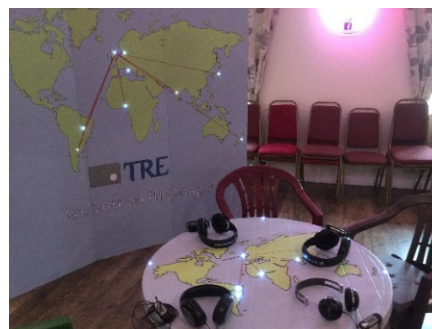


Institution: University of Sunderland		
Unit of Assessment: 34 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: Amplifying Voices: Connecting Communities and Cultures Through Participatory Action Research		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Caroline Mitchell Trish Winter	Associate Professor Professor	1993-present 2001-2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Participatory action research led by Dr. Caroline Mitchell underpins Radio Garden, the global radio streaming platform used by 10 million people per month that changes how listeners access and engage with (community) radio; puts mainstream and community stations on an equal footing; enables cultural connections; and is used to train and inspire the future broadcasting workforce. With Prof. Trish Winter, it also led to a transformative hyper-local community culture project, Putting Southwick on the Map. It has enhanced residents' wellbeing and professional development; produced a new and self-sustaining community organisation; improved cultural participation and inclusivity in programming; and enabled a major cultural commissioner to engage underserved individuals.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Dr. Caroline Mitchell has had a leading role in developing participatory research combining community media and participatory mapping. Her work seeks to understand how marginalised communities establish their own cultural spaces, what barriers to cultural participation they encounter (and their experience of policy-led interventions), and how community stories and experiences are archived. The participatory method Mitchell advances, together with these objectives, link exemplar projects Transnational Radio Encounters and (with Prof. Trish Winter) Putting Southwick on the Map.</p> <p>In the HERA-funded Transnational Radio Encounters (2013-16), Mitchell (in partnership with five universities in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK) examined radio's transnationality in six independent research projects. Mitchell, as PI for the 'Minority Radio: social and cultural identifies and Black and minority ethnic radio' project, led community researchers drawn from stations, voluntary associations, and communities who listen to and contribute to radio made by/for minority groups [R1]. Using 'sharing experience' workshops throughout the project duration, interviews, and PAR projects (e.g. radio programme making), community researchers explored the nature of 'accented' radio in community radio output, the infrastructural conditions that best suited transnational radio, and, drawing on Mitchell's work on the role of archives in creating cultural memory [R2], the importance of archives for transnational community radio networking and recirculation of programming. One PAR activity, webcasting live from a community festival, involved a 'Transnational Radio table' where people could map, record and listen to experiences of students, refugees and mixed-race families. This activity formed ideas that led to the development of Radio Garden [R3], the project's final output. Interviews, audio archive fragments and stories gathered in these PAR projects were brought together and fed back via community radio programmes and at workshops held with the community researchers and their radio partners. They were also 'planted' in Radio Garden, adding a rich 'voicing' of participants' transnational radio experiences to the platform. This work, along with Mitchell's databases of community stations that were added to the platform, meant that community radio is not only represented on Radio Garden, but is in its DNA.</p>		



In **Putting Southwick on the Map** (2015-17), Mitchell and Prof. Trish Winter developed the C.MAP (Culture Mapping and Participation) method, a new PAR approach combining participatory mapping, community media and arts-based methods. It offers a new method for working with communities to investigate the existing cultural life of place from their perspective; to create knowledge about the experience of policy-led cultural interventions from the perspective of those that they target; and to take action on grassroots cultural initiatives developed by participants. The framework for the research brought together praxis from participatory mapping, community media, arts-based methods and action-oriented media pedagogy. The research, undertaken with community researchers from the project's geographic target area, took an iterative approach that cycled between methods: workshops to map tangible and intangible cultural resources and stories; training in community media, research and digital mapping; community events; arts-based workshops in writing, music and visual arts. Community researchers led their own research projects, and relationships were developed with key community organizations. Research materials produced included audio recordings, interviews, new and archive photographs and original artworks, captured in the final exhibition, *The Southwick Map* [R4].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1 Mitchell, C. and Lewis, P.M. (2018) Community Radio and Transnational Identities. In: Transnationalizing Radio Research, New Approaches to an Old Medium. transcript, Verlag Bielefeld, pp. 33-46. ISBN 978-3-8376-3913-1

R2 Mitchell, Caroline (2015) Re-Sounding Feminist Radio: A Journey through Women's Community Radio Archives. *Feminist Media Histories*, 1 (4). pp. 126-143.

R3 Mitchell, C., Lewis, P., Föllmer, G., Jauert, P., Kreutzfeldt, J., Badenoch, A. and de Leeuw S. (2016) <http://radio.garden>

R4 Winter, T. and Mitchell, C. (2017) *The Southwick Map*.

Quality indicators

Funding: HERA. Transnational Radio Encounters. Consortium Lead: Dr. Golo Föllmer. Project PI: Caroline Mitchell. 2013-2016. €999,000.

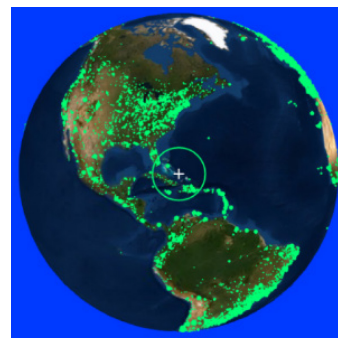
R4 and *Putting Southwick on the Map* were praised by the Cultural Spring, an ACE-funded cultural development project: "*The work revealed a wealth of information about the history of arts and culture in Southwick... We recognise this as a successful and interesting money, and one that is replicable in other communities.*"

Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Research by Mitchell underpins **Radio Garden**, the global radio streaming platform described as "*irresistible*" (Tina Jordan, New York Times), and "*extraordinary*" (Sebastian Piñera, President of Chile) [S1], and **Putting Southwick on the Map** (with Winter), a hyper-local community culture project. While they share a methodology, their impacts operate on vastly different scales and emerged at different stages of the research process.

Radio Garden

Radio Garden [R3], launched in 2016, is the final output of the *Transnational Radio Encounters* project. Available freely online and on iOS and Android devices, the platform is a globe peppered with pinpoints linking users to over 33,000 stations' streamed broadcasts, thereby providing a single point of entry to the world's radio for millions of people. It had 100 million hits in its first year and won the 2017 Webby Media Streaming award. Radio Garden is now used by 10 million listeners per month [S2], benefiting listeners and broadcasters around the globe. Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) rate it as "*one of the most successful humanities public engagement activities ever carried out*" [S3]; a user says it "*will change the way you listen to the world*" [S3]. Each year, UNESCO features Radio Garden in its annual World Radio Day.



Transforming how listeners from around the world engage with radio. Its spinning globe reintroduces curiosity and serendipity to engagement with radio, and extensive media has focussed on journalists' journeys around the world and through time [S1]. A Vice writer 'travels' from Mexico, to Alaska, to Japan. A National Public Radio (NPR) writer recalls early memories of twisting the radio dial to drop into unknown stations. The Guardian says the joy *"is in the spinning of the globe and landing who knows where."*

Making all stations equally accessible; the same pinpricks mark, for example, ILC Tamil Radio and BBC Radio 1. The New York Times says that in this way, Radio Garden *"obliterates all distinction between radio stations"* [S1]. The UK Community Media Association says this *"gives community stations credibility and legitimacy. This is significant because community radio can often be seen as a poor relation to BBC and commercial radio. The interface, which encourages wandering and exploring, provides a new and fun way to pick a station to listen to. Stations are extremely keen to be included on Radio Garden"* [S4]. It transforms the visibility and accessibility of community radio stations, whose reach is traditionally limited to members of the community it serves: *"this is significant ... because listeners are the lifeblood of the station. Listeners validate the importance of the station, and the credibility and quality of the staff"* [S4].

A portal to cultures familiar and new. Radio is a valuable medium for reconnecting listeners with homelands and diasporas, and Radio Garden enables migrants to maintain connections with their host or home community. An NPR writer says *"Back in India, when I was little, I used radio to connect with faraway places. Now living in the U.S., I was using Radio Garden to go home again"* [S1]. A Cornish community station says: *"[it] can be very important for people who have left their local area. In Cornwall, we have a large diaspora of people working in the mining industry around the world and often get people tuning in from these areas"* [S4]. The New York Times notes the platform's power for revealing *"the peculiarities of foreign cultures"*, saying *"the window it opens onto other places is both exceptionally vivid and exceptionally limited, like looking through a keyhole, so that you're compelled to start filling in the rest of the picture yourself"* [S1]. Fine Art Globe says *"Such openness to unfamiliar cultures that Radio Garden encourages ... is crucial during a time when some of our political leaders are hellbent on emphasizing cultural divides, encouraging xenophobia under the guise of nationalism and protectionism"* [S1]. The Guardian echoes the sentiment: *"With global tensions high, anger at the political establishment and fake-news dominating social media discussions, it feels like there has never been a better time to enable people to reflect on human communication on an international level"* [S1]. Covid-19 lockdowns have highlighted the platform's value in enabling cultural connections and exploration. A user writes, *"Radio Garden continuing to come into its own while travelling feels like a pipe dream"* [S1], and the Director of the Earth Institute calls it a *"great way to explore the world sonically while homebound"* [S1].

Inspiring and training the future workforce. Since 2018, 320 teenagers from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds have attended BBC careers workshops that use Radio Garden to demonstrate STEM occupations in broadcasting. The programme's Project Manager says that demonstrating Radio Garden means that *"For the first time, the events included an activity that encouraged thinking about careers at a global level. Most STEM careers events focus on UK careers/ opportunities. Radio Garden allowed us to broaden young people's thinking about careers in the BBC beyond the UK"* [S5]. A BBC Multimedia Trainer has also used it in training for over 1,000 people in the UK and Africa [S5].

Putting Southwick on the Map

Putting Southwick on the Map (PSOTM) underpinned a resurgence in cultural engagement in Southwick, Sunderland, one of England's most deprived areas. As a Participatory Action Research project, impact came firstly through the research process, benefitting the project participants (community researchers) before extending its reach to benefit a major cultural commissioner, Being Human festival organisers, and the 310 members of the legacy project Southwick REACH (Research Education Arts and Culture Home). The research was

captured in the final exhibition, *Southwick Map* [R4], a digital map portraying Southwick's cultural life past and present from the perspective of its people.

Enhanced professional development and wellbeing. 15 community members were trained in community research (interviewing, recording, editing, digital mapping) and event curation and organisation, before being supported to research, record and map Southwick's creative and cultural past. One community researcher, now Creative Director of Southwick REACH, says *"the experience has been instrumental to my career development as a freelance artist. ... I have produced, managed, facilitated, and curated projects planned around the interests of Southwick people. ... My experience has helped me to develop my professional practice as an artist and participatory arts practitioner and I now feel that I am predominant in my field in Sunderland. ... Not only has the journey accelerated my career but has developed lasting friendships with both professionals and community members"* [S6]. It also enhanced project members' wellbeing. Members say that being involved gets them out of the house more and they've gained confidence, feel healthier, and feel less lonely [S6]. *Southwick Map* was launched as part of the Being Human festival. The festival's external evaluator said *"The community researchers told me of a number of positive impacts of their involvement which ranged from learning new skills to an increased emotional connection with their environment and neighbours"* [S8].

Creation of a new organisation, Southwick REACH. The organisation is a direct legacy of the project and delivers annual arts and culture programmes for the community, receiving funding from Sunderland City Council and Cultural Spring (an Arts Council England-funded cultural development project in Sunderland and South Tyneside) [S7]. Cultural Spring's Project Director commends Mitchell and Winter: *"[their] work with the community gave them a new sense of agency and independence. Their work supported them to take ownership of arts and culture in their community, and to make their own decisions about how they want to engage with it. We recognise this as a successful and interesting model, and one that is replicable in other communities."* [S7].

Improving participation in arts and culture. The project's hyper-local focus was critical for ensuring that it met the needs of its traditionally under-served members. PSOTM and Southwick REACH co-created high quality programmes *with* the community, and delivered them *in* the community. Being Human's evaluator said: *"I was particularly impressed by how this project had the community very much at its heart. [It] was facilitated, developed and delivered by the community which in turn led to a project that speaks with the local community, not at the community. ... It was refreshing to see a public engagement project that was enabling a depth of engagement and investing the time to develop valuable relationships within the community"* [S8]. The project was used as an exemplar on the Being Human website, and Winter and a community researcher contributed to the 2018 Being Human Masterclass for future festival organisers, during which Winter challenged how the relationship between cultural agencies and marginalised audiences is framed. Being Human's Manager and Curator said that, as a result, he'll *"never again use the term 'hard to reach audiences'"* [S8]. Other projects have since adopted the methodology, including a community research project with Young Asian Voices, a multicultural youth and community project, and a project with the Churches Conservation Trust.

Annual events programmes continue to fill gaps in cultural offering. The 2019 programme, 'The Art of Coal Mining', explored the region's mining history through visits, talks and workshops. Artwork created in one workshop is exhibited on the Norman Cornish website [S9]. Sunderland's wider cultural programming is likewise enhanced by incorporating Southwick REACH events, thus better representing the needs of the population. The Director of Sunderland's 'Summer Streets' Festival, an annual music, arts and culture festival attended by over 5,000 people, says Southwick REACH's involvement *"is a great way of helping some of the community in being able to attend the festival, and be an important part of the celebrations"* [S10].

Enabling a major cultural commissioner to engage underserved people. Cultural Spring's Project Director says "*The meaningful relationships [Mitchell and Winter] developed helped our work twofold: (1) they could uncover talent and refer those individuals to us for advice and support. We do not have the capacity to find hidden talent in the city in this way, so [they] were instrumental in prompting previously unengaged individuals to come to us for support. (2) They supported individuals and the community to identify what creative and cultural opportunities they wanted and needed, and empowered them to engage with us to seek our support*" [S7].

Changing perceptions of Southwick. Cultural Spring's Project Director says that prior to PSOTM, "*there was a perception [amongst community members and cultural commissioners] that the Southwick community was not interested in arts and culture.*" The project, the way it brought community members together, and the way it enabled Cultural Spring's engagement with them, "*not only challenged that perception, but demonstrated that there was an interest in arts and culture – and a desire among the community to actively engage in them. ... The work – particularly PSOTM – revealed a wealth of information about the history of arts and culture in Southwick; this has underpinned ongoing activity by Southwick REACH*" [S7].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of ten references)

S1 Quotes from Radio Garden users and media commentators

S2 [Number of monthly users, radioking.com](#)

S3 [HERA Public Engagement, Knowledge Exchange and Impact Toolkit](#)

S4 Supporting statements, UK Community Media Association and CMA members

S5 Written statements of support from the BBC

S6 Responses to survey of PSOTM and Southwick REACH members

S7 Written statement of support from Cultural Spring

S8 Evaluation and email from Being Human manager and external evaluator

S9 [Norman Cornish website](#)

S10 Email from Director of the Summer Streets Festival