

## “Radical Radio” with Kiyokazu Washida Harukana Show, hyperlocal and global

There is a radio station where anyone can host his or her own show. That's what we heard, so we went. And we ended up in a small perhaps the world's smallest radio studio. The story starts in the United States. Champaign-Urbana is a rural twin city in the state of Illinois, three hours' drive from Chicago. About 400 Japanese live in this college town, whose population is close to 120,000. *Harukana Show* is a Japanese language program aired from a radio station there. This minuscule community radio station is connected to Japan through the Internet. Voices exchanged over Skype are converted in the studio, and pushed on to the airwave through the Low Power FM transmitter the station is equipped with.

Mugiko Nishikawa, from Kyoto, hosts the show. Mugiko is an anthropologist. As a student, she studied Japanese midwives in Noto Peninsula (Japan). She then traveled and looked at begging practices in rural Bangladesh, "vagrancy laws" in London and neighborhood communities, also in the capital city of the United Kingdom. In 2011, while staying in Illinois as a visiting scholar, Mugiko started *Harukana Show*. She continued hosting the show after her return to Japan, using her own room as a satellite studio.

The station in Illinois is located inside the media and art center in the city. With a \$25 yearly membership, anyone can host up to two radio programs at the station. Immigration, organic food, story reading and current events commentary are some of the examples of the topics of the 20some programs this community radio station currently airs. On *Harukana Show*, Mugiko is joined by six crew members both from Japan and the US, as well as by local Japanese residents, University of Illinois students interested in Japanese culture and subculture and others living throughout Japan, who appear on the show as occasional guests.

"Anyone can be media." A comment one of her friends made to her pushed Mugiko to start the Japanese language show, who was then just observing the activities of this nonprofit run station as a newcomer. It was also right after the great Tohoku earthquake in Japan, and the roles multilingual radio broadcast has played and was playing in times of disaster may have moved her as well.

But, what differences can they make, when citizens become media, rather than simply consume media? Perhaps one answer suggested here is this: it is people, after all, that connects people who do not yet know each other.

I was initially going to just write about *Harukana Show*, but the turn of events took me talking on the show. While I was on, some studio equipments failed, and I got to experience the feel of the show's backstage. Trying to make things right, working with the studio in the U.S., talking to the staff who does not know Japanese and who I have just met for the first time certainly those were not part of my original plan.

To be a mature citizen requires one to be able to work on his or her own to understand and find solutions to various problems the society faces. Having means to solve problems on their own that's what they get when citizens become media, too.

The current age is a difficult time for local communities. In Japan and in the US, expanding national chains are about to wipe out local businesses. Many struggle to find their own places in local areas they live in, as communities crumble. Students and seasonal workers continuously flow in and flow out. That is why the idea of citizens becoming media each individual citizen to become media is gaining importance in this time.

What is important for *Harukana Show* a show hyper-local and global at the same time is that it actually has a studio. Because, after all, it is people who come and join the show and their networks that they have been building through working in local communities, that can make a difference and a sense of assurance that you know someone you can go to when you wanted to do something. They are trying to do globalization right here or, at least better than the way those mega-corporations are doing, who in the name of “globalization” take everything away from local communities and then run away.

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July 2013  
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