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COMMUNITY RADIO AS A BUSINESS MODEL:
CASE OF AÇIK RADYO

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Community Radios as Business Model:

Case of Açık Radyo

İş Modeli Olarak Topluluk Radyoları:

Açık Radyo Vaka Çalışması

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Abstract

Among all the sub-categories of radio, community radios have been the most impactful ones when we look for the historical movements, milestones and future of communications. Radio has been an essential part of our lives since early 1900's and even if it changes forms and infrastructures, it will remain its unique place in our everyday lives. Community radios are the best and unique indicators of that claim. Turkey's one and only community radio Açık Radyo has been on air for almost 20 years with its own principles, broadcasting ethics and numerous successes. However, just like many other community radios in the world, Açık Radyo faces certain challenges during the times of digitalization. The main challenge is to define and maintain a sustainable business model. As a community radio that represents the public by emphasizing that it is "the radio which is open to all the voices, colors and vibes of the cosmos..." Açık Radyo has already taken an enormous burden, especially in a socioeconomic environment of Turkey in the past twenty years. This research project was formed by the interviews of Açık Radyo programmers and contributors, to explore the mentality behind their "alternative institutionalism" and suggest a new business model which can be applicable for many other community radios in future endeavors.

Keywords: Community radios, radio broadcasting, community development, business model, digitalization.

Özet

Vazgeçilmez iletişim araçlarından birisi olan radyonun en önemli alt türlerindenolan topluluk radyoları, tarih boyunca birçok önemli harekette, kilometre taşı sayılabilecek olayda etkisini ve varlığını göstermiştir. Topluluk radyoları gelecekte de toplumu ilgilendiren her konuyu gündeme getireceğini kanıtlamış sayılabilir. 1900'lerden beri hayatımızda olan ve form değiştirse bile bir şekilde hayatlarımıza dokunmayı başaran radyonun kitle iletişim anlamında yüksek ve kendine has etkisi sürüyor. Bu iddianın en önemli belirleyicilerinden biri ise topluluk radyolarıdır. Türkiye'nin ilk ve tek topluluk radyosu Açık Radyo, 20 yıla yakın süredir, kendi manifestosu, prensipleri ve onlarca başarısıyla yayınlarını sürdürüyor. Ancak, her topluluk radyosunda olduğu gibi Açık Radyo'nun da dijitalleşme çağında karşılaştığı belli zorluklar var. Bunların başlıcası ise sürdürülebilir bir iş modeli belirleyebilmek. "Kainatın tüm seslerine, renklerine ve titreşimlerine açık bir radyo..." olan Açık Radyo, son 24 yılda Türkiye'de değişen sosyoekonomik atmosfere baktığımız zaman aslında omuzlarına çok büyük yükler almış bir mecra. Bu tez ise, Açık Radyo çalışanları ve destekçileriyle yapılan röportajlar ışığında, Açık Radyo'nun ana mottosunda yatan "Alternatif kurumsallaşma"nın derinine inilip, geliştirildiği ve gelecek çalışmalar ve uygulamalar için bir iş modeli olarak sunulduğu bir araştırmadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Topluluk radyoları, radio yayıncılığı, toplumsal gelişim, iş modeli, dijitalleşme.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief History of Radio Broadcasting

Radio was a game changer in communication when a 24-year-old young man from Italy called Guglielmo Marconi got inspired by Hienrich Hertz's invention of wireless transmission, using the radio waves in 1898. Radio has been the easiest, fastest and the most accessible medium to inform. It has also been a medium which has had important roles in some key events that are counted as milestones in the history of communication. When Italian physicist Marconi first made a step on inventing the radio, it was not accepted as a notion but in a short period of time, radio proved to be one of the most useful and influential tools to answer the needs of communication at that age. When he applied to Italian government for support, Marconi got rejected and then, he found himself trying to get support from the English government. England let him have the patent of the device he invented without considering it was going to be one of the essential tools for communication in near future. (Coe 7).

In the earlier times, radio was used as a device for naval ships to communicate with the other ships. The speciality of the medium was thought to be a person-to-person device. However, soon it was realized that the device can be used to address larger amount of people at the same time as well. In time, radio became a popular, loved and an important tool.

Together with television, radio showed the people there can be a tool to be informed and to be entertained at the same time. Still, radio is one of the most important mass medium in developing countries. Even though, the visual media dominates in the richer parts of the world, radio still has an impact and a place in everyday lives of many people.

Besides being a tool for information and entertainment, radio was also used during the times of natural disasters and in socially and politically risky areas. Together with the awareness of commercial potential of radio, paid ads and public service announcements also became a part of our lives. In fact, radio is being used as the cheapest and one of the most effective ad area.

Besides, radio has brought up a culture to all the stakeholders it has from producers to listeners. In other words, it has become a platform to share. Over the years, the radios has brought people together for news, music, theatre plays, sound documentaries and so on. Even though the market share of radio has decreased due to the popularity and success of online streaming services like Spotify and Tidal, many people still want to hear a story behind or in between the music they are exposed to. Also, many people still turn on the radio at a specific time for a specific show they would like to hear. As a matter of fact, in an age like we are, where there is a continuous discussion about the future of the radio, it is observed that many commercial radios change their formats to a more storytelling based program format. It would be wrong to expect an annihilation from a strong medium like radio. Also, radio is a medium that can keep pace with the demand of the audience.

Turkey met radio when a French company set wireless stations of 5 kilowatts between Ankara and Istanbul (Kocabaşoğlu). Radio broadcasting had been under the control of state but it had managed by a private corporation for a long time. Radio broadcasting has begun with Istanbul Radio on May 6th, 1927.(RATEM 2) Together with TRT's steps in 1964 and emerging of private equity firms and commercial radios, radio broadcasting has come to a whole new level.

Over the years types and subcategories of radio came into existense. Such as, commercial radios, music radio, university radios, local radios, public radios. The function of radio started to vary in terms of objectives. As a matter of fact, radio became a multi functional medium to inform, to educate, to entertain and to integrate

people. Along with the age of internet, the number of web radios and the FM radios which also broadcast online, have increased. The regulations to structure the web radios are still new and uncertain. Also, since it is not a costly venture, it is easy to establish a new one. So the state cannot control the steps they are taking.

In Turkey, the developments and applications of radio broadcasting have dropped behind the US and European countries. Moreover, with the new communication tools, new mediums started to take over the important role radio has played in Turkish culture. At the same time, most of the commercial radio stations turned into music radios which also broadcast certain commercials and bulletins a couple of times a day. The functions of radio started to be visible in the subcategories of radios. In other words, radios do not educate, inform, entertain and integrate at the same time lately. While some stations are based on entertaining the audience with music and comedy shows, some others are run under the principles of journalism. (Janey)

There are three main sub categories of radio: Commercial, public and community. A commercial radio is a profit-making radio station that has sponsors, broadcasts paid ads and is run as a corporation. A public radio station is recently a very rare one, which is run by the government and the limits of the content and ads are certain. The last category is the community radios.

A community radio is a non-profit radio station which broadcasts for the people, by the people about the people. There are certain principles of every community radio which depend on the characteristics of the community it represents. However, the main principle of a community radio is the freedom of expression. Community radios all over the world are run on a voluntary basis and have certain ways to covering their expenses. There are two different business models which are defined specifically for the community radios. (Crisell) However, from the communications perspective, the notion of a business model is not the same as an administrative comprehension.

One of the business models of community radios, emphasizes on service and community-mindedness and the other one focuses more on involvement and participation of the listeners. In other words, the first one places importance on the opportunities and possible solutions for the community and to be side by side with the community. The second model cares more about integration and audience contribution. In addition to this, administrative perspective and communications perspective on 'business model' are quite different from each other.

1.2 Business Model from Communications' Perspective

A radio station has technical, managerial and other miscellaneous expenses just like any other business. The main idea behind a business model is related to its target market, delivered value, profit margin and revenue generation. The business model defines how an organisation makes money and keeps the balances. The product or service a certain business provides, is delivered to the customer through the ways it is defined in its business' model. Besides the unique business models, the simplest way to form one is to create a product and sell it directly to the customer. Also, there are other models such as selling wholesale to retailers, selling through distributors, licensing products to other companies, selling online and many other numerous alternatives. (<https://hbr.org/2015/01/what-is-a-business-model>). However, when a media platform is the case, the notion of a business model show a slight change in the meaning.

From the communications' perspective, to inform the public is counted as the main service. Additionally what is being delivered is the product. So, there is a more complex meaning here. Community radios, on the other hand, have their own methods of generating revenue. Some common ones are commercials, product placements, sponsorships and additionally event management. However, these counted ways depend on the model the radio sticks to. One of the two defined models highlight the service and requires community-mindedness. To put it in a different

way, it is important for such radios to serve and broadcast according to the needs and demands of its community. The main focus is on the community and it is the people who decide what to hear, in what way. Different than the administrative perspective, there is a switch from the service to the people who are served. The community radios which use this first model tend to follow the opinions of the people closely with surveys and public interviews. Additionally, the broadcasters set their minds on the community they represent which does not require a different job description since they are a part of the community who chose to be the voice of it. A community radio which runs with this business model plans and runs the sponsorships, the donations and all the other monetary resources on reaching, understanding and giving a more powerful voice to the public.

On the other hand, the second model suggests a two sided approach where both the broadcaster and the listener are seen as equal. In other ways, the community radios which are based on this second model focus on the engagement through involvement of the audience. The participation can be a financial inclusion as well as taking initiatives to own, support and develop the community radios which represents the people. Participation of the listeners is a key necessity for a community radio in any case. However, this model is based on a continuous and sustainable system where listeners still do not keep themselves apart from the programmers and the radio, but the involvement is both the reason and the methodology to maintain the standards. From communications' point of view the revenue is generated by the public through embracing the community radios as if it is the public's own senses together with the voice.

What is important for both models is the citizen power and the difference between them is the way they approach to the citizen power. The participation comes in variety of forms (Zakus & Lysack, 2011: 7). According to Carpentier, the ways of participation is participating in the media and participating through the media.

“Participation in the media deals with participation in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media organizational decision-making (structural participation)” (Carpentier, 2011: 68). In other words, the perspective on participation can be representative or inclusive depending on the model. Participation is also about authority and for the community radios, the public should be counted both as an authority and a target in the sphere of influence. However, it is also important not to transform 'participation' to lip service which means while the community reveres in false sense of empowerment, their capabilities of interfere with the important details is much more limited than normal. So the level of participation is also related to the involvement in decision making process.

Besides Carpenter, Arnstein states “the Ladder of Participation” which displays a continuum from non-participation to citizen power as shown in the Figure 1 below (Dobson).

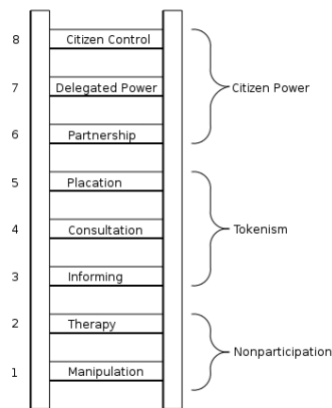


Figure 2: Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969: 217)

The ladder shows a guide on seeing who has the power when the decisions are being made. “In ‘non-participation’ there is no participation and the aim is to “enable power holders to ‘educate’ or ‘cure’ the participants” (Arnstein, 1969: 127). However, controlling a community is not the main aim of a community radio. Participation of

the public is necessary in both business models in a balance between the stairs of the ladder. All the stairs specify a level with its proceeds and lacks. For instance, partnership which is the sixth level of the ladder and the first level of citizen power set, represents the distribution of power between the citizens and the power holders, while planning and decision making processes take place through a joint committee (Arnstein, 1969: 128)

Açık Radyo, as the only community radio of Turkey, got the inspiration for its business model from globally known DemocracyNow! and Pacifica Radio. While DemocracyNow! focuses on independent global news. As a news platform and program, it was founded in 1996, airing on nine radio stations. In almost twenty years, it has grown to be one of the leading U.S.-based independent daily news broadcasts in the world (<https://www.democracynow.org/>). DemocracyNow!'s main principle is not allowing any government funding, corporate sponsorship, underwriting or advertising revenue to be included in their business model. Instead, it is an audience supported system with donations through the website. Also, a community – minded business model is being sustained since 1996. Pacifica Radio, on the other hand, defines itself as a broadcasting network for a grassroots community radio. Different than DemocracyNow! Pacifica Radio is run under the Pacifica Foundation which was founded in 1949 as a visionary alternative to commercially-driven media. (<http://pacificanetwork.org/>) Free media and an audience supported business model are brought together to promote peace and justice through communication between all races, cultures and nationalities. Pacifica Radio is a platform for all community radios to interact, collaborate and exchange programs. While The Pacifica Network includes five stations, belonging to the Pacifica Foundation, in New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Berkeley, and Houston, the Affiliate Network contains nearly 200 independent community radio stations. So, the business model of Pacifica Radio is a little more complex than a regular community radio. The mission of the radio is to be self-sustaining and just like DemocracyNow!, Pacifica Radio gets donations from the

followers and listeners through its web page. In brief, Açık Radyo has taken DemocracyNow! and Pacifica Radio as pioneers and examples and through the path these two platforms created, Açık Radyo came up with “Audience Support Program” which can be counted as the main income of the radio (Madra). Chief Editor of Açık Radyo Ömer Madra, defines their business model as “Alternative Institutionalism” which will be discussed in further chapters.

With all the upsides, certain challenges follow community radios in terms of finding a suitable business model and sustaining it, especially in countries where media is oppressed and there is a high level of state supervision. A community radio is usually born under a challenged environment. For this reason, even from the setting up process pathway of a community radio which seem unique to one but actually are common for every community radio in the world. The main challenges have always been the lack of financial sustainability and inability to maintain equipment. A huge number of stations are not able to meet monthly operational costs just with the regular donations. So, actually the main challenge is the sustainability. Some stations manage to generate revenue through paid announcements, such as thank you messages, birthday wishes and funeral announcements; through a barter system, like airing an advertisement for a local company that has provided goods or services to the station. However, active participation and volunteering of the audience are the keys to success for many community radios. (CIMA, 11) Commitment is the main motivation here but without a doubt, volunteering is not something to rely on.

How the community radios cope with the sustainability challenge is usually lying behind their philosophy. Revenue generating is not the primary goal as community radios have a broader sense and perspective on developing the community by integration. It is very important for audience to embrace who and what they hear. Because loyalty comes with sense of ownership and any challenge faced becomes a common challenge to share for a larger group of people. Murat Can Tonbil who

cohosts Açık Gazete with Ömer Madra at Açık Radyo states, “Providing engaging content to listeners is the best way to ensure both social and financial sustainability, because the bond is created and you always know even if they do not know you, they care about what you’re saying and will do whatever it gets to keep hearing what they like”.

To sum up, two commonly defined business models for community radios have very slight differences that only occurs by the approach to the audience. To let them participate actively or to make them a part of a non-profit system by following their needs and demands are actually interconnecting. As a matter of fact, the “Alternative Institutionalism” model Açık Radyo follows, reveal this as well. It is a combination of both suggested models with a unique approach to participation, which will be discussed in the next chapter deeply.

1.3 Methodology

To understand and define a business model for a radio like Açık Radyo, this thesis is formed by the knowledge provided through the books which were published by Açık Radyo in the past 20 years. Instead of a qualitative or a quantitative approach, a case study of Açık Rado was found more suitable and eligible. To make this valid, I followed the observations in the field and I used interviews to structure and cover the topics I would like to learn more about.

The case study was done by spending three active days at Açık Radyo by being a part of the preparation, production, broadcasting and post-production of the live and pre-recorded shows. By observing the only community radio of Ttury inside its own studios and office rooms, I could get the real sense and the Picture of what and how a community radio provides certain information for its audience. Moreover, seven members including the founder Ömer Madra were interviewed with the questions given in Appendix A. The questions were covering the motivation behind their efforts for Açık Radyo, together with their daily tasks, preparation process, audience

interaction, ideas and thought of how to sustain such a system. The genuine and honest answers of the programmers and members of Açık Radyo confirms the motivation of audience. In other words, through this method it was seen that the audience and the programmers have an intersection where the people in it are the main supporters and the main mechanism behind the business model of Açık Radyo.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY RADIOS: HISTORY AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Definition and History

Definition of what a community radio is, does and contains are three different contexts. To begin with, Mtinde et al. (1998: 12) states “the term ‘community’ can either be defined as: a geographically based group of persons and/or a social group or sector of the public who have common or specific interests”. In other words, a community can be a few people who have common interests or the people who live in the same district sharing the same living space. The base of a community is formed by sharing and it is followed by solidarity and empowerment.

Community radio is defined as “one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community.” by Tabing (2002:9). Different than mainstream media, community radio means a medium beyond communication. In other words, there is an effort for community radios that connects the audience and the programmers in a unique and an inclusive way. The inclusivity arises from the fact that programmers are a part of the audience as well. The mentality behind a community radio is to work for the benefit of the people it represents and to give a voice to the represented public at the same time. The main difference between a mainstream medium and a community radio is the participation and integration. Mainstream radio on the one hand, is there to serve for information which is a right for any human being in the world. However, a community radio has the principle of serving people for information and letting them participate in providing the information, contributing the initiative and be an active part of the services supplied to the public. Moreover, community radios are owned, managed and operated by the community which can be a geographical or an interest based target. (Mtinde et al., 1998). Additionally, community radios are non-profit organizations whose only profit is to be a part of the development of the community

they represent. A community radio is based on an integrative, collaborative and proactive dialogue among the community.

The first community radio stations were *Radio Sutatenza* in Columbia in 1947 and the *Miners' Radio* in 1949 in Bolivia. (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001). *Radio Sutatenza* was founded by Catholic priest Monsignor José Joaquín Salcedo Guarín in the Tenza Valley and broadcasted until the late 1980's to over four million peasants around the region. Guarín managed to convince the government of Colombia to provide one transistor radio per person back in time. The main motivation behind *Radio Sutatenza* was to find a way to integrate two polarized ideologies in the country by sharing stories, teaching history, mathematics, alphabet, agricultural instruction and using radio as an expression tool. This was also called as "Radio Schools" and the range of the station reached around the coasts of Colombia as well. *Radio Sutatenza* played an essential role in people's lives for half a decade and was successful enough to reach larger communities. (<https://thecitypaperbogota.com/culture/a-remembrance-of-radio-schools41511/8770>)

Miners' Radio in Bolivia on the other hand, was based on a political uprising. Different than *Radio Sutatenza*, *Miners' Radio*, or *La Voz Del Minero* (*Miner's Voice*) as they used to call it, was managed entirely by the miners, for the miners. By developing their own media, they acted more like a union and there was not only one miners' radio. Soon, the number of stations increased as they were politically advanced and were seen as opinion leaders in Bolivia. Over the years, many stations got closed because mining lost its importance in the country and has not been the main source of income. Some others were destroyed during military coups and political protests, some lost their archives and sources due to burglaries and invasions. The one station that lasted longer than the others was *Radio Nacional de Huanuni*.

The trend *Radio Sutatenza* and *Miners' Radio* started has found its modern meaning in Europe through pirate radios. Through pirate radios, governments and local authorities have realized the need and the necessity of a locally empowered radio. In Africa, community radios led many social movements, especially in South Africa. Moncef M. Bbouhafa states that, this was followed by democratization, decentralization and to some extent structural adjustment, elsewhere in that continent. Starting with with discussions between UNESCO and the Economic Commission for Africa on local radio broadcasting, UNESCO took an important step to form an initiative for community radios in 1980.

Given these examples, developing one's own media by observing and understanding the needs and lacks of a community, spreading voice and reaching people who need that voice and sharing the ownership with the represented community are counted as the main principles of a community radio. Furthermore, having a smaller scope than mainstream media and caring more about social impact than making money are the main distinctions of a community radio which keeps them sustainable and effective at the same time. However, these distinctions are also the ones which cause challenges in terms of sustainability.

The growth of community radios usually happen without noticing other community radios which hold the same objectives because even if they are aware of each other, community radios tend to collaborate instead of competing. The mindset is to learn from each other and if there is a lack in the represented community, apply what was learned from the other community radio to one's own community. Latin America has been a lucky region since two very important and first community radios in radio history were located there. The impact of *Miners' Radio* spread very quickly to neighbor countries and several employee associations took Bolivian miners as an example and tried different ways of applying the same model to their communities.(fao.org)

Miners' Radio even took the attention of many international organisations such as UNESCO. A strengthening miners' radio project with the budget of US \$16,000,000 was approved in 2014. The implementation of the project is completed together with Universidad Católica Boliviana but several other projects which were inspired by UNESCO's are still in progress around the area. (<http://www.unesco-ci.org/ipdcprojects/content/strengthening-miners%E2%80%99-radios-bolivia>)

2.2 “Modernization Theory” Behind the Story of Community Radios

Community radios were seen as the fruits of modernization in Third World Countries as a result of studies of the researchers like Peter Mhagama, Daniel Lerner and Wilber Schramm. Mhagama stated that the concept of modernization refers to “the fundamental proposition that people in traditional societies should adopt the characteristics of modern societies in order to modernize their social, political and economic institutions.” (Ngugi). The lacks in traditional societies were the knowledge and communication infrastructure. Nonetheless, Daniel Lerner and Wilber Schramm theorized that “Communication is the transmission of information from the Western World to the Third World.” (Ngugi) In other words, the impacts modern cultures provide to traditional cultures and the exposition of mass media causes change in the traditional societies because they will also be exposed to western attitudes. With the given theories, it is not surprising to see the first examples of community radio in the world in rural Colombia and Bolivia. However, the context of community radio has evolved in time and not every community radio is considered as a rural formation. As the communication got broader, people learned from other cultures that microorganisms like community radios can lead to a positive change in the given community.

A more up to date example of a community radio is *Koch FM* in Kenya. *Koch FM* is a community radio based in a slum called Korogocho in Nairobi, which is inhabited by over 750,000 people. The station is run by 42 volunteers who have their own

responsibilities and time slots they are in charge of. The problems of the community they represent are broadcasted by *Koch FM* with subjects vary from human rights violations to robbery cases in the slum. The community started to contribute by reporting the violations to the radio station to notify people and soon, *Koch FM* started to run like a police station report office. The path the broadcasters followed during the announcements are to get the information, to validate the information they received, announce the news on air and then start a discussion for a solution. Besides the problems of the community, broadcasters share job opportunities in town from time to time, talk about child abuse, women empowerment, health facts and so on. The example of *Koch FM* was followed by *Ghetto FM* in Pumwani and *Pamoja FM* in Kibera slums of Kenya. *Ghetto FM* on the other hand, differs from the others by being a part of s Slums Information Development and Resources Centers (SIDAREC). Back in 2000's, the pre and post elections violence was a big problem and *Ghetto FM*'s main motivation was to stop the polarization and form peaceful solution for the ghettos of the country. (Ngugi)

One of the common features of all stations explained above is to be apolitical, non-partisan and all inclusive. This is a rare case even in Western World which are claimed to help the Third World countries modernize, as Mhagama, Lerner and Schramm stated. However, it is not right to assume that community radios only exist in non-developed countries. The impact it has created in several parts of the world got spread around the globe. In Europe, Australia and North America, minority groups such as indigenous immigrants, refugees and black communities who were marginalized by mainstream media used community radio to fight for their rights (Mtinde et al., 1998: 15).

Bruce Girard defined the contributions radio makes to develop the community on the fifth section of Rural Radio case study publication of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Girard took Radio Chaguarurco as a case. Radio

Chaguarurco of the Chaguarurco Foundation in Santa Isabel had a huge impact on training, helping and developing the community. Communication became easier with the local announcements. For example, in the hospitals the situations of the patients, the information on the missing animals, meeting invitations are announced on the radio. Somehow, “the radio became the telephone for those who don't have telephones.” (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/y4721e/y4721e0c.htm>). Moreover, the radio has served as a guardian for the democracy. The revelations of criminals, injustice acts of local authorities have been announced on air. So, Radio Chaguarurco has boosted the democracy awareness in the community.

Another way Radio Chaguarurco has helped the communities in Santa Isabel to develop is people have learned to share problems and experiences. Solutions to every day problems, knowledge on farming techniques, recipes, and family relationship recommendations have been shared on air and made the connection stronger in the community.

Lastly, the radio helped the people of Santa Isabel to understand the value of their culture, music and stories. Some of the programs have featured amateur singers who sang traditional songs which was mostly forgotten by the community and this, reminded the people how precious their cultural background actually is.

2.2.1 AMARC

Community radios provide an alternative perspective on news making and they focus on what is less known or seen by the majority of the population they are a part of. As a matter of fact, there is an association called World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Association Mondiale Des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires, AMARC). AMARC is an international non-governmental organization which has been supporting the community radio movement, with almost 4.000 members and associates in 130 countries (amarc.org). The history of AMARC goes back to 1983, when community radio fans accidentally met in Montreal, Canada and realizing they

had a common will, passion, motivation and stance. As a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange, a global network of non-governmental organisations that monitors free expression violations worldwide and defends journalists, writers, Internet users and others who are persecuted for exercising their right to freedom of expression, AMARC is known to be very attentive while a community radio is being supervised. AMARC consists of 5 boards which are International Board, ALC Board, African Board, Asia Pacific Board and Europe Board. AMARC also has a Declaration of Principles which lays emphasis on freedom of speech, women empowerment, the sovereignty and independence of all the people, solidarity, international cooperation, respect and non-discrimination. The Principles advocated and promoted by AMARC's members are equally expressed and realized in various Charters and Declarations such as, The Amman Declaration, The Kathmandu Declaration, The Milan Declaration, Community Radio Charter for Europe, Declaration of the Latin American and Caribbean Festival of Radioempathic and Televisionaries and so on. Moreover, AMARC works closely with international non-profit organizations such as UNICEF, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Economic and Social Council.

2.3 Fundamentals of Community Radio

The community radio examples given above, support the statement of being “a communicative tool that can be used to mobilize communities to support development initiatives, either those started by the government, the international aid agencies, or the local Non-Governmental Organizations” (Banda, 2003: 125). This statement makes community radio the communication of development. Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 4-5) observe that “Communication for development encompasses all forms and modes of communication, including community radio [...], and the use of various combinations of new and traditional media in support of development

activities”. In other words, community radios are based on supporting the development of the people they represent. It is true that, the impact on the public is most felt when a community radio or any other organization is actively in the process of development. The advantage of community radios in development process is, they have the power to lead and even command because of the instantaneous presence of their information delivery method: to speak on air.

Beyond the definitions, what community radio does to maintain a non-profit, social impact based model has been quite similar in different parts of the world. In 1940's, the community radios in Latin America were based on barter by providing information or letting people present their opinions in exchange of workforce and skills to build necessary equipments. The barter method is still valid and used in traditional or avant-garde ways in most of the community radios. Instead of building the equipments, the programmers contribute by paying a specific fee from time to time or solve technical problems as well as finding creative solutions for physical, digital, functional and operational needs of the community and the radio. Since community radios are based on voluntariness, it is very important for all the contributors to see the community and the radio as a whole organism which has common values, objectives, needs, demands, problems and ways to solutions. If any personal and financial interest arises, this ruins the spirit behind a community radio. Many community radio contributors have a balance in their lives where they have their separate jobs and knowledge of their responsibilities and necessities in a community radio. Where they come together is, the medium that matches with their values, a platform they have with other people who share the same values and a tool to make a difference in their community.

Radio, different than other communication tools, has a unique way or triggering creativity. Because, all the other tools provide a visible output where the audience takes what was given to them. However, radio is an audio medium and the audience

only hears a voice or a sound piece that can make them think and imagine about the resource the sound comes from, the environment it is in and the usage of words that takes the attention of the audience.(Madra) This is also one of the difficult sides of explaining the impact of the radio because every listener has their own imagination where they start from the same point, which is the sound they hear, and lead what they hear to different scapes. For this reason, a community radio can be counted as a very important tool to develop a group of people. Because of the nature of its base, community radios direct audience to think, wonder and care more. The tool changes from being a platform to be informed and entertained to something that makes a person to contribute and combine education with entertainment in a more principled platform. That platform is a place where the public should speak freely of their concerns and broaden their knowledge by listening about other perspectives within the same community they are in. Thus, the content varies around the freedom of speech.

Current political and economic affairs of a country are always on the agenda of all media platforms. However, community radios all have a different perspective on situations. Because there is a certain angle the programmers and the audience have through the news material. The location of the community, physical, natural and socioeconomic conditions affect the way programmers present and discuss the political and economic affairs of the country they are in. Also, if there are no government related cuts or censorship applications, community radios broadcast through natural disasters and public movements. While the mainstream media reports from the scene of news, community radios raise the voices of people who are at the scene of news. For example, during Gezi Park protests in Turkey back in 2013, Açık Radyo, which is the only community radio in Turkey, was broadcasting live inside from the Gezi Park. While mainstream media reporters were watching what was happening in the park from a distance, Açık Radyo programmers were in the park, interviewing the people who were there to protests the demolish attempt of the park.

Ghetto FM in Kenya is another example of proper community radio content. Some of the radio programs *Ghetto FM* has broadcasted are Changamka that deals with current affairs and politics that affect the community; Dau la Vijana or ‘boat of the youth’ that depicts about the life of the youngsters that is full of uncertainties in a country like Kenya; Afya ya mtoto (Children health) that educates on child nutrition and provides cheap and affordable tips to healthier living and common children diseases and Ghetto Women that focuses on the girl child from birth in the Ghetto to the time when she grows to become a Ghetto woman.(Ngugi)

Unlike the commercial radio, it is the content that keeps the audience for community radio. It is a community radio because every single person in the targeted community can find something for themselves in it. The listeners hear and are informed about what they do not get to hear or be informed on bigger radio stations. The content is chosen in order to provide for the good of the community.

All in all, the main component of a community is its contributors, who happen to be the programmers and listeners of the radio. Together with that, developing one’s own media by observing the lacks and needs of a community, longevity, the ownership, the scope, social impact and sustainability are all inseparable when there is a community radio. In addition to those, common values take in all the previous components because all of them are possible with embracing and sustaining the common values of the community. Otherwise, conflict, opposition and polarization are inevitable. After all, a community radio’s primary objective is the integration. If a community radio does not hold the same values as the community it represents, there is no community radio to talk about anymore.

CHAPTER 3

AÇIK RADYO AS A CASE STUDY

3.1 Açık Radyo as the Only Community Radio in Turkey

Community radios are non-profit organisations which work on informing, developing, shaping and supporting the community it was founded in. All the human elements of community radios either work voluntarily or earn a very little amount as a reward of their technical or physical efforts. The cash flow is sometimes provided by sponsors, advertisers but most importantly it is provided by the audience. The audience donates the radio station to support and to keep on listening what they like to listen to. In Turkey, Açık Radyo is the only community radio to sustain its model as a community radio since the first time it was on air.

Açık Radyo was established by political scientist, academician, activist and author Ömer Madra and his son Can Madra on November 13, 1995. The main reasons behind the start of that initiative was the curiosity they had on global agenda and the need they had to narrate the process which was created by that curiosity. (Madra). Açık Radyo is a corporation with 92 partners. The administration and operation models of Açık Radyo are the right models to form a community radio. Besides the partners, Audience Support System / Program (Dinleyici Destek Sistemi / Programı) that Açık Radyo created have become the lifestyle and main source of income of Açık Radyo, as Ömer Madra states. Audience Support System was first announced and took place in 2004. It started with an announcement that starts with “Be realistic, demand the impossible!: The second life of Açık Radyo”. This is because until the given year, the realists who are the 92 partners of the corporation managed to sustain the initiative. In eight years, 630 different shows of 72.000 hours were on air with 600 people from 18 different countries. (“Açık Radyo Konuşuyor”). After 2004, Açık Radyo programmers wanted their listeners in and on action. That was a risky move even for a democratic and a free medium like Açık Radyo. They wanted the

audience to be a part of the process physically in the studio or financially by donating in the event Açık Radyo has started to organize every year since 2004. This was the part where the Açık Radyo programmers demanded the ‘impossible’.

Audience Support System is an event held by Açık Radyo every year, where Açık Radyo programmers invite the audience as well as popular or important guests to talk about topics they choose and also, they ask for donations from the audience to keep on presenting them what they like to hear on the radio. The programs go on with their guests at its normal flow but in between the discussions and interviews, an announcement is heard, saying: “If you want to keep listening to this conversation call now and donate Açık Radyo.” By this, programmers create a different way of engagement, integration and make the audience be a part of the broadcasting sessions. Furthermore, donator and contributors hear the ‘thank you’ announcement made on their names in between songs and shows, which creates a value and a belonging for the audience as well.

Every year, listeners of Açık Radyo contribute to their only community radio to make real what the Açık Radyo team could not do or have not done until that year. To be the voice of the silent ones and to target the ‘world citizens’ who share the same values have always been the main broadcasting criterias of Açık Radyo and as it turns out the audience have noticed it well. Also, the Audience Support System lets the audience participate and be a part of the decision making process of Açık Radyo.

In the announcement of the first Audience Support System event, it is mentioned that Açık Radyo does not want to be seen as a regular radio where people speak their truth and share their thought. Instead, Açık Radyo wants itself to be seen as a platform to communicate through one’s own or common thoughts and emotions at the same time.

While Açık Radyo has been there for 24 years and community radio as a notion has started to be known in the country, Açık Radyo has remained as the only community radio of Turkey. There have been several attempts to form a new radio station but all

failed due to financial issues. The model Açık Radyo has with the corporation and audience supported operation has been a unique example. The only radio stations which has been trying a to be on a parallel path is Flow Radyo, which was founded in January 2017 by 3 hip hop culture and radio enthusiasts. It is also a corporation of 3 partners. However, Flow Radyo has not managed to find a system to sustain itself financially.

To sum up, Açık Radyo differs from all the other radio stations in Turkey not only by its category but also by values, objectives, uniqueness and content that goes with them. A visionary project like Açık Radyo is difficult to form and sustain. However, it has been there for 24 years and it keeps on differentiating itself from all the others by its unmatched operation and business models.

3.2 Operation Model of Açık Radyo

Açık Radyo is a community radio ran by a corporation of 92 partners. Every partner owns a piece of “Tuğralar” lithography which is Royal Ottoman seals redesigned by the late great painter Abidin Dino. On every piece there is number from 1 to 100 and a text saying “This is to certify that the support you have provided for the founding of a free, independent, democratic, dignified, compassionate, and out-of-the-ordinary radio station, which will hopefully lead to the creation of similar projects in the near future.” (Madra). Founder and the Executive Editor of Açık Radyo Ömer Madra highlights not being a part of any ideology, party or group and operating the station with a business model without a manager and the sustainability that arises inside this operation system. This sustainable system Açık Radyo has created fits well with Açık Radyo’s motto “To be open to all voices, colors and vibrations of the universe” and since the very beginning, Açık Radyo holds on to uniqueness around its community.

Chief Editor Ömer Madra states, Açık Radyo can be best described as a News + Music + Personality combination. The programs focus on and represent the richness

of diversity within genres. This is considered as a clear reference to Darwin's, *On the Origin of Species*.

Within the polarised climate of Turkish media, Açık Radyo's ideological stance has always been visible. The manifest on Açık Radyo website forms the infrastructure of a community radio together with stating the needs and lacks of the system. Manifest states that mass media is not enough for communities to reach information and continues with saying that there is a need of a new radio station. Despite the criticisms made upon the general situation of mass media, the manifestation does not involve a resolution suggestion or a heroism indication. The emphasis of being a community radio is grounded by mentioning Açık Radyo's needs from its listeners and supporters and indicating 'solidarity' as the main objective. Seçil Türkkan, who is the presenter of Açık Dergi, defines this objective as "A school that always develops with combinations and integration of unique voices." (Türkkan)

Another important value for Açık Radyo is the right and freedom of information. İlkten Mavituna defines this as the reason of media's existence. He adds, the radio stations in Turkey only do what they are supposed to do but in Açık Radyo free stance and right to be informed are privileges that turn into an obsession. Also, Açık Radyo is taking initiatives on the new ways of informing the public.

Açık Radyo's operation model is run by the audience. Audience Support System events that takes place every year in the studios of Açık Radyo. The only community radio in Turkey has a different, inclusive approach to its listeners. That is to say, Açık Radyo does not see its listeners as people who only tune in and follow what is going on. On the contrary, Açık Radyo accepts the listeners as a part of their workforce, content and solution to problems. In other words, it is the listener who operates the whole system.

In terms of content, hundreds of different shows about different genres of music, politics, environment, philosophy, cinema, psychology, children, human rights,

literature, history, foreign affairs, clean water, sustainability, technology, musical instruments, public figures... have aired on Açık Radyo. Also, since the beginning of the 'second life' of Açık Radyo, it has been actively engaged in the struggle waged against global climate change and global warming. Açık Radyo has been gathering scientific information and evidence of the changes in the atmosphere, oceans, ice cover, land, and biodiversity. Owing to this, Açık Radyo is known to be the most active platform to focus on the climate and environment related issues in Turkey and is counted as a source of information and authority. Açık Radyo does not only maintain this stance on the air but as the team, it is highly involved in studies, workshops and summit in the mentioned fields. For instance, Açık Radyo participated in the "Stop Climate Change" march in 2007 and in the "Another Energy is Possible" rally in 2008. Moreover in 2009, many programmers from Açık Radyo participated to the COP15 "Climate Summit" in Copenhagen. They followed the summit for 13 days and broadcasted live every day from the area. 17 hours of broadcasting in total, have been accomplished during COP15 meetings. Therefore, it is a proof that Açık Radyo is not only run by a group of programmers and producers. It is run by people who are involved in different causes around and about the world and express their opinions and feelings through Açık Radyo in the way they want from wherever they are. (<http://acikradyo.com.tr/>)

Additionally, Açık Radyo has hosted many important personalities from different sectors from singers, actors, historians, artists to authors, opinion leaders, and politicians. By doing this, they allow the community and the guests to communicate and collaborate directly. There would not be such an opportunity if a platform like Açık Radyo could not provide it (Madra). In years, Açık Radyo has gained support, trust and credibility from the people from all levels and occupations. Some of the guests were Noam Chomsky, Amy Goodman (from DemocracyNow!), Hrant Dink, Ara Güler, Adalet Ağaoğlu, İbrahim Ferrer, Omara Portuondo, Terry Tempest

Williams, Fatih Akın, Toots Thielemans, Ibrahim Maalouf, Sir Ian McKellen, Mike Stern... (<http://acikradyo.com.tr/>)

Operations of Açık Radyo also include publishings. Some of them were compilations and some were published versions of conversations in some programs and the translation of the world's first graphic novel on climate change. Karbon Ayak İziniz (Your Carbon Footprint - 2008), Önce İletişim Vardı (In The Beginning There Was Communication – 2008), Açık Kitap: Açık Radyo Ansiklopedisi (Open Book: An Open Radio Encyclopedia – 2010), Testi Kırılmadan: İş Sağlığı ve Güvenliği (On Worker's Health and Workplace Security) were some of them.

The business model of Açık Radyo is evaluated as “alternative institutionalisation” (Madra, Tonbil). In other words, it has a nonrecurrent system which is open to innovations and differences, respects the right to be informed. Açık Radyo cultivates as an institution with the programmers who respect and apply the requirements of Açık Radyo's values in an attentive way. Not losing the common values has been the miraculous side of Açık Radyo's “alternative institutionalisation”. (Madra) Murat Can Tonbil, who presents the morning show “Açık Gazete” together with the Founder and Chief Editor Ömer Madra, claims that the reason why other initiatives with similar business models have failed in time because they could not manage to sustain and apply the common values.

An additional topic that should be covered under an operational model is crowdfunding. Açık Radyo's ongoing Audience Support System is an example of a structured crowdfunding which also teaches people how they can be a part and a supporter of an initiative they want to keep following. Crowdfunding has been an emerging way of financial sustainability and value creation even before the internet age. While some websites such as Indiegogo and Kickstarter were providing masses to donate and have an influence of a new venture, event planners, public relation executives and many other financially responsible authorities have always been

following the new and unique ways of making crowdfunding possible. Especially for community radios like Açık Radyo, where the community meets with its own members through a medium like radio, crowdfunding has been a great way of supporting the one who is making efforts for the community and also from the community.

Açık Radyo's Audience Support System is a unique approach to a crowdfunding by giving the control to the audience and observe them donate as they listen to what they like.

3.3 Business Model of Açık Radyo

The business model Açık Radyo has been trying to sustain since the beginning had a backlash in 2000. Açık Radyo was shut down for 2 weeks and this was an example of Açık Radyo's struggle against the distorted system they are in. The reason was Radio and Television Supreme Council's (RTÜK) allegations on impairing Turkish family morals of a Bukowski reading. During those two weeks Açık Radyo had received countless amount of warnings and threats. In return, Açık Radyo decided to continue to see arts, culture and literature as a tool to make the world a better place. Their new motto was "Radio is the tool to present arts, culture and literature to the community and to see the community as a resource to them in return." (Madra)

Açık Radyo includes the audience in their business model and the listener count has always been at the desired level of presenters. Açık Radyo has come as the community's first radio of choice in the surveys of IKSİV (Istanbul Culture and Arts Foundation) and many other cultural organizations. The audience size has gone up to 250.000 and keeps growing.

Açık Radyo places importance on citizen journalism which leads the station to have a big amount of loyal listeners and to gain new loyal listeners easily. Especially in 1999, during the tragic earthquake that took place in and around Gölcük, Turkey, the

collaboration Açık Radyo made with AKUT (Search and Rescue Association) raised awareness and accelerated the rescue efforts. Likewise, during the Gezi Park Protests in 2013, Açık Radyo has been one of the few mediums which was broadcasting live non-stop from inside the park and the other resistance areas. This has become the main reason of increasing support Açık Radyo got from “Dinleyici Destek Projesi” (Audience Support System) in the past 5 years.

Açık Radyo’s “Alternative Institutionalisation” can be defined as a mixture of two community radio business model; community-mindedness and participation of the listeners. Although, participation of the listeners is at a very high level for Açık Radyo as a result of Audience Support System, empowerment of the community is one of the priorities. Also, since Açık Radyo states as its motto that it is open to all the colors, voices and vibrations of the universe, the community is not limited to a region or just Istanbul. The community of Açık Radyo embraces it because they have shared values, opinions and interests. Additionally, there is no other medium in Turkey that matches with the values and interests Açık Radyo openly presents.

“Alternative Institutionalisation” has a deeper meaning with the people who work for Açık Radyo. The interviewed programers İlksen Mavituna, Seçil Türkkan, Murat Can Tonbil, Tim Hallam and Ömer Madra stated that, “Not hiring our own time to someone else’s sake is a gift in the corporate world.”. Seçil Türkkan added, “It feels good to be both the listener and the programmer of Açık Radyo because it is an inclusive institution which is open to whatever you think of sharing.” .

On the other hand, it took a while for Açık Radyo to gain a loyal audience but once the loyalty is provided, in over twenty years, they way Açık Radyo approaches to its listeners have naturally changed. That is to say, since many programers were once listeners, this became something accustomed. On the one hand, it affects the sustainability in a good way because slight changes are happening. On the other hand, the audience is getting accustomed to what the have beenlistening over the years.

This approach causes backlash of adapting the new and innovative ideas. Even though Açık Radyo is still the most preferred radio in many researches, unlike many other radio station it prefers to be on air through its frequency, web site and recently the mobile app. This might also be a protective approach because the operational and mass infrastructure of the radio has become quite solid now and according to the interviews with programers, they do not tend to change the way that has already made them happy and satisfied.

The challenges come together with a mixed business model of Açık Radyo, which will be discussed in the next section of the chapter. Even though financial and operational sustainability is the main challenge of many community radios, given Açık Radyo's shutting down incident back in 2002 and Turkey's current social, economic and political environment, more challenges seem to be on the way for Açık Radyo.

Even though there are no other radios which is based on a business model like Açık Radyo in Turkey, some of the university radios were inspired by the system Açık Radyo has created. Chief Editor Ömer Madra remarks that, how student radios take Açık Radyo as an example is a sign of a hopeful future for community radios in Turkey. Some of the university radios which have been collaborating with Açık Radyo are RadyoVesaire (Istanbul Bilgi University), Radyo ITU (Istanbul Technical University), Radyo ILEF (University of Ankara) and Radyo ODTU (Middle East Technical University).

Meanwhile, it seems like the political, economical and environmental unrest will make it harder for Açık Radyo and like-minded radios to grow and develop. Presenter Murat Can Tonbil states, "There is no free media, there cannot be such thing. However, it is exciting to work in an environment where we are dependent on certain issues that are easy to put up with. If this peaceful obsession is protected well in the

future and if number of the like-minded platforms increase, maybe then we'll talk about a different media conception.”

3.4 Mobilization Process and Digital Strategies

Mobilization has not been perceived important by Açık Radyo. Contrarily, it has been enough to be accessible. On their website which they call “Açık Site” (Open Page), there are tools for listening the radio live and provide necessary impression and engagement between the audience and the presenter. At the same time, communication is being done through live phone-calls, social media accounts and the webpage. Technological developments and easier ways of accessibility have not attracted the presenters of Açık Radyo. Moreover, they have decided to settle with what they have and develop the facilities on their own way. Also, since Açık Radyo’s business model requires to maintain through capital contributions of the audience and the programmers, what they have already have always kept Açık Radyo a few steps forward in terms of communicating. It is understood that, the audience is not keen on any change or upgrade either.

Açık Radyo has always been looking out for the needs, wants and thoughts of its audience. This has evolved as a strategy rather than a concerned move. Furthermore, Açık Radyo has always managed to provide this by broadcasting live from the active spots of the communities, such as parks, streets, disaster areas, throughout the historically important times of the country. Açık Radyo could engage with the movements through digital platforms as well. What has kept the engagement active and dynamic has been the fact that most of the presenters have been listeners of Açık Radyo before. Outline of the programs proceed by audience contributions and referrals. How they manage the content also comes from the same motivation of being a listener once. Açık Dergi presenters Seçil Türkkan and İlksen Mavituna agree on “Since we were listeners before, we always think of what we would like to hear on

a radio that we have loved the most. That is how we plan and manage the program content. This is our main resource for motivation.”

Açık Radyo recently has had a very simple and functional mobile application. Also, it is accessible through digital radio platforms such as TuneIn and Streema. According to IKSİV’s research in 2015 on audience ratings of Açık Radyo, 50% of the listeners tune in from internet or through frequency from their houses and offices. Ömer Madra explains this as, “The importance of housewives in our society is seen clearly with this research. They become an active and aware part of the society by listening to Açık Radyo. The same goes for office employees; they keep their engagement with the world outside their offices by listening to Açık Radyo.”

Community radios including Açık Radyo from all over the world have not yet finished their digital transformation yet. The main problem here is the adaptation process. While the content, formats and the presenters up to date, how they communicate with the audience remain incapable. It is understandable because the main philosophy behind community radios is to be free in terms of content and the ways of delivering the content. However, the demand of the community defines the way they are communicated as well. This also goes through an adaptation process. In the meantime, community radios look for alternative ways of communicating freely and still being adapted to technological developments at the same time.

Community radios are based on local empowerment and cultural diversity. Through the communication process, the first thing community a radio has to create is an audience. The second move, on the other hand, is to turn the audience into a loyal listener profile. The main challenge of community radios is to keep the audience solid and sustainable. In case of digital transformation of community radios, the main aim is to adapt the modern conditions and then helping the audience adapt them. Traditional audience believes in the fact that digitalisation ruins the core essence of community radios. This is why the supporters and contributors of community radios

fail to make the decision of sticking with the traditional ways of communicating, instead of applying the new and more functional ways of communication. (Hederström)

Beyond doubt, another reason why the community radios fail to adapt technological developments is, the limited budget they have and they keep only for content and production related expenses. However, in some countries like Australia, France and Switzerland, the state provides funds for community radios to keep on broadcasting without going off the air. This helps community radios to have a more powerful economic structure and to sustain the audience engagement. There are local authorities which support local community radios in the same way in Germany and Sweden as well. On the other hand, Norwegian community radios have taken their audience's habits in account and were not open to digitalisation but as of 2018 there are no terrestrial radiocommunication left in Norway.

Digitalisation in different platforms seem like a low-budget investment for now, sustaining the new system comes with new expenses. For example, most of the newspapers were free of charge during their digitalisation process but later on they had to determine a subscription fee. This made the readers unhappy and many online newspapers have faced permanent troubles because of that upgrade. Radios, on the other hand, have more probability of going through bad times because traditional radio audience is different than traditional newspaper reader. In other words, readers follow a newspaper to reach a certain point in the way that aforesaid newspaper approaches. However, radio audience listens without expecting a solution or a conclusion and a fee resulted cut upsets the audience and breaks the loyalty. On the other hand, when communities adapt the digital transformation and the new generation of listeners joins the audience, mentioned situation might show a change in the attitude of community radios in a more digitised way.

Radios tend to have an impact on the listening behaviours of the audience. However, radio has less power and tools to provide an innovative impact on digitalisation than the other media platforms. Radio is technically simple and new functions or plug-ins can only be provided to radios. Yet, it would be wrong to expect an innovative move from radios in particular. In fact, the biggest challenges of community radios in the process of digitalisation are to create and maintain a loyal audience in today's media environment, to stay non-profit and at the same time to be cater to the demand of the community.

The researches and projects to provide a low-budget, functional and flexible ways of digitalisation for community radios are still in progress. Especially in Europe, there are several institutions that are managed by people who are in charge of keeping the medium on the right track. As a matter of fact, it is now an obligation for community radios to run their own researches. While communities adapt digital world, their demand changes due to their digital habits. Therefore, they expect to see the same adaptation from the radios that represent them. It is a bigger change for commercial radios but because of the small size of their audience, community radios have an advantage in this process. However, commitment to the audience is stronger for community radios. The audience is a big part of community radios. For this reason, contributors of community radios have to direct the community radios in the way that their audience wants to.

Community radios have been developers and changemakers in many different communities around the world. Especially local radios which have huge impact on their communities such as Pacifica Radio, DemocracyNow! and WFMT have been a great example of how a community radios should sustain its presence for many decades. Previously mentioned community radios are all managed on a volunteer basis. Their biggest income is the social income they get from their contributors who

happen to be their listeners and programmers. This is the only possible way for them to have a sustainable business model.

While being local is a common feature of community radios, it is not true to categorise Açık Radyo as a local community radio. It is not true to characterise a megapol like Istanbul with a word like 'local' which gives a more limited meaning to where Açık Radyo is located. Even though, the radio frequency of Açık Radyo is only available in Istanbul and the rest can reach Açık Radyo through internet, it is too difficult and expensive for an initiative like Açık Radyo to have a national frequency.

Besides being the only community radio of Turkey and all the challenges it has to face over the years, Açık Radyo has been an example of a workplace where the contributors share at least one common value and sustain the mechanism they are in just because they care about their shared values. The worst condition that Açık Radyo programmers are openly state is the lack of interest and desire to adapt technological changes and developments. The reason why they still are happy with what they have is, they are timid about the possibility of trying to adapt and lose the values on the way to their newer and more technologically developed version.

3.5 Challenges

It is very difficult to see community radios like Açık Radyo to form and rise in today's chaotic media environment of Turkey. Especially when Turkish media is in a historically important, unnerving and socioeconomically polarised situation, it is very difficult to talk about a new and promising media platform.

When the FM/AM radios are kept out, the number of internet based radios are increasing day by day. However, since Turkish state and Radio Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) does not determine a legal and valid way of licensing for internet radios, most of them cannot settle down for a profitable or a non-profit business model. Moreover, their income is based on events, sponsors and investors instead of

contributors. This makes many internet radios follow a commercial path, mostly fail and stop broadcasting. In fact, most internet radios lose the radio format and focus more on events management, social media marketing or visual, written content creating because that is where the revenue is generated from.

Creating content has a new meaning with the new digitised broadcasting systems as well. While new ones struggle to find a place in the industry, traditional and commercial radios tend to change their content from music, announcements and commercials to storytelling, expression based format, just like community radios do as an existence philosophy. For instance; NTV Radyo, which is one of the most followed mainstream news radios of Turkey, have showed a transition from news bulletins and news related programs to intellectually creative, non-political content in the past 5 years.

Açık Radyo, on the other hand, has been a great example of blending daily and contemporary content, with public service announcements and contributor announcements which are produced by the people, for the people. The business model it has created and followed serves as a model for both commercial radio managers and community radio enthusiasts in Turkey. However, the way Açık Radyo sticks to its values, objectives and contributors can only bring great benefits to the radio industry, when Açık Radyo fully adapts and controls the ways, new rules and opportunities technology and digitalisation provide.

Another challenge Açık Radyo is not facing now but might face in the future is, counting too much on the Audience Support System. It is a very successful way of providing sustainability, indeed. However, given the current economic environment in Turkey, the system might also have discontinuation. Not because Açık Radyo might be seen as a perfect mechanism for freedom of speech by the oppressing ongoing policies in the country, but also because the financial issues might hit the audience hard enough to not spare the money they used to donate for Açık Radyo.

Lastly, it is both an advantage and a disadvantage for Açık Radyo to be the only example of its kind. It is an advantage because, Açık Radyo have set the structure and rules and it is being loved and followed for many years now. On the other hand, not seeing what might the other options might be is a disadvantage because it prevents self-criticism and causes lethargy in the long run.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

It goes without saying that Açık Radyo has a very special part in Turkish history of media and broadcasting. Same goes for the community radios all over the world which fight for the right to be informed in a free environment and care about their community's needs and development necessities. Açık Radyo has been a game changer in Turkish media. Since the day it began broadcasting, it has been a unique, free and inclusive platform for all the sounds, colors and vibrations of the universe. The main reason it became very successful and maintains this success is the 'obsession' of not giving up the common values, in words of the programers.

Açık Radyo managed to combine two community radio business models and together with the common values, the way it closes a gap between the audience and a free medium, it also has created its own business model called "Alternative Institutionalism". This model combines the elements of a business plan from an administrative perspective and matches it with the approaches of communications' perspective. Moreover, Açık Radyo has been on air, besides a two weeks long shut down more than a decade ago, for more than 20 years and has witnessed many socially and historically important events. In addition, Açık Radyo was doing more than just witnessing the events, but it was broadcasting live from the events' scenes. By doing this, when no other medium was courageous enough to do, Açık Radyo managed to gain loyal fans. Some even became Açık Radyo programers later on. The most important tool Açık Radyo has is the Audience Support System which provides financial support to Açık Radyo through special shows, interviews that audience can also be a part of.

On the other hand, to sustain the business model Açık Radyo applies, there are a few things that are needed to be done. First of all, Açık Radyo has a hesitation towards digitalization. Traditional listeners do not fancy changes, especially if they are

technology related. Even though there are easier ways of broadcasting, Açık Radyo tends to keep everything as they have been for a long time. Also, interaction between the programmer and the audience might also show a positive change with the current public relations and marketing trends.

For further research, motivation behind the Açık Radyo audience can be researched through surveys. The reason why they embrace the radio this much and the motivation behind being a part of the Audience Support System are some interesting topics to research and discuss.

All in all, Açık Radyo still remains as the one and only community radio of Turkey and it continues informing, entertaining and shaping the community it targets. The audience support matches with the value Açık Radyo team puts into their work. Through all the challenges Açık Radyo has been through, the listeners have become contributors and these contributors overcame the obstacles together with Açık Radyo. It is an issue of concern, how the next steps of Açık Radyo will be taken in terms of developing their business model and finding alternative ways to sustain the structure.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

- 1) Why do you do in Açık Radyo? What are your responsibilities?
- 2) Why are you working in Açık Radyo?
- 3) How is it operated? Do you work with anybody?
- 4) How is your routine while you are preparing for a show?
- 5) How do you decide your content?
- 6) How do you manage listener interactions?
- 7) Why is Açık Radyo the only community radio in Turkey? What do you think?
- 8) Why do you think Açık Radyo have been successful for more than 20 years?
What makes it special?
- 9) What can be done to develop Açık Radyo more?
- 10) What do you think are the lacks of Açık Radyo?