

Running Head: Pluralism as *Diaploki*

Pluralism as *Diaploki*:

The Interplay of Politicians and Media Owners

In Greek Radio Broadcasting

Judy Rene (Bouranis) Sims

Communication and Journalism

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Eau Claire, WI 54702

Simsjr@uwec.edu

715.836.3267 Office

- This paper has been accepted for presentation in Miami, Florida at the “Competitive Papers on Politics in the Media” session of the National Communication Convention, November 21, 2003.
- A shorter version of this paper has been accepted for publication in the Winter 2003 issue of the Journal of Radio Studies.

Abstract

This research investigates why the government closed 70 Athenian radio stations in 2001 and explores the degree of pluralism able to develop in Greece since radio privatized in 1988. This study employed an historical-descriptive approach, as well as survey. The results suggest that a majority of the participants believe that more pluralism exists now than before privatization. However, it also is clear that the radio enthusiasts, who advocated free radio during the movement to privatize, are not being served. A new kind of pluralism has emerged in which voices--independent of political or economic interests--are not cultivated or tolerated. The new media environment is dominated by wealthy businessmen with financial interests in shipping, telecommunications, and refining. The station closings functioned to exacerbate the interplay between the media owners and politicians and move Greece in the direction of structuring a media environment similar to the one in United States.

Pluralism as Diaplokí: The Interplay of Politicians and Media Owners

In Greek Radio Broadcasting

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2001, approximately 13 years after radio privatized in Greece, there were over 100 radio stations broadcasting on the FM band in Athens, many operating without a license. In addition, some of the stations were using more than one frequency, broadcasting with greater power than was permitted and/or operating more than one station. The broadcast spectrum was in a state of chaos.

Suddenly, on March 27, 2001, police SWAT teams were ordered to shut down approximately 70 of the stations broadcasting in Athens (Pulling the Plug, *Athens News*, 2001, March 30). The government announced their actions were necessitated by the opening of a new airport, which was set to begin operations in Spata, Greece on March 29, 2001; they claimed the transmitters on Mt. Hymettus were interfering with airport procedures (New airport warning, *Hellenic Star*, 2001, March 8-15). Behind closed doors, however, others saw the government's actions differently. Politicians, attorneys and scholars of Greek broadcasting understood that the government may have used the interference issue as a means to begin restructuring the chaotic state of Greek radio, a condition that had developed between 1988 and 2001 (Carr, 2001). The need to close the stations had been discussed as early as 1991; according to Zaharopoulos and Paraschos (1993), "someone will have to take the political responsibility of closing down the more than 30 radio stations in Athens and many more throughout the country, and of forcing other stations to operate within the legal boundaries" (p. 112).

The closings, which stirred great controversy, clearly angered numerous station owners and

managers, as well as thousands of listeners. Many claimed the process used to close the stations was unconstitutional. Ultimately, as this research makes clear, the actions of the government did not effectively solve the problem of the overcrowded airwaves; instead, the closings reinforced the emergence of a kind of pluralism in which voices--independent of political or economic interests-- are not tolerated or cultivated. The closings functioned to exacerbate the interplay between the media owners and the politicians, the new "power game" (Papathansopoulos, 1999, p.400) in Greece that determines who will influence public opinion and apply pressure in the political arena. The Greeks coined the word, *diaploki*, to describe this interplay, an ironic outgrowth of the patron-client relationship characteristic of traditional Greek culture (Legg, 1977, pp.285-288).

This longitudinal research, which documents the closing of the stations, also explores the degree of pluralism that was able to develop in Greece since radio was privatized in 1988.¹ In order to understand the degree of pluralism, two concepts central to understanding pluralism--control and access--are examined. The significance of this research is in its timeliness; it documents a culminating moment in the history of Greek radio, the shutting down of approximately 70 Athenian radio stations by the government during the spring 2001.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Greece in Transition

In July 2000, there were more than 10 million people living in Greece, at least 3.5 million of whom resided in Athens (The World Factbook Page on Greece, 2000). Governed by a Parliamentary Republic, Greece saw its first Socialist government come into power in 1981. Currently, Greece has a mixed capitalist economy; the government only recently began to privatize some of its state enterprises. A member of the European Union and NATO, Greece is in a stage of transition; as

Zaharopoulos & Paraschos (1993) explained, “it is attempting to move from a traditional, developing society to a more Western, modern society” (p.1). Papacosma (1979) predicted that Greece might move to become independent or become a client to a larger patron such as the United States or the European Community (in Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993, p. 13). Selected to host the 2004 summer Olympics, the Greeks intend to present a more modern image of Greece to the world; they also understand the event has enormous potential to affect their economy.

Greek Society and the Media

Greece has a history of state controlled media (Papathanassopoulos, 1999, p. 382). The history of the Greek media indicates that radio had been under the control of the State since 1938, when the government established the Radio Broadcasting Service (Keshishoglou, 1962, pp. 20-21). According to Papathanassopoulos (1999), “the general pattern of the broadcasting media in the state monopoly era was that a change of government was followed by a corresponding changeover in the state media institutions’ executives (pp.382-383). “All key radio . . . appointees were politically sympathetic” or affiliated with the government in power, and the news was affected by this influence” (Papathanassopoulos, 1990, p. 389).

The patron-client relationship, a phenomenon characteristic of traditional Greek culture, also influenced the media. In a patron-client relationship, a patron--usually a politician or a wealthy individual employed within an institution--maintains a client, which allows the patron to keep their power base; such power includes their influence over the media (Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993, p. 7). Used by politicians to promote their views, the Greek media’s *raison d’être* evolved to become partisan goal advancement (Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993, p.2 & 6; Clogg, 1979, p. 80).

Greek Radio: From State Control to Privatization

Few scholars have examined the history of Greek media; still fewer have focused on the changes in Greek radio between 1983-2001 (see for example, Zaharopoulos, 1985, 1989; Papathanassopoulos, 1989, 1990, 1999, 2000; Sims, 1990, 1991; Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993). In 1983--forty-five years after the Greek government established the Radio Broadcasting Service--the Greek movement to privatize radio emerged, advocating *pluralismos*, the Greek word meaning pluralism. Composed of pirate radio activists and intellectuals, including Russos Koundouros, the founder of station *Kanali 15*, the movement envisioned the idea of free-radio or *eleftheri radiofonia* (Sims, 1990, 1991; Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993). According to Sims (1990), three interrelated forces were operative in the movement to establish private radio in Greece: (1) the public's dissatisfaction with the State media and thus a desire for more pluralistic information, (2) the concerns of numerous public interest groups, and (3) various politically related motives (pp. 187-189). In 1987, as a result of the movement to privatize radio and the need for Greece to cooperate with "all EC countries to unify the legal background of their broadcasting regulations," the broadcasting environment began to change (Kiki, 1989, p.24).

The free-radio movement realized its first legal success in 1988 with the publication of a Presidential Decree, which set the parameters for the establishment of private radio. The Decree was enacted during the administration of the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which was led by Andreas Papandreou. According to Papathanassopoulos (1990), the Socialist government, unfortunately, did not give "any real thought . . . as to how to redefine the concept and mission of public service in broadcasting" (395-396) or how to build a new broadcasting structure; "they followed a short-sighted policy aimed at responding to the politics of the time and to electoral

speculations rather than to the needs of Greek broadcasting” (p. 395). Although the Decree concerned the criteria for the allocation and renewal of licenses, they were “not exclusively written” (Vgontzas, 1988 in Sims, 1990, p.130) and the policy was not fully developed (Papathanassopoulos, 2001; Petrides, 2001, March 26; Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993; Sims, 1990, 1991). The lack of a developed policy became problematic when the first 29 licenses were approved in May 1988; the commission never announced its criteria for allocating the licenses (Roumeliotis, 1988, p. 27 in Zaharopoulos, 1989, p. 12). It quickly became evident that the policy was vague and not being enforced. Greeks who wanted to broadcast simply found a frequency and began to operate, and others did “not respect their frequency allocations” (Papathanassopoulos, 1990, p.395).

As a result, the number of private radio stations in Greece began to increase markedly by July 1989. According to Zaharopoulos & Paraschos (1993, p. 134), Athenian radio experts seemed to agree that many of the stations were eventually going to have to close; they claimed the market could not support more than about 20 stations (see also Papathanassopoulos, 1999, p. 381; Douatzis, 2001).

Ten years later, during a visit in 1999 to Athens, Zaharopoulos (1999) observed, “much has changed since 1988, yet one thing remains the same--still no definitive plan for awarding licenses.” The unclear regulatory policy and lack of enforcement continued. By the spring of 2001, the radio spectrum was out of control. Zaharopoulos & Paraschos described Athenian radio as an hertzian jungle, where only the strong survive (1993, p. 122 & 134).

Post-Privatization Pluralism and the New Interplay between Politicians and Media Owners

Research in 1988 revealed mixed evaluations concerning the degree of pluralism that been realized immediately after privatization (Sims, 1990, p. 232). Many believed that privatization had

broken the State monopoly of news production and resulted in greater access to information and more discussion of political and societal problems (Sims, 1990, p. 234). As Yiannis Tzannetakos, Manager of Athens 98.4 FM explained, “It was a radical revolution, because the electronic monopoly on information was broken” (Sims, 1990, p. 207). Papathanassopoulos (1999) claimed that Greeks were provided with “a plethora of information about politics and politicians, information of a sort that would never have appeared in an earlier period” (p. 398).

Others, however, declared that a problem of access still existed, evidenced by the fact that most of the licenses and frequencies were being allocated to publishing companies and well-financed investors (Sims, 1990, p. 234; Roumeliotis, 1988, p. 27 in Zaharopoulos, 1989, p. 12). According to Christos Pappas, spokesperson for the Communist Party, “All of the frequencies were given to the commercial interests and not to the real amateurs. . . . The people who have the money can control communication; they can control the flow of information” (Sims, 1990, pp.200-201). Papathanassopoulos (1999) explains the significance of such business interests within the media scene:

These interests try to influence public opinion and to exert pressure in the political arena. For example, the main owners of Mega Channel (Lambrakis, Tegopoulos, Bobolas & Vardinoyannis) are also the owners of the most influential Athenian newspapers and they have also interests in travel and culture (Lambrakis), construction (Bobolas), telecommunications (Tegopoulos, Lambrakis), shipping and oil business (Vardinoyannis), while the owner of Antenna TV and radio station, Mr. Kyriakou, is also a ship owner....Greek media owners want to have the upper hand in order to put pressure on politicians because of the huge financial interests they hold... This pressure is useful when fighting for government contracts,

very important due to the structure of Greek economy. . . .Being able to influence public opinion has become an important business tool for the media owners (p. 399).

As Papathanassopoulos suggests, a new relationship between the media--particularly its owners--and politicians had clearly emerged (1999, p. 397).

Research Questions

In order to investigate how and why the government closed approximately 70 Athenian radio stations in 2001 and explore to what degree a condition of pluralism developed in Greece since radio privatized in 1988, the following questions were posited: (1) To what degree has a condition of pluralism been able to develop in Greece since 1988? (2) How, if at all, has access to radio station facilities by the public for the purposes of broadcasting changed since 1988? (3) In what political, legal, or economic ways has the Greek government attempted to control the radio stations since 1988? (4) Why did the government close the radio stations in March 2001?

METHOD

Sample, Participants, and Texts

This study, which is a continuation of research conducted in 1988 (Sims, 1990, 1991), was researched multi-methodologically, employing an historical-descriptive approach, as well as survey. The present study was conducted between February 24 and April 14, 2001 in Athens, Greece.²

The non-random, purposive sample, which was based on the sample used in the 1988 study (Sims, 1990), was composed of 22 spokespersons from positions of power in Greek society, including: (1) government representatives, (2) people from the four political parties represented by the Greek Parliament during the spring of 2001,³ (3) directors of the private radio stations; (4) journalists; (5) an attorney; (6) a Church of Greece spokesperson; (7) representatives from the State

Radio (ERA), (8) university professors, and (9) an Internet café owner. Ten of the participants from the 1988 sample (Sims, 1990) were again interviewed for the 2001 study. The interview data, which were integrated into the historical descriptive research, were supported with documents, e.g., audience research reports, newspaper articles, videotapes of Greek TV news broadcasts, and photographs.

Data Collection

The survey data were gathered by means of face-to-face interviews. All of the questions were open-ended, except for two, which were multiple-choice. The “stimulated recall” strategy was used with those participants whom the researcher had interviewed in 1988.⁴ Interviewee names and telephone numbers were located by means of a key informant, the Ministry for Press and Mass Media, and networking. Interviewees were informed of how the data would be used, and a confirmation of consent was secured. The interviews, which were audio-taped, were transcribed by the researcher.

RESULTS

RQ# 1: To what degree has a condition of pluralism been able to develop in Greece since 1988?

The interviewees were asked “to what degree has a condition of pluralism been able to develop in Greece since the privatization of radio in 1988?” Each was asked to select one of three options: (1) a condition of pluralism has not developed, (2) there has been some development of a condition of pluralism, and (3) a condition of pluralism has clearly developed. According to the results, a majority (55%) of the respondents indicated that “a condition of pluralism [had] clearly developed,” 35% stated that “there [had] been some development of a condition of pluralism,” and 10% claimed that “a condition of pluralism [had] not developed.”

RQ# 2: How, if at all, has access to radio station facilities by the public for the purposes of broadcasting changed since 1988?

The concept of access is central to understanding the degree of pluralism existing within society. Several interviewees, who agreed that “a condition of pluralism had clearly developed,” commented on issues concerning access. Nikos Athanassakis, General Secretary, PASOK, explained, “If you compare it with the previous period of having just the state-owned radio, it is obvious that there are other, different, conditions for pluralism by just adding radio stations. . . . For sure, we have higher pluralism today than before” (2001). Theodoros Roussopoulos (2001), spokesperson for the New Democracy party, stated, “You can listen to anything now . . . You can hear members of the Parliament--members of this party--talking against their president!” Michaelis Papayannakis, member of the European Parliament, said, “You couldn’t find any kind of opinion. . . which is not expressed somewhere, some way, in some radios” (2001). George Kolios, owner of an Athens’ Internet Café, added, “There are a lot of stations of various kinds. . . . There is a great difference between now and fifteen years back” (2001). And, Costas Cavathas, owner of radio station, En Lefko 94.4 FM, said, “I don’t think there is another country--except, Italy, perhaps and Spain--in which you can turn on a radio and listen to all of those views being expressed on the air. . . . in this country, you can say whatever you want. Political views, political ideas, your opinion about the Pope, about Simitis, about whatever”(2001, April 5).

Although some interviewees expressed positive comments regarding pluralism in terms of access, others remarked about the new interplay between the politicians and media owners; they spoke about the word, *diaploki*. The meaning of this term can be traced to the New Democracy party; in 1990--shortly after radio was privatized--the New Democracy party achieved power. However, the

New Democracy administration, led by Prime Minister, Constantine Mitsotakis, lasted only until 1993, when PASOK was restored. It was at this point that the Greek term, *diaploki*, was introduced; Mitsotakis used the term to explain how he lost his power. Mitsotakis reportedly said, “I lost my power because of the *diaploki*, the businessmen who have the radio and the television” (Koufopoulos, 2001). The word, *diaploki*, refers to the collusion or interlocking relationship of the politics and government of Greece’s Parliamentary Republic with the owners of the radio stations (Koufopoulos, 2001; OECD Sees Collusion with ‘Special Interest’ Groups Mortifying Greek Economy (OOSA: *I Diapoliki Nekronei Tin Oikonomia*, 2001, May 31).

Journalist, Alexander Belios, who believed there had been “some development of a condition of pluralism,” commented about the *diaploki*:

Diaploki is a sick embracing between economic power and political power. In 1989, the government [gave] a kind of limited monopoly to five or six people, who were before, owners of newspapers, etc. Now, the radio stations are owned by people who are businessmen, doing their great jobs, earning their billions of money through the State. The government has created a monster of another kind of power. Now, the politicians are controlled by the economic power they permitted to grow. Now, the government doesn’t control the people that own the three-four big TV stations and radios; they are controlled by them. . . . There is a balance of terror. The [media] owners don’t attack the government, as [long] as they have their big commissions from the State work, [e.g.,] the constructions and the contracts. And, this balance creates the whole quality of information and the forming of public opinion (2001).

Journalist, Vassilis Koufopoulos, who had reported many stories about the history of the Greek media, also believed that a condition of pluralism had not developed; he provided his perspective on

pluralism as *diaploki*:

We don't have pluralism. We have *diaploki* Of course, we have a lot of radio stations since 1988, but we don't have pluralism; we have a thought of pluralism. The owners of the big radio stations are the same who own the TV, the newspapers and the Internet portals. . . . Everyday, they have the same product for radio, TV and portals (2001).

Such comments question the public's ability to access diverse sources of information and thus the kind of pluralism able to develop in Greece. They also reveal influences of both economic and political control, affecting the condition of pluralism. Exploration of the failed attempts at regulatory policy that occurred between 1988 and 2001, as well as an investigation of the politically and economically motivated sequence of events leading to the closing of the radio stations, provide additional perspective.

RQ #3: In what political, legal, or economic ways has the Greek government attempted to control the radio stations since 1988?

Although Law 1866, which created the National Council for Radio and Television (ESR), was enacted in 1989 under the PASOK administration, it was not until 1995 that Mass Media Bill 2328 was passed, which attempted to provide some regulatory structure to broadcasting. The bill, which was forwarded by Venizelos, the Minister for Press and Media Affairs, also was ratified during the PASOK administration (Venizelos, E., 2002, March 17). Known as the Venizelos law; it "described the procedure of how you get your license, which frequency, who is responsible, and who is not" (Petrides, 2001, March 26).

On January 18, 1996, following the resignation of Papandreou, Costas Simitis was elected Prime Minister; the elections of September 1996 returned a PASOK majority (Simitis, C., 2002,

March 17). It was not until after the 1996 elections that the government finally began to address-- with ministerial decision 68390--the enormous problem that had developed concerning the overcrowded Greek airwaves. The decision proclaimed that there would be 20 radio frequencies allowed in Athens (Papathanassopoulos, 2001). A tender was published announcing the opportunity to apply for one of the 20 frequencies; January 17, 1997 was declared as the deadline for applications⁵ According to Athens' attorney, Antonios Petrides (2001, March 26), "86 owners applied to have a license for one of the 20 frequencies; owners were required to pay about 500 thousand drachmas [approximately \$1,592.00 U.S.] to apply."

According to the Venizelos law (2328/95), the ESR was required to review and rate the applications, in accordance with the criteria set forth in the law. Each criterion was worth a certain number of points, ranging from four to ten to an unlimited number of points. The criteria included: (1) years of operation, (2) personnel, (3) investment, and (4) the programming (Kolipanos, 2001; Trigkas, 2001; Binios, 2001, April 3). Kolipanos explained the fourth criterion--the quality of the program—he said; "you take in mind the experience, the knowledge, the ability of the station to give news, to have good music" (2001). It is important to note that the criteria did not include audience ratings, perhaps due the controversy surrounding the different methodologies used by the research companies.⁶

Two years later, in June 1999, the ESR presented a list of 66 radio stations, which were ranked from 1 to 66. No additional action was taken until after the Greek national elections in the spring of 2000.⁷ PASOK retained power and Simitis was re-elected Prime Minister. Following the election in September-October 2000, the Minister of the Press & Media, Demetris Reppas, was asked to review the legitimacy of the June 1999 decision concerning the list of 66 stations. On December

14, 2000, a new list of stations--rated and ranked from 1 to 51--was made public. According to George Trigkas, co-owner of "Diva" FM, the rating points allocated to some stations were not valid. For example, Trigkas claimed there was considerable "fiddling" occurring in the program category. According to Trigkas, Virgin Radio, a station that had never even been on the air, earned ten points, the maximum number possible for the programming criterion (2001).

Although a new list of 51 stations had been made public in December 2000, it was not until February 2001 that the ESR actually convened to review the 1997 files, an examination that revealed numerous problems. According to Alexandridis (2001), "of the 86 applicants, 45 had not submitted a complete file, 22 had, and 19 had both a complete file, as well as a temporary license." Alexandridis (2001) further claimed that the "files [were] were grossly outdated and, in some cases, contained inaccurate information (e.g., previous owner's name, incorrect frequencies, etc.)."

On February 21, 2001, Minister Reppas published a new tender; owners were allowed to apply for three new frequencies. This time, each of the 51 applicants had to pay between 10-12 million drachmaes [approximately \$25, 900 U.S. dollars] to apply (Papathanassopoulos, 2001).

Then, on approximately March 20, 2001, although only three frequencies were even available, Minister Reppas announced that the ESR would select an additional eight stations. Committee Chairman, Vassilis Lambridis, reportedly complained. He did not know which to use, the criteria from the first list of 66 or the new list of 51. According to Alexandridis (2001), Minister Reppas asked an ESR member, "Professor Flogaitis, to form a committee and compile, with the help of expert technicians, a new list of eight [stations]." The criteria that [they] "had at their disposal when deciding which radio stations to include in the new list remain unknown, since they [were] not . . . disclosed, even to the [ESR]" (Alexandridis, 2001).

About this time, some radio station personnel began receiving letters, indirectly informing them that they had been approved for licenses and frequencies, even though an official announcement had not yet been posted. On March 23, 2001, Panos Koliopanos, General Manager of “Flash” FM radio, stated, “On the 28th of March, there will be 28 stations [given] permission to broadcast . . . the rest of them will close” (2001). Koliopanos stated that “Flash” FM had been ranked first on the list, and that he knew “Flash” was going to be given a license and a frequency. Likewise, George Neres, General Manager of “Jeronimo Groovy” radio station, stated on March 13, 2001 that although there had been “no official declaration, they were within the 20 chosen ones;” they had received a letter from the minister requesting technical information concerning their antenna (2001). Neres stated that the minister gave out those letters only to the top 20 stations. And, on March 14, 2001, Antenna journalist, Nancy Kalafiti, said, “it is for sure that Antenna has a license” (2001).

On Monday, March 26, 2001, the government announced a list of the chosen 28 stations that would be allowed to broadcast (Carr, 2001; Police cordon, *Kathimerini*, 2001, March 28; Loud protests, *Kathimerini*, 2001, March 29; Pulling the plug, *Athens News*, 2001, March 30; and Morfiris, 2001). Three lists were released: (1) a list of 20 stations that would receive frequencies and licenses, (2) a list of an additional eight stations that would be given a frequency and a “temporary” license, and (3) a list of seven stations that would not be allowed to broadcast, but would be considered for approval in the future (see Tables A1-C1 in Appendixes A-C).

RQ #5: Why did the government close the radio stations in March 2001?

On the next day--March 27, 2001--approximately 70 radio stations were shut down in Athens. Police SWAT teams were sent to Mt. Hymettos--where a majority of the transmitters were located--to cut off the electrical power to the non-approved stations. The government announced their actions

were necessitated by the advent of the new airport, which was built to accommodate the tourists for the 2004 Olympics; the airport was scheduled to open on March 29, 2001. The government claimed the transmitters were interfering with airport operations (Nellas, March 20, 2001; New airport warning, Hellenic Star 2001, March 8-15).

The station closings angered many owners and managers, as well as listeners. Media coverage of the incident varied. The story was not covered well, if at all, by the newspapers and television stations that also owned a radio station approved to broadcast. For example, before the list of 28 stations was released, the story was covered by the Greek and English versions of *Kathimerini*. But, after the list was released, the newspaper featured little--if any--coverage about the closing of the stations. On March 27th, when a *Kathimerini* journalist was asked by this researcher if someone from the newspaper were going to Mt. Hymettos to cover the story, he replied, “probably not, because all of the stations are in agreement.” *Kathimerini* is owned by Aristedes Alafouzos, who also owns radio station, “Skai” FM, which was granted both a license and a frequency. Trigkas, owner of “Diva” FM, which was shut down, concurred that media coverage was erratic:

The radio stations that are making a point of this atrocity [are] the ones that suffer themselves. The ones that have been satisfied by allowing them to transmit--because they have other radio stations or TV channels or newspapers--they are pleased with the decision. So, they make no point of pluralism. They have forgotten immediately. One day they [are discussing the controversy] on their own TV channel, and they shout how unlawful and bad and unfair the government is. And, the next day--suddenly--this channel stops, as if by magic, there is no problem anymore (2001).

Between 20 and 34 businessmen, angered with the government’s actions, chose to file

lawsuits with the *Symvoulion Epikratias* (the Greek Supreme Court); many also filed lawsuits with the European court (Cavathas, 2001, April 5; Petrides, 2001, April 8; Radio stations silences, *Kathimerini*, 2001, March 29). Suits filed in Greece included “Diva” FM, “En Lefko” FM, and “Lampsi” FM (Binios, 2001; Cavathas, 2001, April 5; War on the airwaves, *Kathimerini*, 2001, March 30; Trigkas, 2001; Petrides, 2001, April 8). Some of the lawsuits claimed that the selection process and ruling were unconstitutional and unlawful, while some disputed the government’s reason for closing the stations. Questions were raised regarding (1) the actual relationship between the radio transmitters and the airport safety and (2) the number of frequencies that that could be accommodated in Athens.⁸

More controversy became evident when, on April 2, Mr. Aristeidi I. Oikonomidis, a lawyer of the high courts and member of the ESR, resigned from the ESR to protest the procedure used to select the eight additional stations (The scandal of 8, *Pondiki*, 2001, April 5). According to Alexandridis (2001), Oikonomidis “was denied access to the [ESR]’s records; he also implied that the committee might well have misled the Council.”

A few weeks later, in April 2001, it was decided that the Court should re-examine the selection process of the last eight radio licenses as possibly illegal (Papathanassopoulos, 2001; Alexandridis, 2001). On October 23, 2001, a new Minister of Press and Mass Media, Christos Protopapas, was appointed.

On March 11, 2002--approximately one year after the radio stations were closed—Minister Protopapas “signed off on 15 additional licenses for radio stations in the Athens region (Nevradakis, 2002, March 18). The 15 stations included seven of the eight stations that had been given a frequency and a temporary license in March 2001, as well as six of the seven stations that had not

been allowed to broadcast during the previous year, but had been put on hold for future approval.

One year after the station closings, antennas were still located on and broadcasting from Mt. Hymmetos (Binios, 2002; Cavathas, 2002; Papathansopoulos, 2002). In addition, according to Nevradakis, there were a total of 78 frequencies broadcasting throughout Athens in early April 2002, including stations broadcasting legally, legal stations broadcasting with illegal second and third frequencies, and pirate stations (2002, April 3). Nevradakis reported that the airport safety appeared unaffected; he stated that the only problem the airport had experienced with the stations resulted from the legal stations' excessive wattage output of 20+kW instead of the legal 2.5kW. Examination of the FM spectrum in August 2002 revealed that at least 87 stations were broadcasting, many without a license and some with an illegal second, third or fourth frequency (Nevradakis, 2002, August 17).

DISCUSSION

Pluralism and Pluralism as *Diaploki*

This research revealed numerous problems related to control and access, which affected the kind of pluralism that was able to develop in Greece between 1988 and 2002. Such problems included (1) the legal and political control evidenced by the lack of clear license and frequency regulation policy, (2) the political and legal control imposed by the government's decision to take two years (1997-1999) to review the license applications, (3) the political control enforced by both the ESR's questionable review procedure intended to restructure the broadcast spectrum and the appointed committee to select the last eight radio stations, (4) the political control exercised by the government through the closing of the stations in March 2001, and (5) the economic and political control imposed through the *diaploki*:

Although the survey results suggest that a majority of the participants believed a condition of

pluralism had clearly developed and that more pluralism exists now than before privatization, it also is clear that the radio enthusiasts, who advocated free radio during the movement to privatize, have not been served. Instead, a homogenization of the media has developed in which a small number of wealthy and powerful businessmen own and control media properties. The interviewees in this study acknowledged seven men as the Greek media barons: Aristedes Alafouzos, Christos Bobolas, Socrates Kokkalis, Minos Kyriakou, Christos Lambrakis, Christos Tegopoulos, and Vardis Varinoyannis. These men--some of whom are financially connected with each other--own newspapers, magazines, publishing companies, Internet portals, radio stations, television stations, companies that manufacture telecommunication and electronics equipment, and more. These men, who represent the players involved in the *diaploki*, influenced how and why Greek radio moved in certain directions since privatization; their actions affected the kind of pluralism able to develop in Greece.

Media often reflect the society in which they exist (Merrill, 1974 in Zaharopoulos, 1989, p.1). In the case of Greek radio, the problems reflect and are evidence of corruption existing within the Greek government. Commenting on the *diaploki* and the length of time needed for the Greek government to attempt regulation of the FM spectrum, Antonis Manitakis, former president of the ESR, said "Private indulgence and governmental arbitrariness go hand in hand. The government . . . fostered chaos and indulgence so that it could administer--in a blunt and opportunist fashion--the radio and television interests. It invoked expediency and the public interest in order to receive selective political benefits" (Alexandridis, 2001). As Belios stated in 1988, "Political power in Greece is a miserable, narrow, authoritative, purely deeply fascist conception--in whatever--concerning propaganda, mass media information, newspapers, etc."(Sims,1990, p.138).

The problems in Greek radio also reflect the political, economic and social struggles that Greece is experiencing in reaction to globalization. The global shift from state regulation to market-driven policies is evident throughout the world (Thussu, 2000, p.115), including Greece, which must decide for itself how to respond to globalization. Greece must determine if it wants to build a structure that achieves the broadcasting objectives intended in the Greek Constitution--the objectives envisioned by the free-radio activists--that is, radio that “thrives for quality, objectivity and cultural growth” (Zaharopoulos, 1989, p. 15). Clearly, Greece must structure a system that functions well within the European Union, but it certainly is not required to nourish an environment that cultivates voices independent of political and economic interests. As this research reveals, the government’s closing of the stations did not effectively solve the problem of the overcrowded airwaves. The closings functioned instead to move Greece in the direction of producing a media environment similar to the one in United States. The concentration of media ownership in the U.S. has resulted in an environment that restricts the diversity of viewpoints, which ultimately affects the process of democracy. Even U.S. media mogul, Ted Turner, maintains that “Media companies have gotten so large and concentrated that an independent voice has an almost impossible time getting stared in any kind of meaningful way, and that’s a great tragedy for our country” (Lieberman, 2003). Similarly, the *diaploki* in Greece has the potential to affect the quality of its information and the forming of its public opinion.

New technologies, such as digital audio broadcasting (DAB), which will soon be introduced to the Greek media, offer solutions to the overcrowded Greek airwaves. Several of the big media owners have affiliations with companies specializing in new technologies, including digital audio broadcasting (Kolipanos, 2001; Binios, 2001, April 3). As Koliopanos (2001) explained,

In the forthcoming five years, DAB frequency will be the dominant frequency in our radios. It will replace FM . . . We here in “FLASH” will be the first to establish that system. Because we are a member of the Association of European Radio, and [because] we have an affiliation with a group of companies specializing in high technology, it is not so difficult for us to apply the new technology.

Although the Greek market may only be able to accommodate a certain number of radio stations, Greece still has the opportunity to shape an environment conducive to free expression. The Greek government, media owners, and the Greek people must carefully consider how to effectively integrate new technologies into their evolving media environment, if they desire to develop the degree of pluralism. As journalist Kalafiti said, “pluralism is not something that comes from God; it is something that one has to earn and work at to create and preserve” (2001).

Notes

¹For purposes of this research, the term, “pluralism,” was defined as a condition present when a broadcast system has competing components encouraged by differing motivations (usually the motives of public service and profit) for programming (Head, 1985, pp. 6, 414).

²The study conducted in 1988 (Sims, 1990) was based on data gathered in Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki. Although data were gathered only from Athens in the present study, the unclear regulatory policy applied to radio stations throughout Greece.

³Political parties recognized by the Greek Parliament during the spring of 2001 included the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), New Democracy (ND), KKE (Communist), and Synaspismos (the Alliance of former Euro-communists and other Marxists in The Left Coalition).

⁴In the “stimulated recall” strategy, an interview is first recorded and then a portion of the

interview transcript is shared with the interviewee to stimulate their recall; the interviewee is then asked to comment on their response (Frey, Botan, and Kreps, 2000). Some of the respondents thus were read a transcript of their response from 1988 and asked to comment on it.

⁵The word, “tender,” in Greece refers to an announcement by the government to bid or apply for a license.

⁶During the spring 2001, there were at least two audience research companies in Greece, including “Opinion” and “Focus.” Kolipanos (2001), who claimed that a problem existed with the audience ratings research in Greece, said “There are two research companies that have made the ratings, and they are very contradictory.” Heretakis (2000) reported problems in the reliability of the ratings, as did Zaharopoulos & Paraschos (1993), who wrote, “part of the problem is caused by contradictory results of audience surveys conducted by different companies, which use different research methods” (p. 125).

⁷The election resulted in 53% (158 seats) of the Parliament composed of members of PASOK, 42% (125 seats) of the New Democracy Party, 3% (11 seats) of the Communist Party (KKE), and 2% (6 seats) of the Alliance of former Euro-communists and other Marxists in The Left Coalition, also known as Synaspismos (World Factbook Page on Greece, 2000, September 14).

⁸Two Athens Polytechnic University studies differed on the number of frequencies that could be accommodated. One report was prepared on behalf of the Attica Union of Private Radio Stations by Professor Nikolaos Ouzounoglou of the faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering. A second report was prepared by Professor Philippos Constandinou, also of the faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, on behalf of the Transport Ministry. According to Papatransopoulos (2001), the professors provided conflicting results, because each was given a different question to research

(Two studies, *Kathimerini*, 2001, March 20).

References

- Alexandridis, T. (2001, April 28). Greek Radio-phobia. Retrieved April 1, 2000 from <http://www.aimpress.org/dyn/trae/archive/data/200104/10428-004-trae-ath.htm>
- Athanassakis, N. (2001, April 11). General Secretary, Panhellenic Socialist Movement. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Belios, A. (2001, March 9). Journalist, EXTRA-TV and Athens 98.4 FM. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Binios, G. (2001, April 3). Station Manager, Lampsis 92.4FM. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Carr, J. (2001, March 30). Radio station culling painful but necessary: Advent of new airport prompted government to clean up airwaves, though it should have done so more than 10 years ago. *Athens News*, p. 7.
- Cavathas, C. (2002, March 20). Chairman and Managing Director, Technical Press S.A. Owner, En Lefko 94.4FM. E-mail message.
- Cavathas, C. (2001, April 5). Chairman and Managing Director, Technical Press S.A. Owner, En Lefko 94.4FM. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Clogg, R. (1979). *A short history of modern Greece*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Douzatis, G. (2001). Journalist, media consultant, producer, and former senior broadcast editor (ERT). Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Frey, L., Botan, C., & Kreps, G. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Head, S. (1985). World broadcasting systems: A comparative analysis. Belmont, California: Wadsworth.
- Heretakis, E. (2000). European media landscape. Retrieved March 31, 2002 from <http://www.ejc.nl/jr/emland/greece.html>.
- Kalafti, N. (2001, March 14). Journalist, Antenna 97.5 FM. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Keshishoglou, J.E. (1962). The development of broadcasting in Greece. Unpublished master's thesis, State University of Iowa, Ames, Iowa.
- Kiki, J. (1990, March). Greek broadcasting law: Past and present. Media Law and Practice, 24-27.
- Koliopanos, P. (2001, March 23). Director, FLASH 96.1 FM. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Kolios, G. (2001, April 11). Owner, Sofokleous.com Internet Café. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Koufopoulos, V. (2001, April 12). Journalist, To Paron. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Legg, K. R. (1977). The nature of the modern Greek state. In J.A. Koumoulides and D. Visvizi-Dontas (eds.). Greece in transition: Essays in the history of modern Greece 1821-1974 (pp.283-296). London: Zero.
- Lieberman, D. (2003, June 2). Media moguls have second thoughts: Behemoths drown out voices of 'the little guys.' USA Today, p. 2A.
- Loud protests as 66 radio stations silenced: Seven take case to council of state. (2001, March 29). Kathimerini (English Edition), p. 1.
- Merrill, J.C. (1974). The imperative of freedom. New York: Hasting House.
- Morfiris, C. (2001, April 5). "The history of events." Posted on the En Lefko web site. <http://www.welcome.to/enlefk/>

- Nellas, D. (2001, March 20). Spata airport ready to operate: Managers believe high charges will not hurt plans to turn it into regional hub; TV, radio antennas still a problem. *Kathimerini* (English edition), p.5.
- Neres, G. (2001, March 13). Director, Jeronimo Groovy 88.9 FM. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- New airport warning. (2001, March 8-15). *Hellenic Star*, p. 4.
- Nevradakis, M. (2002, August 17). Webmaster, www.media.net.gr and contributor of Greek radio frequencies information to the *European FM Handbook* (2002). E-mail message.
- Nevradakis, M. (2002, April 3). Webmaster, www.media.net.gr, and contributor of Greek radio frequencies information to the *European FM Handbook* (2002). E-mail message.
- Nevradakis, M. www.media.net.gr. Retrieved March 18, 2002.
- OEDC Sees Collusion with 'special interest' groups mortifying Greek economy (OOSA: I diaploki nekroni tin oikonomia. (2001, May 31). *Kathimerini*.
- Papacosma, V.S. (1979). Post-junta Greece in historical perspective. *Indiana Social Studies Quarterly*, 32, 122-141.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2002, March 23). Associate Professor, Department of Communication and Media Studies. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Athens, Greece. E-mail message.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2001, April 10). Associate Professor, Department of Communication and Media Studies. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2000). Election campaigning in the television age: The case of contemporary Greece. *Political Communication*, 17 (1), 47-60.

- Papathanassopoulos, S. (1999). The effects of media commercialization on journalism and politics in Greece. The Communication Review, 3 (4), 379-402.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (1990). Broadcasting, politics and the state in socialist Greece. Media, Culture and Society, 12, 387-397.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (1989). Greece: Nothing is more permanent than the provisional. Intermedia, 17 (2), 29-35.
- Papayannakis, M. (2001, March 30, 2001). Member, European Parliament and Member, Snyaspismos Central Office. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Petrides, A. (2001, April 8). Attorney. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Petrides, A. (2001, March 26). Attorney. Athens, Greece. Interview.
- Police cordon on Mt. Hymettus. (2001, March 28). Kathimerini (English Edition), p. 1.
- Pulling the plug. (2001, March 30). Athens News, p. 1.
- Radio stations silences: Government shuts down transmitters to safeguard airport communications. (2001, March 29). Kathimerini (English Edition), p. 2.
- Roumeliotis, A. (1988, May 13). Anridrasis ya anisi katanomi adion [reactions to unequal distribution of licenses]. Eleftherotypia, p. 27.
- Roussopoulos, T. (2001, April 11). Spokesman, New Democracy. Athens, Greece.
- The scandal of 8. (2001, April 5). Pondiki, p. 12-14, 38.
- Simitis, Costas, Prime Minister. Hellenic Republic Prime Minister's Office. Retrieved March 17, 2002 from http://www.primeminister.gr/pminister_en.htm
- Sims, J. (1991, April 13). Pluralism in transition: Cultural implications of the legalization of private and municipal radio broadcasting in Greece. Paper presented in the International Division at

the Broadcast Education Association Convention, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Sims, J. (1990). Pluralism in transition: Cultural implications of the legalization of private and municipal radio broadcasting in Greece. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Thussu, D.K. (2000). International communication: Continuity and change. London: Arnold.

Trigkas, G. (2001, April 6). Owner, Diva 106.FM. Athens, Greece, Interview.

Two studies add to radio confusion. (2001, March 20). *Kathimerini* (English Edition), p.1.

Venizelos, Evangelos, Minister of Culture. Retrieved March 17, 2002 from www.culture.gr.

Vgontzas, A. (1988, August & September). Attorney. Athens, Greece. Interview.

War on the airwaves. (2001, March 30). *Athens News*, p. 6.

World Factbook Page on Greece. Retrieved September 14, 2000 from

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gr.html#Govt>

Zaharopoulos, T. (1999). Professor, Mass Media Department, Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas. Personal e-mail message.

Zaharopoulos, T. (1989, October). Mass communication in Greece: Power/freedom and broadcasting in Greek society. Paper presented at the Modern Greek Studies Association Symposium, University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN.

Zaharopoulos, T.(1985). Foreign mass communication in Greece: Its impact on Greek culture and influence on Greek society. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

Zaharopoulos, T.& Paraschos, M.E. (1993). Mass media in Greece: Power, politics and privatization. London: Praeger.

Appendix A

Table A1

The 20 Radio Stations Approved to Broadcast on March 26, 2001

Radio Stations

Radio Epikoinomia (Ehrakleiou)
 Skai
 97.4 Xenios FM (Ekseinos Demotikos Ano Liosiwn)
 Channel One (Pireaus)
 Melodia
 Klik
 Stathmos
 Capital [Gold]
 Rock FM
 Athens 9.84 FM
 Alpha News
 902 Aristera
 Antenna
 Flash
 Jeronimo Groovy
 Galaxy
 Kiss
 Nitro
 Status
 Ekkleisia Tis Ellados

Note. “The List” of the first 20 radio stations that were granted a frequency and a license to broadcast on March 26, 2001 (Petrides, March 26, 2001). Radio station, Klik, was later sold and became Village FM. Radio station, Status, was later renamed, Best.

Appendix B

Table B1

The Eight Radio Stations Granted a “Temporary License” to Broadcast on March 26, 2001

Radio Stations

Ciao FM

Planet

Love Radio

Sport FM

Sfera

Profit

Pireaus [Peiraiki] Eklesia

Rythmos

Note: The list of the eight radio stations that were granted a “temporary license” to broadcast on March 26, 2001. One year later, in March 2002, Minister Protopapas granted permanent licenses and frequencies to all of these stations to broadcast, except for Pireaus Eklesia, the station of an orthodox church.

Appendix C

Table C1

The Seven Radio Stations Shut Down on March 27, 2001 and Put “On Hold” for Approval in the Future

Radio Stations

Lampsi FM

Athens Radio DJ

Eva FM

Radio Gold FM

En Lefko

Difono

Polis

Note: The list of the seven radio stations that were shut down on March 27, 2001 and put “on hold” for approval in the future. One year later, in March 2002, Minister Protopapas granted permanent licenses and frequencies to all of these stations to broadcast (except for Radio Gold, which lost its place to Business Radio).