

The project explores the shaping of the broadcasting system in Poland after the overthrow of communism. It will be shown that private radio stations established in the years 1989-1995, before the end of the first licensing round, often began operating as spontaneous, illegal, grassroots initiatives where their primary objective was not to make a profit, but self-fulfilment and serving local communities. They were driven by social gain logic rather than market logic. This study examines not only cases of such stations but also the policies that affected them. It also explores the public debate on the method of which they should be regulated. Some factors are characterised which could make the existence of not only two radio sectors possible: public and commercial, but also the third, a community sector from the very beginning of the transformation process. We shall enumerate among them: 1) a long history of free community broadcasting which has its roots in the communism period, 2) the number of people interested in this form of broadcasting after 1989, 3) a public debate regarding specific stations from the early '90s. However, the opportunity to create a legally recognised third radio sector was overlooked and the consequences of the decisions made in the early '90s are still evident today. Several sources of information will be used to maximize the potential of this study, especially documents gathered from the archives of the institutions responsible for the public order in the air, publications from the popular press, interviews with radio station representatives who began broadcasting in the early '90s as well as with decision-makers who influenced the shape of the broadcasting system in Poland. There will be also a comparison between the process of shaping private radio in Poland and other European countries provided.