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Title	Community Ties and Revitalization : the Role of Community Radio in Japan
Sub Title	
Author	金山, 智子(Kanayama, Tomoko)
Publisher	Institute for Communications Research, Keio University
Publication year	2007
Jtitle	Keio communication review No.29 (2007. 3) ,p.5- 24
Abstract	
Notes	
Genre	Journal Article
URL	<a href="http://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AA00266090-20070300-0005">http://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AA00266090-20070300-0005</a>

# Community Ties and Revitalization: The Role of Community Radio in Japan

by Tomoko KANAYAMA\*

## Introduction

This study explores how community radio plays a role in revitalizing local communities in Japan. With the localism movement, most influential of all in the Japanese campaign for community broadcasting (radio) was the government information policy in late 1980, which eventually enforced the community broadcasting law in 1992 to provide local information to local people via local community radio, also called community FM. Since the massive Kobe earthquake in 1995, attention has been paid to the role of community radio for providing local information in preventing and responding to natural disasters. Because news and information provided by mainstream media are typically unbalanced, disaster victims often become frustrated due to lack of information that they really need for their lives. For that particular purpose, local governments have financially participated in community radio in their locals. These local governments utilize community radio as a means of information communication in their policies for disaster prevention.

Moreover, collapse of existing social systems in Japan has called for urgent reconstruction of new systems, motivating citizens to use community media for constructing better local autonomy. The recent civic movement in Japan also has stimulated ordinary people in local areas to use community radio as a tool for revitalizing their communities, many of which have gone into steady decline. Some people perceive community radio as a public space, in which local people happen to meet each other, exchange opinions, and express thoughts. Others see it as a useful tool for promoting and preventing local culture as well as business. Although the government used to issue a community radio license only to for-profit organizations, with the civic movement the government finally allowed nonprofit organizations to operate community radio. More focused on facilitating democratic and civil society, these community radio stations operated by nonprofit organizations are quite notable in terms of operation, public access, and programming.

\* Tomoko KANAYAMA is associate professor at the Institute of Media and Communications Research, Keio University.

\*\* Author's Note: The original version of this article was presented at the International Association for Media Communication Research in Cairo, Egypt in July 2006. The author thanks for research grant from Keio Gijuku Academic Development Funds.

While most community radio stations have faced difficulties in financial management, expectations regarding community radio have grown in local communities. Thus, the number of community radio stations has been increasing, and reached 200 by the end of 2006. In media studies, a general understanding is that community radio plays an important role in developing countries where media is not available for all or the media environment is not developed (Girard, 1992). Assuming this perspective, it is important for media scholars to explore why people still want to have community radio for local community development in Japan, where more technologically sophisticated media are available for most members of society today. However, there are few studies focusing on the role of community radio for community development in advanced countries. Based on Stamm's theoretical concept of community ties, this study attempts to explore how community radio helps local community revitalization in Japan.

## Community Media

### *Definition of Community Media*

As Howley points out that community media is a vague construction whose usage and meanings vary considerably (2002), there exist various definitions of community media. For example, the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) explains that community media “originates, circulates and resonates from the sphere of civil society...This is the field of media communication that exists outside of the state and the market (often non-government and non-profit), yet which may interact with both” (IAMCR, 2005). This definition is broad enough to encompass various platforms as community media is used, but it is narrow enough to consider community uses of commercial or public media. Jankowski (2001) provides more a specific definition as follows: “Community media refers to a diverse range of mediated forms of communication: print media such as newspapers and magazines, electronic media such as radio and television, and electronic network initiatives that embrace characteristics of both traditional print and electronic media” (p.6).

While definitions above focus on media communication, Howley considers meanings of community media: “By community media, I refer to grass roots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity” (2005, p.2).

As definitions of community media vary, actual activities and profiles may more vary. Despite such varieties or differences among community media, “participation” and “access” may be applied to most community media endeavors

(Rennie, 2006). Rennie explicates, “Nonprofessional media makers are encouraged to become involved (participation), providing individuals and communities with a platform to express their views (access)” (2006, p.3).

Regarding characteristics of community media, Jankowski describes the following:

- objectives: to provide news and information relevant to the needs of community members, to engage these members in public communication via the community medium; to ‘empower’ the politically disenfranchised;
- ownership and control: often shared by community residents, local government, and community-based organizations;
- content: locally oriented and produces;
- media production: Involving non-professionals and volunteers;
- distribution: via the ether, cable television infrastructure, or other electronic network;
- audience: predominantly located within a relatively small, clearly defined geographic region, although some community networks attract large and physically dispersed audience;
- financing: essentially non-commercial, although the overall budget may involve corporate sponsorship, advertising, and government subsidies. (2001, p.7-8).

These characters are general aspects of community media, so there are many exceptions or diversities depending upon how it is used for what purpose.

#### *Need of Community Media in Japan*

In Japan, community media such as CATV and community radio have been developed by initiatives of the central government, promoting local revitalization since the 1980s. Community media were particularly placed as the core in two government information policies, Teletopia plan (telecommunication and utopia) and the New Media plan for advanced information-oriented society. These plans were practiced in many prefectures nationwide; however, these media did not exhibit their abilities because the policies primarily focused on infrastructure, not users’ needs (Kiyohara, 1989).

In 1995, community media was looked at again when the Kobe earthquake occurred. This disaster gave local governments and communities an opportunity to rethink the role of community media, particularly community FM, in order to provide local information in preventing and responding to natural disasters. As Japan is well known as a country with frequent earthquakes, disaster prevention is quite important for community media use.

Frequent earthquakes in Japan also has motivated use of community media for constructing better local autonomy. Years ago, public entities in Japan realized their limitations to meet the increasingly diversified and complex needs of citizens. Citizens therefore no longer expect such entities to provide sufficient systems for social life. As a result, there is urgent need for a new system that brings mutual support among residents in a local community (Funatsu, 1994). In such a new system, communication processes are essential for members of the community to exchange information, express thoughts, identify environmental changes, and finally, arouse various actions from the community.

This also can be called community communication, referring to “those small-scale forms of public communication such as local cable and over-the-air broadcasting, community press...a generally restricted, but open category of receivers who are (usually) not dispersed over a large geographic region” (Hollander, Stappers, & Jankowski, 2002, p. 23). Hollander et., al (2002) mentioned,

Communicators in community communication address their audience on the assumption of a shared relevance that community issues have for both parties, both senders and receivers, because they all participate in the same community and because the community serves as frame of reference for a shared interpretation of the relevance of the topic communicated within the community (p. 23).

In fact, communication has been essential for community formation since Aristotle’s community, which was sustained by the dynamics of face-to-face communication (Depew & Peters, 2001). The notion that communication is the process of community formation grown self-conscious was discovered by later sociologists including Dewey and Mead. “Communication is conceived as one of the devices of the relation between individuals and community” as Rothenbuhler described (2001, p.159). Although main communication means has been shifted from face-to-face communication to mass media such as newspaper, radio and television, media communication has played an important role for community formation (Rothenbuhler, 2001). Thus, community media is essentially used to promote community communication among members of the local community.

In general, community media in Japan includes local newspapers, local commercial TV stations, free papers, local government PR publications and brochures, notices for circulation (issued by neighborhood associations), wired telephone, shortwave radio, CATV, and community FM. In addition to these media, with the rapid diffusion of the Internet a great number of people already have been enjoying various types of net communities such as BBS, mailing lists, local portal sites, and social network services (SNS) (Hayashi, 2003). In fact, the

net community has exhibited its effectiveness in helping victims after the Kobe earthquake. Thus, the high expectation from local communities is that community media is able to connect members of local communities, establishing voluntary community networks (Hayashi, 2003).

As mentioned above, types of community media have expanded with development of community technology for the past twenty-years, but the primary functions or roles of these media have not much changed. The following seven categories are summaries of major roles of community media in Japan (Hayashi, 2003; Kobayashi, 2003).

- To provide information transfer for giving community members access to knowledge
- To watch the community environment
- To mobilize to direct peoples' actions
- To establish networks for community members
- To establish community identity
- To create new value and culture
- To transform members' experiences/problems into a community's common experiences/problems

Not all community media is suitable for practicing the roles above, depending upon the characteristics of each media and ways in which each media is utilized. Also, a single media may be enough to achieve a single goal, while plural media may be used for multiple purposes.

## Community FM Radio

### *Definition of Community Radio*

Like community media, there exists a variety of definitions of community radio. Each country or area call their community radio differently, for instance, popular or education radio in Latin America, rural or bush radio in Africa, free or association radio in parts of Europe. In Japan, it is called as community FM. The World Association of Community Radio Broadcaster (AMARC) displays various points of views of community radio among many community radio broadcasters in the world. The following is a comprehensive one that may cover such various thinking:

Community radio, rural radio, cooperative radio, participatory radio, free radio, alternative, popular, educational radio. If the radio stations, networks and production groups that make up the World Association of Community

Radio Broadcasters refer to themselves by a variety of names, then their practices and profiles are even more varied. Some are musical, some militant and some mix music and militancy. They are located in isolated rural villages and in the heart of the largest cities in the world. Their signals may reach only a kilometer, cover a whole country or be carried via shortwave to other parts of the world.

Some stations are owned by not-for-profit groups or by cooperatives whose members are the listeners themselves. Others are owned by students, universities, municipalities, churches or trade unions. There are stations financed by donations from listeners, by international development agencies, by advertising and by governments. ("Waves for Freedom". Report on the Sixth World Conference of Community Radio Broadcasters. Dakar, Senegal, January 23-39, 1995)

This description vividly shows a variety of community radio with regard to purpose, programming, size, location, power, and operation.

Girard provides a definition in *A Passion for Radio*, which focuses on the roles of community radio.

Community radio [is] a type of radio made to serve people; radio that encourages expression and participation and that values local culture. Its purpose is to give a voice to those without voices, the marginalized groups and to communities far from large urban centers, where the population is too small to attract commercial or large-scale state radio. (Girard, 1992, p.13)

Fairchild (2001) also emphasizes that community radio should be democratic, participatory, local, and accessible (2001, p.93). Girard and Fairchild have something in common in terms of "participation," "access," and "locality."

### *Community Radio in Japan*

As mentioned, community radio is used for different purposes and in different ways. In Japan, community radio uses low-power and differs from regular AM and FM radio. With government information policies, the community broadcasting law was enforced in 1992 to provide local information to local people via local community radio, called community FM. Like regular AM and FM radio, radio waves and frequency allocation for community FM is licensed by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications. This licensing system has influenced the way in which community FM is used in local communities. For example, in 1992 the first community FM station was established

in Hakodate, a medium size city in Hokkaido (the northernmost large section of Japan), to provide information to local communities, followed by another station in the Osaka area in 1993 to provide information for disasters. At that time, only one watt was permitted for transmission power of community FM, so that local residents could not fully enjoy community radio. Also, to open a community FM station was so expensive that government financing was needed. Therefore, such very low transmitting power could not attract local governments.

The Kobe earthquake in 1995 changed this situation. Several tiny community radio stations in Kobe played important roles in relieving the disaster, particularly helping foreigners living in Japan who did not understand Japanese. Right after the earthquake, the government allowed an increase in transmitting power from one watt to ten watts. This resulted in a boom in opening community FM stations in those days. In 1999, transmitting power was increased to twenty watts. Finally, in 2004 a large earthquake was occurred in Niigata-Chuetsu. This disaster once again became an alarm to local communities and governments to think about the effectiveness of community media, including community FM, CATV, and net communities for preventing and responding to disasters.

While community FM has received attention regarding disaster prevention, it has been expected to help community revitalization. Recent civic movements that emerged after the Kobe earthquake have encouraged citizens to use community media for constructing better local autonomy. In the 1990s, the collapse of existing social systems in Japan called for urgent reconstruction of new systems, so community FM has been used with the hope for revitalizing local communities, many of which have gone into steady decline. Their perceptions of community FM vary; for example, a public space where local people meet each other, exchange opinions, and express thoughts, and a useful tool for promoting and preventing local culture and business.

Moreover, these movements influenced licensing for community FM. The government used to issue a community radio license only to for-profit organizations due to concerns about management ability in operation of stations. But the government finally allowed nonprofit organizations to operate community radio, so the first community FM station operated by a nonprofit organization was born in Kyoto in 2003. More focused on facilitating democratic and civil society, these community radio stations operated by nonprofit organizations are quite notable in terms of operation, public access, and programming.

As of December 2006, the number of community FM stations is 200, including eighty-nine stations with local government's investments, 102 stations without local government's investments, and nine nonprofit stations. This increase in numbers of community FM stations does not always suggest ease of operation or business. Rather, most stations have faced difficulties in operation. Even though about a half of community FM stations are financed by local governments, recent



budget cuts in local governments directly impact operation of these stations. Therefore, community radio stations have to take various ways to cut expenses and to increase income, such as partnership with community business, expansion of service areas, and collaboration with other community FM stations in programming and sponsorship.

Thus, community FM has been increasingly used to revitalize local communities in Japan. Despite this phenomenon, community radio is a surprisingly underrepresented area within media studies. Most existing studies on community radio have looked at its operation, contents, programming, and Internet use (e.g., Matsuo, 1997; Morita, 2001; Sakata, 2003; Kato, 2005). We know that members of local communities, including local governments, still increasingly open community FM stations for their communities. However, we do not know how community FM helps local communities achieve their goals. It is necessary for media scholars to research this matter.

## Theoretical Framework

Communication is regarded as a device of the relation between individuals and community (Rothenbuhler, 2001). A number of scholars have studied how media communication would construct relation between the two. For instance, Park (1922) and Janowitz (1952) described the unique contributions of newspapers and newspaper reading to communities. Later research also showed the role of the newspaper in the formation and maintenance of people's feelings of attachment to the places they live (cited in Stamm, 1985). This research literature has grown to more complex model, including other media (e.g., Finnegan & Viswanath, 1988; Jeffres, Dobos, & Sweeney; Rothenbuhler, 1996). Maclver (1975) indicated that 'community sentiment' as a fundamental factor of community, which is fusion of 'we-feeling' (that means community attachment), 'role feeling' (that means community commitment), and 'dependency feeling' (that means community identity). So, media communication creates community sentiment, thereby contributing to community formation.

Since the late 1970s research on community and media communication has focused more on community ties, which bond between the individual and community. Rothenbuhler summarized these researches on community ties as below:

People's feeling of attachment to their communities, their involvement in local affairs, their identification with their community, and the patterns of behavior that keep people in the locality, have come to be identified as types of ties to the community. These ties were initially seen as evidence of the continued viability of communities. (2001, p.163-64)

Stamm's community ties concept is quite useful here (Hollander, 2002). According to Stamm (1985), community ties are specifically those things that connect individuals to each other across a variety of gaps, which may be spatial, social, linguistic, political, information, etc. The community tie is a connection that is established through the following activities, as suggested by Stamm.

- Attending: keeping informed of and aware of others
- Orienting: individual thinks about, has ideas about others
- Agreeing: individual shares concerns and views of others
- Connecting: talking to, listening to, getting together with others
- Manipulating: working to have an effect on others

These activities can also be considered community communication. Drawing on the results of a large number of empirical studies on community media and community relationships, Stamm discussed community ties as the antecedent to and/or the consequences of the use of community media. Accordingly, the activities as community communications may be executed prior to and/or after community media use.

In Japan, community FM has been used for various purposes, such as disaster prevention, relief, and revitalization. Regardless of the purposes, it is important to establish a collaborative relationship among community members in order to achieve goals. A common feature underpinning use of community FM may be to strengthen or rebuild ties among members of the local community. It is important to understand how community communication takes place in community FM, which presumably helps to establish community attachment.

Based upon Stamm's community ties concept, we can assume that various activities may be taken before, during, and/or after use of community FM in Japan, and community ties may be established in consequence. This study, therefore, attempts to understand how community FM plays a role in revitalizing local communities in Japan, particularly looking at community ties. The following research questions are made based upon Stamm's community ties concept:

*RQ1: How are members of the community connected through community FM?*

*RQ2: What kinds of activities as community communication are taken by members of the community through community FM, and how?*

*RQ3: How does community FM function for community communication?*

## Method

This study used in-depth interviews with 40 community FM stations in Japan and 19 local governments that finance some of the radio stations interviewed, all of which are located in various types of communities ranging from a small rural village to a large metropolitan area, and from north to south (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Locations of Community FM stations interviewed



In order to select community FM stations for the interviews in this study, content analysis of each website was conducted to see how each station provides information about the radio station to audiences. This actually helped to distinguish each station's management ability, as well as attitude toward audiences and communities. Also, a detailed time table provided through the website was examined to learn 1) what kinds of programs are provided, 2) who is involved in programs, and 3) what kinds of relationships exist via services.

Moreover, to balance selection of the community FM for interviews, this study tried to choose stations from each of all ten regions in Japan because locality influences various aspects. For example, geographical conditions related to radio waves often influence the number of radio stations. Also, interference of radio waves is problematic in a small area like Tokyo, so that the number of radio stations in the area is limited. Type of radio station also was taken into consideration: 1) radio stations that local government financed, 2) commercial radio stations that local government did not finance, and 3) radio stations that nonprofit organization operated (see Table 1).

Table 1. Type of Community FM stations interviewed

Type of Community FM	N=40
Commercial radio stations financed by local governments	21
Commercial radio stations not financed by local governments	18
Non-commercial stations operated by nonprofit organizations	1

There is a tendency for different types of radio stations to be based in different regions. For example, most radio stations in Hokkaido (Northern Island) are not financed by local governments, whereas many radio stations are financially supported by local governments in the Kanto area where Tokyo and other metropolitan cities are located. Also, until recently only one community FM was allowed to open in one district of one local government (village, town, or city). Now, several local governments can finance one radio station and several radio stations can open in one district area.

Because the number of community FM stations increased from 166 to 183 during the interview phase of this study, the number of interviewees had to be increased. Each interview took 90 minutes on average, and all interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

## Analysis

This study attempts to understand how community FM plays a role in revitalizing local communities in Japan based upon Stamm's community ties concept. Community ties are vital for such revitalization. Three research questions that this study focused on include connection among members of the community, their activities taken through community FM, and functions of community FM. Through these research questions this study revealed four major aspects of community radio revitalization: 1) connecting various people in the community, 2) constructing mutual trust in the community, 3) discovering resources in the community, and 4) reaffirming relationship to the community.

### *Connecting Various People in the Community*

Most community radios provide a number of information programs related to the community everyday, in which community people are reported or invited in the studio. Community radio helps create a place where various people in the community meet, including farmers, fisherman, factory workers, housewives, seniors, mothers with small children, students, Buddhist priests, people with

disabilities, and foreigners living in Japan. These contacts through community radio give opportunities for under-represented people to have their voices heard. For example, recently a number of foreigners have come to Japan for work, particularly from China, Brazil, and Korea. They often settle in a small town or middle city in which many small businesses face a labor shortage. These foreigners typically live closely with others from the same country, and do not have much communication with Japanese residents in the community. Japanese residents also realize the existence of these foreigners living in the same community, but often see them from a distance. Some community FM stations have a program hosted by a foreigner living in the community. In such programs, the host introduces friends or acquaintances who came from the same country and live in the community. So listeners not only get to know these foreigners in the community, but also enjoy a different culture including languages, music, history and lifestyle.

In addition, some radio stations provide information such as knowledge of disaster prevention and public information from local government programs in multiple languages. Through this program, both Japanese and foreigners in the community recognize those people who need such information in foreign languages. These programs related to foreigners encourage members of the community to have cross-cultural communication.

People with disabilities also have an opportunity to express their thoughts and emotions through community radio. In fact, the author observed several programs in which people with disabilities talked. They really enjoyed speaking to listeners using a microphone. For example, one vision-impaired host said that she was happy to read responses from listeners. She emphasized that her network in the community has been dramatically expanding because of the radio program. In another example, six mentally disabled teenagers came to the program to announce their campus festival. After the program, they were excited with a blush on their cheeks, saying with a big smile, "It's fun. I think many people will come to our festival." Even though they could not see their listeners, they might feel the presence of listeners. These programs contribute to promote understanding and sympathy toward members of the community who often lack such communication in daily life.

In Japan, every radio station is required by regulation to organize a program examination board. In many community FM stations, this board is composed of various types of people in the community including for example a proprietor, school teacher, officer, housewife, prominent person, and a manager of a local company. The board meeting is held every month. Although the board is held to deliberate programs aired by the station, this meeting becomes an important place to discuss a common theme or issue with different types of people who otherwise may not meet or communicate together in the community.

One recent serious issue in community reconstruction is interchange between

senior residents who have lived in the existing community for a long time and new residents who move from other places and live in new high-rise apartment buildings. This has been caused by urbanization. There is little communication between these two types of people in the community, and this weakens the community.

In addition to this issue, the recent consolidation of smaller municipalities to form larger cities has become a similar issue in building community. Although such consolidation is taken by neighboring villages or towns, there exist different cultures in each community. Therefore, it is not easy to solve this issue of interchange between two or more communities who are geographically close but culturally different. This actually has happened in many local communities nationwide. In both cases, community FM helps to interchange different types of people or cultures through programs and events where they can meet and communicate. For example, some radio stations have had a special program for debating consolidation with people from these communities, while after the consolidation some radio stations call new mayor to their programs to introduce the mayor to the community. Also, various programs introduce people from areas enlarged by consolidation. Thus, through programs, events, and even internal meetings provided by community FM, a variety of people in the community get to know and communicate with each other.

### *Constructing Mutual Trust in the Community*

Relationships of mutual trust in communities have been constructed not only through radio programs, but also by events and activities that make people's participation visible. In particular, many community FM stations organize various types of civic groups for programs as well as activities.

Typically, any member of the community voluntarily is able to participate in these groups. For example, a broadcasting volunteer group plans civic programs in which members of the group bring people from their own human networks. Such programs thus contribute to connect a variety of people in the community. A disaster volunteer group also is organized by many radio stations. This type of group is expected to gather and report information about the damage and situation right after a disaster. These groups usually have a regular meeting for exchanging information, learning new things, and/or forming committees. Through these face-to-face activities, members of these groups have gradually established mutual trust, which becomes important for collaborative relationships.

Most community FM stations connect from the studio to the community via a microphone. But they also participate in various community activities such as campaigns for a main street of stores, sports days of elementary schools, spring and autumn festivals, and road safety campaigns that the police station in the community executes. In such events, radio stations report on the activities of

participants including school children, customers, administrative officials, and monks, airing their voices through the radio. That creates an opportunity for community members to know each other and understand the community more, which also make them more interested in the radio.

A number of community FM stations have a studio(s) in places visible to passers-by, for example, at a crossing, a street of stores, or a street that people often pass by. Even though radio is media to listen to, it is quite important for radio stations to be visible in the community. Some radio stations call this strategy “see the radio, show the radio.” Of course, programs aired are the core of radio. However, visibility of radio broadcasting attracts people in the community. For example, some radio stations have intentionally moved to places where the studio could be better seen by people in the community (see Figure 2). These stations, as a result, receive more attention from the community, that actually increases the level of trust to the community radio. Community radio’s orality and visibility through radio program, activities, events, and studio, create more personal attachment to the radio. For this reason, the radio station may also function like a hub of the community.

Figure 2: Studio that can be seen by people



### *Discovering Resources in the Community*

Community radio helps people discover local resources, including people, culture, nature, history, institutions, activities, and commodities. Such discovery usually happens through various programs focusing on history, culture, and nature in the community, hosted by experts who are members of the community. Listeners not only get to know about their communities, but also learn from people who have a detailed knowledge of these matters in the community.

In some radio stations, community members are able to act as reporters as a member of a voluntary group, as mentioned before. When becoming a reporter, people tend to be more interested in the community including people, events, facilities, building, nature, and history. Naturally, these civic reporters want to

tell what they find in the community to other people in the community regardless of the radio program. Even some radio stations that do not organize such groups often bring community members to a program to let them talk about particular community issues. As a result, this promotes sharing the same issue among people who are interested in it in the community.

Moreover, recently several radio stations located in neighboring communities collaborated in creating a program(s). These programs introduce various things about their community to people in the neighboring community. Such programs serve to exchange information about communities, encourage people to visit neighboring communities, and establish connections among (or between) communities. Networks among neighboring communities become important for working together for revitalizing local economy. Also, this collaboration is increasingly needed for disaster relief because disasters typically happen not in a particular area, but in a wide area. Also, for a serious campaign such as crime prevention and environmental problem, collaboration among community FM stations is more effective.

Local stores and companies are also important resources in the community. As mentioned earlier, most community FM stations face difficulty in financial management. So some of these stations issue a member's card with which a member is given the privilege of discounts (or free services) in local stores and companies that cooperate with the radio station. Among them, there are several radio stations that involve more than 500 stores and companies in the community. This service contributes not only to increase income to the station, but also to return community money to the community. More importantly, this helps to create face-to-face relationships among participants including card members, stores and companies, listeners of the radio, and the radio stations.

As a result of these programs and services, citizens use these resources for expanding or creating community networks, which also can produce new businesses, culture, and/or activities. For instance, when a big river in the community became a main theme of one community radio program, a group of listeners created a drama of which the river was the main theme. Thus, to get know something through community radio programs may trigger new action or activity.

### *Reaffirming Relationship to the Community*

Participation as a volunteer, reporter, host, and staff in and through radio has allowed citizens to realize or reaffirm their relationship to the community, contributing to increased interest toward their community. As already mentioned, the volunteer reporter is one such actor. Looking around the community for reporting, they realize how much they know about the community and do not. This is an important point through which these people reaffirm their relationship or



attachment to the community.

This happens to administrative officers in the local government as well. Local governments that finance community FM often broadcast their programs on the radio. On some programs a host just reads a manuscript written by the officers, whereas on some other programs officers (typically PR officers) come and talk by themselves on the program. This is a challenge for administrative officers to speak out to citizens directly with a microphone. At the same time, they reaffirm how much they understand the community because they have to explain administrative matters in simple language for citizens. Also, questions and responses from listeners encourage them to communicate with members of the community. Furthermore, they often bring persons from other sections of the local government as a guest(s). This may horizontally connect officers in different sections of vertically structured administrations that are general in Japan. In this regard, by participation in the program local governments may strengthen connections inside and outside the community. More importantly, these officers who experienced these appearances on the radio become more conscious of what and how they need to tell their works to members of the community.

Cooperation in the community is also needed for disaster prevention or relief. Some radio stations confirm existing relationships with local businesses and people and build a network with them. These local businesses include news dealer's shops, local shopping malls, restaurants, and factories, for providing their commodities as well as information after disasters. Also, some members of the community who live close to the studio are expected to operate it and broadcast disaster information until staffs of the radio station come to the studio. In order to establish these networks, they reaffirm the existing relationship with the community, and try to strengthen it.

## Discussion

This study observed that most activities that Stamm (1985) mentioned in his discussion of community ties were operational through community FM in Japan. A variety of people in the community engaged in these activities through programs, events, and services provided by community FM. As Girard (1992) explains, many community radio stations encourage people without voices to have a voice through community radio in Japan. More importantly, both people with voices and without voices establish contact with each other. This provides an opportunity to understand others who otherwise are not known or would not meet, even though they are living in the same community. In this regard, community FM in Japan gives voices to a variety of people in the community in a variety of ways. Community FM thus vividly show that the community consists of heterogeneous, not homogeneous people.

Through community communication activities, participants are tied to each other. Based upon such community ties, people in the community become interested in others, thereby creating new community activities together. The implication is that this participation through community radio contributes to connect different persons, groups, and institutions, each of which also has its own human network. In this way, community radio might become a hub of various networks in the community. Importantly, these networks are built on trust. Also, the expansion of community ties is observed through collaboration with several community FM located in neighboring communities. Even though these community ties are often invisible in everyday life, their power is exhibited during emergencies such as natural disasters.

People's attachment to the community is increased by various efforts of community FM, and this is indispensable to revitalizing the community. As observed, many of community FM make efforts to get know people in the community and to get them know their existence. It is not changed that community FM as broadcasting station play a role to convey messages to listeners by sounds. This study, however, explores more important role of community FM. That means that community FM play as a tool of the community to tie various entities in the community. In this sense, community FM is regarded not as a traditional media, but a new tool for community revitalization.

Like other advanced countries, people in Japan use various media including newspapers, commercial radio, over-the-air television, satellite TV, CATV, the Internet, and cellular phones, in daily life. Even though most members of Japanese society enjoy such a rich media environment for personal purposes, they might not be satisfied with these media for their community lives. With Internet growth and media globalization, it is true that in Japan the concept of community has been shifting from a geographical-based one to an interest-based one. However, we also can see that people in local communities have returned to geographical communities in which people living in the same place can share the same interests and issues in order to rebuild society. As mentioned by Hollander, Stappers, and Jankowski (2002), community communication regarded as small-scale forms of public communication is a fundamental human activity.

Therefore, no matter how advanced the society, members of local communities desire to have their own community media, which can be used to feel, recognize, or even assert collective identity and local autonomy. No matter how old the communication technology, community FM will be used for community communication in local communities because of visibility of its practice and existence in the local community.

Putnam indicated current decline of social capital in American society with a concern with bonds between neighbors and neighborhood, citizens and civil-setting (1995). This also has been seen in Japan. In this regard, community ties formed or

strengthened by community FM may contribute to create social capital in community.

Finally, this study did not examine listeners or participants of community FM. It is necessary to understand how these people really think about community FM in their communities, and how their connections (networks) are changed through participating in community FM. Further research from this perspective is needed.

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