way of posters to attract volunteers (Appendix B).

4.1 The Tulcingo implementation

4.1.1 Workshop locations

Once in Tulcingo, the project was carried out basically in three kinds of locations: the Operational Center, for group and individual sessions, was at David's place which was almost downtown; the Connection Center, where we linked up to the Internet, was at 'Armando's Internet Café,' a five minute walk from the Operations Center; and the Field, that is, many distinct locations, such as the street, somebody's house, a school, the church, and the fair, where the field work of the 'Gather' stage (recording the community) was done.

4.1.2 Participants' commitment

At an informal meeting, Friday night before the Tulcingo workshop started, Salomón, our Tulcingo contact, asked those who wanted to participate to confirm their participation. Nine people expressed that they were interested in participating in the project. Not all were going to be audio piece creators, but they offered to help with the Internet connection, taking pictures, and providing support.

Five people participated in the entire workshop. Three communicators were male, Salomón, David, and Israel, who decided to work on individual projects, and two were women, Elsa and Mary, who teamed up. All of them were hardworking and very participative, though Israel did not finish his piece.

4.1.3 Sessions

As foreseen in the implementation plan, members of the Tulcingo community and I adapted the sessions and the timetable of the workshop to the town's festivities and activities. From the first Sunday to Wednesday there were many religious, educational, and commercial activities going on. Field recordings were done on those days. On Tuesday, April 23, we set up an eRadio Project stand at the Tulcingo's 2004 Educational Fair because the communicators wanted to disseminate the workshop, as an educational instance, and the project itself, as a relevant social pursuit. From Thursday to Saturday, we devoted long hours to the editing process.

Uploading to the MIT Media Lab and to PRX via dial-up Internet connection took up all of Saturday night and part of Sunday morning. Web-casting to New York and broadcasting in Tulcingo were carried out Sunday afternoon. That Sunday evening, as we celebrated the closing of the whole process, the post-workshop group evaluation was carried out and the participants were unanimous on implementing an eRadio project to transmit on a regular basis.

Group sessions

There were five group sessions distributed throughout the nine-day workshop:

- (Saturday 20, 9 p.m.) The first group session was for introducing the project, setting up group sessions and individual work, presenting and introductory handling of the recorder, and explaining what the next step would be—coming up with ideas for their audio pieces—for the communicators to start working on it. We agreed on things such as logistics and timetabling for using the equipment. Salomón interviewed each participant very much like a professional journalist would have done. He began with something on the order of, “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Here we are with a group of volunteers who want to do radio. We are going to ask Ms. Flores to give us her opinion.”
- (Wednesday 24, 9 p.m.) The second group session was to see the communicators' progress with the field recordings and to discuss their ideal final product. We then proceeded to fine tune the individual sessions as to who, how, when and what was going to be done. We talked about the importance of listening critically to an edited piece before considering it ‘done.’
- (Saturday 27, 9 p.m.) The third group session was to decide the transmission logistics and timetable.
- (Sunday 28, 11 a.m.) The fourth group session was for the simultaneous transmission of the audio pieces in town and at ‘*Casa Puebla* New York’. We established telephone contact and kept both groups in touch during the whole transmission.

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→ (Sunday 28, 9 p.m.) The fifth and last session was designated to evaluate the work done, to listen to comments and discuss possible improvements, to talk about future approaches and plans, and to celebrate the closing of the workshop.

Individual sessions

The implementation design requires that communicators ‘play’ with the tools to ‘discover’ how to use them and that the researcher stand by in a supportive fashion. Nevertheless, they were reluctant to handle the equipment, and since we were pressed for time, I operated the VoxPopBoxes most of the time, as an editing technician, but they took the editing decisions. Perhaps with more time communicators would have overcome their reluctance to interact with the tools.

The extension and frequency of the individual sessions depended on the amount of editing that was needed. Listening to the field recordings and choosing the parts that were going to be used was the most time-consuming part. The details of each of the communicators’ work and the process they went through are described in the Sections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5.

The group and individual sessions took place in close concordance with the initial design in terms of approach and methodology; that is, we managed an environment where everybody was learning something new, getting feedback on their ideas and work, and feeling challenged to do their best, according to each one’s personal traits and projects. There was a great degree of diversity in the group, which made for variety of subject matter, approaches, styles, and results. The relationships in the group were friendly. All the communicators carried out various activities together.

On Monday 29, when the workshop week was over, I visited the participants at their homes or workplaces and they individually answered some questions about the workshop and tools.

The consensus among the communicators was that, although they were given the most relevant information in order for them to produce the radio program, not enough details were given. They would have also liked to be given more content in the workshops and more than one example for the hands-on learning stage.

Nevertheless, the time allotted for the workshops did not allow for any more. The original plan was to have four 8-hour long sessions, but instead we had to settle for five 2-hour long sessions due to the festivities and to people’s occupations. The total amount in hours of the group sessions was 10 instead of 32, much shorter than planned, so I had to be very concrete.

In fact, what they wanted was what had originally been planned, which required more time, but duration had to be shortened to meet local needs.

Because editing is so time consuming, it is important to keep to the original plan regarding time of allotting more days to editing than to recording. Nevertheless, the Tulcingo situation forced things in the other direction because the town's festivities were valuable input for the project.

4.1.4 Process

This section is concerned with the procedural aspects that took place during the creation of an audio piece. Since the first group session, communicators already had an idea of the kind of work they wanted to develop in the week. Their idea was well accepted among the group members and suggestions were made. As to the methodology of how things should work, I insisted that everybody should try to go through all the process, not to just adopt one role, as David had suggested. He said that roles should be assigned depending on personal characteristics. However, it could be that those characteristics were based on the observer's impressions about others, rather than on a person's real characteristics. For example, David said that Elsa would never be able to make an interview because she was a shy person. Fortunately, I convinced them that everybody should give every step of the process a try, to get a better feel of the whole process and to later decide for themselves which activities suited them better, which were not for them, or which were hard for them to do though not impossible, and I also pointed out that they could even discover in themselves natural abilities they did not know they had. As it happened, Elsa turned out to possess great interviewing skills. And David, who was very reluctant to edit his material, ended up demonstrating to others and to himself that he could be a successful editor.

The Gather stage

Salomón, after three days of recording, came up with about ten hours of audio recordings of an event and of people's opinions about it. He had planned to do two pieces, but after doing the first one, he did not have any time left to do the other one. At the beginning, he was overly ambitious in making recordings for his piece. He self-improved his recording techniques, judging by the excellent quality of his later recordings as compared with the poor quality of many of his first ones. He went through the whole process patiently.

David organized a discussion panel with many people to talk about a problem that he wanted to raise among the community. It was an extremely long a discussion panel but a rewarding one.



Figure 4-1. David gathering

Elsa and Mary: Elsa came to the first session just to keep Mary company. She ended up being a great asset to the workshop, and a wonderful interviewer. She worked with Mary on a piece. Mary was the one with the ideas, logistics and structure, and Elsa conducted the interviews and asked the questions.

It was pleasant to discover that interviewing is something natural and even simple. Elsa, as mentioned earlier, was considered by her workshop-mates, a shy person with no abilities to perform an interview, but when we listened to her interview, we could not believe it. The interview was conducted smoothly, her voice was clear, it sounded confident, her questions were concrete, and she asked them naturally. She was direct but always polite and respectful, and she managed it as if grandpa were telling a story, which gave the piece so much life.

Israel, played with the idea of a piece on high-end, car stereos, which were in fashion in Tulcingo, but ended up working on a very original idea. He planned an audio piece about a day in the life of a boy whose father took off to New York since he was born. The boy had a kind of imaginary friend who was his father. Israel spent the day with the boy, he was with him since the boy woke up, had breakfast, went to school, and until after lunch. Along the day he interviewed the boy, and the significant people around him, such as his mom and his primary school teacher. He also recorded a considerable quantity of ambient sounds for his piece. Unfortunately, he did not finish editing his piece even though he went through the whole process.

The Produce stage

Things were being created, knowledge and skillfulness were growing, the communicators obviously were learning while editing their pieces, but the learning process was not that obvious.

The learning curve can be understood better by analyzing every stage each participant's unique piece went through. But since that is too exacting a task, I will at least provide a bit of detail of some of the stages.

Logging

Communicators understood the idea that logging is selecting whole clips or parts of clips to be later edited. However, they did not know which clips to log or what they were looking for in the clips, because everything sounded important to them. Therefore, most decisions that had to do with selecting parts to be used and deleting unwanted elements from those parts, were made during the editing stage instead.

Editing

Salomón, after spending many hours of editing, said that for his future work he would record the voice separately from the environmental audio to make editing easier. He was the only one who made multiple versions of his piece. He divided it into two parts that he put together at the end. The process was time consuming: listening to all the clips, logging them, figuring out what specifically to say, and determining how to say it from what had been recorded. We imported all the clips into one file for editing; after a while it was almost impossible to do anything because the system had become too slow. Most probably the Audacity software could not handle such an enormous load. While I found out what was going on, I imported what was already finished and worked with only a few clips at a time. The system did not slow down again.

David's piece was a series of tracks with inserted introductory comments of his own and with his voice (except for one, which has his wife's voice) to introduce what the speaker was going to talk about. This technique may be called an 'audio montage,' where we worked with fragments of audio that may or may not be closely related to each other, using the communicators voice as a transitional device.

At the conceptual and the practical level the communicators found editing hard to understand and harder to do. David asked how I expected them to edit a one-hour interview into a 10-minute one, since everything was so important. He was the only one who expressed it, but I could feel that the others were thinking alike. I offered to sit with him and do it together. He refused to work that way: he needed to see an example with his clips of how to shorten his piece while it still made sense.

He did not want to listen to the clips and do the logging himself. That is, he wanted me to take the logging decisions. Again, to save time, I made a small selection for the purpose of an example. He then sequenced the selections, made introductory comments for each one, recorded

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them on separate clips, and then we put it all together. He managed to give cohesiveness to his piece. In the end, his piece was less than five minutes long, the shortest of the program. It had an interview format. The final audio piece had all the necessary information to get his message across.

Elsa and Mary did not know what to edit from their piece. They started by getting rid of the mistakes, the blank clips, repeated things and “Uh’s,” and “well’s.” Then they grouped the logs into topics and, finally, they decided to leave in the fewest questions possible and to put together a new sequence. After listening for a while, they became more critical of their work. Both were picky and we continued editing until they were happy with the piece. They worked on the story narrative and adding background music. The finished audio piece consisted mainly of parts taken from the interview, and only one question was re-recorded, as was the closing.

The learning pace at the beginning was slow, but by the time the communicators finished their first piece, they had picked up speed and ‘mastered,’ conceptually, the editing basics as well as the handling of the recorder and microphone. Practical interaction with the VoxPopBox required more time. Unfortunately, they did not have enough time to do a second piece.

The Publish stage

Broadcasting in Tulcingo was done locally on March, 28, 2004. I had uploaded the files using FTP onto the Media Lab and PRX servers overnight, and for the audience in ‘*Casa Puebla* New York’ it was played simultaneously from a local laptop.

The Listen stage

Later in Tulcingo, in a group session, the communicators made comments about their own pieces. In spite of their joy, they were self-critical in that they mentioned almost imperceptible flaws or parts or effects they could have added or improved. Most of the feedback they gave each other downplayed self-criticism and encouraged the author. All in an ambience full of laughter and *camaraderie*.

4.1.5 Audio piece

Since the first group session, David, Salomón, Mary and Israel, already had an idea of the topics they wanted for their pieces.

David’s piece was meant to raise awareness about the importance of creating a Multiple Assistance Center to assist handicapped kids. His audio-piece is a formal and informative synthesis of a discussion panel. It is well sequenced with effective fade-ins and fade-outs. The

volumes of his piece are kept within an acceptable range though a little bit of noise is heard when he speaks too close to the microphone.

To wrap up, I invite all parents to, together, support us all, for the benefit of our handicapped children, with work and with financial resources, to achieve, as soon as possible, this CAM. [David. “Creating CAM (Multiple Assistance Center) to assist handicapped kids” (my translation)]

Salomón narrated the Educational Fair activities that took place from March 21 (Spring starts) to March 24 (the town’s festival.) The intention of his socio-cultural piece was to share the customs and events of the town with his fellow townspeople in an informal but informative way. There is a part, where people are giving their opinions that is inadequately structured because the listeners get lost as to who is speaking. However, the message of why this kind of fair is important was well understood. Salomón used background music, ambient-sounds, and silences to make his piece more vivid.

We commence this narration on the 22nd of March with the festivity, here in Tulcingo, of the 198th anniversary of the birth of Don Benito Juarez, of whom we recall the dictum: “Among towns and individuals, respect for the rights of others means peace.” [Salomón. “Narration about the Educational Fair 2004” (my translation)]

Mary wanted to do something related to the traditional dances of the region. And **Elsa** was not sure what she wanted her audio piece to be about. Both, Mary and Elsa, ended up together doing an inspiring piece that sounds like ‘grandpa’ narrating what kermesses were like in the 50s. Their audio piece is aimed at promoting socio-cultural traditions of the town among the young. The sequence of the piece and the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee is that of a natural conversation. Don Francisco, the senior citizen interviewed, does the narrating, bringing up interesting points and highlighting details. The details together with the background music evoke in the listeners minds what the teller is reminiscing. The elderly audience was deeply moved with the recollections of those days and they would nod to what was being said in the audio piece and even add side comments of their own. To the youth, listening to how men used to court women, sounded either ridiculously funny or interesting and romantic.

[Don Francisco] Ah, well you’d go up to her, and you’d extend your hand, and you’d say to the girl: “Miss, will you allow me to dance a piece with you?” And, well some said yes and others said no. [Mary and Elsa. “What kermesses were like in the 50s” (my translation)]

The audio pieces can be heard at <http://eradio.media.mit.edu> and an audio piece log can be seen in Appendix D, and excerpts of some pieces in Appendix E.

4.1.6 Program

The program lasted approximately 26 minutes. It included an opening, three pieces, and a closing. Armando was the radio announcer; he had a prerecorded written introduction (scripted by Salomón). The closing comments were given by Nancy, *impromptu*. They did a great job. The radio transmission ran smoothly and towards the end of the transmission, the Tulcingo participants were so enthused with having listened to their radio program that they cheered for the audience in New York.

Communicators, collaborators, friends, and relatives gathered in the house from where we transmitted to listen to the program. The communicators promoted the FM radio transmission by calling their friends and asking taxi drivers and shop owners to tune in to our radio frequency. During the transmission, a TV channel from the State of Puebla covered the event and highlighted its significance for the community. (The channel broadcasts in the State of Puebla and New York but the signal does not reach Tulcingo.) Before the transmission, the reporters interviewed the communicators of the audio pieces. After listening to Elsa talking with so much confidence on her audio piece, it was moving to see how nervous she was while being interviewed, stuttering on her answers. The reporter kept on posing the same question in different ways until Elsa said: “I thought that doing something like this was too hard for me, but I’m very proud that I could do it.”

In New York, Tulcingo migrants came to ‘*Casa Puebla* New York’ to listen to the program. They had learned about the program through relatives or friends involved in the project or because they had gone to *Casa Puebla* to be helped with some governmental paperwork and had seen our publicity. Because I was in Tulcingo, Steve Schultze, technical manager at Public Radio Exchange, represented the eRadio project. He set up and operated the equipment. Jesús, my New York contact, Don Carmelo, *Casa Puebla* Vice-President, and Verónica, coordinator of *Casa Puebla* made sure the place was ready for the audience—they offered snacks. Reporters from *Hoy*, *El Diario*, and *Diario de Mexico*, newspapers published in New York, were there. A ‘Smithsonian Magazine’ journalist was also present. For conversing, we were connected with New York via telephone. Steve explained the project to the audience, downloaded the pieces from the eRadio project website (<http://eradio.media.mit.edu/>) and played them. Since the telephone was connected to the audio system the audience in ‘*Casa Puebla* New York’ could listen to cheers coming from the communicators in Tulcingo. Most of the audience in New York was from Tulcingo but some others were from towns nearby Tulcingo who were curious to hear news from somewhere near their hometowns. There was a girl in the audience, Odilia, a Tulcingan who had been in New York for around three years. She is reported to have said she would like to be one of

the first communicators to transmit from New York to Tulcingo. “There are so many things to tell.” She had said in Spanish to the reporter of the *Hoy* newspaper [Relaño, 2004].

The communicators believe in the potential of the eRadio project. The communicators in Tulcingo, even those who have worked and lived in New York, find it relevant to listen to programs from their hometown and nearby towns because the media coverage about their town is limited and is never about what is going on in their little towns.

4.2 The New York implementation

4.2.1 Workshop location

In New York, the operations center was ‘*Casa Puebla New York*’ in Manhattan but field recordings were done in four boroughs: Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, and Manhattan.

4.2.2 Sessions

Not everything was well organized in New York except for the place where the transmission took place. Promotional material (Appendix C) was distributed in advance (since before the Tulcingo workshop started) to the Tulcingan owners of some businesses, to the hosting organization, and by Internet in the ‘*Casa Puebla New York*’ and Tulcingo web pages (<http://www.tulcingo.net/> and <http://www.casapueblanewyork.org>).

Group Sessions

In New York there were no group sessions. We adhered to the structure of the workshop in matters of timing. Odilia was the only participant who committed herself to go through the whole project as a communicator, hence all the sessions were individual. Odilia would have liked to have a group with whom to cooperate, give and receive feedback, and share experiences and ideas.

Individual Sessions

On the first Saturday, I introduced Odilia to the project. We also made decisions regarding the timetable for the week, and talked about topics for pieces. She had lots of creative and feasible ideas. She invited me to go along with her and I did. From Tuesday through Friday she did interviews at her school and its surroundings, after school hours, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. From Wednesday to Saturday she did logging and editing from 4:30 to 9:00 p.m. I explained most of the notions to her throughout the sessions, but she learned most of the processes by herself. I met just once with the other content providers, from 2 to 4 hours with each.

4.2.3 Participants

As is fully explained in Chapter 5 there are several kinds of participants in the project. In New York, there were six content providers and one communicator. These six content providers participated with their voice and with content by telling anecdotes, reciting a poem, or providing fun talk. The communicator is the participant who goes through the whole process of producing an audio piece; that is, coming up with an idea, recording the content providers, and editing the recording even if they do not operate the equipment.

In New York there were four women, Odilia, Hilda, Reyna, and her mom, and three men, Carmelo, Ernesto and Isidro. Hilda, Ernesto and Isidro teamed up and made the content of a piece together. Odilia, who was fully committed to the project, and the other three, Carmelo, Reyna, and Reyna's mom, also made a story.

Commitment

Odilia would telephone me to check on the day's plan and to talk to me about her ideas, achievements and discoveries, but also to check if I had arrived safely after leaving her close to her home late at night.

The other participants were enthusiastic about sharing their stories, but they were not interested in going through the whole creative process. They claimed to be busy.

I expected more communicators and more or longer audio pieces. The eRadio methodology foresees a reduced proportion of communicators in relation to storytellers and content providers.

The mornings of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday I felt like Don Quixote. I visited restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, *paqueterias*, churches, and baseball leagues looking for Tulcingans. I talked to at least 50 Tulcingans about the project, and they thought that it was not for them. They would say that the project was a great idea, but that the right person to work with was anybody else but them, or at best they would refer me to 'so and so' who lived in the Bronx or to 'such and such a place' where a group of Tulcingans gathered. And at least half of the people I talked to said that they had seen the reportage on TV or had been told about the project.

4.2.4 Process

Odilia was the only one who went through the process several times from the beginning to the end. She produced several audio pieces by herself on the VoxPopBox.

The first Saturday Odilia came back ready to work. She had been part of the audience of the first transmission. She quietly took the workshop that first Saturday, and even though she expected many people to be there taking it, her enthusiasm did not waver and she started working

on what person she was going to interview, and what the topic of her piece would be. She came up with many issues that she considered relevant for the immigrants. On Monday, she talked to her professors and friends about her project. All the school authorities were notified about the project and about the interviews. She arranged the interviews and permission for me to accompany her to the school the whole week. All the professors and school personnel happily cooperated with Odilia's projects. The interviews started on Tuesday at her school and kept on going until Friday.

By the end of the week she had made six pieces. The school principal authorized her to make the two audio pieces with topics related to the school on condition that they be broadcast only in Tulcingo to avoid possible conflicts with Board of Education authorities.

The Gather stage

At the beginning Odilia's interviews were long and poorly structured. By the end, her interviews were totally structured, and with the right length to get the message across.



Figure 4-2. Odilia gathering

When in the first interviews she asked me if she was doing it incorrectly, I would always reply to her with a question such as: "What do you think?" By the end of the week she was doing the interviews confident of herself. She would even approach people at random in Mexican restaurants asking for someone to give her a story of immigrant experiences. She would record herself while riding the subway in front of people without being embarrassed. The sound recorded on the subway was not of good quality, but time was precious on the last day.

In Odilia's case, the progress made in learning between her first and last interviews and pieces was significant. She changed her interviewing strategies: making mistakes while interviewing did not matter any more; if something was not clear, either the question or the answer, asking again was okay for the purpose of clarity. It became like an endless process,

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because more ideas kept on coming to her mind about new topics to work on. Odilia was also shy, and on her first interviews she was nervous about asking the wrong questions. She also worried about whether she had enough information. In her last interviews her attitude was totally different: she sounded natural; she did not keep on turning the recorder on and off while thinking what to ask next; she laughed with the interviewee about being interviewed; and she helped the interviewee feel relaxed.

Ernesto, Isidro, and Hilda wanted to tell a story about the work they do in their organization. Since all the members of the organization did not arrive to the appointment, the three present talked about a set of recommendations for the people in Tulcingo who were thinking of crossing the border. While waiting for the other members, they shared all kinds of good stories. As soon as they decided they were ready for recording, all the beauty was lost, delivering a flat message to the listeners. Instead of narrating what they had experienced, they seemed to be lecturing the listeners, recommending that they do not do this and do not do that.

I went to visit **Reyna** at her Restaurant, one morning. **Her mom** and youngest daughter were with her having breakfast. I sat with them, and we talked for a long time about all the stories that could be told in the project. Finally, Reyna was willing to record a piece of her life. When we started recording she was serious and watchful of what she was saying, obviously the stories did not sound as beautiful as when we were not recording, but since she is a very lively person, the change was not as obvious as with the others. Her mom started to talk about what it was like to cross the border when her husband passed illegally for the last time. Then I recorded approximately half an hour of Reyna's anecdotes about her life. Reyna was aware that the ambience noise of the restaurant was too loud. We set an appointment for later on, to record everything all over again. Unfortunately, we could not meet again.

With Don **Carmelo** it was a special case. After coexisting with this immigrant community, new to me, I was curious to know 'the how' people cross the border. For them it is shared knowledge, for me there was in between Tulcingo and New York a big black hole. Don Carmelo squeezed my interview into his busy agenda to explain to me with all possible details what such a journey had been like for him. Don Carmelo is very used to speaking in public so he narrated his story very naturally and interestingly.

The Produce stage

After we finished her first piece together, Odilia felt confident to edit her other pieces by herself. On Wednesday, the editing process started after school and kept on going until late on Saturday. Odilia had allocated most of her time for the project. She liked to play with the audio segments,

cutting and pasting. And if it did not sound well, there was always a way to undo and try a new combination.

Over time she became more critical during the editing process. While at the beginning she took longer, at the end she did not even have to listen to the recordings. She could structure in her mind the order of the cuts-and-pastes from different files just by recalling her notes; she checked them a little. The last Saturday, Odilia worked until very late at night.

Odilia used both techniques: narrative-based and montage. In one of her pieces, she combined the techniques, making a dialog from two different clips. She was patient during the whole process: she would re-record her voice several times; she would edit for hours; she logged all the clips at home after spending the afternoons either interviewing or editing. She had many ideas for making more stories. She used both interviewing techniques: expecting specific answers, and asking people to tell her stories. Doing her first piece was for her an ice-breaking activity. Odilia did not think it was correct to chop off and erase content from the story: she followed the same strategy as Elsa and Mary's—getting rid of what she thought was not necessary and then putting in sequence those clips that sounded out of place. Her first piece is the only one in which the duration of the raw material (6.09 minutes) is almost the same length as the finished piece (5.56 minutes). Her second piece was a dialog, and from then on she started playing more confidently with the sequences: she would add a creative touch here and there. Her last piece was a montage; in this one it was amazing to see that she did not need her logging notes to see what part of which clip was to be first, what next, and how she was going to connect them. She recorded the introduction of each segment in the subway, without even listening to how the piece was coming out. She was confident and she was probably listening in her imagination to the finished piece. In Odilia's work, the sound quality of her recordings also greatly improved.

Odilia easily learned how to handle the recorder when I explained how to use it. During the day she would skillfully use the recorder and the microphone to get her content. In the evenings, she did the logging of the clips at home using the remote control of the recorder to stop and rewind the clips. Logging everyday after recording was useful to Odilia because she was able to hear the noise recorded by mishandling the microphone or placing it too far away from the speaker, giving her the opportunity to avoid committing the same behaviors the following day.

By observing me operate the VoxPopBox, Odilia learned to use it when we were editing her first piece. Odilia got the idea of editing immediately and she started looking for patterns on the visual audio waves to find what she needed. She used the sound effects and tracks to make her pieces more interesting.

The Publish stage

Broadcasting was done from Tulcingo on May 8, 2004. I had uploaded the files onto the Media Lab server for the audience in ‘*Casa Puebla New York*’ it was again played simultaneously.

The Listen stage

Odilia did not have the opportunity of getting feedback from other participants, only from me.

4.2.5 Audio piece

Odilia made six pieces. Most of them were addressed to the youth and adults, attempting to raise awareness about social problems such as AIDS, drugs, premature pregnancy, immigrant students’ rights, and cancer; or about experiences of immigrants in New York. Her pieces are in Spanish but some have some terms or parts in English translated or explained by her in Spanish. The quality of her pieces varies, depending on the quality of her recording, which improved during the process. She made a closing for her pieces that identify them as hers, as her signature.

So now we’ve heard, girls. May this teach us a lesson so we plan our family. **Learning from life in New York. For you, Odilia.** [Odilia. A pregnant girl in high school (my translation)]

Odilia’s pieces moved her audience to make comments. For example, in the “It’s a matter of adapting” audio piece, the Tulcingans in Tulcingo who had worked in New York related to the interviewee; they even recognized that he worked in the restaurant kitchen, and some specifically said that Juan was a dishwasher; which in fact, he was.

There were four other audio pieces that I edited.

Carmelo’s story is a vivid and detailed story of his experience crossing the border when he was a 14-year-old child and came with his sister of eleven looking for a job in New York. He narrates when they started playing with the idea of crossing the border, contacting the *coyotes*, the fears and things they went through until arriving to New York and finding that his sister (the one living in New York) no longer lived where they were supposed to arrive.

...and until then it dawned on us, this time we were really by ourselves...the policeman stared at us really strangely that we were so many children and all by ourselves, and uh, and, then he actually started to call us and ...Well, we started to run already here at the Kennedy Airport. [Carmelo. “Voyage from Tulcingo to New York” (my translation)]

Reyna talks about her passion for singing and she signs a little bit in her piece. It is a very lively narration.

And honest, when I sing, I feel I bring it out from inside me. And that makes me happy, it does. I feel very good, singing [she sings]. [Reyna. “Singing passion” (my translation)]

Reyna’s mom narrates very briefly how she was about to lose her brother when he crossed the border. She was telling the story to her daughter, so it was naturally told, short and impactful. Unfortunately, the TV is too loud in the background.

And the place where they crossed them, they say it was a gully. But real deep, and then they crossed climbing some tree branches to cross to the other side, there, and all of a sudden, my brother lost his grip. [Reyna’s mom. “Crossing over the gully” (my translation)]

Hilda, Ernesto, and Isidro attempted in their piece to give a series of recommendations and facts to the youth in Tulcingo to keep in mind before deciding to cross the border. It is about what it really means to exchange Tulcingo for New York.

Rent here, at least, it’s \$650 – 700. It’s a little room, tiny, not like those back home. ‘Cause what we got back there is a little house. Small, at least it’s yours, and it’s big. Not like here. I mean, it’s like a closet where we live, really. [Ernesto, Hilda and Isidro. “Think twice” (my translation)]

The audio pieces can be heard at <http://eradio.media.mit.edu> and an audio piece log can be seen in Appendix D, and excerpts of some pieces in Appendix E.

4.2.6 Program

The New York pieces were transmitted six weeks after the Tulcingo transmission. The transmission was much longer: it had an introduction, 10 pieces, and a closing, for a total of approximately 50 minutes of transmission, and at the end, greetings and congratulations sent by request. The whole transmission lasted about two hours because people would not stop calling in.

For the transmission the pieces were also placed on the same server, so people in New York would also play them from the Internet. Because of the cooperation with an online radio station, the transmission could accommodate people from New York talking (with a one-second delay) in real time into the Tulcingo FM radio station. The introduction of the program was given by Jesús, on behalf of the Tulcingans living in New York. After the pieces were transmitted, the commentators sent greetings and thank-you notes to relatives and people involved in the project. The contacts in New York would read the messages and send them through Internet to be aired in near real time.

In Tulcingo the transmission was well received. People in Tulcingo wanted to know how everything had worked out in New York; they were curious about the people and their

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interactions. They were surprised that I had come back as I said for the second transmission. Everybody cooperated to have the transmission done nicely. Communicators, this time as audience promoted the event with taxi drivers, businesses, and among friends to have them tune in and play the program loud. The transmission could be heard many blocks away from where the transmission was taking place. It was on the air.

The town treasurer was driving towards Tulcingo when he heard on the radio a person he knew was in New York. He was so excited that he came to where we were to congratulate us. The greetings were sent and received by phone in the house across the street from the house where the broadcast was being done. Then they were entered through Instant Messenger to the people in New York. Some of the audience did not understand that the transmission in Tulcingo was in FM and Internet but that in New York it was only in *Casa Puebla* and on the Internet. Probably they were aware that the likelihood of their greetings reaching the addressee was almost null, but at least everybody in town had heard them sending their greetings.

People in Tulcingo were excited to hear on the radio their relatives and other people they knew were living in New York.

Audience opinion

Only a few people living in Tulcingo were interviewed regarding both transmissions. The audience agreed that the idea was interesting, that it would be a great communication alternative with the *paisanos* and that the programs were of their liking, considering that it was the communicators first time, and in a certain way they felt, closer to their relatives.

Once they began listening to the program, most of the audience would call other people to come and listen. The people in Tulcingo listened to the program over FM radio, including all of those present at the broadcasting site. Half of those questioned were interested in making their own pieces.