

## Artículo de investigación

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### Emmanuel Essel, PhD

[deltagh@gmail.com](mailto:deltagh@gmail.com)

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Centre for Communication, Media & Society, Durban.

South Africa.

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8500-7505>

### Eliza Govender, PhD

[Govendere1@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Govendere1@ukzn.ac.za)

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Centre for Communication, Media & Society, Durban.

South Africa.

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0937-9438>

# ACCESS, PARTICIPATION, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL AS INTANGIBLE OUTCOMES OF COMMUNITY RADIO PRACTICE IN GHANA.

## ACCESO, PARTICIPACIÓN Y CAPITAL SOCIAL COMO RESULTADOS INTANGIBLES DE LA PRÁCTICA DE LA RADIO COMUNITARIA EN GHANA.

## ACESSO, PARTICIPAÇÃO E CAPITAL SOCIAL COMO RESULTADOS ÍNTANGÍVEIS DA PRÁTICA DE RÁDIO COMUNITÁRIA EM GANA.

### Abstract

The battle for access to free speech and information flow in Ghana occurs within a context of popular resistance, struggles for national liberation and the control of power, knowledge and free expression. This still resonates within Ghana's radio broadcasting sector. Unlike dominant approaches to communicating development, where change outcomes are exclusively based on quantifiable indicators such as message recall and engagement, communication for social change (CFSC) inspired intangible outcomes are more nuanced. The literature further reveals a paucity of CFSC approaches that focus on 'intangible outcomes' for sustainable development among resource-limited communities in Ghana. The literature on the legacy of CFSC in Ghana is limited, and even more scarce is the application of CFSC via community radio (CR) in Ghana. Our study explores the progressive development of CFSC via CR in Ghana, focusing on intangible outcomes. Our paper reflected on the legacy of CFSC via CR in Ghana from historical and contemporary perspectives. We set out to answer the following questions: do listeners genuinely own the content circulating on the CR medium amidst the threat of over-standardisation and quantification of communication outcomes in Ghana? How has the practice of CR offered an alternative approach to evaluating communication and development outcomes as opposed to mainstream media quantitative measures of change in Ghana? This paper makes a case that CFSC's legacy in Ghana via CR is categorised into three intangible outcomes: access to the medium, participation in its activities, and social capital. While this analysis can be criticised for its subjectivity, it should also be recognised for its often intangible outcomes, which usually have a more meaningful impact on the communities, not those who drive the communication agenda. These



intangible outcomes build social capital, making communication real, sometimes messy, but mostly inclusive.

### Keywords

Community radio, communication for social change, participation, social capital, access, intangible outcomes, alternative approaches, Ghana.

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Los autores han declarado que no existen intereses en competencia.

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### Resumen

La batalla por el acceso a la libertad de expresión y el flujo de información en Ghana se produce en un contexto de resistencia popular, luchas por la liberación nacional y el control del poder, el conocimiento y la libre expresión. Esto aún resuena en el sector de la radiodifusión de Ghana. A diferencia de los enfoques dominantes de la comunicación para el desarrollo, en los que los resultados del cambio se basan exclusivamente en indicadores cuantificables como el recuerdo del mensaje y el compromiso, los resultados intangibles inspirados en la comunicación para el cambio social (CFSC) son más matizados. La bibliografía revela además la escasez de enfoques de la comunicación para el cambio social centrados en "resultados intangibles" para el desarrollo sostenible entre las comunidades con recursos limitados de Ghana. La bibliografía sobre el legado de la CFSC en Ghana es limitada, y aún más escasa es la aplicación de la CFSC a través de la radio comunitaria (RC) en Ghana. Nuestro estudio explora el desarrollo progresivo de la CFSC a través de la RC en Ghana, centrándose en los resultados intangibles. Nuestro trabajo reflexiona sobre el legado de la CFSC a través de la RC en Ghana desde perspectivas históricas y contemporáneas. Nos propusimos responder a las siguientes preguntas: ¿se apropian realmente los oyentes de los contenidos que circulan por el medio de la RC en medio de la amenaza de la estandarización y cuantificación excesivas de los resultados de la comunicación en Ghana? ¿De qué manera ha ofrecido la práctica de la RC un enfoque alternativo para evaluar los resultados de la comunicación y el desarrollo en contraposición a las medidas cuantitativas de cambio de los medios de comunicación dominantes en Ghana? Este artículo defiende que el legado de la CFSC en Ghana a través de la RC se clasifica en tres resultados intangibles: acceso al medio, participación en sus actividades y capital social. Aunque este análisis puede criticarse por su subjetividad, también debe reconocerse por sus resultados, a menudo intangibles, que suelen tener un impacto más significativo en las comunidades, no en quienes dirigen la agenda de comunicación. Estos resultados intangibles construyen capital social, haciendo que la comunicación sea real, a veces desordenada, pero sobre todo integradora.

### Palabras clave:

Radio comunitaria, comunicación para el cambio social, participación, capital social, acceso, resultados intangibles, enfoques alternativos, Ghana.

### Resumo

A batalha pelo acesso à liberdade de expressão e ao fluxo de informações em Gana ocorre em um contexto de resistência popular, lutas pela libertação nacional e controle do poder, do conhecimento e da liberdade de expressão. Isso ainda ressoa no setor de transmissão de rádio de Gana. Diferentemente das abordagens dominantes de comunicação do desenvolvimento, em que os resultados da mudança se baseiam exclusivamente em indicadores quantificáveis, como a lembrança da mensagem e o engajamento, os resultados intangíveis inspirados na comunicação para a mudança social (CFSC) são mais matizados. A literatura revela ainda uma escassez de abordagens de CFSC que se concentram em "resultados intangíveis" para o desenvolvimento sustentável entre comunidades com recursos limitados em Gana. A literatura sobre o legado da CFSC em Gana é limitada, e ainda mais escassa é a aplicação da CFSC por meio da rádio comunitária (RC) em Gana. Nosso estudo explora o desenvolvimento progressivo da CFSC via CR em Gana, com foco em resultados intangíveis. Nosso artigo refletiu sobre o legado da CFSC via CR em Gana a partir de perspectivas históricas e contemporâneas. Procuramos responder às seguintes perguntas: os ouvintes realmente se apropriam do conteúdo que circula na mídia de RC em meio à ameaça de padronização e quantificação excessivas dos resultados de comunicação em Gana? Como a prática da CR ofereceu uma abordagem alternativa para avaliar os resultados da comunicação e

do desenvolvimento, em oposição às medidas quantitativas de mudança da mídia convencional em Gana? Este artigo defende que o legado da CFSC em Gana por meio da CR é categorizado em três resultados intangíveis: acesso ao meio, participação em suas atividades e capital social. Embora essa análise possa ser criticada por sua subjetividade, ela também deve ser reconhecida por seus resultados muitas vezes intangíveis, que geralmente têm um impacto mais significativo sobre as comunidades, e não sobre aqueles que conduzem a agenda de comunicação. Esses resultados intangíveis constroem capital social, tornando a comunicação real, às vezes confusa, mas principalmente inclusiva.

#### **Palavras-chave**

Rádio comunitária, comunicação para mudança social, participação, capital social, acesso, resultados intangíveis, abordagens alternativas, Gana.

## **Mapping The Terrain: Radio Broadcasting, Intangible Indicators and Social Change**

Despite the significant advancements in the access and participation in the free flow of information in Ghana, thirty years later, Jaques Habib Sy's (1994, p. vii) statement that “the battle for access to free speech and flow of information in Ghana takes place within a worldwide context of popular resistance, struggles for national liberation and the control of power, knowledge and free expression”, still resonates within the radio broadcasting sector of Ghana.

The contemporary realities of Ghana's broadcasting sector need scholarly attention and critical reflection since communication plays a crucial role in the development and social change processes (Servaes, 2020; Tufte & Tacchi, 2020; Thomas, 2014; Manyozo, 2009; Bessette, 2004). “Development is usually understood to mean the process by which societal conditions are improved” (Melkote & Steeves, 2015, p. 385).

However, the form of improvement desired by the beneficiary community and the related communication has been the subject of intense intellectual debate. Indeed, “understanding the role of communication in processes of development and social change is a complex undertaking” (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020, p. 2).

Again, different and varied theoretical perspectives, including communication for social change (CFSC), still circulate within the development communication space, challenging many notions of evaluation of development imperatives, especially since numerous donors adopt CFSC but with rigorous measures of impact and outcomes.

This paper contributes new insights for research in community radio by focusing on the concept of ‘intangible outcomes’ of communication for social change to analyse the key contributions of community radio in Ghana to CFSC, if any.

From a CFSC perspective, mass media, such as radio, cannot be regarded as an imperialist tool, often with preconceived quantifiable indicators of change that disseminate

‘modern values’ to alter so-called primitive societies in need of transformation; instead, it is one of self-affirmation and empowerment. For Thomas (2014), ‘intangible’ concepts such as participation, access, empowerment and voice of the marginalised are core to CFSC theory and praxis. In essence, the dominant paradigm emphasis on media effects and information dissemination as key evaluation indicators of CFSC imperatives means that alternative approaches to evaluating CFSC outcomes are given less attention.

According to Jan Servaes, “communication for development and social change is the nurturing of knowledge aimed at creating a consensus for action that considers the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned. It is thus a social process, which has as its ultimate objective sustainable development/change at distinct levels of society” (Servaes, 2020, p. vi). A concomitant of Servaes’ definition is that communicative practices must be put at the centre of development and social change processes if citizens’ voices, participation and inclusion in all aspects of life can be achieved (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020).

Paulo Freire’s work provides the bedrock for critical approaches to the theory and praxis of CFSC. Freire intimated that the sources of knowledge creation must always emanate from people hitherto without voice and power (Fernández-Aballí Altamirano, 2020; McAnany, 2012). Our paper draws on the legacy of CFSC thought and praxis in Ghana as part of what Tufte and Tacchi (2020) refer to as seeking to open this field of study up to wider concerns and approaches. We do this via community radio (CR) practice in Ghana. In essence, the normative participatory and bottom-up approaches employed by CR imperatives in Ghana are consistent with current CFSC thought and debate (Diedong & Naaikuur, 2012; McKay, 2009).

This position is consistent with assertions that a distinct line of thought within the CFSC field is community development and participatory and bottom-up approaches to development and social change (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020). However, centring communication in sustainable development imperatives for resource-limited communities using CFSC’s intangible outcomes is not a given due to the dominance of over-corporatised top-down and individual behavioural change-oriented communication approaches within such settings. Such realities raise concerns, and prioritizes for development communication scholar the need to explore new possibilities and approaches to CFSC in different contexts.

Broadcasting’s third-tier community media, particularly CR, distinct from other forms, commercial and public, is widely acknowledged as having the potential to lead contextually proximate communication approaches to development and social change (Fox, 2019; Rodríguez, 2011; Dutta, 2011). Community radio forms part of the broader group of channels variously termed ‘community’, ‘citizens’, ‘radical’, or ‘alternative’ media (Rodríguez, 2011; Dutta, 2011). Community radio is non-profit, owned by or accountable to the community they seek to serve (Laskar & Bhattacharyya, 2021; Pavarala & Jena, 2020; Fox, 2019; Tabing, 2002).

Previous studies report CR’s use for communicating development among Ghana’s marginalised communities (Diedong & Naaikuur, 2012; McKay, 2009; Essandoh, 2006).

Community radio's normative nature facilitates community-level participation, access, empowerment and voice among its host community members (Fox, 2019; Rodríguez, 2011; Tabing, 2002). In this sense, CR's normative characteristics align with CFSC approaches (Pavarala, 2020; Rodríguez, 2011), including acknowledging intangible outcomes.

Pavarala (2020, p. 63) defines intangible outcomes of CFSC as “the somewhat impalpable, non-concrete, fluid consequences of directed social change brought about by certain conspicuous communication processes”. Unlike dominant approaches to communicating development, where change outcomes are exclusively based on quantifiable indicators such as message recall and engagement, CFSC-inspired intangible outcomes are more nuanced (Figueroa et al., 2002).

The CFSC intangible outcomes of change include leadership, degree and equity of participation, information equity, collective self-efficacy, sense of ownership, social cohesion, and social norms (Figueroa et al., 2002). Despite this, the literature revealed a paucity of the legacy of CFSC approaches for sustainable development among resource-limited communities in Ghana that specifically focus on these intangible outcomes.

While the literature on the legacy of CFSC in Ghana is limited, CFSC via CR in Ghana has been scarce. Indeed, the CFSC has seen exponential growth in the past few decades, yet “there has been some acknowledgement of intangible outcomes from strategic communication but with inadequate and unsatisfactory solutions to accounting for them in evaluations” (Pavarala, 2020, p. 65).

This provides a gap to be studied. Our study explores the legacy of CFSC via CR in Ghana, focusing on intangible outcomes. To contribute to filling the gap, our paper critically reflects on the legacy of CFSC in sustainable development among Ghana's resource-limited communities via CR from the perspective of intangible outcomes, if any. Thus, our study aligns with the position that “the search then is for ways to capture ‘intangible outcomes’ of communication for social change without robbing it of its conceptual richness” (Pavarala, 2020, p. 67).

Given the magnitude of the historical struggle for voice and to be listened to in Ghana (Karikari, 2000; Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998; Sy, 1994), it is appropriate to raise fundamental questions about the legacy of CFSC in Ghana via the country's CR sector: do listeners genuinely own the content that circulates on the CR medium amidst the threat of over standardisation and quantification of communication outcomes in Ghana?

How has the practice of CR offered an alternative approach to evaluating communication and development outcomes as opposed to mainstream media quantitative measures of change in Ghana? It is essential to analyse the legacy of CFSC in Ghana via the country's CR sector from historical and contemporary standpoints. Ghana's broadcasting landscape, particularly grassroots media initiatives, has been influenced by her colonial past and current multi-party democratic dispensation.

## Radio Broadcasting Foundations In Ghana

In this sub-section, we trace the foundations of radio broadcasting and how it has contributed to CFSC's legacy in Ghana, if any. Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari (1998) report that colonial Governor Sir Arnold Hodson introduced radio broadcasting to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1935. The first radio station, ZOY, was established in Accra (Ghana's colonial and modern capital).

It marked the beginning of the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service, which became the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) after the country's independence from British colonial rule in 1957 (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998). The main aim of the establishment of radio ZOY was to cater to the information, cultural, and entertainment needs of the political and educated elite, who were made up of European settlers, colonial administrators, and a small group of educated Africans (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998).

It is instructive to note radio ZOY's elitist and repressive broadcast approach and, consequently, its exclusion of ordinary people's information and cultural needs. Such communicative marginalisation was even dire for historically underserved groups, including rural, semi-urban, illiterate, and low illiterate groups and communities in Ghana. This reality raised questions about the essentiality of Ghana's pre-independence radio broadcasting apparatus for CFSC.

The first post-colonial government of Ghana, the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) administration, envisioned radio as a medium for national integration (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998), inspired by top-down approaches. Consistent with the colonial vision of radio broadcasting, the CPP government opposed the establishment of regional or localised stations with specific programming for particular communities in Ghana.

Radio broadcasting was only for educational and political purposes, and commercial and non-state broadcasting was discouraged (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998). Such top-down and repressive communication infrastructure gave credence to the assertion that "Africa's radio broadcasting systems of the post-colonial era are but a pale carbon copy of the former colonial systems' radio broadcasting philosophies and practices (Sy, 1994, p. viii).

Ghana's historical position as the first Sub-Saharan African (SSA) country to gain political independence from colonial rule positions it as a significant case study on efforts to move away from the historical role of radio broadcasting for disseminating centrally crafted information to the masses to a media of widespread usage and popular control. Radical media practices, such as CR, have been at the forefront of popular resistance movements and mass control of radio infrastructure among communities with limited resources (Teer-Tomaselli, 2006; Karikari, 2000). However, the possibility of the CR medium being co-opted by neoliberal forces, thus lacking meaningful community control of such alternative communication spaces, is real.

## Ushering In Radical Media Broadcasting In Ghana

Teer-Tomaselli notes that “throughout Africa, the phenomenon of community radio emerged in the early part of the 1990s but has had a long history with the first station KPFA [the first community-supported radio station in the USA established in 1949] in California, USA” (2006, p.69). The University of Ghana’s Voice of Legon (now Radio Universe, a campus CR) became Ghana’s first non-government-controlled radio station in 1995 (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998).

Following the effective deregulation of broadcasting by Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the Ghana Frequency Registration and Control Board (GFRCB), now the National Communications Authority (NCA), invited applications for frequencies to operate independent or non-state radio broadcasting stations in 1995. The application for a frequency submitted by Radio Ada on 15 March 1995 to the GFRCB ushered in the formal introduction of the CR concept in Ghana [Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN), 2003]. Radio Ada aired on February 1, 1998 (GCRN, 2010).

Ghana’s CR stations are non-commercial, participatory in programme production and broadcast, and are local development-oriented. Ghana’s National Communication Authority (NCA) reports that it has authorised 707 FM broadcasting stations in Ghana as of 2022 (NCA, 2022). These include 31 public, five (5) public (foreign), 145 CR (including campus radio) and 526 commercials (NCA, 2022).

The formal introduction of non-state broadcasting in Ghana after the country liberalised the airwaves following the return to multi-party democracy in 1992 presented a unique challenge in the country’s broadcasting landscape: how to operate non-public or independent broadcasting, that is, commercial and community media. The introduction of community broadcasting in Ghana was a classic case of the proverbial ‘child in a candy store’ because the country was unaware of the form and manifestation of such novel broadcasting.

Such a conundrum raised critical questions about CR broadcast in Ghana: How does a radio medium historically employed as a tool for political and dictatorial propaganda change its seemingly ‘unchangeable stripes’ to one of popular participation and ownership? To what extent can we attribute an increase in demand for accountability of duty bearers by local communities to particular radical media activities in Ghana?

Critically reflecting on these questions is a way to revisit research on the role of communication to allow entry points that help communication scholars and practitioners to critically think about communication, development and social change in ways that expand scholarly thought and enhance praxis within and beyond the CFSC field (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020).

## Community radio and communication for social change in Ghana

The following paragraphs discuss CFSC's legacy via CR in Ghana. Consistent with the subjective CFSC outcomes discussed above, we found that CFSC's legacy in Ghana via CR can be categorised into three intangible outcomes: (1) Community members' access to a mass medium, (2) Social capital among community members, and (3) Community participation in public discourses.

These CFSC outcomes via CR cannot be easily quantified, opposing the effects-based communication interventions hinged on observable and quantifiable outcomes to achieve individual behavioural change. Indeed, Thomas (2014) notes that keywords such as development, participation, social capital, poverty reduction, civil society and empowerment are almost sacrosanct outcomes within the CFSC field. This is consistent with the idea of the intangible outcome of CFSC via CR in the Indian context that "the consequences of community radio in terms that defied easy measurement that it helped 'foster identity', 'nurtured local language and culture', 'built capacities for self-expression', and 'forged community solidarity'" (Pavarala, 2020, p.63).

We discuss access, participation and social capital from the perspective of intangible outcomes within the CFSC space with evidence from our study using the case study of COVID-19 and Radio Peace, a local CR located in Ghana's Central Region. Our study collected qualitative data from community members within Radio Peace's catchment area through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) between July and December 2021. The FGD participants were community members within Radio Peace's catchment area, including the Effutu Municipal and Gomoa West Districts, Ghana's Central Region. Three FGDs were conducted. The FGD participants were selected based on specific criteria, such as Radio Peace's official social club membership, Hyewbo kuw, or otherwise. The panel of two FGDs were exclusively Hyewbo kuw members, with the other FGD participants comprised only non-social club members.

The IDI participants included three Radio Peace staff members (Resident Health Volunteer, presenter, and General Manager) and a community member (Chairman of Radio Peace's official social club, Hyewbo kuw). They were selected due to their position and responsibility to Radio Peace. Braun and Clarke's (2020) reflexive thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data.

To begin with, we focus on host community members' access to the CR medium.

### Access to community radio

Access to CR's activities depicts the listeners' level of involvement in initiating, designing, implementing, and evaluating programmes. Access is about the presence of marginalised voices in creating and distributing media content (Carpentier, 2012). Community radio has provided access to a mass medium to Ghana's rural and semi-urban communities, primarily illiterate or low-literate populations.



Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari (1998) report that during the 1940s, GBC, which broadcast predominantly in English, began using four Ghanaian languages, including Fanti, Ga, Twi, and Ewe, to broadcast some of its programmes. However, in the 1960s, a plan to introduce an all-Akan (the indigenous language of the Akans, Ghana's biggest ethnic group) radio channel was ditched due to concerns of arousing discontent among other language groups in Ghana (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998). The implication of this botched plan was that access to local language radio programmes was limited in Ghana, excluding communities in resource-limited settings.

Community radio practice in Ghana, consistent with the medium's global normative nature, is expected to bridge the access gap. Listeners' access to the CR platform is emancipatory and shifts the gatekeeping information power to both listeners and operators in an empowering and collaborative manner. This position is consistent with Carpentier's (2012) assertion that media access is about the power of control of the communication media between operators and listeners. Community radio practice in Ghana employs numerous strategies to enhance access to its host community members.

Firstly, in Ghana's multi-ethnic societies, CR's use of indigenous language for broadcasting promotes social and political inclusiveness, integration, and nation-building. Ghana's CR imperatives are broadcast in different indigenous languages and dialects to enhance listeners' access. Some of these include Dangme, Fanti, Awutu, Effutu, Ga, Bono Twi, Asante Twi, Akuapem Twi, Ewe, Dagbani, Mampruli, and Moar Languages (GCRN, 2020). The staff of Radio Peace affirmed the local language consideration for their broadcast. One of them shared:

We have the Effutu, the typical language of the Winnebarians [people of Winneba] and the Fante. Some of them, if you go [to] them, they don't even understand the Fante, so you have to talk to them in the local traditional dialect, that is, the Effutu dialect (P1, IDI participant, Effutu Municipal, 30 July 2021).

Evidence from our work suggests that some listeners found CR's use of local language practical for broadcasting. When FGD participants were asked about the choice of Radio Peace as a source of COVID-19 information, one of them had this to say:

It [Radio Peace's broadcast] has helped because the messages are comprehensively broken down to everyone's level of understanding, including the aged and even people who do not speak and understand the English and Effutu languages. So, everyone, including senior citizens, truly understands the disease's nature and how to avoid infection (P6, female, FGD#3 participant, Effutu Municipal, 18 August 2021).

For instance, Bessette (2004) notes that using local language for broadcast facilitates discourse among beneficiary communities as it helps remove the language barrier. This can help CR journalists clarify and understand how different groups perceive development information among Ghana's CR host communities.

Secondly, for CR to provide access to every stakeholder, the host community members and operators must decide on the decorum systems during on-air discussions (Tabing, 2002). This means that access to CR programming does not imply an unaccountable highway where anarchy prevails. The CR medium must apply specific ground rules for access to remain a social good (Tabing, 2002). Participants shared that decorum on air was a way to protect the CR medium's relevance and preserve access to every stakeholder. An FGD participant had this to say:

It is our duty to ensure that opinions expressed on the radio are devoid of aspersions and are not vexatious because it is one of the things we stand against as an association. So, all offenders of inappropriate talk on the radio are invited and disciplined (P1, male, FGD#3 participant, Effutu Municipal, 18 August 2021).

In affirming the centrality of decorum, another FGD participant expressed, *“should someone speak inappropriately on air; I call Adu [host of the Radio Peace's morning show] to draw his attention privately. So, it helps to curate public speaking (P1, female, FGD#2 participant, Gomoa West District, 21 September 2021)”*. The above quotations suggest that CR journalists, in collaboration with listeners, moderate on-air programmes to preserve access to every community member, especially during listener call-in segments of on-air programmes.

This ensures decorum, tact and circumspection per local social values. This could be equated to CR journalists being responsible and responsive to the need to remain faithful to the CR ideal of providing access to every community member (see Fox, 2019; Carpentier, 2012; Tabing, 2002). This position is consistent with Bessette's (2004) advice of development facilitators on the balanced moderation of public discourses. In this way, community members can articulate their voices when producing and distributing the content circulating on local CR in Ghana.

Lastly, beyond on-air access to CR programming, operators have instituted off-air activities to provide community members access to CR programming in Ghana. Off-air interventions are a way to manoeuvre any semblance of the commodification of voice practised by mainstream platforms. On-air access to CR activities still requires economic capability in the form of batteries to power radio sets, access to radio sets and the cost of call credits. These conditions limit the agency of people from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

To circumvent such hindrances, every community member who may wish to express a concern has unfettered access to the physical offices of CR stations in Ghana. The excerpt below by Radio Peace's General Manager is representative of this position:

For instance, in my office, I never shut my door; it's for a reason, and the reason why if you come to my office, my desk is what it is [table on the wall with

chair in front of it] for a reason. I didn't want to sit behind a table where you will come in and then you are facing me. I wanted something like this, when you come, I will turn round and have chat with you. I think that all that build that kind of relationship and to give some access to community members to feel relax and to come through (P2, IDI participant, Effutu Municipal, 21 October 2021).

A cultural implication of the above quote is the symbolism of an open door, which implicitly communicates to community members that all are welcome. This practice means community members can access local CR offices and staff without going through bureaucratic processes. Indeed, CR staff and volunteers are typically residents within the stations' catchment communities in Ghana.

This meant that the lines between work and off-work periods were blurred. Radio Peace participants expressed that listeners had access to them beyond the station's offices or their official working hours, including on the streets and in their homes. One of them stated:

So, they sometimes come to us. Even at home, you may say you've closed from work, but still, you are working at home because you may be sleeping, and your child will come and say, Mummy, mummy, someone is after [looking] you. You come, and the person is having a challenge. They will tell you to do this and that, and so sometimes you may call the station, or if the need arises, you have to stop whatever you are doing and bring the person to the station (P1, IDI participant, Effutu Municipal, 30 July 2021)

Again, CR operators in Ghana conduct working visits to their catchment community to interact with them through FGDs, IDIs and community durbars on developmental issues of local interest. This practice is exemplified by statements by Radio Peace staff such as:

So, when we go [for community visits], the first thing that we do is to do community entry. You find someone there, you talk to him about who is the most influential person there, and they will tell you maybe go to the committee chairman, and the committee chairman becomes the lead person who will lead you to the Chief and his elders. [...] So, you talk to them, and they will inform the community members that maybe tomorrow or the day after, Radio Peace's team are visiting the community, and they will wait for us (P1, IDI participant, Effutu Municipal, 30 July 2021).

Even though on-air broadcasts may be relevant to listeners, not everyone can fully understand the messages shared if they are only discussed in words, implying that the agency of some community members will be limited. Consequently, some community members may be at a heightened risk of exclusion from public discourses, giving further need for CR's off-air activities.

Community radio's off-air activities imply that the mainstream practice of gatekeeping, which is in the exclusive domain of journalists who control such conventional media, has been ruptured. Ghana's CR sectors' off-air practices of providing access to community members are consistent with the extant literature that community ownership of CR content is guaranteed through listeners' access to the station's programming activities and physical space (Manyozo, 2009).

Enhanced listener involvement in CR activities through access to the station's physical offices and community visits by operators means that the financial requirement of access to the medium is lessened. The above discussions on CR's access to ordinary people suggest that CFSC processes acknowledge beneficiary communities of interventions as active people who can critically pose questions throughout a developmental project (Fernández-Aballí Altamirano, 2020).

Unlike dominant approaches to communicating development, CFSC imperatives recognise the voice and agency of hitherto marginalised communities to actively engage in the change process (Dutta, 2011; Figueroa et al., 2002). However, some factors limit community members' access to Ghana's CR media. These include the economic challenges of batteries to power radio sets, transmission challenges, and difficulty in calling into programmes due to jammed telephone lines. This implies that access to the CR medium to all stakeholders is an ideal that requires continuous engagement to achieve. The concept of participation is linked with access.

### **Participation and Community Radio**

Here, we discuss the potential of CR to engender community participation in its activities in Ghana. Access to communication media is essential to the possible involvement of communities in resource-limited settings in communication interventions (Dutta et al., 2020; Carpentier, 2012).

Carpentier (2012, p. 175) intimated that "participation becomes defined as a political in the broad meaning of the concept of the political process where the actors involved in decision-making processes are positioned towards each other through power relationships that are (to an extent) egalitarian". Participation in the CR medium can be achieved in many ways.

Firstly, the study CR operators, such as on-air presenters and programme producers, are typically community members who reside among the station's host communities. As such, CR operators are usually familiar with and knowledgeable about local values, cultures and practices.

Due to the community members' on-air and off-air access to CR operators discussed above, there is regular interaction between the CR journalists and community members via off-air interpersonal communication. This is consistent with CFSC principles, which consider interpersonal communication as the tool to transform communities in resource-limited settings instead of mass communication forms (McAnany, 2012).

Again, familiarity with local values and regular interaction with community members give CR journalists insight into where and how cultural members learn about new initiatives. Thus, CR programming reflects local developmental issues compared to the content circulating in mainstream media in Ghana.

Also, such CR practice means that the information sources, the radio announcer and the names involved in the programme broadcast are familiar to host community members, making it easier for them to identify with CR programming.

Secondly, the global CR practice positions the medium as participatory through its use of dialogue to facilitate engagement among practitioners and community members. We found that Radio Peace's allocated listener call-in time allows community members to activate their voice on local issues of concern.

A statement by an FGD participant buttresses this position: *"they [Radio Peace] have introduced two main programmes which accord listeners extensive time to phone in, one is Hyewbo, and the other is Woso kabi. Everyone can call to express their opinion"* (P1, male, FGD#1 participant, official social club, Effutu Municipal, 18 August 2021).

The above quotation suggests that CR-facilitated discourse is dialogic since every community member can call in and express opinions during on-air programmes. Such CR dialogic approaches to communicating local issues are essential as they are tilted toward projecting the multiple active voices and the everyday experiences of community members, challenging mainstream participation framed in tokenism. Dialogic-oriented communication is expected to engender interaction and flow by sharing local knowledge and experiences (Manyozo, 2005).

By projecting local views, Ghana's CR social change imperatives are more likely to preserve indigenous knowledge of its host communities. Community radio's potential to protect indigenous knowledge is critical since Western knowledge systems have dominated the global communication for development and social change space.

Therefore, in line with CFSC processes, a co-knowledge production system where alternative knowledge systems are viewed as complementary since local people are the true experts of their developmental concerns is necessary.

This position is consistent with Manyozo's (2009) assertion that development journalists' understanding of the complexities and importance of indigenous knowledge is at the core of the social change process. This is because indigenous and Western knowledge are complementary (Awori et al., 2015; Sillitoe, 2002).

Linked with the issue of preserving indigenous knowledge is the empowerment of local communities through CR. To this end, we discuss the factors influencing CR community members to participate in the medium's discourses here. To start with, Ghana's CR initiatives are associated with official social clubs or listener groups. The working relationship between such official social clubs and CR operatives accords

members enhanced access to the CR medium, empowers them, and creates a sense of belonging among community members, enhancing their tendency to involve themselves in the medium's activities.

This is consistent with the line of thought within the CFSC field, which focuses on social movements and their communicative practice to enhance citizen engagement and social change (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020).

Radio Peace's official social club members have contributed immensely to the station's content and financial sustainability. The point on enhanced access to community groups and how it empowers listeners is a widely understood concept in community media literature (Fox, 2019).

For instance, we found that the involvement of Radio Peace's official social club in the station's programming increased members' tendency to participate in the station's activities. Hyewbo kuw members who participated in our study had this to say, *"We are part of the station. On anniversaries, we are there; anything that the station [does], we don't force ourselves on them, we don't. But whatever the station wants us to be part of, we are"* (P1, male, FGD#1 participant, official social club, Effutu Municipal, 18 August 2021).

Again, the recognition of social clubs in CR activities means that it is easy for such groups to engage local CR station operators on how to improve programming. Participatory communication approaches emphasise the beneficiary community's monitoring role in the communication interventions (Besette, 2004). This paper established a similar position. For instance, we found that the Hyewbo Kuw watchdog's role is to monitor Radio Peace's on-air content and provide feedback to the station managers for programming improvement.

One of the association's members said, *"we also monitor the station day in, day out. ...we also monitor and give feedback to management on every programme aired on the station from morning till evening"* (P3, IDI participant, Effutu Municipal, 30 July 2021). The above quotation suggests that the content circulating on Ghana's CR stations reflects its listeners' everyday lived realities and gives credence to the assertion that the best judge of CR programmes is the listener (Fox, 2019; Rodríguez, 2011).

Such subjective and participatory processes of evaluating CR programming oppose mainstream results-based programme evaluation efforts (Pavarala, 2020), often designed and implemented by corporate executives without community input.

The above discussion suggests that alternative media, such as CR, offers a counter-discursive approach to CFSC compared to top-down approaches. Indeed, Hyewbo kuw members were empowered to assert social pressure on duty-bearers through off-air in-person follow-up on community developmental concerns. This position is illustrated by statements such as: *"another thing that Hyewbo kuw does is to take the initiative to visit some duty-bearers like the assembly or the MCE [Municipal Chief Executive] to draw their*

*attention to some issues of local developmental concern that may have escaped their notice (P3, IDI participant, Effutu Municipal, 30 July 2021)*". The community empowerment implicit in this statement opposes the hegemonic practice of head counting audience as a metric for advertising appeal for profit making.

This position gives credence to the CFSC's thought that the rise of social movements provides a consolidated voice to hitherto invisible groups to critique power and demand authorities to improve livelihoods and tackle social inequalities (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020). Again, this position is unsurprising as CR programming can enhance community solidarity groups' endogenous development through on-air and off-air facilitated connections among listeners (Fox, 2019).

As such, social movements and endogenous groups that engage with communication for development and social change processes have become visible and gained momentum in the constitution of civilisational changes at the local and global levels.

Finally, CR imperatives in Ghana allow community members to be involved by employing local media forms for their development and social change efforts. This is consistent with the extant literature that regards alternative media forms such as CR as complimentary with other local forms of media (Rodríguez, 2011).

Indeed, folk media such as storytelling, drama, poetry recitals, proverbs, and music are promoted and broadcast by local radio in Ghana (Panford et al., 2001). Regarding COVID-19 communication, our study found that CR operators facilitated community members' participation in their creative messaging production and broadcast related to the pandemic using storytelling and songs.

For example, to encourage youthful listeners' participation in Radio Peace's COVID-19 communication interventions, the staff of Radio Peace shared an example of how music competitions facilitated this sub-group's involvement in such efforts. The purpose was to creatively share COVID-19 prevention messages with this sub-group of listeners by other community members they can identify with. A presenter of the station stated:

Sometimes, we give opportunities to burgeoning musicians from our communities, for instance, in rap competitions on the radio. [...] In terms of COVID-19, we accorded community members the opportunity to compose COVID-19 themed songs for us to air on the radio. [...] We used some of these songs as jingles that were aired regularly. Community members were encouraged to adhere to the prevention messages carried by the songs, such as wearing nose [face] masks, using sanitiser, [and] washing their hands with soap because they could identify with the singers (P4, IDI participant Effutu Municipal, 30 July 2021).

The convergence of CR and informal media forms such as songs and drama suggests that the former is a culturally proximate medium that projects the values of its listeners, aligning with the CFSC principle of considering the interests, needs and capa-

cities of all concerned (Servaes, 2020). For Ayedun-Aluma (2011), genuine participation should allow the host community to use indigenous forms of communication alongside the modern mass media of CR.

However, funding bottlenecks limited Ghana's CR sector's participatory credentials. Indeed, some scholars have questioned the participatory credentials of CR in Africa due to funding inadequacies (Conrad, 2015; Diedong & Naaikuur, 2012; Manyozo, 2009). For our case study, findings revealed that the lack of financial resources negatively impacts Radio Peace's ability to conduct regular community visits, limiting community members' ability to participate meaningfully in station social change activities.

This reality negatively impacts the medium's CFSC credentials. Such communicatively marginalised people may be unable to utilise local CR's platform to share information, challenges and counter-strategies on developmental issues of local concern. The following sub-section discusses the third contribution of Ghana's CR sector to CFSC, that is, social capital.

### **Social Capital and Community Radio**

In Ghana's closely-knit CR host communities, social capital is expected to be a crucial driver for community-oriented social change activities. We discuss how the CR facilitates social capital among CR host communities in Ghana. To begin with, social capital is the community-valued resources, including trust, reciprocity, obligations, expectations, consensus, information exchange, cohesion, participation in local development activities, and the application of sanctions (Cook et al., 2015; Duta, 2011; Kawachi et al., 2008; Viswanath, 2008).

So, what is the link between community media, including CR and social capital? Several scholars intimate that normative global community media practices are helpful for social integration and building stronger community ties by projecting local values, thereby enhancing social capital (Dutta, 2011; Viswanath, 2008; Kawachi et al., 2008).

For us, social capital is CR host community members' respect for self and others, social support, a commitment to learning about community-level development activities, and willingness to participate and sustain such initiatives for the common good. Previous studies have established that social expectations for conformity and support for the set way of life drive people's actions within Ghana's CR host communities (Diedong & Naaikuur, 2012; Essandoh, 2006). It must be noted that whilst individualism still exists in such communities, the communal is prioritised over the private.

Our study established that CR-facilitated social capital creates harmonious social relations and an enabling environment for social change communication initiatives among Ghana's CR host communities. For instance, Radio Peace leverages social capital to organise its COVID-19 responses. The statement below by the station's Manager elucidates this position:



Yea, I think that one of the biggest advantages that we have is what we call social capital, things that won't just happen overnight. So, sometimes I get the feeling that because people have followed us over time, sometimes it is not too difficult to engage them when situations like that [COVID-19 infection] happen (P2, IDI participant, Effutu Municipal, 21 October 2021).

The above quotation implies that, unlike mainstream platforms, Radio Peace acknowledges the organising role of its community members in identifying and co-creating solutions to contain the spread of COVID-19.

This position is unsurprising since CR practice must leverage trust, networking, cohesion and reciprocity to enhance health outcomes among its listeners. Such social capital-facilitating factors improve community participation in social interventions (Cook et al., 2015; Dutta, 2011; Kawachi et al., 2008; Viswanath, 2008), significantly improving health outcomes among closely-knit communities.

A significant factor for CR-facilitated social capital is trust between CR operatives and their host communities in Ghana. We attribute the existence of trust between CR operatives and host communities to the perception among the latter that the CR programme is designed for host communities' development.

To illustrate, a community member who participated in an IDI session stated: *“community radio is remarkably different because we all recognise, especially we the natives of Winneba [physical location of Radio Peace], that Radio Peace belongs to us since the content of the broadcast is about us (P2, IDI Participant, Effutu Municipal, 15 July 2021)”*.

This statement is unsurprising as the normative characteristics of community media enhance social integration and build stronger community ties (Dutta, 2011; Viswanath, 2008; Kawachi et al., 2008). It is important to note here that this relationship of trust did not happen overnight but has been built over time through strategic actions by the station and its listeners.

Trust, networking, participation, cohesion, and reciprocity are critical support mechanisms for social change communication imperatives within Ghana's CR host communities. Unlike mainstream media, CR leverages these existing social capital-enhancing factors to organise sustainable social change and development interventions in Ghana.

Leveraging social capital in organising intra-community dialogue and listener-duty bearer interactions may increase the involvement of CR community members in the discourses around empowerment and access to essential resources within such communities. This approach offers CR host community members a concerted voice in holding duty-bearers accountable in Ghana, a crucial concept in the CFSC space (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020).

## Conclusion

Our paper reflected on the legacy of CFSC via CR in Ghana from historical and contemporary perspectives. We conclude that the legacy of CFSC via CR in Ghana is subjective and can be appreciated using intangible outcomes: access to the medium, participation in its activities, and social capital. The two intangible outcomes of access and participation are particularly relevant to inform the advancement of social capital, thereby making communication real, sometimes messy, but mostly inclusive. Access to the CR medium is guaranteed through community visits, using indigenous language for broadcast, decorum during on-air discussions, and an open-door policy allowing community members to visit the local CR's offices.

The strategies encouraging community participation include extended listener call-in time for live on-air programmes, community members as producers and presenters and working relationships with official social clubs or listener groups. CR-facilitated social capital is the glue that binds community members' access and participation in the medium's social change activities. Communication for development and social change via CR imperatives should recognise that social capital is critical in improving community members' access and participation in the medium's activities.

We suggest that Ghana's CR imperatives should syndicate their broadcast through other local media like Community Audio Towers (CATs) to improve community members' access and participation. This is consistent with Rodríguez (2011) suggestion that alternative media like CR complement other local forms of media in providing communities in resource-limited settings enhanced access, unlike mainstream channels.

For instance, Ghana's CR operators relaying their broadcast via CATs can remove the need for radio sets and the economic expense of batteries to power such receivers, thereby improving access to the medium. This is critical since radio access is limited due to erratic transmission signals and batteries to power radio-receiving sets can be expensive, especially for rural and semi-urban communities in Ghana. This way, CFSC's legacy via CR can be enhanced in Ghana.

## Future Research

The concepts of access and participation are central to CFSC theory and practice. This can be achieved by employing a CR as well to communicate change. However, CR practice has manifested differently in different contexts, leaving the door open to critical assessment of approaches to CFSC via CR in divergent contexts. Community radio practice and CFSC are emerging in the broader development communication field.

Future critical development communication scholarship can assess concepts like social capital and how it can contribute to CFSC via CR across different contexts. From the standpoint of reflexive engagement with CR host communities, future works can

focus on the following questions: How could social capital be leveraged to involve CR host communities in the medium's development and social change communication interventions in closely-knit societies? How can CR leverage other local media forms to enhance community members' access and participation in its development and social change communications imperatives? We believe there is much to be done in theory and praxis concerning CFSC's legacy via CR among resource-limited communities, thus providing opportunities for understanding the medium's manifestation in different contexts.

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