Community Radio Development and Public Funding for Programme Production: Options for Policy

Niamh Farren

Ciaran Murray

Kenneth Murphy

COMMUNITY RADIO DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC FUNDING FOR PROGRAMME PRODUCTION: Options for policy

Niamh Farren, Ciaran Murray and Kenneth Murphy

Introduction

This paper originates in a wider research project funded by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's media research scheme.[1] The project arose out of collaboration between community media practitioners and academics. The project sought to provide a comparative analysis of national 'programme production schemes' which are open to the community radio sector in other states. A key context for that research was the legislative requirement that the programme production scheme run by the BAI pay attention to the 'the developmental needs of community broadcasters'. An additional context for the research was the criticism from within the sector that the BAI's scheme was insufficiently attentive to the particular dynamics of community radio production. The key research objective that thus arose was to evaluate the ways in which other states link developmental goals to programme production funding for the community radion sector. In order to answer this question we evaluated the literature on 'development' of the sector and analysed the production schemes of five other states (Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, New Zealand) through a combination of interviews and document analysis.

The present article will provide a review of the findings from that larger research project. Its key aim is to provide an evaluation of the 'developmental' aspects of the production schemes in those five other states and consider their relevance to the Irish scheme. To do that, we first present an overview of community radio in Ireland and the operation of the Sound and Vision production scheme. We then undertake a review of the literature on development of community media and the role of public policy therein. Following that we will present our key findings from the research into the developmental aspects of programme production schemes offering tentative suggestions for their adaptation in the Irish context.

Community Radio in Ireland and the Sound And Vision Scheme

Community radio in Ireland developed in parallel with a growing community and voluntary sector in Ireland.[2] From programme production to management structures and funding, community radio differed from commercial and state models and in

---

[1] *www.bai.ie/wordpress/.../20110725_CommRadioFundingReport.pdf*
[2] For an overview, see Day, R. (ed.) (2007) *Bicycle Highway: celebrating community radio in Ireland*. Dublin: Liffey Press.

recognition of this, the IRTC together with the Community Radio Forum of Ireland (now CRAOL) developed a policy document on community radio. The document proposed the following definition of community radio:

> A community radio station is characterised by its ownership and programming and the community it is licensed 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.[3]

Over the past 15 years the sector has grown, with 22 stations now licensed in Ireland, representing urban, rural and communities of interest. Stations are bound by contract to the BAI (formerly the IRTC/BCI), and contracts issued to all stations include a commitment to the AMARC Charter for Community Radio Stations. Following AMARC guidelines, stations are funded through a variety of sources. Advertising, donations and sponsorship have provided varying levels of funding for stations. Many stations also draw down grants from government departments and various agencies.

One significant source of public funding for the sector is access to the Sound and Vision programme production scheme administered by the Broadacsting Authority of Ireland. The fund was set up under the Broadcasting Funding Act in 2003. The Act made available 5% of the television license fee for radio or television programme productions considered to be of a public service character, disbursed through the broadcasting regualtor (then the BCI). This funding was also open to the community media sector. The core objective of the scheme as outlined in the legislation is to increase access to high quality programmes which reflect Irish culture, heritage and experience. Changes to the scheme in 2009 included amendments of relevance to the community media sector e.g. that the broadcasting regulator in preparing the scheme would have regards to the 'developmental needs of community broadcasters'.

BAI policy on Sound and Vision clarifies the objectives of the scheme and establishes an operational framework whereby applications are assessed and funding disbursed. According to the guidelines, programmes must be new, must reflect the themes of the legislation, and must be broadcast by a licensed entity. The representation and exploration of both diversity and tradition in Irish culture are encouraged. All programme genres are eligible. Funding for training and development activities are generally not permitted under the scheme. There is no prescribed length, duration or number of programmes. Applicants (normally independent programme producers) are required to submit an extensive application form with details of the production proposed, along with a letter from a licensed broadcaster who commits to broadcasting the programme during peak times, i.e., 7a.m. to 7p.m.

From its inception there were concerns within the community radio sector as to the suitability of the scheme for community radio production. In 2008, Craol commissioned an independent research study by Dr Maria Gibbons[4] exploring the

---

3 BCI Policy Document on Community Radio (1996), p.3
4 The report can be access at http://www.craol.ie/images/resources/community-radio-and-the-sound—100611161329.pdf, [Accessed 01/12/10].

sector's experience of the scheme. Gibbon's research covered the first six rounds of the Scheme, which were disbursed between 2006 and 2008, and drew on interviews with 19 representatives from different community radio stations. Other key stakeholders, including the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (now the BAI), were also consulted in the research.

The research found significant benefits for community broadcasters, beyond the monetary, as a result of engaging with the scheme. Benefits articulated by community broadcasters interviewed during the research process include improved standards, greater diversity of programming, and in general 'raising the bar' of station output, in accordance with the 'quality' criteria of the scheme. However, there was a concern expressed that the quality criteria within the scheme favoured the production of streamlined professionalised programmes, which might not fit with the ethos of community radio. Core objectives of community radio such as community access, in particular providing media access to groups outside of the mainstream, do not always result in the slick production values of commercial or state broadcasting. Community radio also attributes equal value to both the programming output and the production process, while the Scheme focuses solely on the end product – the programme. In summary, Gibbons states the fund was 'perceived as not taking into account sufficiently the unique characteristics of community media' (p. 26).

The BAI has stated its commitment to ensuring that it responds to the various needs of the various sectors within the constraints of the scheme. In January 2010 the BAI launched Sound and Vision II, a revised version of the scheme. Sound and Vision II contains a number of changes relevant to the community radio sector. These include a willingness on behalf of the BAI to consider multi-annual funding proposals providing certain criteria are in place. The revised guidelines also state that in limited circumstances the BAI will allocate funding for the development phase of programmes. Sound and Vision II also outlines a distinct assessment approach for proposals from the community media sector. The following additional questions inform the assessment process for proposals for broadcast on community radio.

- Does the programme preserve the ethos of community broadcasting?

- Is the proposal based on community access?

- Does the programme support active community participation?

- Does the programme support the development of skills within the community?

- What impact will the programme have on the development of the broadcaster?[5]

What is missing from this revised approach, however, is a wider context to consider the 'developmental' goals of the community radio sector and further details as to how public policy and funding may actively support those goals. This would entail a wider consideration of the key developmental goals of community radio and some of the structural and procedural aspects of public policy which supports those goals.

[5] http://www.bai.ie/pdfs/soundandvisionschemedoc.pdf, [Accessed 01/12/10].

Development of Community Broadcasting

Whereas development may be loosely defined as 'growth or advancement', the specifics of what this means for community media, at this juncture in time, needs further elaboration. A survey of the international scholarly literature indicates the relationship between programme production funds and development of the sector has not received much attention. This is not in itself surprising, as scholarly work on community media within the wider field of media studies is in an emergent phase. There is, however, a growing literature from policy and associational bodies relevant to community media that have begun to document the relationship between community media, public policy and aspects of development therein.

Policy towards the community broadcasting sector requires differential approaches to the policy directed towards the public service sector and the commercial sector. In their development of a public interest agenda for broadcasting policy, Buckley[6] et al. point to the necessity of this differentiation and go on to state that policy directed towards community and radio broadcasting should be mindful that community media should,

- Remain independent of the government and of commercial organisations;

- Serve specific communities, either geographical or communities of interest;

- Have ownership and management representative of that community;

- Operate for purposes of social benefit rather than private financial profit; and

- Enable participation by the community in program making and management (Buckley et al., 2008, p. 222).

The relationship between policy and funding is succinctly stated wherein funding, which includes government or public funding, should be just one element in a wider matrix of funds including advertising, sponsorship, membership fees and donations. However, public funding can be a strategically important element of the funding mix as it offers a potentially more stable and predictable source of funding. According to Buckley et al., community media should have the potential to access sources of public funding to ensure both the mix and security of funding.

Buckley et al. briefly consider the relationship between programme production support and the development of the sector. A central argument of this study is that whereas funding for programme production is important,

> funding arrangements are only one of the issues that affect the viability and sustainability of community broadcasters. The social base, authenticity and responsiveness of the broadcaster to its audience are crucial factors which are strengthened by interactive programming and by accountable and participatory management structures. Most community broadcasters depend heavily on volunteers to assist in programme making, fund-raising and other activities and rely on the active involvement of local groups and organizations to provide expertise and input on matters of local and community concern. Support pro-

---

6 Buckley et al. (2008) *Broadcasting Voice and Accountability*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

> grammes should recognize that social, institutional and technical sustainability are as important to the functioning and survival of community broadcasters as economic arrangements (Buckley et al., 2008, p. 220).

This provides a set of parameters for understanding sustainability as a key developmental goal and how sustainability maps across financial, social, institutional and technological arrangements.

The Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA) has also reflected upon criteria for public funding as an element of successfully developing community radio.[7] Twenty-seven community media practitioners and experts addressed varied issues related to the theme of 'community radio: its impact and challenges to its development' and produced a working group report on the topic. In the executive summary the report details the features of community radio and suggests that 'long term commitment and co-ordinated efforts are necessary for the institutional development of community radio' and that 'funding strategies and development models should encourage sustainability in the long run' (CIMA 2007, p. 5). Kim Mahling-Clarke argues that the following criteria are key to the long-term success of community radio and must be considered within funding initiatives:

- Active participation by volunteers;

- The production of engaging programmes which are responsive to the listeners needs;

- Training and skills adapted to community media ethos;

- Adjustment to the changing media environment;

- Editorial independence (creating a gap between funding and programming); and

- Funding sources which are not subject to political change.

Clarke also points to the consensus within the sector that 'all aspects of sustainability – social, institutional and financial – should be incorporated into the overall strategy of community radio development' (CIMA, p. 13).

At this juncture, sustainability emerges as a central component of development in community media. The need for sustainability reflects both the relative youth of the sector and the difficult operating environment that community radio initiatives tend to work within. According to a study commissioned by Internews, the international media development organisation, achieving sustainability is the first step on the road to further development.[8] The report also adapts the work of Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini (2005)[9] to define the three axes of social, institu-

---

7 Centre for International Media Assistance (2007) Community Radio: Its impact and challenges to its development, CIMA.
8 Fairbairn, J. (2009) *Community Media Sustainability Guide: the business of changing lives.* Washington: Internews.
9 Gumucio-Dagron, A, and Dlamini, H. (2005). 'Sustainability of CMCs', in *Guidebook on setting up a community media center.* Unesco. See portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/15721/1084292960512.pdf/12.pdf (Accessed 02/12/10).

tional and financial sustainability. The report gives the following definitions to these axes:

- **Social sustainability** refers to all the social processes that are needed to create sustainable community media, including community participation in governance, management, operations, content production, generation of income, and feedback.

- **Institutional sustainability** refers to the policies, governance structures, management structures and styles, staffing, internal relationships, and practices, as well as partnerships with organizations and the legal and regulatory environment.

- **Financial sustainability** is the organization's ongoing income-generating potential, and includes cash and donations of goods and services (Fairbairn, 2009, pp. 11–13).

Thus sustainability and the three axes of social, institutional and financial sustainability provide normative parameters for evaluating development of the sector and the contribution of public policy/public funding threin. It is clear from these parameters that policy that purports to support developmental goals of community radio needs to take into account both procedural and structural characteristics of community media and policy must be attuned to their social, institutional and financial sustainabilty.

Comparative Dimensions of Programme Production Funding Schemes

The development of community radio in Ireland is comparable to its development in Austria, Denmark, Canada, France and New Zealand. The sector emerged in these countries in the 1980s, and to varying degrees each has been recognised in broadcasting policy since the 1990s. Each of these states are considered to be relatively advanced in how they incorporate community media into the wider broadcasting sector. Each of them has also developed a scheme for programme production to which the community radio broadcasters can apply. Given the varied economic, political and socio-cultural contexts and the particular histories of broadcasting and the community dimension, different approaches to the support of programme production exist. It is the purpose of this section to compare and contrast the developmental aspects of these schemes according to the frameworks outlined in the previous section.

It is first important to note the structural differences between the funding schemes. In Denmark, France and Canada the schemes were initiated as dedicated community media/radio production funds and legislation and policy evolved accordingly. In Austria the scheme was legislated for and developed as a dedicated community broadcasting production fund alongside a dedicated fund for the commercial broadcasting sector. In New Zealand the scheme was legislated for as a generic 'local content' production fund (open to community, commercial and public television and radio broadcasters) and adapted to enable a dedicated funding policy for access/community radio production within the wider scheme. In Ireland the scheme (Sound and Vision) originated from legislation for a 'national content' production fund, open to broadcasters (community, commercial and public) and independent producers. The scheme is 'generic' and open to all of these sectors and is thus not a dedicated community media scheme, nor does it contain a separate scheme for community media production funding.

Through interviews with community media representatives and regulatory officials with responsibility for the community media sector we identified a composite of structural and procedural features arising from the five funds analysed that provide guidelines to how developmental goals have been differentially addressed and institutionalised within these schemes. Here we will consider how these aspects of fund-

Table 1: Programme Production Funding Schemes

	France	New Zealand	Denmark	Austria	Canada	Ireland
Status of Fund	Dedicated	Generic	Dedicated	Dedicated	Dedicated	Generic
Source of Fund	Commercial Levy	State Grant	Licence Fee	Licence Fee	Commercial Levy	Licence Fee
Core V Project Based	Core + Selective Grant	Core	Core grant for hours	Project (Thematic)	Project (specified)	Project (specified)
Distribution	Tiered	Tiered	Licence linked	Capped funds	Open	Open
Capacity, Procedural and Quality objectives	C, P & Q	C & P	C	C, P & Q	C, P & Q	P & Q
Application cycle	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Rolling

ing schemes have been actualised with examples from the programme production schemes in the varied jurisdictions.

There are structural features of the varied funding schemes which directly address issues of sustainability and are thus developmental in character. The following is a summary of those structural features:

• Dedicated funding schemes for community media (Austria, France, Denemark, Canada)

• The availability of operational/core funding (France)

• Operational funding for determined programme hours as opposed to 'specific projects' (Denmark)

• Funding for programme strands as opposed to defined 'stock' programming (Austria)

• Ring-fenced 'radio' funding (Austria, Canada and France)

• Funding based on successful retention of a service licence in conjunction with project proposals (all except Ireland and Canada).

A key issue that arose in relation to predictability and sustainability of funding relates to the difference between 'core funding' and 'project-by-project funding'. Operational, or 'core' funds as they are more commonly known, are annual bulk funds which are designed to provide broadcasters with a proportion of their station maintenance and programme production costs. In the countries under consideration here, France clearly has access to core funding. Core funding is usually directed towards supporting fundraising awareness, management, administration, financial management and reporting, content production, training, technological planning, community outreach and volunteer organisation and research. The rationale is that funding stations and their operations will enable the capacity for the production of community radio programmes on an ongoing basis leading to greater output from funding over time. Project funds/schemes tend to be targeted funds which support particular elements of community radio, e.g., once-off training initiatives, once-off programme production grants, once-off station enhancement grants, etc. In relation to programme production, stations are funded to produce an agreed programme or set of programmes and the funding is entirely directed towards the production costs of that agreed programme. The rationale is that it allows community broadcasters to produce quality programmes, encourages efficiencies in all strands of programme production and leads to demonstrable outputs from public funding. This is the model which Sound and Vision operates under in the Irish scenario.

One of the key findings of the research was the emergence of 'third way' approaches, between core funding and project-by-project grants. In Denmark, for example, operation funding is provided for determined programming hours which introduces a degree of transparency and measurability into the scheme. Fifteen hours of independent programming are funded through operational grants for staff/fixed costs and production costs. Thus 15 first-time broadcast hours are funded but the onus is on the station to find funding for the rest of its original programming. However the 15 hours builds station capacity which generates further programming because of its focus on operational costs.

In Austria, the scheme is nominally a project-based grant but also entails 'operational dynamics'. This is evident in that the fund has a three-way split in relation to content, training and research grant support. Training and research schemes exist to support the development of the capacity of the sector and its development of content. In relation to the content stream, broadcasters can apply for funding for 'production and broadcasting of programmes, series, parts of programmes and/or projects, which may lead to the broadcast of programmes'.[10] This allows broadcasters to specify generic programme strands in their funding applications, that is, projects that do not have to be tightly detailed on an episode-by-episode basis. This is a flexible approach to content production. It gives broadcasters the freedom to develop programming relevant to schedule needs based on studio resources that already reside with the station. It also allows for broadcasters to use funding for development of programming. This formal approach to funding programme strands is beneficial in allowing community broadcasters to balance the production focus of their projects with procedural issues such as training and up-skilling volunteers, and capacity building such as developing the station and technical side of operations.

10 RTR (2010) *Funds For the Promotion of Non-Commercial Broadcasting: Guidelines*. Vienna: RTR.

Ring-fenced funding is also a structural means of ensuring that the sector can anticipate the availability of funds on a year-on-year basis. In Austria, the fund for Non-Commercial Media is a dedicated fund where the amounts available for radio and television are separate. Whatever way the funds are then disbursed, the sector can depend on a set amount being availed of in any given year. In the varied schemes discussed above, Ireland is the only scheme where there is no ring-fenced amount for the sector.

A further structural feature of funds is the linking of eligibility for funding to actual programme/project grants. This is the situation that pertains in all cases except for Canada and Ireland. In France, New Zealand, Denmark and Austria, those stations which are eligible for funding can expect to receive funding once they fulfil certain criteria related to organisational, procedural and content requirements. This is a means of building capacity in these categories over time whilst providing some financial certainty. It does not preclude the awarding of differential amounts for applicant projects and, as is the case in New Zealand and France, awarding funding on the basis of differential scales. Linking eligibility to funding encourages efficiencies on a longer term and provides some degree of secure funding for the different stations.

The research also addressed procedural aspects of each of the funding schemes. The broadly positive procedural aspects that address issues of sustainability in each of the funding schemes are as follows:

- Annual funding rounds with potential for multi-annual funding (New Zealand)

- Streamlined application process/clarity of criteria/independent but public judging panels (Canada, France, Denmark)

- Varied hybrids of content, procedural and operational criteria (Canada, Austria, France)

- Operational and content evaluation linked to political legitimation of guaranteed grants (Denmark, New Zealand, France)

- Distribution of funds across the sector (France, New Zealand)

Firstly, a structural feature, which is linked to the procedural aspects, is that of frequency of funding rounds. In all of the funds surveyed in the research the application process is based on a yearly submission cycle. Thus funding is awarded for an entire year. It was argued in relation to this cycle that this allowed broadcasters to plan ahead for the entire year and cut down on the procedure involved in applying for funding. Regulators were sympathetic to the concept of multi-annual funding wherein large-scale broadcasters with ambitious programming plans could benefit from funding awarded for more than one year. However, it is only in New Zealand that the regulator is planning on moving towards a multi annual funding model.

There are other procedural aspects of the programme production funds which can help to address the issues identified as impinging on sustainability and development in the sector. Following on directly from annual funding rounds, one of the key procedural aspects of each fund is the need for streamlined application processes that

attempt to be equitable and fair in disbursing funds. Perhaps one of the most stream-lined funding application processes for a project-based fund is Canada's CRFC. There is a six-week period of assessment for each of the applications, which is clearly outlined and made public. The process also contains a midway point wherein the judging panel can request further information from the applicants. The applicants have one week to reply. In the Canadian fund, the criteria for funding judgements are clear, publicly available and contain weightings for different aspects of capacity-building criteria, content production criteria and community media production criteria (e.g., the CRFC criteria: Timeline (5%), Training, Mentoring and Education (25%), Local Content (25%), Budget (10%) and Value and Relevance (35%).[11]

The Canadian scheme as developed by the CRFC also appoints a publicised independent judging panel that has direct experience or knowledge of the community sector. In the French scheme there are two panel members directly appointed by the community radio association, SNRL. In both Denmark and Austria there are special committees on local broadcasting that advise on the disbursement of funds. There are two issues here: the transparency of the award process and the relevant knowledge of those involved in assessment.

In relation to the monitoring of the various schemes there are similarities across the board. All of the schemes incorporate a mechanism for withholding funds until the successful completion of projects/programme schedules. All of the schemes involve a retrospective element of overseeing how the funds were used in the successful completion of programming/scheduling/production. The importance of the monitoring process is linked to the need to ensure political and public legitimacy for funding. However, the monitoring process can also have a productive dimension insofar as it encourages the continued application of community media operational dynamics in relation to the organisation and maintenance of stations.

The final procedural issue that arose in the research also has a structural dimension as it relates to the distribution of funds across the sector. In both France and New Zealand there are formulae to allow for different amounts to be allocated to broadcasters on the basis of either their potential service area and demographic make up (New Zealand) or on the basis of their potential to raise funds combined with service area size (France). In Denmark there is a spread of funding relative to the amount of licences that each operator holds, with funding thus reflecting the capacity of the different licensed operators. In Austria there is an informal agreement to ensure there is not too much disparity in funding until more rigorous formula for distributing funds is worked out. In each case, the policy focus is to ensure that broadcasters develop relatively evenly across the sector and competition for funding is not a 'winner takes all' approach, which is ill suited to community development/social benefit goals.

Distributing funds across the sector requires working out a careful formula that can take into account 1) the 'needs' and the 'merits' of the applications received (Canada, 2009–2011), 2) the accomplishments of stations in raising their own funding (France), 3) the varied operating contexts of different stations (New Zealand). A blunt but effective measure for ensuring a spread across broadcasters is to impose a cap on the amount of funding that can go to one station. The cap can be sufficiently

11 CRFC (2010) Community Radio Fund of Canada, Annual Report.

high to allow a station to succeed on the basis of the merits of its proposals (this is the case in Austria).

The community radio sector in Ireland has been well served by the recognition given to it in legislation and policy. In particular the BAI has proved itself attentive to the needs of community media. In relation to Sound and Vision it has adapted sector specific criteria for community broadcasters into the application assessment procedure and has indicated its willingness to consider multi annual funding and funding for programme development. However there are aspects of the various funds reviewed above that could also be considered in the Irish context, specifically in view of the distinctiveness of the sector and the developmental need for sustainability in the sector. The focus of Sound and Vision on discrete radio and television programmes as 'outputs' and independent television and radio production as the dominant production model ill suits the community media sector. From a structural point of view there appears to be few legislative barriers at European or National level to the development of a scheme within Sound and Vision for the community media sector (Television and Radio). This could allow consideration of serial based genre funding or funding of programme hours for community radio based on the specificities of the social and institutional base of community media (i.e., attentive to the production base of volunteer led and station centred production). These are structural features directly adapted to the social and institutional dynamics of community media production which are already operational in Austria and Denmark. Likewise, ring fenced funding would allow for financial sustainability and funding for training and developmental aspects of programme production would address institutional sustainability within the sector. In New Zealand a generic programme production scheme was adapted to fit more specifically the developmental needs of the sector and provides a possible model for a dedicated community media scheme within Ireland's Sound and Vision fund. This of course would also allow for the development of criteria/procedure directly targeted to the sustainability of the community media/radio sector.

At a procedural level, there could be benefits in community radio broadcasters moving to an annual funding round, cutting down on application procedure whilst allowing for budgeting for programme production for an entire year. Likewise, including weighted criteria that cover the varied aspects of capacity building, content development and community process in application procedures could also be more directly incorporated in the Sound and Vision criteria for awards for community radio production. Directly linked to this is the possibility of developing side schemes which address issues of training and content development within the sector. There are also various models for developing criteria for distributing funding across the sector in a tiered fashion. A key goal of this approach is to ensure the collective development of the sector.

Conclusion
Community radio has emerged as a significant element of community and social development in Ireland. The community radio sector is recognised in Irish broadcasting legislation and policy but there are many opportunities for the strengthening of this support. There is legislative commitment to support the development of the community media sector and this can be achieved through various aspects of public

policy towards the sector such as through the operation of the Sound and Vision programme production fund overseen by the BAI. Public policy designed and targeted to the specificities of community media is one aspect of the institutional sustainability of the sector that is a key component of its development. At this critical juncture in the development of community radio, the need to attain social, institutional and financial sustainability represent central developmental goals. The operation of programme production schemes open to the community media sector in states such as France, Denmark, Austria, Canada and New Zealand present both structural and procedural guidelines for potential policy adaptations directed towards achieving sustainability in the community media sector.

AUTHORS

Kenneth Murphy, PhD, is an assistant lecturer in the School of Media, Dublin Institute of Technology. His key research interests include transition in media industries, media policy and the public sphere. He has published on these issues in *Trends in Communication*, the *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, the *International Journal of Digital Television* and the *Irish Studies Review*.

Ciarán Murray is the coordinator of the Near Media Co-op, Dublin. He has been involved in community media, both radio and television, as a volunteer, producer, radio station manager, and committee member for almost 20 years. He is currently president of the Community Media Forum of Europe and is a former secretary of Craol, the Community Radio Forum of Ireland. He has initiated and participated in numerous community media research projects.

Niamh Farren is Communications Officer with AONTAS, a national NGO which promotes lifelong learning. She has over ten years experience in the community media sector, ranging from volunteer programme production to management and governance. She graduated from Dublin City University in 2007 with a Masters Degree in Communications and Cultural Studies. Her thesis focused on the development of a framework to measure quality in community radio.

References
Buckley et al. (2008) *Broadcasting Voice and Accountability*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
Centre for International Media Assistance (2007) *Community Radio: Its impact and challenges to its development*. CIMA.
Gibbons, M. (2008) *Community Radio and the Sound and Vision funding scheme 2005–2008*. Craol: Dublin.
Gumucio-Dagron, A. and Dlamini, H. (2005) 'Sustainability of CMCs', in *Guideboook on setting up a community media center*. Unesco.