

The Evolution of Public Service Radio Broadcasting in Greece: From Authoritarianism to Anarchy and Irrelevance

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Introduction

The development of radio in Greece was influenced by the public service model established earlier in other European nations. However, as a social institution radio could not escape the socio-cultural environment in which it operates. The Greek political and economic environment in the twentieth century was greatly shaped by wars, occupation, earthquakes, dictatorships and the resulting poor economic conditions. As such, Greek public service radio had a terrific challenge in trying to reach its goals. For some observers it came close to providing a public service to the Greek people, but for others its fate was predetermined by the socio-cultural conditions of the nation, and thus could never succeed. In either case, the development of public service radio in Greece parallels the development of Greece in the 20th Century.

State control of all aspects of society, including broadcasting, was almost never questioned in Greece. The state was trusted to control—and use for the benefit of all—the relatively few natural resources, because Greeks distrusted private interests. As a result of the country's scarce natural resources, mountainous geography, and frequently invading armies, Greeks have historically relied on the family for protection (Triandis & Vassiliou 1972). Competition for resources, honor, and prestige has always been present in Greek society. This competition in turn has taught Greek to distrust all others outside their particular in-group.

Patron-client relations, which flourish in environments perceived as hostile and threatening (Legg 1977), is an outgrowth of the need for an extended in-group. Political parties, competing for power, created such a system to secure public support. As such, rules and regulations were never objectively created or applied in Greece, but were used as tools for maintaining power. For patrons and clients “the State existed for personal manipulation and exploitation” (Legg, p. 285). The evolution of state radio is indicative of such processes. It was created and used throughout its history as a tool for gaining personal, political and economic power.

Finally, the Greek people's survival needs left little time for analysis, integration and precision. This has traditionally characterized Greek work habits, as well as the carrying out of rules and regulations. As outlined below, the emergence of state, private and municipal radio in Greece followed this socio-cultural infrastructure. Thus, public service radio could not be expected to operate like radio in western European nations that have different socio-cultural identities.

Early Radio

Radio arrived in Greece in 1923 in the form of experimental broadcasts by the Ministry of the Navy and the Union of Greek Amateur Wireless Operators (“E Radiofonia,” 1956, p. 572). The Ministry of the Navy, which regulated broadcasting until 1926, demanded a license fee to be paid by owners of each receiver. The government wanted to discourage broadcasting until it had a firm control of it. Nevertheless, Greece's first regular radio station was established in 1928 in Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city, by C. Tsingiridis.

In 1936 the authoritarian Metaxas government decided to build a state broadcasting system. For Metaxas, state radio was not only a matter of national pride, but also a means to "educate" Greek society in ways satisfactory to Metaxas, who had a liking for German fascism. In March 1938 Greece became one of the last European countries to get a national radio station. Regular programming consisted of music by the station's symphony orchestra, choirs, and news (Hatzidoulis, 1988).

During the first stages of World War II, the two stations in Greece carried news from the front and helped boost the morale of the nation (Keshishoglou, p. 21). However, German occupation (1941-1944) halted further expansion of broadcasting. The Germans ordered radio set owners in Athens to register their sets. These receivers were sealed to receive only the national station, which the Germans controlled. Around the country people were ordered to turn their radios in or face life imprisonment or even death (Keshishoglou, p. 22).

Following unsuccessful attempts to operate the Tsingiridis station the Germans eventually built their own 20-kilowatt station in Thessaloniki (Keshishoglou, p. 25). While departing from Greece in October 1944, German forces failed in their attempt to destroy the national station. This station resumed broadcasting a week later, upon the return of the national government from exile ("E Radiofonia," p. 572). The Germans destroyed the Tsingiridis station, while they took back their own station's equipment. Tsingiridis put his station back on the air in September 1945 (Keshishoglou, p. 26).

During the 1940s, the national radio station in Athens operated under censorship rules, and broadcast mostly in the evenings. Its programming consisted of news, children's programs, classical and contemporary Greek and foreign music, plays, church services, and educational programs directed at women, farmers, and other social groups (Kotsaki, 1988).

Broadcasting After WWII

In 1945 the Greek government decided to reorganize and expand radio broadcasting. Law 1775/1945 established the Hellenic Radio Foundation (EIR), and placed it under the supervision of the Ministry to the Premier. EIR asked Tsingiridis to broadcast the national signal, but when he refused they closed him down ("Radiofonikos," 1945). The government wanted total control of broadcasting, as it could play an important role in the ensuing Civil War. EIR proceeded to build its own station in Thessaloniki in 1947. Since these stations carried no advertising they were financed through license fees from about 40,000 radio receivers (UNESCO, 1947, p. 123).

In the late 1940s, radio station construction accelerated. Stations were built by EIR, by private interests, and by the armed forces. The armed forces station started as a pirate station by soldiers for their entertainment during the Civil War (McDonald, 1983, p. 164). Other armed forces stations were constructed with U.S. Pentagon assistance in 1949 when law 968/1949 established the Central Radio Station for the Greek Armed Forces. Soon the army operated five such stations, which were established to "enlighten" the people of Northern Greece about the dangers of communism. The United States, which had taken a major role in the Civil War, helped the Greek government by building two radio stations that would transmit Voice of America (VOA) programs part of the day and Greek government programming the rest of the day ("New U.S. Radio," 1949).

In 1951 law 1663/1951 legally authorized the operation of military stations, for the purpose of "raising the educational level of the Armed Forces, and in wartime, of strengthening the morale of the nation at war...." (Emery, p. 284). These stations targeted both military personnel and the general public. Their programs were financed through army funds and advertising. American support for military stations' activities was further reinforced through donations of radio receivers to villages so that villagers could tune in to state broadcasts (Sadgwick, 1953).

As the armed forces stations were gaining popularity, EIR established a new service in 1952, called the Second Program. This station carried commercials and more popular music programming, as opposed to the first station's more serious orientation. The First Program carried news, information, education, and fine arts programming, but no advertising. Nevertheless, all stations from 1946 to 1953 were under

strict government censorship (McDonald, p. 162).

In 1954, EIR established the Third Program, a classical music and fine arts program, operating a few hours each day. The political stability and the economic recovery that took place in the 1950s and early 1960s allowed for an increasing number of radio stations. By 1961, there were five private and twelve EIR stations in the country, while there were also twelve armed forces stations, mostly in Northern Greece. These stations had less power and covered much less territory than the national stations (Keshishoglou, p.39).

When the military took over the government in 1967, one of the first buildings to be seized was the EIR building. During the first few days, the junta used the facilities of the armed forces stations and forced EIR to carry that signal (McDonald, p. 164).

Broadcasting and the Return to Democracy

In 1974 the military junta fell and civilian rule was restored in Greece. Parliament approved a new Constitution in 1975. Article 15 Section 2 states:

"Radio and television shall be under the immediate control of the state and shall aim at the objective transmission, on equal terms, of information and news reports as well as works of literature and art; The qualitative level of programs shall be assured in consideration of their social mission and the cultural development of the country."

A new broadcasting law (230/1975) established the Hellenic Radio Television (ERT) as a public corporation, replacing EIR(T), as the new legal entity for broadcasting. ERT theoretically was supervised by an administrative council, but ERT was controlled by the government via the Deputy Minister to the Premier, who appointed the Director-General of ERT and the two assistant directors.

According to law 230/1975, and all subsequent broadcast laws, the purpose of ERT is to provide "information, education, and recreation for the Greek people (through) the organization, operation and development of radio and television" (Article 1). In addition, Article 3 states that "ERT programs must be imbued with democratic spirit, awareness of cultural responsibility, humanitarianism and objectivity, and must take into account the local situation." Finally, this law prohibited broadcasting "by any natural person or legal entity other than ERT and the Armed Forces Information Service (YENED)" ("Greek Radio-TV Law," 1976). This brought an end to any legal private broadcasting in Greece.

The legal structure of ERT was one of the targets of the opposition socialist party, PASOK. It promised to change this structure because it was used to promote only the party in power, especially before elections. However, following the 1981 elections, which brought PASOK to power, its only change was to make more airtime available to political parties represented in Parliament.

In 1982, PASOK followed through with the intention of the 1975 law to eventually do away with YENED. Law 1288/1982 transformed YENED into ERT-2, and ERT into ERT-1. ERT-1 remained a public corporation owned by the state. ERT-2 became a public service of the Ministry of the Premier and governed by a General Council appointed by the Minister to the Premier. However, there was no difference in the control of ERT-1 and ERT-2, as the Deputy Minister to the Premier practically was in charge of both. Furthermore, top administrative positions, as well as most other positions were filled by the party loyalists. No political party was willing to part with radio and television, although during the 1985 election campaign, the New Democracy (ND) party promised, if elected, to allow private broadcasting "within the confines of the Constitution."

In 1987, a new legal structure for broadcasting was enacted. As a result of this law (1730/1987), one company, Hellenic Radio-Television S. A., (ERT), has complete control of public service broadcasting in Greece. ERT has five divisions, the major three of which are: Hellenic Television 1 (ET-1); Hellenic Television 2 (ET-2); and Hellenic Radio (ERA), made up of the three ERT-1 radio services (ERA-1, ERA-2, ERA-3), ERT-2 radio (ERA-4), and the Voice of Greece short-wave service (ERA-5).

Nevertheless, the major importance of this law is that the government included in it a provision allowing for the establishment of private radio stations.

The Emergence of Free Radio

Free radio, as non-state radio came to be called, existed in Greece in the form of pirate radio since the 1950s. Law 1244/1972, enacted by the military junta in 1972, imposed serious penalties against pirates, including fines, imprisonment and confiscation of equipment (Balis & Kapsis, 1986, p. 11).

Citizens' groups demanded the right to operate radio stations beginning in 1983. However, what gave impetus to free radio was the political pressure brought on by opposition parties wanting a piece of the airwaves. During the 1986 municipal elections, six mayoral candidates made free radio part of their platform. Their demands were not so much in support of the rights of amateur broadcasters, but in support of a breakdown of the state's monopoly, especially concerning news and public affairs programming. The eventual victory of the opposition ND candidates in Greece's three largest cities, put pressure on the government to act.

The idea of abolishing the state radio monopoly came up in 1982, and again in 1985, when some within PASOK proposed to allow local governments to establish municipal radio stations (Pretenteris, 1986). This was a time PASOK members were in control of local governments in most large cities. However, following the 1986 municipal elections, in which ND mayoral candidates won in several major Greek cities, PASOK shelved the idea.

Municipal radio was not a new idea in Greece. Private, non-profit stations, under the protection of their local governments, operated in three cities beginning in the 1950s. These stations in Amaliada, Ierapetra, and Messologi were allowed to operate because they had public support and because they cooperated with ERT.

In 1984 the Central Union of Greek Municipalities and Villages (KEDKE) made its first proposal for establishing local stations. One of the architects of that proposal was the 1986 leftist parties' mayoral candidate for Athens, who declared that if elected, he would establish a municipal radio station. The New Democracy's candidate in that same election, and eventual winner, adopted that idea.

The new mayor of Athens insisted that if a legal structure for free radio was not created by March 1987, he would build a city radio station, even if that meant violating the law. The government responded that if a legal structure was not ready by then, it would find a way to accommodate the mayor ("Ekviasmos," 1987).

Nevertheless, not all parties agreed on how the state radio monopoly should be lifted. Many within the ruling party (PASOK) wanted to legalize radio pirates/amateurs, but not let them broadcast news or public affairs programs. Others wanted to allow provincial stations to operate under the provincial governors, whom the ruling party had appointed, but not under local mayors, many of whom were with the opposition. New Democracy, on the other hand, was in favor of private radio, while leftist parties were opposed to it, believing that it would lead to private television controlled by foreign interests ("Ti tha Giny," 1986).

While cities throughout Greece started planning to build radio stations, on May 31, 1987, Athens municipal station "Athens 98.4 FM" went on the air without a license, operating initially 12 hours a day. Just two days before, feeling the political pressure, the government issued a Ministerial decision allowing the establishment of municipal radio stations. This station initially employed 85 people, some of whom, including the general manager, were not members of New Democracy. This in itself was a major change that caused much discontent within the ranks of the party (Papachristos, 1987). It was very unusual for a politician not to stock a government enterprise with members of his own party. The station's programming was mostly live—unlike state radio programs that were mostly taped—consisting of music, news, talk, and commercials.

The second municipal station, "Kanali 1," went on the air on June 26, 1987, in the city of Piraeus, the port

of Athens, by another opposition mayor. This station sought a more local orientation than the Athens station, and many of its employees considered Athens 98.4 much like state radio (Cowell, 1987).

This was followed in September 1987 by station "FM-100" in Thessaloniki. Soon, KEDKE proposed again that local stations be established in most Greek provinces, and operated jointly by small towns (Lionarakis, 1988, p. 139). The first such station went on the air in July 1990 in Agrinio, as a joint corporation between several municipalities and private interests (Roumeliotis, 1990, July).

Before the end of 1988, the first joint effort came from eight Athenian suburbs, which established radio station "Diavlos 10" in a working-class western region of Athens. By March 1989, there were 13 municipal stations throughout the country and their number was rapidly growing (Roumeliotis, 1989, March).

Meanwhile, although PASOK was forced to abolish the state broadcasting monopoly, it was determined to keep the new stations in check. The government attempted to keep the mayors within the bounds of the law by trying to demolish illegal transmission towers of municipal stations in Athens and Thessaloniki. The mayors fought back with party loyalists who would guard the tower sites.

However, municipal radio was not what many had envisioned. As columnist Efthimiou (1987) stated, "free radio is a chance for a change in (people's) mentality and practices," but unfortunately, municipal radio was a result of the same mentality. It was simply politicians' radio, not public or non-partisan radio.

Even the managers of the first two municipal stations had doubts about municipal radio. Y. Jannetakos of Athens 98.4 said that free radio should be much more than municipal radio. The manager of the Pireaus station, Kanali 1, stated that he did not believe in municipal radio because "people don't want to listen to small-town problems" (Papasprou, 1987, p. 69).

Law 1730/1987, which gave ERT monopoly over broadcasting, also stated that the Minister to the Premier could supply licenses for the creation and operation of FM radio stations for local coverage. Such licenses could be given to local government, individuals, and corporations, but no entity could have more than one license, neither could there be private radio networks.

This law further created a commission to supervise licensing. A later Presidential Decree (25/1988) allowed for the establishment of FM stations by entities as set forth by law 1730/1987, between 87.5 and 107.7 MHz, with a required license. It also stated:

These stations have as a goal the objective and on equal terms transmission of information and news as well as products of speech and the arts, while upholding the qualitative standards of the broadcasts which are imposed by the (broadcaster's) social mission and the cultural development of the country (Article 1, Par. 2).

Municipal stations were to be supervised by an executive council representing all parties within each city council. It also established technical standards and set maximum advertising minutes. It gave priority for two-year renewable radio licenses to local governments, press groups, and radio amateurs (in that order). Its most controversial provision, however, was the requirement that most stations have an ethics and standards committee primarily made up of journalists.

These restrictions reflected the uncertainty politicians had about a truly free radio. PASOK generally held that new stations were politically opposing it. New Democracy supported free radio, but only in the ways it could help it or hurt the government. A major problem with this law and the accompanying decrees was while they dealt with political broadcasting, which was dear to the party in power, they did not deal with the number of frequencies available.

Nevertheless, the first non-state radio licenses were approved in May 1988. There were 29 licenses granted, most going to municipalities and publishing firms (Roumeliotis, 1988, May). However, the commission never announced the criteria used in allocating these licenses, nor did it tie the licenses to

specific frequencies. The situation was seemingly getting out of control. The government wanted to be seen as freeing up the airwaves, while at the same time trying to ensure that they do not end up in the hands of the opposition. However, the speed with which these events were happening did not allow for adequate legal ground rules, which in itself was not at all unusual for Greece.

Under the new situation, the number of radio stations exploded. Many stations in Athens and Thessaloniki began operating on a 24-hour basis, resulting in increased competition for audiences and radio personalities. By the end of 1988, there were 22 licensed radio stations in Thessaloniki and possibly up to 100 pirates sharing the airwaves (Roumeliotis, 1988, Oct. 31). In this unstable regulatory climate radio piracy flourished. In Athens there were 52 fully licensed or license-applied-for stations, and up to 20 more unlicensed stations on the air, in addition to about 60 other applicants waiting to get one of the remaining frequencies. With another set of license applications approved in early 1989, more than 200 licenses had been approved for the whole country (Roumeliotis, 1989, February).

As a result of the absence of clear rules and regulations as well as the lack of clear control created by political pressure, this situation resembled anarchy. There were pirate stations using licensed frequencies, stations illegally using relay transmitters or a second frequency, stations broadcasting with greater power than allowed, stations building transmitters in unauthorized areas, and city mayors operating more than one station without a license. For example, Thessaloniki's mayor built two more stations in that city, "FM-101," a youth-oriented station carrying primarily foreign music, and "FM-100.5," a fine arts station.

Indeed, some of the greatest problems of free radio were political. Although the major municipal stations would allow all parties to be heard, which led to some mayors being criticized by their own party for not being partisan enough, most municipal stations were under the direct control of the mayor. This was not surprising given that local governments followed the state broadcasting model. Despite this, many more political voices were being heard among the different stations, which had the effect of promoting a healthier discussion of political ideas.

In this new situation, state radio did not remain unaffected. In Thessaloniki, where the mayor's radio station, FM-100, came to attract 50 percent of the audience, the government decided to join the trend. It built a new radio station (102 FM stereo) along the lines of free radio, but with more Greek music. Furthermore, three of the four national radio services increased their percentage of live programming, which had averaged less than 25 percent, while ERA-4 completely changed its format to target younger audiences. At the same time, many state radio stations broadcasting for years on AM, started transmitting on FM as well.

Before this period, ERT used to provide a good variety of programming, given its financial resources and the number of program services involved. ERT radio services had traditionally packaged programming in blocks. These were pre-recorded by either members of its permanent staff or by independent producers.

Weekly radio ratings became important and controversial, as they sometimes showed contradictory results. Ratings showed that the most popular stations in Athens in the late 1980s were Athens 98.4 and three private stations, while state radio station audiences plummeted. As S. Koufopoulos (1996) stated, "State radio was the big loser from the exposition of private and municipal radio. A bigger loss was that of the political elites who lost a sure means of propaganda" (p. 30).

Nevertheless, financial problems started taking their toll on the new radio stations. Although Athens 98.4 managed to generate a sizable profit within the first seven months (Neofotistos, 1988), soon there were so many new stations that radio advertising expenditures, initially only six percent of total, were divided up (Chalkou, 1990).

Financial difficulties especially hurt stations operated jointly by smaller municipalities around Athens, resulting in the first strike by non-state radio station employees (Roumeliotis, 1989, January). In addition, music licensing groups threatened legal action because the stations were not paying music royalties. Financial problems also resulted in greater competition for revenue-producing popular programming and

radio personalities. Both private and municipal stations depended on their popular programming to gain huge audiences so they could generate profits and political support, respectively. Many private station owners also intended to use radio as a political voice, which they could leverage to increase their business opportunities involving government contracts (Zaharopoulos, 1993).

As the first few of years of free radio came to an end, the competing centers of power in Greek radio were the government-run radio services (ERA), municipal radio stations and privately owned stations. However, in terms of public service broadcasting, municipal stations were gaining over state broadcasting.

National State Radio

Hellenic Radio (ERA) is made up of five program services: ERA-1, ERA-2, ERA-3, ERA Sport, and ERA-5 or the "Voice of Greece." The first four are national services, while ERA-5 is Greece's international short-wave radio service. ERA also has 19 local and regional stations on AM, two AM relay stations, and 40 FM transmitters throughout the country. In addition, ERA-1 uses two Voice of America (VOA) transmitters for a limited number of hours each day.

The First Program (ERA-1) is the oldest and most diverse programming service. It was intended as ERA's news and information program, but also carries popular and traditional music, and occasional radio plays. In 2002 the First Program was renamed NET radio; NET (New Greek Television) being the name of Greek television's second channel, which has a serious orientation. The Second Program (ERA-2) carries more popular music and a few magazine and public affairs programs. Since the year 2000 it has also been broadcasting foreign language news and public affairs programs for the increasing number of immigrants in Greece. In 2002, one of the Second Program's frequencies in Athens was used to create ERA's fifth domestic service called "Kosmos" radio, carrying primarily world music.

The Third Program (ERA-3) is ERA's fine arts service carrying mostly classical music. ERA-4 was turned into a sports and youth-oriented station in 1989, and later it became ERA Sport by taking over the sports operations of all ERA programs. All four services have been influenced by free radio and now carry more hours of live programming, while ERA-1, ERA-2, and ERA Sport also carry advertising. Hellenic Radio (ERA) also has two orchestras and a choir.

NET radio has the most extensive nationwide network, with a central AM station in Athens, two AM relay stations, 17 FM transmitters, and limited short-wave international programming through VOA transmitters. ERA-2 also has a central Athens AM station, and 17 FM transmitters. ERA-3 has a relatively limited coverage area, having one central AM station in Athens and five FM transmitters, two of which are on Aegean islands.

ERA Sport has one central AM station and broadcasts part-time from 10 regional stations. It also has a 100 kW FM stereo transmitter in Athens. Its former AM station in Thessaloniki is now the Second Macedonian regional service, which carries the new ERA station, "FM-102," from Thessaloniki.

ERA-5 broadcasts in 16 languages directed to different parts of the world. ERA's international broadcasts consist of news, public affairs, and music programming. The (First) Macedonian Radio station also broadcasts in Greek to Europe and the Middle East.

Some of ERA's regional stations were originally established as armed forces stations. Regional stations have historically been relay stations for central programs, such as ERA-1 and ERA-2 originating in Athens. They carry locally originated programs, including local news bulletins, for about six hours per day, which amounts to about 30 percent of their total programming. Regional stations have always had a limited infrastructure, and some stations have very low power (Lionarakis, 1988, p. 134). Their income is also limited.

In 1991, there was talk of downsizing ERA, especially after a BBC consultant's report suggested it. However, the employee unions objected, as did some managers, and this plan was not implemented.

Since 1998, in an effort to cut costs, ERA stations have formed a joint network for part of the day. Generally, ERA-1 (NET radio) and ERA-2 simulcast between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. Between 1 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. all ERA stations, except ERA 3, broadcast as one national network called Dyktio (network). Regional stations also have joined together to form regional networks. They interconnect regionally for much of the day with common music or public affairs programs. These regional stations broadcast individually or interconnected from 7:00 a.m. to 9 p.m., except from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. when most carry ERA programs.

ERA-2 was the most popular station in Athens until September 1987, when municipal station Athens 98.4 went ahead in the ratings. By May 1988, three municipal stations in the Athens area (98.4, Kanali 1, Diavlos 10) outperformed the four state radio programs in the ratings, while overall listenership was going up. In Thessaloniki, municipal station "FM 100" attracting 59 percent of the audience ("Proto Synolika," 1988). Nationwide, ERA-2 individual programs still were the most popular until the early 1990s when private Athenian stations extended their reach illegally via relay transmitters.

From 1990 to 1998 ERA stations continued their decline in the ratings, even though critics saw an increase in the quality of their programs. However, over the last fifteen years, ERA-2 has gone from the most listened to station in Athens to eighteenth in the ratings.

Although ERA stations have nationwide reach, they are no longer very relevant to big city listeners, thus the attempt in 2002 to reinvent their sound and image. Their public service mission is intact, but that mission cannot be truly fulfilled when people are not listening.

Besides the loss of listeners, ERA continues to face grave financial problems. ERT is a debt-ridden enterprise with an estimated \$200 million in debt in 2001 despite huge government subsidies. ERT is estimated to have 20% more employees than it needs, a dysfunctional human resources management system, low productivity, limited facilities infrastructure, dysfunctional accounting and security systems, low listenership/viewership, and a serious decrease in advertising revenues ("Thanasimes," 1998).

It is obvious that over the next few years ERT will have to make major decisions with regard to the scope and size of its radio services. Although drastic changes are not expected, it is evident that in this competitive environment ERA, especially in major cities, has become a minor player looking for relevancy.

Municipal Stations

Municipalities started the wave of free radio and initially were very successful at attracting audiences and advertising revenues. However, within three years, competition from private stations and political problems, pushed them into hard times.

During their first two years, stations such as Athens 98.4 and Thessaloniki's FM-100 even subsidized other municipal enterprises. However, there is no municipal or provincial station in Greece today that does not lose money. As most municipal stations are operated by a city corporation, their financial losses are subsidized by taxpayers.

In Athens, as a result of the station's huge deficit, a bipartisan city council committee in 1991 questioned the need for all of "Athens 98.4" 254 employees (Nicolopoulos, 1991). At the same time, Piraeus' "Kanali 1" was losing around \$100,000 per year (D. Kapranos, station managing director, personal communication, July 11, 1991). In the early 1990s there was talk of the station's impending closure. Since 1996 the station has reportedly been up for sale but there is no legal framework for the sale of municipal stations nor the political will to do so (Koufopoulos, 1996).

One of the first ways to cut costs for the municipal stations was to share programming. In 1990 five Athens area municipal stations started sharing news and public affairs programs. Together with the Hellenic Corporation for Local Government and Local Development they formed a program syndication

company. However, most journalists who would have been affected by the ensuing layoffs went on strike, thus putting pressure on the stations not to participate (Roumeliotis, 1990, Jan. 11). This forced some of the stations to withdraw, although the syndicator eventually distributed news and public affairs programs to about 160 stations nationwide.

One of the problems municipal stations had was that, unlike many private stations, they could not avoid paying the relevant fees and taxes. Those who did had their managers and city officials dragged through the courts. Many private stations simply did not pay such obligations. Their first licenses had expired, and without a licensing process on the horizon, they did not feel compelled to meet their financial obligations to the state. The government was so overwhelmed by the number of stations that it did not pay the necessary attention to this problem. As a result, hardly any station paid music royalties, except for ERA stations that pay 2.4 percent of their gross advertising revenue.

Besides financial problems, municipal stations also experienced political problems. The first municipal stations took an identity that was influenced by the size of their city, by the personality of their mayor and the political party controlling the city.

In Athens and Piraeus, the municipal stations started as large operations with a variety of programs and large production and news staffs like ERA stations. But unlike ERA stations, they tended to have a relatively more objective approach to news and public affairs. In Thessaloniki, the first municipal station was not as objective, but served as the opposition voice to ERA. Similarly, many smaller municipal stations either supported or opposed the government depending on the political affiliation of their mayor.

As soon as Athens 98.4 started having financial problems, political problems also surfaced. Under its first general manager, Y. Jannetakos, the station exhibited a pluralistic political profile. In 1989, with parliamentary elections on the horizon, politicians became nervous and put pressure on the station to tow the ND party line. In July 1989 Jannetakos resigned accusing ND of interfering. Later employees went on strike and eventually the station was closed down for a short time. It was reorganized and returned with a more partisan sound (Koufopoulos).

The first municipal elections after the birth of municipal radio stations were held in 1990. These elections resulted in changes of city administrations. In the three largest cities, which were most influential in the introduction of free radio, all three New Democracy (ND) mayors moved into cabinet posts when ND won the 1989 parliamentary elections.

Once elected, the new mayors had to contend with great financial difficulties. Stations were facing fierce competition as the number of radio stations had increased dramatically. The new mayor of Athens was very critical of the station's audience losses, and directed the station to concentrate more on local matters and Greek music (T. Papadopoulos, "98.4" Programming Consultant, personal communication, July 10, 1991). Athens 98.4 originally had a 50-50 mix between Greek and foreign music, but many of the new stations narrowcasted and foreign music was abundant on the airwaves.

Despite the trend toward program specialization, the two most popular stations in Athens since the early 1990s (Sky, Antenna) featured variety formats, carrying music, political talk and information. Station "Tik-Tak" was the first municipal station to specialize its programming, targeting a variety of social groups, but especially children.

In Piraeus, changes took place within the confines dictated by the new political environment. Additional people were hired to reflect the new leftist political orientation of the mayor and city council, which serves as the administrative council of Kanali 1. Forty percent of this station's programming involved news, while 60 percent was music, 70 percent of which was Greek (Kapranos, personal communication, July 11, 1991).

In 1993 of the 75 or so regularly operating, non-state radio stations in the Athens area, 10 were municipal stations. Most notable of these were "Athens 98.4," "Kanali 1" of Piraeus, "Diavlos 10" of 10 western suburbs, "Tik-Tak" of 9 eastern suburbs, "Radio 5" of five suburbs of Piraeus, "Epikoinonia FM" of Neo

Iraklion, "Radio Kyclos" of five northeastern suburbs, and "Xenios" of Ano Liossia.

In 1996 Diavlos 10 dissolved, unable to withstand the financial hardship. Radio 5 also stopped operating regularly soon thereafter. Another Athens area municipality did not file for a license in 1997, as city officials overlooked the relevant deadline, while an additional station was not granted a new license.

Municipal station "Athens 98.4," is a prime example of the decline of municipal stations, although it is certainly in the best shape of any other municipal station in Greece and thus not representative. From its beginnings in 1897 Athens 98.4 captured the largest share of the audience in Athens. This lasted only until private commercial stations went on the air and the decline in audiences was accompanied by a great decline in advertising revenues. In 1998 Athens 98.4 had less than 1% of the listening audience in Athens, while its listeners were over 42 years old (V. Talamangas, general manager, personal communication, July 19, 2000). At that point the city council decided to re-examine the station in terms of its listenership, number of employees, and purposes. All political parties agreed on a plan that included moving the station to better facilities; renewing its programming while maintaining a variety format with music (mostly Greek), news and information; bringing in top talent, while firing 79 employees, many having a "civil service mentality"; and putting a major effort into advertising revenue increases (V. Talamangas, V, personal communication, July 19, 2000).

This plan seems to be working as the station climbed to 3% of the audience, while advertising revenue increased by 7-fold in eight years. Nevertheless, the city still subsidizes this station, as it only generates 35% of its expenses through advertising. Even its general manager, V. Talamangas admits that he sees little future or purpose for municipal stations. He admits that such stations "bleed the city" financially while providing few services that the public really needs and cannot find in private stations. He can only envision municipal stations being necessary in some remote parts of Greece that private stations don't serve, but even there he admits, ERA reaches most of those people (V. Talamangas, personal communication, July 19, 2000).

As of July 2002, the Athens area was the only area in the country where stations have gone through a systematic license renewal process. While some stations have been granted a license, others have been ordered closed. Following a lengthy license renewal process for the Athens area that has taken five years, the government has approved and licensed 40 radio stations. Of these, four are municipal stations: Athens 98.4, Xenios FM, Kanali 1, and Epikoinonia. Only Athens 98.4 has an audience share exceeding one percent.

Provincial Stations

Today, there are over 600 radio stations operating outside the two major Greek metropolitan areas. In the early 1990s, there was at least one municipal radio station in each of the other 50 Greek provinces. In 2001 the government reports that there are 23 municipal stations operating in the whole country (D. Bassantis, Ministry of Press and Mass Media, personal communication, August 30, 2001). Nevertheless, no one knows exactly how many stations are actually on the air, as the number reflects only the municipal stations that acquired a state license to operate at some point.

Like the municipal stations in the larger cities, their small city counterparts are also facing financial problems. This is the result of the combination of too many radio stations and an underdeveloped advertising market in smaller cities. Municipal stations have to compete with some private stations operated by former pirates who do not worry much about generating revenue, as that is not their aim. The province of Ilis in southwestern Greece is an interesting case for the study of provincial radio. Before 1977 this province had only two stations, an ERA-4 regional station, and an ERA-affiliated private station. This station in Amaliada is unusual in that it was built by an individual, and since 1955 was operated by a non-profit group of local residents. In 1959 it became affiliated with ERT, which allowed it to operate even when other private stations were closed down.

In 1993 there were 28 stations in the province, while in 2002 that number had decreased to 16 stations. Local radio people admit the market cannot support more than six stations. This new competitive

situation has resulted in court battles among some stations, as all broadcast with greater power than allowed, while the Amaliada station is operating on both AM and FM.

The Amaliada station was forced to change its programming and incorporate more live programs, like the new stations, but early on the new marketplace quickly turned it from a prosperous station into a station fighting for its survival (A. Meglis, station manager, personal communication, July 26, 1991).

By 1993 the station was so much in debt that the club was forced to dissolve and turn over the station to the city (A. Fragogiannopoulos, interim manager, personal communication, July 13, 2000). The station now has a small staff, little advertising revenue and the city's subsidy makes up two-thirds of its budget (S. Beratis, vice-mayor, personal communication, June 12, 2000). If it were not for the historical nature of this station, which results in public support, it would have closed down by now.

Like other municipal stations in the country its audiences and subsequently its advertising revenue were lost to the many private stations. In an attempt to compete it adopted a more local and livelier programming profile, but this was more expensive and did not bring back the audience. Like other municipal stations, political interference and the ever-present patronage system and its accompanying bureaucracy further put the station in the hole. Like many other municipal stations it is attempting to find a new identity—a public service identity to which the public will respond. Like other municipal stations it is looking for a reason d'être and for a way to financial survival.

Conclusion

Greece developed a national state radio broadcasting system patterned after the public service model of other European nations. In Greece, however, radio broadcasting was developed during a dictatorship so it could propagate to the Greek people. This model was followed throughout the twentieth century, as the country went from war to civil war and political upheavals, with each successive government using radio for its own propaganda purposes. When individuals pressured the government to dismantle the state monopoly over broadcasting, they only found support from politicians who wanted to use radio for their own purposes.

Nevertheless, a new public service municipal radio developed as a result. In the long run, however, municipal radio will only be remembered as an instrument in demonopolizing Greek state radio. Municipal radio never actually found its public service niche, first because it tried to imitate state radio (with differing political views), and later because it tried to imitate private radio. When it finally decided to try to become local public service radio it was too late. The public had already left it for the glamour and excitement of private radio.

Ironically, the history of radio in Greece can be summarized as follows: state radio as an instrument of politicians to remain in power; municipal radio disguised as free radio used by other politicians to share power; and individuals using the birth of municipal radio to begin private radio in order to extend their political or economic power.

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