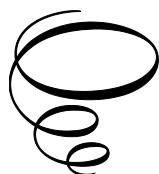# Radio at the Edges

Radio at the Edges:

Perspectives on Alternative, Community and Pirate Radio

Edited by

Matt Mollgaard

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Perspectives on Alternative, Community and Pirate Radio

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INTRODUCTION

MATT MOLLGAARD

Radio, the original electronic media, is at another crossroads in the second decade of the 21st century. Broadcast radio has been with us for well over a century and continues to be a part of our media mix, despite the introduction of portable music formats, television, and the internet. Podcasting has become an increasingly mainstream competitor for our ears in the 2020s, as have digital music services and algorithms that deliver us audio content that they have learned we like. In the new digital spaces of worldwide delivery of bespoke, niched, and carefully targeted sounds, radio faces an existential threat to its claims on our listening time.

Despite these challenges to the dominance of radio in the mainstream audio media mix, there are still significant and critical parts for radio to play in broadening the reach and impact of citizens and groups at the "edges" of our evolving and increasingly complex media environments. This has to do with what has always been key to how radio works – its low cost of entry for both creators and audiences, its ease of use, its geographical broadcast appeal to local audiences (now combined with its online national and international transmission potentials), and its ability to capture our imaginations and influence our understanding of our worlds with speech and sounds. These essential elements have not changed and still provide potential for a myriad of radio experiences across the globe.

This book is a contribution to the emerging local, national, and global discussions of the uses and utilities of radio as it continues to develop today. The United Nations celebrated World Radio Day 2021 with the theme "New World, New Radio", declaring it:

> An ode to the resilience of radio. It is a tribute to its capacity for perpetual adaptation at the rate of societal transformations and listeners' new needs. Accessible anywhere and anytime, radio reaches a broad audience. It presents itself as an arena where all voices can be expressed, represented, and heard hence why radio is still the most consumed medium worldwide today (UN, 2021).

The inspiration for this collection is evident here. There is still a lot of radio going on, all over the world. It is inflected by the issues and narratives of the places it is being made, driven by different perspectives, and created with particular audiences in mind but accessible to anyone within its broadcast range and increasingly pushed out to anyone, anywhere with an internet capable device. The chapters here reflect this ongoing ubiquity and impact, across a range of nations and broadcasting systems. They all engage with the motives, creations and outputs of diverse radio enterprises that exist not so much as fringes of the media, but challengers to the mainstream - creators of new types of radio content and developers of new listening publics. In totality, they remind us that radio has not hit a hard border of its development but is instead expanding at the edges in its capacity to be a relevant, contemporary medium for 21st century audiences.

This ongoing evolution of what radio can do is evident in the opening chapter on the post-apartheid media landscape in South Africa by Advocate Robert Sewlal. The dismantling of the race-based power structure of South Africa included deconstructing the national broadcasting system, which reinforced racial oppression by monopolizing the airwaves and acting as a "mouthpiece" for the regime's racist politics. The creation of a new broadcasting system, including independent community radio stations has been important in terms of protecting local languages, promoting equality, empowering communities, and platforming South African music. The trials and tribulations along with the successes of South African community radio are insights into both the power of radio to influence society and its ability to enable and privilege voices for the greater good.

Gloria Khamkar explores British Asian community radio as a challenge to the regulatory environment in the United Kingdom. This challenge was part of a wider development of a community radio sector that would provide spaces for languages beside English in an increasingly multicultural society. This development would also allow local communities to create local services that reflected ethnic, cultural, and religious practices. Through the determination of passionate advocates for spectrum space and other support for such services, we see the evolution of radio policy in the United Kingdom from gatekeeper to enabler of innovate services outside of the dominant broadcasting structures. This made space for diverse languages, new modes of representation and participation in local and national cultural and political discourses through community radio organizations.

Juan Valencia discusses an often-overlooked part of the radio experience – university-based radio stations, in a part of the world rarely considered by

English language speakers – Latin America. This chapter introduces us to radio system in existence since 1924, but little known, even inside the region. By focusing on a station in Bogotá, Colombia, the chapter reveals the intensely negotiated nature of these radio enterprises, in terms of context, structure and content. The political nature of this form of radio is also elemental to understanding their purpose and impact, with the complex interplay of power, religion and economics affecting the musical, intellectual and social outputs of a radio station. The encroachment of Western culture on Latin American university radio stations is also considered in this discussion, as is the ongoing impact of colonization of the region by European powers.

My chapter focuses on a radio station in New Zealand that was a partnership between the government and a private radio company that only played music made in that country. The station was promoted to the New Zealand government, the local music industry, and audiences as both an alternative to the mainstream commercial radio system and an extraordinarily altruistic thing to do for the New Zealand music industry by the multinational commercial radio company that produced it. However, the station attracted heavy criticism from the music industry and other pundits from its inception, as concerns about the ghettoization of New Zealand music, the hidden commercial motives for the move and the loss of government support for other radio stations that championed New Zealand music were debated in public. The station was shut down after ten years on-air, despite the input of significant government funding. The decade-long experiment in broadcasting just local music had only ever attracted very small audiences and had outlived its political usefulness for both the company and the government by the time of its demise. This attempt to produce a non-mainstream radio station by a mainstream commercial radio organization is examined as an example of "third-way" political entanglements between governments, the culture industries and commercial entities that ultimately reveals the weakness of such approaches.

Radio music, power, and the plurality of voices in Hungary is the focus of the next chapter from Ieva Gudaitytė. Working from pirate and community radio sources in Budapest, Gudaitytė brings to light the intertwined relationship of the emergent democratic project of the former Soviet bloc country and community radio as a platform for civic progress. This is examined through the convergence of socio-political and "acoustemological" evaluations of the impacts of radio on its audiences and the unsettling nature of the cultural, political, and social outputs that counter-hegemonic radio systems can produce. This chapter engages with the ongoing tenacity of

radio as an accessible, cost effective and at critical times–subversive–medium that can challenge power and forefront certain voices and sounds, even in the contemporary multiplatform media landscape. Gudaitytė challenges us to reconsider the power of the ambiguous, emotive, creative, and invisible nature of radio by placing it in the wider political and social contexts of Hungary and its convulsive recent history.

Rosemary Day discusses the development of independent Irish community radio over a 40-year period. Day's narrative begins in the early pirate radio phase of the sector's development and moves through the early pilots for independent radio stations through to the "small but strong" community radio sector of contemporary Ireland. The Irish experience is both familiar and unique. There is the familiar story of pioneers trying to create space for new voices and music against a dominant state broadcasting monopoly, reflecting the early history of many community radio systems. The Irish experience also traverses the familiar political void between community radio advocates and legislators that hobbled attempts to create a legal and functional independent community radio sector for many years. But unique to Irish community radio is the development of a community radio network that conglomerated independent voices and presented a vison for a radio system that engaged with social issues confronting Irish society. This network, given the Irish name "Craol", is critical to the overall resilience of Irish community radio and is instructive in its many roles and strategic vision for the sector. Day's chapter reveals the social impact of the unique Irish experience of this form of radio and offers new ways to consider the structures independent community radio can thrive in.

Bruce Berryman has unique insights into critical relationship between universities and radio stations in Australia, noting that radio and places of higher education have a long and entwined history together. Working in Melbourne, Berryman has been a long-time community radio advocate, working at RMIT University and with its resident radio station 3RRR. Using Bruce Tuckman's group development model, Berryman unpacks the twists and turns that led to the establishment of the station and its progression through fraught beginnings to relative stability today. Critical to this is the relationship with its host university and the vagaries of legislation that can be seen as both enabling and restricting the development of community radio in Australia. The story of 3RRR and RMIT is replete with personalities, politics and ultimately, partnership and serves as an insight into how to manage conflicting priorities to produce mutually beneficial outcomes for community radio stations, audiences, and the structures they are embedded in.

Janey Gordon examines the contemporary convergence of digital technologies and community radio in the United Kingdom. This chapter charts the shifting topography of audience engagement with audio services through the digital transformation of broadcasting, with a nuanced discussion of the impact of mobile technologies on radio content and distribution. Community radio faces unique challenges in this evolving digital environment as it needs to fund these new distribution platforms and find ways to meet both traditional and new audiences through the new channels that make up the range of choices available to those audiences today and into the future. There is also the fundamental challenge that all radio services face in the digital ecology – the temporal and spatial challenges to radio content of global, on demand audio such as podcasts, music streaming and other services available at an instant on a mobile device from anywhere in the world. Ultimately, Gordon issues a challenge to community radio sectors to be prepared to fully participate in the new digital spaces available to them, despite the economic and legislative challenges many will face.

The next chapter discusses the public sphere and democratizing potentials of community radio in Nigeria. Adejare Samuel Odu presents a strong argument for community radio as an essential element in the country's fledgling democratic project, as it emerges from years of colonization, military dictatorships, and political struggle. This chapter is a reminder of the power of radio to communicate ideas across different communities, to promote debate and to offer platforms for social goods. The participation of communities in their own grassroots media systems is also an important part of this discussion, as is the potential for community radio to improve governance and arrest democratic deficits. Odu argues that radio still has the power to empower, and to reach into the lives of citizens to create communities of interest that advance political and social development.

The final chapter engages with the tumultuous history of free autonomous radios in The Netherlands. Philomeen Lelieveldt and Jitse van Leeuwen chart the ups and downs of the nearly four decades of illegal radio stations broadcasting in the Netherlands and their impact on local subcultures and listeners. Lelieveldt and van Leewen reveal a confronting style of pirate radio from the edges of the dial, challenging the mainstream and extending the potential of the medium. This chapter concludes this collection by leaving the reader with the slightly uneasy feeling of "what if?" – reminding us that radio has the power to open spaces for new voices and can still be an essential platform to contest cultures and ideas.

All the chapters in this collection serve to reveal the ongoing relevance, dynamism, and potentials of radio, especially at the "edges" of our media choices. It is at the margins that new ways of doing things often ferment and arise, and the chapters in this collection are a critical contribution to a wider understanding of radio as both a place of continuity, but also contestation in the rapidly changing media landscape.

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Community Radio in South Africa: Striving for Sustainability

Advocate Robin Sewlal

Introduction

The release of South Africa's first black president, Nelson Rohlihlahla Mandela from prison on February 11, 1990 signalled the start of the transition to a democratic order in the country. The airwaves in the preceding decades were under the sole and arbitrary control of a state broadcaster, namely, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The organisation was established in 1936, and became, in the main, the 'mouthpiece' for the government. The country was ruled with an iron-fist after the National Party acceded to power in 1948. A system of racial segregation labelled "apartheid" took root, and was mirrored by the broadcasting framework (Hachten, Gifford and Hachten, 1984, 201).

The SABC was used by the government to spread its discriminatory tendencies and tentacles to silence black people. The overall intention was to enforce conformity with the prevailing laws, standards and conditions. It was not only about adherence, but also a fierce and feisty pattern of indoctrinating the majority in the land. The propagandist ideology permeated the airwaves of the various stations under the umbrella of the SABC. With the broadcasting industry monopolised, suppression of both thought and deed of the nation was the order of the day. The state broadcaster was not hesitant to censor content that was in conflict with the government's agenda. The National Party, not only regulated, but controlled all broadcasting (Van Zyl, 2003, 7).

Background

The government had carefully crafted a plan to keep black people away from the urban and peri-urban areas of South Africa. The intention was to keep the economic hubs in the country the preserve of the minority white-

ruling class. In so doing, it created homeland states for blacks in the farthest places, namely, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda – they had nominal independence. In essence, the four states were still under the control and fiefdom of the South African government (Khunou, 2009). By virtue of the states being deemed "independent", private entrepreneurs seized the opportunity to locate radio stations in two of them. Capital Radio commenced broadcasting on December 26, 1979 from Port St John's in the Transkei. The other station was Channel 702 that took to the airwaves on June 28, 1980 from Ga-Rankuwa, Bophuthatswana. Both services were on the AM band, and heard in different parts of South Africa, especially at night. They rose to prominence through their news bulletins and current affairs shows that courageously exposed the atrocities endemic in the country. The staid airwaves in the country were revolutionised (Tolsi, 2012). South Africans, for the first time, were hearing the voices and aspirations of those who were waging battle to rid the country of its vile and vicious form of discrimination (Da Silva, 2010). Listeners began to develop a better sense of the struggle for freedom in the country. Capital Radio was forced to close in November 1996, ironically, after the war for inclusiveness was won – 702 is still on-air, and now based in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

Apart from playing a monumental role in telling the tale as it ought to be told, the bravery displayed by both stations sparked massive interest as the power and influence of the media were fast becoming evident. Several developments in the early 1990s contributed to the shaping of the broadcasting environment in South Africa. The Campaign for Open Media (COM) was launched in January 1990 to, inter alia, challenge government's restrictions on the press in the country and wrest control of broadcasting away from the state. Two months later, the Viljoen Task Group on Broadcasting was established to focus on the future of the SABC (Freedom of Expression Institute 2008, 1). COM was critical of the state-appointed group that was headed by Professor Christo Viljoen, a member of the Broederbond (Markovitz, 2019), a secret group in the Afrikaans white community that entrenched apartheid. A "March on the SABC" took place on August 25, 1990 whereby the composition of the task team was criticised. COM further objected to the lack of consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The Viljoen Report did, later, concede that an independent body should regulate broadcasting in South Africa (Freedom of Expression Institute, 2008, 5).

A ground-breaking initiative was the Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves conference in August 1991 in Doorn, Netherlands. The organisers were the anti-apartheid organisation, Omroep Voor Radio Freedom, African European

Institute, the Dutch Anti-Apartheid movement and Dutch government. The event was attended by representatives from South Africa's trade unions, cultural organisations, commercial and community media players, journalists, and academics. Jabulani! recommended that three tiers of broadcasting should be operational in South Africa: community, public and commercial. The conference was emphatic about the establishment of community broadcasting by stating that the "active development of this sector is a priority". It added, "national community broadcasting should be participatory; it should be owned and controlled by the community itself, and the broadcasting content of the station should be determined by the needs of the community as perceived by that community" (Jabulani!, 1991, 68).

Buoyed by the outcomes of the Jabulani! conference, lobbying for the liberalisation of the airwaves in South Africa took on greater impetus. The Campaign for Independent Broadcasting (CIB) was a coalition of about 40 interest groups that proactively mobilised through ongoing workshops, debates, telephone calls and facsimile (fax) transmissions, and protests. The CIB called for the withdrawal of advertising from the state broadcaster, public boycott of the payment of licence fees, and global pressure on the authorities (Freedom of Expression Institute, 2008, 7).

The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) commenced deliberations on December 20, 1991 (Freedom of Expression Institute 2008, 5). It was a multi-party negotiation platform to steer the country through the transitional period, and into a democratic dispensation. Broadcasting was discussed in one the working groups at Codesa, and it cleared the path for an independent regulator. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act was passed by Parliament in September 1993.

Growth and Development

Following the series of activities agitating for free media in the country, community activists were earnestly positioning themselves for a voice on the radio dial. Bush Radio in Western Cape, tagging itself as the "mother of community radio in Africa", had unsuccessfully applied to the authorities for a licence. Undaunted, it took to the air illegally on April 25, 1993. The transmission was terminated by the police within few hours, and the equipment was confiscated. Two members of the "pirate" team were arrested, and the case dragged on for about a year when the charges were eventually withdrawn. Radio Zibonele (meaning "see for yourself") was the other station in the province that attempted to broadcast without a licence.

The precursor to Bush Radio was the CASET Project. Cassettes were produced, and the content comprised talks by banned political leaders, poetry and local music. The Zibonele Community Health Workers' Project gave rise to its radio initiative. The health programmes were made possible through the participation of and production by members of the community.

Radio Pretoria in Gauteng was granted a one-day licence for September 18, 1993 by the apartheid government. As a right-wing opponent to the changing political climate in the country, the station continued to broadcast illegally for a longer period until it was instructed to close. During this phase of heightened tension and controversy in the country, the station had its premises protected by heavily-armed personnel (Drogin ,1994).

The three "pirate" community radio stations did subsequently acquire licences from the regulator to provide full-time broadcasts.

With the Act in place, the IBA was enabled to commence the process of licensing community radio stations throughout the country. Due to the absence of a policy and regulatory framework, stations were, initially, allocated temporary 12-month licences (NAB 2019, 8). Moreover, the regulator made available special event licences for a maximum period of 30 days – Light FM and Beachwise 103 FM are but two examples of such licensees. The mandate of the body was to provide a platform for the poor and marginalised, ensure plurality of voices and diversity of content, and allow for local expression.

With the strand of broadcasting gaining momentum, the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) was formed in 1993 in the country's largest black residential area, Soweto in Gauteng. The membership-driven entity sought to provide a conducive climate for its affiliates, but it has, over the years, been hindered by insufficient funds, and plagued by the penchant for power within its ranks (Pather, 2014, 136).

Radio Maritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) was the first-licensed community radio station in South Africa. It received its licence from the IBA on November 23, 1994, and started broadcasting on March 1, 1995. A founder, David Hotchkiss (Radiocracy Roundtable, August 15, 2019) says the station was initially called Radio Peace as its mission was to prevent conflict by the warring political factions around the city. Surveys were undertaken in the community, and the name Radio Maritzburg was thereafter settled upon. The team at the station was assisted by a volunteer from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

Transformation across the broadcasting industry in the country proceeded at a steady rate mainly through an incipient community radio environment. In comparison, activity in the other two tiers of broadcasting was miniscule. Sixty-five stations in the community were licensed by 2001, 92 by 2005 (Pather 2014, 133), 133 by 2012, 204 by 2014, and 285 by 2018 (NAB, 2019, 17). Some licensees, though were either unable to take to air or had to suspend services due to a series of drawbacks (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, 2004, 36).

Support for the community radio movement came from several quarters. The Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA) had hired the services of William Siemering, a founding member of the Board of Directors at National Public Radio in the United States of America, and who wrote its original mission statement and goals. He established guidelines for OSF-SA to award grants for planning, development, equipment, training and programming to stations licensed by the IBA (Siemering, n.d., 3). One beneficiary of the organisation's support was Moutse Community Radio Station in Mpumalanga. It was conceived by the Rural Women's Movement, and granted a licence in 1996. The national Department of Communications (DoC) had set up the Community Radio Support Programme (CRSP) (Pygma Consulting, 2011). It aided community radio stations by providing equipment to stations, signal distribution and upgrade, programme production in specific areas, capacity building and training, as well as satellite network infrastructure.

Former Chief Executive Officer of the NCRF, Mabalane Mfundisi (2002, 24) remarked that community radio is seen as a threat to the SABC, and it would have been better if the public broadcaster could have instead given effect to the partnership agreement it signed with the NCRF in the early 1990s. On the other hand, international broadcasters like the BBC (C-Flat Radio) Deutsche Welle (C-Flat Radio) and Radio Netherlands (Bush Radio) had entered relationships with the stations in relation to capacity building, equipment, and programming.

The IBA's Position Paper on Community Sound Broadcasting Services in 1997 ensured a stable framework for the regulation of the licensing of community radio stations in the country. It set the benchmark in terms of community participation, content, funding, advertising and sponsorships (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, 2004, 33). The Broadcasting Act (1999) reinforced the attributes of community services, but primarily covered public service broadcasting in the country.

With a view to especially rationalising resources, an amalgamation between the IBA and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (Satra) took place in 2000 thereby legislating the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa). The onset of convergence in the industry dictated the need for appropriate legislation, and this resulted in the promulgation of the Electronic Communications Act (ECA) (2005) that covers both broadcasting and telecommunications. A positive development for community radio broadcasters was that the ECA allowed for class licences in contrast to the previous regime whereby would-be broadcasters had to wait for Icasa to issue an invitation for applications.

In a bid to make stations more accountable, Icasa embarked on a two-year process of consultation before releasing the final Community Broadcasting Services Regulations (NAB, 2019, 14–15). They include a pre-registration process for those applying for a new licence, and greater emphasis on local content in connection with programmes, news and current affairs. Penalties are to be enforced for non-compliance (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, 2019a).

As community radio stations come to grips with the regulations, they also have to plan and prepare for the impending digital migration in South Africa (Gavaza, 2020). The move will present both opportunities and challenges for the movement.

Amplifying the Voice of the People

As communities were preparing to enter the business of media throughout South Africa, they were inspired by Mandela's powerful words at the International Press Institute Congress:

> A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference. It must have the economic strength to stand up to the blandishments of government officials. It must have sufficient independence from vested interests to be bold and inquiring without fear or favour. It must enjoy the protection of the constitution, so that it can protect our rights as citizens. I have often said that the media are a mirror through which we can see ourselves as others perceive us, warts, blemishes and all. (1994)

A community radio licence in South Africa can be acquired on the basis of either geographic location or a special interest. The overarching principles for the sector are active community participation and a community-owned and operated service which is non-profitmaking. Van Zyl (2003, 17) views

this stream of broadcasting as a fillip as community radio has the inherent power of bringing people together as a unit for both dialogue and debate. Conversations in the community take place through and on the airwaves of the station (Sewlal, 2014, 25). The IBA Act specifically precluded political parties from owning community radio stations, and this was re-iterated in the ECA.

Community radio stations played a pivotal role in the transitional period in South Africa. Stations kept citizens informed as the country moved from a fractured past to a constitutional democracy. As Berger (2009, 11) points out, community radio, traditionally, is intended to give ordinary people access to the airwaves. It was a historic phase for the previously-disenfranchised black people in the country who, for the first time, were afforded the opportunity to cast their vote in 1994.

Since inception, the thrust was on developmental broadcasting with support for and promotion of sustainable development, participatory democracy and human rights (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa 2004, 33). The values of reconciliation, nation-building and equality, often espoused by Mandela, were embraced and embedded into the programming by stations. Human dignity, non-racialism, non-sexism, and the right to freedom of the press and other media were included in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act (1996). Through the years, stations prioritised these values in covering topics such as the socio-economy, education, health, consumerism, and political conflicts as was the case with Radio Maritzburg at the time of its establishment. Social justice has been and continues to be a major element in programming. Voter education, in the build-up to local and national elections, has been a mainstay of community radio as it gave ample coverage to a plethora of pressing issues and not just events (Siemering, n.d., 3).

Critical engagement with communities helps the station to remain relevant. This bottom-up approach is the *raison d'etre* of community radio. Mgibisa puts it succinctly:

> It is community participation in the selection and provision of programming that underpins the democratic values of community radio. This aspect of participation is not just through letters, phone-ins, musical requests, on-air competitions, greetings and dedications and simple conversations, but the involvement and participation of community members in the actual design, implementation and evaluation of stations' programming schedules. (2005, 47)

By way of safe spaces, like listener forums and townhall meetings, the sector has gained valuable insights in the planning and curating of shows. Bush Radio convenes an Open Forum to elicit feedback from the community, and in 2005, ABC Ulwazi, a training and production facility in Gauteng, conceived a listeners' association that invited input from community stakeholders and stations. The approach by Radio Khwezi in KZN is to host gatherings in a townhall. Titled 'Masibumbane' (meaning "embracing diversity"), it represents robust interaction between listeners and the station. The feedback gleaned from this station-interaction assists in amplifying the voices of listeners over the air. The "intimate knowledge" that the station has of the community which it serves is one of the unique strengths of community radio (Siemering, n.d., 3). However, Inanda FM in KZN cautions that the listener forum could attract certain individuals and groups for their own inappropriate motives like political campaigning (Gondwe & Mavididze, 2014, 18).

South Africa is rich in its diversity of languages, cultures and religions (Pather, 2014, 134). The respect for such variance is encapsulated in the Constitution of the country. This was not lost on the regulatory authority. Since commencing the process of licensing in 1994, it entertained applications for community radio stations that intended to cater for the different groupings in South Africa. The Constitution recognises 11 official languages, and they are accommodated by stations in the nine provinces. The heterogeneity is reflected by several stations like Radio Khwezi, Radio Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga, and Radio Riverside in Northern Cape, each of which broadcasts in four different languages. The dial is further enhanced by stations broadcasting in Hindi (Radio Hindvani in KZN), Islam (Voice of the Cape in Western Cape), Chinese (Arrowline Radio in Gauteng), and Greek (Hellenic Radio in Gauteng).

Community radio is an ideal platform in the promotion of the music industry in the country. According to Icasa (2016, 6), community radio stations, after 18 months, must be broadcasting a minimum of 60% of local music. It must increase by 10% annually for the following two years.

The increase in the number of stations broadcasting has led to the growth in the audience figure for the sector. It is estimated that between eight and ten million people daily tune into community radio in South Africa (Katz, 2020). Beyond the conventional method of broadcasting, community radio has attracted additional listeners through the use of streaming services. With the increasing availability of computers, tablets and smartphones, many stations in the country can be heard online. The use of technology is

becoming more central to people's lives (Gondwe & Mavididze, 2014, 24). Some community radio stations, like Fine Music Radio in Western Cape, have extended their reach by adding itself to the audio bouquet of satellite services available in South Africa (DStv 2018).

Recognition of the Sector

Icasa's "Ten years of broadcasting regulation in South Africa 1994–2004" (2004, 36) paints an uplifting picture of the sector with the achievement of a number of policy gains that include localised broadcasting, the promotion of language rights, empowerment and equity, as well as South African music quotas. It added that people in rural areas are able to access community radio which is both popular and affordable.

Community radio stations throughout South Africa may have, whether individually or collectively, experienced difficulties, but have continued to produce excellent work. Such sterling output has been recognised at major competitions in the country. Two competitions in particular, the Vodacom Journalist of the Year, and the Radio Awards, attract entries from all three tiers of broadcasting. A couple of stations have exhibited that community radio could compete with the best and succeed. Radio Khwezi has, on numerous occasions, scooped awards in different categories in both contests. The station picked up a special Vodacom award in 2004 as the country celebrated ten years of democracy. Radio Khwezi was also a recipient of awards in the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA)/Sanlam Community Media competition (Phakamani Mkhwanazi, email message, August 28, 2020). Hot 91.9FM is headquartered in Gauteng. The appeal of community radio is best demonstrated by Hot being voted Station of the Year for four consecutive years at the Radio Awards. Various shows on the station also garnered awards at the annual competition (Hot 91.9FM 2020). Radio 786 in Western Cape won the BBC Africa Young Broadcaster of the Year Award for its 'Youthopia' programme, and received the PMR Diamond Award for being the Best Muslim Radio Station. Bush Radio has also been internationally recognised, It received the Prince Claus Award for the project, 'Urban Heroes', and a Silver Award in the New York International Radio Festival for a compact disc on hip hop music relating to HIV/Aids. This was a co-production with Radio Netherlands. Even the public service broadcaster recognised the good work of community radio at the SABC Community Media Awards. Radio Khwezi, Radio 786 and Bush Radio have been winners.

Recognised as a strong community upliftment project, Radio Hindvani has hosted radiothons to benefit the Aryan Benevolent Home (Aryan Benevolent Home n.d.), a non-profit entity that takes care of all age groups.

Impact of COVID-19

Community radio was put through self-examination during the period of the pandemic. Through early messaging from the World Health Organisation (WHO), South Africans became aware of the rampant spread of the coronavirus. The impact of the outbreak of Covid-19 took hold when the national Minister of Health announced on March 5, 2020 that the first case in the country had been detected (South African Government, 2020a). Later, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa announced that a lockdown will become effective on March 27, 2020 (South African Government, 2020b). Community radio stations tend to be close to their audiences, sharing their concerns and fears (Dicey, 2020). Accordingly, the sector provided comfort and companionship in this 'unique unusual' circumstance. Management had to be agile by responding with relevant programming as lifestyle and listening patterns quickly changed. The traditional breakfast and afternoon drive shows had to be suspended, and sport as well as traffic news disappeared from the schedule. The community radio fraternity covered briefings by authorities, made regular public service announcements on the necessary precautions to be taken, and dispelled disinformation and misinformation with accurate and timeous news reports. The true character of the community radio sector was noticeable.

With advertising revenues depleted during the pandemic, survival became critical for many a station. The MDDA was set up through an Act (2002) of Parliament with a mission "to support the development of a vibrant, innovative, sustainable and people-centred community media sector through resourcing, knowledge-based research and capacity building, in order to give a voice to historically disadvantaged communities". The agency allocated two rounds of funding. In March 2020, the agency made available Emergency Relief Funding to community radio stations. One hundred and sixteen community broadcasters were supported in the first phase (South African Government News Agency, 2020), and the second phase of funding became available in May 2020 for stations to meet rental/bond commitments, pay staff, off-set costs of telecommunications and acquire essentials for health and safety purposes (Potye, 2020). Stations assisted staff to acquire funds from the Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (TERS), an initiative by the national Department of

Employment and Labour that administers the Unemployment Insurance Fund (South African Government, 2020d)

Vela Xulu, the station manager at Izxwi Lomzansi in KZN says the arrival of Covid-19 almost crippled the station (Vela Xulu, email message, August 24, 2020). Sales initiatives were adversely affected, and this had a huge negative impact on its sustainability model. Xulu added that, in terms of programming, the station had to be fully conscious of the rapidly-changing scenario. Funds for the station during the pandemic came from the continued support of programmes by the local municipality. Izwi Lomzansi was further assisted by the sponsorship of specialist health shows.

During Covid-19, the regulator placed on hold the furnishing of quarterly programming logs and recordings by community radio stations (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, 2020). The regulator added that local content requirements will be relaxed, and it did not expect management to hold public meetings including the annual general meeting during the pandemic. Given community radio's extensive outreach and influence, Icasa had awarded eight special event licences in the country during Covid-19 (Paseka Maleka, email message, August 4, 2020).

A strong endorsement and welcome boost for the sector was the president of the country incorporating the airwaves of community radio stations when he interacted with a 'nervous' nation during Covid-19 (South African Government, 2020c).

Facing Challenges

Just as much as community radio has been the most active in the broadcasting sphere, it has been beset by a series of challenges. Some problems have been self-inflicted, while others were beyond its control.

When the IBA commenced the licensing of community radio stations throughout the country following the dismantling of apartheid, several stations, mainly in Western Cape, were forced to share frequencies. Radio 786 had partial use of a frequency which was shared with the Voice of the Cape. Bush Radio and C-Flat could not have their own frequencies. The same problem was encountered by Radio Tygerberg and Radio Fish Hoek (Mail & Guardian 1995). The regulator has since given the stations their own frequency (NAB, 2018, 11).

Mamelodi (Mams) FM and Poort FM have had to share a frequency in Gauteng (Van Petegem, 2017). Oddly, Southside FM in KZN was granted a licence to broadcast by Icasa in 2011 but was unable to do so in the absence of a spectrum licence due to lack of a frequency (Lutchman, 2020). The many years of frustration that entailed the writing of letters and meetings with various stakeholders turned to joy in December 2019 when a frequency was located for the station. The issue of frequencies is a perennial problem to the extent that Icasa (2015) was forced to announce a moratorium on the issuing of licences to the industry. This was due to the "scarcity of analogue radio frequencies". However, the moratorium was lifted in July 2019. The regulator, thereafter, invited pre-registration for community radio stations in areas where frequencies had become available (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, 2019b).

There have been accusations of certain community radio stations straying away from its mandate and operating as a commercial broadcaster. They frequently mimic their privately-owned counterparts (Hadland & Thorne, 2007, 56). Radio management and programming consultant, Tim Zunckel (Bratt, 2018) argues that some stations hide behind a community banner veil by arranging few blanket drives, charity golf days and helping the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, whereas their real intention is quite different.

Some stations have done themselves and their audiences a disfavour by not paying adequate attention to matters of governance and compliance with licence conditions. Stand-offs between board members and management at stations can be attributed to the affected parties being unaware of their respective roles. This is a strong signal that in troubled stations clearly-defined roles and responsibilities have not been properly delineated. Moreover, the unsuitability of individuals that serve on boards, lack of continuity, and members driven by power lead to board instability (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, 2004, 34). Commissioned by the DoC to look at the impact of the CRSP, the Pygma Consulting study (2011, 10) showed that 48% of participants interviewed cited problems at stations to governance. The repercussions are that the community thrust of the station becomes diluted.

The issue of mismanagement arose at Thetha FM in Gauteng in 2006, and at Radio Zibonele in Western Cape in 2014. Unitra in Eastern Cape and Village FM in North West Province had to contend with infighting between two competing boards (Pather, 2014, 138). In early 2018, the listener's forum at Alex FM in Gauteng alleged that the station does not comply with

regulations set by Icasa as members of the board have been in office for longer than they should have (The Citizen, 2018).

The Complaints and Compliance Committee (CCC) at Icasa keeps a watchful eye on possible violations of its Code of Conduct by stations. Alongside is the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), a self-regulatory body set up by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in 1993. Stations which become members of the NAB can have public complaints against them administered by the BCCSA. The ECA allows such power to the BCCSA.

Some challenges highlighted by Icasa about stations are the blurring of the divide between board and management, financial management, news and language quotas, and format in respect of the quantity of talk and music (NAB, 2019, 23). The authority took a strong stance on 29 community radio stations that were in breach of their licence conditions (Etheridge, 2019). Fifteen stations were closed for operating without a licence as they had either submitted late applications for renewal or failed to apply. The remaining stations were advised to regularise their affairs with the authority. Apart from being required to fully comply with Icasa's regulations, community radio stations that seek material support need to be tax-compliant.

Community radio largely operates through the generosity of volunteers (Van Zyl, 2003, 52). Most of them have not previously been exposed to broadcasting so orientation is a key component before training and development can ensue. The lack of capacity results in an erratic focus on the community by stations. In taking cognisance of this, Moletsi FM in Limpopo has set up a training centre (Gondiwe & Mavindidze, 2014, 20), and Hot 91.9FM operates an academy where a course covers a range of applicable topics (Hot 91.9FM, 2019). Training has to be a continual consideration as some volunteers are either unable to sustain themselves without an income, and leave, or those who excel at their jobs are poached by the other categories of broadcasters. However, there are cases of experienced talent from commercial broadcasters joining community radio stations like Hot 91.9FM and Mix FM in Gauteng (Bratt, 2018).

Icasa (2014, 35) says there is a great deal of duplication on training courses due to service providers not sufficiently co-ordinating between themselves. It adds that the nature of training emanating from donor funding was too prescriptive and restrictive.

A hallmark of community radio is to provide news with a local perspective through coverage of happenings in the area of broadcast, and not to focus on issues of a provincial or national nature unless they are of direct interest to the target audience. A Radio News Diversity Project carried out by the Media Monitoring Project (1998, 19) discovered that participating stations had relied on a centralised service. It syndicated news throughout the country, and had very little, if any, localised news for the stations. It was also found that stations did not have adequately-trained staff and dedicated newsrooms with the required equipment.

Regulations, since the early days of community radio in the country, allowed for funds to be generated through advertising, donations, grants, membership fees, and sponsorships. Stations have almost exclusively relied on revenue from advertisements to meet costs. Community radio stations have to constantly be alert to the fact that advertisers could divert their spend to the growing phenomenon of online platforms. It demands of the sector to properly market itself to stay top-of-mind. Fine Music Radio supplements its income from membership fees. Moeletsi FM has been innovative in the generation of funds. The station derives additional income from a horticulture venture (Gondwe & Mavindidze, 2014, 20).

The government indicated in 2011 that it was considering the allocation of 30% of its advertising-spend to the community radio sector. In a Memorandum to the Office of the Presidency on July 17, 2019, community media activists requested the urgent implementation of the 30% spend (Leonard, Thorne & Kahn, 2019). Soon thereafter, government attributed the delay in effecting such a measure to challenges being experienced (South African Government News Agency, 2019b).

The MDDA had started to fund projects in 2004. Though it had assisted more than 150 community radio stations across the land, questions were being raised about its level of service. For several years, the agency used the "first-come, first-serve" principle with no deadline date for submission of applications for funding. The system exposed a range of inefficiencies that created incredible delays. The MDDA changed the process in August 2019 whereby it would, in future, issue a call for funding by a stipulated date (South African Government News Agency, 2019a). All applicants would timeously be informed of the success or otherwise of their submissions.

In an attempt to assist community radio broadcasters, Sentech, the state-owned signal distributor, reduced its tariff by 65% (South African Government, 2012). However, it was forced to send a letter of demand in 2017 to stations that were not servicing their debt incurred since the lowering of the scale (Gantsha, 2018). In April 2018, Sentech suspended the services of 15 stations, and another 17 stations were due to suffer the same fate if they had not met their arrear payments. Through the intervention of various stakeholders, the suspension was lifted (South African Government, 2018).

Community radio stations in the country can ill-afford to adopt a mode of dependency. They have to devise innovative ways and means of generating funds in an effort to remain self-sustainable. Lack of skills in planning, budgeting, fundraising, and report-writing are challenges (Hadland & Thorne, 2004, 56).

Community radio stations have not been immune to crime. Radio Al-Ansaar in KZN was attacked during the holy month of Ramadan (Moolla, 2012). A group entered the station's building, held up staff and escaped with cash and personal items. In September 2013, two men entered Karabo FM in Free State. They requested staff and guests to leave the studio which was then set alight. Indications of political interference were rife at the time of the incident (Pather, 2014, 143).

The Minister in the Office of the Presidency in South Africa (Mthembu 2020, 6), summed up the factors that are placing unrelenting pressure on the sector. Speaking at the MDDA Community Media Sustainability Consultative conference, he observed,

> There are many reasons for the continued challenges and fragility of the sector – ranging from the urgent need for transformation of the advertising industry; to a general lack of understanding of the value of community and small commercial media, compliance by the sector to basic regulatory requirements; sustainability and continuity of leadership of the sector, governance and management; at times lack of professional business operational systems and therefore increased opportunity for corruption within the sector; the depressed economy and now Covid-19. Other factors such as shortage of skills, lack of sound audience and readership figures, the fact that many community media projects serve communities that have limited consumer power and are not lucrative markets for private sector advertisers contribute to the chronic battle for survival. (2020)

Conclusion

Community radio has had an exciting, though at times, a bumpy journey since the early days of democracy in South Africa. Every now and again, thorny issues may have been the source of discomfort, but the sector has managed to muster sufficient energy with remarkable resilience to rise above and beyond.

The set of regulations introduced by Icasa (2019a) places the onus on the sector to ensure greater level of compliance and accountability. Moreover, economic conditions in the country are not destined to assist the course of community radio in the short to medium term. The imminent shift from an analogue to a digital environment is an encouraging development (NAB, 2018, 44- 45), but will bring along a new set of challenges to face. The community radio sector will need to harness the full potential of the new system sooner rather than later to be digitally attractive and appealing. In response to a question after he had delivered the 18th annual Nelson Mandela Lecture on July 18, 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres said, "We need a digital world to be a force for good not a force for evil". Community radio in South Africa is poised to be that "force for good".

Covid-19 could have given the sector the opportunity to re-calibrate with greater meaning and purpose. By continuing to focus on the tenets of quality community broadcasting and principles of sound corporate governance, it would be able to garner the support from all quarters including that from a more discerning and demanding listener who is continually being spoilt for choice.

It is in the best interests of all stakeholders for community radio in the country to prosper. A sustainable sector will go a long way in securing an even more constitutionally-democratic and stable society.

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