


The transformation of community radio in the podcast era: Between distribution and de-communitarisation

La transformación de la radio comunitaria en la era del podcast: Entre la distribución y la descomunitarización

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Abstract

The study examines the impact of podcasting on the character of community radio stations in the context of digital convergence. Although community radio stations are increasingly using podcasts, the asynchronous nature of this format makes it difficult to maintain a sense of community. The aim of this exploratory research is to find out whether and how two selected European community stations integrate community-building elements into their podcasts. A qualitative content analysis of selected episodes looked at the presence of parasocial interactions, calls for participation, and explicit references to the community. The results show that the podcasts of the analysed stations serve primarily in the logic of archiving and distribution. While basic parasociality is present, proactive calls for participation and connections with the community are almost absent. The findings empirically confirm the risk of "de-communitarisation" and suggest that without a targeted relationship-building strategy, the community potential of podcasts is lost.

Keywords: community building, community media, community podcast, community radio

Resumen

El estudio examina el impacto del podcasting en el carácter comunitario de las radios locales en el contexto de la convergencia digital. Aunque las radios comunitarias utilizan cada vez más los podcasts, la naturaleza asincrónica de este formato dificulta el mantenimiento del sentido de comunidad. El objetivo de la investigación exploratoria es determinar si dos emisoras comunitarias europeas seleccionadas integran elementos de construcción de comunidad en sus podcasts y, en caso afirmativo, cómo lo hacen. El análisis cualitativo del contenido de los episodios seleccionados se centró en la presencia de interacciones parasociales, llamamientos a la participación y referencias explícitas a la

comunidad. Los resultados muestran que los podcasts de las emisoras analizadas sirven principalmente para fines de archivo y distribución. Si bien la parasocialidad básica está presente, las invitaciones proactivas a la participación y las conexiones con la comunidad están prácticamente ausentes. Los resultados confirman empíricamente el riesgo de «descomunitarización» e indican que, sin una estrategia específica de construcción de relaciones, el potencial comunitario de los podcasts se pierde.

Palabras clave: creación de comunidades, medios comunitarios, podcast comunitario, radio comunitaria

Summary: 1. Introduction and state of the art. 1.1. Community media. 1.2. Community radio. 1.3. Podcasting. 2. Methodology. 3. Analysis and results. 3.1. Case study: Near FM. 3.2. Case study: World Radio Paris. 4. Discussion and conclusions. 5. Acknowledgement. 6. References.

1. Introduction and state of the art

Community radio emerged in the analogue era as small, local projects that built their audience on shortwave radio, in neighbourhoods and community centres. Today, they are shifting the same ambition – to give a voice to those who do not have one in the mainstream media – to the crowded and algorithmic online space, where frequencies are turning into streams and broadcasts into podcasts. The following theoretical section examines what happens to the community character of media in this process, as community radio turns into community podcasting.

1.1. Community media

Community media have been a stable part of the democratisation of media communication for several decades. In the era of mass media and media profit maximisation, they offer a counterpoint (or rather fill a void) that complements media systems and provides opportunities for the marginalised voices of communities to be heard and for topics that have not found a place in traditional mass media to be presented (Atton, 2002; Howley, 2005; Carpentier, 2017). In addition to a different approach to the selection of important topics, they also differ from traditional media in the way they are processed. The community media often do not employ media professionals, but rather enthusiastic amateurs, mostly without media education, who also increase their own media literacy through this work. The target audience of these media is also different. They do not try to reach the largest possible target audience in order to maximise profits through attractive advertisers. On the contrary, they create the media for themselves or their community and address a limited target audience.

The position of community media in individual countries is inevitably influenced by the legislative framework for their implementation. Countries without community media, with partial or full integration as a stable part of the media system, shape different habits not only of the audience but also of the media themselves. This inconsistency is also reflected in the different terminology (Škripcová, 2016) and definitions of community media in academia, but also in everyday functioning. On the other hand, it should be added that finding a uniform definition or term that could function as an umbrella term for all possibilities is an impossible task. However, their foundations and concept always remain the same – to serve the community and reflect its interests and needs.

Community media manifest themselves in various forms and shapes. Traditionally, we can talk about community press (zines), community radio and community television. However, the digitisation and transformation of media into the internet space have also brought with it other possibilities, such as newsletters, websites, YouTube channels and podcasts. Contemporary community media use various combinations of these possibilities and thus converge into hybrid forms that are no longer necessarily defined by a single stable channel (Škripcová & Mistrík, 2021) - a transformation whose implications for community identity are the central concern of this study.

1.2. Community radio

Community radio stations around the world have traditionally developed mainly as stations with a small regional reach or coverage, which was directly caused by the technological capabilities of small transmitters (see Coyer, 2011; Rusnák, 2023). Their illegality gradually transformed into a legal and legitimate part of broadcasting with the implementation of laws that protected their status or, conversely, placed them within a specific functional framework of rules and obligations, depending on the specific country of occurrence and the chosen implementation strategies (Rodríguez, 2001). Over the years, student and campus radio stations, arts and underground radio stations, interest group radio stations, religious radio stations and many others have developed.

A significant milestone in the development of radio as such was its digitisation and transformation into internet broadcasting, which made it possible to reach almost anyone (see Mučalo & Šulentić, 2023). Broadcasting via the internet was also technically less demanding than traditional frequency broadcasting. However, there is one big "but" – frequency offers a stable place in broadcasting that is not threatened by internet congestion, while also offering simple and quick tuning for the audience. The highly competitive environment of the internet, despite its positives, may not always offer this stability in audience behaviour. This is one of the reasons why traditional mass media radio stations remain loyal to classic frequency broadcasting, but at the same time mirror their content on the internet via their own websites or internet broadcast aggregators. However, internet broadcasting had another competitive advantage for community radio stations – the internet was a relatively unregulated space that allowed almost anything to be broadcast. In practice, this meant that it was possible to broadcast even if there was no legislative framework for community media in the country and traditional broadcasting on the frequency was not possible (except in the role of traditional mass media, or through a commercial media licence, which carries certain rights, but also obligations that not all community media necessarily have to fulfil). The digitisation of radio and the popularisation of the internet have thus not only brought about technological change, but, as Milioni argues, community media have become less organised on the basis of real-life social ties and more on the basis of network sociality (Milioni, 2009).

1.3. Podcasting

The latest significant milestone in this area is the popularisation and democratisation of podcast creation (Sharon, 2023; Gray, 2025). Popularity rankings - both national and global - show a mix of independent creators and professional media. Radio podcasts, edited from original broadcasts, rank equally high alongside original productions (Spotify, 2026; Apple Podcasts, 2026). This principle also works in reverse – radio, or more often its media house, creates podcast series, and after their success on the internet, they are also broadcast on traditional radio.

We consider it the current standard for radio to broadcast on a frequency and at the same time mirror this content through internet broadcasting, producing podcasts from individual programmes, which are then released through podcast applications (see Brník et al., 2020; Alonso-Fernández et al., 2022). All these activities are also supported by media coverage and advertising using appropriate content on social media, which is further supported by additional content designed to provide a glimpse behind the scenes of the creative process. This is a textbook example of media convergence (Jenkins, 2006; Cordeiro, 2012) - reaching different audiences with a single piece of content across multiple platforms and formats.

However, the situation in the field of community radio is different. Broadcasting frequencies and their legal status are not standardised, even in democratic countries, and are not uniform across European Union countries (European Parliament, 2007; Doliwa & Rankovic, 2014; Peissl et al., 2022).

Community radio stations in many countries are therefore reliant on internet broadcasting as their main channel, and the use of other formats, such as podcasts, varies from case to case. Midões points out that there is no legal regulation of community media in Portugal, but the identified community radio projects mainly use streaming and podcasts (Midões, 2022). The use of podcasts as a relevant format for communities is also advocated by Lamas, author of a training series for community media in Argentina (Lamas & Montells, 2023; James, 2025). In this context, Fick talks about the multimedia identity of community radio stations, which is created through cross-platform availability. Radio stations are moving away from so-called mono-media consisting of only one media type and are adapting to the current situation, as illustrated by the example of four radio stations in South Africa (Fick, 2024). Qurratul'aini and Mulawarman describe the same situation using the example of a campus radio station in Indonesia, which, in order to survive, converged on all popular formats – from podcasts and short videos for social media to longer YouTube videos (Qurratul'aini & Mulawarman, 2025). This trend is also confirmed by research on community radio stations in Zimbabwe (Sibanda & Ndlovu, 2023; Tsarwe & Sibanda, 2025). However, Wendland points out that although podcasts are based on the radio tradition, their community-building logic is different – it is based on asynchrony, demassification and deliberate audience participation. Unlike community radio, where the community is created by coexisting on the airwaves and in the local space, podcasts must actively build community through participatory culture and a sense of community – technology alone is not enough. He defines podcasting as an interactive, demassified and asynchronous medium – this opens up space for a deeper and more individual experience, but at the same time makes it more difficult to create a shared, simultaneous community experience, which is natural for live radio broadcasting. Therefore, if podcasts are to replace or complement community radio in a community context, they must work specifically with six "amplifiers" of community spirit (liveness, small thematic community, parasociality, participation, transmediality, shared intimacy and trust), otherwise it remains an individual medium and not a space for collective participation (Wendland, 2024). Community radio stations thus face a fundamental dilemma when migrating to podcast form: if they only transfer the technical format (RSS, on-demand episodes) but do not maintain the participatory logic and relationship with the locally anchored community, they risk "de-communitarisation" – they will transform from a community medium into a small-scale audio product.

The study seeks to understand what happens to the community character of medium when community radio becomes a community podcast. It focuses on how digital convergence and platform pressures are changing the ways in which communities use audio formats to represent themselves, build relationships, and maintain participation. Its purpose is to identify the circumstances under which a podcast can build on the tradition of community radio – that is, remain a medium "for and with the community" – and when, on the contrary, there is a risk that community production will dissolve into an individual, personalised audio space. Although there is extensive literature on community media, community radio and podcasts separately, systematic studies that track the specific transformations of community radio into podcast form and their implications for the community nature of the media are still the exception rather than the rule, especially in the European context.

2. Methodology

The study uses an exploratory multi-case design focusing on two European community radio stations that have integrated podcasting into their audio ecosystem: Near FM (Dublin, Ireland) and World Radio Paris (Paris, France). Both stations are non-profit, community-oriented broadcasters offering linear radio programmes and on-demand podcasts in English, making them suitable for quality-oriented research.

Given the objectives of the study, a desk-based qualitative strategy was chosen. The analysis combines: a) analysis of documents from publicly available sources (websites, "about us" sections, statements, information on regulation and funding, project descriptions, programme structures), b) qualitative content analysis of selected podcast episodes and, where possible, corresponding radio broadcasts.

The sample selection was purposive, guided by a set of explicit criteria. Stations were eligible for inclusion if they: 1. explicitly define themselves as a community or non-profit radio station; 2. operate within the European media system, ensuring comparability within a shared regulatory context; 3. actively produce and distribute podcasts alongside their linear broadcast; and 4. broadcast in English, which was a necessary constraint given the author's language limitations and the requirement for close analysis of subtle nuances in spoken content.

Within this eligibility framework, Near FM (Dublin, Ireland) and World Radio Paris (Paris, France) were selected because they not only meet all four criteria, but also represent meaningfully different models of community broadcasting in Europe. Near FM is a geographically anchored community radio station with a long tradition of civic engagement — it serves a territorially defined local community in Dublin and operates as a registered charity with a publicly available governance framework. World Radio Paris, by contrast, represents a language-defined, multi-ethnic community model: it broadcasts in English in a French-speaking country, serving a community bound not by geography but by shared linguistic and cultural experience. This contrast between a place-based and an identity-based community model was considered analytically valuable, as it allows for an inter-case comparison that goes beyond a single type of community radio logic.

It should be acknowledged that this selection inevitably reflects a degree of opportunity sampling. Suitable alternatives in other languages - such as Radio Fro (Austria) or Civil Rádió/Tilos (Hungary) - were considered but excluded due to the author's inability to conduct sufficiently nuanced analysis of spoken content in German or Hungarian. The final selection therefore prioritises analytical depth over breadth, which is consistent with the exploratory and qualitative nature of the study. Subsequently, podcast series were identified within each station that:

- are part of the station's programme (they appear on the radio's website and on major podcast platforms);
- have been updated within the last year, or represent the most recent content available as of 10 March 2026.

For a detailed analysis, the three most recent podcast episodes for each station were selected. The criterion of topicality is intended to ensure that the analysis reflects current practices in working with podcasts, rather than historical experiments that may no longer be representative.

The qualitative analysis was guided by the principles of directed content analysis, based on the theoretical framework of community media, media convergence and podcasting studies. The following dimensions were systematically examined for each station:

- The relationship between radio and podcasts:
 - whether podcasts mirror existing radio programmes (edited or full recordings of broadcasts),
 - whether they are original productions that do not appear in linear broadcasting, or
 - whether they use hybrid forms (e.g. extended/re-packaged versions of radio content).

- Media identity and branding:
 - how often and in what way the podcast explicitly refers to the parent radio station (name, slogans, "you are listening to...", mentions of frequency and broadcast times),
 - whether the podcast has the same audio identity as the radio station (jingles, station IDs),
 - how the station presents and categorises the podcast on its platforms (as a "radio programme", "podcast", "on-demand audio", etc.).
- Community-building elements based on Wendland's synthesis (2024) of participatory culture and "sense of community" in podcasts:
 - references to the local community, location and target groups,
 - invitations to participate (contact, events, volunteering, listener contributions),
 - parasocial addressing and personal sharing by presenters,
 - links to other platforms (website, social networks, community events).

All materials were collected and analysed manually. For each station, a brief case profile was first created (mission, context, audio offering), followed by a case analysis of the relationship between radio and podcasts and community-building elements in the analysed episodes. In the final step, an inter-case comparison was conducted to identify similarities and differences in how both stations use podcasting within their community media logic.

Although the study does not use statistical analysis, the chosen methodological approaches (exploratory design, deliberate case selection, qualitative content analysis) are consistent with the goal of capturing the subtle nuances of how community radio stations translate their mission and identity into podcast form. The main limitations of the design are the small number of cases and the reliance on publicly available data. The former reflects the current state of the field, as community podcasting does not yet have a long-standing strong tradition, which limits the pool of eligible cases. The language constraint that further shaped the sample is discussed in the case selection rationale above. These limitations are explicitly considered in the interpretation of the findings.

3. Analysis and results

3.1. Case study: Near FM

The official name of the entire company is Near Media Co-op, and it is divided into three main parts: Near FM (radio broadcasting since 1995), Near TV Productions (television production in the form of videos via a website) and NearCast (podcasts). The website also lists other projects: Near Listen Again, Near Archive and Near Education, but at the time of research, some of the links to these projects were not active. In the Our Mission section, they clearly state that this is a community non-profit media project focused on supporting local communities in Dublin, creating an alternative to mainstream media, promoting media literacy and promoting civil society ownership of media (Near Media Co-Op, n.d.a). Given the nature of their project, they are registered with the Charity Regulator and have a freely available Operations and Procedures Handbook (Near Media Co-Op, n.d.b), which formally sets out how the media operates. Funding is provided through occasional grants and Friends of Near, a support network of contributors to the project.

When reviewing the programme composition, it is important to note that although this is a community based on geographical affiliation, the diversity of the programme structure reflects the various smaller communities that have their own space in the broadcasts. There are programmes focused on current

local events, radio dramatisations of books and radio plays, queer programmes, religious programmes and discussions, as well as programmes about Asian talents in their original language and programmes focused on specific music genres.

Near FM broadcasts 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 90.3 FM in Dublin and the surrounding area, and all broadcasts are also available online via their website (in addition to audio, there is also a webcam from the studio). It also maintains an archive of broadcast programmes on its own Listen again platform. This is not a complete recording of the broadcast, but recordings of specific programmes that begin and end with the radio or programme jingle and do not include broadcasted music blocks. The programme archive can be viewed chronologically by broadcast time, but also by individual genres/themes (general, arts, documentary, sport, current affairs, Irish, drama, politics) and programme titles (135 in all genres/themes, but not all are currently broadcast and not all are regular programmes). All of them can be listened to via the web interface (some older ones are added via the SoundCloud widget), but they can also be downloaded or added to an RSS feed. Only brief information is provided – who the presenter/host or guest is and what the topic of the programme is. In addition to original programmes, the radio broadcasts also include music blocks, advertisements for their own broadcasts and individual programmes (recorded by the programme presenters, who personally invite listeners to tune in). Interestingly, some music programmes (e.g. *Irish to the Core* or *Pop Punk Playlist*) also have their own music playlists on Spotify, labelled with the name of the programme or the date it was broadcast. However, these are not official playlists, but playlists created by the programme presenters.

During the radio broadcast, the presenters encourage audience participation, mention the studio's contact details, and offer the possibility of requesting a song, if the format allows it.

In the field of podcasts, they use the aforementioned NearCast, which has its own website. Anyone can get involved in the creation process – organisations and individuals alike – and for a fee, they also offer the option of creating a separate podcast, for which they provide production, technical and distribution support through tailor-made packages. NearCast has 21 podcasts available on its website, but most of them are older and are no longer being released. The last episode of the oldest one was released in October 2018. Categorising these podcasts by the release year of their most recent episode reveals the following distribution:

- 2018: 3 podcasts;
- 2019: 2 podcasts;
- 2020: 4 podcasts;
- 2021: 1 podcast;
- 2022: 3 podcasts;
- 2023: 1 podcast;
- 2024: 3 podcasts;
- 2025: 3 podcasts;
- 2026: 1 podcast (number updated as of March 2026) (NearCast, n.d.).

However, since most of their topics are not inherently time-sensitive, they remain relevant even after the podcast concludes its run. From the chronology of podcasts, we can assume that podcasts are created mainly in waves and are more project-based than continuous programming.

Interestingly, every week at the same time (Wednesdays at 16:30), the radio schedule includes a programme called Podcast Hour, but each week it features a different podcast. During February and early March, the following were broadcast: *Hiberno Goethe* (4 February 2026), *Stories from Foster Care*, part 1 (11 February 2026), *Stories from Foster Care*, Part 2 (18 February 2026), *Perspectives on Prevention* (25 February 2026), *Hiberno Goethe* (4 March 2026), and *Stories from Foster Care* (11 March 2026).

Hiberno Goethe is a podcast that focuses on conversations about German and Irish life and culture and is supported by the Goethe-Institut. However, the podcast is not available in the NearFM radio archive, Near Listen Again or on the NearCast website. It is only available through podcast applications. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that this is not a community podcast, NearFM and NearCast are not mentioned in it, and it is a podcast originally published on 24 March 2022, with its last episode released on 27 October 2022. This suggests that the podcast was produced in the NearCast studio but has nothing to do with the community radio, or that the broadcast is based on an agreement between the radio station and the author, so we do not take it into account in our analysis.

Stories from Foster Care and *Perspectives on Prevention* are podcasts listed on the NearCast website in the Our podcasts section, with the latest episodes of both released in December 2025. However, the episodes broadcast on the radio during the period in question are older and were released in September and November 2025. We will supplement these two podcasts with a podcast that is not included in the radio broadcast schedule, but is the latest published and therefore the most current podcast on the NearCast website – *Candid Conversations*.

Figure 1. Cover art of the analysed podcasts *Candid Conversations*, *Stories from Foster Care*, and *Perspectives on Prevention* (Near FM)



Source: own processing, 2026, according to Oyediran (2026), Murphy (2025), and Quinn (2025).

The first podcast analysed is *Candid Conversations*, the latest episode available is episode 15, which was released on 4 March 2026 and has a running time of 1:08:46. It is a podcast about the African diaspora in Ireland, as the host explains at the beginning. The podcast has its own sound design, different from the radio, and the name Near FM or NearCast is not mentioned once in the podcast. It is an interview that fills the entire length of the podcast, along with sound design, with all of the presenter's questions to the respondent being personal and relating to his life and professional activities. Although some of the respondent's answers naturally relate to participation and community, we find no signs of a community podcast in the recording. The only community-building elements here are references to the local community, but these come in the respondent's answers, not from the presenter. There are no invitations to participate, parasocial relationships, or links to other platforms. At the end of the podcast, the presenter thanks the listeners for tuning in and invites them to listen to the next episode, but this is

a classic podcast feature. The only visible link is the Near FM logo in the podcast's visual graphics. This podcast is not found in the radio schedule on the day of its release or on the previous or following days.

The second material analysed is the podcast *Stories from Foster Care*, the latest episode of which was released on 16 December 2026 and has a running time of 44:02. It is a podcast of the Irish Foster Care Association in association with the Department of Children, Disability & Equality, available on NearCast and in podcast applications. The podcast has its own sound design, different from radio, and radio is not mentioned anywhere in the podcast, but NearCast is mentioned in the text description of the podcast as the producer. As in the previous podcast, this one also features an interview with a respondent, which, together with the sound design, fills the entire running time. The presenter works with a minimum of community-building elements, specifically sharing personal opinions on certain topics and targeting a specific group of listeners, but in a very limited space, leaving most of the talking to the interviewee. At the end, the host thanks the listeners and the interviewee and says that he has also learned a lot from her (a minor parasocial expression) and invites them to listen to the next episode.

The third material analysed is *Perspectives on Prevention*, the latest episode of which was released on 17 December 2025 with a running time of 38:31 and is a series from the Prevention and Early Intervention Network. It is available on NearCast and in podcast applications, and as in the previous case, the visual identity of this podcast also does not refer to NearFM. However, NearCast is mentioned in the text description as a co-creator. The podcast has its own sound design, and in the opening jingle, the presenter talks about its focus, including communities. Although most of the podcast is conceived as an interview with the respondent, the presenter does not speak for herself but asks questions on behalf of the listeners, using phrases such as "we would like to know", "we are interested in", "people think", etc. At the same time, she does not shy away from sharing her personal opinions, thereby building parasocial bonds with listeners. The community-building element is also found in the text information about the podcast, which includes a call for listeners to send in their suggestions for respondents and an email address. In conclusion, the presenter thanks the respondent and listeners and expresses her hope that the interview has inspired listeners and made them think about the topic. She also mentions the call for listeners to send in suggestions for respondents and adds her email address.

In all the podcasts analysed, community radio is either not mentioned at all or only very marginally – in the text description in the podcast application and once in the visual identity of the podcast. There is no direct connection to the community in the audio recording; most presenters only address the listeners of the podcast in question. The relationship between radio and podcasts in these cases is rather marginal – the podcasts were created as independent projects or original productions, which were also broadcast on the radio in a separate programme called Podcast Hour several months after their release.

3.2. Case study: World Radio Paris

The official name of the organisation is Association World Radio Paris, and it broadcasts two radio stations: WRP News and WRP MusicMix (in this analysis, we will focus only on the former, as unlike the latter, it contains spoken word, programmes, etc.). Several places on the website mention that they broadcast via DAB+ in the Paris, Nice, Cannes and Normandy areas, as well as online and via the RadioPlayer app. The About Us section clearly states that it is a community radio station focused on life in France, open to audience participation and focused on domestic culture (World Radio Paris, n.d.a) and the acclimatisation of people coming to live in France. The latter is particularly interesting and is also based on the language situation (radio broadcasting in English in a French-speaking country), with a separate subpage on the website called Getting Started in France, which contains tips on other media in English, socialisation platforms, as well as short audio episodes about life situations and how to deal

with them (World Radio Paris, n.d.b). The radio station is funded by public sources from the Ministry of Culture, donations, corporate sponsors and advertising.

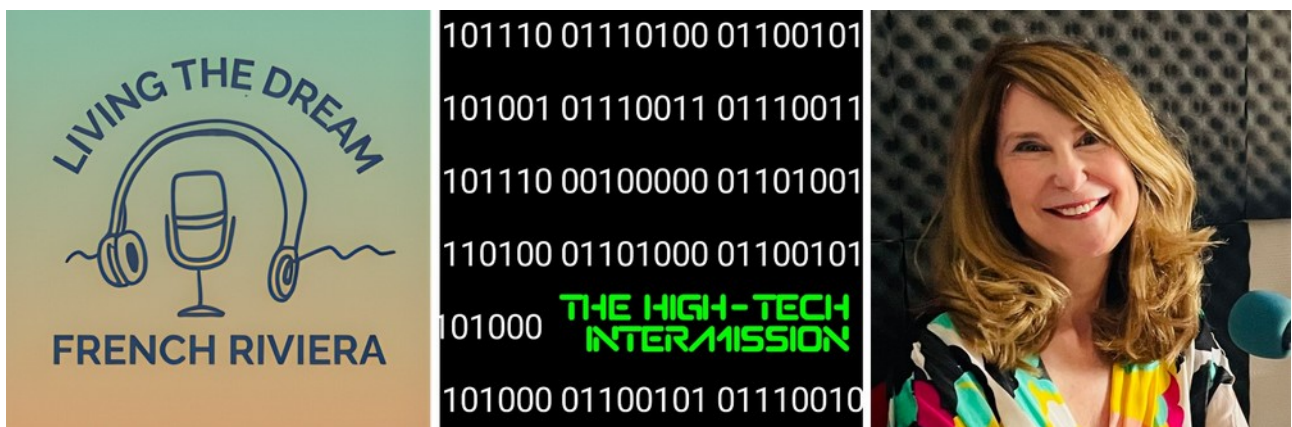
Looking at the broadcasting structure, it is clear that, as in the previous case, this is also a broadcast composed of several communities, groups and, in many cases, formats taken from other media. For example, we find programmes such as *The World*, *BBC Newsday*, *BBC Outlook*, *As it happens*, *Pacifica News* and others (independently operating programmes and formats that are taken over by various radio stations). Original programmes are broadcast during the week at predetermined times (11:00, 12:30, 14:00, 16:00, 19:00, 21:00, 00:30) and are clearly marked by colour in the broadcast schedule. The schedule includes a total of 55 different shows that are broadcast on a weekly basis, but some are broadcast only once a week and others several times a week.

The radio station does not have a separate subpage that would serve as a comprehensive archive, but it does have an available list of World Radio Paris Shows, which contains 41 programmes. Each one has a short text description, thematic focus, frequency of publication, and a link to the archive of the specific programme. Some links lead to Apple Podcasts, while others remain on the WRP website. However, the programmes do not have time stamps, so it is difficult to determine at first glance whether they are current programmes or have already ceased publication. Furthermore, they are not sorted alphabetically or chronologically.

Interestingly, whether in the archive of individual episodes or in the broadcast schedule, most of these episodes are not referred to as podcasts, even if they are available on Apple Podcasts. The term podcast only appears in the descriptions of some episodes, such as *The Earful Tower* or *La Vie Creative*. Despite the lack of consistency in terminology, the format and distribution are identical. In the case of original shows, the schedule clearly shows that the same programmes are repeated on different days or at different times. For example, *The Earful Tower* show airs on Tuesday at 19:00, Wednesday at 14:00 and Thursday at 11:00, and this pattern is also visible in other episodes.

As this is an atypical arrangement and schedule, but with a view to keeping the research as up-to-date as possible, the deciding factor was the Best of World Radio Paris podcast playlist on podcast platforms, which is managed by the radio station itself. We selected the last three published programmes/podcasts, which are: *Living the Dream: French Riviera*, *High-Tech Intermission* and *Turning Points*, all of which can also be found in the list of programmes on the radio station's website.

Figure 2. Cover art of the analysed podcasts *Living the Dream: French Riviera*, *High-Tech Intermission*, and *Turning Points* (World Radio Paris)



Source: own processing, 2026, according to Liconnet (2026), Diouri-Adequin (2026), and Killeen (2026).

The first one analysed is *Living the Dream: French Riviera*, published on 9 March 2026, focusing on lifestyle and, according to the information on the radio's website, published bi-monthly. The podcast has its own sound design, different from the radio, and has a running time of 27:16. It is available on the radio's website and on podcast platforms. The text description on Apple Podcasts states that the podcast is broadcast on WRP every two weeks (i.e., a different release date compared to the information on the website). A quick check in podcast apps shows that since January 2026, the podcast has been released every two weeks, but until January, was released every week, and at the beginning of its run in November 2025, five episodes were released on one day. It is also interesting that there is no information about WRP in the text description on Spotify, neither in the text about a specific episode nor in the overall description of the podcast. Community radio is not mentioned once in the audio recording itself, nor are there any community-building elements. At the end of the podcast, the presenter thanks the listeners, refers them to the podcast's website and announces that she is preparing a second season. She takes this opportunity to ask listeners to let her know what kind of stories they would like to hear more of. The podcast thus comes across as a standalone show that has nothing to do with radio, except for the description in Apple Podcasts. It should also be noted that although the episode in question was published on the radio podcast playlist on 9 March 2026, it has been available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts since 2 February 2026 (when viewed via the podcast title, not via WRP). The WRP website also lists episode 17 as the latest episode, even though episode 19 is already available in the apps. There is therefore a delay of several weeks between Spotify and Apple Podcasts (which manages the podcast), the radio website and subsequently the radio's own podcast selections in these apps, and they also have different running times. The radio version is 27:16, while the original versions are 43:36.

The second podcast analysed is *High-Tech Intermission*, published on 27 February 2026, with a running time of 20:27. It has its own sound design, different from the radio station, and in the introduction, the presenter begins his speech by mentioning the name of the radio station in the first few seconds. He introduces the topic and notes that this is the last episode and his time at WRP radio is coming to an end. In the introduction, he repeatedly uses "we" to refer to the listeners and himself, shares his feelings and opinions, and addresses the listeners directly. However, the format is different from all the previous ones – it is not an interview between the presenter and the respondent, but an assessment of current events by the presenter and his commentary. For some topics, he also mentions the previous episode or where listeners can find more information. Community building is therefore more than just marginal. At the end of the episode, the presenter thanks the listeners and mentions the name of the radio station again. The podcast does not have a separate page on podcast applications and can only be found under Best of World Radio Paris.

The third podcast analysed is *Turning Points*, published on 27 February 2026, with a running time of 20:12 (with advertising) or 19:55 (without advertising). It has its own sound design and, as in the previous case, the presenter mentions the name of the radio station at the beginning. She introduces the guest, explaining why he was chosen – he is an artist currently exhibiting in Paris, and the day after the episode is broadcast is the closing night of his exhibition. She also informs listeners that they are all invited. This is followed by a traditional interview about the artist's work and the exhibition, but the presenter repeatedly returns to the theme of Paris and local personalities in her questions, thus thematically linking to community radio and expressing her personal feelings. At the end, she thanks the respondent and reminds listeners of the location, date and time of the exhibition, adding that she will also be attending. However, the invitation is not formal, but friendly, as if she were inviting friends or acquaintances.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The following section first synthesises the key findings from both case studies, before situating them within the broader theoretical framework of community media and podcasting research. In all the podcasts analysed, there was no significant relationship between community radio and its podcasts, but we can say that radio stations approach podcasts in different ways. In some cases, it is a separate podcast created outside the media, which the radio station simply takes over and includes in its broadcast as if it were another programme. In other cases, it is the radio station's own podcast, but the radio station is only mentioned marginally or not at all in the podcast itself. However, all the podcasts analysed can be found on the radio station's website and in podcast applications, as the authors seek to diversify distribution. The time factor often plays no role in this – podcasts that were released several months ago are also included in the broadcast. We could summarise that in radio-podcast relations, the analysed community radio stations have room for improvement. Media identity and branding analysis showed that almost all podcasts appear on podcast platforms as separate media products, rarely referring to their community radio station, and even then only marginally. There were no mentions of frequency, slogans, or broadcast times in any case, and each podcast had its own audio design. The presentation of podcasts on community radio platforms and websites is also inconsistent. Some refer to them as shows, some label them as podcasts, and some do not label them at all. Community-building elements were most often present in the form of parasocial relationships between the presenter and the audience (which are, however, typical for any podcast). References to the community and invitations to participate were not present at all, and links to other platforms appeared only marginally.

Moving beyond the descriptive findings, this pattern has broader theoretical implications. This lack of community-building elements empirically confirms Wendland's (2024) thesis on the nature of podcasts in a community context. While live radio creates a sense of community naturally through coexistence on the airwaves and in local space, podcasts, as an asynchronous and demassified medium, require targeted and deliberate community building. The analysis showed that, with the exception of basic parasociality (which is, however, part of almost any podcast), creators work with other community enhancers only minimally. The podcasts of the analysed community radio stations thus remain trapped in the logic of distribution and confirm the risk of "de-communitarisation" – they are becoming more of an individualised on-demand audio product in which the space for collective participation is being lost.

Based on the above, we can conclude that there is still considerable room for improvement in the relationship between community radio stations and their podcasts. It is relatively easy for audiences to access radio podcasts from radio broadcasts, but this relationship rarely works in reverse. In most cases, podcasts appear as separate media outputs, offering space for a deeper representation of selected topics, but they are unlikely to bring listeners to community radio, as in many cases they do not even refer to it.

Podcasts on community radio stations are thus at an important crossroads. On the one hand, it is unlikely that they will replace community radio stations on their own – just as the internet did not destroy community press, but rather stimulated the emergence of e-zines and digital follow-ups to printed fanzines (Triggs, 2010). Community radio stations are therefore unlikely to disappear, but will continue to transform, with podcasts becoming one of the more accessible and flexible forms of this transformation. During the popularisation of the internet, Rennie pointed out that community media could become either more relevant or less relevant as a result of technological and cultural change, depending on how well they were able to embrace new forms of communication without losing their community mission (Rennie, 2006). Against the backdrop of current changes, it appears that the future

of community radio stations does not depend solely on whether they "accept" new platforms, but whether they can "bend" them to their advantage. If they adapt only to the logic of algorithms, metrics and current distribution trends, they will become just another player in a crowded digital space. However, if they use new forms of distribution, such as podcasts, to strengthen dialogue with the community, they can retain what makes them unique in the online environment: slowness, locality and participation (Satria & Urrahmah, 2025). Our research shows that the community radio stations and their podcasts have already embarked on this transformation, but they still operate as separate entities.

In conclusion, the contribution of this study lies in linking theoretical concepts of media convergence and community media with the specific practices of European community radio stations in the era of podcasting. Exploratory analysis has shown that while community radio stations successfully use podcasts for distribution diversification and archiving purposes, their content and community connection to the station itself remains minimal. This has an important implication for community radio stations: if they want podcasts to reinforce their core mission, they must approach them not only as a distribution channel, but as a space where participation and engagement with the audience must be actively rebuilt.

Future research should build on these findings by analysing a broader sample of European stations, involving non-English-speaking communities and, where appropriate, conducting qualitative interviews with the creators of community podcasts themselves to gain a better understanding of their production and strategic decisions.

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