

Handout Community Development

From Drivers of Change? Community Radio in Ireland (Gaynor, Niamh & O'Brien, Anne, 2010)

Table 5.1: Main values and commitments for community development

| Values | Commitments |
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| Social justice – enabling people to claim their rights, meet their needs and have greater control over decision making processes that affect their lives | Challenging discrimination and oppressive practices within organisations, institutions and communities |
| Participation – facilitating democratic involvement by people in the issues that affect their lives based on full citizenship, autonomy and shared power, skills, knowledge and expertise | Developing policy and practice that protects the environment Encouraging networking and connections between communities and organisations |
| Equality – challenging the attitudes of individuals and the practice of institutions and society that discriminate against and marginalise people | Ensuring access and choice for all groups and individuals within society |
| Learning – recognising the skills, knowledge and expertise that people contribute and develop by taking action to tackle social, economic, political and environmental problems | Influencing policy and programmes from the perspective of communities Prioritising the issues of concern to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion |
| Cooperation – working together to identify and implement action based on mutual respect of diverse cultures and contributions Challenging discrimination and oppressive practices within organisations, institutions and communities | Promoting social change that is long-term and sustainable Reversing inequality and the imbalance of power relationships in society Supporting community-led collective action |

after Gilchrist (2004: 22)

“Community radio has played a key role nationally and internationally in scoping out space for a type of media operation that is fundamentally different to the mainstream commercially-oriented institution. In its core concepts, aims and objectives community radio, as an international social movement and as a micro practice, is fundamentally distinct from any other form of media production. Within the community sector, the emphasis is on extending communications rights to all members of the community while also focusing on the importance of equality of access and participation. Community media insist on overt resistance to the commercialisation of communication

and the commodification of communities by refusing to treat them as passive anonymous 'audiences' or worse, mere targets for advertising. Instead community radio treats listeners as fundamentally necessary participants in diverse styles and formats of radio programming. Community radio equally counters tendencies towards nationalisation and transnationalisation aimed at maximising the number of consumers for a limited media 'product' and thereby optimising profit. Instead community media insists on the power and importance of the local and the micro issues that are relevant to audiences and participants on an everyday basis, as determined and articulated by those cohorts. Community radio assumes responsibility for its actions, agendas and positions by remaining accountable to its constituencies. Thus, the interests served by community radio are those of its communities. In many ways community radio is constructed by and, in turn, constructs and reconstructs its communities. In other words the relationships in community media are entirely reciprocal. Community radio generates a sense of belonging for its listeners, that they are part of and connected to a bigger collectivity or listenership; it creates the same feeling of community for the participants in radio production, who become part of a community of shared interest within the station; and it encourages a sense of identity for the community served by the station, which is both a fundamental influence on the operation of the station, but which also comes to be shaped by the processes of communication that are part of the working definition of the community carried within the programming. Ultimately the endeavour of community radio to create a different type of media world is enacted every day within community radio stations in Ireland and internationally. This is most succinctly and effectively stated by Servaes who argues "*Community radio is accessible; it is neither the expression of political power nor the expression of capital. It is the expression of the population*" (1999: 260).

(...) As we enter a particularly challenging time in our collective history, the need for collective reflection on our past and on our ongoing journey is ever more prescient. Community radio, as a distinct and crucial space for this reflection, debate and engagement, in collaboration with community groups – both formal and informal – remains a crucial tool in this endeavour. It provides the means to recolonise the public sphere and to engage with each other, in all our diversity, to collectively re-imagine our collective direction and future, working together to effect positive change for all. The extent to which community stations, groups and individuals come together in this endeavour will ultimately characterise and determine the multiple social benefits accruing from the community radio project, alongside the multiple benefits to Irish society more broadly."

(Gaynor, Niamh & O'Brien, Anne, 2010)

"Enabling people to enhance their capacity to play a role in shaping the society of which they are a part. It works towards helping groups and communities to articulate needs and viewpoints and to take part in collective action to influence the processes that structure their everyday lives.

It is recognised that the ability to participate fully in society is open more to some groups and individuals than others, therefore the priority for those engaged in integrated local social and economic development is to work with the most disadvantaged"

Source: ADM Integrated Local Development Handbook 1995, p.36

“Promoting and producing positive change in society in favour of those who benefit least”

Source: Combat Poverty Agency, Ireland, 1995