GONE TO THE MARKET? THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN AND GREEK-CYPRIOT COMMUNITY MEDIA IN BRITAIN

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Abstract

This article focuses on minority community media (ethnic minority radio, cable, satellite and terrestrial television) in the UK and their position within global diasporic media landscapes as well as in the media landscape of contemporary Britain. These media, partly products of the end of frequency scarcity which has led to media market fragmentation and encouraged/enabled the creation of new, specialised media, are distinct from other local, regional or community media as they identify their audience in minority communities whose identities are not rooted in well bounded localities.

Drawing upon research on Asian and Greek-Cypriot community media in the UK, the article attempts to chart and discuss critically the development of ethnic community media in the UK over the past two decades. It examines the provision of programming for ethnic communities within the framework of Public Service Broadcasting and assesses the record of the main terrestrial channels in this area. It then assesses the community politics and the political, legal and regulatory framework which have led to the emergence of ethnic community-specific electronic media (cable and satellite television, radio and, more recently, terrestrial television).

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Ethnic Community Media in the Age of Globalisation

It is commonplace nowadays to say that social identities are in a state of perpetual flux, involved in processes of more or less continuous renegotiation and redefinition that as Hall points out make take the form of erosion, strengthening or the emergence of new identities (1992). This is especially so in the case of migrant communities.[1] In a global context marked by the transnational flow of people, commodities and cultural products, growing awareness of, and contact with other cultures, the increasing possibility of "local happenings [being] shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa" (Giddens 1990, 64) the interplay between the global and the local is accentuated and the dialectical character of the processes of globalisation is thus highlighted. The dialectics of globalisation thus affects particularly migrant communities and the ways in which individuals and social groups within them make sense of their relationship with "place" and the "Other" and define themselves.

Situated "between" countries of origin and countries of settlement, they often develop strategies of coping with the apparently contradictory needs to integrate in the latter and to maintain aspects of their distinct identity and contact with the former. These range from the pursuit of equality and fuller participation to the public life of the country of settlement, to the pursuit of isolation and cultural separatism driven by the irresistible charm of essentialism, or, the creation of hybrid, more cosmopolitan cultures,[2] often the product of the popular and youth cultures of descendants of the original migrants. Increasingly significant to this respect, is the establishment of ethnic minority media as these might prove to be a valuable resource in the process of ethnic community identity formation (Husband 1994; Tsagarousianou 1996). This is especially so at a time when analyses of the ownership and control of contemporary media indicate a concentration of media ownership in "Western" societies, the intensification of processes of homogenisation of cultural products and the narrowing of perspectives and interests reflected in media output that these trends entail (Garnham 1990, Murdock 1990). This process of concentration of ownership and control within the commercial sector of the media industry has been complemented by the shake-up of Public Service Broadcasting that has been taking place over the past decade in most Western European societies and which has been characterised by the increasing adoption of commercial imperatives and rationale by the public media sector (Dahlgren 1991).

At the same time, however, the introduction of new technologies (like the fibre optic technology employed now in cable TV distribution) and the need to open up new, mainly "niche," markets in order to absorb excess capital has led to the emergence of commercial media ventures (Garnham 1990) catering for specific niche audiences, including ethnic minorities. In addition, the growth and proliferation of transnational communications and social networks has made possible the emergence of transnational diaspora-specific mediascapes and related transnational diaspora networks linking migrant communities with their country of origin (cf. Appadurai 1990, Morley and Robins 1995) and establishing or intensifying contact and interaction among migrant communities of the same ethnic background across the globe. The realisation of these new possibilities by ethnic community media has led to the development of relevant strategies (especially focusing on investment, production and programming).

Although ethnicity is not necessarily the main factor determining the media-related behaviour of members of an ethnic minority community, its significance in the communication environment of members of diaspora communities is increasingly

manifest. Today, when the "state as the singular agent of action and intervention has faded away" and given its place to increasingly prominent transnational relations and networks on the one hand, and "a multiplicity of partial governments, with their own systems of representation and decision-making" (Melucci 1996, 219), and in view of the developments outlined above minority media might be a valuable cultural and political resource available to minority groups, by instituting public spaces of representation and participation and creating an opportunity structure for cultural and political expression, dialogue and self-definition by members of ethnic communities. On the other hand, through the institutionalisation of the culture of their specific ethnic communities, ethnic community media could ignore the particular character of diaspora cultures and their internal complexity and diversity and promote cultural separatism and cultural uniformity among the members of their respective migrant communities or, finally, could become instrumental in the colonisation by instrumental, economic rationality of the social networks of the communities they address, when they address them primarily or exclusively as markets.

The discussion that follows in this paper is based on a first analysis of data collected for a research project focusing on ethnic minority community media (in particular, ethnic minority radio and cable television) in Britain and their role in processes of ethnic community identity formation and change in the 1990s. The particular case studies of ethnic community media that this paper draws upon are those of (1) terrestrial radio broadcasting, cable and satellite media developed for London's Greek-Cypriot and Greek community/ies (in particular, the mainly Greek language London Greek Radio broadcasting mainly in North London, and Hellenic TV narrowcasting in North London, and providing a limited service in East London); and (2) terrestrial radio, satellite and cable media broadcasting for the Asian community/ies of London, in particular, Sunrise Radio, an Asian radio station broadcasting London-wide, Asianet, and Sony Entertainment Television Asia, cable and satellite/cable television channels broadcasting for the Asian community of the UK.

While the development of satellite and cable media is closely linked to the technological advances of the past couple of decades, these new media are not new-technology-based in their entirety (for example terrestrial radio). Their existence is partly due to the advances in technology and to the end of the frequency scarcity which has led to media market fragmentation and the creation of new, specialised media. These media are clearly distinct from other local, regional or community media as they identify their audience in minority communities whose "identities [are] not rooted in well bounded localities" (Hall 1992).[3]

The Context

Although setting these media in the broader context of the contemporary media industry (globalisation, deregulation etc.), and tracing the process of development of minority media in Britain is a task that cannot be accomplished in the next few pages, I believe that a brief sketch of the developments that led to their emergence is necessary.

Until relatively recently the broadcast media sector in Britain had been dominated, initially by the monopoly of the non-commercial BBC, and after 1955, by the BBC / Independent Television Authority (ITA — later Independent Broadcasting Authority — IBA) duopoly. While the BBC had been obliged in the aftermath of World War II to take account of a demand for a more popular style and content in radio and television

and to cater for separate "taste publics," the 1950s and 1960s saw an intensification of commercial pressure on European broadcasting systems as a whole, including that of Britain. As early as 1955, the BBC's monopoly of the airwaves was broken as Independent Television (ITV) having won parliamentary approval made its first broadcast, while commercial radio (under the guise of the Local Radio Association and through the operation of North Sea Pirate Radio) emerges in 1964.

However, despite the differing funding formulae[4] and regulatory frameworks for the two sectors, the principles of Public Service Broadcasting in Britain have "historically embraced all broadcasters" (Sparks 1995), especially in the television sector. As Lewis and Booth point out referring to radio (Lewis and Booth, 1989), this context of a prevailing Public Service Broadcasting ethos in the radio and television sectors and the cautious but persistent attempt of commercial radio (and, occasionally, television) proponents to gain some political capital has set the parameters for the development of the notion of community media since the war. For the BBC and the ITA/IBA, community media (especially community radio as the cost of operating television channels was considered to be inhibiting local community television projects) carried primarily connotations of unity and were associated with locality. On the other hand, the commercial radio lobby discourse disguised claims for a slice in the broadcasting pie by conflating local and community radio with small-scale commercial radio (Lewis and Booth 1989, 90). The sole exception in this struggle for the definition of community media was that of the community radio movement which introduced the idea of "community of interest," a variant that was built into Home Office discourse of the Conservative governments of the early 1980s until the prevalence of the commercial lobby definition in the 1987 Green Paper and subsequent legislation.

During the same period the black, Asian and other ethnic communities of London, were becoming increasingly critical of their perceived marginalisation in the media - programmes focusing on ethnic communities like BBC Radio London's Black Londoners, were perceived as about token and "ghetto" slots that alienated the communities they were supposed to address.[5] In this climate of malaise and dissatisfaction the Greater London Council (GLC), an all-London Strategic Authority, began to have a significant effect on the trend towards more localised and often community-specific radio. The GLC Left leadership which won power in 1981 developed an interventionist media policy from 1982 onwards, arguing that media impinged on several policy areas, including arts and recreation, and industry and employment. Strongly committed to antiracist, anti-sexist policies, the GLC funded a variety of groups in the field of arts and community politics. Until the abolition of the GLC by the Conservative government in 1986, the GLC Community Radio Development Unit became the best resourced centre of information, advice, research and funding in the country. Its Local Radio Forum which met for the first time in October 1982 identified areas for intervention and research and enabled Afro-Caribbean, Asian and other minority ethnic groups to become prominent in the community radio debate and provided the impetus for setting up several ethnic community radio projects and a vigorous campaign for ethnic community media.

As far as television was concerned, the government's response to the accusations that Public Service Broadcasting had not responded adequately to the needs of minority communities (in the sense of communities of interest and, therefore, including ethnic communities) was the establishment in 1982 of Channel 4, a nationally networked television publishing house owned by IBA, funded by subscriptions from the ITV

companies. Channel 4, has been statutorily required to appeal to minority (including ethnic community) tastes and interests and to encourage innovation and experiment and has consistently fulfilled this requirement (Harvey 1994, 114-124). Its activity has encouraged the creation of some hundreds of independent production companies specialising in catering for minorities of taste and interest.

The Conservative Governments of the 1980s and 1990s, intent on allowing private corporations to compete with the up to then existing broadcasters (BBC, IBA-regulated television) developed legislation (1990 and 1996 Broadcasting Act) and a new regulatory framework designed to stimulate the independent (mainly commercial) sector by "removing unnecessary regulatory barriers [which inhibit enterprises] to develop and meet the needs of consumers" (Green Paper 1988, 6). Accordingly, the 1990 Broadcasting Act dissolved the IBA and created two new regulatory and licensing bodies, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) and the Radio Authority and set in motion the licensing process of several new satellite and cable television channels, of national and several hundred small commercial radio stations. Commercial television programme providers and radio stations were freed from any substantial obligation to provide public service at local level and were to be overseen by the then established ITC and Radio Authority respectively, two new "lighter touch" regulators. In this climate of deregulation licence bids by Black, Asian, Greek and Turkish radio projects (and pirates) and a number of television projects targeting ethnic communities were made with considerable degree of success.

Thus, the ethnic community media that have emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the UK have been the products, or rather beneficiaries of a climate of deregulation and encouragement of commercial interests to participate in the broadcasting (and narrowcasting) field. What is more, the 1988 Green Paper, as well as subsequent government documents are revealing of the perspective of the Conservative governments concerned regarding the primary function of the new radio and television programme providers, as the latter are defined primarily, if not exclusively, as enterprises whose objective is to satisfy "the needs of consumers" (Green Paper 1988, 6). In a somewhat similar vein, the Radio Authority defines as a key task of the commercial radio system "the provision of new opportunities for listening and further listener choice." It could be argued that these two institutional perspectives reveal the parameters of the system in which the new ethnic minority media have been expected to operate: the transformation of the public, or the community (in the sense this term is used by the community radio movement), into consumers, and the relationship between minority media and their audiences into a one way process of service/product provision.

In this climate of deregulation and privatisation of the broadcasting sector emerged a substantial number of ethnic community media organisations claiming to serve and represent their respective communities. As these are marked by considerable diversity in terms of their structures, sizes, stated objectives and positioning in the local/global nexus, in the remainder of this paper I shall attempt a cursory examination of some of the main media available to London's Asian and Greek communities and the ways in which they operate as both local (in the sense of "serving" a "local" — albeit not in the conventional sense of the term — community) and global actors (in the sense of operating in a global context and, often, being important elements in the life of transnational communities encompassing diaspora as well as "country of origin" audiences).

The Asian Media Sector

Starting from London's Asian community media, or rather, media available to London's Asian community, it is not difficult to note the existence of numerous actors operating within a rather competitive environment. At the time of writing, London's only Asian radio station, Sunrise Radio, operates alongside a number of Asian television stations, notably, Asianet (exclusively cable), Sony Entertainment Television Asia (satellite and cable), Zee TV (satellite) and Namaste TV (satellite).

Sunrise Radio is the only 24 Hour Asian radio station in the South East of England and part of Sunrise Communications, a media network broadcasting also for the Asian communities of Leicester and Bradford. It is available through the FM frequency spectrum, satellite and cable throughout the UK and a large part of Europe. After having been granted a licence to broadcast in the AM waveband in the Hounslow and Ealing areas of London in 1989, Sunrise applied successfully for a London-wide licence.

Although, clearly the monopoly of the radio sector enjoyed by Sunrise Radio appears to be in stark contrast with the multiplicity of actors and the competitive environment in the television sector, it should be stressed that Radio Authority has considered rival and o far unsuccessful Asian radio station bids for the FM frequency of Sunrise Radio or for another AM or FM frequency in the Greater London area. As a result, Sunrise Radio has not been immune to pressures arising from the highly competitive environment of the Asian media sector.

The languages employed in its broadcasting are Hindustani (a hybrid of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi), as well as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and English, reflecting in this way the linguistic and cultural diversity of its audience. This, in many respects, reflects the station's definition of the community it is supposed to serve: According to Sunrise management, the term "Asian" includes all people whose direct ethnic origins can be traced to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka, irrespective of whether they came [to the UK] via Africa or elsewhere. Sunrise Radio's licence application and other station literature stress the importance of focusing on contemporary Asian culture in the UK and claim that the station's formula "of Asian culture and sound set in a Western context has proved successful in bringing together a community diverse in languages and culture, believing in one Asian community" (Sunrise Radio Limited 1993).

The station's choice of Hindustani/English speech combined with popular Asian music indicates its need (and possibly the wish) to address the members of the Asian community as a whole, mainly for practical and commercial reasons. The station's economic survival and profitability depends on reaching as large an audience as possible. As a result, the community the station aims to reach is defined in as broad and vague terms as possible in order to encompass the majority of South Asians or people of South Asian origin of London, often suppressing differences between different South Asian cultures and groups. by identifying the Asian community in such broad terms, Sunrise Radio effectively limits the prospects of competitors to enter the market by tapping to an "untapped" audience (in cultural, ethnic, religious or generational terms) within the Asian community.

However, Sunrise, according to its management, aims at the same time to cater for all major (linguistic and cultural) communities with specialist magazine format programmes with their respective news bulletins, delivered in Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, Sinhalese, and Tamil. Being part of a larger network of radio stations, Sunrise, through co-operation with its affiliates in Leicester and Bradford offers extensive

coverage of local events and Asian community issues from a large part of the UK. This allows the station to be local while, at the same time, to be able to cover community events from outside its specific locality without the cost that would otherwise be involved. In addition, this allows Sunrise Radio to offer a link between Asian communities concentrated in different localities of the UK.

Sunrise describes itself as a community station. However, other self-definitions or definitions of the community it addresses are quite revealing of the stations objectives. Sunrise management describe the station as commercial ethnic radio, while the audience is referred to as "a unique audience sought after by advertisers, an audience not engaged by other London stations and avoiding duplication." Finally, in his application to the Radio Authority (Sunrise Radio 1993) the station's chief executive argues that Sunrise's concept of broadcasting for London's Asian community is "eminently marketable" and that the station has already established "marketability of sensitivity to expressed need" (p. 17). It is clear that Sunrise considers its listeners a valuable financial asset and openly describes them as such. Sunrise's confident and eager embracing of the commercial ethos characterising the broadcasting climate of the mid-1990s makes the station stand out as an exemplar of the latter. What is more, it demonstrates how the idiom of community which has also been used extensively by Sunrise Radio can be used as a vehicle for the success of commercial logic in the ethnic minority media sector.

Another major actor in the Asian community media sector is Asianet. Asianet is one of six companies based in the UK and the USA and is available in 14 cable franchise areas throughout the UK and caters for Asian viewers. Like Sunrise radio, and possibly for similar reasons, it provides a substantial part of its programming in Hindi, Urdu and English as well as caters for viewers who speak other regional languages from the Indian subcontinent through language diversification and the use of English subtitles in non-English language programmes.

Although Asianet identifies its actual and potential viewers as Asian, it nevertheless, recognises the internal diversity of the Asian community. as it is argued that "each sector of the Asian community has an identity of its own" and that Asianet seeks "to promote their identity by providing programmes in the regional languages as well."[6]

Asianet delivers a variety of programmes ranging from entertainment and special interest to sports and news programmes. The organisation stresses its commitment to local productions and programming tailored to the needs of the local communities conveying news and local information to its viewers while maintains and expands its transnational profile. Apart from being part of a broader transnational organisation, it utilises its transnational links in its production and programming strategies. It enables viewers in the UK to participate in networked call in programmes and live shows direct from India or the USA. In addition, Asianet realises that there is a significant gulf between the different generations within the Asian community and in view of the recognition of the difficulty, common among ethnic minority media, of attracting younger members of the audience, Asianet has developed a strategy of producing "youth orientated programmes that try to attract the third generation of the Asian community"[7] like soap operas and music shows in which English language is predominant.[8]

Like Sunrise Radio, Asianet considers itself an organisation that guarantees viewer choice and diversity of programming. According to Asianet employees, however, Asianet takes pride in its being a local as well as a transnational organisation and the

decision of remaining an exclusively cable programme provider has been deliberate as cable TV is considered to be a local medium, although Asianet management believes that local programme production should be further increased when funds become available to this effect. Thus Asianet's dual strategy of global expansion and emphasis of local programming is one of its main characteristics.

This dual approach is also affecting Asianet's relationship with the community or communities it considers as its constituency. Graham Pitman, Marketing Director of Asianet UK, claims that their research indicates Asianet's network extension to the Netherlands has attracted intense interest from members of the Surinam (formerly Dutch Guyana) community living in the country whose origins can be traced back to the Indian subcontinent and the surrounding area, but who had not been in contact with South Asian culture before.[9] Although this is a rather extreme case, it, nevertheless indicates the potential impact that the global expansion of an ethnic community medium may have in processes of identity formation and cultural change of communities that may have only remotely common backgrounds, or even imagined affinities for that matter.

Sony Entertainment Television Asia (SET Asia) is a premium pay-TV service launched in Europe on 1 March 1998 available to satellite and cable viewers. It broadcasts programmes in Hindustani complimented by special programming in Guja-rati and Urdu as well as a daily news programme. The company identifies as its Europe-an audience the "4 million strong South Asian community living in the UK and all across Europe" although Sony Entertainment Television Asia is a global broadcaster as it broadcasts to Asian viewers in South Asia, Africa and the USA as well as in Europe.

SET Asia features over 2,000 hours of original Hindustani productions in different genres as also a broad range of films ranging from classics to Hollywood blockbusters. Entertainment is clearly the main component and objective of SET Asia's programme and news or special interest programmes are really a marginal part of the overall output of the station. SET Asia's links to the London or UK Asian community are not really strong at the time of writing as its local presence is in fact restricted to marketing and sales-related activities. SET Asia's programme is broadcast for a global audience with limited regional variations and, clearly, SET Asia sees its global character as one of its distinctive marks.

From a practical point of view, it is obvious that such a global strategy brings to SET Asia the benefits of economies of scale and is closely linked to a profit maximisation strategy. This also appears to be the model of development that the other major actor in the Asian media sector, Zee TV, has followed as it too broadcasts to the Indian subcontinent, the Arab peninsula and Europe. However Zee has attempted to establish links with local communities, especially the Asian community of the UK by producing programmes especially for the members of the latter.

The Greek Media Sector

Catering for a less numerous, yet large and compact community of Greek-Cypriot and Greek origin, the Greek media sector comprises one terrestrial radio station, London Greek Radio (LGR), and one television station (Hellenic TV) available to cable subscribers in parts of Greater London.

London Greek Radio came first on the air as a pirate radio station in 1983, at the time when ethnic community pirate radio projects were flourishing in London. It soon

became a focus of community action and identification as in 1984 50,000 people signed a petition supporting an application for a licence. LGR mounted a vigorous campaign for an ethnic radio station and attracted local and national publicity. It continued transmitting and applying for licences until the end of 1988 when the IBA decided to advertise licences for a number of stations. In 1989 four members of pirate LGR combined forces with four smaller applicants and made an application for the North London licence under the name LGR. The licence was granted and transmissions began in November 1989.

According to the station's sales manager, the station management team and employees do not consider launching the station as a primarily commercial venture, but as an attempt to provide a service to the Greek/Greek-Cypriot community, although, obviously, they are interested in rendering the station self-sufficient in financial terms.[10]

LGR is a mainly Greek language radio station, In its 1993 licence application (LGR 1993) it is stated that LGR is "designed to service in particular the Greek speaking and culturally Greek members of the community within [its] transmission area. 75% of the output will be in the Greek Language. Some of the output will be bilingual targeting youth, to encourage the use of the Greek language. Other languages would be considered by LGR for ethnic groups unserved [sic] within the area" (p. 14). In the same document it is also stated that the programme of the station seeks to meet the needs, tastes and interests of Greeks, Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and some Turkish Cypriots, who either by birth or by ethnic origin desire to retain their culture and its traditions (p. 16).

The licence application and other station literature identify the station's objectives as:

Information: with particular emphasis on local, national and international news, community services, announcements, debates, and programmes on legal, medical and financial matters, reminders and updates of Council and National services available to the public Education: This service is intended to cover cultural heritage, literary and art subjects as well as historical issues. In conjunction with the Greek Education Authority, and other public bodies in the UK and elsewhere the station aims to provide specially planned programmes for children. Support of Religion: by providing coverage of church services, of important community events and promoting "community spirit." Entertainment: through Greek musical output with special emphasis on listener involvement and request programmes.

A fifth objective which, although not identified as such in LGR documents, nevertheless is quite prominent in them and has emerged in interviews with station management and employees, is the establishment and maintenance of contacts with the countries of origin of members of the community (mainly Cyprus and Greece) and other Greek and Greek Cypriot diaspora centres world-wide through regular 2 and 3 way broadcasts linking London with Cyprus, Greece, and the Greek speaking communities of Australia, Canada, the USA, Germany and South Africa. To this, could be added the station's policy to offer, apart from its in-house produced news programmes, news bulletins from Greece, Cyprus, Germany and, during two way broadcasts with other Greek diaspora stations throughout the globe, the exchange of news bulletins.

LGR has also been poised to increase the amount of bilingual programming to the extent that the Radio Authority will allow. Chris Harmandas, the station's sales manager

has argued that this is one of the most important aims of the station as this will have the dual effect of maintaining and strengthening a sense of community among the members of the Greek and Greek-Cypriot communities of London that would transcend generational boundaries and, in addition, safeguarding the future of the station in the longer term by allowing the station to establish a better relationship with younger members of the Greek and Greek Cypriot communities of North London.[11]

Another significant aspect of the station's activities is its emphasis on community involvement. Apart from the more or less conventional phone-in programmes and community information noticeboard slots, the station has established regular legal, medical and social services information programmes which seek to raise awareness of the rights of the members of the community and to help those not familiar with the procedures of activating these to do so. This commitment extends beyond the framework of the relevant programme as listeners can use the station as a contact with the social services and the local Borough officers. In addition, the station has been supporting a social club (LGR Club) and has extended an invitation to community associations and groups (schools, church, Maronite community associations, or theatre groups) to participate in programme production. This is indicative of a perspective that sees the community, not merely as an audience, or an aggregate of potential consumers to be delivered to advertisers, but as a community involved into the production of the station's programme. Although I am not suggesting that LGR has adopted a model similar to that of Channel 4, it is interesting to note its limited function as a publishing house encouraging a degree of cultural creativity and expression within the London Greek and Greek Cypriot community.

Hellenic TV's main narrowcast area is the franchise area of Cable London in North London while it is also available for 3 hours every weekend to viewers in Videotron's and United Artists' franchise Areas (Central and West London). Hellenic TV estimates it has 11,000 subscribers (1996) in its main broadcast area, and an estimated total of 15,750 subscribers in the latter areas (although, in the latter case subscription figures are not available as the service is provided free of charge by the cable operators of these areas) although its management are anxious to point out that there might be considerable discrepancy between the subscribers and viewers figures as television can be viewed by several members of a household, or a "kafeneio"[12] or social club.

As in the case of LGR, the management of Hellenic TV have argued that the channel primarily offers service to the Greek community of London and pointed out that self sufficiency was a longer term aim. The programme schedules of Hellenic TV consist of the morning/afternoon programme of ET1, the first Greek State Channel, the early evening programme of CBC (Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation) followed by a number of Greek films, a very limited number of programmes produced by it, and a weekly community news bulletin.

Hellenic TV seems currently unable to transcend the relatively safe financially programming format it has adopted although the management of the channel has expressed its determination to expand its in-house produced programmes that would be of interest to the Greek and Greek-Cypriot community of the UK. The low number of local programmes focusing on local community issues is clearly a matter of serious concern and a cause of regret for the management[13] but the cost of producing such programmes is thought to be prohibiting. Nevertheless, there is evidence of efforts towards this direction as Hellenic TV covers events of community interest and has

included in its schedules interviews with leading community figures, political personalities, ordinary community members and programmes like Greek community school theatre performances. However, clearly, the financial constraints and the production costs involved in covering Greek and Greek-Cypriot community-related events and topics have forced Hellenic TV to be highly selective in its coverage.[14] In addition, the channel has had plans for a number of youth orientated and educational programmes and has already pursued co-operation with educational authorities and other bodies to this effect, with no success at the time of writing.

The programme of Hellenic TV is almost entirely in Greek language and its management argue that this is the outcome of a conscious decision as their viewers are interested in Greek language programmes and that this is the factor that distinguishes Hellenic TV from other UK based television channels.[15]

Hellenic TV considers co-operation with television channels of Greece and Cyprus essential as it considers that, apart from its role as a medium informing and entertaining the Greek/Greek Cypriot community of the UK, it serves as a link between the countries of origin and the latter. In this context, it is pursuing links with television channels from Cyprus and Greece and a part of its local output/productions is shown in Cypriot channels.

Ethnic Community Media: Making Sense of the Terrain

When considering ethnic community media such as the ones presented above, it might be useful to distinguish between more community oriented media, usually media maintaining a base in London, often near areas marked by high concentrations of residents of South Asian origin, and more global media, usually satellite television based in remote locations and catering for Asian audiences in different parts of the globe.

Although, admittedly, such a distinction is not easy to make, and simplifies considerably the complexity of the ethnic community media sector, it is clear that a number of organisations have opted for a more local presence than others. Thus Sunrise Radio and LGR clearly define themselves as community radio stations and, although their respective communities are dispersed in the Greater London Area with the exception of areas of high concentration of ethnic populations, they nevertheless strive to maintain a local identity. This is also true, albeit not to the same extent, in the case of Asianet and Zee TV whereas SET Asia has clearly opted for a global strategy instead.

At the same time almost all radio and television stations have developed some type of global strategies. In fact, a trend common in all media examined in this paper is that of establishing links varying from informal relationships with other media (LGR and Hellenic TV), national (Sunrise Radio) and increasingly transnational syndication to transnational expansion (Asianet) in the areas of investment, production or programming. As, again, Asianet seems to indicate clearly, these strategies may affect processes of identity formation of ethnic communities as they are bound to affect perceptions of the local and the global among the members of communities that have already experienced migrancy in a world that is becoming increasingly more fluid. What is more, the connections that ethnic minority media establish between different parts of the diasporas in which they situate themselves are likely to affect the perceptions of self and otherness and the diasporic awareness among members of ethnic communities. British Asians can now participate in a US based interactive show

produced by Asianet, Greek-Cypriots of London may communicate with Australian Greeks through a link-up programme organised by LGR and Australian Greek radio stations, Bradford Asians may keep in touch with events in London by tuning to Sunrise Radio and viewers in Cyprus receive a daily programme produced by Hellenic TV.

Equally significant is the issue that, again all ethnic media examined in this paper have tried to address in varying ways and degrees of success, notably the internal diversity of the communities which they seek to address. The problem of extending their appeal to the younger generations of the Asian and Greek communities appears to be common among the media examined. In all cases, developing youth oriented programmes appears to be the answer so far. The Greek media, have also emphasised the need to educate younger members of the Greek community, while LGR has been frustrated by its inability to convince the Radio Authority to allow it to increase its English Language output in order to reach more of this audience. In all cases, a dynamic notion of community is in evidence: community that comprises members of different generations with different expectations, needs and tastes not necessarily linked through language. and community whose cultural hybridity requires recognition. As the case of LGR indicates, this notion is not accepted by the Radio Authority which prefers a closed and static definition of the Greek community as essentially monolingual, whose culture does not evolve and can be clearly distinguished from British or mainstream culture.

It is also clear that the linguistic and cultural, and even political diversity of the Asian community has been an issue which has been seriously considered by Sunrise Radio and Asianet, and to a lesser extent by LGR and Hellenic TV. Indeed, both the Asian and Greek communities of the UK are marked by diversity as the former encompasses members of different ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic groups, originating from and often associating themselves to several contemporary distinct nation states which, as the case of India and Pakistan indicates have been antagonistic to each other. Although the media examined argue for the specificity and particularity of the communities they seek to serve, they, nevertheless, try to overcome or play down the internal diversity or even fragmentation of these communities. Clearly, the formula of considering the community as a whole but catering for every linguistic, ethnic and religious group within it as it is currently applied does present some problems. Both Sunrise Radio and Asianet have striven to maintain some distance from the problems — or challenges as most of the interview respondents preferred to call them — that this diversity poses. Examples of this are Sunrise Radio's emphasis on its good relations with both the Pakistani and Indian governments, as it is considered as "objective," by both (Sunrise Radio Limited, 1993) or Asianet's reluctance to cover the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of India and Pakistan in a way other than "focusing on the entertainment aspect of it."[16] Similarly, the Greek community of London, is also diverse as it comprises Greeks from Cyprus and Greek from Greece who, to an extent, have formed different social, cultural and political networks and have different concerns. It is clear that this "rift" has affected the ways that the Greek community media have developed and the strategies they have employed in their operation. In these cases, it seems that commercial -and possibly political imperatives - have forced the ethnic community media in question not to address this diversity in a creative and stimulating manner and to adopt themselves a safer static definition of the communities they serve.

The emergence of ethnic community media in the UK within a climate of commercialism seems to be part of a more general trend as

> *capital has fallen in love with difference; advertising thrives on selling us things that will enhance our uniqueness and individuality. .... From World Music to exotic holidays in Third-World locations, ethnic tv dinners to Peruvian knitted hats, cultural difference sells* (Rutherford 1990, 11).

Indeed, it has been evident that at least some of the media examined in this paper, and, indeed, the Radio Authority and the previous UK government have employed the idiom of consumer choice in their discourse and it is admittedly clear that the ethnic minority media sector is a potentially profitable one as ethnic minority communities can in fact be considered to be niche markets with considerable potential. Although there seems to be a new awareness of the problems and issues raised by the contemporary processes of discovery/imagination of cultural difference, the existing evocation of national, ethnic or cultural community rights to self-expression has to be linked to serious rethinking of the role of difference within contemporary societies.

The process of emergence of minority media in the UK during the 1990s and indeed, some of the media examined in this paper, indicate that dialogue within (and between ethnic communities and other social groups) remains at best a distant goal as issues of recognition (as far as ethnic communities are concerned) and competitiveness, consolidation and survival (as far as the ethnic community media themselves are concerned) seem to occupy centre stage at the moment. Clearly, there are benefits associated with the emergence of ethnic community media, notably, the potential these have to create and increase a sense of diasporic awareness among members of the ethnic community and play a part in the formation of solidarities based on it, the opening of avenues for communication and negotiation specific and accessible to members of the ethnic community. Equally clearly, however, are the shortcomings of subjugating the community dimension of ethnic community media to the commercial imperatives that prevail in the current independent media sector in the UK. Identity politics presents a challenge in our understanding and realising citizenship today. The articulation of the politics of recognition in contemporary concepts of citizenship is by no means sufficient; recognition of difference might open avenues for communication and negotiation, but might also obstruct any attempts of the sort by offering the security and warmth of cultural autism and separatism. The realisation of citizenship rests upon the creation and maintenance of accessible public spaces where strangers meet, engage in processes of self-definition and representation, hear, attempt to understand by translating, deliberate and forge solidarities on the basis of shared values and goals. The realisation of citizenship therefore rests upon the encouragement of a culture of communication and the articulation to it of an ethics of solidarity and ethnic community media can certainly play a role to this effect.

Notes:

1. I am using the term "migrant" here to refer not only to migrants themselves but descendants of migrants who are citizens of the countries of settlement of their parents or progenitors.

2. Hannerz considers cosmopolitanism as "a state of mind and a mode of managing meaning" in the context of globalisation (1990, 238).

3. Although, all claim to varying degrees that they are local media and premised upon local communities.

4. The BBC is mainly funded through the revenue from television licensing, while the independent sector's revenue is largely derived from advertising and related activities.

5. For research on television and ethnic minorities (however, mainly focusing on aspects of representation and not expression) of minority communities see ITC 1996, and ITC (no date).

6. Interview with Seema Hussain, Asianet Researcher (25/9/97).

7. Interview with Seema Hussain, Asianet Researcher (25/9/97).

8. Interview with Graham Pitman, Asianet Marketing Director (6/10/97). Asianet appears to have had some success to this effect as research indicates Asianet is more popular among Asian youth than its main rival Zee TV.

9. Interview with Graham Pitman, Asianet Marketing Director (6/10/97).

10. Interview with C. Harmandas (4/7/97).

11. Interview with C. Harmandas (4/7/97).

12. Kafeneio is the Greek word for coffee-shop, but refers in fact to a locus of social interaction, a meeting place where people (usually males) drink together, play cards and socialise. Watching television is indeed one of the past times of those who frequent a kafeneio.

13. Interviews with Miroula Fellas (11/9/97) and Andy Konstantinou (11/9/97).

14. Interview with Miroula Fellas (11/9/97).

15. Interviews with Miroula Fellas (11/9/97) and Andy Konstantinou (11/9/97).

16. Interview with Seema Hussain, Asianet Researcher (25/9/97).

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