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Wireless World: Global Perspectives on Community Radio

By *Kevin Howley*

Introduction

From its inception, radio has been somewhat paradoxical: at once local, national and international. Describing broadcasting's 'pre-history' cultural historian Susan Douglas calls our attention to the domestic origins of the technology and to the decisive role radio amateurs, so-called 'distance fiends', played in shaping the modern institution of broadcasting. 'It was the amateurs who demonstrated that, in an increasingly atomized and impersonal society, the nascent broadcast audience was waiting to be brought together' (Douglas 53). Douglas's work alerts us to the fact that the popular imagination has long been fueled by the communitarian potential of 'the wireless': the Reithian tradition of public broadcasting associated with the BBC being perhaps the most familiar expression of radio's ability to articulate the imagined community of the modern nation-state (Scannell). Increasingly, however, radio organises its listeners not as citizens but as consumers, fragmenting its national and local audiences into ever more discrete market niches (Fairchild *Deterritorializing Radio*).

On one hand, then, radio enlarges our world, inviting listeners to participate in distant events and to hear music, sounds, and voices from around the globe. On the other hand, radio makes the world a much smaller place, bringing distant people, lands and cultures into close, often quite intimate relationships (Hendy 7). Regardless of its mode of transmission – terrestrial broadcast, coaxial cable, satellite or via the Internet – radio is a global medium. And, like its private, state-run, and public service counterparts, community radio – sometimes referred to as 'local', 'neighborhood', and 'free' radio — assumes a global dimension (Lewis).

Following on from recent work in media and cultural studies (e.g., Ang; Cvetkovich & Kellner) this discussion 'traces the global through the local' by way of an analysis of community radio initiatives around the world. That is, I use community radio to examine the dialectical (if uneven) process between global forces and conditions and the everyday lived experience of local communities. Throughout, I challenge the notion that local populations are simply subject to (or dominated by) transnational political and economic arrangements, structures, policies and prerogatives. Having said this, I am keenly aware of the dangers involved in overstating popular resistance to global incursions on local economies, social relations and cultural sensibilities (e.g., Morris). A quandary media scholar David Morley describes as 'a question of steering between the dangers of an improper romanticism of 'consumer freedom' on the one hand, and a paranoiac fantasy of 'global control' on the other' (1).

What I hope to demonstrate is that community radio offers cultural analysts an empirical setting in which to interrogate 'globalisation'. Specifically, this paper explores three key aspects of this process: 1) the application of neo-liberal market philosophy to broadcast regulation; 2) the role of NGOs and international aid organisations in 'development communication' projects; and 3) the internationalisation of socio-political movements. Throughout, I argue that community radio

represents an important although under-valued site to examine the dynamics of globalisation *from the perspective of local communities*.

Before proceeding, I offer a clarification and a caveat. To clarify, I use the phrase 'globalisation' in the double sense employed by Doreen Massey (*Globalisation*). According to Massey, there are two distinct discursive formations surrounding the concept of globalisation. The dominant discourse, championed by business and political elites, characterises globalisation as an inevitable process of growing interdependence – an intensification and deepening of social, political and economic relations based on 'free market' trade policies and realised through technological developments in transport and communication. For Massey, this definition obscures dramatic imbalances in the global political economy – what she refers to as 'geometries of power' – and disingenuously conflates free market economics with democratic processes.

The second discursive formation, a progressive vision of globalisation advocated by human rights advocates, environmentalists, indigenous peoples and others, appreciates the interdependent character of global relations. Whereas the neo-liberal formation seeks to remove the process of globalisation from the realm of the political, however, a progressive view of globalisation – what Massey describes as 'globalisation from below' – foregrounds the intensification of local struggles over collective identity, political sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and sustainable development which define the current moment. Thus, globalisation from below seeks to create more just, equitable, and egalitarian socio-political relations and economic arrangements (Massey *Power-geometry*). Far from an 'anti-globalisation' perspective, this approach challenges dominant articulations of transnational relations and seeks to create viable alternatives to systems of domination and subordination.

This paper proceeds with an analysis of community radio with this double sense of globalisation in play. In doing so, I underscore a defining feature of community radio — and by extension, community media in general. That is, community media are at once a response to the encroachment of the global upon the local as well as an assertion of local cultural identities and socio-political autonomy in light of these global forces. This perspective owes a great deal to Arjun Appadurai's notion of disjunctive moments, forces and conditions within the global cultural economy.

Having clarified my terms, I add the following caveat. This discussion is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of community radio around the world. Instead, this paper provides concise descriptions of select community radio initiatives, which serve to illuminate those aspects of globalisation outlined above. Therefore, this essay draws upon previously published material from academic, popular press, and trade publications. Furthermore, I consulted a growing body of online material related to community radio. These resources, available through an emerging global communication infrastructure, also facilitated my personal communication with community radio workers from around the world.

Deregulation and its Discontents

Over the past quarter century, communication policy has undergone a dramatic reorientation around the world. While technological developments tend to disrupt existing regulatory frameworks and clandestine broadcasters defy the authority of regulatory authorities, it is safe to say that a new regulatory regime has emerged due to a fundamental reappraisal of the guiding principles of national and international media policy. This new regulatory framework, part of a broader effort to apply neo-liberal principles to global trade and international relations, is distinctive in that regulation no longer serves (even nominally) the public interest, but instead operates at the behest of private concerns.

The impetus behind this worldwide embrace of so-called 'free market' regulatory schemes stems

from the enormous influence wielded by the United States in international media markets. Political economist Herb Schiller suggests that the United States' unilateral withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1984 signaled the beginning of a virtual tidal wave of media deregulation. In Schiller's view, the U.S. decision was calculated to promote a regime of media deregulation and privatisation in an international context. Indeed, since that time, 'deregulation' and 'privatisation' have become the basis for national communication policy 'reform measures' around the world.

Ostensibly designed to promote greater competition, reduce costs, and diversify media content, thereby enhancing consumer choice, this new regulatory regime has had contradictory results. In many instances, deregulation has stifled, rather than promoted competition, standardised and homogenised media form and content instead of diversifying them, and diminished rather than enhanced the quality of news, information, and cultural programming. Moreover, critics charge that these policies are implicated in a 'retreat' from a public service ethos that marked much of broadcasting history (Tracey; Ledbetter).

Deregulation has also undermined the position and long-term viability of the community radio sector around the world. Latin America, a region with a long tradition of alternative, grassroots and guerrilla radio, provides a startling illustration of this trend. For example, in Peru, recent regulatory 'reforms' have virtually barred non-profit stations from generating income through advertising. Likeminded regulatory changes in Chile, Brazil, and Argentina weaken community radio's legal status and encourage private ownership and consolidation. As Rafael Roncagliolo observes:

> Until recently, Latin America's local radio stations coexisted with commercial stations without too much trouble. But the concentration of the media over the past few years has tended to push nonprofit radio and small stations in general out of the picture. This has inevitably led to few voices being heard on the air. (43)

In other instances, deregulation has created some, albeit limited opportunities for community-oriented radio to gain a foothold in media environments heretofore dominated either by the state-run, public service or commercial interests. For instance, across Africa local groups have taken advantage of ambiguous or ill-defined broadcast regulations and established unlicensed community radio stations. These 'illegal' stations forced the issue of community broadcasting onto the legislative agenda. Such is the case of Bush Radio in South Africa. Sometimes referred to as the Mother of Community Radio in Africa – Bush Radio began as an unlicensed broadcaster on 25 April 1993. Within days, South African authorities seized the station's equipment and arrested two staff members. Following intense lobbying efforts, however, the case was dismissed and Bush Radio was granted a broadcast license on 1 August 1995.

In short, the effects of media deregulation around the world have been complex and contradictory, in some instances enabling the development of community radio while in other contexts further constraining the development of the sector. Nowhere have these contradictions played out with greater frequency and variation than in Western Europe.

Discussing dramatic reversal of fortunes of community radio (*radio libres*) in France, James Miller observes that despite its long tradition of state-run broadcasting, France 'has been, since the 1980s, at the forefront in redefining the relationship between electronic cultural media and the European state' (261). Miller's analysis highlights the contradictions of the Socialist government's 1981 decision to legalise *radio locales* – unlicensed broadcasters (sometimes referred to as 'pirate' broadcasters) serving the interests of young people, cultural minorities and others whose interests were un-met by the rather staid programming offered by state-run radio.

By legalising these local stations, the Mitterrand government put an end to the labor intensive and costly enforcement efforts that frustrated local radio in France. Thus, deregulation opened up the

broadcasting landscape to scores of community minded broadcasters, what would become known as *radio libres*. However, this same legislation prompted a similar explosion of commercial stations, commonly referred to as *radio privée*. Shortsighted and ill-advised restrictions on the operation of *radio libres* coupled with inadequate funding mechanisms undermined the development of France's nascent community radio sector. In short order, the *radio libres* were unable to compete with private concerns that quickly consolidated their holdings and began to form regional and national commercial networks. As Miller concludes, 'Through liberalisation French radio has quickly and nearly completely become dominated by North American-style commercial networks' (272).

With the 2000 passage of the Communication Bill, the situation in the United Kingdom is more promising. Following years of incremental measures — including a number of cable radio experiments, the introduction of local BBC outlets and Independent Local Radio (ILR), and the establishment of restricted service licenses (RSLs) — the government's latest Communication White Paper encouraged regulators and community media activists to develop a framework for promoting and supporting community broadcasting (UK Government). [1] In July 2003, the government approved a community media fund to support non-commercial, locally oriented radio and television. It remains to be seen, however, if these new regulatory provisions and funding mechanisms can assure the long-term viability of community broadcasting in the UK.

The development of community radio in Ireland may offer a note of encouragement in this regard. Not unlike the English experience, pirate stations were commonplace throughout Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s. [2] Following years of organising efforts, community radio enthusiasts persuaded the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) to use the guidelines set forth by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) as a reference for defining, establishing and regulating an Irish community radio sector. Prior to this decision, Irish regulators conflated commercial and community radio under the heading of independent radio. Not surprisingly, the majority of these independent stations were commercial broadcasters.

On the heels of successful pilot programs using special event licenses, the IRTC first issued permanent broadcast licenses to 11 community radio stations across Ireland in 1994 (Byrne). One of the most successful of these stations is Connemara Community Radio (CCR) in western Ireland. Established as a pirate station dedicated to community development, Connemara Community Radio applied for a permanent broadcast license in 1995. However, unlike other community radio stations, such as Dublin South Community Radio or Cork Campus Radio, which compete with public and commercial broadcasters for large cosmopolitan audiences, CCR provides a much needed local broadcast service to a relatively small rural population of approximately 9000 people (O'Donovan). And yet, because its listenership is geographically dispersed, CCR's coverage area is an impressive 800 square kilometres, making it one of the largest community radio stations in Ireland.

In keeping with IRTC license requirements, 50 percent of Connemara Community Radio's programming is talk. Additionally, license requirements stipulate that no more than 50 percent of the station's revenue can be based on advertising. The remainder of station funds comes from benefits and other fundraising events, such as pub quizzes. Likewise, IRTC regulations specify the make up of the station's board of directors. Specifically, no less than 40 percent of either gender can be on the board (O'Donovan). The regulatory authority places further conditions on community stations, which may exert undue influence on a community station's program output, financial apparatus, and organisational structure. It remains to be seen what the long-term consequences of the IRTC's license requirements will be on Ireland's emerging community radio sector. For the time being, it appears Irish communication policy has successfully emulated those of Australia and Canada, two countries that have developed a viable 'mixed system' of commercial, public service and community broadcasters.

Conversely, deregulation in India has done little more than weaken already fragile state-run

monopoly broadcasters. Ever since the government 'liberalized' its communication policy in 1999, the once dominant All India Radio (AIR) now shares the airwaves with commercial broadcasters (Thussu). These commercial broadcasters certainly provide an alternative to a highly centralised broadcast service that had grown increasingly irrelevant to listeners. Indeed, in its capacity as a state-run monopoly, AIR seldom exercised editorial independence, effectively serving as a mouthpiece for the national government. However, under the terms of license agreements private broadcasters are prohibited from operating news channels. In this way, government regulations encourage commercial stations to broadcast a steady diet of music and entertainment programming augmented by little more than traffic reports and weather forecasts. Thus, India's regulatory framework fails to leverage the medium's capacity to provide useful and relevant news and information for an ethnically and linguistically diverse population.

Used effectively, radio could make a real difference in the lives of poor, illiterate populations who can neither read a newspaper nor afford to purchase a television receiver (Sharma). Journalist Fredrick Noronha observes that opening up the airwaves to commercial broadcasters has come at the expense of other non-commercial services. 'India has only so far developed its commercial-urban broadcast facilities, while ignoring its public service, community, educational and development broadcast networks'. Indeed, India's initial broadcast reform measures failed to even mention community radio. Moreover, by demanding exorbitant license-fees, the new regulatory scheme favours entrenched media interests, most notably India's successful newspaper publishers, and international investors, effectively shutting out non-profit groups and small business owners alike.

Despite the Indian government's refusal to surrender its control over news and information programming or to promote locally relevant development communication, a handful of community-oriented projects have taken shape (Sharma). The Bangalore-based VOICES, a not-for-profit development organisation, lobbies on behalf of community and development radio initiatives. These efforts have had moderate success insofar as community groups, such as Radio Ujjas in western India, can now purchase airtime over the state-run service to broadcast programming produced by, for and about the people of Kutch, an isolated region not far from the Pakistani border (Kennedy).

Over the last four years, Radio Ujjas has expanded its programming considerably. What began as a soap opera, a form that allowed producers to slyly circumvent AIR's content restrictions, has evolved into a magazine program featuring investigative reports, travelogues, folk music and, of course, the much beloved soap. All told, then, the results have been impressive. Despite its grassroots sensibility, by transmitting via AIR local facilities, Radio Ujjas reaches nearly a million listeners – an enviable audience for any broadcaster.

Despite the success of these rural initiatives, however, community radio remains a cipher among Indian politicians and media regulators. At the level of policy, then, we can detect the global in the local. As long-time community media advocate Peter Lewis observed, the struggle for communicative democracy at the local level reflects the realities of the global political economy:

> The complaint of Third World countries about the unjust effects of allowing information to be at the mercy of the 'free play' of market forces – in other words serving the interests of rich and powerful nations and transnational conglomerates – is exactly mirrored at the level at which community radio operates in places where, in Western societies, marginalized groups have an inadequate share of resources. There is more than a likeness between the arguments of community media proponents and those supporting the New World Information Order. Both need each other's perspectives. The battle line against the corrupting power of multinational commercial interests is a continuous one, and if the battle is lost on the local level, it will have been in vain for regulatory authorities to impose quotas in national channels or attempt to create cultural 'tariff barriers' across regions. (148)

Sponsoring the McBride Report and endorsing calls for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), UNESCO sought to influence global communication policy at precisely the moment when Western governments embarked upon a new deregulatory regime. Although UNESCO's efficacy on this score is debatable, the international development organisation and other NGOs nonetheless recognise community radio's value for preserving local cultural autonomy, promoting participatory democracy and encouraging sustainable development. As we shall see, international aid organisations have played a pivotal role in the emerging global community radio sector.

Radio for Democracy and Development

Following the Second World War, newly independent nations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific sought ways to promote social, political, and economic development through mass media. So-called 'development communication' emerged as a mechanism to forge coherent and cohesive national identities out of the vast territories and ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of former colonial states. Typically, development communication, produced and distributed under the auspices and supervision of the central government, consisted of information related to health care, nutrition, education, agriculture and family planning.

In the 1970s, the assumptions guiding development communication were challenged on several fronts. On one hand, the model's capacity to mobilise whole populations and encourage a sense of shared national purpose and identity were questioned. All too often, the instruments of development communication were little more than mouthpieces for sometimes benevolent, often brutal regimes. As a result, news and information critical of the state authority, let alone overtly oppositional perspectives, were excluded from publication and broadcast. In this regard, development communication systems came to resemble the authoritarian broadcast systems synonymous with totalitarian regimes in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc.

Development communication of this sort did little to improve the lives of local communities and quickly became irrelevant to whole segments of society. On the other hand, Western participation in development communication was criticised for several reasons, not least of which was the perceived ineffectiveness of development campaigns. More critically, some observers viewed the development communication model as a form of neo-imperialism in that it fosters the newly independent nation's social, economic and cultural dependency upon its former colonial master (Stevenson). This critique informed lengthy and acrimonious debates surrounding the NWICO (Roach). In turn, these deliberations focused international attention on the relative merits of development communication projects.

One of the principle drawbacks of the traditional development communication model was its top-down approach. To be an effective tool for development, community radio needs to involve local residents in constructing the broadcast service from the ground up. For instance, Mahaweli Community Radio (MCR), a collaborative effort between the Sri Lanka government and UNESCO launched in 1981, called upon the local population to design and implement its local broadcast service. Residents and other stakeholders were identified and asked for their input regarding the community station's programming and format. Enlisting local participation in this manner helps ensure community support for the broadcast service.

Another failing of traditional development campaigns had been the unwillingness or inability of foreign workers and agencies to fully appreciate the distinct socio-cultural milieu in which they operated. By immersing themselves in the local culture, socialising with residents, and encouraging their input into the broadcast service's structure and program production processes, UNESCO workers gained the trust and respect of the locals:

> The MCR producers do not come to villages as experts to teach and preach. They

> come as friends and colleagues with open minds, not with pre-conceived notions of what is good or bad for the people (Karunanayake 214).

Significantly, given the expansive rural terrain covered by the project, MCR's production facilities were mobile, allowing MCR to take radio production and distribution directly to the people, encouraging their participation in program production and giving them editorial decision making authority.

An exemplar of participatory communication, MCR gave UNESCO a new model for development communication: one that leverages radio's low cost, flexibility, and ease of use in realisation of the medium's participatory potential. Following on from MCR's success, UNESCO working in tandem with the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the Philippine government launched a far more ambitious project in 1991: the Tambuli Community Radio (Jayaweera & Tabing). The project derives its name from traditional Filipino culture: *tambuli* refers to a conch shell used to call villagers together for important meetings or social events. It is an apt metaphor in that it not only recognises, but also values and incorporates local cultural traditions and practices into a development campaign.

The program works like this. First, Tambuli provides 'appropriate' technology for community broadcasting. That is, rather than overwhelm local populations with expensive and sophisticated broadcast gear simple, low-cost production equipment is used. Transmission equipment is likewise easy to operate and maintain. These transmitters generally have an effective radiating power of approximately 10-50 kilometres, just enough to provide adequate coverage for a single village or locality.

Second, Tambuli enlists community volunteers to staff the station. Following several training sessions, local residents serve as program producers, DJ's and technicians. Typically, trainers provide informal assistance on program development and production, rather than rigorous media arts instruction. Equipped with rudimentary broadcasting skills, local residents then enjoy enormous freedom in the creation of programming that not only matches their own production capabilities but also meets their specific needs. In this way, community producers are not bound by industry conventions or held to 'professional' standards; rather they are encouraged to create radio that reflects and embraces local cultural forms and practices. For example, entertainment programs such as *haranahan* draw on indigenous courtship rituals and feature locals singing traditional love songs. These programs are enormously popular with local audiences and help encourage community-wide participation in radio broadcasting.

The principle factor behind the success of the Tambuli community radios is the level of popular participation in station activities (Jayaweera & Tabing). By serving as on-air talent, production personnel, administrative staff and financial supporters, locals have a sense of ownership in the station and rightfully take pride in the station's activities. Crucially, this participation in station management and operation translates into greater civic participation more generally. In a relatively short period, community residents come to appreciate radio's potential as a forum to discuss issues of mutual concern. Moreover, community radio allows local populations to give immediate and sustained feedback to local, regional and even national political leaders and authorities. Thus, community radio amplifies the voices of local residents and affords them greater opportunity to chart their own destiny.

Other international agencies and NGOs have also helped shaped the emerging global community radio sector. For example, in 1995 the Asian Social Institute, in collaboration with the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) published a 'Primer' on community radio. Delineating the relationship between community radio, development communication, and participatory democracy, the book is a cogent appraisal of the impact of globalisation on the Asia-Pacific region. As the book's author Fr. Lucas suggests:

> The world trend for development strategies has become the pursuit for more democratic and community based approaches. UN bodies like UNDP and FAO have started the practice of devolution and regionalization. This is a recognition of the importance of involving communities in the development process. Media should follow suit (Lucas 6).

The Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA), part of the Soros Foundations' Network, likewise published a comprehensive manual for South African community radio. Beginning with an overview of the community radio sector, the manual goes on to discuss the importance of participatory program production and management, a section on developing a mission statement, suggestions for a station's organisational structure, a primer on dealing with broadcast authorities, and materials related to equipment, training, production, community outreach and financial support. Through its network of regional foundations, the Soros Foundation provides financial support and material resources for fledgling community broadcasters around the world.

Another leader in this regard is the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), an NGO based in Montreal, Canada representing thousands of community broadcasters worldwide. With regional offices in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, North America, and Asia, AMARC is involved in every aspect of community radio – from research and policy, to program production and distribution, as well as training and advocacy on the local, national and international levels. As we shall see, AMARC's advocacy highlights the dialectics between community-based, participatory radio and broader socio-political movements. In the next section, I hope to illustrate the decisive role various peace and social justice movements have played in sustaining community radio initiatives around the world. Conversely, I want to underscore the prominent role community radio plays in the internationalisation of popular movements.

Popular Movements and Technological Appropriation

A number of scholars trace the development of community radio as it is commonly understood and currently practiced to the pioneering efforts of KPFA, Pacifica Radio in Berkeley, California (Barlow; Lewis & Booth). A contentious and internally divisive organisation, Pacifica nonetheless represents a triumph in an increasingly global struggle to democratise mass media. Pacifica Radio did so by forging a new model of radio broadcasting in the post World War II period. The Pacifica Network continues to do so today by providing listeners with news, information and cultural programming of the sort rarely heard in mainstream media outlets (Lasar). In this regard, Pacifica has been at the social, cultural and political vanguard of American broadcasting for well over a half century.

Appalled by commercial broadcasting's unrelenting commercialisation and the industry's attendant silence on the militarisation of everyday life, Pacifica's founders sought to remake radio for purposes of promoting dialogue, understanding and peaceful coexistence among all the peoples of the world. To that end, Pacifica radio pledged to 'engage in any activity that shall contribute to a lasting understanding between nations, races, creeds, and colors; to gather and disseminate information on the causes of conflict between any and all such groups' (Pacifica Foundation).

Working alongside a cadre of dedicated volunteers, Lewis Hill, KPFA's visionary founder, sought to realise broadcasting's untapped potential to educate listeners, to challenge them, and to promote all manner of creative self-expression. This nexus of political, philosophical and cultural programming would, in Hill's estimation, resonate with listeners whose interests, passions and tastes were un-met by commercial broadcasting.

Moreover, this alternative broadcast service would encourage listeners' financial support. To that

end, Hill championed 'listener sponsorship' as the station's primary funding mechanism. In doing so, Pacifica would insulate itself from commercial pressures – those institutional constraints and economic prerogatives that demand broadcasters meticulously avoid controversial issues and treat audiences as consumer aggregates – which undermine radio broadcasting's communicative potential. This model of community broadcasting, based upon an abiding respect for listeners and supported through 'subscription fees,' served as the cornerstone for the U.S. 'community radio' sector.

Taking its name from an international movement dedicated to world peace, Pacifica's local initiative was, from its inception, informed by a global political consciousness. Indeed, Pacifica emerged at a time when Cold War politics undermined civil liberties at home and threatened peace and security abroad (Land). Broadcasting lively, freewheeling discussions on a variety of 'hot topics' – nuclear arms, conscription, foreign aid, the redistribution of wealth and civil rights – Hill and his colleagues sought to counter the rhetoric of the national security state and challenge the emergence of the military-industrial complex. According to media historian Jeff Land, KPFA embraced a 'radical pacifism' of the sort practiced by Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India Movement (32-34). That is, Pacifica's founders were committed to active nonviolent resistance to militarism and other forms of social, economic and political repression. Pacifica's long history of dissident expression and its promotion of dialogue and negotiation rather than conflict and militarism, exerts an enormous influence on community radio around the world.

Consider, for example, Radio Suara Persaudaraan Matraman (RSPM) in East Jakarta. Founded by M Satiri, a local radio technician, RSPM grew in response to the uneasy and often hostile relations between two squatter communities in the Matraman district (Senevirante *Media-Indonesia*). Dubbed the 'peace music station' by Satiri, the station features so-called 'dangdut' music, an indigenous variant of Indian popular music that appeals to young people from both warring factions. Over the course of the past three years, Satiri's home studio served as a meeting ground for young people to encounter one another without fear of violence. Instead, young people produce their own music programming and learn valuable production skills. RSPM's resemblance to KPFA goes beyond this commitment to promoting tolerance and understanding, however. RSPM's funding mechanism is reminiscent of KPFA's model of listener sponsorship; albeit on a more modest, but no less effective scale. Charging listeners 1,000 rupiah (12 U.S. cents) per request, Satiri not only supports his efforts but also attracts listeners as well as volunteers to the station.

RSPM's journalistic endeavors have likewise yielded impressive results. Rather than simply report on hostilities, RSPM uses radio to resolve conflicts. Here again, RSPM operates along the same lines envisioned by KPFA. That is, by opening up its doors and the airwaves to discussion, negotiation and conflict mediation, Indonesia's 'peace music station' gives local residents a nonviolent alternative to 30 years of feuding and bloodshed.

In the years since Suharto's regime ended, Indonesian broadcast policy has undergone significant if incremental changes. A media landscape that was once tightly controlled by Suharto supporters has opened up considerably. Predictably, commercial interests have rushed to the airwaves, but so too have more community-minded broadcasters. Impatient for regulatory authorities to officially sanction community radio, RSPM, like hundreds of other community stations across the country, began broadcasting without a license.

In certain respects, the emergent Indonesian community radio sector resembles the informal network of micro-broadcasters that took to the airwaves in Japan throughout the 1980s and more recently in the free radio movement in the United States (Kogawa; Sakolsky & Dunifer). Like radio enthusiasts across the Indonesian archipelago, so-called microwatt broadcasters took advantage of legislative loopholes, improved technical capabilities, and fissures in spectrum management schemes to 'seize the airwaves' for purposes of community communication. What links these distinctive community radio initiatives together, despite the disparate national

contexts and local circumstances in which they operate, is that these efforts to democratize the airwaves are often articulated within and through broader socio-political agendas and movements.

We can detect a similar dynamic at work in pirate operations some thirty years earlier. For example, throughout the 1970s, feminist groups across Western Europe were especially active in establishing free radio stations committed to promoting women's rights and extending women's presence into social and political arenas traditionally reserved for men. Stations like the Parisian-based Les Nanas Radioteuses or Radio Donna in Rome aired programs that dealt with controversial issues like abortion and reproductive rights at a time when mainstream media outlets rarely, if ever, broached such subjects (Jallov). These unlicensed stations anticipated the philosophical orientations, organisational structures, and institutional practices that exist today throughout Western Europe's dynamic and multifaceted community radio sector.

Germany's radio st. paula illustrates this last point. Since 1991 radio st. paula has produced more than 600 programs related to women's issues, lesbian culture, local politics, sports and music. Listeners and local residents are invited to radio st. paula's weekly meeting to pitch program ideas, learn technical skills, assist with administrative functions, coordinate community outreach efforts, and otherwise socialize with a close-knit group of likeminded individuals.

A collective of approximately 20 women from different walks of life, radio st. paula is one of the founding members of Freise Sender Kombinat (FSK): a 'free' community radio station based in Hamburg, Germany. FSK encourages community participation in every aspect of the station. Moreover, FSK serves as the parent organisation of a network of local radio projects including Radio Loretta, Forum Radio, Stadtterilradio, UniRadio/Academic Hardcore, and, of course, radio st. paula. Like many free radio stations across Europe, FSK is non-commercial, listener-supported radio that produces independent news and cultural programming largely through volunteer efforts. In this way, FSK and other 'free radio' stations across Europe create what Caroline Mitchell describes as a 'feminist public sphere.'

Community radio is also implicated in the identity politics of various indigenous rights movements. Community radio in Bolivia provides a case in point. Unlike much of Latin America, the Bolivian community radio sector is thriving, thanks in large part to the World Association of Christian Communicator's (WAAC) support for indigenous peoples' radio. For instance, in Cochambamba, Radio Esperanza (Hope Radio) broadcasts daily in the local dialects of the Quechua people (WAAC). Like other indigenous peoples' stations, Radio Esperanza's emphasis on participatory communication takes full advantage of the medium's social, technical, and cultural biases. That is, in light of the high rates of illiteracy throughout Cochambamba, Radio Esperanza capitalizes on the Quechua's formidable social networks, their rich oral traditions, and radio's popularity throughout the region.

Indigenous peoples' radio has made its mark in industrialised societies as well. In Australia, Aboriginal broadcasters have made impressive use of radio and satellite delivery systems to create a nation-wide network of Aboriginal community radio. With technical and financial support from the Australian government, Aboriginal community radio reaches millions of listeners in urban centres and rural villages alike. Indeed, Aboriginal community radio is the fastest-growing sector in Australian broadcasting (Meadows & Molnar; Senevirante *Giving a Voice*). Thus, indigenous radio initiatives are remarkable instances of the global meeting the local, of the past merging with the present.

This condition is not without its complexities and contradictions, however. Non-Western cultural values and practices associated with indigenous people's radio are often at odds with the institutional arrangements, aesthetic and professional standards, and cultural forms of associated with mainstream Australian broadcasting:

> The Aborigines who broadcast over those stations had to learn a good deal by trial and error, including what form 'Aboriginal radio' might take. Although they distrusted 'European' radio, which has almost totally neglected them from the time of its creation, it was the only kind they knew. (Browne 113)

Thus, Aboriginal radio reveals the tensions between assimilation and accommodation that mark the everyday lived experience of indigenous people throughout the world. Through an ongoing process of accommodation Aboriginal broadcasting preserves ancient cultural forms and practices through modern communication technologies. In this way, native or indigenous radio manifests the wider struggle to maintain a sense of cultural identity while simultaneously engaging with an increasingly multicultural society.

Indigenous radio has been instrumental in shaping the community radio sector in other national contexts as well. For example, historical studies of Canadian community broadcasting highlight the decisive role played by native people in pioneering the form (Salter). Some of Canada's earliest experiences with what would later become community radio were the experimental efforts to use radio communication in isolated Aboriginal communities of the north. Media scholar Chris Fairchild describes one such experiment, a mobile radio station called Radio Kenomadiwin that visited indigenous communities to offer radio production training to Aboriginal peoples and promote local program production.

While the effort ultimately took a form somewhat contrary to its original motivations, Radio Kenomadiwin marked an important precedent for others to follow; one of the staff involved in the project was later involved in the creation of Co-op Radio in Vancouver in 1973, one of the first urban community radio stations in the country. The most important result of these developments was the necessary practical and policy precedents which allowed the development of future community-based radio experiments in southern cities and towns. (Fairchild *Canadian Alternative* 50)

Thus, not only have indigenous populations made effective use of community based radio to preserve their culture, publicise their concerns, and secure some semblance of self-determination, in some instances, indigenous stations have provided invaluable insights that would help shape and inform subsequent community radio efforts. Viewed in this light, local initiatives have played a significant, if overlooked role in forging a global community radio sector. Here then, media convergence of the sort associated with transnational media conglomerates has been instrumental in coordinating the efforts of community radio stations around the world. That is to say, like their counterparts in the commercial and public service sectors, community broadcasters have seized upon new technologies and techniques to broaden and diversify their content and their reach.

AMARC's 'MoebiuS/Planeta Radio' project exemplifies this process. Supported in part by the Canadian-based International Development Research Centre (IDRC) 'Planet Radio' uses the internet to exchange locally produced radio programming between community stations around the world (Shore). Initiated in 1999 as a pilot project in Latin America and the Caribbean, Planet Radio expanded its operations into Africa in 2001 with financial support from the U.K.- based Department for International Development (DFID). In addition to maintaining a web site where local stations can share and acquire programming, the project trains local radio producers to use digital technologies so that they might contribute material to the website's expanding archive. For stations without internet access, Planet Radio continues its program exchange through more 'traditional' distribution outlets including fax and surface mail.

For AMARC member stations confronted with the difficult task of filling the broadcast day, Planet Radio provides a dynamic resource for all sorts of program material: news reports, documentaries, drama and musical programming from around the world (Shore). The site even houses a sound effects library. Thus, not only does Planet Radio help fledgling community stations expand their offerings and reduce costs associated with internal program production, this

online program exchange has been instrumental in facilitating collaborative program production between community stations and strengthening the AMARC network of stations.

Likeminded initiatives are proliferating around the world. The Costa Rican-based Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE) uses an array of distribution techniques, from radio on horseback and shortwave transmission, to internet archiving and live webcasting to distribute independently-produced radio programs to community oriented radio stations around the world (Toro). Dedicated to 'amplifying women's voices' through community oriented radio, FIRE produces programming that address reproductive rights, promotes sustainable development, and encourages indigenous women to stand up for their rights.

Similarly, the UK-based Community Media Association (CMA) encourages community radio producers to contribute programming for global distribution. In anticipation of the UN sponsored World Refugee Day, CMA put out a call for programming that celebrates 'the enormous economic and cultural contribution that refugees and asylum seekers make to the UK, and promoting understanding about the reasons why people seek sanctuary' (CMA). Finally, Radio Netherlands hosts an extensive web site featuring histories and descriptions of community stations around the world, and a series of links to stations and community radio resources. All told, then, through the application of new technologies, community radio becomes an even more dynamic site to trace the global through the local.

Conclusion

A review of the literature on community radio reveals two distinct facets of contemporary scholarship. First, community radio has received some, albeit uneven and sporadic attention from communication and media studies scholars. Given the global dimensions of community radio presented above, this is somewhat surprising. Perhaps, the relative dearth of academic attention to community radio reflects its marginalized status in contemporary media culture. Second, those scholars who are interested in community radio demonstrate an unusual passion for this object of study. Here I am thinking of the activism and scholarship of the likes of Peter Lewis, Bridgette Jallov, and Bruce Girard, whose seminal work 'A Passion for Radio' reveals his own appreciation for the community radio as much as it does the groups and individuals profiled in that excellent volume.

If, as some scholars have argued, radio suffers from critical neglect, then community radio is at the short end of that particular stick. And yet, an editorial in the debut issue of *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media* suggests 'recent years have seen (such) an explosion of international scholarly activity and interest in radio [and] that the sheer volume of high-quality work from radio academics can no longer be accommodated by the occasional feature in the more general journals' (Garner 8). The editors welcome and celebrate the unprecedented level and intensity of academic interest in radio, one of the oldest forms of electronic communication.

Any single explanation for the sudden and dramatic ascendancy of radio studies on the academic agenda will be inadequate. Clearly, the impact of new technologies on this more established medium has played a pivotal role in renewing scholarly attention on radio. Likewise, the wholesale application of free market principles to broadcast regulation has upset the established order of radio broadcasting in most national contexts. As a result, policy makers and policy analysts alike have looked long and hard at this so-called 'invisible medium.' To this, I would suggest that a growing popular interest in community radio has fueled some of this scholarly activity. As we have seen, community radio provides a particularly rich, if under valued site to explore the dynamics of globalisation and to do so from the vantage point of local communities.

Kevin Howley, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in Communications, Arts & Sciences at the Pullium Center for Contemporary Media at DePauw University, Indiana, USA.

Kevin Howley PhD
Pulliam Center for Contemporary Media
DePauw University
709 S. Locust Street
Greencastle, IN 46135
Tel. (765) 658-4491
Fax. (765) 658-4499

Endnotes

[1] For a historical account of the British governments response to the demand for local radio, see Lewis & Booth 89-114. [return]

[2] For a detailed, first-hand account of these efforts, see The Irish Era website developed by Jack Russell http://dxarchive.blackpool.ac.uk/eire.inc [return]

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