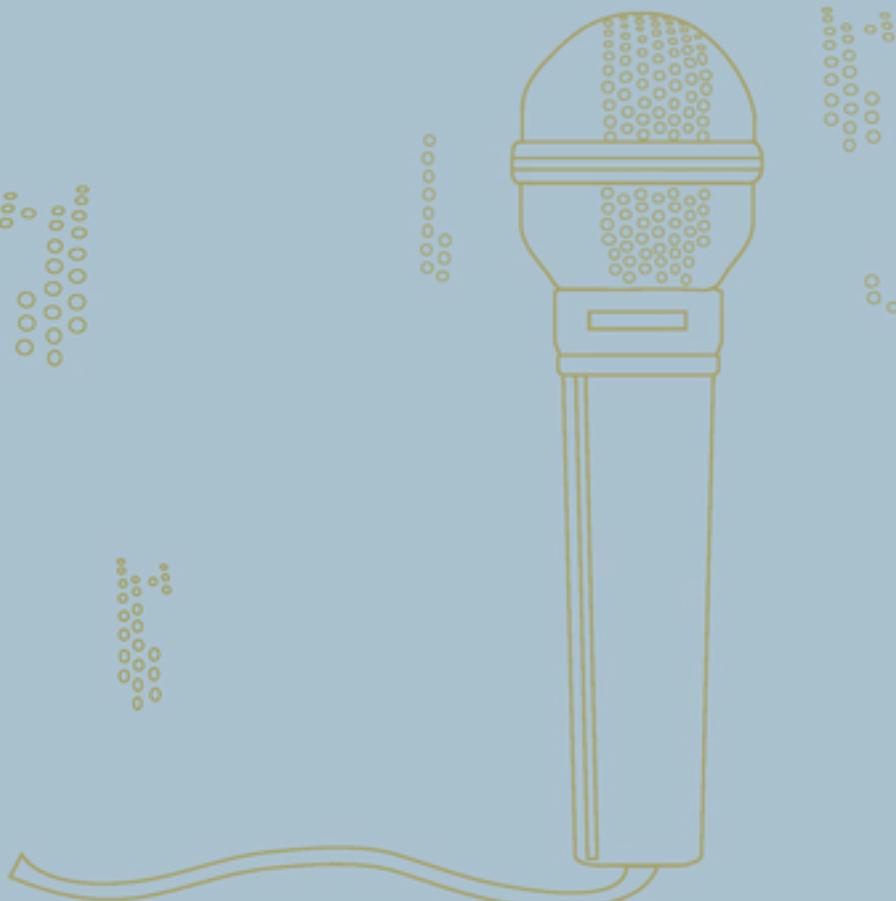


COMMUNITY RADIO IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



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Introduction

Community radio broadcasters are working to make the airwaves accessible and open, and to transform radio into a medium in the service of their communities. With radio activists from around the world as your guides, this book offers a voyage to the heart of the alternative airwaves, and an understanding of why these activists have a passion for radio.

— GIRARD 1992: 10–11

It is now twenty years since Bruce Girard closed his introduction to *A Passion for Radio* with the words above and I can think of no better way to start this book, since once more radio activists, each with a passion for community radio will be your guides through its chapters. All the authors of *Community Radio in the Twenty-First Century* are activists and practitioners as well as being academics with first-hand experience of involvement in this third tier of broadcasting, which is neither commercial nor state run.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century concepts of what a 'community' is, have sometimes become somewhat muddied and clichéd. Governmental and non-governmental authorities have found 'community' a convenient tag to give respectability to their favourite projects. The term 'community' has a number of very different yet distinct meanings, depending on who is using the word, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists or archaeologists for example all have a slightly differing view. Robert Putnam comes from a Public Policy discourse and his work concerning groups of people who come together for a mutual concern or pleasure thereby benefiting a wider society and bringing enhanced 'social capital' is a helpful concept with regards to community radio (Putnam 2000).

Community radio brings people together physically within the station premises, but by broadcasting to a distinct audience, whether a geographic community or a community of interest, a linguistic or migrant community or a group of people that is in some way marginalised, the station may provide social capital, social worth and ultimately social gain to that community. In a world where we are encouraged to think of the global macro community, this book features some of the micro communities that make up the macro and who are using radio to communicate their views, information needs and cultures.

The book is divided into three sections, the first providing histories and examples of activism. In the UK community radio eventually became a legitimate third tier of broadcasting in 2002 and the regulatory body directly tasked the newly licensed stations to provide 'social gain' to the communities served. For Peter Lewis, a long-time community broadcasting activist in the UK, this was the culmination of many years of pressure applied to the government and regulatory bodies. His chapter explains the route to UK community radio and the milestones along the way, including the acknowledgement of models from other countries such as Australia and North America. However as Brandy Doyle's account of low-powered community radio in the US attests, its development has not been easy in such a strongly commercial culture as the US, but has been successful. The following three chapters discuss the situation in three very different areas of the globe. Lisa Brooten provides us with a chilling account of the dangers faced by community stations in the Philippines, where corruption is rife and murder known as 'extra-judicial killing'. Evan Light and Shameem Reza give accounts of the legalisation of community radio broadcasting in Uruguay and Bangladesh. Light's study takes us from the period when stations were broadcasting outside the law and considered pirates to the situation in 2011 where they have become a valued part of Uruguay's democratic processes. Reza leads us through the complex application procedures community radio broadcasters in Bangladesh have faced in order to get on-air. From the original field of over 200 applicants in 2008, the group were narrowed down to just fourteen possible licences of which just three are currently broadcasting. The final chapter in this section looks at the way that new media technologies may be utilised by community radio stations and their listeners to promote engagement with the station and

activism more generally. It theorises that the electromagnetic spectrum is being utilised as a benefit to communities via both community radio and mobile telephony.

The authors in the second section each address a theoretical context of community radio, starting with Kerrie Foxwell's examination of the apparently polar concepts of 'community' and 'mass' media. She argues that with community radio having such a large footprint globally, it can reasonably be termed a mass medium. The following chapters unpick two basic terms of community radio. Donald Browne examines and discusses the concept of 'community' as applied to radio. Susan Forde and Michael Meadows then theorize on the role of the 'citizen' and the relationship of community radio with alternative forms of journalism. The next two chapters are by scholars from the US, Nick Rubin and Michael Huntsberger. These authors examine two common programming forms, music radio and programming featuring public service values and place these in theoretical contexts.

The final section on Community Radio in Practice gives a series of case studies from different parts of the globe, starting with Mary Traynor's comparison of community radio in two communist states, Lao PDR and its much larger neighbour China. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the decline of communism in Europe, the old Soviet Bloc countries have been grappling with the liberalisation of the press and broadcast media and the strangeness of allowing them to report democratic processes. Gabriella Velics details what has happened to community radio in Hungary where the espousal of freedom of speech has not been matched with reality. Community radio was legitimised and functioning from 1996 and by the end of 2010 there were sixty-eight small community radio stations across Hungary, but a new law at the start of 2011 has made it much more difficult for them to function. We then have two case studies from Africa. Kennedy Javuru provides an analysis of community radio in three East African countries, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. We are reminded that not all stations that call themselves 'community radio' stations behave well or ethically. South Africa has developed a large community radio sector since the end of apartheid and has used it widely for cohesion and reconciliation. Last Moyo provides a case study about radio for the Islamic minority in South Africa, where the aims sometimes belie the activities.

Caroline Mitchell's chapter on community radio training in Europe focuses on the volunteers working in community radio and the benefits acquired by both the trainers and trainees from their work together. The following chapter by Emma Ward, Tom Buckingham and Lawrie Hallett concentrates on methods for discovering more about the listening audience, explaining methodology used on a community station in the UK. The book concludes with a short history of the relationship between community radio stations and universities, including a brief introduction to Radio LaB 97.1fm, my own university community radio station.

The personal involvement in community radio from all the authors in this book, frequently as radical and activist 'movers and shakers', means that unlike many academic texts, the chapters are often written in the first person. Many examples and case studies of community radio stations are featured, as well as interviews with activists, volunteers and members from the listening audiences. The chapters that follow provide an immensely rich, fresh and lively testimony of community radio in the twenty-first century and, once more, the radio activists who will be your guides still have a passion for radio.

References

Girard, B. (1992). *A Passion For Radio: Radio Waves and Community*. Montreal: Red Rose Books.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks.