

The Concept and Philosophy of Community Radio Stations in the Kenyan Context

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Abstract

According to the media council of Kenya, 95% of all Kenyans listen regularly to the radio. As much as some people dismiss the radio for not being as rich as the TV which exploits both the visual and audio senses, it is a fact that nobody can dismiss the "strong influence" (Lasswell theory) of the radio on the general population. The radio is an effective tool of communication due to its portability, affordability and ability to reach a large audience, even to the poorest population in the remotest part of the world with little infrastructure. One can listen to it while going on with their daily chores. Kenya has over a hundred radio stations today a good number of them being commercial stations while the others are community Radios. Some of these commercial stations broadcast in vernacular therefore causing confusion as to what exactly is the difference between a community radio and the commercial radio broadcasting in a local language. This paper attempts at elucidating vividly the difference between the two and the role they play in the society with a bias to the Kenyan context of legal and policy frame work .

Keywords: Community radios; Broadcasting; Kenya

Abbreviations: OSIEA: Open Society Institute for East Africa; KCOMNET: Kenya Community Media Network; ENA: EcoNews Africa; NGO: Non-Government Organisation

World Association of Community Broadcasters-AMARC is a network of about 6,000 community radio stations in 110 countries. The network comprises members from diverse and marginalized communities with expertise in advocacy, capacity building, technology facilitation and content sharing.

The BBC World Service Trust is the independently-funded development charity of the BBC established in 1999. They use media and communications to reduce poverty and promote human rights, thereby enabling people to build better lives. Giving a voice to the voiceless through the media is a crucial element of their vision.

Background

In Africa, radio outside the state owned systems has been a development of the late 90s. Homa Bay Community Radio Station established in the western part of Kenya in May, 1982 was among the first in Africa. For decades Kenya's only local source of news, information, and entertainment on radio came through the state owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). But in 1996, all that changed with the liberalisation of airwaves and the first privately owned FM station, Capital FM took to the air [1].

In a study of media in sub-Saharan Africa (BBC World Service Trust), it was found that local commercial radio grew by an average of 360 percent between 2000 and 2006 and that community radio had grown on average by a striking 1,386 percent over the same period. For example, in Tanzania, whereas there were only eight independent local radio stations in 2000, there were 32 in 2006 and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) there are now over 150 community radio stations when there were only ten in the year 2000. Mali has over 300 community radios which have considerable public and political support. South Africa has over 200 community radio stations.

Conceptualization

The study in this paper attempt to understand the concept of community radios broadly but with a bias to the Kenyan socio-

economic and legal political context. Oxford online Dictionary defines the term conceptualize as: to Form a concept or idea of something. Cambridge dictionary online defines the term conceptualize as to form an idea or principle in your mind.

According to Macmillan English Dictionary, a philosophy is a system of beliefs that influence behaviour or the study about theories on meanings of things etc. There is a common belief that the traditional philosophy of community media is to empower the marginalized people with no access to mainstream media.

According to UNESCO 2011, the phrase "a radio service by the people, close to the people and for the people" sums up the essential features of this service. This means that community radio must not only be run by but also serve the interests of the community. For all the wide range of existing definitions, UNESCO sees community radio as a medium that gives a voice to the voiceless, serves as a mouthpiece of the marginalized and is central to communication and democratic processes within societies.

The UNESCO manuals [2], point to community radio as being a third tier of broadcasting that is distinguished from its commercial and public service counterparts in three fundamental ways. First, the manner in which stations provide local populations with access to resources so that their voices can be heard; second, the organizational culture of stations that stress volunteerism over professionalism and promote community participation; and, third, the rejection of market-oriented approaches of operation and ownership with the advocating of a service that is non-profit and owned by a community for its

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own purposes and control; put more simply the principles of access, participation and ownership.

Banda argues that when considering radio, the criteria of access, participation, self management and ownership (should) be brought to bear on any definition of community radio. These three core principles of community radio have associated sub-categories of classification that include the topologies of democratic organizational and staff structures, local geographical positioning, localized programming and the non-commercialization and non-professionalism on operations.

The main purpose of community radio is to provide marginalized communities with access to a voice through the broadcasting channel of radio so they can express their concerns, interests and needs, promote and protect their cultures, traditions and heritages and determine their own development.

For a community radio station to serve its purpose, members of a community need to be allowed access to participate in the day-to-day activities of a community radio station and have access to relevant information to better their circumstances. In order to obtain access to these resources, certain operational frameworks must be established and maintained. UNESCO refers to access as the use of the media by the public in terms of opportunities available to the public to use facilities and equipment and to choose to participate in programming and give feedback on programming.

In the AMARC report, it is stated that access to information, education and knowledge that cater to the needs of communities are vital factors in facilitating achievements in poverty reduction and sustainable human development. The question of access introduces the issue of geographical positioning. With the existence a community radio station being fundamentally based in and formed by the social fabric of a community, it is evident that in order for the station to function as part of the community it would have to be physically situated within the community itself. As a result, community radio stations are usually located within their communities in order to provide easy access to their facilities and to encourage community members to visit the studio and participate in the fields of management, production and broadcasting. It also allows individuals within communities to have direct contact with their radio stations, their staff and personnel on an everyday basis. It creates a sense of ownership and belonging among members of the communities.

Participation is the key defining feature of community media; it is what places community media outside traditional media models, in which audiences are passive receivers of messages, and by blurring the functions of senders and receivers together through participatory processes of production [2]. Bruce Girard, proposes that the "most distinguishing characteristic of community radio, is its commitment to community participation at all levels. Community participation, for AMARC, refers to ongoing interaction between the broadcast station and the community that results in the station becoming the voice of the community and prioritizing their needs, concerns and interests.

Myers's [3] contextualizes community radio as a small-scale, decentralized, broadcasting initiative that has some elements of community ownership or membership that is easily accessed by local people to encourage their participation in programming. UNESCO, six countries (Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Benin, Mali) recognise community broadcasting as the third sector of broadcasting.

Most of the countries above have geographically defined (local) radio stations as well as stations run by faith-based organisations. Local

radio stations started to emerge in the late 1980s, mostly as rural radios. They were assisted or even initiated by international donor agencies, regarded as catalysts for development in rural communities, and supposed to be apolitical. In many cases they were left to their own devices after their initial establishment, with no support from state authorities or the private sector. They now depend on the elites in their respective localities who tend to set the agenda and dictate the content. In some countries local/rural radios managed to survive financially because they were able to mobilise funding from diverse sources Community radio treats its listeners as subjects and participants and not as objects. As stated in principle 13 of the Charter of Community and Citizen Radio Broadcasters, what define community radio is the sociocultural benefits that it brings [4].

UNESCO shares the views of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters that community radio stations should represent the interests of the community, whether that is a small locality or a broad social sector. They provide opportunities for citizen involvement where all views can find expression and the diversity of languages and cultures can be defended.

Robb [5] Community manifests itself in a variety of ways, many of which transcend geographic considerations. Mgahama community refers to a collective or a group of people sharing common characters and/or interests. The term 'community' can either be defined as: a geographically based group of persons and/or a social group or sector of the public who have common or specific interests". In south Africa, Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), a legal entity whose tasks are to formulate broadcasting policy, plan the broadcast frequency spectrum, grant licences, adjudicate in the event of dispute and regulate the broadcasting industry as a whole. This Act recognizes community broadcasting as a third category of the sound broadcasting service and puts it under the control and protection of IBA. Within this legal framework, the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) was launched in December 1993, the highpoint of the *Free the Airwaves* campaign that had been waged for years during apartheid.

Similarly, Ruth Teer-Tomaselli observes that the 1997 IBA Act in South Africa "provides for a community broadcasting service to cater for a geographic community or a community of interest". The difference is that in a geographic community broadcasting serves people living in a particular geographic location while in a community of interest, the community served has a specific ascertainable common interest. She further argues that in SA the IBA Act categorises community interest radio stations into three types, namely; those which serve 'institutional communities', 'religious communities', and 'cultural communities'. An institutional community is primarily designed to meet the needs of persons directly associated with an institution of learning, labour or indeed any other institutional formations. Religious community stations cater for religious needs of a specific community whose common interest is based on a religion or belief. Cultural community station, is designed to meet the cultural needs of a defined 'community group'.

In 1992, media activists from all over the country managed to put community radio on the South African media policy agenda at a conference held in Cape Town where it was resolved that community broadcasting should "(i) be owned by its community but simultaneously (ii) have access to public sector funds, technology and training". Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria (OSIEA) [2], community radio is premised on community ownership and control and community participation in programming, and most stations (Kenya) are applying these principles, but in varying degrees. Stiegler, the history of US radio

broadcasting exhibits persistent tensions between nationalism and localism, which have intensified in recent decades. As corporate entities such as Clear Channel, Citadel, Cumulus and Infinity Broadcasting continue to dominate the US radio market in the twenty-first century, localism dissolves from the airwaves.

When national conglomerates dominate media ownership, these myriad publics are at a disadvantage, as they lose access to vital channels of communication. As ownership and operations consolidate, independent and locally owned stations disappear from the airwaves, compromising the circulation of programming catering to the specific needs, tastes and desires of these smaller, local publics.

Stiegler, despite resolutions such as “Radio Communication is a public utility and as such should be regulated and controlled by the Federal Government in the public interest” that came out of the first conference in 1922, the importance of business investment was always central to the discussions. During the second radio conference, the participating members had a hand in the creation of classes of broadcasting licenses.

Localism [6] as a concept in broadcast legislation and regulation shifted to “affirmative localism,” fostering “geographically based local identities and local public spheres through a licensee’s program service”.

Stiegler a station should be ready, able, and willing to serve the needs of the local community by broadcasting such outstanding local events as community concerts, civic meetings, local sports events, and other programs of local consumer and social interest (National Broadcasting Co v US).

Former president of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) Edward Fritts argues that to be successful, a station has to be a reflection of the community it serves. Hoover, in a speech before the Fourth Annual Radio Conference in 1925, reinforced the importance of radio serving the public by noting that, “The ether is a public medium, and its use must be for public benefit” and the final Conference attendees endorsed the use of the concept of public interest to regulate the spectrum, simultaneously Hoover emphasized the importance of protecting capital already invested into radio enterprises. Robb [5] at its best, radio can be a social space that reflects individual communities and their interests in a very real way. The idea that radio stations can be living representations of their local communities is central to how progressive media reformers envision the airwaves and the application of a meaningful public interest standard. The challenges of implementing, executing and retaining community-based Low Power Stations (LPFM) [7], launched under the LPFM service umbrella, are important to examine as these stations are attempting to embody the tenets of a progressive interpretation of the public interest standard, emphasizing local voices and diverse content while giving voice to the voiceless [8].

Robb [5] When radio fosters the participation of citizens and defends their interests;...and makes good humour and hope its main purpose; when it truly informs; when it helps resolve the thousand and one problems of daily life; when all ideas are debated on its programs and all opinions respected; when cultural diversity is stimulated over commercial homogeneity; when women are main players in communication and not simply a pretty voice or a publicity gimmick; when no type of dictatorship is tolerated...; when everyone’s words fly without discrimination or censorship, that is community radio” (1991). Some LPFM examples of this commitment to its community are WJOJ 103.3 FM in Florence, Massachusetts; WRYR 97.5 FM on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland 97.5 FM; KRBS 107.1 FM in Oroville,

California; WCIW 107.9 FM in Immokalee, Florida; KYRS 93.2 FM in Spokane, Washington; KPCN 96.3 FM in Woodburn, Oregon; Radio Tierra also known as KZAS, 95.1 FM in Hood River, Oregon and WRFU 104.5 FM in Urbana, Illinois.

Chibita, financial constraints define the operation of the community media in Uganda. Although registered as not-for-profit, most community stations have defied Broadcasting Council rules and taken to advertising just to survive. In many ways, therefore, community radio stations in Uganda have been compelled by financial hardship to operate very much like commercial stations. To remain viable for advertisers, a number of community radio stations have experimented with several languages to cast a wider net. This experimentation has also been brought about by these stations’ inability to retain staff who speaks a given language and therefore the need to work with whatever talent is available. Lutaaya, a manager at *Maama FM* who has also worked with *Kagadi-Kibaale FM*, explained to her that community media in Uganda find it difficult to fulfill their mandate as media by and for their given communities as they are often answerable to donors as well as to advertisers and sponsors. Lutaaya attributes this to lack of political clarity on the role of community media in the broadcast industry [8].

Community versus Vernacular Radio Stations

Community broadcasting is unique because the ownership and control of stations is in the hands of community being served and as such the community speaks for itself. Community radios usually broadcast in local languages of the communities that they serve but not limited to the ethnic community language.

Community broadcasting is conducted on a non-profit basis to cater for educational, religious, professional, musical and other interests either in terms of geographic communities or communities or interests. In Kenya, among the community radios already licensed include: Manglele Community Radio in Kibwezi district, Koch FM in Korogocho slums, Nairobi; Pamoja FM in Kibera slums, Nairobi; Ghetto FM in Pumwani area, Nairobi; Radio Maendeleo in Bondo district; Maseno University in Maseno; Daystar University in Athi River; St. Pauls University in Limuru; Baraton University in Eldoret; Masinde Muliro University in Kakamega; Kenyatta University on Thika Rd, in Nairobi and the Kenya Institute of Mass Communications in Nairobi.

The vernacular FM stations, which predominantly broadcast from the city and some urban areas, are purely business ventures. The difference between these and those broadcasting in Swahili or English is that they broadcast in vernacular. Examples of such vernacular language radio stations in Kenya include: Inooro, Kameme, Kass FM, Murembe, Egesa, Ramogi etc.

Principles of Community Radio Broadcasting

Clause 3 of the Kenya Communication Amendment Act, 2007, defines a community broadcasting service as one that:

“Is fully controlled by a non-profit entity and carried on for non-profitable purpose;

- Serve a particular community;
- Encourage members of the community served by it or persons associated with or promoting the interest of such community to participate in the selection and provision of programmes to be broadcast in the course of such broadcasting service.

Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria (OSIEA) [2], internationally,

there is general agreement on four principles that are seen as pillars of community broadcasting.

- **Access,** Community broadcasting promotes proactive voluntary participation in media production rather than passive consumption of media. The sector provides facilities (including skills and training) that ensure access to the media for all parts of the community. At the core of community radio or television is the relationship between the station and the community in which it is situated. Easy access allows local people to focus on local issues, giving voice to groups and individuals who otherwise have no choice but to remain silent.
- **Diversity,** Community broadcasting fosters innovation, creativity and diversity of content. In both structure and output, community broadcasting reflects a country's cultural diversity and by doing so supports greater tolerance understanding and social cohesion.
- **Localism,** Moves by the government to force minimum levels of local programming to all broadcasting illustrates the extent to which private and public Broadcasters opt for networking (in news and entertainment). Community broadcasting by definition relies on programming generated by local communities.
- **Independence,** Community Broadcasting stations are owned and operated by individual not for profit groups. Each Licensed group has open membership and democratic decision-making practices. All stations must adhere to a sector code of practice that embodies the sector's philosophy and secures their independence.

Content and Programming

MCK conducted interviews with chief-editors and managers of the selected vernacular radio stations in December 2011 and January 2012. 36% of all news items were local and regional stories, whereas 31% had a national, 7% an African and 26% an international scope. The high percentage of international news was a result of the news coverage of the ICC hearings in The Hague.

Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria (OSIEA) [2], according to programme schedules and interviewees, content at most stations includes important development issues like agriculture, HIV and AIDS, health, the environment, income-generation projects and many others. Specific groups example women, youth, children and the people living with disability are also represented in programme schedules, and there is plenty of news and current affairs.

At most stations, presenters double up as reporters. Most stations are using newspapers, television stations and other radio stations as sources of international, national and even local news. This means that their news content is very similar to the news carried by other media, and it is broadcast later.

Across the board, the favourite programme format at stations is the live call-in programme, which is used for current affairs, elaborating development issues and greetings. SMS programmes (where listeners text greetings, or sometimes questions) are also fairly common, but call-in programmes are favoured. They are also a favourite with listeners and stations reported getting many callers. The strengths of call-in programmes are that they provide an opportunity for community voices to be heard, and that listeners have the opportunity to speak to experts provided the station invites experts to the studio. Most call-in

programmes, however, are led by presenters, who also select the topics for their programmes again, mostly from other media.

Funding and Ownership

Robb [5] USA when radio stations first began broadcasting in the 1920s, big corporations were on hand, providing both equipment and much of the content that listeners received. This makes radio broadcasting susceptible to elite manipulation.

Kenya Communication Amendment Act [9], provides that; clause 3(c) Maybe be funded by donations, grants, sponsor or membership fees, or by any combination of the aforementioned."

Selected stations and donors in Kenya

Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria (OSIEA) [2] sampled the financing mode of some community media and discovered that they mainly relied on the goodwill of donors:

Koch FM: Equipment were donated by Norwegian Church Aid Community. They also do mobilisation activities and workshops as an extension of broadcasting .MS Kenya give Programme sponsorship on anti-corruption and democracy.

Mugambo Jwetu: Local CDF donated new offices, studios and is also supplementing Salaries. Finnish Embassy donated Studio equipment and one year grant for maintenance, electricity and fuel .UNESCO also gave computers for a community media.

Oltoilo Le

Maa 89.3 FM: Kenya Meteorological Department Equipment give operational support and Salaries.

Pamoja FM: USAID gave equipment while business development Consultancy and Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission give Programme sponsorship. Kenya Power and Lighting Company also give Programme sponsorship. BBC World Service Trust donated equipment and provide training.

Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria (OSIEA) [2], community radio stations are new, unsophisticated, small, distant and given the poor quality of roads, and banditry and insecurity in some places they are inaccessible. High staff turnover, internal crises and the almost 100% lack of clear financial information make them risky to fund and labour intensive for donor assessment and grant making.

Some donors have preferred to work through intermediaries or to fund capacity development. Where donors have got directly involved, While being grateful for equipment, recipients felt disempowered because the donors had purchased and installed the equipment without properly consulting them about their needs. The problem for the donors, though, is ensuring community radios are financially sustainable without commercial pressures skewing their public service aims and compromising their capacity to be a voice for the poor. Caution here should be exercised to prevent financiers be it, government, NGOs, Advertisers, politician etc. from encroaching into community agenda and eventually diluting their goals.

Concerns on Community Radio Broadcasts

Robb [5] there is a lot of good that comes out of community radio such as people crossing paths in the lobby on the way in to be interviewed, knowledgeable volunteer hosts who really love their music or producing the news and sharing it with their listeners, amazing guests, live music from really great bands and singers, the list goes on

and on. On the flip side, however, community radio has tremendous challenges. Some of these include burn-out, people milking the (usually) collective systems for their own purposes, collectives vs organizational hierarchy, debates over professionalism vs staying community-based, finding loopholes in the organizational structure to drag down the functioning of the station, interpersonal disputes over ideological difference, sexual harassment, the constant need to fundraise, and concern about airing internal conflicts.

Further he notes that although the coverage of low power stations is important to the community radio movement and individual stations aim to garner positive publicity to help grow its listenership, it can also be a source of concern. This concern is based around the idea that the people running the stations are often progressive, if not radical, and approach organizing their stations in non-traditional ways, including the running of stations as collectives and providing programming that can be ideologically challenging.

Meeting agendas, decision-making processes, mission statements, and formation of committees all require careful thought.

In the process of trying to create an idealist space on the broadcast dial, the intersections of racism, sexism, classism and homophobia can often come into play. The importance of an organizational structure comes into play particularly when ideologies clash within a community radio station and the group has to deal with the fall-out of such clashes.

A project like a low power radio station is guaranteed to attract them: people who talk too much in meetings, who want to take over, who think the government is out to kill them, who will misrepresent you in public and turn other people off....It's a pain, and it takes energy away from the real job of organizing the station, but be prepared, because you will have to figure out how to deal with them" (Huron, PRP handout, unknown date).

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights summarized the role of the vernacular media in the post-election violence as follows: "The media, and particularly local language media, influenced or facilitated the influencing of communities to hate or to be violent against other communities.

Radio stations broadcasting in Kalenjin languages as well as in the Kikuyu language were culpable in this respect. Live phone-in programmes were particularly notorious for disseminating negative ethnic stereotypes, cultural chauvinism and the peddling of sheer untruths about the political situation or individual politicians."

An analysis of the formats in which hate-speech arises shows that mainly it is on free-ranging music shows, hosted by disc-jockeys; live call-in programmes where the public is allowed to express its opinions unfettered; and it is insinuated by way of jokes, proverbs and vernacular sayings. It also emerges and gains impetus through careless reporting of rumor as fact, through allowing extremist politicians free-rein, and from inflammatory language used, often unwittingly, by presenters..... Such speech emerged mainly on call-in programmes where media monitors observed that 'the announcers do not really have the ability to check what the callers are going to say'. Mary Myers [3]: 'Local Radio: Fostering Community Development or Ethnic Hatred?

"The National Steering Committee on Media Monitoring in 2007 claimed that Radio stations were propagating hate speech on their online platforms. Director of Public Communications Mary Ombara said that messages written in vernacular languages were abusive and derogatory to other communities. "We have noted that there is a tendency to post items on radio websites which border on hate speech

that have been written in vernacular languages and are abusive to the other communities," said Ombara.

National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) Vice Chair Millie Lwanga while maintaining that Kenyans have the right to engage in social media, said care must be taken to ensure the rights of others are not prejudiced during the enjoyment of the freedoms enshrined in the constitution. "We wish to caution all Kenyans engaging in social media to verify any messages of a political nature that they receive before making any postings. Kenyans should be left to engage in the social media but should not prejudice the rights of others," said Lwanga.

Abdi [10] show that it was not the community stations but the commercial FM stations that were responsible for much of the hate speech and ethnic prejudice that emerged onto the airwaves in the aftermath of the elections earlier this year. As one Kenyan journalist put it, "The ethnic hate our radio station was propagating about those from outside the community was unbelievable. The unfortunate thing is we let these callers speak vile and laughed about it." Another local broadcaster said afterwards, "We took sides in the issue and we became subjective, forgetting our professional tenet of objectivity and neutrality. In fact, this polarization was so bad in the newsrooms that some broadcast journalists refused to cover or read news that was not favourable to the candidate or party they supported."

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

Modernization theory

Modernization theorists argued that to ensure the transformation from traditional to modern, there was a need to distribute and disseminate large amounts of information on modern discourses through the mass media to subjects. Third World countries were considered backward or underdeveloped. This view was advocated by Daniel Lerner and Walt W Rostow who argued that traditional practices, cultures and economies hamper development because of their backwardness and should be dissolved in order to ensure economic growth and development. The need to communicate and disseminate Western discourses of modernization to underdeveloped Third World countries so that they would advance, led to the first systematic attempts to use communication for development purposes. This form of communication, referred to as development communication was conceived as a one-way process of passing messages from (Western) specialists to mass rural recipients, usually in a vertical, top-down fashion.

It was believed that the mass media were influential in shaping and influencing societies and that they provided fast and efficient methods of information exchange between specialists and recipients. Thus these early approaches of development communication-relied on the dissemination of pre-packaged information to faceless mass audiences as part of extension strategies of the modernization paradigm. However, over time it became evident that development communication interventions were not effecting the directed social change among recipients.

Diffusion of innovations

Rogers argued that the Diffusion model could bring social change to individuals and the public through a combination of mass mediated and interpersonal processes of communication that started with the awareness of a new innovation and then moved through the stages of interest, evaluation, trial and finally adoption or rejection. Thus the role of the mass media was to create an atmosphere of adoption and an

appetite for change through the indirect diffusion of knowledge from early adopters (opinion leaders) to the public (recipients). However, research over the decades has shown that - while groups of the public could obtain information from impersonal sources such as radio and television, this information has relatively little effect on behavioural changes. The view that traditionalism and culture were obstacles and barriers to modernization left many countries with socio-political and socio-cultural problems and conflict. This was because most projects had a total lack of recognition for local circumstances, conditions, needs and historical contents of beneficiaries and thus were irrelevant to most populations who were subject to development. In addition, modernization models of development communication eroded the control that communities had over their lifestyles because development agencies and theorists did not acknowledge the knowledge and expertise of the community members, but saw them as only receivers. Development agencies and specialists had too much control on decisions of operation, production, dissemination and implementation of discourses they sought appropriate for the development of beneficiaries, while the receivers of projects were neither included in decision-making processes nor were they asked what they wanted, needed or preferred.

Cultural imperialism theory

Cultural imperialism theory asserts that a handful of advanced nations dominate the global economic systems leaving peripheral countries with little control over their social, political and economic progress. America for instance is known for imposing its culture and ideologies through films, TV and radio broadcasts. Community radios can mitigate against this by putting local content broadcast first.

Agenda-setting theory

Agenda-setting theory describes the ability of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently the audience will regard the issue as more important. They select which issues to highlight and which ones to ignore. They set the economic, social and political agenda for the public. Community radio promotes community agenda and interests against other competing interests.

Agenda-setting theory

The knowledge gap theory states that people in high economic status possess more knowledge than their counterparts in low economic status. This is partly because those in higher social scale have more access and exposure to a wider range of media channels in all medium; print, broadcast, electronic and others. Most ordinary Kenyans have access to radio and prefer vernacular stations because they easily identify with the issues under broadcast and there is no language barrier. Most Kenyans on average have only basic education. A few others have low level of education and may find it difficult to participate in national discourse using the prescribed national languages viz: Kiswahili and English.

Legal Framework

Current legal environment is conducive for the community media safe for challenges I will discuss later. The instruments below guarantee freedoms stated:

The Kenya constitution 2010

1. Freedom and independence of electronic, print and all other types of media is guaranteed, but does not extend to any expression specified in Article 33.

2. Broadcasting and other electronic media have freedom of establishment, subject only to licensing procedures that
 - are necessary to regulate the airwaves and other forms of signal distribution; and
 - are independent of control by government, political interests or commercial interests.

UNESCO

Kenya is constrained by UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage and 2005 Convention on Cultural Content of Artistic Expressions, to provide special support to media that promote cultural heritage. The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines everyone's "right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU), a United Nations agency tasked with coordinating global telecommunications and services, has set a deadline of 17 June 2015 for broadcasters in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Islamic Republic of Iran to migrate to digital television broadcasting technology, on both the transmission and the reception side. Deadlines for the digitalisation of radio have not yet been determined.

The ITU agreement covers three frequency bands: 174–230 MHz (band III) and 470–862 MHz (bands IV and V). The end of the transition period for bands IV and V is 17 June 2015. For many African countries the cut-off point for band III (VHF band) can be up to five years later. After the end of the transition period, analogue broadcasting stations may continue to operate provided they do not cause unacceptable signal interference to, or claim protection against interference from, neighbouring countries. The ITU sees the digitalisation of broadcasting as a means of establishing a more equitable, just and people-centred information society, leapfrogging 'existing technologies to connect the unconnected in underserved and remote communities and close the digital divide'. The switch-over from analogue to digital broadcasting will expand the potential for a greater convergence of services, with digital terrestrial broadcasting supporting mobile reception of video, internet and multimedia data.

Regulation and Licensing

The Communications Amendment Act (2009), guides the commission in granting community radio licences. It says that in granting licenses, the CCK should consider:

- The community of interests of the persons applying for the licence;
- Whether a significant proportion of the community have consented to the application;
- The source of funding for the broadcasting service;
- Whether the broadcasting service to be established is not-for profit, and
- The manner in which members of the community will participate in the selection and provision of programmes to be broadcast.

A community radio licence may contain conditions requiring the licensee to:

- Ensure that a cross section of the community is represented in the management of the broadcasting service;
- Ensure that each member of the community has a reasonable chance to serve in the management of the broadcasting service;
- Ensure that members of the community have a way of making their preferences known in the selection and provision of programmes.

CCK has granted FM frequencies to some community based organizations and academic institutions. Most of the community stations have been accommodated on the basis of low power transmitters, shared frequencies and limited coverage area. However, scarce frequency resource cannot match the large number of those on the waiting list.

Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria 2011 [2], areas which are regulated through licensing include

Frequency spectrum: This is because the frequency resource is finite hence scarce; it is a key media for relaying broadcast information; needs to be managed in terms of planning, assignment and monitoring usage ensuring optimal and efficient utilization. In addition, the planning is governed by specific international and regional agreements; coordination with neighbouring countries necessary and it is vulnerable to interference due to high powers. The associated technical parameters that are regulated are effective radiated power; geographical sites; antenna height; radiation patterns; frequency deviation and polarization.

Broadcast equipment standards: Broadcast equipment such transmitters and studio to transmitter links are regulated for them to meet minimum technical standards. Type approval process ensures only approved equipment is used. This is necessary to ensure equipment characteristics comply with licensed parameters and thereby reducing cases of harmful interference.

Conditions of use: These are issues such as the timeframe of putting frequency into use, change of associated parameters, fulfillment of other statutory requirements, migration, frequency fee criteria based on total radiated power and such other issues.

What needs to be regulated

Ownership: Media influences the way people think, and plays a vital role in shaping public opinion. Regulation of broadcasting ownership is necessary to ensure information that is disseminated is not controlled by a few individuals and caters for a wide variety of issues of public interest [11]. There is need also to check foreign ownership of broadcast media vis-a vis local participation in ownership and put some restriction on cross media ownership.

Broadcast content: Content should attempt to provide cultural, educational, social and political impartiality and balance. Regulation that provides programming guidelines with basic requirements to be complied with while allowing greater degree of self-regulation by broadcasters. Programmes containing matter that is indecent, obscene, and in bad taste should be discouraged. Unrestricted programmes likely to encourage hatred and insults against persons and groups on the basis of ethnicity, race, nationality, age, social status, physical and mental disability Status of community broadcasters. However care should be exercised so that freedom of expression is not seen to be curtailed but instead walk in the path of self-regulation.

Robb [5] in the USA, The Federal Communications Commission

allocated the 41-42 mHz portion of FM radio to noncommercial educational stations (NCEs) in 1938. In 1940, the Commission shifted the allocation of noncommercial FM stations from 41-42 mHz to 42-43 mHz. Although the amount of space designated for non-commercial broadcasting remained the same, the amended regulation stipulated that commercial stations may encroach upon the reserved noncommercial band if necessary which sparked a dispute which ended up in court.

Digital Convergence

Digital broadcasting and the convergence of broadcasting and telecoms technologies will vastly expand the range of frequencies available. Convergence between radio and the internet is providing new strengths to community radio.

Not only are community radios getting empowered to reach new latitudes, but also Internet users are learning from a participatory experience which is expected to contribute much to social change. The establishment of community media centres in the marginalized areas of East Africa envisages a combination of community radio with telecentre facilities, under community ownership. A Community Media Centre combines community radio by local people in local languages with community telecentre facilities. Telecenters provide a myriad of ICT [12] services such as computers with Internet, e-mail, phone, fax and photocopying services, software capacities, to electronic commerce applications, and to other public information services

The Role of Community Radios

Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria (OSIEA) [2], say community Radio should be used as a tool to educate, inform and entertain the community, controlled and owned by the community and a social responsibility is carried out by the community and does not have a language barrier (Zachary) [13].

Challenges

Jean Fairbairn and Doreen Rukaria (OSIEA) [2], stations in Kenya face many challenges, including: vulnerability to political control and influence, unformed and under-skilled governance structures, absence of a sense of their own identity, or niche, as community radio stations [14], resulting in a tendency to imitate commercial stations, lack of management, business planning and marketing capacity, poor audience research skills, limited programming skills and formats; stations broadcast mostly a mix of calling programmes, music and news (as the commercial sector does).

There is a high turnover of personnel and stations cannot afford to pay staff and must use volunteers who use the stations as stepping stones to other jobs. Most are plagued by poor financial controls and lack of financial transparency as well as insufficient equipment to reach their allotted broadcast areas or to produce high quality programming.

Conclusions

Community stations must remain a-political and non-partisan, especially in conflict prone areas in order to have greater impact in delivery of services. Also effective management and leadership are critical in ensuring the performance of every organization, particularly those involving radio stations.

Recommendations

- To recognize community radio as a distinct sector and acknowledge its contributions to societies and communities;

- To legitimize Community Radio/or give it legal status;
- To open up of the airwaves/frequencies to Community Radios, on an equitable basis: from 20 to 30 percent of frequencies;
- To urge governments to provide financial and technical support to Community Radios ;
- To support sustainability of Community Radios through initiatives like a community radio fund;
- To remove unreasonable restrictions in terms of technical (power) and editorial policies such as the ban on news;

To simplify licensing procedures,

- To provide guidelines, mechanisms and funding for development, reform, research and development, and capacity building; and to ensure protection of community radio journalists.
- There is a need for community radio to deepen its linkages with development and build synergies with social movements like Freedom of Information, Freedom of Expression, Food Security, Gender issues etc.
- Community Broadcasting needs to strategically combine old and new communication technologies and develop mixed media models.
- Strengthen relationship between community and public broadcasting sectors.

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