

# **Organisational structure in participatory media**

Flirt FM : A case study

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# Abstract

In this dissertation I address the issue of the role of volunteers in the management of community radio stations. Firstly, I use Habermas' theory of communicative action to derive a theoretical basis for a model of how volunteers should be involved. Secondly, I use this model to examine the case study of Flirt FM, Galway's student radio station. The AMARC community radio charter for Europe states that community radio stations

*“operate management, programming and employment practices which oppose discrimination and which are open and accountable to all supporters, staff and volunteers”.*

Starting from this premise, I examine the theories of Jürgen Habermas, and derive six factors which I believe will assist us in examining whether structures do meet this requirement. The six factors are the existence of public spaces; volunteer morale; fair access for all; rationality of knowledge; solidarity of participants; colonisation by systems.

I use these factors to examine the situation in Flirt FM, using a mixture of questionnaires, document review and interviews. I conclude that Flirt FM has few public spaces, resulting in low volunteer cohesion. Participation by GMIT students is low, and female participation is below expectations.

I conclude by making recommendations that should help to improve the situation within the station. I included the volunteers in this process through a workshop held in the station.

# Dedication

I wish to make a two-fold dedication:

To my parents, for their constant selfless support.

To the many volunteers of Flirt FM, and to all those who give their time to the station, past, present and future.

*“Our community belongs to us and whether it is mean or majestic, whether arrayed in glory or covered in shame, we cannot but share its character and destiny”.*

*- Frederick Douglass*

*“A fantastic facility on campus with brilliant people”*

*- Questionnaire response*

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*“Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance”*

*- Will Durant*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

*“To begin at the beginning...”*

*- Under Milkwood; Dylan Thomas*

This dissertation examines the organisational structure of participatory media. The specific topic of enquiry of this study relates to the responsibilities of community radio stations in relation to the involvement of volunteers in the management of the station. This responsibility, we will see, can be understood to arise from the terms of the *AMARC Community Radio Charter for Europe*, which I include as Appendix A.

Building on Habermas’ idealised model of communicative action we will derive a series of factors for measuring the extent to which a station meets its obligations.

We will apply these factors to the case of Flirt FM, Galway’s student radio station. I start, therefore, by outlining the context within which Flirt FM has evolved.

## ***Galway city – a media city***

Galway city and county have a high number of relationships with the development and history of radio in this country and world-wide. Roundstone Bog, near Clifden, was the location of the Marconi company’s transatlantic wireless station<sup>1</sup>, while

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<sup>1</sup> “Marconi Station Celebrations”.

William Joyce, later to become famous as “Lord Ha-Ha” for his propaganda broadcasts from war-time Germany, was a Galway man, educated at Coláiste Íognáid in Sea Road.

RTE ran a number of temporary ‘community access’ stations in the city in the late 1970s and early 1980s<sup>2</sup>. Later, Margaretta D’Arcy founded her Radio Pirate Woman in the city, an occasional freeform radio station aimed particularly at women<sup>3</sup>. The county has a commercial radio station, Galway Bay FM (formerly Radio West) which was licensed as part of the introduction of independent radio following the 1988 Broadcasting Act, while the county now also accommodates both Connemara Community Radio (Letterfrack) and Flirt FM (Galway city), both on air since 1995<sup>4</sup>.

The city also hosted the Women on Air (WOA) project. This project, funded under the New Opportunities for Women (NOW) scheme was “*established by ... Connemara Community Radio (CCR), the IRTC and the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI, Galway)*”. The aim of the project was “*to promote equality of opportunity for women within the independent radio sector*”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Mulryan, Peter. 1988. *Radio Radio*. p56.

<sup>3</sup> D’Arcy, Margaretta (compiler). 1996. *Galway’s pirate women: a global trawl*.

<sup>4</sup> IRTC. 1996. *IRTC review ’95*. p13.

<sup>5</sup> Gibbons, Maria and Jordan, Bob (Nexus Research Co-op). March 2000. *Impact evaluation of the Women On Air NOW project 1996-1999*. p7.

In terms of more general media related issues, TG4 and Radio na Gaeltachta both have major studio bases in the Galway Gaeltacht. Film is an area of particular strength for the city, with a highly regarded Film Fleadh, and film society, while the Irish Film Board is also based in Galway city.

In training terms, NUI, Galway provides a Higher diploma in applied communications, aimed at those wishing to work in regional media, and a newer Irish language higher diploma, aimed at those wishing to work in Irish language broadcast media. GMIT's Cluain Mhuire campus hosts their film and television courses, currently offered at undergraduate level.

It is the various forces that have developed all of these resources, along with others such as the Galway Arts Festival, Cúirt and Macnas, which have resulted in Galway city in particular gaining a reputation as Ireland's 'cultural capital'. For a time the fastest growing city in Europe, the city had a population in 1996 of 57,241<sup>6</sup>. With over 19,000 third-level students, Galway is a vibrant city, with a history of cultural institutions, such as Druid, emerging from the student body.

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<sup>6</sup> Central statistics office. *Principle statistics: demography and labour force*.

## ***The origins of Flirt FM***

It was into this reality that Flirt FM emerged in 1995. One of only 3 student stations licensed as part of the IRTC's pilot scheme in community radio<sup>7</sup>, it emerged initially as a project of the (then) UCG Radio Society. The society had been formed in 1993 with the aim of setting up a full-time station in the college. It was involved, in February 1994, with the operation of UCG Rag Week Radio (the students' union had been operating Rag Week stations for a number of years) and later that year responded to the IRTC's call for expressions of interest in the operation of new radio services<sup>8</sup>.

When the IRTC tendered for applications to operate a 'community of interest' station as part of its pilot project in community radio, I, as Radio Society auditor, approached Seán Mac Íomhair, Director of audio-visual services in UCG, who had previously signed the licence contracts for rag week stations on behalf of the college. He directed me to Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, Vice-President for development and external affairs, who acquired college support, and the support of Gay Corr, Director of Galway RTC.

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<sup>7</sup> A fourth, Dublin Weekend Radio, based in Dublin City University, was licensed as Dublin's Community of Interest station, beating off UCD and Dun Laoighaire College of Art and Design, but did not aim itself at a student audience, and is not considered a student station in the IRTC evaluation.

<sup>8</sup> University College Galway and Galway RTC. 1994. *Application for a community of interest sound broadcasting contract*.

Together we prepared the application which, following a public hearing in October 1994, was ultimately successful in gaining what turned out to be one of three contracts for student radio stations.

College Campus Radio Ltd. was incorporated as a company in February 1995, and the station started on-air on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1995. In the meantime, UCG Radio Society had operated temporary stations for UCG Freshers' Week and UCG Rag Week, inviting input from RTC students on each occasion.

The IRTC review of the pilot scheme, to which I refer in detail in the next chapter, contains an account of the next 18 months of the station's operation. The review is probably the most extensive analysis of community radio in Ireland.

## ***The international context***

The question of governance is, of course, one of perennial interest. However, the question of participatory governance in radio has been highlighted recently by disputes surrounding the Pacifica network in the USA<sup>9</sup>. There, senior management are alleged to have attempted to insulate themselves from grass-roots pressure through changes in structures and attempted to use their new power to change the nature of the stations to give them a more 'audience-friendly' sound, which they depict as being less elitist.

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<sup>9</sup> Albert, Michael. "Pacifica Turmoil".

Listeners and staff have resisted the changes through a range of measures, including boycotts, publicity campaigns and setting up alternative stations.

The ‘poster children’ of participatory models of governance in recent years have to be the Zapatistas of Chiapas province in Mexico. With their motto “*obedience leads*”<sup>10</sup> they act to co-ordinate the resistance of indigenous peoples to the Mexican government. However, their core ideals are not new or unique, and apart from sharing Habermas’ belief that continued inclusive discussion is necessary to ensure legitimation, we shall see that their ideals are similar to those of the authors of 1969’s *Sit Down and Be Counted*, who introduced the concept of *authority as service* to Irish broadcasting.

In terms of more general governance issues, the question of control and ownership of media has been highlighted in recent years by commentators such as Noam Chomsky<sup>11</sup> and Ben Bagdikian<sup>12</sup>. In June of this year, the IRTC published a consultation paper<sup>13</sup> soliciting comments on the policy it should adopt in relation to regulation and restriction of ownership of broadcasting services in Ireland.

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<sup>10</sup> Giordano, Al. “News reports from the indigenous national congress”.

<sup>11</sup> Herman, Edward S and Chomsky, Noam. 1994. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*.

<sup>12</sup> Bagdikian, Ben H. 1997. *The Media Monopoly, fifth edition*.

<sup>13</sup> IRTC. 2001. *Regulating for Pluralism and Diversity in Broadcasting - The Way Forward*.

## ***The research question***

When the IRTC licensed community stations in 1995, they decided that all stations should be bound, as part of their contract, by the *AMARC Community Radio Charter for Europe*. AMARC is a global representative association of community radio station, and the charter lays out principles by which all community stations should operate - the defining characteristics of community radio.

Item 9 of the 10 point charter states that community radio stations:

*“operate management, programming and employment practices which oppose discrimination and which are open and accountable to all supporters, staff and volunteers”*

It is this commitment which is the subject of this thesis. More specifically, I am concerned with the requirement that stations’ management structures be open and accountable to volunteers.

The primary research question can be phrased as:

*To what extent does Flirt FM meet its commitment to have management structures which are open and accountable to volunteers?*

In order to address this question, it is necessary to first ask:

*How can we measure the extent to which a community radio station meets its commitment to have management structures which are open and accountable to volunteers?*

I provide one possible solution to this latter question by using Habermas' theory of communicative action.

Using this theory, I derive six factors which can be measured to determine the extent to which a station meets Habermas' ideal. I assert that meeting Habermas' ideal is co-terminous with meeting the commitments on management structures.

I then use the six factors to examine the situation in Flirt FM. Arising from these findings I recommend actions to be taken to improve the station's conformity with its commitments.

## Chapter 2: Radio Literature

In this chapter I give a short overview of some of the major developmental stages in Irish broadcasting. This provides information on the context within which community broadcasting has developed. I also look at relevant reports on Irish broadcasting, including the various reports of the Women on Air project. These reports will assist us in choosing methodologies, and also inform us of the likely effectiveness of different approaches to combating deficiencies we may identify in the case of Flirt FM.

### ***A brief history of radio***

*“History is a nightmare from which we are trying to awaken”*

*– James Joyce*

When conducting research of the type contained in this report, it is traditional, and indeed appropriate to begin by providing an outline of the history of broadcasting and radio in Ireland and elsewhere. I have divided the developments that have led to the current state of community broadcasting into four sections. The first section relates to the history of Irish broadcasting up to 1960. The second section outlines the main international developments during a roughly similar period. The third section relates to the developments in Irish radio from the 1960s through to the late 1980s, while the final section looks at legalised community broadcasting, which emerged in the mid-1990s.

## The origins of Irish radio

Peter Mulryan in *Radio Radio* has documented the use of radio in the 1916 Easter Rising where the rebels used a ship's transmitter to attempt to inform passing American ships of the Rising. While Mulryan's claim that this constituted "*the world's first broadcast*"<sup>14</sup> is open to dispute, it is a significant early landmark in the history of radio in Ireland.

Although Mulryan implies a linkage between the Rising's 'pirate' broadcast and the pirate broadcasters of a later era in Irish history, it is perhaps more appropriate to remember that the 1916 Rebels saw themselves as the legitimate provisional government of the Irish republic. The use of radio to protect and further the aims of the state has a close relationship with the eventual establishment of 2RN in 1926<sup>15</sup>, which when merged with Cork's 6CK<sup>16</sup> eventually became known as Radio Éireann. Radio Éireann operated as part of the civil service, and much has been made elsewhere of political controversies relating to broadcasting policy, such as the furore over the playing of 'jazz' on-air<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Mulryan, Peter. 1988. p2.

<sup>15</sup> Mulryan, Peter. 1988. p6.

<sup>16</sup> Mulryan, Peter. 1988. p7.

<sup>17</sup> Cathcart, Rex. "Broadcasting – the early decades". p43.

Despite such scandals, the station continued to thrive, and by 1961, when the new state television service started on air<sup>18</sup> radio was a part of everyday life, and playing an increasing part in defining the cultural life of the nation. Marking the changing role of broadcasting, the new combined service, titled Radio Teilifis Éireann, was operated by an *Authority*, appointed by the Minister, rather than as part of a government department.

### **The international context**

The first phase of Irish radio broadcasting mirrored the situation in the UK where the stations, such as 2LO, which were originally set up by the Marconi company and others, merged in 1922, to form the British Broadcasting Company which, as Andrew Crisell has noted, was “*granted a de facto though never a de jure monopoly*” by the British Post Office, which regulated wireless telegraphy and, by default, wireless telephony.

In 1927, the Company became the British Broadcasting Corporation, with general manager John Reith becoming director-general<sup>19</sup>. Reith is generally credited with developing the concept of ‘public service broadcasting’<sup>20</sup>, which is associated with the ideal of educating, informing and entertaining listeners. Crisell notes that central to

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<sup>18</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969. *Sit Down and Be Counted: the cultural evolution of a television station*. p1.

<sup>19</sup> Crisell, Andrew. 1997. *An introductory History of British Broadcasting*. p22.

<sup>20</sup> Pilger, John. 1986. *Heroes*. p519.

this approach is the concept of continually renewing “*the listener's alertness to the medium*”<sup>21</sup> by scheduling in a manner that exposes listeners to subjects and content to which they would not necessarily choose to listen, and thereby “*to give her [sic] ‘something a little better than she thought she wanted’*”<sup>22</sup>.

The British and Irish experiences contrast with that of the United States. While stations in the USA were started, as in Britain, by the engineering companies such as Westinghouse and RCA (a subsidiary of GE which incorporated American Marconi), and aimed to “*create a demand for the equipment through broadcasts*”<sup>23</sup>, the corporations succeeded in the USA in retaining control and maintained radio as a commercial entity, rather than one bound by an ethos such as Reith’s public service broadcasting.

However, the large corporations were not the only ones to operate radio stations. In another contrast to the British, and subsequently Irish, approach, the corporations did not have a monopoly, with “*newspapers, banks, public utilities, department stores, universities and colleges, cities and towns, pharmacies, creameries, and hospitals*”<sup>24</sup> all starting stations in the flush of the early 1920s. However, the potential influence of these stations was quickly eclipsed by the development of networks such as RCA’s

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<sup>21</sup> Crisell, Andrew. 1997. p23.

<sup>22</sup> Crisell, Andrew. 1997. p23.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, Tom. 1993. *Empire of the air: the men who made radio*. p153.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, Tom. 1993. p163.

National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in 1926 and, in 1928, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).<sup>25</sup>

These major networks had economic dominance, but they did not have a monopoly, and other stations did continue to exist, though significantly marginalised. One of the most famous examples is the Pacifica network of stations, founded in 1949, which consists of 5 stations in different US cities, including KPFA in Berkeley and WKAI in New York<sup>26</sup>. In addition to its own licensed stations, the Pacifica network also provides syndicated programming to other stations<sup>27</sup>. Lately, the network has been in the headlines for all the wrong reasons with major internal disputes arising from disparate visions of the network's future.

### **New approaches to radio**

In Ireland and Britain, where a broadcasting outlet other than the State broadcaster did not exist, the first moves towards change came with the development of so-called 'pirate' radio from the 1960s onwards. Stations such as Radio Caroline, Radio Nova and Radio Dublin provided the 'pop culture' that was seen to be lacking on RTÉ and the BBC, and many became successful businesses, though hampered by the illegality of their action of broadcasting without a licence.

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<sup>25</sup> Lewis, Tom. 1993. p178-183.

<sup>26</sup> Barsamian, David. "The Pacification of Public Radio: NPR, Pacifica, and community radio: crises and prospects"; "About kpfa – history".

<sup>27</sup> Barsamian, David; "About kpfa – history".

RTÉ responded with a local opt-out station in Cork, and temporary ‘community access’ radio experiments in Galway and elsewhere, and with Radio 2, later to become 2FM.<sup>28</sup>

It would be wrong to characterise all ‘pirate’ stations as commercial operations. Some were hobby stations, what is sometimes derisively referred to as ‘vanity radio’. Others were community radio stations, such as Bray Local Broadcasting (BLB) and Kilkenny Community Radio (KCR)<sup>29</sup>. Much of community broadcasting has developed out of the community development field, and this is seen to have influenced its attitudes towards issues such as gender inclusivity<sup>30</sup>

In 1983, the National Association of Community Broadcasting (NACB) was set up, to argue the case for (legalised) community broadcasting, or ‘Community Access Radio’ as it was known. While the association’s members were themselves pirate community stations, the NACB was ‘ringfenced’ from this illegal activity, with its development officer being paid “*via the Youth Development Agency*”<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Mulryan, Peter. 1988. p56.

<sup>29</sup> Mulryan, Peter. 1988. p82-83; IRTC. June 1997. *Community Radio Pilot Project: Final Report*. p1.

<sup>30</sup> Gibbons, Maria. 2000. “The Nature of Glass”. p234.

<sup>31</sup> Mulryan, Peter. 1988. p82.

The NACB had a charter which was an attempt “to identify the philosophical differences between community broadcasters and other radio operators”<sup>32</sup>. This charter and the code of practice of the Community Radio Association in Britain<sup>33</sup> can be seen as antecedents of the AMARC community radio charter for Europe.

### **Legalised community radio**

Despite the lobbying of the NACB and its members, the legislation introduced in 1988<sup>34</sup> did not privilege the concept of community access. Community radio had to wait for the appointment of the second Independent radio and Television Commission (IRTC) by Michael D. Higgins in 1993 before the issue was addressed. In early 1994, the IRTC announced their intention to operate a pilot scheme in community radio, and called for expressions of interest<sup>35</sup>. This was followed by a call for applications from specified communities and communities of interest. Eleven stations were eventually set up by September 1995, including four stations based in third level institutions

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<sup>32</sup> NACB/Veritas. 1988. *A Voice for Everyone: All you need to know about community radio*. p135.

<sup>33</sup> NACB/Veritas. 1988. pp135-136.

<sup>34</sup> Government of Ireland. No. 19/1988: - *Broadcasting and Wireless telegraphy act, 1988*; Government of Ireland. No. 20/1988: - *Radio and television act, 1988*.

<sup>35</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p2.

(these constitute ‘community of interest’ stations<sup>36</sup>) and seven in geographic communities.<sup>37</sup>

The pilot scheme was due to finish at the end of 1996. It was extended, to facilitate evaluation, by a further year, and the licences were extended by a further six months while the application process for five year licences took place. In mid-1998 this process was complete. Most of the stations had successfully applied for five-year licences and continued to the next stage of their development. There were, however, a number of exceptions. DCU, for example, decided not to continue with Dublin Weekend Radio, while nine-7-eleven FM was also wound up. Newcomers in this new stage include Tallaght Community Radio<sup>38</sup>.

These developments in Irish community radio reflect the global developments in the field. As the UNESCO World Communications Review notes, “*Community radio is present in every single region around the world*”<sup>39</sup>. Developments in the field are seen to be assisted by

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<sup>36</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, three of these served student communities, with the fourth, Dublin Weekend Radio, serving the community surrounding the university

<sup>37</sup> IRTC. 1996. p13.

<sup>38</sup> IRTC. 1999. *IRTC review '98*. p8.

<sup>39</sup> UNESCO. 1997. *World communication report: The media and the challenge of the new technologies*. p148.

*“technological innovations and advances in equipment, reductions in the cost of FM transmitters, slacker controls on broadcasting by public monopolies, progress in democracy and the emergence of new private and associative market players”<sup>40</sup>.*

## **Irish broadcasting research**

In Ireland, there have been a small number of research projects and publications relevant to this dissertation. One could usefully return to *Sit Down and Be Counted* (1969) as a commentary on how a television station should be organised to “*give creative programme-makers an authoritative voice in programme initiation, development and execution*”<sup>41</sup>. Likewise, the IRTC’s review of the community radio pilot project<sup>42</sup> resulted in the adoption of the commission’s *policy on community radio*<sup>43</sup>.

The Women On Air project, which examined the involvement of women in independent radio in Ireland, produced two reports, *Breaking Glass Walls* (May 1998) and an *Impact Evaluation* (March 2000).

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<sup>40</sup> UNESCO. 1997. p148.

<sup>41</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969. p377.

<sup>42</sup> IRTC. June 1997.

<sup>43</sup> IRTC. 1997. *IRTC policy on community radio broadcasting*.

## Sit Down and Be Counted

*Sit Down and Be Counted* is based on the authors' experiences in the early days of RTÉ television. Those events, often referred to as the '7-days' and 'Home Truths' controversies, after the programmes involved, have been well-covered in several publications<sup>44</sup>. The book is perhaps best understood as the result of a piece of intense participant observation.

Based on the events in those early days, the authors prescribe changes in the structures and approach of RTÉ. They advocate the idea of 'authority as service', which they define as:

*“government by debate, by dialogue, by generous and candid information exchanged among moral and social equals, by the provision of alternatives for intelligent choice and human use, by participation in decisions and mutual solicitation of initiatives and by intellectual persuasion”*<sup>45</sup>.

The single role of authority in such a process is to provide a means to take a decision *“where the evidence for what ought to be done in particular cases is never objectively*

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<sup>44</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969; Farrell, Brian (ed.). 1984.

*Communications and community in Ireland*; Horgan, John. 2001. *Irish media: a critical history since 1922*.

<sup>45</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969. p304.

*clear*”<sup>46</sup>. A person, in such a situation, is given authority to take decisions because they will do so from a position of moral rectitude – they will take what *appears* to be the best decision in the circumstances, based on their experience and knowledge. Drawing on their experiences, the authors stress the importance of the validation of this authority, even if the decision does not eventually turn out for the best.

In a separate chapter titled ‘The Dis-organisation ... Man!’ the authors critique the structure of RTE<sup>47</sup>. They speak first of the confused nature of the relationships between various organisational units in RTE. In outlining the persona of a television producer-director, they come to the conclusion that “*he [sic] will tend to work best in ad-hoc structures and to be at his worst in rigid ‘in-group’ structures*”<sup>48</sup>. They are scathing of the various forms of programme organisation adopted from the station formation. The form that, perhaps, emerges best is that in which programming is organised into departments, with the head of each reporting to the programme controller. As they note, this has the virtue of maximising control while minimising the number of direct reports to the controller. However,

*“administrative control is the least important element in programme production. The values of imaginative initiative are vital. They never*

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<sup>46</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969. p308.

<sup>47</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969. pp341-354.

<sup>48</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969. p347.

*survive any administrative control that is not immediately decision making*<sup>49</sup>.

There is much of interest in Sit Down and Be Counted relating to our current research. First, the authors' assessment of their practical experiences leads them to advocate a participatory mode of management which we will see to be strikingly similar to Habermas' model of communicative action. Second, the authors' admonition that roles and powers be clearly delimited yet set in an informal structure can serve to guide our recommendations regarding developments in Flirt FM.

### **IRTC evaluation**

In June 1997 the IRTC produced their report on the community radio pilot project, which had run through 1995 and 1996. The report was the result of a number of evaluation techniques employed by the commission, and acted both as a historical record of the pilot project and an evaluation of its success.

The report includes a profile of each station, including Flirt FM. This was largely positive in relation to the training provided in the station, and also referred to an occasional newsletter aimed at volunteers, the Flirt Ripirt, which had been "*produced on a few occasions*"<sup>50</sup> during the pilot project.

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<sup>49</sup> Dowling, Jack, Doolin, Lelia and Quinn, Bob. 1969. p349.

<sup>50</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p91.

In relation to organisation and management, the profile refers to “*the collapse of their management structures early on*”<sup>51</sup>. The board of management was not fully operational, and did not function in the manner envisaged in the original submission. The result of this was that “*decision making was effectively left to the station manager*”, and this “*hampered their efforts in areas like volunteer recruitment, attracting sponsorship and promoting the station among the general student population*”<sup>52</sup>.

In the report’s general assessment of management structures, it was suggested that where informal management structures were in operation, it was important to formalise “*the emerging informal structure. This provided legitimacy to the actual management team and enabled the station to move forward*”<sup>53</sup>.

Another point raised in the report is that “*establishing the rights and responsibilities of a volunteer and the station in relation to each other also emerged as an issue for attention*”<sup>54</sup>. It is noted that volunteers in all pilot stations “*tended to focus on programming and other broadcasting related tasks*”<sup>55</sup>. It is suggested that in order to

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<sup>51</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p89.

<sup>52</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p89.

<sup>53</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p154.

<sup>54</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p159.

<sup>55</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p159.

properly balance power and responsibility volunteers will have to take responsibility for “*difficult areas such as fund-raising*”<sup>56</sup>. One tool suggested is to establish

*“a task list and [display] it in a prominent place in the station. This would include all the various tasks which have to be completed, the name of the person responsible and an indication of the time required. As well as publicly recognising the input of dedicated volunteers, this allows new people or those who wish to increase their involvement an insight into the station’s requirements”*<sup>57</sup>.

The issue of legitimacy is important in the work of Habermas, and we shall see that he refers to the concept of the legitimation of governance structures. The model which we will develop, based on Habermas’ theories should allow us to recognise and avoid the problems identified by the IRTC, and to maximise the legitimation of management structures.

It is also important to note the IRTC’s concentration on the issue of balancing rights and responsibilities. Management is not only about having the power to make decisions, but also, and perhaps more essentially, about organising the production of work. When proposing improved structures for Flirt FM, later, we must ensure that we do not concentrate only on decision making, but also on involving volunteers in all aspects of the station’s operation. We will see that this is consistent with Habermas’ emphasis on treating others as rational beings rather than objects to be manipulated.

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<sup>56</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p159.

<sup>57</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p158.

## **Women on air**

The various reports which emanated from the Women On Air project are of interest for a number of reasons. First, as with the IRTC report, their methodological approach can help to inform our own research methods. Second, their approach to identifying power imbalances can guide us on what we need to look for in our own research. Third, the project's assessments of the effectiveness of their own actions, such as training, can give us guidance on what actions might be of benefit when we come to develop recommendations for action ourselves.

### ***Breaking Glass Walls***

Women On Air's first report, commonly referred to as *Breaking Glass Walls*, represented the findings of a “*study on gender and employment in the independent radio industry in Ireland*”<sup>58</sup> and covered both the community and commercial radio sectors. The study's methodology included a postal questionnaire, interviews with staff and managers in radio, and a review of existing literature on the position of women in RTÉ.

The aims of the study were to profile employment conditions in the radio industry (with a breakdown by gender) and to identify the factors that influence women's career paths in radio. The interviews with station managers provided information on the experience and interest of this group in equality issues in the sector.

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<sup>58</sup> Nexus Research Co-operative and Gibbons, Maria. May 1998. *Gender and Employment Issues in the Independent Radio Sector in Ireland: A report to Women On Air. (The Breaking Glass Walls report)*. p1.

**Table 1 Gender and staffing in radio**

|                            | <i>Commercial Radio</i> |               | <i>Community Radio</i> |               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|
|                            | <i>Male</i>             | <i>Female</i> | <i>Male</i>            | <i>Female</i> |
| <i>Gender of Employees</i> | 59%                     | 41%           | 48%                    | 52%           |
| <i>Senior Management</i>   | 95%                     | 5%            | 30%                    | 70%           |
| <i>Middle Management</i>   | 61%                     | 39%           |                        |               |
| <i>Administration</i>      | 23%                     | 77%           |                        |               |
| <i>Board of Management</i> | 86%                     | 14%           | 60%                    | 40%           |

At first glance, the situation in community radio looks more encouraging for women than that in commercial radio, with 40% of board members being female, and 70% of management/administration staff being female. However, it is to be noted that community stations have a 40% gender quota on management boards, and the grouping of management and administrative roles may be masking “*gender segregation between management and administrative posts*” similar to that found in commercial stations<sup>59</sup>.

The report states that “*gender-related vertical segregation*” is evident in both community and commercial stations<sup>60</sup>. Vertical segregation relates to representation in different skill areas - such as programming, sales, technical – as opposed to horizontal segregation which is perhaps best summarised in the concept of a glass ceiling.

Men are especially dominant in technical roles, and are also predominant in programming roles. WOA notes that in commercial radio while 41% of employees are

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<sup>59</sup> Nexus Research Co-operative and Gibbons, Maria. May 1998. p57.

<sup>60</sup> Nexus Research Co-operative and Gibbons, Maria. May 1998. p74.

women, only 26% of ‘radio-specific’ posts are held by women. In community radio, this situation is not quite as polarised, but the results are still striking, with over 50% of staff working in programming or technical roles, but only 32% of female staff.

While the report ultimately rejects the idea that *overt* sexual discrimination is in operation in the radio industry, they do talk of

*“the many inter-related factors that direct women and men towards different job areas in commercial and community radio, and give women less access to positions of power in commercial radio”<sup>61</sup>.*

Maria Gibbons, one of the authors of the report, later identified four factors which emerged. These include work structures, training, prejudicial expectations and attitudes and lack of role models<sup>62</sup>.

Key to the report’s recommendations were education and training. Training is seen to have contributed to improved representation of women in radio-specific posts in community radio. The gender quota on community radio boards of management is seen to have *“improved women’s representation in the sector”<sup>63</sup>* and it is advised that a similar quota be extended to commercial stations.

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<sup>61</sup> Nexus Research Co-operative and Gibbons, Maria. May 1998. p76.

<sup>62</sup> Gibbons, Maria. 2000. p234.

<sup>63</sup> Nexus Research Co-operative and Gibbons, Maria. May 1998. p78.

## ***Impact Evaluation***

The second WOA report evaluated the contribution of the WOA project to changes to the independent radio sector during the lifetime of the WOA project. The report makes use of a 1999 IRTC survey on the gender breakdown in independent radio, with results being compared to those of the WOA 1997 survey.

While the representation of women in commercial radio has not improved significantly, there have been some improvements in the community radio sector in relation to horizontal segregation.

**Table 2 Community radio - women in each job category in 1997 and 1999**

|                           | <i>1997</i>   |          | <i>1999</i>   |          |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|                           | <i>Number</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>%</i> |
| <i>Management</i>         | -             | 70%      | 12            | 63%      |
| <i>Office/Secretarial</i> | 15            | 94%      | 12            | 86%      |
| <i>Programme making</i>   | 12            | 41%      | 29            | 55%      |
| <i>Technical</i>          | 5             | 23%      | 6             | 29%      |
| <i>Other</i>              | 8             | 67%      | -             | -        |
| <i>Total</i>              | 53            | 55%      | 59            | 55%      |

In terms of vertical segregation, technical roles are the only area in which women are under-represented. However, women's dominance of office/secretarial and management roles, though ameliorated, does continue.

The report also examined the efficacy and impact of the Women On Air project's various training activities. Although the majority of respondents in a 1999 Tracking Report, on those who had taken part in the training provided by the project, had

“viewed the experience as worthwhile”<sup>64</sup> the tracking also indicated that “the likelihood of being involved with radio subsequent to training was closely related to whether or not the trainees already had previous experience of radio”<sup>65</sup>.

The evaluation concluded with wide-ranging recommendations on future actions to combat gender imbalance in independent radio. Some of these have since been implemented, such as the appointment of a training and development officer by the IRTC. Post-training support is seen as a vital element of any training course addressing gender imbalance. The need for training itself to be part of a ‘training culture’ and ‘strategic approach’ is stressed<sup>66</sup>.

### **Summary**

The Women On Air research focussed on the participation of women in radio. It identified both horizontal and vertical segregation within the sectors. The research identified barriers to access, which may prove of benefit to us when we examine participation levels of women and others in Flirt FM. Although the *Impact Evaluation* identified training as a necessary support, it acknowledged that training must be ongoing, and include post-training support in order to be fully effective. This will be of relevance when we come to recommend possible developments within Flirt FM.

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<sup>64</sup> Gibbons, Maria and Jordan, Bob (Nexus Research Co-op). March 2000. p31.

<sup>65</sup> Gibbons, Maria and Jordan, Bob (Nexus Research Co-op). March 2000. p32.

<sup>66</sup> Gibbons, Maria and Jordan, Bob (Nexus Research Co-op). March 2000. p68.

## **Creativity and organisation in community radio**

Edel O’Dea’s thesis *Creativity and Organization in Community Radio* (1997) looked at the influence of the structures of radio stations on output. O’Dea examined the situation in four Dublin-based community radio stations using a range of guided but unstructured interviews with station managers and volunteers.

O’Dea concluded that “*the stations foster creativity to the extent that they do not tend to hinder creativity by being overly strict in what is produced*”<sup>67</sup>. While this could be seen to be a form of ‘damning with false praise’, it does indicate a belief that an informal approach can play a part in allowing volunteers to proceed with developing their own styles and output.

O’Dea examined the situation in stations under investigation, and concludes by identifying five elements which she claims aid creativity. These are:

### Funding

Size: “*creativity is fostered in small organisations or in small tightly-knit groups within a larger organisation*”<sup>68</sup>.

Culture: “*an informal atmosphere is conducive to the facilitation of the creative effort. Informality fosters creativity as it creates a climate of psychological safety*”<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> O’Dea, Edel. 1997. *Creativity and organization in community radio: a case study*. p50.

<sup>68</sup> O’Dea, Edel. 1997. p52.

Evaluation: O'Dea mentions the listener panels in operation in stations, but views them as being of limited value, other than in the initial stages of a volunteer's involvement. However, she does suggest that other means of evaluation should be investigated.

## Training

O'Dea's focus can be seen to differ substantially from that of the research being undertaken here in that she concentrates on the influence of organisational structure on the output produced by volunteers. Although the impact of structures on station output is not the primary concern of this thesis, any implementation of structural change must obviously take account of such issues.

O'Dea's faith in the benefits of an informal culture arise from the fact that an informal attitude encourages volunteers to relax and 'be themselves'. This is linked to the advocacy of small teams, which again act in an informal manner and encourage participants to relax in a condition of intimacy. The links to the recommendations of *Sit Down and Be Counted* are obvious.

It is significant that O'Dea identifies the importance of training. The Women On Air reports have already noted the significance of training, within a properly structured environment, for facilitating and encouraging female involvement. Here O'Dea sees training as facilitating more creative programming. The link to evaluation can be seen to aid in creating an on-going culture of development. This, we will see, can be

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<sup>69</sup> O'Dea, Edel. 1997. p53.

viewed in terms of encouraging participants to maximise their potential, a ‘positive freedom’ approach to facilitating involvement.

## **Review**

This chapter has provided an outline of the context within which community radio has developed. We have seen that it is a relatively recent sector, which has been closely associated with the community development field. The context within which the sector developed can be seen to be responsible for giving the field an appreciation of gender issues, and also explains the context within which the principles eventually enshrined in the AMARC charter were melded.

We have also looked at the major relevant pieces of research, including *Sit Down and Be Counted*, the IRTC report on the community radio pilot project, the Women On Air project, and Edel O’Dea’s *Creativity and Organisation in Community Radio*. These various projects have provided guidance on the various methodologies which can usefully be applied to examine the issue under review.

We have also seen a number of clear themes arise from the different reports, which will be important in our later analysis. Several of the reports were supportive of informal structures, though the IRTC stressed the importance of ensuring that such structures were granted legitimacy, and the authors of *Sit Down and Be Counted* were concerned that there should be a clear demarcation of roles, with decision making powers being as straight-forward as possible.

Training was emphasised in both the Women On Air reports and Edel O’Dea’s work. However, the Women On Air project found that the efficacy of training was related to

post-training supports, and O'Dea also called for evaluation as a support mechanism. It would appear to be a clear conclusion that training is seen to be of most benefit in a 'training culture' where participants are given on-going supports. This will be of benefit when we later come to look at questions of making structures fully open to volunteer involvement.

# Chapter 3: Theory

*“‘Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?’*

*‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the Cat.*

*‘I don't much care where—’ said Alice.*

*‘Then it doesn't matter which way you go,’ said the Cat.”*

*- Alice in Wonderland; Lewis Carroll*

As outlined earlier, the primary research question of this dissertation is:

*To what extent does Flirt FM meet its commitment to have management structures which are open and accountable to volunteers?*

In this chapter we will be dealing with the preliminary issue of developing a means to address this primary question:

*How can we measure the extent to which a community radio station meets its commitment to have management structures which are open and accountable to volunteers?*

The theories of Jürgen Habermas seem particularly suited to this task. In developing his theory of communicative action, Habermas has advocated norms, developed through inclusive rational discussion as the means on which societal structures should be based. His belief that system rules should be subordinate to rational enquiry provides a means to address the issue of making structures accountable to volunteers.

In this chapter I first examine the theories of Jürgen Habermas. I then look at a number of critiques of his theory, and propose a modified model, which I will use to analyse Flirt FM. Finally, I propose six factors which can be used to examine Flirt FM's success in meeting its commitment to have open and accountable structures.

## ***The theories of Jürgen Habermas***

### **Habermas and the public sphere**

Jürgen Habermas is perhaps best known for his conception of the public sphere. This theory, first expounded in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*<sup>70</sup> can be viewed in a number of ways. Firstly, it is a description of a historical development – the ‘bourgeois’ public sphere of the European coffee houses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Secondly, the public sphere is an ideal against which we can measure the structure of debate in a modern society<sup>71</sup>.

Thirdly, the public sphere can be seen as part of Habermas' larger scheme of communicative action, in which he models the range, and process, of human communication.

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<sup>70</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. 1997. “Institutions of the public sphere”. pp235-244; Boyd-

Barrett, Oliver. 1997. “Conceptualizing the ‘public sphere’”. p230.

<sup>71</sup> Ó Baoill, Andrew. 2000. “Slashdot and the public sphere” in *First Monday* 5:9.

In truth, the reality is a combination of all of these. In developing his model, Habermas has taken a strong stance on what he considers to be a desirable form of communication. His theories originated in his analysis of the “*coffee houses, newspaper circulation or literary salons*”<sup>72</sup>, the virtues of which he has resolutely defended in the light of various criticisms. His model provides us with an ideal against which we can measure any particular instance of a public space, provided only that we accept Habermas’ conception of ‘the good’.

The public sphere, and concepts of public space in general, have, as Seyla Benhabib has noted, an “*intimate rootedness in the domain of political life*”<sup>73</sup>. They describe those places and situations in which people meet to discuss matters of public concern. This, as we shall see later, has led to tension regarding how the public/private divide is defined.

Ignoring, for the moment, this particular controversy, it is possible to identify a number of conditions which will be met by an ideal public sphere:

- universal access;
- disregard of rank;

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<sup>72</sup> Holub, Robert C. 1991. *Jürgen Habermas - Critic in the Public Sphere*. p3.

<sup>73</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. p89.

- rational debate until consensus is achieved.<sup>74</sup>

## The lifeworld

In some of his later work, Habermas has situated the public sphere within a wider ‘lifeworld/systems perspective’. The lifeworld is conceived of as “*understandings that we share and take for granted*”<sup>75</sup>. We shall return to systems later.

The usefulness of the lifeworld is that it allows us to engage in interaction without having to verify each concept from ‘first principles’ on each separate occasion. The lifeworld thus helps to “*maintain a way of life*”<sup>76</sup>.

Of course, this idea of ‘shared understandings’ is in itself a vague concept, which must be further elaborated if we are to be able to derive practical benefit from it.

Among the ways in which the lifeworld has been visualised is as:

a cultural storehouse;

a source of expectations about the ordering of social relations;

a milieu out of which individual competencies for speech and action are formed.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ó Baoill, Andrew. 2000.

<sup>75</sup> Warren, Mark E. 1995. “The self in discursive democracy”. p177.

<sup>76</sup> Chambers, Simone. 1995. “Discourse and democratic practices”. p243.

<sup>77</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice and Modernity*. p99.

For Habermas, the lifeworld is all of these things. In addition, Habermas has identified the importance within the ‘rationalised’ lifeworld that evolves in modernity, of the lifeworld’s “*structural differentiation*” of precisely these three dimensions: *culture, society and personality*”<sup>78</sup>.

### **Communicative action**

The general model of communicative action mirrors the theory of the public sphere, in that it also can be viewed in a number of ways. Habermas has undoubtedly taken a view on what an ‘ideal’ or desirable form of human interaction should be – one based on an attempt to reach understanding of each others’ views and assertions, rooted in *rational* analysis of so-called ‘speech acts’.

The model is also, however, an evolutionary one, mirroring what Habermas sees as the development of Western society.

At the core of the development from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’ society is the notion of reflexivity, a “self-critical *perspective*”<sup>79</sup>. The idea is not that individuals suddenly gained a gift for logical thought, but that they moved towards subjecting all beliefs and assumptions to rational enquiry, thus satisfying Kant’s admonition to “*make public use of one's reason in all matters*”<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p99.

<sup>79</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p95.

<sup>80</sup> Kant, Immanuel. “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’”

Linking this idea with Habermas' concept of the lifeworld, we can conceive that the beliefs and expectations surrounding culture, society and personality will be fully open to rational enquiry and construction. The reproduction and evolution of these beliefs will arise out of this process of enquiry.

Habermas believes that "*communication is the way we transmit and reproduce our lifeworld*"<sup>81</sup>. While threats and rewards can encourage citizens to follow rules, "*such inducements cannot guarantee mass loyalty and thus stability*"<sup>82</sup>

Reproduction of the lifeworld is, for Habermas, the symbolic and material reproduction, in this case of society, and he has identified three reproduction processes – cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation. These processes relate to the structural components of the lifeworld as outlined in the table below, which is derived from Habermas' *Reply to my critics*<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Chambers, Simone. 1995. p241.

<sup>82</sup> Chambers, Simone. 1995. p242.

<sup>83</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p100.

**Table 3 Reproductive processes in the lifeworld**

| <i>Reproduction processes</i> | <i>Structural Components</i>  |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
|                               | <i>Culture</i>  | <i>Society</i>  | <i>Person</i>  |
| <i>Cultural reproduction</i>  | <i>(1) Interpretative schemata susceptible to consensus (“valid knowledge”)</i> | <i>(4) Legitimizations</i>                              | <i>(7) Behavioural patterns influential in self-formation, educational goals</i> |
| <i>Social integration</i>     | <i>(2) Obligations</i>  | <i>(5) Legitimately ordered interpersonal relations</i> | <i>(8) Social memberships</i>  |
| <i>Socialisation</i>          | <i>(3) Interpretative accomplishments</i>                                       | <i>(6) Motivation for norm-conformative actions</i>     | <i>(9) Capability for interaction (“personal identity”)</i>                      |

Communicative action is “*action oriented toward reaching self- and mutual-understanding*”<sup>84</sup>. A speech act is seen to generate a validity claim which can be assessed by the listener.

For Habermas, then, the motivation for a listener to agree with a given statement arises from a ‘warranty’ [*Gewahr*] offered by the speaker to “*redeem, if necessary, the validity claim raised with his speech act*”<sup>85</sup>.

Habermas believes that in the rationalised lifeworld of modern culture,

*“actors consistently carry the expectation that the various validity claims in speech are to be cognitively distinguished, and that they have to be redeemed in different ways”*<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Love, Nancy S. 1995. “What’s left of Marx?” p50.

<sup>85</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p42.

The different validity claims are “*institutionalised in corresponding cultural spheres of action*”<sup>87</sup> Habermas identifies three (and indeed argues that these are the only three which can be ‘sharply’ distinguished<sup>88</sup>):

- Science and technology;
- Morality and law; and
- Art and literature.

Communicative action can be distinguished from *strategic* action. The distinction between strategic and communicative action, on a case by case basis, requires the use of intuition, but can be broadly understood as “*the difference between treating another person like an object versus treating him/her as something like an end in itself, worthy of some sort of respect*”<sup>89</sup>.

White argues that while both strategic and communicative action are “*necessary to social life ... in the final analysis a social theory in which the central theoretical emphasis is given to communicative co-ordination will be more adequate*”<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> White, Stephen K. 1995. “Reason, modernity, and democracy”. p8.

<sup>87</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p95.

<sup>88</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p95.

<sup>89</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p45.

<sup>90</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p46.

Habermas views “*thorough-going criticism of all traditions and norms*”<sup>91</sup> as an ideal which is facilitated by the use of communicative action. However, this is not to say that he views modern life as having achieved this ideal. Communicative action can often operate within the bounds of a “*normatively secured consensus*”<sup>92</sup>, avoiding, for example, challenging social institutions such as the family. Benhabib has used this fact, as we shall see later, to challenge Habermas’ conception of the public sphere. However, as White has noted, the fact that Habermas’ model is not blind to the problem gives hope in that we can couple it with other more specific solutions which do address the issue.

There is another equally important barrier to achievement and maintenance of Habermas’ ideal of truly rationalised human interaction. To examine this element, we must move to the systems aspect of the systems-lifeworld perspective.

### **Colonisation by systems**

Just as communicative action can be contrasted with strategic action, the one based on reaching an understanding, the other based on attaining a goal, so too can the lifeworld be contrasted with systems.

*“Society [can be] conceived from the participant perspective of acting subjects as the lifeworld of a social group. On the other hand society can be conceived from the observer perspective of someone not*

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<sup>91</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p101.

<sup>92</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p102.

*involved as merely a system of actions, in which actions attain a functional value according to their contribution to the maintenance of the system*”<sup>93</sup>.

Habermas identifies two primary systems which exist in modern society. These systems – the economic and administrative systems – interact with participants through the ‘steering’ media of money and power.

One of the traits associated with these systems, as identified by Habermas, is known as juridification. Unlike the lifeworld, systems reproduce materially, which causes them to “*interfere in the process of the symbolic reproduction of daily life*”<sup>94</sup>. And since these systems act in functional terms

*“the processes of mediation between systems and lifeworld are perceived under imperatives of money and power in functional terms exclusive of communicative interaction*”<sup>95</sup>.

Habermas suggests that citizens thus become less likely to engage in co-operative social and political action, as it serves no function within the system.

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<sup>93</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p105.

<sup>94</sup> Rasmussen, David M. 1990. *Reading Habermas*. p47.

<sup>95</sup> Rasmussen, David M. 1990. p. 47.

Further, juridification requires “*an incessant process of the ‘compulsory abstraction’ of everyday life situations*”<sup>96</sup>. This leads to the “*objective redefining*”<sup>97</sup> of individuals’ lifeworlds, a process known as ‘reification’.

Reification is “*the act of regarding an abstraction as a material thing*”<sup>98</sup>. For writers such as Habermas it refers particularly to “*the treatment of men as objects of manipulation, as things rather than as human beings*”<sup>99</sup>. While thinkers such as Adorno and Horkheimer believed that reification was a direct result of enlightenment itself, Habermas contends that the process is “*to be attributed to the external effects of capitalism*”<sup>100</sup>.

Regarding people as objects, to be related with solely through the processes and roles of guiding systems, obviously runs directly counter to Habermas’ desire that we view others as people with whom we wish to reach understanding. After all, systems such as ‘the economy’ are, from the point of view of the lifeworld (and its advocates) merely abstractions and models we develop in order to aid our understanding of various processes and actions. Like any model, we elevate, name and categorise

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<sup>96</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p113.

<sup>97</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990.p113.

<sup>98</sup> Bullock, Alan and Stallybrass. 1977. *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. p534.

<sup>99</sup> Bullock, Alan and Stallybrass. 1977. p534.

<sup>100</sup> Ingram, David. 1990. *Critical Theory and Philosophy*. p160.

certain processes – e.g. the transfer of value – to the exclusion of others, and simplify others, and analyse events from a particular viewpoint – in this case the ‘objective’ or external observer.

The end-point of any reification process must be to subjugate the lifeworld to the aims of the system. This situation, referred to as the colonisation of the lifeworld, undermines “*the communicative conditions for transmitting culture, co-ordinating action, and fostering personal identity freely and rationally*”<sup>101</sup>.

Nancy Fraser, in her *Unruly Practices*<sup>102</sup>, gives an example of reification in action. She speaks of the identities and needs of social-welfare recipients, as fashioned by the system. Since these are clearly the result of interpretation, and of public/political concern, they should be open to debate and dispute. However, in many cases, these interpretations are not recognised as such and “*simply go without saying and are rendered immune from analysis and critique*”<sup>103</sup>.

It is the colonisation of the lifeworld which

*“makes possible a kind of systematic integration that enters into competition with the integrating principle of reaching understanding*

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<sup>101</sup> Ingram, David. 1990. p161.

<sup>102</sup> Fraser, Nancy. 1989. *Unruly practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*.

<sup>103</sup> Fraser, Nancy. 1989. p154.

*that, under certain conditions, has a disintegrative effect on the lifeworld*<sup>104</sup>.

The colonisation process is plainly subversive of democracy, removing citizens' roles in the forming of policy development, and reducing the range within which policy can, indeed, be framed. However, in order for this to be possible without being noticed and objected to by casual observers, a second process is necessary. This process is known as 'cultural impoverishment' or the fragmentation of consciousness.

### **Disturbances in Lifeworld reproduction**

Colonisation of the lifeworld allows the introduction of distortions to the reproductive processes of the lifeworld. As with so many of Habermas' concepts, these distortions, or disturbances can be viewed from two distinct points of view. Firstly, from the systems perspective, the disturbances result in 'disequilibriums', which can impede the system in achieving its goal.

From the lifeworld perspective, the disturbances induce pathologies in the lifeworld.

Returning to our earlier table of structural components (of the lifeworld) and reproductive processes, we can categorise these pathologies as outlined in Table 4.

**Table 4 Consequences of breakdowns in reproductive processes**

|                                      |                              |                |               |                   |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <i>Disturbances in the domain of</i> | <i>Structural Components</i> |                |               | <i>Evaluative</i> |
|                                      | <i>Culture</i>               | <i>Society</i> | <i>Person</i> | <i>Dimension</i>  |

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<sup>104</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p107.

|                              |  |                                       |  |                                     |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Cultural reproduction</i> | <i>(1) Loss of Meaning (cultural impoverishment)</i> | <i>(4) Withdrawal of legitimation</i> | <i>(7) Crisis in orientation and education</i> | <i>Rationality of knowledge</i>     |
| <i>Social integration</i>    | <i>(2) Insecurity of collective identity</i>         | <i>(5) Anomie</i>                     | <i>(8) Alienation</i>                          | <i>Solidarity of members</i>        |
| <i>Socialisation</i>         | <i>(3) Breakdown of tradition</i>                    | <i>(6) Withdrawal of motivation</i>   | <i>(9) Psycho-pathologies</i>                  | <i>Accountability of the person</i> |

These pathologies obviously have different forms and act in different ways. One in particular, loss of meaning, also referred to as ‘cultural impoverishment’ or ‘fragmentation of consciousness’, serves to stifle the development of awareness of the existence of and counter-democratic nature of the colonisation process.

The essence of this concept is that while people nowadays have access to, and are “*bombarded with greater quantities of information*”<sup>105</sup>, the average citizen is unable to “*make effective use of the cognitive arsenal of cultural modernity*”<sup>106</sup>.

A version of this problem was highlighted by the development of the world-wide web (www). With users having access to (in practical terms) an unlimited volume of material, the problem was obviously not a paucity of information on the world, but rather the means to interpret this information and build it into a usable and meaningful picture of the world. Search engines, portal, vortals, web rings, directories, hubs, boards and blogs proliferate, each trying to provide a window by which to frame the world.

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<sup>105</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p117.

<sup>106</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p117.

Anyone who has tried to use the ‘web to research diverse topics will have encountered a number of difficulties. First there are the different modes of speech associated with different topics and modes of communication. Second, there is the supposition of prior knowledge, which can hinder and delay one’s entry into discussion of any particular topic. As the preface to the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought admits, “*all of us are ignorant of whole areas of modern thought. In an age of specialisation this may be as true of a Nobel Laureate as it is of a college freshman*”<sup>107</sup>.

Habermas associates these areas of specialisation with the development of ‘expert cultures’. By relegating different areas of activity to being within the domain of different cultures, and by viewing information, commentary and analysis as being the products of these different cultures, information remains diffuse and incapable of aggregation.

Whereas in traditional society world views could be developed by way of ideologies, which facilitated “*social integration in a positive way by providing some overall interpretative framework for core aspects of social life*”<sup>108</sup>, the existence of expert cultures acts to hinder “*“everyday knowledge” from even reaching the “level of articulation” of an ideology*”<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> Bullock, Alan and Stallybrass. 1977. v.

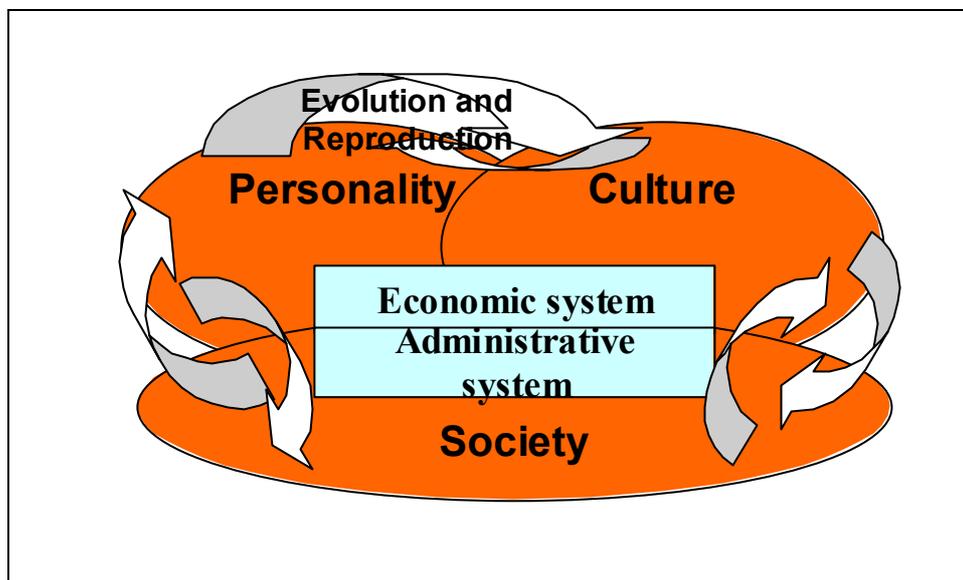
<sup>108</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p117.

<sup>109</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p117.

Thus the development of the cultural impoverishment phenomenon acts to thwart the development of what Habermas refers to as crises of legitimation.

## ***Habermas' model summarised***

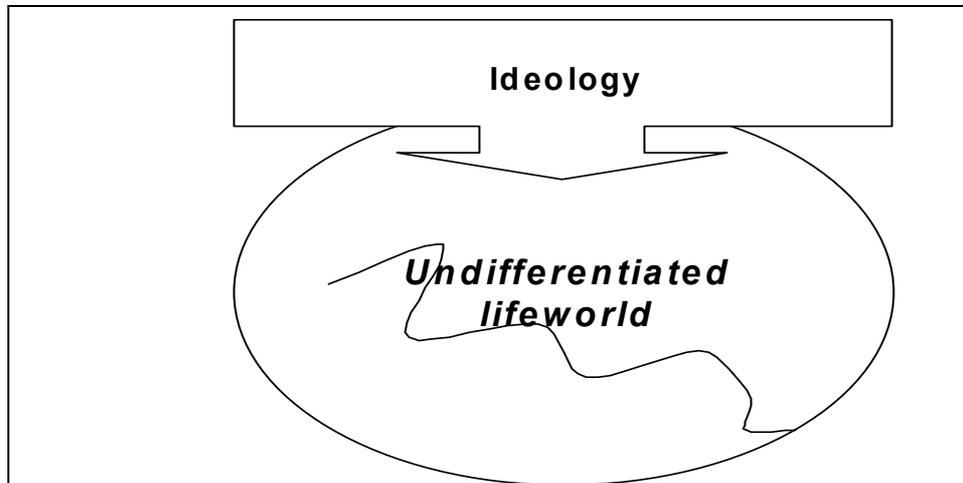
Having seen how Habermas' model is developed, we can now see how the different elements fit together



**Figure 1 Habermas' ideal form**

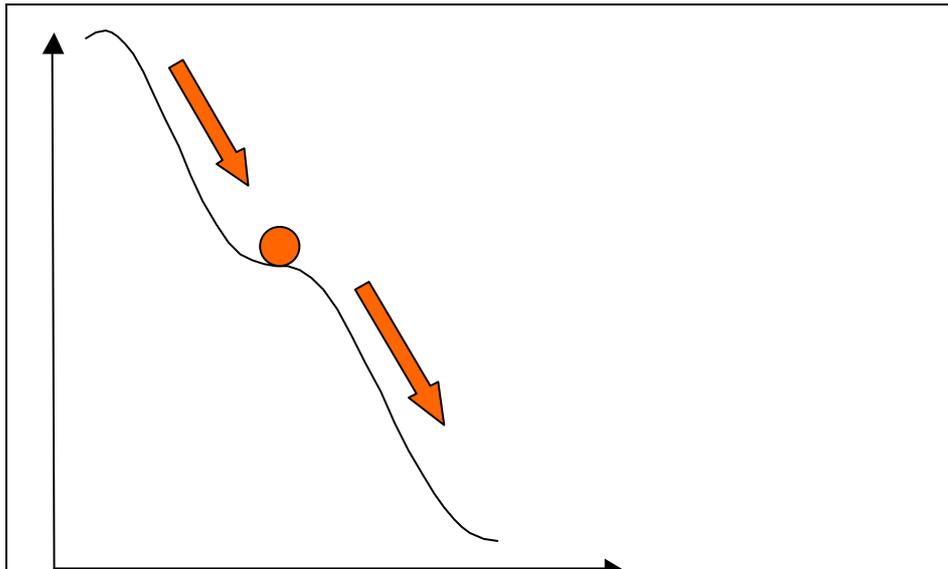
There are four distinct views on which I wish to concentrate, Firstly, there is Habermas' ideal state. Here a rationalised lifeworld, broken into clear divisions of culture, society and personality, acts as an unproblematic background to distinct spheres of action. While action by individuals in these spheres can be either strategic or communicative, the primary form of interaction is communicative, where participants are concerned to understand the views of others and reach mutual understanding, using forums such as those outlined in the theory of the public sphere

where appropriate. Systems exist within the context of the lifeworld, and are subject to rational critique through communicative action.



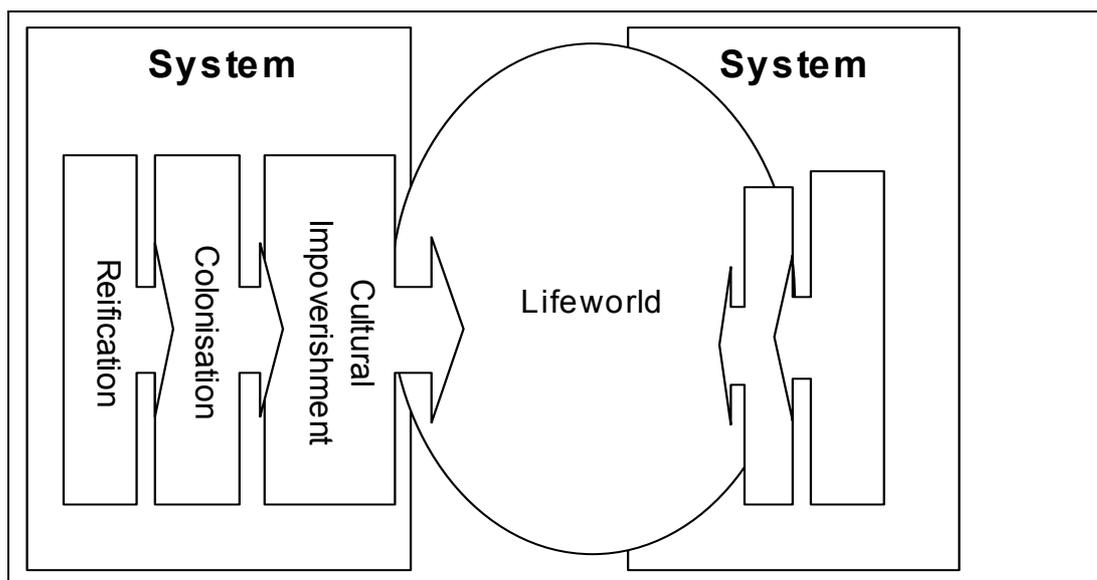
**Figure 2 Habermas' view of the traditional lifeworld**

The ideal form is a development from the traditional form, where views are decided in line with ideologies. This model, associated with a magic-mystical view of the world, is notable for not being reflexive – participants do not question the constituent elements of the lifeworld, which does not have the strong structural divisions of the ideal.



**Figure 3 The stability of Habermas' ideal**

Once the elements of the ideal model have evolved from the traditional state, they are essentially in a state of unstable equilibrium. Processes such as the colonisation of the lifeworld, which arise, according to Habermas, due to the nature of the capitalism, lead to a situation where the reproductive processes of the lifeworld are disturbed and systems displace the lifeworld as the basis for human interaction.



**Figure 4 The dominance of systems**

Habermas' criticism of this situation is basically an attack on the notion of objectivity, As mentioned earlier, a systems approach involves viewing the world from an observer's perspective, assessing events on the basis of their functional value and rule-conformance. The lifeworld perspective is that of a participant attempting to understand their world and those of others.

The importance of the *participant* role is that, while notions of justice can be viewed in accordance with norms which are decided/negotiated through communicative action, the notion of the good society is seen to be, at heart, beyond the realm of rational construction. This notion – that conceptions of the good society are essentially evaluative – has the important implication that the lifeworld can never be “*rendered totally transparent*”<sup>110</sup>, in that certain core concepts cannot be derived solely from rational norms. It also, by implication, *requires* the involvement of an actor to make these evaluative judgements.

In Habermas' ideal, we cannot reduce our shared existence to rules and functional actions. Rather our lives are oriented towards understanding others, through lives built on rational norms themselves built on certain core understanding of the Good Society.

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<sup>110</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p103.

## ***Critiques of Habermas***

Habermas' theories, and his model of communicative action, have attracted much attention from other thinkers. Some have criticised his model for the sin of omission, while others have pointed to structural deficiencies.

While an exhaustive trawl of such criticism is beyond the scope of this study, I wish to highlight some relevant criticisms which can be levelled. These map closely to the three essential features of a public sphere identified earlier.

### **Access**

*“Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains”*

*- Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

When Habermas spoke of the historical development of the bourgeois public sphere in nineteenth century Europe, he asserted that access was open to all comers. This claim has been widely criticised on the basis that, as John B Thompson has noted

*“although the bourgeois public sphere was based on the principle of universal access, in practice it was restricted to those individuals who had the education and the financial means to participate in it”<sup>111</sup>.*

Not only this, but the public sphere of the coffee houses was also “*a predominately male preserve*”<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> Thompson, John B. 1997. “The Theory of the Public Sphere” p253.

The issue of access on the basis of class may be rebutted somewhat by Habermas' assertion that the idea of parity of esteem within the public sphere might not be "actually realised ... but as an idea it had become institutionalised, and thereby stated as an objective claim"<sup>113</sup>. However, the issue serves to highlight the essential difference between a negative freedom and a positive freedom.

The idea that there are two types of freedom was postulated by Isaiah Berlin in his 1958 *Two concepts of liberty*<sup>114</sup>. For Berlin, negative freedom is "*freedom from interference*"<sup>115</sup>. This can be seen, in this context as the equivalent to the declaration that access to the sphere is open to all – nobody will be actively impeded from involvement.

However, the concept of 'positive freedom' goes further and is seen as "*the capability of doing what you really want to do*"<sup>116</sup>, as "*self-realisation*"<sup>117</sup>.

In this regard, positive freedom of access can be seen as ensuring that all (potential) participants have the tools necessary to participate fully and realise their potential. By

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<sup>112</sup> Thompson, John B. 1997. p253.

<sup>113</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. 1997. "Institutions of the Public Sphere" p238.

<sup>114</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 2001. "Two concepts of liberty".

<sup>115</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 2001. p5.

<sup>116</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 2001. p22.

<sup>117</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 2001. p119.

tools here I mean not just physical, external, supports, such as Braille versions of texts for blind participants, but also, for example, education which provides a participant with the intellectual tools to participate fully.

While Habermas' rules for argument in the ideal speech situation state that

*“no speaker ought to be hindered by compulsion – whether arising from inside the discourse or outside of it – from making use of the rights [to participate fully]”<sup>118</sup>,*

this is obviously a minimal approach, based on negative freedom. I would contend that the right to participate is only truly vindicated when the abilities of participants are properly nurtured, and barriers such as physical impediments to access are ameliorated or removed.

If the right to access is to be fully vindicated, it must be integrated with an understanding of the supports necessary for the realisation of this right to be available to all.

### **Normatively-secured consensus**

*“At any given moment there is a sort of all-prevailing orthodoxy, a general tacit agreement not to discuss some large and uncomfortable fact” – George Orwell*

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<sup>118</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p56.

I referred earlier to the admission by White that Habermas' ideal situation does not have any mechanism to recognise, or combat, the exclusion of an issue from interrogation through "*normatively secured consensus*"<sup>119</sup>. One of the widely discussed examples of this relates to the division between the private and public sphere.

There is no hermetic seal between public and private, and Benhabib claims that "*the effect of collective action in concert will be to put ever new and unexpected items on the agenda of public debate*"<sup>120</sup>. However, Benhabib does identify a number of areas which have traditionally been viewed as proper to the private sphere:

*"the sphere of moral and religious conscience"*;

*"the free flow of commodity relations"*;

the *"intimate sphere"*<sup>121</sup>.

As can be seen most clearly from the inclusion of matters relating to market relations, by private we do not necessarily mean 'matters which happen in private', as that term would be understood in common parlance. Rather we are making a judgement on whether something is of 'general concern', and therefore suitable for public debate and interrogation, to be examined by people in their public capacities as citizens, or is

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<sup>119</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p102.

<sup>120</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p95.

<sup>121</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p108.

a matter for private decision and agreement, an area “*considered beyond the realm of justice*”<sup>122</sup>.

The relegation to the private sphere of matters relating to the intimate sphere, such as the division of roles within families and matters of sexual relations, is seen as having proscribed public debate on these issues, masking them from the social reflection that is at the heart of the public sphere.

While Benhabib believes that the ability to redefine the boundaries of the public sphere through discourse can ultimately lead to questions of power imbalances and gender politics being addressed, she takes issue with Habermas for being blind to “*the difference in the experiences of male versus female subjects in all domains of life*”<sup>123</sup> and the power imbalance inherent in the fact that “*women’s work in the private sphere has been unremunerated*”<sup>124</sup>.

When Nancy Fraser comes to analyse the issue of ‘Habermas and Gender’, she starts by referring to this blindness, and refers to the lack of mention, other than briefly in the context of New Social Movements, of feminism and gender in Habermas’ work<sup>125</sup>. She goes further, however, and claims that the concentration on the opposition between system-institutions and lifeworld-institutions puts the “*male-headed nuclear*

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<sup>122</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p109.

<sup>123</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p109.

<sup>124</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p109.

<sup>125</sup> Fraser, Nancy. 1989. p114.

*family and the state-regulated official economy on two opposite sides of the major categorical divide*<sup>126</sup>. The concentration on reification as being the ‘primary evil’ eclipses the consideration of “*the evil of dominance and subordination*”<sup>127</sup>.

Mark Warren suggests “*when differences of interest and identity in ... organisations are empowered, they can serve as a check on premature consensus*”<sup>128</sup>. We would expect a democratic rationalised organisation to be its own best protection.

### **The concept of debate until consensus**

Apart from the possibility of certain issues never entering the public domain due to ‘normatively secured consensus’, the notion of debating issues ‘until consensus is achieved’ is questionable.

Firstly, any public sphere is necessarily finite in nature, and the participants are humans, limited in processing power and knowledge<sup>129</sup>. Theories such as Herbert Simon’s models of bounded rationality highlight the limited ability of human beings when faced with questions such as achieving a ‘successful’ outcome when there are an unknown number of possible results, which cannot necessarily be measured against

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<sup>126</sup> Fraser, Nancy. 1989. p138.

<sup>127</sup> Fraser, Nancy. 1989. p138.

<sup>128</sup> Warren, Mark E. 1995. p191.

<sup>129</sup> Boyle, Liam. 1991. *Individual and Social Action: From the Neoclassical Model to Bounded Rationality*. pp179-183.

each other. Though Simon suggests that such problems can be solved through the introduction of concepts such as a “‘*satisficing*’ strategy” which “*seeks to satisfy some pre-set goal*”<sup>130</sup>, there still exists the fact that “*people have limited attention*” which results in both “*political faddishness and one-issue politics*”<sup>131</sup>. Theories such as agenda setting would concur, suggesting that prior content of an agenda, while perhaps not telling us what to think, “*tells us what to think about*”<sup>132</sup>. This would appear to be an inescapable distortion in the topology of any public space.

Secondly, the concept of consensus is one fraught with difficulties. One can easily conceive of matters of debate - such as the issue of abortion - in which the tenets of the various participants are so much at odds that consensus can never be achieved. Bruce Ackerman deals with this matter, as part of his model of a Liberal Public Space, through the introduction of a Supreme Pragmatic Imperative (SPI) which

*“states that they [citizens] must be willing to participate in an ongoing dialogue about their conception of the good with others who are not members of their primary group”*<sup>133</sup>.

Ackerman suggests that this ongoing dialogue can be supported through the introduction of “*conversational restraint*”, where participants agree not to discuss the

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<sup>130</sup> Boyle, Liam. 1991. p188.

<sup>131</sup> Boyle, Liam. 1991. p198.

<sup>132</sup> Dearing, James W. and Rogers, Everett M. 1996. *Agenda-Setting*. p1.

<sup>133</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p96.

point of disagreement within the public sphere , though discussion can continue within the private sphere<sup>134</sup>.

Benhabib, rightly, attacks this suggestion for precluding certain matters from being debated in the public arena<sup>135</sup>. To simply avoid any issue on which fundamental differences occur is, on the one hand, unlikely to be practicable and on the other suspect from a theoretical viewpoint, since it attempts to side-step any weaknesses in the model, waiving the opportunity to address and potentially overcome these weaknesses.

A potential solution may lie in Benhabib's assertion that

*“consent alone can never be a criterion of anything, neither of truth nor of moral validity; rather, it is always the rationality of the procedure for attaining agreement which is of philosophical interest”*<sup>136</sup>.

In other words, it is the means rather than the ends which is significant. If we return to Habermas' idea of communicative action being when a speaker '*orients himself*

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<sup>134</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p96.

<sup>135</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p97.

<sup>136</sup> Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. p37.

*toward understanding*<sup>137</sup>, we can see that the proper emphasis is on the *attempt* to reach consensus, rather than on the consensus itself.

## **Rank**

Although it is clear that the external rank of a participant is irrelevant to their participation and status in a public sphere, what is somewhat vague is how the prior actions of a person within a sphere should affect their future standing in that sphere.

Mark Poster in his essay “The Net as a Public Sphere” has criticised the ability of those on-line to “*define their own identities and change them at will*”, claiming that this is “*not consonant with forming a stable political community as we have known it*”<sup>138</sup>. The implication that the trust generated between participants in a debate is essential to the efficient operation of that debate is compelling. The trust arises from knowledge, gained through observation, that the participant in question has a track record of redeeming the *Gewahr* referred to by Habermas.

While the trust engendered by experience does allow more efficient argumentation, it is important that those new to a discourse are also allowed sufficient opportunities to enter a warranty and express *their* truths. It would appear, therefore, that Poster’s concern for creating stability through familiarity must ultimately be subservient to the need for a universal right of participation.

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<sup>137</sup> White, Stephen K. 1990. p42.

<sup>138</sup> Poster, Mark. 1999. “The Net as a Public Sphere” p336.

## ***Modified model***

Bearing these points in mind, it is possible to outline a modified model which builds upon Habermas' model of communicative action. It will be the modified ideal provided by this process which will be used to measure the performance of actual instances of human interaction.

Communicative action is still at the centre of our model. While everyday life will also, as we noted earlier, involve other forms, such as strategic action, communicative action, the attempt to achieve understanding through speech acts, must underpin our relations with others.

It is through communicative action that we build and evolve our lifeworlds – the framework within which we view and interact with the world. It is obviously important, therefore, that we have sufficient space to undertake such action. A so-called rationalised lifeworld governs our expectations and relations with respect to culture, society and personality, but also governs the structural differentiation between these elements. We can also identify 3 cultural spheres, which deal with Law/Morality, Art/Literature and Science/Technology. These are the domains of the metaphorical spaces in which matters can be rationally debated by all parties, until consensus is reached.

The matters debated in these spheres are those deemed of 'public' concern. Society has traditionally cast certain matters – those relating to the intimate sphere of the home for example – as being beyond the remit of the public sphere, and therefore belonging to the private sphere.

Systems develop in order to facilitate functional actions. In an ideal situation systems are secondary to communicative action. An ideal situation must, therefore, provide adequate space for discussion and debate, with citizens availing of these opportunities to become involved in shaping their world. These spaces should not only have the key characteristics of universal access, disregard of external rank and rational debate. Involvement in the space must be facilitated under a 'positive freedom' approach, through education and other supports.

Further, the range of topics which is seen as open to debate must be open to review.

While prior acts of participants *within* the sphere can influence the perceptions others have of them, and consequently their rank within the sphere, this cannot be at the cost of the principle of universal access – experienced, even respected, participants cannot dominate proceedings.

While consensus is the desired result of debate, it is not always achievable, and the genuine *attempt* to reach consensus is ultimately the essential factor, rather than actually *reaching* consensus.

In a similar vein to the previous points, the limited resources (time, processing power) of humans means that not all topics will be addressed by any particular forum. However, again, the fact that any topic *can be raised* is the important feature. Once the participants can debate which topics will be raised, in essence a reflexive debate, the criteria for a public sphere will be met.

This last feature also addresses a question relating to the public/private divide. Once the division is porous, allowing constant reassessing of what constitutes the private,

the sphere itself will provide some defence against normatively secured consensus (and perhaps the only defence that can be envisaged).

If these then constitute the ideal, what is it that must be avoided? First, we must ensure that the structure of the public sphere does not itself engender dominance or sub-ordination. Feminist readings have noted that the nature of the public/private divide in particular can bolster institutionalised power imbalances.

Second, we must ensure that the lifeworld and communicative action retain their dominant status relative to the systems. If reification is allowed to develop – in essence if the *human* nature of participants is ignored with the *functional* role being given precedence – then a process of colonisation can occur where the lifeworld is subjugated to the aims of the system. This can disturb the reproductive and evolutionary processes of the lifeworld, resulting in pathologies such as fragmentation of consciousness (cultural impoverishment) – which in itself leads to the privileging of ‘experts’ – and delegitimation, where participants are unable to rationalise the authority basis of rules and bodies, and are consequently unable to give moral support to these rules ad/or bodies.

## ***Factors for measuring compliance***

*“Progress should mean that we are always changing the world to fit the vision; instead we are always changing the vision.” – G.K. Chesterton*

Using the model outlined above, I now propose the following 6 factors as being a useful practical tool for structuring research into the health of democratic governance

structures in specific instances. Some of these draw from the evaluative dimensions referenced in Table 2

#### Existence of public spaces

- Spaces can be constructed from a combination of physical and social factors. Bearing in mind the random nature of interaction in true public places<sup>139</sup>, we should include not only sites of formal debate, but also arenas of informal interaction which contain the flexibility for participants to engage in meaningful dialogue. These informal spaces, learning from O’Dea<sup>140</sup>, will also provide places of ‘psychological safety’ to volunteers, allowing them to relax and be fully participative in the space.

#### Volunteer morale

- Low morale can indicate the existence of cynicism and legitimization problems for current structures. Even if this is not the case, an investigation of the state of morale may identify other problems with the structures under investigation.

#### Fair access for all

- This factor is evaluated in its negative form. The presence of barriers to involvement obviously violates our ideal. Using our positive freedom

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<sup>139</sup> Graham, Stephen and Marvin, Simon. 1997. *Telecommunications and the city: electronic spaces, urban places*. pp231-232.

<sup>140</sup> O’Dea, Edel. 1997.

approach, the absence of tools required to facilitate full involvement is also a flaw. Structural factors which influence the level or form of involvement of identifiable sub-groups should be considered, ensuring that factors supportive of domination are avoided. Bearing in mind the results of WOA research, we should be attentive to sectoral roles (glass walls), which may not show up in total-number counts.

#### Rationality of knowledge

- Can participants develop a rational understanding of the authority basis of power structures? Do participants have sufficient access to training and knowledge? Are participants able to construct a comprehensive and rational world-view from their knowledge base? The existence of expert cultures will provide an indicator of failures in this regard. Lack of rationality of knowledge is associated with problems such as loss of meaning, withdrawal of legitimation and crises of orientation/education.

#### Solidarity of members

- Do participants have a sense of membership, of belonging? Is there a clear sense of collective identity? Lack of solidarity may be associated with breakdowns in the reproductive structures such as insecurity of collective identity, anomie and alienation.

#### Colonisation by systems

- This is the only measure to be expressed strictly in the negative, and relates amongst other things to the concept of reification. Do participants exercise

their imaginations solely within the existing bounds delimited by system rules and regulations?

Having developed, with a strong theoretical justification, this set of six factors, we can now move to apply it to our case-study, Galway's student radio station, Flirt FM.

# Chapter 4: Methodology

*“Some are building monuments,*

*Others, jotting down notes,”*

*- Quinn the Eskimo (The Mighty Quinn); Bob Dylan*

To reprise, the question we are addressing is the extent to which Flirt FM is meeting its responsibilities to volunteers arising from the AMARC Charter’s admonition that community radio stations

*“operate management, programming and employment practices which oppose discrimination and which are open and accountable to all supporters, staff and volunteers”.*

We have broken this task into six different measurable areas, vis:

The existence of public spaces in the station

Volunteer morale

Fair access for all to full involvement in the station

Rationality of Knowledge

Solidarity of members

Colonisation by systems

Given the focus of the study on volunteers, it is obviously important, in the first instance, to obtain information from and about volunteers themselves. Questions regarding volunteers' morale for instance are obviously best addressed by volunteers. Similarly, volunteers' lived experience of the reality of public spaces may differ from that outlined in the formal literature, such as the station's licence application form, or described by management.

However, this is not to dismiss these alternative sources. The formal literature can give us an insight into the vision of the station. The views of management are also important as they are ultimately the ones charged with implementing and maintaining station structures. Consequently, their views on what should be, and what is, the case will tell us much, for instance, about problems which have already been identified, and issues which have not yet been conceptualised within the station.

## ***Previous research***

Earlier Irish studies in this area have used a range of methodologies. The *Breaking Glass Walls*<sup>141</sup> report of Women On Air used questionnaires, distributed by station managers to staff, and open interviews with staff and station managers. The IRTC's report on the pilot project<sup>142</sup>, acting both as a chronicle of events and a collation of both formal research and the outcomes of various community radio forums, has a

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<sup>141</sup> Nexus Research Co-operative and Gibbons, Maria. May 1998.

<sup>142</sup> IRTC. June 1997.

more varied range of methodological tools in play. The profile of each station drew on the knowledge gained by the IRTC's community radio officer through ongoing informal contact with stations throughout the 18 month period, as well as documentary records (licence applications, schedules, correspondence and programme monitor reports prepared by IRTC staff). Nexus Research Co-operative was engaged to run a number of research workshops in a selected cross-section of community radio stations. Representatives of the stations themselves attended regular *Community Radio Forums* that featured a mixture of plenary discussions and workshop sessions. Again, the outcome of these was utilised. Finally, the IRTC undertook a series of interviews with a sample of those involved with each station.

## ***Consideration of options***

As my primary research question related to the openness and transparency of the station structures as regards volunteers, I saw it as necessary, of course to derive the formal structures of the station, but more pertinently to ascertain the lived experience of station volunteers. I proceed from the assumption that if station structures are open and transparent, then volunteers will view them as such. While the converse is not always the case the six-pronged analysis developed in the previous chapter also calls, in many respects, for direct analysis of volunteers' experiences and beliefs.

While the first criterion (the existence of public spaces) draws on what is essentially a documentary analysis of the station's formal structures, both this and the other five measures all rely largely on volunteers' experiences and beliefs. For example, volunteers' solidarity requires direct interrogation of volunteers, as does any assessment of volunteer morale. Hansen et al provide support for this approach in

suggesting that those researching media policy should follow their literature review with “*a piece of original research, for example, interviews, questionnaires*”<sup>143</sup>.

Having established this point, we can proceed to examine the various methods which might be available to us to achieve the latter task. Hansen et al look at participation, surveys and focussed group interviews<sup>144</sup>. Surveys can, of course, take the form of either questionnaires or interviews.

Observational research is dealt within depth in *Educational Research: An Introduction*<sup>145</sup>. There, stress is placed on:

- The desirability of using multiple observers separate from the researcher, “*in order to determine interrater reliability*”<sup>146</sup> and avoid subjectivity in reporting.
- The fact that “*obtaining data related to complex behaviour that is objectively observable and yet pertinent to the problem requires careful planning*”<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>143</sup> Hansen, Anders et al. 1998. *Mass communication research methods*. p81.

<sup>144</sup> Hansen, Anders et al. 1998.

<sup>145</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. *Educational Research: An Introduction*.

<sup>146</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. p521.

<sup>147</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. p466.

While Borg and Gall do refer to participant observation as one of a number of observational approaches, Hansen et al concentrate exclusively on this form.

One point of special importance in participant observation is the need to gain the trust of those being observed. This necessarily takes time.

It is to be further noted that “*participant observation will rapidly generate reams of data for later analysis*”<sup>148</sup>. Given the nature, and timetable, of the research project to be completed, and my own work commitments in Dublin, it became clear early in the planning process that observational techniques were not a practical approach in the circumstances.

## ***Choice of methods***

The methods which remain available include questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. With just over 60 active volunteers in the station at the time of the research, I decided that a questionnaire, distributed to all volunteers was practical. I would supplement the findings of the questionnaire by interviewing a selection of volunteers. In addition, I decided to conduct interviews with the station manager and a number of members of the board of directors.

While I viewed the questionnaire as being most useful in gathering quantitative information, Borg and Gall have noted the unique advantage of the interview in allowing “*the research worker to follow-up leads and thus obtain more data and*

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<sup>148</sup> Hansen, Anders et al. 1998. p57.

*greater clarity*”<sup>149</sup>. Thus, each interview is unique in that it concentrates on the specific experiences of the interviewee, with room to adapt and develop on themes which emerge within the interview process. On the other hand, Borg and Gall also note that “*the interview is often misused to collect quantitative data that can be measured more accurately by other methods*”<sup>150</sup>. The value of an initial questionnaire process to gather this type of information is thus recognised. Hansen et al note, similarly, that “*these two methods should not be seen as antagonistic, and they can be combined to good effect*”<sup>151</sup>. They give an example of Morrison’s study of broadcasting where a survey was supplemented by a series of focus groups, and claim that

*“in this way, the broad data obtained from the survey could be supported by more qualitative information which would give depth to bold figures”*<sup>152</sup>.

This supports the proposal for questionnaires and interviews with volunteers. Why, though, the need for interviews with the station manager and company directors? It has already been mentioned that documentary evidence is available outlining the formal structure of the station. However, while useful, this information is necessarily

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<sup>149</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. p437.

<sup>150</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. p437.

<sup>151</sup> Hansen, Anders et al. 1998. p233.

<sup>152</sup> Hansen, Anders et al. 1998. p233.

limited in nature. Much of it was developed in or around the time of the station's application for a new licence contract in early 1998, and as such can be expected to put a positive gloss on the situation within the station, and to deal with aspirational expectations relating to the future of the station. In addition, three years is more than a generation in student broadcasting, and the situation on the ground may have changed substantially.

Interviews can reveal how the station's structures and activities have actually developed, and give an accurate picture of the current situation. They can also give information on the desires and attitudes of board members, in particular, which will be especially useful in delimiting realistic proposals in the final section of this document.

## ***Questionnaire***

Having decided on the main research tools to be employed, it remained to carry out the research. I started with the questionnaire. This had three major sections. The first collected demographic information, the second determined the respondents' views on various aspects of the station. The third related to how the respondents felt certain types of decisions should be taken.

In deciding what types of decisions to examine I initially considered holding a focus group to identify what types of decisions were of most interest to volunteers. However, I abandoned this idea as being of limited merit. It would involve a large outlay of resources for a limited return, might introduce biases (would volunteers be more likely to suggest decision areas in which they wished volunteers to have an

active input?) and was ultimately impractical within the timeline of the project, given the lack of a third term in NUI, Galway in the 2000/01 academic year.

The various stages in questionnaire work are:

- Questionnaire design
- Piloting
- Revision
- Administration of questionnaire
- Analysis of data<sup>153</sup>

In designing the questionnaire, I felt that consistency of approach in question format would improve clarity of the questionnaire for respondents. Borg and Gall recommend the use of closed form questions, as these allow efficient analysis of results<sup>154</sup>. At the same time, I was aware of the benefit of open questions in capturing information not expected by the researcher.

I decided to group the questions into sections such as ‘knowledge of structures’, ‘equal access’ etc, and to include an open question allowing extra comments by the respondent, at the end of each section. The closed questions were generally of the form:

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<sup>153</sup> Hansen, Anders et al. 1998. p245.

<sup>154</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. p419.

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)*

|   |                     |                           |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------|
| X | This is a statement | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------|

I piloted the questionnaire with three former volunteers on 25 March 2001, and used this experience, and the comments provided by respondents, to hone the questionnaire layout and content.

The questionnaire itself was completed from 2 April to 6 April 2001. I had obtained a list of active volunteers from the station manager. Over the course of the week, individually addressed envelopes containing the questionnaires were distributed by the station manager to volunteers as they arrived in the station to produce their shows. Each envelope contained a letter of transmittal<sup>155</sup>, a questionnaire, and a return envelope, addressed to myself. Upon completion, volunteers were to place the questionnaire in the envelope, seal it and hand it to the station manager, The manager would then hand the volunteer a ticket, for a raffle for record vouchers. It was hoped that this inducement, and the promise of station access to the research findings, would encourage a high response rate.

In the end, 50 volunteers responded, from an initial list of 62. This gives a response rate of 80.6%, which was ahead of the target response rate of 75%.

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<sup>155</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. p427; Appendix C

## ***Interviews***

Face-to-face interviews were completed, following the completion of the questionnaire, with a cross section of volunteers, chosen by length of service, gender, college and seniority (denoted by rank or position). Interviews were also completed with the station manager, the chair of the board of directors and another member of the board. Interviews were recorded onto minidisc. Due to the circumstances, it was felt that the respondents were unlikely to be uncomfortable when faced with a microphone and recorder<sup>156</sup>. The form of the interviews was largely unstructured, with an initial list of areas of enquiry guiding the overall question choice. Due to the interrelation of areas such as communication, training and access difficulties, respondents often moved from one area to another without prompting from the interviewer.

## ***Workshop***

In addition to this research, which helped to map the findings which we will discuss shortly, I decided to run a seminar or workshop at which a draft of the findings would be presented, and where volunteers themselves would have an opportunity to consider possible courses of action.

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<sup>156</sup> Borg, Walter R. and Gall, Meredith D. 1983. p446.

The workshop was duly run on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2001. Many of the ideas which were discussed in this workshop have been incorporated into the final chapter of this document, and have been noted as such.

Apart from the practical benefits inherent in utilising volunteers' imaginations to generate ideas, I felt that the workshop was a necessary step given the thesis upon which my research was based. If management structures are to be open and transparent, it makes sense that recommendations which may have an important bearing on the future structures of the station should themselves be generated through a process of communicative action.

At the request of the board of directors, the workshop was incorporated into a larger workshop which looked at several aspects of station operations. With a two year licence extension being granted by the IRTC in July (to July 2005) the workshop provided the opportunity to start planning for the next four years.

It is to be noted that while the workshop was useful it was not itself free from methodological biases. Looking at the six factors, we can see that :

- It provided a significant public space for discussion of matters relating to the station. [SPACE]
- Those who participated expressed their satisfaction with the event [MORALE]
- Due in part to the decision not to broadcast during the summer months, it proved difficult to contact many volunteers. Those resident in Galway were at an obvious advantage [FAIR ACCESS]

- The workshop provided an opportunity to clarify matters on which volunteers may have been unsure and to disabuse participants of myths and rumours [RATIONALITY OF KNOWLEDGE]
- Volunteers gained an opportunity to meet and interact with others in a structured yet informal setting, learning to appreciate the common sense-of-purpose of all volunteers [SOLIDARITY]
- Volunteers were encouraged to ‘think outside the box’, ignoring system restrictions when generating ideas. [COLONISATION]

In the weeks leading to the workshop, an attempt was made to contact as many volunteers as possible. Apart from myself as facilitator, the workshop had an attendance of six volunteers, 2 directors and the station manager. The volunteer attendance represents 17.1% of those who had indicated an intention to remain involved with the station next year (though, of course, due to anonymity, I cannot be sure that all those attending had indicated an intention to remain involved next year).

# Chapter 5: Questionnaire Findings

*“Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it”.*

*- Civil Disobedience; Henry David Thoreau*

There are two sets of field research results to be examined. First there is the questionnaire that was distributed to active volunteers. Out of a potential pool of 62 named volunteers, 50 returned completed forms, a response rate of over 80%. This provides a large volume of quantitative data on the station, across the range of volunteer experiences, as well as some qualitative information from the responses to open questions.

In this chapter, I outline the results of the questionnaire. I examine the results sequentially, detailing the responses section by section, with a breakdown by the various demographic details identified. This section will also involve a certain amount of cross-tabulation of responses to different questions, where appropriate, and an outline of the main themes identified in the interviews.

In the next chapter, I will look at the results of the review of station documentation and the interviews conducted with a cross-section of those involved with the station. These provide qualitative information on how decisions are taken, what information flows exist, and what structures people believe would help the station to fulfil its mandate. That chapter will also incorporate a discussion of the interview findings outlined in this chapter, utilising the six factors developed earlier. For each of the

factors identified, I will compend the relevant information gained from the research, allowing the development of a picture of Flirt FM's situation in regard to that factor.

## ***Questionnaire overview***

The station has 62 active volunteers. This excludes those involved on the board of directors, who are largely to be considered a separate group, insofar as they are largely (though not exclusively) uninvolved with programming and have a different functional role within the station.

Of the 62 active volunteers, 50 responded to the questionnaire. Instances of non-completion can partly be explained by volunteers who did not attend to produce their radio programme on the week in which the forms were distributed, and therefore did not receive copies of the questionnaire. To this extent, those who are more diligent or dedicated in their commitment to their programme are likely to be somewhat over-represented in the responses received.

With a total response rate of 80.6%, however, I do not expect this to be a significant factor in itself. The concept of volunteer involvement in management must, by its nature, concentrate on currently active, and dedicated, volunteers.

Respondents were asked to provide a range of demographic details, including gender, year of birth, home residence and how long they have been involved with the station.

Moving to the open questions in the questionnaire, there are ten open questions. Every respondent answered at least 1 open question and 4 answered all 10.

**Table 5 Rate of completion of open questions**

| <i>Question</i> | <i>Area</i>               | <i>Responses</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 11              | <i>Reason for joining</i> | 34               |
| 16              | <i>Aim of station</i>     | 28               |
| 20              | <i>Satisfaction</i>       | 25               |
| 24              | <i>Knowledge</i>          | 17               |
| 32              | <i>Structures</i>         | 19               |
| 40              | <i>Influence</i>          | 24               |
| 44              | <i>Music policy</i>       | 22               |
| 48              | <i>Scheduling</i>         | 18               |
| 53              | <i>Promotion</i>          | 28               |
| 55              | <i>Future involvement</i> | 47               |

## ***Gender of volunteers***

Of the 50 respondents, 31 were male and 19 were female, which corresponds closely to the overall station makeup according to an analysis of the 62 names provided by the station manager. Henceforth I shall refer to volunteers rather than respondents, except where I want to differentiate between statistics obtained from respondents and total numbers.

## ***Age of volunteers***

70% of volunteers were born on or after 1979, meaning that they are 22 or under in 2001. A further 12% were born between 1976 and 1978 (turn 23, 24 or 25 this year) with 10% born between 1972 and 1975, and 8% born prior to 1972. One student did

not specify their year of birth. As one would expect, long-serving volunteers tend to be older than newer volunteers

**Table 6 Year of birth and length of service with the station**

| <i>Born\joined</i>   | <i>N/A</i> | <i>1995/96</i> | <i>1997</i> | <i>1998</i> | <i>1999</i> | <i>2000/01</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------------|------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Prior to 1972</i> |            |                |             | 2%          | 2%          | 4%             | 8%           |
| <i>72-76</i>         |            | 4%             | 4%          | 2%          |             | 4%             | 14%          |
| <i>77-79</i>         |            | 2%             | 4%          | 4%          | 2%          | 4%             | 16%          |
| <i>1980</i>          |            | 2%             |             | 4%          | 6%          | 4%             | 16%          |
| <i>1981</i>          |            |                |             | 6%          | 8%          | 8%             | 22%          |
| <i>1982</i>          | 2%         |                |             |             | 4%          | 10%            | 16%          |
| <i>1983</i>          |            |                |             |             |             | 4%             | 4%           |
| <i>1984</i>          |            |                |             |             | 2%          |                | 2%           |
| <i>N/A</i>           |            |                |             | 2%          |             |                | 2%           |
| <i>Total</i>         | 2%         | 8%             | 8%          | 20%         | 24%         | 38%            | 100%         |

**Table 7 Gender and length of service with station**

| <i>Joined\Gender</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| <i>1995/96</i>       | 2%          | 6%            | 8%           |
| <i>1997</i>          | 8%          |               | 8%           |
| <i>1998</i>          | 12%         | 8%            | 20%          |
| <i>1999</i>          | 12%         | 12%           | 24%          |
| <i>2000/01</i>       | 26%         | 12%           | 38%          |
| <i>N/A</i>           | 2%          |               | 2%           |
| <i>Total</i>         | 62%         | 38%           | 100%         |

## ***Home residence of volunteers***

76% of volunteers are from Galway city or county. Again, this is unrepresentative of the origin of students in the two colleges. Even allowing for mature students and others who may have moved allegiance to the city, it would appear that students from outside the county are underrepresented.

Male volunteers are more likely to come from the city with female volunteers being slightly more likely to come from the county.

**Table 8 Gender and place of residence**

| <i>Home\Gender</i>   | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| <i>Galway city</i>   | <i>36%</i>  | <i>20%</i>    | <i>56%</i>   |
| <i>Galway county</i> | <i>12%</i>  | <i>8%</i>     | <i>20%</i>   |
| <i>Elsewhere</i>     | <i>14%</i>  | <i>8%</i>     | <i>22%</i>   |
| <i>N/A</i>           | <i>0%</i>   | <i>2%</i>     | <i>2%</i>    |
| <i>Total</i>         | <i>62%</i>  | <i>38%</i>    | <i>100%</i>  |

## ***Place of study of volunteers***

In question 4, I sought information on whether respondents were students at NUI, Galway, GMIT or neither. The results of this, tabulated against gender, are outlined in the table below. As can be seen, male NUI, Galway students constitute the largest group of volunteers, with fully half falling into this category.

**Table 9 Gender and college association**

|  | <i>NUI, Galway</i> | <i>GMIT</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--|--------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
|  |                    |             |                |              |

|               |    |   |   |    |
|---------------|----|---|---|----|
| <i>Male</i>   | 25 | 2 | 4 | 31 |
| <i>Female</i> | 13 | 1 | 5 | 19 |
| <i>Total</i>  | 38 | 3 | 9 | 50 |

A certain number of those listed as not being a student of either college are (recent) former students of one of the colleges, or are based, in a non-student capacity, on one of the campuses.

Irrespective of this last point, it is obvious that male students and NUI, Galway students dominate far out of correspondence to their numbers. A male student in NUI, Galway is more than two and a half times as likely to become involved with the station as a female student.

### ***Length of service with station***

If anything, this situation is getting worse, with over 68% of new (NUI, Galway) volunteers in 2000/01 being male. In contrast, only 39.5% of full-time students, and 38.8% of all students in the University in the 2000/01 academic year were male<sup>157</sup>.

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<sup>157</sup> NUI, Galway. *Student numbers in NUI, Galway.*

**Table 10 Gender and college compared to total student body**

| <i>Group</i>                             | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
|--|-------------|---------------|
| <i>NUI, Galway full-time students</i>    | 39.5%       | 60.5%         |
| <i>NUI, Galway students</i>              | 38.8%       | 61.2%         |
| <i>Volunteers</i>                        | 62%         | 38%           |
| <i>Volunteers who started in 00/01</i>   | 68%         | 32%           |
| <i>Of NUI, Galway volunteers:</i>        |             |               |
| <i>- All NUI, Galway volunteers</i>      | 65.8%       | 34.2%         |
| <i>- Volunteers who started in 00/01</i> | 58%         | 42%           |

Similarly, GMIT students are obviously grossly underrepresented in the volunteer corps<sup>158</sup>.

It should be noted that a small number of students from each institution are based on campuses outside Galway city. However, this is only a small portion of the numbers of each, and is unlikely to materially affect the overall picture.

## ***Time usage/socialisation of volunteers***

In question 6, I examined the time usage and socialisation of volunteers. The median study done by both male and female volunteers is 25 hours per week. There are differences between the genders in terms of paid employment. 38% of volunteers do no paid work (47% of female volunteers), 36% do up to 16 hours a week (31.5% of female volunteers) while 26% of volunteers do 20 or more hours per week (21% of

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<sup>158</sup> GMIT. *Student statistics 2000/2001*.

female volunteers). When female volunteers do work, they work fewer hours than male volunteers.

58% of all volunteers spend no time on college society committee work. Of those who do spend time, male volunteers spend more time, with one third of male volunteers active in society committees claiming to spend over 10 hours per week on this activity. Female volunteers, in contrast, all claim to spend 5 hours or less a week on committee work.

20% of volunteers are involved in committees outside of college, with male volunteers again reporting more hours involved than female volunteers.

Only 14% of volunteers reported involvement with radio society committees. The low numbers may have been a factor in accentuating gender difference here, with 10% of female volunteers and 16% of male volunteers reporting involvement.

The picture changes when we turn to sport, Overall numbers are still low, with 26% of volunteers involved with sport outside college, and 20% involved with sport in college. (Note that some volunteers fall into both groups). However, 19.4% of male volunteers are involved with either activity, while 21% of female volunteers are involved with college sport, and 36.8% are involved with sport outside college.

The figures given for 'socialising' by volunteers give a median of 10 hours per week for both male and female volunteers.

## ***Why volunteers became involved with the station***

Moving beyond demographic factors in questions 7 to 11, I examined the reasons why volunteers became involved with the station. I asked respondents to rank each of four possible motives on a scale of 1 to 7. In question 11 respondents were given space to provide their own thoughts on the reason(s) for their initial involvement.

Statement no 10 (I became involved because I enjoy radio) got by far the most positive response (96% responded in the positive) of the four statements.

58% of volunteers agreed that they became involved in order to make radio that ‘affects people’, with 26% disagreeing. Male volunteers were far more likely to respond positively to this statement, with fully 29% giving the statement a ‘7’, and only 22.6% responding in the negative, while only 47.4% of female volunteers gave a positive mark to the statement.

**Table 11 Desire to make radio that affects people**

|                 | <i>Overall</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| <i>Positive</i> | 58.0%          | 64.5%       | 47.4%         |
| <i>Neutral</i>  | 16.0%          | 12.9%       | 21.1%         |
| <i>Negative</i> | 26.0%          | 22.6%       | 31.6%         |

Career aspirations also showed up gender differences

**Table 12 Career aspirations and gender**

|                 | <i>Overall</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| <i>Positive</i> | 38%            | 35.5%       | 42.1%         |
| <i>Neutral</i>  | 30%            | 25.8%       | 36.8%         |
| <i>Negative</i> | 32%            | 38.7%       | 21.1%         |

Only 28% credited friends' involvement as a factor in their becoming involved. Again, gender differences emerge, with 35.6% of male volunteers answering positively to the statement and only 15.8% of female volunteers answering in the positive.

**Table 13 Involvement due to friends**

|                 | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| <i>Positive</i> | 35.6%       | 15.8%         | 28%          |
| <i>Neutral</i>  | 3.3%        | 21%           | 10%          |
| <i>Negative</i> | 61.1%       | 63.1%         | 62%          |

In summary, female volunteers are more likely to become involved because they want a career in radio, while males are more likely to become involved because they have friends in the station or they want to 'make radio that affects people'.

Moving beyond gender differences, students from Galway city or county are more likely to cite friends' involvement as a factor than those from without the county.

**Table 14 Involvement of friends versus home residence**

|                      | <i>Positive</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Negative</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Galway city</i>   | 34%             | 8%             | 14%             |
| <i>Galway county</i> | 8%              | 0%             | 12%             |
| <i>Elsewhere</i>     | 18%             | 2%             | 2%              |
| <i>N/A</i>           | 2%              | 0%             | 0%              |
| <i>Total</i>         | 62%             | 10%            | 28%             |

In response to question 11, many volunteers mentioned music. Several mentioned being able to play “*my music*” or a specific style of music, with some wanting to cater for the “*discerning music listener*” or to meet with people with similar taste in music. Some merely found the idea of involvement “*interesting*”, “*fun*” or a challenge, while others cited the “*fantastic facility*” and the fact that the station “*was prepared to take in inexperienced people*”. A number became involved in order to meet people (one specifying people with different musical tastes) while others claim that “*I like talking to myself and others*”.

Several referred to the involvement of friends, or their interest in a future career, while one mentioned that “*mainstream is so boring*” and another mentioned providing a “*voice for students and for other minority groups*”.

## ***The primary roles of the station***

The next area surveyed was what volunteers felt the primary role of the station should be. Volunteers were presented with four statements of the form “*A primary aim of Flirt FM should be to ...*”, and were asked to grade each on a scale of 1 to 7. The four suggested roles were:

To provide information;

To provide a creative outlet;

To provide an alternative;

To act as a social outlet.

There was also space for volunteers to add their own comments.

94% of volunteers responded positively to the “*creative outlet*” role. 90% of volunteers agreed with the “*provide an alternative*” role. Despite the slightly lower overall rating, the ‘alternative’ role got a higher proportion of 6 and 7 responses (agree strongly) than the ‘creative outlet’ role.

62% of volunteers classify providing information as a primary aim of the station, with 20% disagreeing. Those who disagree are likely to be recent volunteers (joined 1999-2001) while those who have been with the station for longer are more likely to agree.

Only 56% of volunteers classified being a social outlet as a primary aim, with fully 30% disagreeing. More recent volunteers are more likely to classify this as a primary aim, with 67.9% of those who joined since 1999 agreeing.

In question 16, an open question relating to the purpose of Flirt FM, many respondents mentioned music, either “*to play your own choice of music*” or, as one person memorably put it, “*to get rid of pop*”. Two volunteers said the purpose should be to entertain. Eight students mentioned providing experience, with some of these also mentioning providing alternatives or serving the community. One mentioned that the station should be relayed within campus, which doesn’t currently happen. Eight volunteers also mentioned providing information, with student and

SU/College/Society information being particularly mentioned. Some were complimentary of the stations current role in this regard. One volunteer warned that too much information would bore listeners.

A small number of responses contained openly negative comments. One volunteer commented that while NUI, Galway wants the station because it looks good, the University has little commitment to the station. Another claimed that the station is a *“huge but underexploited resource”*, while one claimed that *“Flirt should be something anyway, something else than it is now anyway”*.

One volunteer’s summary of the stations purposes is *“to give outlets to any and every thing marginalised by commercial radio”*.

## ***Volunteer satisfaction***

When I moved to measure volunteer satisfaction, I found that all respondents gave between a 4 and 7 (neutral to agree strongly) in response to the statement *“I enjoy being involved with Flirt FM”*, with 22% giving a 6 and a further 70% giving a 7. All those who responded with a 4 or 5 had answered in the negative to the statement *“I became involved with Flirt FM because my friends are involved with Flirt FM”*.

76% of volunteers agreed that their involvement with the station was good for their CV, with 14% disagreeing. All those who disagreed had also disagreed with the statement *“I became involved with Flirt FM because I want to have a career in radio”*

74% of volunteers agreed that they felt part of the station, with female volunteers being slightly more likely to respond positively. Having friends involved does not

appear to be a relevant factor here, though more recent volunteers (joined 1999 to date) are less likely to have responded positively.

Reading the comments in response to question 20, the open question that followed, the overwhelming sense of enthusiasm is unavoidable. *“I’ve enjoyed every minute”*, *“I’m part of a team”*, *“It was brilliant”*.

However, there were a number of areas of discontent. Several volunteers referred to a lack of contact with the greater volunteer body. *“I never see other Flirters”*, wrote one, while another commented that *“apart from my own show, I am not very aware of other people in the station”*, and others agreed.

A number of volunteers commented specifically on promotion of the station. While one recently recruited volunteer felt that *“It’s nice to share songs ... no matter how much/little are listening in”*, another commented that *“I enjoy doing the shows but its very disheartening when nobody listens”*.

Many volunteers talked about their level of involvement with the station. Some lamented their lack of greater involvement, sometimes implying time and study demands as limiting factors. Others expressed a desire to know more about how the station is run, one student commenting that she is *“not sure of the distinction between radio station and radio society”*.

Perhaps underscoring the lack of clear division, involvement on ‘the committee’ (the radio society committee) was seen as a factor in heightening involvement both by those who had been on the committee, and those recently elected. Another volunteer who wished to be more involved felt that she would *“have to be pushed into it more by the manager and staff”*.

Finally, one volunteer felt that his enjoyment was hampered by the fact that “*not enough effort [is] made by everyone involved*”, while another believed that there is “*little room/support for ‘breaking boundaries’*” and that “*my opinion does not really count*”.

## ***Volunteer knowledge***

Questions 21 to 24 addressed the issue of knowledge of the volunteers’ role, and of the structure of the station. 58% of volunteers claim to know how the station is organised, with 24% disagreeing. Female volunteers are less likely to have answered in the positive, and slightly more likely to answer in the negative. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, newer volunteers are much less likely to claim to know how the station is organised.

In terms of knowledge of their own role, no volunteer answered in the negative to the statement “*I know how to do my job in Flirt FM*” with 48% giving a 7 and 30% a 6. Only 68.4% of female volunteers gave a 6 or 7. Interestingly, newer volunteers are most likely to give a 6 or 7.

**Table 15 Knowledge of role and length of service**

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| <i>Joined</i> | <i>6-7</i>   |
| <i>95-98</i>  | <i>72.2%</i> |
| <i>99</i>     | <i>75%</i>   |
| <i>00-01</i>  | <i>83.3%</i> |

60% of volunteers agreed with the statement “*Flirt FM provides sufficient training for volunteers*”, with 24% disagreeing. Newer volunteers are more likely to agree, as are male volunteers. Those who want a career in radio are less likely to agree, with only 52.6% of this group answering in the positive.

In response to question 24, the open question, five volunteers indicated that they felt well informed, with one commenting that “*everyone is friendly and glad to help you out*”. Of the remaining 12 volunteers who commented, four indicated that they did not feel well informed with one commenting that “*you wonder who oversees the place. Sometimes feels as though there is a radio God watching over us*” and another complaining that “*it is rarely publicised anywhere*”. Two further volunteers called for more training and two for more posters around college and “*talking between committee and general volunteers*”.

Three volunteers felt reasonably well informed but “*only from gleaning info myself*”, or complained that “*I feel in touch, but sometimes things aren’t said*”, while one mentioned “*BOM [Board of Management] decisions*” as the only area where they felt ignorant.

Finally, one volunteer’s enigmatic comment was “*I was never asked to train volunteers. I would have if asked. That’s the way I am, dammit*”.

## **Station structures**

The next section of the questionnaire dealt with volunteers' impressions of station structures. In question 25 volunteers were asked to grade the statement "*Flirt FM has an accessible and open structure (for example, input from volunteers is listened to)*". 64% of volunteers agreed with this statement, with 14% giving the statement a 7, 28% a 6 and 22% a 5. Newer volunteers were more likely to agree, with 73.7% of 00/01 volunteers agreeing. However, only 58.3% of those who joined in 1999, and 55.6% of those who joined before 1999 agreed. 22% of volunteers disagreed (4% were neutral) with long serving volunteers being more likely to fall into this group. There is little variation by gender.

In contrast with the issue of accessible structures, only 40% felt that the station structures are transparent (i.e. that volunteers can easily see how decisions are made) with 34% disagreeing. Those who joined before 1999 are more likely to disagree (i.e. have a negative image of the transparency of the structures).

28% of volunteers believe no change is necessary to Flirt FM structures, with 50% disagreeing. Long-time volunteers are more likely to believe that no change is necessary (37.8%), but are also slightly more likely (52.6%) to disagree with the statement with very few of this group giving a 4 (neutral) in response.

Interestingly, only 20% of volunteers believe Flirt FM should have more formal structures, with 46% disagreeing. However, if we restrict ourselves to those who gave a negative response to the previous question (i.e. disagree that no change is necessary) 32% believe that there should be more formal structures, with 40% disagreeing.

58% of volunteers believe their views are respected in the station, with more recent volunteers being less likely (42.1% of 00/01 intake) to agree and long term volunteers being more likely (66.7%).

A slightly lower 52% believe their views are taken into account in the station. The new/long-term divide was more striking here, with 36.8% of 00/01 intake and 72.2% of pre 1999 volunteers agreeing.

Only 42% of volunteers believe that there is sufficient consultation in the station, with 32% disagreeing. New volunteers are less likely to agree and are slightly more likely to disagree. Female volunteers are more likely than male volunteers to agree that there is sufficient consultation.

Views on whether there is sufficient consultation seem to be quite strongly related to whether a volunteer feels part of the station (question 19). All those who gave a 6 or 7 in answer to question 31 gave a 5-7 answer to question 19, in contrast to only 74% of the total population. Looked at a different way, of those who answered 5-7 to question 19, only 21.6% gave question 31 a 1-3, while 51.4% gave it a 5-7.

**Table 16 Views on whether there is sufficient consultation**

|                            | <i>Negative</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Positive</i> | <i>No response</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <i>Male</i>                | 41.9%           | 16.1%          | 38.7%           | 3.2%               |
| <i>Female</i>              | 15.8%           | 31.6%          | 47.4%           | 5.3%               |
| <i>95-98 intake</i>        | 27.8%           | 11.1%          | 55.6%           | 5.6%               |
| <i>99-01 intake</i>        | 35.5%           | 29%            | 32.3%           | 3.2%               |
| <i>Answered 5-7 to Q19</i> | 21.6%           | 21.6%          | 51.4%           | 5.4%               |
| <i>Total</i>               | 32%             | 22%            | 42%             | 4%                 |

Three volunteers answered question 32 by praising the informal nature of the station, saying “*It’s casual, but organised well*”. Three more volunteers called for more simple structures, with one claiming that “*It is undemocratic, unalternative way of organising people*”.

Two further volunteers were “*happy with management*”, with one claiming that “*as far as volunteers are concerned, it is pretty simple, manager = God, the first and last word*”. Another volunteer commented on the level of responsibility placed on the manager and called for part-time helpers, while another called for a full-time PRO.

Other suggestions included greater use of the website and/or email bulletins and a suggestion box for volunteer ideas. One volunteer called for “*greater input from volunteers*” and another claimed that there is “*not enough done by Radio Soc*”.

While one volunteer claimed to know “*very little about Flirt FM structures*” another felt that “*for those not as familiar with the committee, it might be a bit intimidating to speak up*” and also that “*older past member[s] of the [sic] Flirt FM sometimes influence the running of the station too much*”.

## ***Equality of influence***

Only 28% of volunteers believe that “*In general, volunteers have equal influence in Flirt FM*”, with 50% disagreeing. More established volunteers are more likely to disagree – 55.6% as opposed to 48.4% of the 99-01 intake, but are also more likely to agree. There are no significant variances by gender or home residence.

**Table 17 Belief that all volunteers have equal influence**

|              | <i>Negative</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Positive</i> | <i>No response</i> |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <i>95-98</i> | 55.6%           | 11.1%          | 27.8%           | 5.6%               |
| <i>99-01</i> | 48.4%           | 22.6%          | 25.8%           | 3.2%               |
| <i>Total</i> | 50%             | 18%            | 28%             | 4%                 |

54% of volunteers agree that some informal groups in the station have more influence than others. Only 24% disagree. Interesting only two-thirds of those agreeing had disagreed that all volunteers had equal influence. However the majority of the remaining one-third had been neutral on that question. Perhaps more importantly, only 8% of those who had given a 1-3 in response to question 33 gave a 1-3 in response to question 34. The issue of informal groups would appear to be quite important in any examination of power imbalances in the station.

Male volunteers are slightly more likely (52.6%) to agree that some informal groups have more influence than others, while female volunteers are far more likely to disagree (36.8%).

60% of volunteers agree that male and female volunteers have equal influence in the station, with 6% disagreeing. Female volunteers are less likely to agree (and more likely to disagree) as are older volunteers (born prior to 1979).

**Table 18 Belief that male and female volunteers have equal influence**

|               | <i>No response</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>7</i> |
|---------------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Male</i>   | 3%                 | -        | 3%       | 29%      | 19%      | 23%      | 32%      |
| <i>Female</i> | 5%                 | 5%       | 5%       | 32%      | 5%       | 5%       | 42%      |
| <i>Total</i>  | 4%                 | 3%       | 4%       | 30%      | 8%       | 16%      | 36%      |

In contrast, only 14% agree that volunteers from NUI, Galway and those from GMIT have equal influence, with 66% disagreeing. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the depth of opinion, all GMIT volunteers responded in the negative, though to different extents.

**Table 19 Belief that GMIT and NUI, Galway volunteers have equal influence**

|              | <i>No response</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>7</i> |
|--------------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Total</i> | 4%                 | 20%      | 28%      | 18%      | 16%      | 8%       | 4%       | 2%       |

14% of volunteers agree with the statement that “*there are cliques within the volunteer body who try to exclude others*”, while 66% disagree. While this is a relatively low number, the extreme nature of the statement should be noted.

Male volunteers are more likely to agree (19%) and less likely to disagree (58%), as are the long-term volunteers.

**Table 20 Belief that there are cliques**

|                     | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Male</i>         | 10%                | 58%             | 13%            | 19%          |
| <i>Female</i>       | -                  | 68%             | 16%            | 5%           |
| <i>95-98 intake</i> | 6%                 | 56%             | 17%            | 3%           |
| <i>99-01 intake</i> | 6%                 | 74%             | 10%            | 3%           |
| <i>Total</i>        | 6%                 | 66%             | 14%            | 14%          |

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, most of those who testified as to the existence of cliques had earlier agreed that there were informal groups with more influence than others (question 34). However many of those who had agreed with statement 34 disagreed with statement 37 (that cliques exist).

**Table 21 Comparison of responses to questions 34 and 37**

| <i>Q34\Q37</i>     | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>No response</i> | 4%                 | -               | -              | -            |
| <i>Disagree</i>    | -                  | 22%             | 2%             | -            |
| <i>Neutral</i>     | -                  | 12%             | 2%             | 4%           |
| <i>Agree</i>       | 2%                 | 32%             | 10%            | 10%          |

62% of volunteers believe that experienced volunteers have more influence than other volunteers (question 38), with 20% disagreeing. Experienced volunteers are more likely to agree (72.2%) and less likely to disagree.

58% of volunteers believe that experienced volunteers should have more influence than other volunteers (question 39), while 26% disagree. There is little variation in terms of level of experience as regards agreeing, but newer volunteers are more likely to disagree (29%).

Comparing answers for question 38 and question 39, we can tentatively interpret situations where a volunteer gives a higher number answer to 38 than to 39 as meaning that experienced volunteers have more influence than they should have. Conversely, we can interpret situations where volunteers give a higher answer to question 39 as meaning that the volunteer believes that experienced volunteers have less influence than they should have.

36% of volunteers give a higher number answer to question 38 while 34% give a higher answer to question 39.

In answer to question 40, the open question on influence, three volunteers commented on the lack of GMIT involvement. Three others claimed that there is no clique in the

station “*any more*”, and four professed ignorance of structures, claiming, for example, that “*I come, do my show and leave*”.

Three volunteers mentioned that they felt that there were no “*groups*” in the station influencing “*other groups*” and that volunteers are treated fairly. Seven volunteers felt that while those with more experience or interest might have more influence, this was a reasonably fair situation, though one volunteer did allude to possible negative aspects, “*such as cliques, undue influence and stale approaches*”.

Other views expressed included that “*every organisation should have a hierarchy*” that “*the role of the radio society isn’t fully exploited*” and that the station is a “*very disconnected bunch of groups*”.

Finally, one volunteer made a plea “*for all the volunteers to go on the piss, as an added incentive to joining radio/radio soc*”.

## ***Music policy***

In questions 41 to 53, I addressed various areas of policy, starting with music policy. 24% of volunteers agree that “*Flirt FM should have a formal policy on what restrictions (if any) exist regarding what music can be played on air*” (question 41), with 54% disagreeing – some strongly (19.4% gave a response of 1). Male volunteers are far less likely to agree (19.4%) and far more likely to disagree (64.5%), as are newer volunteers (22.6% agree and 61.3% disagree).

**Table 22 Belief that there should be a formal music policy**

|                     | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>95-98 intake</i> | 5.6%               | 44.4%           | 22.2%          | 27.8%        |
| <i>99-01 intake</i> | 3.2%               | 61.3%           | 12.9%          | 22.6%        |
| <i>Male</i>         | 6.5%               | 64.5%           | 9.7%           | 19.4%        |
| <i>Female</i>       | -                  | 38.8%           | 31.6%          | 31.6%        |
| <i>Total</i>        | 4%                 | 54%             | 18%            | 24%          |

However, 44% of volunteers believe “*the station manager should have the power to stop a track being played if (s)he feels it is inappropriate*” (question 42), with 38% disagreeing. 45.2% of male volunteers support this approach, with 41.9% opposing it. There is a marked difference between the beliefs of newer and more long-term volunteers, with newer volunteers continuing to oppose this form of control.

**Table 23 Belief that station manager should have the power to stop specific tracks**

|                     | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>95-98 intake</i> | 5.6%               | 27.8%           | 11.1%          | 55.6%        |
| <i>99-01 intake</i> | 6.5%               | 45.2%           | 12.9%          | 35.5%        |
| <i>Male</i>         | 9.7%               | 41.9%           | 3.2%           | 45.2%        |
| <i>Female</i>       | -                  | 31.6%           | 26.3%          | 42.1%        |
| <i>Total</i>        | 6%                 | 38%             | 12%            | 44%          |

54% of volunteers believe that “*individual volunteers should have an absolute right to decide what music they want to play*” (question 43) with 38% disagreeing. Male volunteers are more likely to agree.

**Table 24 Belief that volunteers have an absolute right to play any music**

|             | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Male</i> | 6.5%               | 35.5%           | 3.2%           | 54.8%        |

|                     |      |       |      |       |
|---------------------|------|-------|------|-------|
| <i>Female</i>       | -    | 42.1% | 5.3% | 52.6% |
| <i>95-98 intake</i> | 5.6% | 50%   | -    | 44.4% |
| <i>99-01 intake</i> | 3.2% | 32.3% | 6.5% | 58.1% |
| <i>Total</i>        | 4%   | 38%   | 4%   | 54%   |

More experienced volunteers are less likely to agree with this statement and more likely to disagree.

**Table 25 Comparison of responses to questions 42 and 43**

| <i>Q42\Q43</i>     | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>No response</i> | 4%                 | -               | -              | 2%           |
| <i>Disagree</i>    | -                  | 12%             | 2%             | 24%          |
| <i>Neutral</i>     | -                  | 4%              | -              | 8%           |
| <i>Agree</i>       | -                  | 22%             | 2%             | 20%          |

Looking at the table above there are two interesting groups. One is the 12% who disagree with both statements. The second is the 20% who agree with both statements.

How do the first group propose, in the absence of Station Manager action, to regulate volunteer decision making? Looking at their responses to question 41, most oppose a formal policy on music, so we are still at a loss.

**Table 26 Views on music policy of those who disagree with questions 42 and 43**

|                             | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Number of volunteers</i> | 2        | 2        | 1        | 1        |

The second group, who believe both in the absolute right to volunteers to play what they want and the right of the Station Manager to stop tracks being played, are also generally opposed to a formal policy.

**Table 27 Views on music policy of those who agree with questions 42 and 43**

|                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <i>Number of volunteers</i> | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

In question 44, four volunteers address the type (genre) of music to be played on the station. One believed that the station should concentrate on alternative music and local bands, while another said “*all music should be allowed except for ‘pop’ and ‘dance’ music*”. In contrast, two volunteers called for more variety, with one claiming that “*a lot of volunteers are reluctant to join as they think it’s only alternative music*”.

Four volunteers commented that “*there should be no restrictions*” with two further volunteers advocating a watershed, after which “*anything goes*”. Another said that “*specialist shows should have more right to play whatever*”.

Eleven volunteers advocate various “*happy mediums*” with one suggesting “*guidelines*” rather than “*restrictions*” on what can be played, and another calling for decisions to be made in consultation with shows. Some felt that the station manager should only act in extreme cases.

One volunteer suggested that policy should be decided by “*voting at radio soc meeting*” or by survey.

## ***Programme scheduling***

Moving to programme scheduling, 74% of volunteers agree that “*there should be a formal programme schedule*” (question 45) with 12% disagreeing. Female volunteers are more likely to disagree, while long-term volunteers are more likely to agree.

54% of volunteers believe the schedule “*should be decided by the station manager*” (question 46), with 20% disagreeing. Male volunteers are more likely to agree, as are long-term volunteers.

36% of volunteers believe that the “*schedule should be decided by representatives of the volunteers*” (question 47) with 34% disagreeing. Long-term volunteers were more likely to disagree.

**Table 28 Belief that schedule should be decided by volunteer representatives**

|               | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Male</i>   | 6.5%               | 38.7%           | 19.4%          | 35.5%        |
| <i>Female</i> | 5.3%               | 26.3%           | 31.6%          | 36.8%        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 6%                 | 34%             | 24%            | 36%          |

Comparing the results of question 46 and question 47, we get the following table.

**Table 29 Comparison of responses to questions 46 and 47**

| <i>Q46\Q47</i>     | <i>No response</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>No response</i> | 4%                 | -               | -              | -            |
| <i>Disagree</i>    | -                  | 4%              | -              | 16%          |
| <i>Neutral</i>     | -                  | -               | 14%            | 8%           |
| <i>Agree</i>       | 2%                 | 30%             | 10%            | 12%          |

Here the double agree and double disagree combinations are less common than with music policy.

Four volunteers answered question 48, the open question, by saying that the schedule should be set by the station manager, “*hence the name manager*” according to one. One person said “*it should not be decided by the manager as he could then be accused of favouritism towards friends etc.*” Eight volunteers called for a collaborative or

consultative process, with one commenting that “*scheduling isn’t brain surgery*”. This view was echoed by a number (5) of people who made various suggestions regarding how the schedule should be structured, including a comment that seniority should get priority, by a volunteer who joined in 2000/2001.

## ***Station promotion***

Moving to promotion, fully 96% of volunteers believe that “*more should be done to promote Flirt FM to students*” (question 49) with 4% not responding and fully 80% giving a 7 in response.

82% believe that “*volunteers should have a responsibility to promote the station*” (question 50), with 4% disagreeing.

86% believe that “*volunteers should have a responsibility to promote their own shows*” (question 51), with, again, 4% disagreeing.

78% believe that “*promotion campaigns should be centrally co-ordinated*” (question 52), with 8% disagreeing. Those who disagreed with question 50 give a 6 or 7 to question 52, while those who disagree with question 52 tend to give a 6 or 7 to question 50.

Question 53 got a very high response, and reading the comments one can understand why. Volunteers are concerned that there is little knowledge regarding the station and are bursting with ideas. Seven volunteers suggested poster/flyer campaigns, including more use of the standard Flirt FM poster. Four suggested having the station played on campus. One suggested information on the students union website, a second

suggested prominent/permanent signs on NUI, Galway, and a third suggested advertising on TG4: “*Suil eile – Alternative Radio*”. Seven simply called for more promotion.

Several volunteers commented on the organisation of promotion. While some believe that “*promotion of the station should be everyone’s issue*”, others called for the Radio Soc to promote the station and another cautioned regarding the risk of disparate uncoordinated campaigns. The ideas of “*a big meeting on promotion that got everyone involved*” took this grassroots yet co-ordinated approach.

While one volunteer suggested a “*full-time (one-year) Station promotion officer*” as they had in response to question 32, another suggested “*a better system of communication between all volunteers so that ...they can promote the shows on air*”.

Finally, one volunteer claimed that they do, personally, promote the station.

## ***Intention to remain involved***

72% of volunteers claim that they plan to be involved next year. All 22% who answer in the negative explain in response to question 55 that they will either not be in their college, or in Galway, next year.

## Chapter 6: Other research

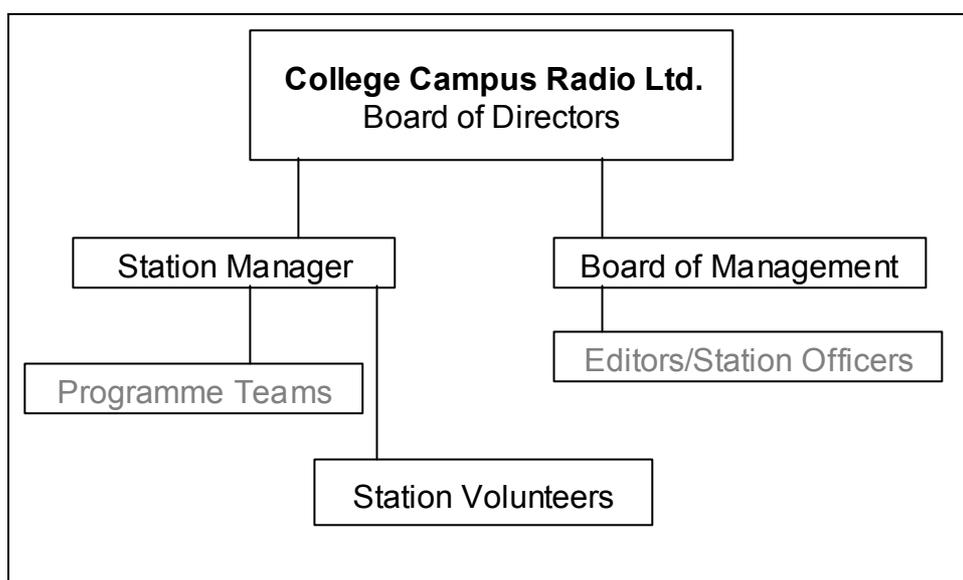
In this chapter I return to the six factors developed earlier. Addressing each factor individually, I use the analysis of questionnaire results already concluded, and the interviews conducted, to map the state of Flirt FM in relation to each of the factors. In addition, in relation to the first factor, the existence of spaces, I outline the formal station structures detailed in station documentation.

I conclude the chapter with a review of the main themes arising in relation to each factor, and an outline of the main areas where development would seem to be required. This outline will be used in the next chapter to develop detailed recommendations on actions to be taken in order to improve the station's compliance with its commitment to:

*“operate management, programming and employment practices which oppose discrimination and which are open and accountable to all supporters, staff and volunteers”*

## ***The existence of spaces***

Flirt FM's 1998 licence application outlines a structure that includes a board of directors, a board of management, the station manager and the volunteers<sup>159</sup>. Figure 5 is amended from one in a 1997 training manual for the station<sup>160</sup>, and outlines the structure as included in the subsequent 1998 application.



**Figure 5 Flirt FM structure, as outlined in 1997 training manual**

From the interviews conducted, it appears that while the board of management had been in operation, it has been, in practical terms, defunct for at least the last year.

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<sup>159</sup> Flirt FM/ College campus radio limited. 1998. *Application for a community of interest sound broadcasting contract.*

<sup>160</sup> Ó Baoill, Andrew. 1997. *Flirt FM Training manual for volunteer producers, presenters and technicians.*

Accounts of its effectiveness prior to this time vary, with some bemoaning the lack of a clear mandate, which lead to topics being discussed without a clear sense regarding what action could be taken by the board. Others felt that it had served as a useful forum for discussion.

A number of 'area heads' are currently in place, with varying degrees of effectiveness. The head of news is the editor of the daily news programme, while the two co-producers of the weekly arts show hold the head of arts position jointly. The station manager holds the position of head of music, and co-ordinates the receipt of promotional CDs for the library, while the head of Irish language programming and the head of sports have no specific responsibilities, other than being the most senior volunteers in that area and being assumed to have a general advocacy role.

It would appear, therefore, that there is currently no forum for discussion within the station, other than at board of directors level. Some volunteers commented on their lack of contact with other volunteers, with one interviewee saying "*[I only meet] those before my show, those after my show and the odd meeting in the corridor of the radio station*".

It is notable that 28% of volunteers cited friends' involvement as a factor in joining. It would appear that those who do not have friends involved may not have much interaction with other volunteers. However, one interviewee did suggest that becoming involved at committee level affords volunteers the opportunity to meet more volunteers than might otherwise be the case. Given that 56% of volunteers see being a social outlet as a primary role of the station, the lack of room for social contact is particularly worrying.

It would appear that the effective demise of the board of management was not a conscious decision, and may have arisen from a confusion or lack of certainty over whose role it might be to convene or reactivate it. The station manager was of the opinion that there was still sufficient room for volunteers to have their voices heard, and that they could “*bounce [ideas] against any number of walls in here*” through approaching him.

Although half of all volunteers disagree that no change is necessary to the station structures, only 20% believe that more formal structures are necessary. While just over half of volunteers believe that their views are taken into account in the station, only 42% believe that there is sufficient consultation in the station.

Several interviewees, however, were concerned that they were often not informed of decisions until they had been made, with one interviewee commenting on the short notice regarding schedule changes. Having less than a week’s notice could result in a volunteer finishing their show with “*tune in next week*”, to find out immediately after the show that the station would be closed.

Arising from concerns such as this, volunteers felt that there should be more meetings with volunteers, and continuous information flows – both from the station, and from volunteers in terms of ideas and suggestions. The internet was cited as a valuable communications tool in this regard.

## ***Volunteer morale***

Volunteer morale appears quite high overall. No volunteer disagreed with the statement “*I enjoy being involved with Flirt FM*”, while 92% of volunteers gave a 6 or

7 in answer. However, those who joined because of a friend's involvement are more likely to strongly agree with the statement.

A large majority of volunteers, 74%, also feel part of the station. Here, having friends involved is not a factor, but female volunteers are more likely to respond positively, with more recent volunteers less likely.

A number of areas of concern were identified in question 20 (the open question on enjoyment and feeling part of the station). These included lack of contact with other volunteers, lack of promotion of the station and lack of greater personal involvement (with greater involvement often being associated with committee membership).

The majority (56%) of volunteers feel that their views are respected in the station, with a slightly small number (52%) believing that their views are taken into account. This does leave a large number who did not agree with these statements. In addition, only 42% believe that there is sufficient consultation in the station. One point raised in interviews was the lack of information about station plans. For example, volunteers have received less than a week's notice of schedule changes, which has led to them giving inaccurate information to listeners. Several volunteers stated that they felt poorly informed in relation to issues facing the station, such as accommodation, and this was, for them, a source of significant disquiet.

70% of volunteers plan to remain involved next year, with "*'cos I love it*" being a typical explanation. For those who answered "No", not being in college or in Galway was the universal reason.

Overall then, morale is high, with such problems as exist being mainly related to:

Low volunteer interaction

Little promotion/listenership – the ‘why bother’ factor

A lack of clarity in station structure

A lack of information about station developments and news

A sense of not being brought into station structures

## ***Fair access for all***

The first, and most obvious, point to be made is that some groups are severely under-represented in the station. Only 3 GMIT students completed the survey. Even if a high number of non-completers were GMIT students, involvement would not reflect total student numbers<sup>161</sup>. Only 14% of volunteers felt that the influence of volunteers from the two institutions was well balanced in the station, with this being the most polarised of results to questions on influence within the station.

In addition, only 38% of volunteers are female, although over 60% of NUI, Galway students are female. Students whose home residence is Galway are also over-represented.

The reasons for each of these imbalances appear to be different, and they need to be examined separately.

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<sup>161</sup> See Appendices

## **GMIT involvement**

The physical barrier of having to travel across the city was often mentioned in interviews. It was suggested that more use of the existing facilities on Cluain Mhuire campus, or the creation of facilities on the main GMIT campus, would foster greater involvement.

The low level of promotion of the station, a fact consistently mentioned in questionnaires and interviews, meant that many GMIT students may not be aware of the station, or of the fact that it is a student station embracing both campuses, rather than merely an NUI, Galway station.

The current low levels of participation mean that GMIT volunteers often do not know any other volunteers from the college, and consequently are not in a position to organise themselves without aid from the station management.

One interviewee felt that volunteers from NUI, Galway should assist with the development of the station in GMIT, through assistance with recruitment, visits to GMIT campus etc.

## **Female involvement**

No clear reasons emerged for the low level of female participation. Female interviewees did not identify any negative factors within the station, and only 10% of female volunteers disagreed that male and female volunteers have equal access in the station. Female volunteers were more likely than male volunteers to say that they felt part of the station.

While volunteers were aware of the under-representation of GMIT students, they seemed not to be aware of the skewed figures for gender. One interviewee, when asked about whether the mix of volunteers was representative, described the situation as “*there’s some boys and some girls*”. Others, when the figures were brought to their attention, suggested that it was merely a temporary anomaly, which might be reversed next year.

One interviewee suggested that lower participation might result from female students perceiving radio as a male preserve. It was suggested that were female involvement to be given a higher profile, as part of the promotion of the station, that this might encourage more female involvement, by challenging the received impression.

Another volunteer suggested that lower rates of female involvement might reflect generally lower rates of female participation in student activities.

Looking at the data that we have to hand, it is interesting that female volunteers are more likely to want a career in radio, and less likely to want to make radio that affects people. This may indicate that those female students who are interested in a career in media will join the station in order to further that goal, but that, unlike with male students, the station has not succeeded in ‘reaching out’ to make contact with the ‘ordinary female student on the street’. The fact that female students are less likely to cite friends’ involvement is also a potentially significant fact.

### **Non-native involvement**

Little information emerged about this issue. It would appear that friends’ involvement is again an issue here. Also, the fact that several volunteers became involved before entering college – often through the secondary school broadcast scheme – will tend to

increase involvement from this group. As this scheme is a positive support for encouraging involvement from Galway students it is to be encouraged. However, it should be examined whether separate targeted supports should be put in place to assist/encourage non-native students, given that they will not have this support.

### **Relative influence of volunteers**

In questions 33 to 40 of the questionnaire I examined questions of relative influence. The majority of volunteers believe that there are informal groups within the station that have more influence than other volunteers. If volunteers feel disempowered this may inhibit their future involvement with the station.

### ***Rationality of knowledge***

A majority of volunteers are happy with the level of training provided to them. However, it would appear that this satisfaction relates mainly to basic training – equipment use and the like. There is little training other than an introductory course for new volunteers and an annual lecture in media law for all volunteers. This is reflected in the fact that newer volunteers are more likely to be satisfied with the training they have received. More experienced volunteers are more likely to mention training in documentary making, news programming etc as being areas which would be of use.

Many volunteers have little knowledge of the station structures. While 58% claim to know how the station is organised, many have at best a hazy knowledge of the existence of the board of directors, with many unsure of the difference between the board of directors and the board of management.

This lack of clarity often leads volunteers to blame ‘them’ for station difficulties, with college authorities/the board of directors/facilities managers being merged into a vague entity. While the station has had uncertainty regarding its future accommodation, this seems to have resulted in volunteers ascribing all problems to the same cause.

For example, (NUI, Galway) authorities were blamed for the fact that the station is not relayed on the sound systems in the college canteen and elsewhere. However the canteen is managed by a contract catering company, and is not within the direct control of university management.

Similarly, when questioned about music policy, volunteers often vested an almost mystical quality in concepts such as ‘free speech’ or ‘the watershed’. Some, including those at management level, appeared to believe that a watershed was a necessary and sufficient control. (The watershed is a British concept, and has no formal role in Irish law or broadcasting. It is a supplementary control instituted for terrestrial television). It is noteworthy that 32% of volunteers gave contradictory answers to statements in this section.

Some experienced volunteers have adopted a ‘mentoring’ approach, taking new volunteers into their programme teams in order to facilitate their development, and bring new ideas to the programme. It is unclear how effective this approach has been, as it has been limited in extent, and not recognised formally within the station.

## ***Solidarity of members***

74% of volunteers say that they feel part of Flirt FM. However, recent volunteers are less likely to agree.

The lack of contact between volunteers may be an inhibiting factor here. Several interviewees talked of how they only briefly met those on before or after them in the schedule, and one person claimed that “*everyone is a stranger to everyone*”.

This was not the universal response, however, and some volunteers talked of meeting others through society involvement. Some interviewees were of the opinion that some (other) volunteers would not be interested in heightening their involvement within the station. This view may be supported by one volunteer’s comment that “*I come, do my show and leave*”.

However, the comment of one volunteer, in relation to training, that “*I was never asked to train volunteers. I would have if asked*”, would seem to indicate that some volunteers are not given sufficient opportunities to raise their level of involvement to the extent they would desire. It appears that opportunities to meet other volunteers, and to become more involved with the station, are available, but depend upon volunteers taking the initiative in generating the opportunity, or coming to the personal attention of those co-ordinating, in this case, training.

In addition, the high level of support for volunteers taking responsibility for promotion of their own shows (86%) and the station (82%) indicate a degree of commitment to the station, though it is to be noted that few programme teams have spontaneously acted on this to date.

This reinforces the point that those who are quieter, or more reserved, may ‘slip through the net’. While volunteers may be interested in furthering their involvement, or assisting the station in new ways, they may not act upon this desire unless they are given positive encouragement to do so.

Even amongst those who expressed negative comments about the current state of the station, their commitment to attempting to improve the station was noteworthy. The high level of completion of the questionnaire, as well as volunteers’ interest in my research and willingness to be interviewed reflected a high level of commitment to the station, and of their sense of being part of the station.

## ***Colonisation by systems***

The comment by one volunteer that “*as far as volunteers are concerned, it is pretty simple, manager = God, the first and last word*” indicates how some volunteers relate to station structures. When questioned about structures or activities, many volunteers fell back on existing rules, which they seemed to take on faith, rather than interrogating the rationale behind them.

For example, as mentioned earlier, when asked about music policy, some referred to the ‘Watershed’ or to ‘free speech’, seeming to invest the terms with meaning which removed the need for them personally to interrogate the issues in question.

When the station manager was asked about what would happen if a volunteer wanted to play chart music, he said he would “*wave the licence at them*”. Elsewhere he commented that “*once the licence terms are met by the station manager that’s enough*”.

Volunteers referred to the licence too, with some believing that regulation prevented extension of broadcast hours, and therefore dismissing the possibility without consideration. (The station's licence contract commits it to a 40% talk quota, amongst others, but does not specifically limit the amount of hours which can be broadcast). The station manager explained his policy on when to broadcast as being based solely on the academic calendar.

Some felt that the current scheduling system resulted in a situation where volunteers aren't seen as part of the station, but "*just sub-ordinates who come in to fill-in for half-an-hour*". Another interviewee stressed the importance of viewing the station as a community, and not merely as "*students here for 6 months*".

When asked about tackling certain issues such as promotion or GMIT recruitment, some seemed to fall back on creating formal roles, with one interviewee answering many questions with a suggestion that a paid position be set up to tackle that issue. The concentration on abrogating responsibility to process and formal roles would appear to be a sign of colonisation.

On a positive note, however, some volunteers took delight in challenging the status quo, with ideas for promotion campaigns including advertising on TG4 and Galway Bay FM. Such ideas were advocated as being low budget yet novel, subverting accepted notions of the station's relationship with other broadcasters, and side-stepping budgetary restrictions. In short, they indicate a refusal to have the 'reach of their thought' constrained by rules and expectation.

## ***Areas for development***

Flirt FM is obviously a station with a number of strengths. It has high volunteer morale, it has volunteers who are willing to give of their time<sup>162</sup> without an obvious immediate personal return, and it has a tradition of an innovative and adventurous approach to the creation of a radio service<sup>163</sup>.

At the same time, the findings outlined in the earlier sections would seem to indicate a number of areas which require attention. To turn, once again, to our six factors, the requirements would seem to include:

### **Spaces**

- Reactivate the board of management or a similar body with clear terms of reference.
- Provide regular opportunities for volunteers to meet, get information and discuss items of relevance to the station.
- Create informal spaces where volunteers can meet and get to know each other.

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<sup>162</sup> See the high response rate to the questionnaire, and the willingness to participate in interviews and the seminar.

<sup>163</sup> IRTC. June 1997. p95.

## **Morale**

- Provide opportunities for volunteers to socialise with each other.
- Improve station promotion.
- Investigate other ways to ensure that volunteers are aware that their input and commitment is valued.

## **Fair access for all**

- Address the physical difficulties of GMIT students in accessing the station.
- Ensure the station identity is less closely associated specifically with NUI, Galway.
- Enquire as to whether lower female participation reflects general social trends.
- Encourage higher rates of female participation.
- Identify factors which might increase input from students from outside Galway.
- Continually monitor to prevent the (re)emergence of cliques, or the appearance of cliques.
- Develop an open process for recruiting (e.g.) trainers from the volunteer body, to encourage participation and ensure all volunteers have a visible opportunity to deepen their involvement.

## **Rationality of knowledge**

- Ensure that all volunteers have a clear understanding of the structures of the station.
- Keep volunteers informed of developments in the station, to minimise the spread of inaccurate rumour and speculation.
- Provide advanced training, for those interested, in relevant areas, allowing volunteers to deepen and develop their world view.

## **Solidarity of members**

- Provide opportunities for volunteers to socialise and get to know each other.
- Ensure that all volunteers are given positive encouragement to develop their involvement with the station, bearing in mind that quieter or more reserved volunteers may require special attention.

## **Colonisation**

- Encourage volunteers to critically assess system restrictions.
- Facilitate on-going meaningful debate on all issues related to the station.

# Chapter 7: Recommendations

*How do I know what I think until I have written about it? – E.M.*

*Forster*

## ***Suggestions for action***

Given the major themes identified in the last chapter, I would see specific suggestions falling into five distinct categories

- Station structures
- Station resources and supports
- Volunteer recruitment
- Volunteer training and development
- Future research

### Station structures

This was the area which saw the most discussion at the workshop run in the station. Participants felt strongly that the board of management, or a similar body, should be re-constituted. There was a general consensus that student union and college staff representatives had played a limited role on the board of management in the past, and

the body might function most effectively with membership drawn exclusively from the volunteer body.

There was disagreement as to whether the new board should be constituted of elected representatives of the volunteers, or so-called ‘area heads’ – the heads of news, sport, arts, etc. Also, while there was agreement that there should be more consultation with the general volunteer body, there was disagreement as to the relationship between any ‘volunteer assembly’ and the ‘new’ board of management.

Taking these suggestions, and the findings discussed in the last chapter, into consideration, I wish to make the following recommendations:

- A management committee should be created, to replace the board of management. The change of title will help to reduce confusion amongst volunteers, and emphasise the hands-on nature of the committee as opposed to the guiding-role of the board of directors.
- A volunteer forum should be instituted. This should meet once every 6 weeks, with at least two meetings per term. Its role would be to review the station’s status and set general policy guidelines for the management committee.
- There are currently five area heads<sup>164</sup>. These should be restyled ‘Editor’: News Editor, Arts Editor etc.

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<sup>164</sup> the heads of news, sport, arts, music and Irish language programming.

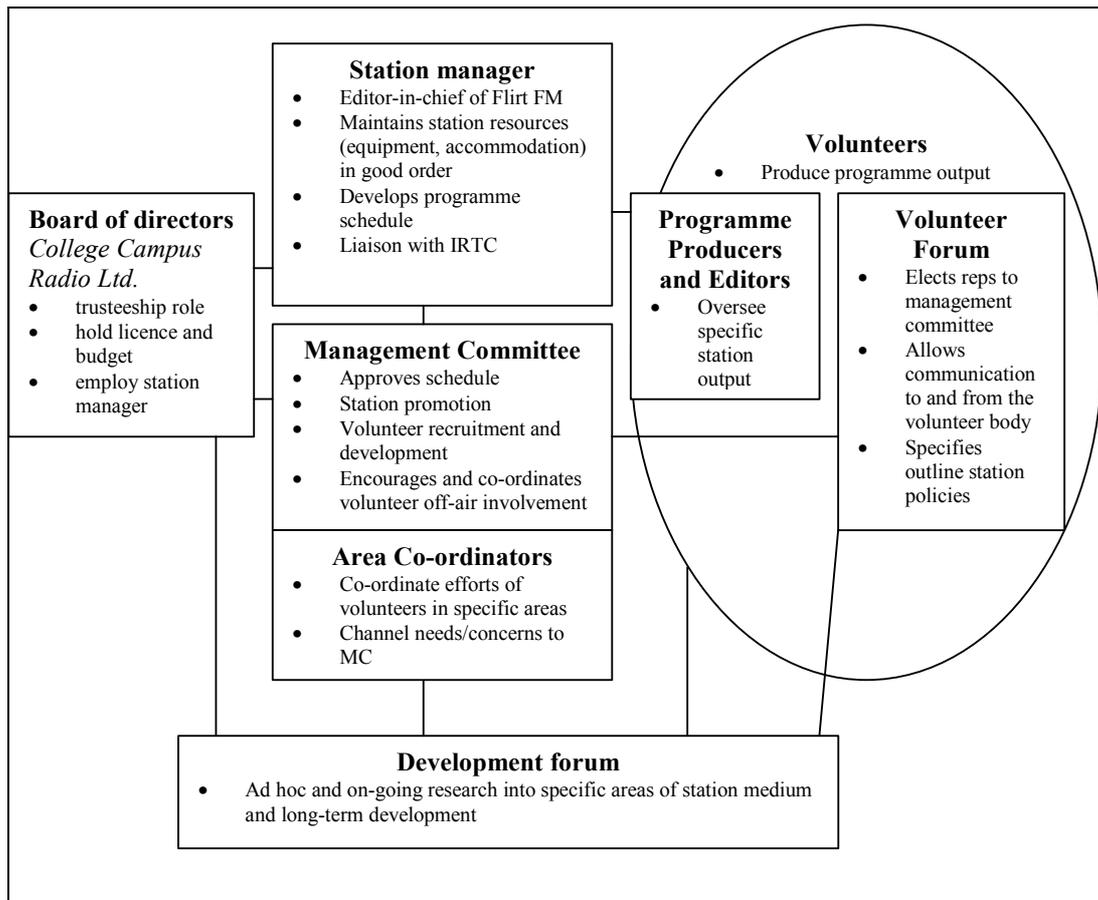
- Their roles (powers and responsibilities) should be clearly defined and explicitly tied to the production of specific output, such as news bulletins, the arts show etc.
- The number of persons given editorial titles could be expanded to the extent deemed reasonable by the management committee and the station manager, who is editor-in-chief.
- It may be preferable for the station manager, as editor-in-chief of the station, not to hold a specific editorship, such as news or music.
- The membership of the management committee should consist of:
  - Five representatives of the volunteer body. Two of these positions could be reserved for the auditors, or other representatives, of the two radio societies, to ensure representative of each college. The remainder should be elected directly by the volunteers currently active in the station.
  - Up to four ‘area co-ordinators’. These should be appointed by the five representative members of the committee, following consultation with volunteers working in the different areas of the station. In contrast with the editors (currently area heads) who generally have responsibility for specific shows (e.g. the head of arts is the producer of the Arts Show), area co-ordinators would represent, and co-ordinate, all those who work in a broad area (such as ‘Arts and Features’). There would be no necessary impediment to a single person holding both editorial and co-ordinating positions. I would suggest the following initial area co-ordinators:

- News and current affairs
  - Arts and features (incorporating external programming)
  - Specialist music
  - Chat and general/light entertainment
- The functions of the management committee should include
    - Approving the programme schedule drawn up by the station manager.
    - Acting as the primary disciplinary body of the station (a role currently held by the board of management). Volunteers would have a right of appeal to the board of directors, who would also be kept informed of all disciplinary action.
    - Implementing station strategy, drawing up work plans for areas such as training, recruitment and promotion, and soliciting the input and assistance of volunteers.
    - Keep volunteers informed of their activities.
    - Address any issues raised by individual volunteers.
    - It would be expected that the committee would meet at least weekly.
  - The management committee would elect their chairperson from among themselves, along with any other necessary posts such as secretary. The chairperson would liaise regularly with the chairperson of the board of directors.

- The station manager would attend all meetings of the management committee.
- The board of directors should approve an outline annual budget in advance and inform the management committee and station manager of what monies are likely to be available for different purposes. The board will approve specific operating budgets for the management committee on request.
- Minutes of board meetings shall be available to the management committee and station volunteers. While editing of the public version may be necessary for reasons of confidentiality, disclosure shall be the norm.
- The board of directors should institute a development forum:
  - The forum, which would deal with issues that are removed from the day to day operation of the station, would develop long-term strategies for the station.
  - The forum should be co-ordinated/facilitated by one to three people.
  - The strategy development process should include regular evaluation of the status of the station, ongoing review of relevant developments in technology, law, media and society, and appropriate consultation with volunteers and other interested parties.
  - The forum would examine general station development, and may be tasked to examine specific areas such as digital strategies, external programming or community interaction.

- The forum would present proposals to the board of directors and management committee as appropriate.

The following diagram illustrates the roles of, and relationships between, the various parts of the station, as proposed:



**Figure 6 Proposed organisational structure for Flirt FM**

### Station resources and supports

- The station's studio complex must be developed as a welcoming environment where volunteers can meet each other
- The station should improve its use of the internet

- The station must move from its current web address of <http://www.flirtfm.nuigalway.ie>, as this marks the station as being exclusively associated with the university. <http://flirtfm.org> is suggested as an appropriate alternative. The cost is nominal, at under US\$40 per annum.
- The web would be a cheap and simple delivery method for a volunteer manual, which could provide information on the station structure, the philosophy of community radio, and station policies, as well as providing an efficient means of archiving this information.
- Bulletin boards or email discussion lists could provide an effective forum for on-going discussion by volunteers of station matters. It was indicated by those at the workshop that the vast majority of students use the internet regularly (more than once per week).
- Regular updates on station news should be supplied to volunteers by email, with a number of copies being available in print for those who do not use the internet.
- GMIT participation must be supported
  - The station could consider subsidising travel from GMIT campus to the university for volunteers. It may be possible to obtain part sponsorship for a scheme or this sort from Bus Éireann or a taxi or hackney company, in return for on-air accreditation.

- Production facilities available on GMIT campus must be fully exploited.

New and potential volunteers should be made aware of the existence of such facilities, and processes put in place to ensure fair access to these facilities.

#### Volunteer recruitment

- Recruitment should be planned at station level (by the management committee) in consultation with the radio societies.
- The station should consider separating its general volunteer recruitment drive from the ‘Societies Days’ within the colleges, to differentiate the station from college societies.
- The station should ensure that sufficient volunteers are available to support the recruitment drive in GMIT. Given the low rate of current participation, this will require volunteers from outside GMIT to assist.
- The station manager and management committee must put in place a support process to ensure that potential volunteers from GMIT, in particular, progress to become fully involved with the station. This will involve special training and induction meetings in GMIT, transport supports, particularly in the initial stages, and on-going encouragement and consultation.
- Station promotion and recruitment should emphasise the involvement of female volunteers, in order to combat any pre-conceived notions of gender-specific roles.
- Work with college societies and other bodies in order to diversify and increase involvement, with a view to attaining a more representative mix of volunteers.

## Volunteer training and development

- The management committee should continually evaluate training resources (e.g. volunteers with special skills) and needs within the station.
- Volunteers should continually be given opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge
- Interaction with the radio societies in the provision of, e.g., lectures on topics related to radio may be of benefit.
- Basic training in the station should include information on the station structures. Volunteers should be given a handout summarising this information and station policies etc.
- Station volunteers should be afforded regular opportunities to meet each other socially. The station should occasionally subvent events of general interest, which will act both as a show of gratitude for work done, and as an opportunity for social interaction.
- The station manager and management committee should ensure that all volunteers are given opportunities to heighten their involvement with the station, both through making training available to them and making sure that all volunteers are made aware of opportunities to become involved with other areas of the station, such as training provision, promotion and administration.

## Future research

- The station should investigate the factors inhibiting female involvement with the station. Corrective action to alleviate these factors or their effects should be taken where possible.
- The station should monitor involvement by GMIT students in the station. Efforts to increase participation should be evaluated.
- Volunteers are only one of several groups mentioned by the AMARC charter. The station should consider undertaking or sanctioning research to evaluate community involvement with the station.

## ***Closing summary***

The recommendations made in this chapter are designed to assist Flirt FM in meeting its obligations under the AMARC charter to “*operate management ... practices which oppose discrimination and which are open and accountable to all ... volunteers*”.

In this research project, I first looked at the history and context of community radio, and looked at prior research such as the Women On Air project and the IRTC’s evaluation of the community radio pilot project.

I then used Habermas’ theory of communicative action to develop six factors which could be used to measure the extent to which stations meet their obligations under the AMARC charter. The measures are:

The existence of public spaces

Volunteer morale

Fair access for all

Rationality of knowledge

Solidarity of members

Colonisation by systems

I then evaluated Flirt FM according to these criteria, using a mixture of questionnaires and interviews. I found that Flirt FM offered few opportunities for volunteer interaction, resulting, often, in a sense of isolation. In addition, there were few volunteers from GMIT, and a disproportionately low number of female volunteers. However, volunteers were, overall, happy to be involved with the station and anxious to assist with its development.

I presented a draft summary of my findings to a workshop in NUI, Galway, in July 2001, and used the suggestions made by volunteers at this workshop to develop the recommendations listed earlier in this chapter.

I believe that the recommendations made will, if enacted, improve Flirt FM as a radio station. By fully utilising the potential and imagination of its volunteers, Flirt FM can improve its output and the service provided to the student population of Galway. Just as importantly, implementation is an ethically correct response, resulting in volunteers being treated as people rather than objects.

This study has only dealt with one aspect of the organisation of one station. Apart from the opportunity, mentioned earlier, to investigate community involvement, it may also prove of interest to complete a comparative study of different student stations, or a further future study charting development within Flirt FM.

*“I had a very pleasant journey, thank you sincerely,*

*For giving me my madness back, or nearly.”*

*- Come Dance with Kitty Stobling; Patrick Kavanagh*

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# Appendix A: AMARC Charter

The AMARC Community Radio Charter for Europe

Recognising that community radio is an ideal means of fostering freedom of expression and information, the development of culture, the freedom of form and confront opinions and active participation in local life; noting that different cultures and traditions lead to diversity of forms of community radio; this Charter identifies objectives which community radio stations share and should strive to achieve.

Community radio stations:

1. promote the right to communicate, assist the free flow of information and opinions, encourage creative expression and contribute to the democratic process and a pluralist society;
2. provide access to training, production and distribution facilities; encourage local creative talent and foster local traditions; and provide programmes for the benefit, entertainment, education and development of their listeners;
3. seek to have their ownership representative of local geographically recognisable communities or of communities of common interest;
4. are editorially independent of government, commercial and religious institutions and political parties in determining their programme policy;
5. provide a right of access to minority and marginalised groups and promote and protect cultural and linguistic diversity;

6. seek to honestly inform their listeners on the basis of information drawn from a diversity of sources and provide a right of reply to any person or organisation subject to serious misrepresentation;
7. are established as organisations which are not run with a view to profit and ensure their independence by being financed from a variety of sources;
8. recognise and respect the contribution of volunteers, recognise the right of paid workers to join trade unions and provide satisfactory working conditions for both;
9. operate management, programming and employment practices which oppose discriminations and which are open and accountable to all supporters, staff and volunteers;
10. foster exchange between community radio broadcasters using communications to develop greater understanding in support of peace, tolerance, democracy and development.

*Adopted on 18 September 1994 in Ljubljana, Slovenia at the first AMARC Pan-European Conference of Community Radio Broadcasters*

# Appendix B: Questionnaire

## Flirt FM Volunteer Questionnaire

*Please provide the following information about yourself:*

(1) I am:      Male       Female                       (2) Year of Birth      19\_\_\_\_\_

(3) My home residence is in:

Galway City       Co. Galway       Elsewhere

(4) I am a student of: NUI, Galway       GMIT       Neither

(5) I first become involved with Flirt FM in:

1995/96            1997       1998       1999       2000/01

(6) How many hours per week do you spend, on average, at the following activities?

|  |  |                                  |  |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Flirt FM programming (including preparation) |  | Other Flirt FM work              |  |
| Radio Society committee work                 |  | Other committees in this college |  |
| Class/study                                  |  | Paid employment                  |  |
| College sports                               |  | Other sports                     |  |
| College societies                            |  | Other organisations              |  |
| Pub/nightclub/general socialising            |  | Other: _____                     |  |

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)*

|    |  |                           |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 7  | I became involved with Flirt FM because I want to have a career in radio         | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 8  | I became involved with Flirt FM because I want to make radio that affects people | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 9  | I became involved with Flirt FM because my friends are involved with Flirt FM    | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 10 | I became involved with Flirt FM because I enjoy doing radio                      | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(11) Please add any further comments on why you became involved with Flirt FM:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |   |                           |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| 12 | A primary aim of Flirt FM should be to provide information to students                        | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 13 | A primary aim of Flirt FM should be to provide a creative outlet for students                 | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 14 | A primary aim of Flirt FM should be to provide an alternative to other radio stations         | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 15 | A primary aim of Flirt FM should be to provide a means for students to interact and socialise | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(16) Please add any further comments on the purpose of Flirt FM:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |  |                           |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 17 | I enjoy being involved with Flirt FM           | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 18 | My involvement with Flirt FM is good for my CV | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 19 | I feel part of Flirt FM                        | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(20) Please add any further comments about how you feel about your involvement:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |  |                           |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 21 | I know how Flirt FM is organised                     | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 22 | I know how to do my job in Flirt FM                  | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 23 | Flirt FM provides sufficient training for volunteers | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(24) Please add any further comments on how well informed you feel about Flirt FM:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |   |                           |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| 25 | Flirt FM has an accessible and open structure<br>(for example, input from volunteers is listened to)    | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 26 | Flirt FM has an transparent management structure<br>(Volunteers can easily see how decisions are taken) | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 27 | No change is necessary to Flirt FM structures   | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 28 | Flirt FM should have more formal structures   | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 29 | My views are respected in Flirt FM  | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 30 | My views are taken into account in Flirt FM   | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 31 | Flirt FM has sufficient consultation with volunteers  | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(32) Please add any further comments on how Flirt FM is structured:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |   |                           |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| 33 | In general, all volunteers have equal influence in Flirt FM   | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 34 | Some informal groups of people within the station have more influence than others                     | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 35 | The influence of male and female volunteers is well balanced within Flirt FM                          | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 36 | The influence of volunteers from the two colleges, GMIT and NUI, Galway, is well balanced in Flirt FM | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 37 | There are cliques within the volunteer body who try to exclude others                                 | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 38 | Experienced volunteers have more influence than others  | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 39 | Experienced volunteers should have more influence than other volunteers                               | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(40) Please add any further comments on the relative influence of different groups in Flirt FM:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |  |                           |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 41 | Flirt FM should have a formal policy on what restrictions (if any) exist regarding what music can be played on air | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 42 | The Station Manager should have the power to stop a track being played if (s)he feels it is inappropriate          | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 43 | Individual volunteers should have an absolute right to decide what music they want to play                         | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(44) Please add any further comments about how Flirt FM's music policy should be decided:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |   |                           |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| 45 | There must be a formal programme schedule                                     | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 46 | The programme schedule should be decided by the Station Manager               | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |
| 47 | The programme schedule should be decided by representatives of the volunteers | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 |

(48) Please add any further comments about how the station schedule should be decided:

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. (1 = strongly disagree ; 7 = strongly agree)

|    |  |                           |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 49 | More should be done to promote Flirt FM to students                | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 |
| 50 | Volunteers should have a responsibility to promote the station     | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 |
| 51 | Volunteers should have a responsibility to promote their own shows | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 |
| 52 | Promotion campaigns should be centrally co-ordinated               | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 |

(53) Please add any further comments about how promotion should be organised:

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(54) Are you likely to remain involved with Flirt FM next year?

Yes  No

(55) Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

# Appendix C: Letter of Transmittal

<address, including contact phone and email>

2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2001

Dear Volunteer,

I am studying for an MA in Communications and Cultural Studies with DCU. My dissertation focuses on community radio, and the Board of Flirt FM has kindly allowed me to use the station as a case study. As a former volunteer and station manager of Flirt FM myself, I am happy to be able to conduct my field research in the station.

The opinions and beliefs of current volunteers are central to my study. I would appreciate if you could fill out the attached questionnaire, which should take less than 15 minutes to complete. I can assure you that your input will be treated in complete confidence, and will not be quoted in a manner likely to identify any individual participant.

Please place the completed sheets in the envelope provided, seal it, and return it to the station manager. As an incentive to encourage participation, you will then be given a ticket for a draw for record vouchers, which will be conducted shortly after Easter. Results of this draw will be posted in the radio station.

This research should give valuable information regarding Flirt FM's volunteers, and I would appreciate your support. Upon completion of my research, I will be providing a copy of my results to Flirt FM, and will also be happy to discuss my findings with any interested volunteers.

Thank you,

Andrew Ó Baoill

# Appendix D: List of interviewees

Chair of the board of directors, College campus radio ltd.

Another member of the board of directors

Station manager, Flirt FM

I also interviewed six volunteers, selected based on college affiliation, gender, length of time with station, whether or not they hold a position (area head or society committee membership) in the station.

# Appendix E: Student numbers, NUI, Galway

| National University of Ireland, Galway    |                              |             |             |              |
|---|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| STATISTICS ON STUDENTS REGISTERED 2000/01 |                              |             |             |              |
| TABLE 1                                   |                              |             |             |              |
|   |                              | M           | F           | Total        |
| (a)                                       | Full-time                    |             |             |              |
|   | <b>Undergraduate Degree</b>  | <b>2920</b> | <b>3982</b> | <b>6902</b>  |
|   | <b>Nongraduate Diploma</b>   | <b>20</b>   | <b>272</b>  | <b>292</b>   |
|   | <b>Postgraduate Degree</b>   | <b>380</b>  | <b>483</b>  | <b>863</b>   |
|   | <b>Postgraduate Diploma</b>  | <b>179</b>  | <b>453</b>  | <b>632</b>   |
|   | <b>Visiting</b>              | <b>164</b>  | <b>414</b>  | <b>578</b>   |
|   | <b>Total</b>                 | <b>3663</b> | <b>5604</b> | <b>9267</b>  |
| (b)                                       | Part-time                    |             |             |              |
|   | Distance Education Degree    | 39          | 79          | 118          |
|   | Other Undergraduate Degree   | 268         | 415         | 683          |
|   | Nongraduate Diploma          | 111         | 516         | 627          |
|   | Postgraduate Degree          | 143         | 139         | 282          |
|   | Postgraduate Diploma         | 15          | 49          | 64           |
|   | Visiting                     | 7           | 9           | 16           |
|   | <b>Total</b>                 | <b>583</b>  | <b>1207</b> | <b>1790</b>  |
|   | <b>Total (a) + (b)</b>       | <b>4246</b> | <b>6811</b> | <b>11057</b> |
| (c)                                       | Examination Only             |             |             |              |
|   | Undergraduate Degree         | 153         | 192         | 345          |
|   | Postgraduate Degree          | 102         | 114         | 216          |
|   | Postgraduate Diploma         | 11          | 9           | 20           |
|   | Nongraduate Diploma          | 1           | 14          | 15           |
|   | <b>Total</b>                 | <b>267</b>  | <b>329</b>  | <b>596</b>   |
|   | <b>Total (a) + (b) + (c)</b> | <b>4513</b> | <b>7140</b> | <b>11653</b> |
| (d)                                       | ERASMUS                      | 115         | 168         | 283          |
|   | <b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>         | <b>4628</b> | <b>7308</b> | <b>11936</b> |

# Appendix F: GMIT student numbers

Student Statistics 2000/01

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Full-time third-level<br>(undergraduate) | 4,492 |
| Foundation Certificates                  | 107   |
| ACCS-third-level                         | 210   |
| Postgraduates                            | 33    |
| Hotel and Catering Craft                 | 541   |
| Engineering Apprentices                  | 368   |
| Adult Education                          | 3,145 |
| Grand Total                              | 8,896 |

From <http://www.gmit.ie/services/about/#stude>

# Appendix G: Six factors

The existence of public spaces

Volunteer morale

Fair access for all

Rationality of knowledge

Solidarity of members

Colonisation by systems