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# STATIC STRUCTURES AND DYNAMIC PROCESSES OF PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS: A case study of Connemara Community Radio

Kevin P. Heanue, Áine Macken Walsh

## Introduction

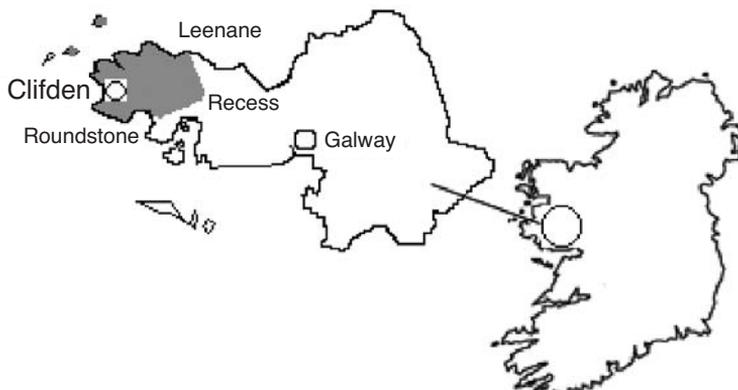
CONNEMARA COMMUNITY RADIO (CCR) is a community-based radio station broadcasting from Letterfrack in the North West Connemara area of Co. Galway since 1995. On air for 10 hours daily, it is possibly the smallest community radio station in Ireland serving a remote, yet large and sparsely populated rural franchise area. One of the main motivations behind CCR's original establishment was that the radio station would promote community development in its franchise area (Day, 2007b; Heanue, 2002). Set against the literatures on community radio (Day, 2007a, b; Kanayama, 2007; Rennie, 2006; Sánchez, 2003; Heanue, 2002; Girard, 1992) and community development (Tilly, 2004; Moseley, 2003; Varley and Curtin, 2002; Lowe et al., 1998; Mannion, 1996; Curtin et al., 1991; Varley, 1991; Griffiths, 1974; Armstrong, 1971) this article uses a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collected over the period 2000 to 2008 to analyse the community development aspects of this radio station. The explicit community development focus is important for two reasons. First, as a core principle, community radio seeks to contribute to community development. Second, North West Connemara as a remote, economically challenged rural area relies heavily on endogenous development and has a long-standing and vibrant community development sector (see Heanue et al., 2012). A central objective behind the establishment of CCR by Connemara West Plc was to support and engage in community development efforts. This article seeks to assess the extent to which that objective is being reached by describing and analysing various indicators and processes of participation of local people with the radio station and the form of access they have to it.

Both from a community development and a community radio perspective, participation and access are identified as critical processes. Participation and access can be evaluated in a multiplicity of ways. Here we distinguish between 'static structures' (organisational and management features) and 'dynamic processes' (interactive communications and engagement) of participation and access. Our contention is that although static structures are necessary, in the absence of dynamic processes they are insufficient to ensure the achievement of community development objectives. Static structures are examined by focusing on the organisational and management structure of CCR, the age and geographic profile of the radio's volunteers, and the results of

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**Figure 1: CCR Franchise Area**

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listenership surveys. Dynamic processes are revealed through qualitative interviewing and illustrate the interaction between CCR and local non-statutory organisations. This analysis forms the core of the research. Non-statutory organisations are placed at the centre of the analysis because they are understood to represent civil society and have a well-recognised role in the community development process. Exploring the nature of the 'dynamic processes' that characterise interactions between such organisations and CCR in the context of overall community development efforts in the North West Connemara region is of critical importance.

An approximate representation of the radio station's franchise area is depicted in Figure 1. Located on the Western seaboard of Co. Galway, the franchise area covers some 300 square miles (seven hundred and ninety square kilometres) and contains a population of approximately 9,715.

The franchise area is characterised by a dispersed and low-density population, with 11 persons per square kilometre compared with a national average of 60 and a European average of 143. The main population concentration is in the town of Clifden and its immediate hinterland, which in 2011 had a combined population of 2,609. The actual town of Clifden, with 1,497 inhabitants in 2011, is the main urban centre in the region. The franchise area covers the district electoral divisions of Ballyconneely, Cashel, Cleggan/Claddaghduff, Ballinakill, Leenane, Recess, Renvyle and Roundstone and also the islands of Inishbofin (*c.*199 persons) and Inishturk (*c.*58 persons).

Economically, the case study region is classified as severely disadvantaged. The residents of the area are heavily dependent on small-scale agriculture, construction sector employment and seasonal service-sector jobs primarily in the tourism sector, with little industrial or permanent service-sector work in the region. Dependency rates in the region are significantly above the national average. The locality has a long tradition of emigration, with the population having been reduced by half since 1926; a recent recognition of this structural problem was the inclusion of the area in the CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Ard-Riachtanais) programme for revitalising rural areas, an initiative that aimed to fast-track National Development Plan spending, particularly

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infrastructural investment, in selected rural areas. Therefore, endogenous development activities are very important for this area. This is reflected in the fact that there is a vibrant community development sector that has participated in, and indeed pioneered, initiatives unique in Ireland (Heanue et al., 2012). There is also an energetic social and artistic community. In total, there are approximately 160 active community, sporting and social organisations in the area.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: In the next section, a brief review of the literature on community radio and community development is presented. In the following part, the main research questions and data sources are outlined. After that, the penultimate section presents the findings and a discussion. The final part of the article contains a brief conclusion.

## Community Radio and Community Development

### *Community Radio*

The phrase ‘a radio service by the people, close to the people and for the people’ sums up the ideal essential features of community radio (Sánchez, 2003). This means that community radio must not only be run by, but also serve the interests of, the community. It is generally accepted that community radio stations should represent the interests of the community, whether that is a small locality or a broad social sector (Sánchez, 2003; see also AMARC)<sup>1</sup> and that a community radio station is a non-profit organisation consisting of members of a community, with the programming of the radio station based on community participation and access so that it represents the special interests and needs of its listeners (Sanchez, 2003). In the myriad of definitions and accounts of community radio, therefore, the notions of ‘participation’ and ‘access’ are perceived as the critical dimensions along which community radio stations should be assessed (Day 2007b, Kanayama, 2007; Fairchild, 2001; Girard, 1992). At its most fundamental level, participation means that non-professional media personnel are encouraged to become involved in the radio station, and access means that individuals and communities have a platform to express their views (Rennie, 2006).

Specifically, in an Irish context, the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland defines community radio as:

A community radio station is characterised by its ownership and programming and the community it is authorised to serve. It is owned and controlled by a not for profit organisation whose structure provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large. Its programming should be based on community access and should reflect the special interests and needs of the listenership it is licensed to serve.

This emphasis is reflected by CCR, who in their most recent licence application to the BCI in 2005 give the following outline:

Our aims are to operate a station that adheres to the principles of good community practice, i.e. widespread participation, empowerment, ready access by

<sup>1</sup> AMARC is the World Association of Community Oriented Broadcasters.

all, especially the most marginalised. We are firmly located in the community development tradition and see radio as a highly significant and appropriate vehicle in this process. As members of AMARC since 1988 we recognise and adhere to the principles outlined in the Charter (p. 8).

These aims are unchanged since CCR's first successful application for a licence in 1998. As outlined by Day (2007a), participation by all, shared ownership, and community building are fundamental to the idea of community media. Previous Irish research has focused on various aspects of the relationship between community radio and communities. Day (2007a) shows how community radio helps construct community through communication, the role and meaning of public participation in the context of community radio, and how such radio stations succeed, or not, in relation to the creation of communication flows. Focusing more on the explicit community development impact, Day (2007b) argues that community radio can use community development as a work practice while encompassing many, but not all of its aims. For her, community development is a particular practice while developing the community is an ideal. She argues that although community radio activists share many of the same aims as practitioners of community development they define a wider role for themselves in society.

This broad view of the role of community radio fits well with the conceptualisation of community development taken in this article, where it is considered both a practice and an ideal. Moreover, this interpretation is particularly appropriate in the context of CCR as it was established by Connemara West Plc, one of Ireland's longest established and most successful rural community development organisations, as a part that organisation's strategy to enhance community development.

### *Community Development*

The core objectives of community development are to encourage, promote and support community-based action, whatever form or aims that action may have (Griffiths, 1974). While the objectives of community development are fluid, community based action typically takes place through formally or informally organised groups of civilians, who seek to bring about change in relation to a specific issue or set of issues that is otherwise not provided for adequately in the existing institutional setting. Such formally or informally organised groups of civilians, called 'community organisations' or 'interest groups', are understood to represent social movements, defined as strategies for ordinary people to exert political influence (Tilly, 2004). Typically, community and interest groups have non-statutory status and those who work as employees or volunteers for such groups are understood to be civil society representatives or 'community workers'.<sup>2</sup>

Of particular interest in the context of the current article is the strong heritage of non-statutory community organisations in the case-study area and how these organisations are implicated in and associated with the community development objectives of CCR. There is a notably vibrant community sector in North West Connemara, comprised of 73 non-statutory organisations, which address issues as diverse as poverty, education and tourism. While the number and diversity of organisations is

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<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding that the community development sector in Ireland has undergone what authors have called 'formalisation' and 'professionalisation', which inevitably has had an impact on the organisations' and employees' 'third sector' status (see Varley and Curtin, 2002).

an indicator of an active community sector, the extent to which the organisations successfully and democratically represent the views of the public is an altogether different question. The varying degrees of how representative non-statutory organisations are of the people they are intended to represent is the subject of a vast literature.

Organisations succeed to greater and lesser extents in actively and accurately representing the views of the communities for whom they claim to advocate. From a corporate governance perspective, there are clear and universally accepted democratic processes that are of particular relevance to community organisations as well as private companies with a community development remit. Internationally, third-sector organisations and companies have been leaders in advocating for the representation of a diversity of socio-economic groups and for gender equality in corporate governance structures. Ideally, in a local setting, this representation should be spatially balanced as well.

The quality of citizen participation, varying from manipulation to placation to full citizen control, is depicted in Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder of participation'. There are various tools and methods to promote popular participation in community organisations and development (see Moseley, 2003). In the establishment and operation of community organisations, however, there is the risk that only a limited number of local inhabitants will get involved. Irish community development initiatives have been described as 'dominated by a small group of enthusiasts, adept at assembling the illusion of consensus that allows the interests of some to masquerade as the interests of all' (Macken-Walsh, 2011; Varley, 1991, 236; see also Mannion, 1996). From another perspective, it is noted that 'only a few people have the time, resources and inclination to commit themselves to lengthy involvement' (Lowe et al., 1998: 27). Given such threats to genuinely representative community development, it is imperative that those involved in community organisations employ strategies to actively maintain and promote the meaningful participation of local people in defining the organisations' mandate and activities.

However, from a pragmatic perspective, it is also acknowledged that there are obstacles to organisations' representation of large numbers of people and diverse social groups. The task of territorially-oriented community organisations promoting popular participation in large geographical areas is particularly challenging: 'the scale of such involvement is too massive and the public in any case is made up of many different people with different interests, priorities and resources' (Moseley and Cherrett, 1993: 8, cited in Lowe et al., 1998). CCR as a radio station operating within a relatively large and sparsely populated geographical area faces such challenges in realising its community development objectives. However, as a radio station, CCR has a particularly valuable advantage in that it can reach 'on air' all areas and inhabitants of its franchise area. This medium for participation can conceivably operate via a 'two way' system: by citizens *listening* to but also *featuring* in and *contributing* to radio content. In this sense, CCR offers a public forum for individuals to access and contribute to an ongoing discourse of community development in the franchise area. CCR also provides an opportunity for the direction of community development (and the power relations underpinning it) to be continuously negotiated in a participatory way.

The potential of CCR in this regard is dependent on how the radio station is actively and strategically managed as a community development resource and the extent to which opportunities for balanced public discourse are exploited. In addition to programming content that features public input, strong and strategic linkages with the 73 non-statutory community organisations operating in its franchise area are of

critical importance for CCR to pursue its community development goals. In a sparsely populated and marginalised area, CCR and the 73 non-statutory organisations have the potential to be mutually supportive. While representing the views of all inhabitants of its franchise area may be an impossible task, actively collaborating with and representing the views of 73 non-statutory organisations is a potentially realisable way of contributing to community development goals. For non-statutory organisations, CCR represents a valuable opportunity to promote public awareness of and participation in the organisations' activities.

### Research Question and Data

The main research question addressed in the article is an analysis of how CCR is supporting and engaging in community development efforts. Analytically, the article differentiates between *static structures* and *dynamic processes* of participation and access. We argue that although appropriately configured *static structures* are necessary to promote community development, they are not sufficient in the absence of positive *dynamic processes*. *Static structures* of participation and access are defined as the organisational and structural characteristics of CCR itself. Analysis of these structures illustrates some aspects of the community development impact of CCR. Data on these *static structures* are derived from an organisational case study of the radio station carried out in 2008 and listenership surveys conducted in 1989, 2002 and 2005.

By contrast, *dynamic processes* focus in a qualitative way on the interactions between CCR and non-statutory organisations and also to a lesser extent on inhabitants of the area who are not connected with non-statutory organisations. This focus is the core of the research. The analysis of *dynamic processes* explores how different the needs of and issues facing the members of the community, to different extents, come to light and are discussed on CCR. Non-statutory organisations, of which there are 73 in the franchise area, are placed at the centre of the analysis because they have a well-recognised role in the community development process. Data on *dynamic processes* are derived from 32 qualitative interviews carried out in 2008. Twenty-two of these were conducted with representatives of non-statutory organisations in the franchise area with the remaining ten interviews conducted with inhabitants of the local area who were not directly involved with these non-statutory groups. A number of interviews were also conducted with 'key informants', representing those heavily involved in CCR as employees, volunteers, and co-founders. Interviews conducted with inhabitants and key informants explored broader community development functions outside of CCR's relationships with non-statutory community organisations.

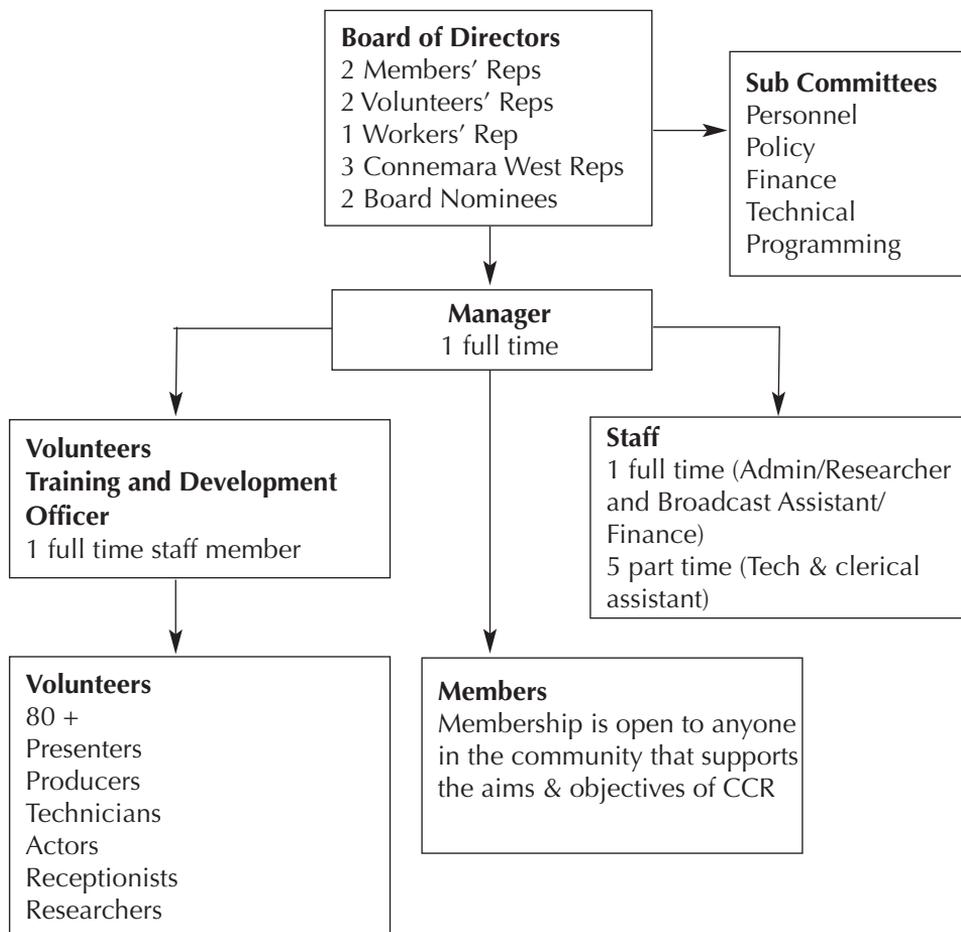
### Findings and Discussion

#### (1) Static Structures: Ownership, Management Structure, Profile of Volunteers and Listenership Surveys

##### *Ownership*

CCR is a company limited by guarantee. Membership of the company is open to anyone from the community that supports the aims and objectives of CCR and is the institutional mechanism devised in order to promote broader community ownership and access to policy formulation and decision making for CCR. Members have two places on the Board of Directors. At present there are about 80 to 90 members.

**Figure 2: CCR’s Organisational and Management Structure**



Approximately 40 of these are volunteers or members of the Board and therefore are likely to be very active. Membership numbers do not seem to have changed over the past few years, although originally a target of 1,000 members was identified.

*Management*

There is a ten-person Board of Directors. As shown in Figure 2, two of the Board are members’ representatives, two are volunteers’ representatives, there is one workers’ representative, three Connemara West Plc representatives and two Board nominees. Within the sub-committees, only the personnel committee is regularly active.

*Profile of Volunteers: Location, Age and Gender*

Tables 1 and 2 profile the volunteers at CCR and show whether or not the volunteers are representative of the general population in terms of geographic location and age profile. These people, who form the backbone of the radio station, are responsible for pre-

**Table 1: Location of volunteers**

<i>Location</i>	<i>No. of volunteers</i>	<i>Percentage of volunteers</i>	<i>Percentage of population</i>
Ballyconneely	6	8	3
Cashel	2	3	0.4
Cleggan/Claddaghduff	4	5	8
Clifden	15	20	24
Inishbofin	2	3	2
Ballinakill (Letterfrack, Moyard, Kylemore)	2	30	6
Leenane	2	3	2
Recess	2	3	1
Renvyle	17	22	14
Roundstone	3	4	4
Total	76	100	100

Note: Note: Addresses for only 76 out of the listed 79 volunteers for CCR could be identified. Therefore, the number of volunteers differs slightly in Table 1 from Table 2 below. Numbers may not add up due to rounding

senting programmes, conducting research, providing technical assistance, answering telephones and conducting interviews. In addition, volunteers also carry out the majority of fundraising activities, and in many cases source sponsorship for their own programmes. With such commitment it is not surprising that CCR has repeatedly gained national recognition for the quality of its programmes. Table 1 shows that the volunteers are concentrated in certain locations within the franchise area. Table 1 has three columns. In the first column, the actual number of volunteers in each of the ten main sub-districts of the franchise area is shown. The second column converts these actual numbers to percentages and shows the percentage of total volunteers in each of the ten main sub-districts. The final column shows the distribution of the total resident population, in percentage terms, among those ten sub-districts. For example, although the Ballinakill region of the franchise area contains only 6% of the total population (column 3), 30% of the volunteers come from the area (column 2). This location is also physically closest to the radio station in Letterfrack. Ballyconneely, Cashel, Leenane and Renvyle also have greater representations of volunteers than their population share would suggest.

Table 2 compares the age profile of volunteers to the age profile of the general population. It is clear that there are fewer volunteers under 20 years of age than would be suggested by the proportion of the population under that age. This under-representation of young people has consistently been a problem for the radio station and has never been fully addressed. By contrast, there are more volunteers in the 20-40-years and over-40-years categories than would be expected by the structure of the population in the franchise area.

Although not explicitly shown in Table 2, the gender split of volunteers is relatively equal. 41 (52%) of the volunteers are female and 38 (48%) are male.

**Table 2: Age profile of volunteers**

	<i>Under 20 years</i>	<i>20-40 years</i>	<i>Over 40 years</i>	<i>Total</i>
No. of volunteers	5	28	46	79
Percentage of volunteers	6	35	58	100
Percentage of Population	25	25	50	100

Note: Numbers may not add up due to rounding

### *Listenership surveys: How is CCR Viewed by the Community?*

There are three listenerships surveys to draw upon. The first, in 1989, consisted of a non-representative survey carried out by radio station volunteers and college students. The second, in 2002, was a representative survey carried out by MRBI Ltd as part of a broader evaluation of CCR. The third, in 2005, was a non-representative sample of local community and voluntary groups. All of these assessments reported widespread support for CCR among the local community. For example, the 1989 survey revealed that 97.5% of those interviewed felt that community radio was a good development in the area and 77.5% of those interviewed thought that it was important that local radio was owned and managed by a voluntary community group rather than a private individual or commercial business. The 2002 survey, conducted by MRBI Ltd as part of an evaluation of CCR, was implemented in the same manner as the Joint National Listenership Research (JNLR) Survey. This survey reported that in the week prior to the survey, 47% of the population in the franchise area had listened to CCR. Listenership was strong among persons aged over 35, and was relatively evenly split in terms of social class and gender. The 2005 survey concentrated on investigating how local community and voluntary groups currently used, or might in the future use, CCR. Of the groups surveyed, 66% of them used the radio in the previous year to promote their activities in the local area.

This analysis of static structures provides valuable information on some important aspects of the community development impact of the radio station. For example, it shows that the management structure of CCR is inclusive and that membership is open to all in the community. All segments of the community engage with the radio station, although volunteers are older and concentrated in certain geographic locations compared to the population at large. The gender balance of volunteers is appropriate. Listenership surveys show that there is strong recognition of the station in the locality; there is extensive listenership to the radio; that people generally are appreciative of the programme schedule and content and that the radio has, according to this metric, made a significant community development impact.

### **(2) Dynamic processes: Non-Statutory Organisations, their Mandates and CCR**

As mentioned previously, there are 73 non-statutory community organisations operational in CCR's franchise area, which includes issue-oriented groups and territorial groups (see Table 3). The mandates of issue-oriented non-statutory organisations, such as those detailed below, are generally more targeted in focus than territorially-

**Table 3: Non-Statutory Organisations in the CCR Franchise Area**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number</i>
Community Organisations (territory-oriented)	26
Elderly (issue-oriented)	7
Women (issue-oriented)	7
Youth (issue-oriented)	8
Playgroups/Parent & Toddler Groups / Playground Committees /	
Community Childcare (issue-oriented)	19
Other (issue-oriented)*	6
Total	73

\* Citizens Information Centre; Letterfrack Farmers' Cooperative; Domestic Violence Response; Tullycross Credit Union; Críost Linn ; Elm Tree Mental Health Support Centre

oriented organisations, which ideally represent all social groups within a territory. However, it can often be the case that ideas for targeted issue-oriented interest groups arise from and are supported by a core territorial organisation.

In order to explore how the mandates of these diverse non-statutory community organisations are represented on CCR, interviews were conducted with representatives of each category of organisation listed in Table 3 above. Using a semi-structured format, interviewees were first asked to describe the general mandate of their organisation and to identify some current primary issues of concern. Once the mandates and priority issues of the organisation was established, the remainder of the interview sought to establish how CCR was instrumental in furthering the organisation's mandate and in addressing the issues identified. Representatives were asked to describe if and how CCR had in any way been involved in how the organisation furthered its mandate and, specifically, how it dealt with current primary issues of concern. The interviewing process sought to detect representatives' use of tactics, or an absence of the use of tactics, to promote/discuss issues important to their mandate using CCR as a medium. Related questions were posed to explore the strength and nature of channels of communication between community organisations and CCR. Interviewees were also asked whether, and how often, they listened to CCR. Details on the particular programmes they listened to were sought. The findings from the interviews are presented below in two sections, the first detailing the mandates and 'priority issues' of the community organisations interviewed and the second detailing interviewees' responses in relation to their interactions with CCR.

Table 4 below provides an overview of the organisational mandates of different types of non-statutory organisations operating in CCR's franchise area, the current propriety issues identified by representatives of the organisations and content broadcast on CCR that was identified by representatives as relevant to their current mandates.

#### *Communication between CCR and Non-Statutory Organisations*

The interviews found that without exception, a high proportion of the issues that were identified by the organisations as priority issues were comprehensively addressed by CCR. All of the 22 representatives interviewed stated that they listened

**Table 4: Organisational Mandates, Priority Issues & Relevant Content on CCR**

<i>Organisational Mandate</i>	<i>Current Priority Issues</i>	<i>Relevant Content on CCR</i>
<p><u>Community Organisations</u> Represent the inhabitants of a territorially defined area within which the organisations are based, and the main social, cultural and economic issues that local people in the area feel to be important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental issues (e.g. maintenance of village amenities &amp; roads)</li> <li>• Planning issues</li> <li>• Local economic, employment, and education issues (including the stimulation of enterprise; adult education; vocational education; back-to-work schemes; and re-skilling)</li> <li>• Social problems, for example underage alcohol consumption and delinquency.</li> <li>• Social issues relating to youth; childcare; women; the elderly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tidy Towns</li> <li>• Planning issues</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Roads</li> <li>• Enterprise development</li> <li>• Re-skilling &amp; Education</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Sewerage</li> </ul>
<p><u>Organisations for the Elderly</u> Provide supports and resources for the elderly, ranging from “meals on wheels” services to transport services to the organisation of social events. Provide liaison and intermediary services between the elderly and external services e.g. transport, health, household, and social welfare services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation and loneliness</li> <li>• Impeded access to necessary services such as healthcare and transport</li> <li>• Impeded access to necessary social and cultural outlets, including religious Mass services.</li> <li>• Lack of security in the home and related experiences of fear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious Services i.e. Mass</li> <li>• Information on Alzheimer’s disease and other medical conditions</li> <li>• Carers’ allowance</li> <li>• Wills/inheritance</li> <li>• Crime, vulnerability &amp;, and theft</li> <li>• Isolation</li> </ul>
<p><u>Organisations for Women</u> Represent women’s issues and counteract social isolation. Offering opportunities for friendship, social support, and avenues towards education, health awareness, the arts, and aesthetics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female health and fitness</li> <li>• Social interaction among women</li> <li>• Encouraging women to become active members of women’s groups (this is a specific aim of the ICA)</li> <li>• Encouraging women to become involved in events and activities that benefit the wider community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICA notices</li> <li>• Health issues e.g. diet; heart disease and breast cancer awareness; depression</li> <li>• Fundraising events e.g. Hospice</li> <li>• Information on educational courses</li> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Financial advice e.g. MABS</li> </ul>

Youth Organisations

Assist young people in many aspects of their social and cultural development Operate according to the 'Foróige' model, the slogan of which is "empowering youth, enriching communities" (see [www.foroige.ie](http://www.foroige.ie)).

- Programmes on drugs; sex; and alcohol
- Community Work
- Provision of a safe environment in which activities can take place, such as sports activities and debating activities.
- Sport
- Underage alcohol use
- Drug use
- Coverage of youth agencies (e.g. Foróige; Teenline)
- Third-level and Vocational Education Information
- Exam advice
- School activities (secondary and primary)

Organisations (Other)

- Variety of priority issues
- Childcare issues
- Farming issues
- Fishing issues
- Domestic violence
- MABS
- Information on Social Welfare Benefits / Social Welfare Initiatives

to CCR both in a personal capacity and in their capacity as representatives of non-statutory organisations. A first question posed to representatives was the following: *Do you find that the programme content of Connemara Community Radio is generally relevant to community activities in the area and important and topical issues in the area?* The response from the representatives interviewed was unanimously positive with responses such as the following being prevalent:

The radio is absolutely relevant.

The radio station is essential to our community.

The radio lets everyone know what we're doing and what's going on in the locality.

Representatives were asked to identify the programmes broadcast on CCR that were most relevant to the mandates of their respective non-statutory organisations. Every representative interviewed identified their weekly Local News Report as being of primary interest. This report reviews issues of local importance in Roundstone, Cashel, Clifden, Cleggan/Claddaghduff, Ballyconneely and Ballinakill. In the opinion of the representatives interviewed, this local news report is of considerable importance and interest to the members and stakeholders of the organisations they represent. Various representatives stated that the weekly local news programme is:

Specifically relevant to the area.

Very current in terms of up-and-coming issues and events.

Useful for us to tell people in the community about what is going on in the locality.

Representatives considered the local news report to be an important tool for increasing awareness of local issues in the area and for publicising local events. In addition, they demonstrated considerable pride in the representation of their area through the local news report. Most of the representatives interviewed spoke of their active role in preparing the programme content for the weekly local news report for their area.

Two additional programmes were identified by representatives as being relevant and important to their organisations: Community Matters and the weekday Magazine Programme. These programmes feature general discussion on social, cultural and economic issues within the CCR franchise area; issues of broader importance outside the franchise area; and announcements in relation to activities and events that are of potential interest to the programme's listeners. The programme also features interviews with politicians and other individuals on topics of public interest. Additionally, the programme features music, as well as phone-in dedications.

It is conceived by representatives that these discussion programmes, in particular, are very important to local non-statutory organisations for the purposes of disseminating information on and debating the issues that organisations are addressing within their mandates:

The radio station gives us a chance to explain our efforts and our tackling of issues and problems in the community. It helps us celebrate with people in the community our successes, and to explain to people in the community our delays and failures.

It is conceived that the discussion programmes are also instrumental to achieving the aims of organisations:

(In relation to a youth organisation): The radio gives me a way and a means to praise young people, which contributes to reaching our main objective – for young people to gain confidence and prosper.

The broadcasting of Community Notices was perceived by representatives as being of instrumental importance to the operation of their non-statutory organisations, particularly for the purpose of publicising community-based events. The Death Notices section was also identified by most organisations as being an important source of local public information and a very important service to the community. Representatives also viewed the broadcasting of religious services as being of crucial importance, to the elderly in particular.

Aside from CCR programmes that were specifically relevant to the activities of their non-statutory community organisations, representatives identified the following programmes/programme categories as being among their personal favourites: (1) 'Senior Side of the Street'; (2) Sport programmes (various); and (3) Music programmes (various).

Taking the results of all of the interviews into account there is no detectable evidence that different categories of community organisation are differently positioned to communicate with, or influence, CCR. A related research finding from all of the 32 interviews conducted (including ten interviews conducted with inhabitants of the CCR franchise area) was evidence of a close interpersonal relationship between CCR and the non-statutory organisations in the franchise area. This is illustrated most pointedly by

the dynamics of how the non-statutory organisations in the CCR franchise area communicated with CCR. In response to questions posed to representatives of non-statutory organisations on how they generally make contact with the radio station for the purposes of bringing priority issues/events/concerns to the radio station's attention, all interviewees stated that they make one-to-one contact with a station representative. Unlike formalised procedures commonly used for communication purposes by commercial radio stations, it is evident that communication between CCR and outside organisations takes place for the most part by means of one-to-one communication. In addition, it is evident that when representatives of non-statutory organisations contact the radio station, they communicate with a person involved in CCR who is known to them. Some illustrative responses from the interviews are as follows:

Every week I get a phone call from X and I tell him about everything that has been going on in the area. He puts the information into his programme.

When I want to put in a community notice, I just walk across the road and give it to X who is at reception.

My own sister used to be on the radio. Everyone knows someone who is involved in the radio, and they can talk to them.

Overall, it is evident that the channels of communication between the CCR and non-statutory civil society organisations in the franchise area are highly personalised, and also that communication with the radio station is easy to establish and is obstacle-free. In some instances, the same actors were involved in the community organisations and CCR. This issue does prompt questions in relation to the possibility of a small number of actors dominating community development agencies in the area. CCR's representation of broader inhabitants of the franchise area (i.e. those not involved in non-statutory interest groups) is discussed in the following section.

### **Beyond Non-Statutory Organisations: The Issue of Representation**

Ten qualitative interviews were conducted with inhabitants of the CCR franchise area who are not directly involved in non-statutory organisations. The qualitative interviews conducted with these inhabitants sought in part to determine whether the inhabitants listened to CCR and, if so, to which programmes they listened. Each of the inhabitants interviewed stated that they listened to CCR, though it was clear from interviews conducted with younger respondents that they listened to the station less frequently.<sup>3</sup> All of the inhabitants interviewed identified the following programme categories as the ones they most frequently listened to: 1) Music programmes (various); 2) Sports programmes (various); and 3) Local news.

When inhabitants were specifically asked whether they thought CCR was important and useful for finding out information on issues and events in the locality and community, all interviewees gave positive responses such as:

The radio is essential for us to find out what is going on around the locality.

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<sup>3</sup> Three of the ten interviews were conducted with people who are attending university outside of the CCR franchise area but are from the franchise area and return there on weekends and during holiday periods.

And, from another perspective:

For 'blow-ins', the radio station is useful for getting to know all about the area and its history.

An important observation from interviews conducted with inhabitants of the CCR franchise area is that they revealed a motivation for listening to CCR that was different in orientation to the corresponding motivation of representatives of non-statutory organisations. While inhabitants of the CCR franchise area identified community-based and local news-based programmes as being of interest, they tended to pay equal attention in their interviews to sports and music programmes.

Interviews conducted with inhabitants of the CCR franchise area, similar to interviews with representatives of non-statutory organisations, gave the impression of a close and personalised relationship with CCR. It was notable, however, that a number of inhabitants interviewed gave the impression that in contacting a representative of their local non-statutory organisation about an issue, the issue would consequently be aired on CCR. This finding again highlights the close relationship between non-statutory community organisations and CCR, while also corroborating the idea that many of those involved with CCR (i.e., in the preparation and delivery of programme content) are also involved as key actors in local non-statutory organisations.

While the close connection between CCR and surrounding non-statutory organisations is a positive attribute in terms of how representative CCR is of local non-statutory activity, it also raises other questions in relation to representation. The perception of non-statutory organisations as an intermediary for CCR makes the encouragement and maintenance of popular participation in the non-statutory organisations an issue of concern also for CCR. However, it was also clear that there was not a total reliance on non-statutory organisations on the part of CCR in furthering its community development mandate.

CCR has extended beyond communicating with people who are involved in non-statutory organisations in its franchise area. Issues that are not the focus of non-statutory community organisations in the area currently, such as racism and gay and lesbian matters, are represented in radio programming content (Macken-Walsh and Heanue, 2008). Furthermore, in terms of garnering the interest of the general population, CCR has succeeded in developing a large listenership, demonstrated by the findings of the 2002 survey. In such a way, CCR reaches those who may ordinarily be estranged from community development processes. In an interview conducted with one of the founding members of the radio station, this is one of the unique features of community-based radio that is actively exploited in the case of CCR:

One of the remarkable features of community radio is that it draws people into the community who otherwise would not

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis in this paper CCR has a positive impact on community development in its franchise area. The analysis of *static structures* provides valuable information on some important aspects of the community development impact of the radio station. It showed that the management structure of CCR is inclusive and that

membership is open to all in the community. All segments of the community engage with the radio station, although volunteers are older and concentrated in certain geographic locations compared to the population at large. The gender balance of volunteers is appropriate. Repeated listenership surveys show that there is strong recognition of the station in the locality; people listen extensively to the radio; that people generally are appreciative of the programme schedule and content, and that the radio has, according to this metric, made a significant community development impact. Therefore, on balance, it is reasonable to argue that the organisational and structural profile of CCR ensures it makes a positive contribution to community development.

Analysis of the *dynamic processes* of interactive communications and the engagement of non-statutory organisations and inhabitants of the franchise area with CCR, also suggest that the community development impact of the radio station is positive. It is clear that representatives of non-statutory organisations (representing a range of territory and issue-based communities) consistently evaluate CCR as responding directly to their priority concerns. Qualitative interviews revealed that communication with CCR takes a highly personalised form, mostly through one-to-one verbal exchange and that such communication is obstacle free. Inevitably, the close association between CCR and its surrounding non-statutory organisations raises questions concerning representation, that is, how representative organisations actually are of the people (connected through a common territory or through common issues) they claim to represent.

In the case of CCR, the extent to which the station is representative of both non-statutory organisations and of inhabitants who are unaffiliated to organisations is an important question. While close interdependencies are evident between CCR and non-statutory organisations, from a more wide ranging analysis it is evident that CCR goes beyond the mandates of the main types of non-statutory organisations in the area (i.e. community-based; elderly; women; youth; children) to address more wide-ranging issues. Furthermore, CCR engages in a number of independent community development actions, such as training, in its own right.

Of course, it is a separate question not addressed in this paper whether or not the non-statutory organisations themselves are representative of the territory or issue-based groups they claim to represent. The possibility of ‘hijacking’ in this sense is still valid. While the large number and diversity of organisations indicate an active community sector, the extent to which the organisations successfully and democratically represent the views of the public is an altogether different question. Community radio stations such as CCR have an ongoing and proactive role to play in ensuring the representativeness of non-statutory organisations by actively and continuously encouraging people in the community to participate and become involved, both in other non-statutory organisations and in CCR itself. The ease with which the general public has access to CCR suggests that the radio station is fulfilling a positive role in this regard.

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