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### **The echoes of grassroots media practices in Greece: a sociological approach**

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***THE ECHOES OF GRASSROOTS MEDIA PRACTICES IN GREECE:  
A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH***

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(Scholar of Alexander Onassis Public Benefit Foundation 2001-2004)

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## *Abstract*

This thesis probes into grassroots media projects by addressing them in a broad theoretical framework that evaluates such projects in macro terms, along the interplay between 'public sphere' and 'civil society', as well as in micro terms, across the 'lived experience' of their practice, on the grounds of the expression and enactment of 'citizenship' correspondingly. From this perspective, the study researches media projects that are implemented 'on the margins' in Greece, drawing both on their contribution to and intervention in the public and political life. By evaluating these projects in a resonant context the study prioritizes the 'agents', citizens/social groups, who are engaged in their practice.

Using empirical evidence from fieldwork conducted in Greece in 2003 involving: in-depth interviews with people engaged (forty four participants) in the practice of diverse, heterogeneous media projects – one newspaper, two periodicals, three pirate radio stations and three Internet sites – this thesis evaluates the limits and the challenges of the practice of such projects in terms of their contribution to the public sphere and their intervention in the sphere of 'the political'. It argues that while such projects constitute a realm for the representation of various social domains, collectives/social groups and their discourses, as well as, for their intervention in civic life, at the same time their practice is entrapped in traditional 'politics' that deter the expansion of these projects, and negate the potential their practice encompasses for the constitution of 'the political' in the realm of everyday life as well.

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## INTRODUCTION

The present study explores diverse, heterogeneous grassroots media experiments, running in press, radio, and Internet, in Greece. The absence of any relevant research on the field in the particular context, along with the development of dynamic theoretical approaches on grassroots media practices, have been great challenges for the researcher.

The study addresses its research interest – the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of the implementation of grassroots media projects in Greece – into a broader theoretical framework. This framework concerns the evaluation of such projects in the macro level, in terms of the interplay between public sphere and civil society, as well as in the micro level, in terms of their ‘lived experience’. From this perspective, the study probes into grassroots media projects in Greece critically understanding their practice and role in relation to the public and political sphere.

What makes such a study important in the specific context is not only the absence of any research on grassroots media practices, but also the fact that it addresses such a research into a new theoretical framework, beyond the developed discussion on Greek political culture and its hegemonic nature within which most of the communication studies have been articulated. In the relevant literature, the universes of political discourse and action have been predominantly approached in terms of the conventional public and political sphere, and specifically along the lines of the dominant political parties and the mass media. On the other hand, forms of political discourse and action, their practices, and the social domains they are enacted into, which take place ‘on the margins’ of the public and political sphere, have been regarded only in terms of their exclusion. The present study highlights another area in the research field, that of the richness of diverse fragmented, heterogeneous media projects, which various social actors run, evaluating them in their own terms. From this perspective, the research does not begin from a common conception of what is ‘wrong’ in the projects (fragmented, ‘on the margins’), but it has as an aim to contribute to the identification of what is going on through the projects, and evaluate their practice within the specific context of their implementation.

In the context of a radical theoretical framework that evaluates the aspect of the active expression and enactment of citizenship through the practice of such projects, this study addresses the following research question: *Do grassroots media practices contribute to, and intervene in, the public and political sphere in Greece?* Being interested in

generating data concerning the engagement of people in media experiments, this study employs in-depth interviews as the main research method. Hence, by evaluating the practice of these projects, which are originated from ‘below,’ in a resonant context that prioritizes the ‘agents’, the study highlights both the challenges and the limits of them, in relation to the context of their implementation.

The study has been divided in three parts. The first one consists of two chapters that address the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 1 draws on a number of approaches that call forth a vital “public-mediated-space” at the very heart of the democratic process, constituting the “double democratization of public sphere and civil society” on the grounds of citizenship. Such a discussion evaluates citizenship in terms of the representation and expression of diverse civic actors (movements, groups, citizens), their activities, and their discourses in the public and political sphere.

Chapter 2, makes the ‘historiography’ of a variety of democratic media projects, across their different context (alternative, radical, participatory, community, civic, citizens’ media), evaluating finally people’s ‘lived experience’ of being engaged in their practice as an aspect of the active nature of citizenship.

The second part introduces the specific area of the research – Greece – both in terms of the respective literature on the communication field, and in empirical terms by sketching the mediascape.

Chapter 3, draws on the lines of the Greek literature on communication studies – the categories its theorizing uses to explore the formal public and political sphere and the exclusion of other discourses from it – addressing the need to encompass the neglected realm of the ‘margins’ and their communication practices.

Chapter 4 draws both historically and normatively on Greek mediascape pointing out its distinctive characteristics across the fields of mass media, local/regional media, as well as of grassroots media.



Part three concerns the research fieldwork – its planning, the case studies the research employs; the actual exploration of these projects in relation to the particular context of their implementation; and, the evaluation of their practice along with the theoretical sketches of the study.

Chapter 5 sets the methodological context of the research; the choices it made, the methods of data gathering, and the forms of data analysis in planning and executing the research.

Chapter 6 draws on the accounts/experiences of people engaged in the practice of the experiments, generating knowledge and explanations concerning diverse grassroots media practices in Greece, indicating their challenges and limits in relation to the public and political sphere in Greece.

Chapter 7 develops an overall discussion, evaluating the findings concerning the practice of grassroots media practices in Greece along the lines of its theoretical framework, making further conclusions.

Epilogue, highlights issues for further research that the present study on grassroots media practices raises in the empirical as well as in the theoretical field.

# *PART I*

## CHAPTER 1

### *Public sphere-civil society-citizenship and media*

The present chapter probes into the concepts of public sphere, civil society, and citizenship in historical and normative terms. Diverse perspectives on these concepts have respectively highlighted different aspects of their realms, in regards to different ‘publics’, across the distinction between ‘economy’ and the ‘state’, and along the very identity of the ‘agent’, in relation to a range of rights (individual – community). The study draws on the lines of approaches that evaluate the interplay between public sphere and civil society as a discursive space for the realization of the democratic process. Moreover, this interplay between public sphere and civil society is evaluated along with the enhancement and enrichment of the realm of citizenry, in terms of the constitution of citizenship as a form of identity on the grounds of ‘difference’ and ‘agency’.

By focusing then on media the study draws on various perspectives that have evaluated their role in this context as conveyors of ‘public sphere’, in relation to the fulfilment of the very principles of public/democratic communication, either in a universal or in a diversity model. Drawing on approaches that address a dynamic interface between public sphere and civil society in terms of the representation and participation of different ‘publics’ both through and within media, taking thus into account the plurality of small communicative practices, the study evaluates media practices that are implemented in the “nooks and crannies of civil society” in relation to their contribution to, and intervention in, the public and political sphere.

## 1.1 Public space

The conception of ‘public space’ has a central place in the context of political theory as far as it concerns the realization of democratic process. In the macro-level, ‘public space’ has been historically constituted as a realm in terms of the dichotomy between state and household/economy; while in the micro-level it has been constituted along the lines of the public – private polarity.

In ancient Greece the distinction between the *polis* (city-state) and the *oikos* (household) defined the ‘public’ and ‘private’ realms of life correspondingly. The *polis* was the place where the condition of being and acting as ‘the public’ was realised. It is in terms of the “agonistic space” of *polis* where Arendt (1958/1989) evaluates the public space of politics. On the other hand, Arendt critically describes the “rise of the social”, the institutional emancipation of economic processes from the “shadowy realm of the household” and their transformation into public matters, in the era of modernity. A new hybrid realm, what Arendt calls “society” emerged between the political state (public) and the household (private). “Arendt sees in this process the occluding of the political by the social and the transformation of the public space of politics into a pseudospace of interaction in which individuals no longer ‘act’ but ‘merely behave’ as economic producers, consumers and urban city dwellers” (Benhabib, 1996a: 75). It is the principles of moral homogeneity and political equality, on which Greek *polis* had been constituted (though in exclusive terms), that the “rise of social” undermines. As a result, the agonistic character of the ‘political public space’, which is grounded on the common concern for the political association (*res publica*), is challenged by the expansion/proliferation of public arena(s). It is along these lines that the “republican model” of democracy has been sketched, which views “politics as the articulation of a ‘common good’, of a substantive vision of the ethical life of a community” (Benhabib, 1996b: 6). From the perspective of the civic republican tradition, the constitution of the political is conceptualised in the context of a unique constitutive space (Mouffe, 1993: 20). Accordingly, it is the principles of equality, universalism, participation, and the creation of solidarity among citizens that the republican tradition prioritizes in the discussion about the constitution of a vital public (political) space for the practice of the democratic process.

In contrast to the “republican virtue”, where the constitution of ‘public space’ has been sketched in terms of the ‘participatory’ model of Athenian *polis*, the category of public

space has been evaluated in the liberal approach along the lines of representative democracy of the modern large-scale societies, in relation to the divergent interests among private persons. In the classical liberal theory, the 'public space' is conceptualised as a "public forum"; it is "the space between government and society in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state: formal control through the election of governments and informal control through the pressure of public opinion" (Curran, 1991: 29). In the context of this 'public forum' the function of media is central. According to Mills (quoted in Peters, 1993: 550), "the press, and even the newspaper press, [is] the real equivalent, though not in all aspects the adequate one, of the Pnyx and the Forum". Moreover, the role of the press as the conveyor of 'public forum', which is realized in terms of the principles of publicity and public opinion, correspondingly, is facilitated in the place of the free market. Overall, the principal democratic roles of media in the liberal framework include media acting, as a "public watchdog" – ensuring the ideal of freedom from state control and coercion; as an "agency of information and debate" – facilitating the function of democracy; and, as the "voice of people" – representing people to authority in the name of 'public opinion' (Curran, 2000: 120-134). Namely, the 'public space' in liberal tradition is not formed according to the principle of equality of participation but that of equality of representation. As it concerns the particularities that the freedom of individuals presupposes, they are integrated into a unique space under the universal principle of justice (Mouffe, 2000: 94). Nevertheless, the constitution of 'public space' is articulated here, though from a different position than that of republican tradition, within the formal political domain exclusively, perpetuating a distinction between the public and private realm.

## 1.2 *Public sphere*

In terms of a procedural-deliberative view of democratic politics, the concept of 'public space' has been assessed in historical as well as in normative terms in Habermas's (1962/1989) category of 'public sphere'. The concept of public sphere represents a specific evaluation of the concept of 'public space', which is originated in the context of British, French and German developments in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, promoting a different understanding of the very idea of *publicness*. The specific characteristics of the category of public sphere are drawn on its two-sided constitution,

concerning simultaneously “the quality or form of rational-critical discourse and the quantity of, or openness to, popular participation” (Calhoun, 1996: 4). It is within the context of the bourgeois society that both of these conditions are satisfied, producing a certain form of publicness (*bourgeois public sphere*). Both of the principles of ‘publicity’ and ‘public opinion’ are constituted and realised correspondingly within the context that privileged private citizens set; issues of public concern are discussed in a free, rational way through personal interaction that takes place in public settings (coffee houses, literacy clubs), which is mediated by the press, forming a critical public.

From this perspective, the category of public sphere conceptualizes the ‘public space’ along the lines of the ‘state – economy’ polarity. “The model of the bourgeois public sphere presupposed strict separation of the public from the private realm in such a way that public sphere, made up of private people gathered as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state, was itself considered part of the private realm” (Habermas, 1989: 175-176, quoted also in Calhoun, 1996: 21). The very dichotomy here between ‘public’ and ‘private’ encompasses an equation of intimate sphere and private life, of family and economic society. Moreover, this realm consists of autonomous, relatively equal persons who in public discourse might address the general or public interest; as such, the public interest is located here in advance of public life – it is actually the private activities that form persons for public life, providing their motivations (Calhoun, 1996: 21, 24, 35). From this perspective, the construction of *res publica* is articulated here, drawing on Habermas’s (1981/1987) distinction between ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’, in moral terms, within the realm of private life; this ‘morality’ produces us as reasonable and accountable social beings, facilitating the conditions of societal interaction.

Moreover, the “transformation of the public sphere” is conceptualised by Habermas in terms of the refeudalization of society. At first place, state penetrated the private realm; “the welfare state fused state and society together, making the privacy of citizens and the public authority of the state collaborators instead of antagonists” (Peters, 1993: 558). The interlocking of state and society transformed the place of the politically relevant exercise and equilibration of power towards the direct negotiation between the private bureaucracies, special-interest associations, parties, and public administration (Habermas, 1989: 176). Furthermore, this intervention encompassed the expansion of the realm of public sphere through the articulation of new interests. “[T]he notion of an objective general interest was replaced, even ideally, with one of a fairly negotiated compromise among interests. The

functioning of the public sphere thus shifted from rational-critical debate to negotiation” (Calhoun, 1996: 22). This process of negotiation, being articulated in terms of interest groups that demanded ‘social rights’ – the services or their protection of the state – promoted the direct intervention of the state (ibid).

In addition, the assumption of public power by private organizations undermined the equation between the intimate sphere and private life, promoting in contrast the division between family and economic society. Such a process entailed the depoliticization of the public sphere in terms of its discourse as well. The mutual character of public discourse was replaced by a passive culture of consumption. “Rational-critical debate had a tendency to be replaced by consumption and the web of public communication unravelled into acts of individuated reception, however uniform in mode” (Habermas, 1989: 161). Central to this transition from a “culture-debating to a culture-consuming public” is the function of mass media. Their dominance within the realm of public sphere is related to the prioritisation of the economic role of mass media, to produce audiences for advertisers, over their civic one, to provide information for public debate. From this perspective, the public sphere becomes “an arena for competitive claims to power (over market share, political loyalty, votes, and so on)” (Peters, 1993: 560). This process undermines the status of media as conveyors of public sphere that facilitate a genuine public debate. “The media are used to create occasions for consumers to identify with the public positions or personas of others. All this amounts to the return of a version of representative publicity, to which the public responds by acclamation, or the withholding of acclamation, rather than critical discourse” (Calhoun, 1996: 26).

Overall, it is in the context of the social welfare state of mass democracy and advanced industrial capitalism that Habermas puts the transformation of public sphere (Dahlgren, 1995: 8). The blurring of the distinction between public and private realms through the corporate organization of public life and the commodification of culture traced the decline of the ideal of ‘bourgeois public sphere’.

### *1.2.1 Beyond the ‘bourgeois public sphere’*

The critique of *‘The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere’* has raised questions in terms of both the historical and the normative aspects of ‘public sphere’. By

being constituted historically in the specific bourgeois context the category of public sphere has excluded other discourses from being a mode of formation of different publics (Eley, 1996). Consequently, the lack of attention to different 'publics' – according to Habermas (1989: xviii), the plebeian public sphere is suppressed in the historical process – has omitted the discursive nature of the space between state and economy ('civil society').

[I]mportant parts of the struggle to establish some of the features Habermas describes as integral to bourgeois publicity, like freedom of the press, in fact were carried out largely by activists in the so-called plebeian public sphere. The hegemony of bourgeois publicity was always incomplete and exercised within a field constituted partly by its relation to other insurgent discourses (Calhoun, 1996: 39).

Thus, the category of public sphere has been re-constituted in order to include 'publics' that the original constitution of public sphere, being confined to the bourgeois context, had not taken into account. In this context, different theoretical approaches, focusing on various 'discourses', have contributed to the evaluation of public sphere beyond its ideal constitution as a single one in liberal terms. The work of Negt and Kluge (1972/1993) questions the singularity and homogeneity of the model of bourgeois public sphere by highlighting a wider realm of public sphere activity that encompasses various social sites of production and reproduction; it is there where new "public spheres of production" mediate the private sphere of individual. In this context, Negt and Kluge evaluate the possibility of the constitution of a counter, proletarian, public sphere on the grounds of the 'experience', though exclusively in terms of the "experiential levels" of the reconstruction of collective consciousness along with a critique on commodity production. From another perspective, that of thematizing the 'difference' in general, Fraser (1996) adopts a pluralistic approach. Prominent is here the argument that a single, comprehensive, overarching public sphere fails to accommodate the contestation among a plurality of competing publics within the society. In contrast, a single, comprehensive public sphere tends to deepen, within its processes, the chasm between dominant and subordinates groups.

In that case, members of subordinated groups have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives and strategies. They would have no venues to undertake communicative process that were not, as it were, under the supervision of dominant groups. In this situation they would be less likely than otherwise "to find the right voice or words to express their thoughts" and more likely than otherwise to "keep their wants inchoate". This



would render them less able than otherwise to articulate and defend their interests in the comprehensive public sphere (Fraser, 1996: 123).

At first, Fraser evaluates the case of subordinate social groups that respond to their exclusion within dominant publics by constituting alternative ones – “subaltern counterpublics”. The proliferation of subaltern counterpublics challenges the widening of the discursive space; “they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (ibid). In addition, Fraser considers the relative merits of multiple publics versus a single ‘public’ beyond the realm of the “stratified societies”, in the hypothetical terms of an “egalitarian, multicultural society” too. The multiplicity of ‘publics’ here, in a society without classes, and without gender or racial divisions of labour, is justified in terms of the diversity of identities and cultural styles. “[P]ublic spheres are not only arenas for the formation of discursive opinion; in addition, they are arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities” (ibid: 125). In conclusion, such an approach questions the universal character of a single public sphere within, and beyond, the societal framework of modern societies, re-constituting the category of public sphere in plural terms, as the setting of the articulation of a variety of ideological and cultural differences, and of the negotiation or contestation among a variety of ‘publics’.

Further approaches have addressed the re-constitution of the public sphere in terms of a plurality of ‘publics’ across the nexuses of ‘difference’ and ‘identity’. In terms of gender, the feminist critique of ‘bourgeois public sphere’ has pointed out also the exclusive nature of bourgeois public sphere. The fundamental division between the private and public realm, along with the patriarchal character of the conjugal family that constituted the core of bourgeois society’s private sphere, has excluded women from being equal, active social actors and participants in the formation of political opinion and will. The idealization of the bourgeois-patriarchal public sphere as the primary and unique space for the constitution of the ‘public’ is challenged by the historiography of Ryan (1996) that evaluates a variety of ways, being articulated within as well as beyond the bourgeois context, through which women constructed their access to public life. Following the point of view of scholars of the revisionist historiography, Fraser concludes that “the view that women were excluded from the public sphere turns out to be ideological; it rests on a class-and gender-biased notion of

publicity, one which accepts at face value the bourgeois public's claim to be *the public*" (Fraser, 1996: 116, emphasis in the original).

Moreover, the feminist criticism of bourgeois public sphere and its very public-private dichotomy goes beyond a gendered articulation of the concept of 'public sphere', evaluating also the issue of 'identity' and its formation that challenges the very essence of the category of bourgeois public sphere, that of public deliberation. Public deliberation is rooted in Habermas's conceptualisation of the 'archaeology' of the private realm, which means it is addressed independently to public life. It is this principal construction of identities, and constitution of interests, beyond public life, which is criticised here. Drawing on the lines of Fraser's approach Calhoun states that

public deliberation need not be understood as simply *about* an already established common good; it may be even more basically an occasion for the clarification (and I would add constitution) of interests. ... [The feminist critique] points up that the public/private dichotomy itself imposes a neutralizing logic on differential identity by establishing qualification for publicness as a matter of abstraction from private identity ... Difference may be "bracketed" or tolerated; it is hard on Habermas's account to see the need for it to be positively thematized (Calhoun, 1996: 35, emphasis in the original).

Lastly, the evaluation of public sphere along the lines of 'identity' has also challenged the reconstitution of the fundamental characteristic of bourgeois public sphere, that of 'publicity'. Such a perspective sets the constitution of publicity beyond the representations of an overall public sphere that are built in the name of 'public opinion', which is supposed to be held by a concrete 'public'. By addressing the necessity of the "moment of special imaginary", Warner points out:

The mediating rhetorical dimension of a public context must be built into each individual's relation to it, as a meaningful reference point against which something could be grasped as information, discussion, will formation. To ask about the relation between democracy and the rhetorical forms of publicity, we would have to consider how the public dimension of discourse can come about differently in different contexts of mediation, from official to mass-cultural or subcultural (Warner, 1996: 379).

To conclude, the conceptualisation of public space in terms of Habermas's 'public sphere' concept has evaluated the category of public sphere, through the critique on its

historical and normative foundations, as a framework for the articulation of different discourses. The issues of ‘difference’ and its entitlement in multiple ‘publics’, as well as, that of identity and the discursive spaces of its construction, have enriched the field. “The recovery and extension of a strong normative idea of publicness is very much on the current agenda” (Calhoun, 1996: 42). This discussion has also re-evaluated the terrain of ‘civil society’, promoting at the same time the dialectic relationship between the public sphere and civil society.

### 1.3 *Civil society*

The concept of ‘civil society’ has primarily been unfolded, theoretically and analytically, within Hegel’s synthesis; a theoretical position that fundamentally inspired the most important later (twentieth-century) analyses of civil society. In that scheme, civil society is constituted in terms of the levels of legality, plurality and association, and publicity; then, it is linked with state in terms of mediation and interpretation (Cohen and Arato, 1992: xiv). Both of these aspects of Hegel’s framework have constituted the principal categories of civil society. Firstly, the articulation of the discourse concerning the relation between state and civil society in dialectical terms (*thesis – antithesis*) has addressed the interface between these two realms; civil society is the *antithesis* of the state (“antistate”), but at the same time, in the long-run, a moment in the process of the formation of the state (Splichal, Calabrese and Sparks, 1994: 6-7). Moreover, civil society, being associated exclusively with public life, opposite to family and domestic life, includes economy as one of its levels; “[t]he system of needs is the first level of civil society” (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 97). It is these dimensions of Hegel’s scheme, “statism” and “economism”, which have provided the terrain for the articulation of subsequent theoretical approaches on civil society.

From the perspective of Marxist tradition, civil society, being constituted within the context of “economic reductionism” (that of class structure), has been conceptualised in a negative form. “[C]ivil society precedes and forms the (economic) base of the state, but the latter has the same character in that it represents the interests of the ruling class, mainly by political and ideological means” (Splichal, Calabrese and Sparks, 1994: 6). In this context, the Hegelian conception of civil society – systems of needs, rights, and associations – has

been reduced to the “anatomy of political economy” (Arato, 1989: 135). Since civil society forms the economic base of modern capitalist state it potentially provides the battling ground for “withering away of the state”.

In the liberal political theory, civil society is constituted in accordance with the hypothesis on plurality, as it is conceptualised in individualistic terms. The institutionalisation of public spaces within civil society is sketched along the lines of rights (speech, assembly, association), and their defence towards the violence of legislation. The protection of individual rights against the democratic polity is realised through the political act of ‘civil disobedience’, which forms the boundaries between state and civil society. “Both Rawls and Dworkin understand civil disobedience as involving actions contrary to the law within the limits of fidelity to the law” (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 569). Thus, classical liberal theory addresses civil society in political terms; yet this approach evaluates a sort of political field that is exclusively related to the government and legislation. As a result, “[liberalism] has tended to operate with a simplistic public/private or state/society dichotomy which causes it to neglect ... the ‘politics of civil society’” (Adamson, 1987/8: 320).

In a functionalistic scheme, Gramsci, drawing on Hegel’s lines of civil society, introduces a tripartite model differentiating civil society from both economy and the state. Thus, by developing civil society in terms of this twofold “declaration of independence”, Gramsci evaluates the associational and cultural dimension of civil society (modern churches, unions, cultural institutions, clubs, neighbourhood associations, and especially political parties). However, while Gramsci’s approach avoids economic and political reductionism, it construes the institutions of civil society in a one dimensional-way. “Although autonomous, the associational forms (types of political parties and unions), cultural institutions and values of civil society are precisely those most adequate to reproducing bourgeois hegemony and manufacturing consent on the part of all social strata. They are, in short, not dualistic but thoroughly bourgeois” (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 151). In addition, civil society has been evaluated, through the prism of the revolutionary project of the total replacement of one form of society by another, as the ground for building new institutions of associational and cultural life, in terms of setting a counter-balance to the hegemony of the bourgeois society; in this context, a proletarian counter hegemony could question and replace the bourgeois one. Yet, rather than evaluating the mediating role of

civil society as being an end itself, such an approach addresses it as a means for its very overcoming.

Gramsci's strategic interest in civil society is wholly opportunistic. It envisages a future classless 'regulated society', and it therefore draws the political conclusion that civil society is a temporary and historically disposable arrangement. Gramsci's political strategy is driven by the reverie of abolishing civil society by means of civil society (Keane, 1998: 16).

Thus, Gramsci's evaluation of civil society, being exclusively articulated in terms of its functional role in the production of hegemony, as well as of counter hegemony, does not take into account another aspect of the realm of civil society; the fact that its inputs constitute forms of social self-government that "have value in and of themselves".

### *1.3.1 ... and 'lifeworld'*

The work of Cohen and Arato (1992), following the three part model of Gramsci, and drawing on Habermas's theory of public sphere (1962/1989), as well as, on, albeit critically, his later theory (1981/1987) on communicative action, evaluate the interplay and the structural interrelations among civil society, economy and the state. Firstly, Cohen and Arato probe into the dualistic distinction between 'system' and 'lifeworld' that appears to be Habermas's version for state – civil society duality. According to Habermas, modernity encompasses a differentiation between system and lifeworld, which is implemented in the polarity of two types of rationality. On the one hand, the twofold 'system' of state and market embodies 'strategic rationality', which means that it is instrumental and goal-orientated. On the other hand, 'lifeworld', being entitled in face-to-face encounters, embodies 'communicative rationality', which fosters the conditions of intersubjectivity. It is in terms of the replacement of communicative rationality by the steering mechanisms of strategic rationality that Habermas puts the colonisation of 'lifeworld' by the 'system' (Baxter, 1987).

Cohen and Arato, based on this scheme between system and lifeworld, expand the internal realm of each category, evaluating at the same time a more complex set of relations between them. By underscoring the duality of the 'system', state administration and market,

and introducing the duality of ‘lifeworld’, public sphere and family, Cohen and Arato evaluate both their public and private dimensions.<sup>1</sup>

[T]his framework over dualistic models of state and civil society ... allows a clarification of the structural interrelations among civil society, economy, and state by severing the ideological one-to-one correlation of civil society with the private sphere and of the state with public sphere. The two sets of public and private dichotomies, one at the level of subsystems (state/economy) and one at the level of civil society (public sphere/family), allow a distinction between two meanings of privatization and “publicization” (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 430).

From this perspective, Cohen and Arato reconstruct civil society, pinpointing the exact locus of it within the realm of lifeworld. By differentiating and clarifying two distinct levels of Habermas’s concept of lifeworld, the cultural-linguistic background (the source of the underlying unity of the whole lifeworld complex) and the “institutional-sociological” components of lifeworld, they evaluate the realm of civil society in terms of its structural components.

It is here, on the institutional level of the lifeworld, that one can root a hermeneutically accessible, because socially integrated, concept of civil society. This concept would include all of the institutions and associational forms that require communicative interaction for their reproduction and that rely primarily on processes of social integration for coordinating action within their boundaries (ibid: 429).

Consequently, Cohen and Arato address the structural components of lifeworld – culture, society and personality in Habermas’s terms – from a sociological perspective, evaluating these components, each of which is linked to the resources of meaning, solidarity, and personal competence, in the context of societal integration. Such a perspective prioritises three institutional complexes: “institutions of socialization”, “social groups and associations”, and “institutions of culture” (ibid: 703). From this point of view, civil society is institutionally composed of: the intimate sphere (especially the family); the sphere of

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen and Arato (1992: 431) sketch a four-cell table:

	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>
<i>System</i>	political subsystem or “state”	economic subsystem
<i>Lifeworld</i>	public sphere	private sphere

associations (in particular, voluntary associations); social movements (which point to its political relevance); and the many forms of public communication (Dahlgren, 1995: 127).

In this context, the arena of social movements takes on special significance. Social movements have been constituted as the dynamic element in the discursive space between lifeworld and system. As such, collective action and its diverse forms have been evaluated by different theoretical approaches. Cohen and Arato (1992: 493-523) highlight two overall theoretical paradigms: the “recourse mobilization paradigm” points out the strategic role of social movements in terms of political inclusion (in the polity), on the one hand; and, the “identity orientated paradigm” stresses specifically identity, norms, cultural modes and associational forms articulated by the most innovative actors themselves on the other hand. However, both of these aspects are, according to Cohen and Arato, compatible in terms of the articulation of the institutionalised dimension of lifeworld as civil society, evaluating the double political task of new social movements. This task consists of “the acquisition of influence by publics, associations, and organizations on political society, and the institutionalisation of their gains (new identities, autonomous egalitarian associational forms, democratised institutions) within the lifeworld” (ibid: 555-556). Nevertheless, according to Keane (1998), the evaluation of lifeworld in public terms is literally drawn here within the realm of the “political society”. Namely, public spheres are “somehow tied by definition to what has been called *political society*: that is, to the zone of social life narrowly wedged between the world of power and money (state/economy) and the prepolitical group associations of civil society” (Keane, 1998: 182, emphasis in the original).

Beyond the theoretical framework of the “lifeworld – system” scheme, Melucci (1989) points out both aspects of mobilization and identity in terms of the evaluation of social movements as distinct public spaces.

Inasmuch public spaces are situated between the levels of political power and decision-making and the networks of everyday life, they are structurally ambivalent: they express the double meaning of the terms representation and participation. Representation means the possibility of presenting interests and demands; but it also means remaining different and never being heard entirely. Participation also has a double meaning. It means both taking part, that is, acting so as to promote the interests and the needs of an actor as well as belonging to a system, identifying with the ‘general interests’ of the community (Melucci, 1989: 173-174).

The realm of social movements, which encompasses a variety of networks of small groups, organizations, citizens' initiatives, local contacts and friendships submerged in the everyday life patterns of civil society, constitutes according to Keane (1998: 172), laboratories that "function as public spaces in which the elements of everyday life are mixed, remixed, developed and tested". The social actors of these movements are according to Melucci (1989), the "nomads of the present". "They focus upon the present, wherein they practice the future social changes they seek, and their organizational means are therefore valued as ends in themselves" (Keane, 1998: 171).

Nonetheless, civil society has constituted, either in narrow or wider terms, the social terrain for the expansion of 'public space'. Dahlgren, drawing on the lines of Held's (1989) evaluation of the need for a "double democratisation" of the state and civil society, addresses the interplay between public sphere and civil society as a discursive space for the realisation of the democratic process; each one constitutes the conditions for the other's democratisation. Dahlgren draws this struggle on two fronts as follows: "[a] 'favorable organization of civil society', the site of everyday interaction, in other words, is an essential prerequisite for a viable public sphere. At the same time, a democratically functioning public sphere can give shape to civil society" (Dahlgren, 1995: 131).

#### *1.4 Citizenship*

In the space of the inseparable relationship between public sphere and civil society, another fundamental aspect of the democratic process, that of citizenship, has been re-evaluated too.

In the context of political theory/philosophy, the concept of citizenship has been primarily constituted in the name of liberal and civic republican traditions, and their view of democracy, giving priority either to the individual, or to the society, correspondingly. On the one hand, in liberal terms, the notion of citizenship is drawn on the lines of an atomised view of society which justifies citizenry on the grounds of the 'individual', treated in abstract terms, beyond its social and cultural preconditions. It is the free pursuing of individual's self-interests in just terms that citizenship presupposes and promotes. "According to that liberal view, citizenship is the capacity for each person to form, revise and rationally pursue his/her definition of the good. Citizens are seen as using their rights to



promote their self-interests within certain constraints imposed by the exigency to respect the rights of others” (Mouffe, 1992: 226). As such, citizenship is constituted here in advance along the diverse interests of the individuals; individuals enter a community in order to promote these interests. On the other hand, in civic republican terms, it is the sense of community, a community constitutive of the very identity of individuals, that the concept of citizenship encompasses and privileges. According to Walzer (1992) the communitarian approach addresses citizenship as ‘moral agency’; “to live well is to be politically active, working with our fellow citizens, collectively determining our common destiny – not for the sake of this or that determination but for the work itself, in which our highest capacities as rational and moral agents find expression” (Walzer 1992: 91). In contrast to the liberal tradition, the individual here is subjected socially and culturally to the community, which is organized around shared moral values; thus, it is the notion of public/common good, prior to and independent of individual desires and interests, that communitarian tradition prioritises in terms of the very constitution of citizenship (Mouffe, 1992: 226, 230).

In addition, diverse applications of the ideal of citizenship have been addressed along the lines of the dichotomy between liberal and civic republican political thinking, in terms of the scope of ‘welfare state’. From a pluralist liberal perspective, Marshall (1950), elaborating into the concept of citizenship points out three dimensions of it, which incorporate a range of rights correspondingly: “civil citizenship” – legal rights that protect the individual’s freedom; “political citizenship” – rights of individuals to participate in politics; “social citizenship” – rights related to minimal economic security and welfare. According to Mouffe, such a view highlights the need of the “extension of the sphere of rights in order to include groups hitherto excluded” but it ignores the limits and the tensions of such a process – “that some existing rights have been constituted on the very exclusion or subordination of the rights of other categories” (Mouffe, 1992: 236). Nevertheless, apart from the questions that this constitution of citizenship raises it points out diverse terrains of application for citizenship. Such a pluralistic understanding of citizenship encompasses a variety of legal, political rights as well as social requisites needed in order for individuals to be represented and participate within society. Thus, another important parameter of the expression of citizenship, of the very belonging of individuals in the community they live, is also a range of social entitlements, as they were articulated in terms of a welfare state. In addition, from a communitarian perspective that assumes social pluralism – the case of the ‘participatory’, in contrast to the ‘integrationist’, strand of communitarian thought in

Benhabib's (1992) words – the concept of citizenship has been evaluated in terms of the dimension of agency rather than that of belonging, across the multiple aspects of civil and political community.

Citizenship, which is not intended to encompass the person in his or her entity, is learned by doing, by participating in a multifaceted civil and political society. In this regard, communitarianism tends to see the welfare state as a means for enhancing participation generally – civically, socially, politically, culturally. The participatory view assumes social pluralism; in the modern world no single overwhelming vision of the good can dominate large and heterogeneous societies or serve as the foundation for the political community. Social difference *per se* is not something to be eradicated (Dahlgren, 1995: 139).

Overall, either in the context of the liberal approach that gives priority to the individual, or in that of civic republican approach that prioritizes community, central is an understanding of citizenship which is inclusive in representative as well as in participatory terms.

#### *1.4.1 ... as a form of identity*

Besides, the aspects of 'difference' and 'agency' have constituted the basis of various theoretical positions for challenging the ideal of citizenship, thus expanding and enriching the realm of citizenry.

In regards to the issues of 'difference', post-modern positions question the ideal of a unitary citizenship that promotes a homogeneous citizenry, which is reflected in the exclusion of social differences. Young (1990) from the position of politics of difference argues for the inclusion of different social groups, in terms of their representation and participation in a democratic public, introducing in this way the concept of "differentiated citizenship" which encompasses the recognition of everyone in full citizenship. From this perspective, by evaluating the multiplicity of social groups, their voices, experiences and perceptions, and the need for their recognition and inclusion in a democratic public, Young puts emphasis on particular aspects of the realization of the ideal of citizenship. Such an approach that theorizes citizenship as a form of identity "reconcil[es] the principle of universal needs and interests with the many legitimate forms of difference which do not violate generalized needs. These differences are expressed not least in the associations,

movements and interest groups within civil society” (Dahlgren, 1995: 142). Along the same lines, Phillips (1996) points out also the need for the representation of ‘differences’ in the actual field that ‘political presence’ addresses; “when the politics of ideas is taken into isolation from what I call the politics of presence, it does not deal adequately with the experience of those social groups who by virtue of their race or ethnicity or gender have felt themselves excluded from the democratic process” (Phillips, 1996: 141).

From another perspective, that of radical democracy, Mouffe (1992, 1993) evaluates citizenship as an articulating principle along the lines of the social agent and its multidimensional subjectivity. The view of radical pluralism justifies the principle of diversity within society in terms of the different subject positions of the social agent. Thus, ‘agent’ is conceived not as a unitary subject but “as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions, constructed within specific discourses and always precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those subject positions” (Mouffe, 1993: 71). These subject positions and their interrelations reflect different identities of citizens; citizenship is not constituted here as a legal status, but as a form of identification that is constructed in actual terms. In addition, these identities are performed within a culture of democratic values (*res publica*) that “provides the grammar of citizen’s conduct” (ibid: 72). From this point of view, ‘citizenship’ is neither “one more identity among others” nor the “dominant identity that overrides all the others”, but it is a form of identification that reflects different subject positions of the social agents; as such there are competing forms of identification relating to the different and antagonistic interpretations of *res publica*.

The creation of political identities as radical democratic citizens depends therefore on a collective form of identification among the democratic demands found in a variety of movements: women, workers, black, gay, ecological, as well as in several other ‘new social movements’. This is a conception of citizenship which, through a common identification with radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality, aims at constructing a ‘we’, a chain of equivalence among their demands so as to articulate them through the principle of democratic equivalence (Mouffe, 1992: 236).

Within the framework of the feminist theory citizenship has been constituted as a form of identity too. Probing into Arendt’s work different approaches have understood citizenship in progressive terms, challenging at the same its constitution within the intimate realm as well. d’Entreves re-evaluates Arendt’s conception of politics which is based on the

idea of active citizenship, as it is reflected in the civic engagement and the collective deliberation about all matters affecting the political community. “The practice of citizenship is valued because it enables each citizen to exercise his or her powers of agency, to develop the capacities for judgement, and to attain by concerted action some measure of political efficacy” (d’Entreves, 1992: 146). Moreover, by evaluating citizenship as an identity, feminist theories point out the performative character of its production; it is the agents that create themselves, their identities, including that of ‘citizen’, through their performance. “The key idea here is that citizenship must be conceived of as a continuous activity and a good in itself, not as a momentary engagement (or a socialist revolution) with an eye to a final goal or a societal engagement” (Dietz, 1992: 76-77). Furthermore, although Arendt addresses the ‘processes of becoming’ exclusively within the public realm, feminist theories evaluate the private realm as a social context for identity formation too. Yet, according to Dahlgren, such a perspective does not aim for the total eradication of the boundaries between public and private sphere but to their redefinition. “The point is not to accept these gendered realms as fixed and immutable, but rather to undermine the gendering of public and private and move on to a more visionary and liberating conception of human practices, including those that constitute politics” (Dietz, 1991: 247, quoted in Dahlgren, 1995: 145-146).

Such a re-constitution of the concept of citizenship as a form of identity that prioritises the aspects of ‘difference’ and ‘agency’ through different positions (post-modernism, radical pluralism, feminism) addresses issues that concern the realms of public sphere and civil society, as well as, their interplay. By addressing “difference” instead of “unity” as the ground for the realization of citizenry, and its principles of belonging and participation, the post-modern strand challenges the notion of a universal public space that promotes a homogeneous polity. Moreover, the radical democratic position, drawing on the lines of the multidimensionality of the subject, evaluates the individual and collective identity formation processes that run through the terrain of civil society. Furthermore, the feminist perspective places both private and public realms in the discursive terms of identity formation, expanding the realm of sociocultural interaction, which is the common denominator of public sphere and civil society. Thus, from the perspective of citizenship as a form of identity, the horizon of the concept of citizenship has been expanded in order to include the realm of civic life, as another social terrain where the principles of belonging

and participation have to be satisfied too. As such, the realization of citizenship has not only political but also civil, social and even cultural manifestations.

Moving from the area of the circulation of the idea of citizenship towards its realization in the field of action, its new dimensions promote new arenas for struggle. According to Dahlgren, sociocultural interaction provides the space for the articulation of forms of identity.

Sociocultural interaction has to do not only with encounters in which people act out their roles as citizens and discuss social and political issues. It also has to do with the more fundamental construction of social reality at the intersubjective level. ... Norms, collective frames of reference, even our identities, ultimately derive from sociocultural interaction. In short, it is via such interaction, and the practices it embodies, that we generate our culture (Dahlgren, 1995: x).

By conceptualising citizenship as a form of identity, Dahlgren points out its multiple versions and evaluates its constitution in process, being related to the social practices of agents that are performed in the realms of both civil society and public sphere. Hence, the various forms of citizenship and its diverse practices are constantly framed within these spaces which sociocultural interaction runs through discursively. Speaking in terms of the circulation of ideas, Dahlgren sketches here the double democratisation of public sphere and civil society on the grounds of citizenship.

### *1.5 Re-constituting 'public sphere' in mediated terms*

The discussion concerning the interplay between public sphere and civil society, and its enhancement along the lines of the category of citizenship has also been reflected within the realm of public communication. On the one hand, much public communication has been institutionally subsumed under the mass media; on the other hand, various forms of public communication of civil society, face to face and mediated, question the centralized character of public sphere, which is beyond the reach of citizen practices and interventions. In terms of the structural transformation of the public sphere, Habermas underscored the manipulative power of mass media, neglecting their role as mediators of public communication in the era of representative democracy (Garnham, 1996).

In the circumstance of the mediated form of public communication the category of 'public sphere' has provided an 'ideal type' for sketching the role of media in contemporary societies, which are characterised by the institutionalisation of power relations and the mediation of the networks of communication both across place and space. The re-constitution of the category of 'public sphere' across the realm of civil society and along the concept of citizenship, both in terms of representation and participation, has addressed the role of media either in the macro-level of a universal public sphere, in a national, global, and spatial context; or, in the micro-level of diverse competing public spheres. "The health of democracy in the course of the twentieth century has more and more been linked to the health of the systems of communication, though of course democracy cannot be reduced to issues of the media" (Dahlgren, 1995: 2).

### *1.5.1 The universal model*

One of the strengths of the concept of 'public sphere', that of universalism, has provided the grounds for the evaluation of the role of mass media. The universalistic aspect of public sphere has been drawn on the principles of "general accessibility, especially to information, the elimination of privilege, and the search for general norms and their rational legitimation" (Garnham, 1990: 108). Accordingly, this kind of universalism has been facilitated within institutional forms that embody these principles in modern societies. The media of public communication are a part of this concrete set of institutions. Moreover, "the institutions and processes of public communication are themselves a central and integral part of political structure and process" (Garnham, 1996: 361). In this context, Garnham sketches normatively and analytically a "space for a rational and universalistic politics distinct from both the economy and the state" (Keane, 1998: 161). From this perspective, Garnham highlights also the profound change in our inherited structure of public communication, characterised by "a reinforcement of the market and the progressive destruction of public service as the preferred mode of the allocation of cultural resources" (Garnham, 1990: 104). Such a concentration of the market on the cultural sector that gives priority to consumption needs, transforms 'information' into a commodity for individuals. Taking into account these trends Garnham argues for a re-constitution of public sphere concept upon its very principles, evaluating public service broadcasting as the arena for the

realization, though imperfect, of the ideal of a public sphere of “deliberating citizens”.

Thus, Garnham evaluates public service broadcasting,

as a means of providing all citizens, whatever their wealth or geographical location, equal access to a wide range of high quality entertainment, information and education, as a means of ensuring that the aim of the programme producer is the satisfaction of a range of audience tastes rather than only those tastes that show the largest profit (Garnham, 1990: 120, quoted also in Keane, 1998: 161).

Therefore, public service broadcasting constitutes potentially the ideal media terrain for the full representation of different interests and styles of civil society. Moreover, public service broadcasting constitutes a public good in terms of contributing to the “democratization of everyday life, in public and private contexts” (Scannell, 1989: 136). In addition, the embodiment of the principle of universalism of the ideal of the ‘public sphere’ within public service broadcasting, which is committed to “properly public, social values”, facilitating a free, open, reasoned public dialogue, is in accordance with that of the polity of a nation-state.

[E]qual access for all to a wide and varied range of common informational, entertainment and cultural services, carried on channels that can be received throughout the country, should be thought of as an important citizenship right in mass democratic societies. It is a crucial means ... whereby common knowledges and pleasures in a shared public life are maintained as a social good for the whole population (ibid: 164).

However, in actual terms, the public service model of broadcasting cannot satisfy the multiplicity of ‘discourses’ that are articulated in the “nooks and crannies” of a civil society in motion. According to Keane,

[d]efenders of the existing public service model typically understate the ways in which the alleged ‘balance’, ‘quality’ standards and universalism of existing public service media are routinely perceived by certain audiences as ‘unrepresentative’. ... In other words, both audiences and broadcasters sense that the public service claim to representativeness is in fact a defence of *virtual representation* of a fictive whole, a resort to programming which simulates the actual opinions and tastes of *some* of those at whom it is directed (Keane, 1998: 165, emphasis in the original).

In addition, the territorially structured mode of public mediated life has been questioned by the development of communication networks beyond the nation-state framework. Diverse spatial networks of communication challenge the ideal of unified public sphere, and its very definition of the public good. These networked spaces of communication create, according to Garnham (1993: 265), a “global chasm” between the economic and the political sphere challenging the constitution of the ideal of public sphere in wider terms – “the construction of an international public sphere and parallel system of democratic accountability”. However, Sparks (1998) critically assessing the constitution of a global public sphere in terms of the operation of global media organizations, points out the emergence of a new global elite facilitated by information that these organizations provide; a new class schism between “information poor” and “information rich” is created in terms of “access to information” (Golding, 1990; Garnham, 1996). From a different perspective, the expansion of mass media beyond the boundaries of the territorial nation-state has been addressed in terms of promoting the growth of an overall public milieu that advances the deliberative democratic process. In this context, Thompson (1995) has evaluated the constitution of a new form of “publicness” in spatial terms along the function of media conglomerates across different contexts. This kind of mediated publicness is “non-locale” – it detaches the visibility of actions and events from the sharing of a common locale; “non-dialogical” – there is no symmetrical response between the producers and receivers of media messages; and “open-ended” – it provides the place for new symbolic forms that cannot be entirely delimited in advance (Thompson, 1995: 244-248). In this regard, Thompson calls for the expansion of the terrain of democracy towards its deliberative form. “The deliberative conception of democracy focuses attention on the processes by which judgements are formed and decisions are taken” (ibid: 255). Such processes are not necessarily mutual and dialogical, and they rerun as more information comes in.

In conclusion, diverse approaches, drawing on the strong aspects of the ideal of public sphere, mainly on that of universalism, have pointed out the role of media as conveyors of the very idea of public sphere; either in terms of the public service broadcasting model (raising questions also beyond a national context), or along the lines of a new form of mediated publicness that has no boundaries, encompassing features of deliberation. In both aspects the role of media is central and closely related, although from different points of view, to democratic politics. Yet, both of the approaches are constituted from ‘above’ and as a result they are not linked in their very constitution to the sociocultural



realm; aspects of representation and participation are articulated here in relation to different 'publics' but less on the grounds of these 'publics' themselves.

### *1.5.2 The diversity model*

On the other hand, the re-constitution of the category of 'public sphere' in normative terms on the grounds of 'difference' has addressed its multiple dimensions along diverse and different 'publics'. According to Keane,

public life is today subject to 'refeudalization', not in the sense in which Habermas's [work] used the term, but in the different sense of modularization, of the development of a complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres that force us radically to revise our understanding of public life and its 'partner' terms such as public opinion, the public good and the public/private distinction (Keane, 1998: 169).

Thus, by evaluating the category of 'public sphere' within the "nooks and crannies" of civil society, Keane points out public sphere's multiplicity. Particularly, Keane distinguishes between "macro public spheres", constituted in spatial (global, regional) terms, though "these public spheres are far fledglings"; "meso public spheres", constituted at the level of the territorial nation-state, and "micro public spheres", constituted at the sub-state level (ibid: 170-181). What is significant in such an approach is that it addresses the category of public sphere within the realm of civil society as well.

[T]he plea for a pluralistic understanding of the variable forms of communication that currently constitute public life shares an elective affinity with a non-foundationalist understanding of democracy as a type of regime which enables a genuine plurality of individuals and groups within civil society openly to express their solidarity with, or opposition to, others' ideal and forms of life (ibid: 185).

The enhancement of the category of public sphere in terms of both its context and functioning has stimulated discussions concerning the diversity and pluralism of media within a democratic system, along the lines of the "intermediary structures" of modern democracy.

From a radical democratic approach Curran (1991, 2000), drawing on what Keane has defined as “meso” and “micro” spheres, sketches the democratic purposes of a ‘democratic media system’. One of the purposes concerns the representation of different social groups both within and through the media. Firstly, a democratic media system consists of a general media sector that provides an arena of common discourse where divergent groups of society are engaged in a reciprocal debate. At the same time that this process gives place and space to different interests, promoting competing definitions of the common good, it encompasses the possibility of a mutual understanding that facilitates the attainment of collective agreement. Such a conception of a democratic system is an attempt to establish a functional relation between the particular and the universal, “to maintain some kind of equilibrium between conflict and conciliation, fragmentation and unity”.

A democratic media system needs ... to have a well-developed, specialist media tier, serving different audiences, which enables different social groups to debate issues of social identity, group interest, political strategy and normative understanding on their own terms. ... The specialist tier also has a secondary democratic purpose of enhancing the political effectiveness of different social groups. It should include media that assist collective organizations to recruit support; provide an internal channel of communication and debate for their members; and transmit their concerns and policy proposals to a wider public (Curran, 2000: 140-141).

From this perspective, by re-evaluating media democratic functioning, Curran draws a model of democratic media system, “broadly representative of the society it serves”, on the lines of its structure and organisation. It consists of a “core public sector” (public service organizations that reach a mass audience), being encircled by “civic” (channels of communication linked to organised groups and social networks), “professional” (professional communicators relate to the public on their own terms), “social market” (minority media, operating within the market), and “private enterprise” (related to the public as consumers) sectors (ibid: 142-148). Such an approach is articulated in the context of a pluralistic conceptualisation of the public sphere, which takes into account the diversity of discourses within civil society. Although Curran’s perspective evaluates the collective, self-organised tradition of civil society it has been done from above, in terms of the organisation of a democratic media system, rather than from below, in terms of their own practices.

### 1.5.2.1 “Common-advocacy” domains

From another approach, probing also into the interplay between public sphere and civil society, Dahlgren (1995) evaluates public sphere in dynamic and interventionist terms, by making an analytical distinction between the “common” and “advocacy” domains. In this context the relation between common and advocacy domains is conceptualised in terms of a ‘continual and dynamic interface’, facilitated by the ‘dialogic and contesting voices’ that elements of the advocacy domain provide for the common one. It is in terms of the dialectic relationship between the common and advocacy domains that Dahlgren evaluates a pluralism of perspectives in the public sphere (Dahlgren, 1995: 157).

Dahlgren conceptualises a functional differentiation between the two realms. On the one hand, “the common domain is the arena which strives for universalism”; the dominant mass media, which ideally provide information, debate and opinion for all members of society, figure prominently here. On the other hand, the advocacy domain that facilitates the representation and development of special interests, of alternative and oppositional discourses, supplements the common domain (ibid: 155, 156). The advocacy domain consists of a plurality of small ‘civic media’, encompassing a variety of communication channels in its place (organizational press, opinion magazines, community/local radio stations, and electronic bulletin boards). Political parties, interest groups, organisations, networks and mainly social movements figure in their place.

The assumption is that the common domain would represent the ‘lowest common denominator’ with regard to shared assumptions, and would struggle centripetally to hold together dominant perceptions, much like the major media do today. The advocacy domain would allow alternative perceptions to flourish, generating adversarial interpretations and cultural practices (ibid: 157).

In regards to the plurality of public spheres that emerge within the realm of civil society, Keane highlights also, drawing on Fiske’s work (1993), the variety of bottom-up, small-scale locales “in which citizens enter into disputes about who does and who ought to get what, when and how”, forging their identities and defining their place in public life (Keane, 1998: 170). Dahlgren evaluates this aspect in terms of the need for the two-way implementation of the process of sociocultural interaction, to express ‘identity work’ in mediated terms too. By addressing mass media as being beyond the reach of citizen

practices and interventions, yet the arena of maintaining the cultural experience of *res publica* (our common identity of being members of socio-political entities), Dahlgren evaluates 'civic media' as the place for the expression and development of different 'discourses'.

This advocacy domain would be the setting for all citizens who wish to pursue special interests, and generate group-based cultural and political interpretations of society. ... The advocacy domain would serve partly as alternative and oppositional public spheres for different groups, as Fraser (1992) and others have urged, allowing them not only to air and shape their own views, but also to develop their group identities (Dahlgren, 1995: 156).

Consequently, not only does Dahlgren evaluate the pluralistic nature of public sphere in normative terms, but he also addresses it in literal terms, drawing on inputs from civil society.

#### *1.5.2.2 Grassroots media practices*

As a result, the discussion concerning the interplay between civil society and public sphere, evaluates the role of diverse inputs from civil society (social movements, associations, organizations, and groups) in public life. By drawing on 'micro public spheres' Keane (1998: 169) points out that, "[a]lthough these public spheres emerge within differently-sized milieux within the nooks and crannies of civil societies and states, all of them are stages of power-and interest-bound action that display the essential characteristics of a public sphere". Moreover, these social actors develop their own communication means too. Even though Dahlgren's (1995) constitution of an advocacy domain is articulated in theoretical terms, it opens the space for the consideration of diverse spheres of social movements/groups and their employment of media projects, and the extent to what they contribute to the public sphere. Such locales constitute melting-pot spaces:

These submerged networks, noted for their stress on solidarity, individual needs and part-time involvement, constitute the laboratories in which new experiences are invented and popularized. Within these local laboratories, movements utilize a variety of means of communications ... to question and transform the dominant codes of everyday life. These laboratories function as public spaces in which the elements of everyday life are mixed, re mixed, developed and tested (Keane, 1998: 171-172).

Such an approach points out the other side of the picture of the relation between civil society and public sphere, addressing this relationship from 'below'. The evaluation of the actual field of civil society, of the various manifestations of it and their particular interests, as well as, their need of expression and representation in a public form, grounds the ideal of citizenship in societal terms. "The social anchoring within civil society which groups, associations and movements have is precisely one of the definitive assets of the advocacy domain" (Dahlgren, 1995: 158). In addition, the anchoring of the 'advocacy domain' within the realm of civil society and across alternative mediated practices promotes the ideal of public-mediated-communication further than its mass form. Thus, while the common domain consists of centralised, mass media, the advocacy one encompasses a variety of subcultural, alternative forms of mediated communication which allow marginalised discourses to be communicated, questioning, and potentially challenging, aspects of the broad public sphere.

In normative terms, the anchoring of 'civic media' within the diverse contexts of civil society raises questions concerning the extent to what society ensures viable economic, legal and technical conditions for their implementation (ibid: 158-159), and how this could be done in terms of facilitating advocacy practices and promoting decentralized policies concerning such media projects.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the evaluation of these media projects along the lines of the relation between civil society and public sphere in actual terms poses questions concerning the role of these practices; meaning in terms of the way these practices are addressed within the public and political sphere, and the extent to which various 'discourses' acquire a place in the public debate for communicating their experiences and grievances. From this point of view, further issues are raised; Keane highlights an interesting aspect concerning the role of these practices:

Although they appear to be 'private', acting at a distance from official public life, party politics and the glare of media publicity, they in fact display all the characteristics of small group efforts, whose challenging of the existing distribution of power can be effective because they operate *unhindered in the unnewsworthy nooks and crannies of civil society* (Keane, 1998: 172, emphasis added).

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<sup>2</sup> There is a developing discussion here in the macro level concerning advocacy and policy issues for such practices, in terms of civil society's mobilizations in the context of WSIS (the World Summit on Information Society); see for example the case of CRIS (Communication Rights in the Information Society) campaign (Fleming, 2003).

In this regard, probing into the role of such media projects within the particular context of their realization, the present study focuses on diverse, heterogeneous grassroots ('from below') media practices in Greece, in terms of their relation to the public and political sphere.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Alternative communication/media*

The following chapter draws firstly on theories that question the exclusionary nature of mass communication either in terms of the emancipatory potential of 'new media', favouring modes of horizontal communication; or, in terms of the democratization of communication, both in the context of the developmental debate and on the lines of models of participatory and community communication; or even advancing alternative forms of communication, on the grounds of the organization of alternative media projects, promoting decentralized forms of generating their practice, as well as, in relation to processes of empowerment of their 'agents'.

By probing then specifically into diverse cases of non-mass media projects that have been implemented along these lines the study points out the main characteristics of these practices across their diverse areas of application. In this regard, issues concerning their creation, production and dissemination; the cultural as well as the social context of their implementation; the employment of new technologies; and, instances of the very mediation process itself, across both the production and reception process, are central along these practices. Running through these aspects of diverse 'alternative' media projects the study draws finally on approaches that evaluate these projects on the grounds of their 'lived experience' in terms of their social actors, agents, and the enactment of their citizenship.

## 2.1 *Beyond mass communication*

Various theoretical approaches on media of communication have evaluated their 'emancipatory' role as conveyors either of participatory communication, or of the democratization of communication, or even of subversive action. Irrespective of the concern of these considerations – either on large-scale or small-scale media and their different applications – the interest has been articulated here beyond the realm of mass communication, which is exclusively addressed 'for the people' but not 'from the people'.

Brecht (1930/1983) highlighted the democratic potential of radio broadcasting, pointing out the possibility of a two-way nature of communication. By criticizing the fact that radio was one-sided, "a pure instrument of distribution that hands things out", Brecht evaluated the emancipatory dimension of it, attributing to the radio a new function.

Radio should be converted from a distribution system to a communication system. Radio should be the most wonderful public communication system imaginable, a gigantic system of channels – could be, that is, if it were capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of making the listener not only hear but also speak, not of isolating him but of connecting him. This means that radio would have to give up being a purveyor and organise the listener as purveyor. That is why it is extremely positive when radio attempts to give public affairs a truly public nature (Brecht, 1983: 169).

From this perspective, Brecht supported the view that radio technology does not entail a certain form of broadcasting, but encompasses the possibility of its exploitation through various cultural forms. Thus, although technology was advanced enough to produce radio in various forms, it was the 'public' that had to take advantage of it. Moreover, Brecht conceptualised the exploitation of the two-way aspect of radio in pedagogic terms, through the interface between radio and art. As such, the function of radio in such a project is constituted in the realm of actuality; listener is activated and 're-employed as a producer'. "[The technique of such a project] will be directed towards the prime task of ensuring that the public is not only taught but must also itself teach" (ibid: 171). In this context, Brecht evaluated the full realization of the participatory communication. According to Hartley (2000: 155), "Brecht saw clearly that radio provided an unprecedented opportunity for citizen participation in public life. ... Brecht saw radio as a perfect opportunity for building a public sphere and for promoting the development of civil society".



Benjamin's (1968) approach evaluated the liberating potential of the 'new media' (*apparatuses*) too. "[F]or the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility" (Benjamin, 1968: 224). Along these lines, Benjamin introduces the idea of "the author as producer" that questions the very distinction between producer and consumer.

With the increasing extension of the press, which kept placing new political, religious, scientific, professional, and local organs before the readers, an increasing number of readers became writers – at first, occasional ones ... [Today], the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character. The difference becomes merely functional; it may vary from case to case. At any moment the reader is ready to turn into a writer (*ibid*: 232).

This process of transition, which in the case of literature took a long time to be realised, applies to the 'new media' (film) more easily because mechanical reproduction is inherent in the very technique of their production. Focusing on the paradigm of film, Benjamin pointed out firstly the detachment of the reproduced object from the domain of tradition, and then the reactivation of the object reproduced in the particular terms of each receiver's situation. In the case of the Russian cinematic practice of that period, Benjamin evaluated this changeover of the reader who gains access to authorship as follows: "[s]ome of the players whom we meet in Russian films are not actors in our sense but people who portray *themselves* – and primarily in their own work process" (*ibid*, emphasis in the original).

By drawing on Benjamin's and Brecht's lines, Enzensberger (1974) pointed out the democratic potential of new electronic media.

For the first time in history, the media are making possible mass participation in a social and socialized productive process, the practical means of which are in the hands of the masses themselves. Such a use of them would bring the communications media, which up to now have not deserved the name, in their own. In its present form, equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver; technically speaking, it reduces feedback to the lowest point compatible with the system (Enzensberger, 1974: 97).

Hence, Enzensberger distinguished between the "repressive use of media" – centrally controlled, with one-way flow of messages, produced by specialists, for isolated

individuals, promoting passive consumption; and, an “emancipatory use of media” – decentralised, linking many to many, fostering interactivity, collectively produced, and actively used, promoting collective mobilization (Enzensberger, 1974: 113). In this regard, Enzensberger approached the consciousness industry beyond its “bourgeois dark side”, evaluating its socialist possibilities. Such a revolutionary model of the media is conceptualised here in the idealistic terms of another context, of another social system (as Brecht proposed as well), “in which people using small-scale media prevail and large media institutions and undifferentiated content can no longer be found” (McQuail, 1987: 88, quoted also in Atton, 2002: 8).

Based on Enzensberger’s positions, McQuail (1987, 1994) has proposed a normative type of media theory (‘democratic participant’), “in recognition of new media developments and of increasing criticism of the dominance of the main mass media by private or public monopolies” (McQuail, 1994: 131). Such a proposal encompasses aspects of media both in the liberal developed societies and in developing ones. In terms of the developed societies, the term ‘democratic participant’ “expresses a sense of disillusionment with established political parties and with a system of parliamentary democracy which has seemed to become detached from its grass-roots origins, to impede rather than facilitate involvement in political and social life” (McQuail, 1987: 122). In this context, the ‘democratic-participant paradigm’ points out the failure of the mass media to meet the needs that arise from the daily experience of citizens, to offer place to individual and minority expressions. In addition, this type of theory “joins with some elements present in development media theory, especially its emphasis on the ‘basis’ of society, on the value of horizontal rather vertical (top-down) communication” (ibid: 121-122). Overall, the theory rejects both the centralism and bureaucratisation of public broadcasting (‘elitist’, ‘paternalist’) and the commercialisation and monopolization of privately owned media (‘professionalized’, ‘monolithic’) that prevent media system from assisting “in the long process of social improvement and democratic change”. Consequently, in the ‘democratic-participant’ theory media are ideally constituted in small-scale terms, favouring horizontal patterns of interaction, and facilitating the expression of citizens’ needs. The empirical manifestations of such a model are many and varied, including the underground or alternative press, pirate radio, community cable television, ‘samizdat’ publication, micro-media in rural settings, neighbourhood media, wall posters, and media for women and ethnic minorities (McQuail, 1994: 132).

In the context of the developmental debate, UNESCO's forums in the 1970s addressed the issue of the constitution of alternatives to mass communication in order to balance the flow of information and communication (New World Information and Communication Order). The report of UNESCO's General Conference in 1976 in Nairobi, pointed out the need for a system of horizontal communication.

In the past, the role of communication in human society was seen essentially as to inform and influence people. It is now being proposed that communication should be understood as a process of social interaction through a balanced exchange of information and experience ... This shift in perception implies the predominance of dialogue over the monologue. The aim is to achieve a system of horizontal communication based upon an equitable distribution of resources and facilities enabling all persons to send as well as to receive messages (Prehn, 1992: 258).

Thus, the discussion about processes of democratization of communication and redistribution of communicative power put emphasis on the need for people and communities who had traditionally been excluded from the production and distribution of media messages to gain access in electronic media. Moreover, in the 1977 meeting in Belgrade, UNESCO's statement sketched a normative theory of alternative communication in terms of the concepts of "access", "participation" and "self-management". The aspect of 'access' raised questions concerning the public service role of media, the chance for the public to "choose varied and relevant programs and to have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands to production organisations"; the issue of 'participation' implied the "involvement of the public in the production process and also in the planning of communication systems"; and the parameter of 'self-management' promoted an advanced form of participation for the public, to exercise "the power of decision making within communication enterprises" and being "fully involved in the formation of communication policies and plans" (Servaes, 1999: 85; Berrigan, 1979: 18-20). Furthermore, the MacBride report's (UNESCO, 1980) proposal about the "right to communicate" constituted, according to Husband (1996: 209, 210 cited in Downing, 2001: 32, 33), one part of a third generation of human rights entitlements in addition to the "political-civil" and "economic-social-cultural" ones. In an overall approach of the developmental issue Servaes (1999) addresses the necessary content and the normative components of development in terms of a "participatory communication" model.

The participatory model incorporates the concepts in the emerging framework of multiplicity/another development. It stresses the importance of the cultural identity of local communities and of democratisation and participation at all levels – international, national, local, and individual. It points to a strategy that is not merely inclusive of but largely emanates from the traditional receivers (Servaes, 1999: 88).

Such a ‘participatory model’ grounds developmental process on local/community level (in its own culture, intellect, and environment) through the active participation of ‘ordinary’ people (the key agents), involving the “strengthening of democratic processes and institutions, and the redistribution of power” (ibid: 93). Moreover, this perspective questions the conceptualisation of a universal model of development, “favor[ing] a multiplicity of approaches based on the context, the basic, felt needs, and the empowerment of the most oppressed sectors of various societies at divergent levels” (ibid: 271).

In another context, by highlighting the problems of the attempts to conceptualize mass communication within a distinct social setting, Hollander and Stappers (1992)<sup>3</sup> point out the need for a consideration of community communication, which encompasses the interplay between mediated and interpersonal communication, and addresses both senders and receivers within the same social system, ‘community’. The geographical locality and/or a community of interest constitute an essential communicative context since participants, both senders and receivers, share the same concern on community issues; in this context, a ‘community’ realizes the reproduction and representation of its shared interests.

[C]ommunicators in community communication address their audience on the assumption of a shared relevance that community issues have for both senders and receivers because they all participate in the same community. This community, further, serves as a frame of reference for a shared interpretation of the relevance of the topics communicated within the community (Hollander and Stappers, 1992: 19-20).

Moreover, this perspective of community communication that goes beyond a linear conceptualization of the communication process as it has been constituted along the central role of media in mass communication, evaluates the social aspects of the communication process in terms of the context, the ‘community’, in which ‘experience’ is communicated, and collectivised. From this point of view, communication process is not conceptualized

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<sup>3</sup> For a revised version see Hollander, E., Stappers J., and Jankowski, N. (2002).

exclusively along the lines of transmission and reception processes but also within a specific social setting, in relation to its own structure – the structures of relevance (both in community and individual level), and the interplay between mediated and non-mediated forms of communication. “This implies that media use and communicative interaction are not studied as isolated activities but as an integral part of the individual’s active orientation towards the physical and social environment” (Hollander and Stappers, 1992: 22). Moreover, this approach evaluates mass communication in terms of public communication setting its interest on the social context of the communication process rather than on the media themselves. In this regard, ‘community communication’ is conceptualized in terms of small scale forms of public communication implemented across various media practices within a specific social context, promoting communicative exchange and social action. Besides, the category of ‘community’ and its different descriptions have provided the ground for various manifestations of small scale public communication forms, in terms of a local/geographical context, within a local/social system, and along the lines of a sense of identity (Newby, 1980, and Hollander, 1988, cited in Hollander and Stappers, 1992: 22).

In addition, the new communications technology has fostered new spaces for access and participation. Certain technological developments and their implications – one platform for different types of communication through the digitalisation of data; time-space compression; two-way, interactive communication – have provided the infrastructure for the support and encouragement of political action.

Political parties of all sizes and ideological hues, voluntary organisations, pressure groups and other organisations in civil society are exploring computer-mediated communication as a means not only to reach potential supporters and bypass the traditional media filters, but to network with one other, sharing information and resources. For many, CMC holds the key to the enhancement of the democratic aspects of the political process and to the creation of new opportunities for citizen participation in the local and national public spheres (Bryan, Tsagarousianou and Tambini, 1998: 2).

From this perspective, new forms of communication create public spaces, arenas for the free engagement of citizens in deliberation and public debate. In addition, these new forms of communication can facilitate more horizontal, than vertical, communication. Both of these aspects of computer-mediated communication have been articulated under the rhetoric of ‘electronic democracy’ in widespread as well as fragmented (local/community) terms.

Finally, Williams's theory of "democratic communication" has been articulated both in terms of a critique on mass communication system, and along the lines of the development of alternative forms of communication. Firstly, the critique of Williams has been focused on the notion of 'mass communication'. Deriving from a critique on the term 'mass' – "there are in fact no masses: there are only ways of seeing people as masses" (Williams, 1963: 289) – Williams questioned the conceptual framework for thinking about the institutionalised forms of communication.

The usual terms suppose a central and elite group of producers who generate material consumed by others, geographically and socially remote from the originators. In that, they reproduce, not merely in their vocabulary but in the underlying theory of the place and nature of communication in society, the negative and antidemocratic associations of the term "mass" itself (Sparks, 1993: 72).

Accordingly, Williams identified the problems of addressing the role of the institutions of communication itself. Moreover, Williams' theory of democratic communication takes into consideration the articulation of alternative forms of communication, the radical press as well as other cultural forms which are products of the working people themselves. These forms of communication differ from the ones of 'mass culture' in relation to the product itself, concerning the reflection of the "structures of feelings" on it that are inherently different among the different classes (O'Connor, 1989, cited in Sparks: 1993: 72). Furthermore, the fact that Williams evaluates these alternative forms of communication in terms of promoting new kinds of relationships, and as such a new social order, is, according to Hamilton (2000: 263), "a positive advance, in that it suggests goals of popular participation, maximum responsiveness and sensitivity to emergent ways of thinking, and maximum availability of expressions of such ways".

In addition, Williams (1980: 50-63) addresses the organization of mass media and its structural implications – professionalization (*skills*), capitalization, and institutionalisation (*controls*) – as the main barriers to enable wider social participation in their creation, production and dissemination. By drawing on these lines, Hamilton (cited in Atton, 2002: 25) conceptualises the distinction between alternative media and the mass media in terms of 'deprofessionalization', 'decapitalization' and 'deinstitutionalization'. "In short, they must be available to ordinary people without the necessity of professional training, without excessive capital outlay and they must take place in settings other than

media institutions or similar systems” (Atton, 2002: 25). Besides, Hamilton (2000) grounds the communication process on the level of experience.

In contrast with being a synonym for ‘media’, communication is better seen in cultural terms: as the creative making of social order. Williams emphasizes this kind of understanding in his characterization of culture as ‘ordinary’, in the sense of being a widespread process of formulating and learning new ways of organizing experience and of finding the form or content to present it in such a way that others can understand and participate in that experience (Hamilton, 2000: 361-362).

In this context, communication process encompasses further social processes that invariably change through it. As Williams (1976: 11, quoted also in Atton, 2002: 25) sets it, “[c]ommunication begins in the struggle to learn and describe”; the other side of the same picture is that communication process entails a learning/educational value. The learning/educational value of communication process has been highlighted in terms of group dialogue in the dialogical/critical pedagogy of Freire (1972). Probing into communication strategies that advance democratic interaction, horizontal communication and solidarity Freire proposed a model of communication for liberation, for the empowerment of the disenfranchised. In the case of alternative communication/media practices the empowerment of those who participate in them happens, according to Atton (2002), in tandem with reflexive practices that take place in the production process, “establish[ing] their own alternative frames of participation, power and creative action. Participants do not simply consume reflexively, but produce reflexively in an attempt to ‘change the way they construct themselves, their actions and their lifeworlds’” (Atton, 2002: 155, citing also Cox, 1997).

## 2.2 *Decentralised media projects*

Proceeding from theory to practice, diverse small-scale media experiments have provided the grounds for challenging various aspects of mass communication, and constituted the conveyors of various, new forms of communicative practice. Hence, from different perspectives, small-scale media projects have been evaluated in terms of constituting agencies of resistance, of counterbalancing the unequal distribution of

communication resources; along the lines of the mobilization, representation and participation of different social actors/groups; in regards to the organization (non-hierarchical, non-professional) of these projects; and, as a locus of empowerment both of the projects themselves, as narratives, and, of those involved with these projects, the agents.

### 2.2.1 *Radical media*

The ‘polemical’ aspect of small-scale media projects has been prominently addressed in the work of Downing (1984, 2001) through the evaluation of a variety of media projects as resistant practices, in terms of “radical media”. Downing articulates the discourse about the radical media in terms of Gramsci’s analysis of culture and power, employing also the notion of ‘counterhegemony’, “as a way to categorize attempts to challenge dominant ideological frameworks and to supplant them with a radical alternative vision” (Downing, 2001: 15). From this perspective, radical media can offer a space for alternative discourses in public debate as well as a locus of oppositional power to the agency of domination. Moreover, not only do radical media constitute counter-information institutions, which try to “disrupt the silence”, to “counter the lies”, to “provide the truth”, but they constitute also conveyors of social change. “Radical media ... have a mission not only to provide facts to public denied them but to explore fresh ways of developing a questioning perspective on the hegemonic process and increasing the public’s sense of confidence in its power to engineer constructive change” (ibid: 16).

In his early work Downing (1984) conceptualises media alternatives in principle by drawing on libertarian Marxist, feminist, and socialist anarchist sketches of media organisation. From a point of view that claims the realization of media democracy in practice, Downing critically assesses both capitalist mass media and revolutionary socialist (Soviet) media. The revolutionary socialist media, despite its rhetoric against the monopolies of capitalist mass media, actually provide no alternative for a democratic media communication at all. The realisation of any prospect of democratic communication is undermined here in practice by their hierarchical, authoritarian and bureaucratic organisation; which is the result of their organic commitment to the party and the institutions of the state. Thus, Downing argues that “radical media, while they may be partisan, should never become a tool of a party or intelligentsia”; moreover, he points out



“the importance of encouraging contributions from as many interested parties as possible, in order to emphasise the ‘multiple realities’ of social life (oppression, political cultures, economic situations)” (Downing, 1984: 17, quoted also in Atton, 2002: 20). From this perspective, Downing puts emphasis on the aspect of engagement, as a collective endeavour, as well as, on the organization of radical media that promotes “prefigurative politics”. Yet, at the same time, both of these aspects, engagement and organization, of radical media have been articulated through a discourse that has the social change at its heart. In this regard, examples of radical media have been drawn here in terms of oppositional politics, in different contexts, across the world. In the United States, radical media were the conveyors of a progressive opposition to the repressive political climate of the Cold War era. “A small number of leftists caught up in the turmoil of the times began to look at radio as a valuable weapon in their struggle to combat the pro-war, anticommunist hysteria sweeping the nation” (Barlow, 1988: 85).<sup>4</sup> In the European context, radical media were part of political movements whose social framework was featured by the experience of fascism and national internal conflicts; radical media played a conspicuous role in national politics here (Downing, 1984: 161, 215).<sup>5</sup> In Eastern Europe radical media (publications) organised also new public spaces during periods of revolt against soviet-style socialism.<sup>6</sup> “[C]ollectively, over time, these media were instrumental in helping to bring about significant political change in one of the most entrenched empires of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ... they operated in favour of justice and cultural enhancement in the teeth of a lying rhetoric of socialist progress” (Downing, 2001: 383). In the case also of former USSR, according to Menaev (1993), the role of alternative press publications, the most developed and influential part of the alternative media (a direct successor of samizdat), was important; it “united groups of like-minded persons characterized by a common rejection of the values and principles of totalitarianism” (Menaev, 1993: 75).

In his later work, Downing (2001) acknowledges that his earlier discourse about radical media had been articulated in terms of a binary scheme, between radical and mainstream media; at the same time, radical media were conceptualised in this context as

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<sup>4</sup> The case of KPFA, the oldest of the listener supported independent stations in the USA (Berkeley, California 1949) run by a small number of leftist liberal pacifists, figures here prominently.

<sup>5</sup> The cases of Italy and Portugal during the seventies; see also Lewis and Booth, 1989 for the case of France as well.

<sup>6</sup> The cases of Czechoslovakia and Poland, in the period of the ‘Prague Spring’ and during 1976-1980 correspondingly (Downing, 1984).

the way to overcome the dominant opposition between capitalist and socialist media. Such a position “seriously simplified both mainstream and alternative media” (Downing, 2001: ix). Thus, Downing’s early binarism and ‘antibinarism’ prevented him from taking into account both “more finely gradated positions, such as the possibility of democratizing mass media or the occasional, radical deployment of mass media”, and the very considerable variety of radical media, “a more ‘impure’ and hybridized version of radical media” (Atton, 2002: 21). On his updated theoretical perspective, Downing enriches the terrain of radical media by paying attention to ephemeral media forms as well, by focusing, from a socialist anarchist angle of vision, on social movements and their media practices.

Historically, the anarchist movement has always given priority to movements over institutions. Constructive social change must, in this philosophy, be built on the basis of mass activity, of self-mobilization. Effective communication within and by social movements is, therefore, a vital necessity for self-mobilization to emerge and prosper. Radical media are in no way to be dismissed as just a curious little experiment for revolutionary culture freaks (Downing, 2001: 31).

Moreover, Downing identifies “alternative zones for radical debate and reflection within present-day society” in and round these movements. His study (1988) on the antinuclear media (press) movement in West Germany and Britain addressed radical media in relation to the constitution of an alternative public realm. The movement organisations and the flood of antinuclear books, pamphlets, magazines, and flyers that circulated that time nourished an oppositional political culture. “[T]his nourishment was not just a function of more widely circulating counter-information, but equally or even more so because of the experience of exchange inside a flourishing alternative public realm” (Downing, 1988: 179). Furthermore, Downing, drawing on the lines of alternative and counter public spheres, points out the role of radical media as catalysts of lateral communication enabling dialogical forums – “providing movements with opportunity to talk through their internal divisions and so to enrich and strengthen themselves” (Downing, 2001: 34). In addition, Downing expands the spectrum of radical media along the lines of alternative communication that encompasses fluid communicative practices and instances as well, employed by social movements. As a result, through the prism of the relationship between social movements and radical media – “social movements ... are the life blood of these media, and they are the movements’ oxygen” (ibid: 390) – Downing weaves a tapestry of radical alternative media. A variety of

communicative practices are included here: public speech, jokes, dance, and songs; graffiti and dress; popular theatre, performance art, and culture-jamming; print media; mind bombs (woodcuts, prints, flyers, posters, photomontages, murals); radio; film and video; and, the Internet.

Although Downing's later approach is articulated in a 'dialectic' scheme, encompassing a wider range of media practices in the place of alternative, or counter, public spheres, it is exclusively concerned with the formation of political consciousness. As a result, radical alternative media are conceptualised here, as agents of developmental power, in terms of the constitution of a "popular oppositional culture"; for this reason Downing draws exclusively on the social movements.

### *2.2.2 Participatory media*

Within the framework of the developmental debate, and the search for the "new communication order", new approaches highlighted social/grassroots movements and their alternative media as conveyors of the process of the democratization of communication. However, the process of the democratization of communication has been mainly addressed in terms of counterbalancing the trend toward transnational communication. The potential of these alternative media to establish their own communication and information systems on the basis of a bottom-up horizontal mode of communication was conceived as the means to overcome the inequalities to communicative power that mass media produce along the lines of the division between North and South. Besides, it is the actual practice of these projects that could promote any changes. According to Sparks and Roach (1990: 280, quoted in Rodriguez, 2001: 15), "[i]t is not in the corridors of power that the new order will be forged but in the little experiments in which workers and peasants attempt to find new ways of communicating their ideas and their experiences to each other". As a result, alternative media were conceived as the terrain for a new communication order to emerge. Moreover, alternative media have been conceptualized as potential locus of resistance to the cultural imperialism. Although respective concerns have been predominantly articulated in the context of the developing world and in relation to the function of TNCCs, issues concerning the transnational expansion of capitalism have been raised in the context of alternative media in the developed world as well. Here, the aspects that alternative media in West

address concern the defence of a quality of life; “the arms race, nuclear war, state control of everyday life, and the creative use of free time, defined ‘a common platform on which people from many social groups ask[ed] whether life could not be lived differently, beyond the order defined by the market and the laws of cost and benefit’” (Rodriguez, 2001: 10, quoting Reyes Matta, 1986: 196).<sup>7</sup>

In this context, a variety of participatory communication projects have been evaluated in terms of the “defence of culture” and the “reevaluation of cultural identity”. A wide range of such media practices have been developed across different contexts. From the perspective of the potential for difference, diversity and radical innovation in world television, Dowmunt (1993) highlights a variety of “channels of resistance” to the powerful external pressures that threaten people’s cultures; “peoples are using video and television as tools with which to assert themselves and fight back” (Dowmunt, 1993: 8). Accordingly, Dowmunt evaluates the “thirst of cultural self-expression” in terms of indigenous people/groups’ engagement with video and television in a variety of ways, across both the reception and production process.<sup>8</sup> Hence, various modes of resistance emanate in socially and culturally pertinent meanings and pleasures made through reception process. Moreover, by allowing people access to production process projects entitle them in the expression of their own values and the making of their own image.<sup>9</sup> From another perspective, Servaes (1999) evaluates participatory communication (radio) projects that contribute to the development of the communities they serve in a progressive manner, “favorizing social change”. Overall, a strategy that facilitates access to and the participation in the organization of communication projects promotes a participatory type of communication which “is not limited to sending messages to the public; it is an agent for social change, culture development and democratisation” (Servaes, 1999: 260). By drawing on the Latin America popular radio movement Servaes points out three phases that it has passed through: radio as a medium to support education of the population; radio as a propaganda medium

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<sup>7</sup> Many of such alternative projects implemented in the developed world have been also evaluated from different points of view; for example as radical media – the cases of antinuclear media practices (see Downing, 1988 above), or as community media (see Dowmunt, 1993 below).

<sup>8</sup> See also Molnar (1993) on the case of aboriginal community broadcasting in Australia; Festa (1993) on an alternative project of appropriation and use of video and television (TVT – Worker’s Television) in Brazil.

<sup>9</sup> For a literature on indigenous and non-indigenous participatory (citizens’ in author’s words) electronic media projects on video, radio, and television around the world see Rodriguez, 2001: 27-36.

against the military dictatorships; and radio as a communication medium. In the case of radio as communication medium, “[r]adio is part of the communication process as a whole, that is, radio is there for the people and made by the people” (Servaes, 1999: 267). Diverse approaches on the Latin America movement of alternative media practices have pointed out different aspects of them. Velasquez (1993), surveying the significant contribution of miners’ radio and peasant radio to Bolivian social and political life, points out that “alternative radio is, and will be for a long time to come, the only means of communication that performs an integrating and socializing function, offering a glimpse of equality for, and participation by the popular sectors in the political life of the country” (Velasquez, 1993: 95). In contrast, Huesca (1995), adopting a procedural view of participatory communication in his study of Bolivian tin miners’ radio, criticizes researchers who desperately search for theories of practice helpful to the aims of participatory media and ignore the communicative procedures by which participation is implemented in everyday life. By approaching alternative communication from the perspective of daily practice, Huesca points to the paradoxes and limits of participation. “If procedures are left to chance, participation will inevitably reflect relations of power in societies, neighbourhoods, and households. But if communication follows a design guided by democratic principles, responsive procedures can develop to identify and amend inequalities” (Huesca, 1995: 116). On the other hand, Servaes addresses participatory communication projects in terms of the specific context they are implemented, along the lines of his overall concern for a “multiplicity” development paradigm;<sup>10</sup> “[t]here is no universal model for development. Each society must develop its own strategy” (Servaes, 1999: 271). Through this prism, by identifying ordinary people as the key agents of change, as the participants for development, Servaes evaluates participatory media as a locus for the development and empowerment of the dominated groups of society; in terms of a two-way communication process that provides a “diagnosis of the actual situation in the region”. From this perspective, Servaes points out the self-evaluative nature of participatory projects, where people become conscious of their own situation and its possibilities for change.

Overall, electronic alternative communication projects have a central place as conveyors of participatory communication due to the communal character of their pertinent reception and production processes. In this context, participatory media have been evaluated

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<sup>10</sup> By criticizing the “dependency” and the “modernization” paradigms on communication for development, Servaes (1999: 269-280) evaluates a third one, the “multiplicity” paradigm.

as agents of developmental power, in terms of social and cultural empowerment. Yet, these aspects have been mostly addressed along the lines of the binary domination-subordination scheme; according to Servaes (1999: 258), “[the] culture process may be a ‘long revolution’ – the slow process of building counter-hegemony to the dominant political culture”.

### 2.2.3 *Community media*

There are different terms for what is here collectively referred as ‘community media’ that are “not only due to linguistic differences, but are also based on ideological and conceptual distinctions” (Prehn, 1992: 256). Moreover, the fact that community media (mainly electronic initiatives) distinguish themselves both from state and commercial ones has resulted in a polymorphism of their practices (Barboutis, 1994: 21, citing Lewis, 1993).

In North America, ‘community media’ originated in the establishment of community radio and television stations as non-commercial, democratic organizations aiming at community involvement. More specifically, Barlow (1988: 83-84) highlights two sources of community radio’s origins – the opposition to the repressive climate of the Cold War; and, the emergence of ethnic-orientated stations.<sup>11</sup> The pirate/‘free’ radio stations that grassroots movements, students and minority groups run,<sup>12</sup> and then the development of regional/local/neighbourhood radio and television stations,<sup>13</sup> have also provided the context for the emergence of community media in the European territory. The implementation of community media promoted in practice the realization of the very principles of diversity and pluralism, generating a call for more access and more participation. “In both cases there was a rejection of top-down, uniformistic system of mass communication, be it monocentrically originated as in Western Europe, or polycentrically structured as in the United States (Prehn, 1992: 256, citing Jakubowicz, 1988). In countries where there is not a strong tradition of public service model of broadcasting (the cases of USA, Canada, and Australia) it is the predominant commercial character of media environment that community media challenge and against which they form another model (Kleinsteuber and

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<sup>11</sup> Ethnic-orientated stations were urban commercial stations without network affiliations which sold blocks of air time to ethnic broadcasters, targeting different audiences of immigrants (European, Afro-American) by broadcasting in their native language (Barlow, 1988: 83).

<sup>12</sup> These examples apply also to Downing’s category of ‘radical media’.

<sup>13</sup> See Lewis, 1976, 1984 and Mattelart and Piemme, 1980.

Sonnenberg, 1990: 93, 96-97). In the European context, public service broadcasting has constituted, either directly in favour of its local application,<sup>14</sup> or indirectly against its monopolization by the state, another source of the implementation of community media. The ideals of 'access' and 'participation' provided the grounds for advancing public service broadcasting system, or questioning its exclusionary centralised character pointing out the failure of performing its social, public service role. Moreover, the technical possibilities of broadcasting in localities enabled the local context to become the battlefield of rejecting the top-down, uniformistic system of mass communication. Through this prism, community media have advanced the principle of public communication within the small-scale form of a neighbourhood, a village, a town, as well as within the realm of a community of interest.

Prehn (1992), drawing on an experimentation period on community media in Western Europe (Britain, Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany and in Nordic countries) in 1970s, highlights the pluralistic and community orientation of these experiments; their aim of facilitating access among people to electronic media, as well as, participation in the production of programmes that stimulate discussion on local issues. "The stations, in other words, were to be non-commercial and non-professional in nature, and to rely primarily on volunteers for programme production. The general policy was to exclude commercially orientated entrepreneurs from the experiments in order to allow opportunity for local participation to develop" (Prehn, 1992: 252). Kleinsteuber and Sonnenberg (1990: 97) sketch an overall map of community radio stations, "non commercial local" radio in their own words, in the European context, highlighting their diverse applications. On the one hand, the 'free radio' model (initially in Italy and France) consists of radio stations based on protest against a public monopoly"; on the other hand, the "naerradio model" of the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway) is the result of a revolution from above where radio stations were established in coexistence with a public monopoly. In addition, Kleinsteuber and Sonnenberg acknowledge the existence of more complex radio structures outside the binary scheme of commercial/public versus non-commercial local radio (the cases of Netherlands, Great Britain, Switzerland and Finland) (ibid: 98, 99). From another point of view, by drawing on their actual features, Prehn (1992) points out also two models of community stations in addition to the stations with emancipatory intentions ('free radios' and 'militant radios'): the "community stations which stress free speech" –

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<sup>14</sup> See Rushton, D. (1993).

characteristic is here the Dutch model of issuing only one licence to a given locality which is to be shared by all interests in the area, be they organizational or individual ones; and the “public service oriented community stations” – characteristic is here the Swedish model which applies to established civic organizations and associations (Prehn, 1992: 260, citing Jankowski, 1988: 171-175).

The diversification of public radio was galvanised also by the creation of regional stations with some degree of autonomy, along with the application of new technologies. “This led to the emergence of individual local radio stations, particularly those licensed to universities and local education authorities, many of them cablecast” (Dunaway, 1998: 92, citing Gray and Lewis, 1992: 161). Moreover, community media have been developed in local/regional context along the lines of cultural differences. Moragas Spa and Corominas (1992) elaborate the cases of local media in Catalonia, a part of Spain with a strong regional identity; these community experiments promote the Catalan culture, “operating as a form of public service” (Moragas Spa and Corominas, 1992: 195). From this perspective, Dowmunt (1993) highlights out also the film and video workshop movement in the UK that “received its impetus in part from the regional (or national) aspirations of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the North East, and from the demands of black film and video makers” (Dowmunt, 1993: 8). Furthermore, Tsagarousianou (1999, 2002), drawing on ethnic minority communities, evaluates ethnic community media as distinct from other local, regional or community media since they “identify their audience in minority communities whose identities are not rooted in well bound localities” (Tsagarousianou, 1999: 57, citing Hall, 1992). By probing into ethnic community media in Britain, Tsagarousianou points out the challenges of a dynamic notion of community, which is evident through these initiatives – “community that comprises members of different generations with different expectations, needs and tastes not necessarily linked through language.[sic] and community whose cultural hybridity requires recognition” (ibid: 66). In addition, community media have been constituted generally as a “communication tool for special interest groups”. Stappers, Olderan and de Wit (1992: 96) sketch such a type of community stations in the case of Netherlands; “[t]here are usually strong ties with minority groups such as the elderly, the unemployed and ethnic groups. This type of local broadcasting places much value on encouraging programming contributions from diverse groups in the community”. As a result, the specialisation of small-scale media in the context of “community media” corresponds to a wide conception of the term “community”, including local/regional,



minority/ethnic, and more specific, grounded on diverse interests, manifestations of it. In any case, as Lewis and Booth (1989: 187, 188) put it, community media, community radio in their case, “can [not] create communities where none exist”; “community media reflect common interests”.<sup>15</sup>

Electronic initiatives figure prominently within the context of community media. Community radio, due to the low cost of operating it and its worldwide pervasiveness, has provided the main conveyor for ‘community’ communication projects. According to Hartley (2000: 153), “radio continues to be used in a variety of community building developmental situations, providing remote, marginal and disenfranchised communities with low-cost, low-tech public space”. Moreover, radio has been evaluated as the most important vehicle for promoting the ideal of communicative democracy within the context of community communication.

There is equally little doubt that the concept of communicative democracy lies at the heart of the participative practice demonstrated by the use of radio as a popular communications tool. Not only is this conception prevalent in the daily practice of many local and community based media, it also finds the support of millions of ordinary citizens who make up the audiences to these media, and who tune in generally to a ‘radio station they can call their own’ (Buckley 2000: 184).

Concerning community television projects, the high cost of operating television channels makes their implementation in local/community context highly problematic; “[l]ocal community orientated television, however, has remained in embryonic form partially because the medium is relatively expensive and because audiences generally prefer entertainment programming of high technical quality” (Prehn, 1992: 254, citing Videotrame, 1990). Nonetheless, diverse experiments on community television have taken place – ‘community television’ that involves community members in the production of an overall programming package (Lewis, 1976); ‘citizen television’, as a local dimension to public service broadcasting (Rushton, 1993); ‘local television’, which involves strong cultural and social organizations and supports decentralizing practices in linguistic, demographic and cultural terms (Moragas Spa and Corominas 1992); and, ‘public access

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<sup>15</sup> Comparative studies concerning the implementation of community television projects in Norway (along rural – urban communities) have also suggested that community television can only be real in a locality where community relations are already alive and active (Lindby, 1992).

television' that creates a discourse arena for diverse grassroots citizens groups (Stein, 1998).<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, press initiatives have less been evaluated in terms of community/local communication because of the non-interactive nature of the medium. Highlighting alternative community newspapers that emerged in the early 1970s throughout Britain ("Liverpool Free Press" figures prominently here), Atton (2002) points out their attempt to introduce a different kind of newspaper, different than the mainstream one, being produced voluntarily for specific communities of interest. These alternative community newspapers "sought to be free from commercial considerations provid[ing] 'ordinary people' with news and information that was directly useful to them in their daily lives" (Atton, 2002: 17). Nevertheless, most of the small-scale press initiatives have been evaluated within a different theoretical context ("alternative media", as it is sketched below) in relation to various aspects of the production process.

In general, community media have been mainly evaluated as forms of public communication, in terms of the diverse 'communities' they serve, challenging potentially the very structure of mass communication. As a result, most of the approaches on community media have put emphasis on the institutional and structural implications of their implementation for the democratisation of communication, along the lines of the different contexts that diverse communities set. However, the context in which this process takes place – 'communities of interest' – provides the grounds "for understanding the development of collective experience and of the communication process within a special social context" (Hollander and Stappers, 1992: 21-22). This dimension of the term 'community', which incorporates the transformation of individual experience into public collective experience through the interplay between mediated and non-mediated forms of communication, has been misrepresented in the research of community media in favour of the prospective changing of the communication structures. However, up to date overall approaches on 'community media' evaluate a broader terrain for community media research, including aspects concerning the engagement of people in them (Jankowski, 2002a; 2000b; 2003).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Stein (1998), drawing on Barber, (1984), probes into seven radical access television projects in the United States, which serve diverse communities and regions, in terms of the ways they contribute to the democratic functions of speech.

<sup>17</sup> Jankowski (2002b: 369) points out various areas of research on community media – organization, product, environment, and users – addressing different aspects across them (including in the case of users "attention to 'engaged' audience").

#### 2.2.4 *Electronic democratic projects*

From another perspective rooted in the potential of the new technologies, the “rejuvenation of local democracy” has been promoted in the place of electronic democratic projects (in both top-down and bottom-up approaches). These projects “hold a related assumption: that by altering the form of communication the content can be changed, and more participation encouraged” (Bryan, Tsagarousianou and Tambini, 1998: 5). In terms of these electronically facilitated public spaces, citizens can freely engage in deliberation and public debate. As a result, their preferences and interests can be more directly represented. Moreover, in the terms of this new kind of publicness, communities are treated as “social capital networks, rather than strictly as discourse communities”; such an approach “grounds the connective elements of new information technologies in social life and social structure”.

Social capital describes the durable networks that form social resources through which individuals and groups strive for mutual recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 19). As such, social capital is the necessary infrastructure of civic and community life that generates ‘norms of reciprocity and civic engagement’” (Friedland, 1996: 189).

A number of experiments in electronic democracy were implemented in the mid-1980s by American local government authorities.<sup>18</sup> These initiatives promoted the use of information and communications technology in order to improve initially the services of local authority to the citizens, and further, to facilitate citizens’ participation in public affairs (Docter and Dutton, 1998). Tracing on the ‘Minnesota’s e-democracy project’, Dahlberg (2001) evaluates citizen participation in political life, local politics, in terms of the constitution of an ‘on-line’ public space. By developing ‘on line’ public forums where “members have the rights and responsibilities associated with open discussion and highly public exchange”,<sup>19</sup> Minnesota e-democracy project provides a deliberative space for participants to discuss issues related to a particular geographically bounded political jurisdiction, the state of Minnesota. Thus, Minnesota’s e-democracy project develops community issues forums and electronic orientated special events (offering news, voter

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<sup>18</sup> The example of ‘The Public Electronic Network’ in Santa Monica, California figures prominently here.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted from Minnesota e-democracy’s home page (<http://www.e-democracy.org>) in Dahlberg (2001: 5).

information, media coverage and comments, and e-debates between political candidates), providing links to the various lists and their archives as well (Dahlberg, 2001: 6). Such an on-line forum, based on deliberative discourse, promotes, according to Dahlberg, the ideals of inclusion and participation. Moreover, Friedland (1996), elaborating into a broad range of “citizen-and community-based information networks” – advocacy,<sup>20</sup> community,<sup>21</sup> government and electronic development networks,<sup>22</sup> and electronic public journalism<sup>23</sup> – based in USA, evaluates the “distinct enabling relationship that new technologies have to the building of social capital on the one hand, and new citizenship capacities on the other” (Friedland, 1996: 206). Furthermore, since the early 1990s local authorities in Europe have been engaged in experiments in electronic democracy as well). New media initiatives have been constituted as means of enhancing political participation, making possible for citizens to participate directly in the political process – in terms of facilitating access to information, deliberation, debate and voting<sup>24</sup> – overcoming by this way the barriers of representative democracy. Such experiments share a number of common characteristics;

they are perceived by the social actors initiating or participating in them as a means of reviving and reinvigorating democratic politics ...; they have been local or regional in their character, being related to more or less territorially urban and suburban communities; they have been based on broadly similar technological infrastructures (Tsagarousianou, 1998a: 168).

These civic projects encompass various modes of citizens’ engagement, related to the service provision of the projects as well as to citizens’ participation in them. Accordingly, the character of the projects (local government-led – civil society-led) defines their objectives and aims. Thus, there are public information provision-centred projects that provide information for local concerns (the Berlin City Information System<sup>25</sup>); projects that combine to a more or lesser extent service provision and citizen’s deliberation (Network

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<sup>20</sup> “[N]etworks that have created new information out of advocacy in the service of problem solving and action” (Friedland, 1996: 190-195).

<sup>21</sup> “[N]etworks that have been driven by technology in local or regional communities” (ibid: 190, 195-197).

<sup>22</sup> “[N]etworks that have grown out of broadly defined governmental or local planning activity (including economic and community development) (ibid: 190, 197-201).

<sup>23</sup> “[E]lectronic public journalism models that have grown out of new network publishing practices” (ibid: 190, 201-206).

<sup>24</sup> See Bryan, Tsagarousianou and Tambini (1998: 6-8) for an extensive account on the ideology of civic networking movement.

<sup>25</sup> See Schmidtke (1998: 60 – 83).

Pericles,<sup>26</sup> the Manchester Information City<sup>27</sup>); some of them having also the support of grassroots groups (the IperBoLE project in Bologna,<sup>28</sup> Amsterdam's Digital City<sup>29</sup>). In addition, citizens' participation in civic and political life through new media practices has been evaluated in collective terms: in the context of online-communities – along with new technology's potential for political empowerment (Schwartz, 1998),<sup>30</sup> and in relation to the building of a global civil society (Curran, 2003);<sup>31</sup> as well as, in terms of providing the organizational software of a kind of media activism (Downing, 2003b),<sup>32</sup> constituting in general a new terrain for collective political action (Rheingold, 1995). According to Tsagarousianou (1998a: 169, 176-177), while in theory there are different frameworks of evaluating electronic democracy, the “plebiscitary” model and the “deliberative” one which promote either direct or representative modes of the democratic process correspondingly, aspects of both these models can be found in the implementation of electronic projects concerning citizen's engagement in them.

“New forms of communication, it is argued, will foster greater interest and participation in the political process which will in turn enhance and enrich democracy” (Barnett, 1997: 193). A number of questions have been raised concerning the emancipatory potential of the new media, that of cementing the principle of democracy itself. On the one hand, the issues of access to hardware and software raise the problems of non-universal access and the growing disparity between information “haves” and “have-nots” (Tsagarousianou, 1998a: 170). Yet, despite their limits in emancipatory terms, electronic democratic projects, and their possible democratic uses, can support and promote public communication within the context of the ‘community’ they serve. On the other hand, the opportunity for deliberation that new media convey, which is grounded on their interactive nature and on time – space compression, is questionable in terms of the individualistic nature of engagement (Barnett, 1997: 216), and the absence of face-to-face interaction (Dahlgren, 1995: 20). Overall, the non-consistent, in both literal and normative terms, character of citizen's participation in the electronic democratic projects highlights their

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<sup>26</sup> See Tsagarousianou (1998b: 41 – 59).

<sup>27</sup> See Bryan (1998: 152 – 166).

<sup>28</sup> See Tambini (1998: 84 – 109)

<sup>29</sup> See Francissen and Brants (1998: 18 – 40).

<sup>30</sup> The case of ‘Philadelphia's Neighbourhoods-Online’.

<sup>31</sup> The case of the Web magazine ‘open-Democracy’

<sup>32</sup> The case of the ‘Independent Media Center Movement’.

supplementary, instead of central, role in the process of the democratisation of communication.

### 2.2.5 *Alternative media*

The term ‘alternative media’<sup>33</sup> is the most controversial one concerning its definition in bibliography because of its nature to apply to various modes of contestation of mainstream practices. Different approaches on alternative media have highlighted diverse issues, putting emphasis on instances of media operation – creation, production, distribution – as well as, on the process of the communication practice itself and its manifestations of empowerment, in symbolic (Couldry, 1999, 2001a, 2001b), and reflexive terms (Atton, 2001, 2002).

On the one hand, alternative media have been evaluated in terms of incorporating decentralised, non-mainstream, non-commercial practices in their operation. From this perspective, it is the employment of such practices along the organisation, production and dissemination of these media projects that attributes to them the very term alternative. The model of left press figures prominently here. The concern of left press with prefigurative forms of organisation has promoted collective models of working, a strategy that is in accordance with the political commitment of such projects. Moreover, the operation of left press has been based on anti-commercial practices. Competing approaches on the function of alternative press along these lines have been articulated here. According to Comedia group’s (1984) assessment<sup>34</sup> the a priori rejection of mainstream economic and organizational techniques by alternative press has been the main reason for its underdevelopment. From this point of view, Comedia group suggest that alternative press has to come to terms with issues of commercial necessity – “the only other option either collapse or an existence so marginal as to be irrelevant” (Comedia, 1984: 96). On the other hand, the commercial strategy that Comedia proposes for alternative press – to employ capitalist skills as marketing and promotion – has, as Khiabany (2000) points out, failed miserably (the case of the monthly *Red Pepper*). In contrast,

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<sup>33</sup> For a discussion on the term ‘alternative media’ see Atton, 2002; Couldry, 2001b (defending the term) and Downing, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001 (making objections to the term).

<sup>34</sup> Comedia was set up (originally as the Minority Press Group) in 1978 to conduct research into the problems faced by community newspapers, and by minority publications attempting to break into the wholesale distribution market (Comedia, 1984: 102).

concessions to the much more traditional strategy of publishing on a shoestring and addressing a relatively small audience of those interested in the leftist ideas have at least managed to provide a way for *Red Pepper* to survive. In this light, the much derided 'Leninist' theory of the press has proved far superior to the more market-friendly alternatives (Khiabany, 2000: 461).

According to this perspective, working, socialist, left newspapers that followed the traditional version of the alternative to the capitalist press have provided a more consistent 'alternative', surviving longer and attracting more readers than did the left press under a broad professional and commercial strategy (ibid: 462).

Moreover, diverse grassroots press projects run by various alliances and pressure groups in the 1990s, have provided examples of employing alternative methods of production (reproduction) and distribution. Atton (2002) elaborates two strategies of "distributive use" – 'anti-copyright'/'open copyright', and 'open distribution' – developed by grassroots press.<sup>35</sup> "[These strategies] are concerned with the deliberate decentralization and relinquishment of control of the processes of reproduction and distribution of alternative publications by the original publishers" (Atton, 2002: 42). From this perspective, alternative press does not simply constitute an economic rival to its mainstream counterpart, but it "actively rejects the economic conditions of the mainstream, even to the extent of developing innovative forms of distribution" (ibid: 50). It is actually the way these pre-figurative projects address their practice, in terms of opposing the dominant relations of production, that values alternative media as such. Thus, this approach addresses alternative media practices further than their ideological presumptions, in terms of social and political action as well. Moreover, these projects are interrelated with the alternative public sphere(s)<sup>36</sup> in which they are implemented.

The relationship is mutual and synergetic; the alternative public sphere provides opportunities and outlets for the production and consumption of the alternative press, at the same time as the press itself provides material that

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<sup>35</sup> Atton (2002: 42 – 52) traces here on the examples of *Green Anarchist* (anti-copyright strategy), *Squall* (open copyright strategy), *Do or Die* (open distribution strategy), *The Big Issue* (street-selling strategy), and other projects (activist newsletters - SchNEWS).

<sup>36</sup> For an overall evaluation of the relation between alternative public sphere and their media see Downing, 1984; 2001. See also studies on the evaluation of this relation in specific contexts/realms; for example, in relation to environmental movement (Downing, 1988), and to women's/feminist movement (Smith, 1993).

sustains the sphere's function as a place for the formulation, discussion and debate of radical and dissenting ideas (Atton, 2002: 50).

In this context of the mutual relationship between alternative media and alternative culture/subcultures, diverse cultural forms of communication – including artistic and literary media,<sup>37</sup> as well as media practices such as zines and hybrid forms of electronic communication – have sprung up. Probing into the 'zine culture',<sup>38</sup> the 'do-it-yourself' model of alternative media production, in both printed ('zines') and electronic ('e-zines') versions, Atton (2001, 2002) highlights the transformation of social relations along with the transformation of the communication process itself. Firstly, the separate roles that characterize mass media culture become collapsed into one in zine culture.<sup>39</sup> "In this model, roles and responsibilities are no longer discrete; there is much overlap and, with that overlap, the transformation of notions such as professionalism, competence and expertise" (Atton, 2001: 22). Moreover, the production of zine-like communication questions the very elitist division between cultural activity and everyday life, entitling a wide range of social actors in the process (Atton, 2002: 77, 78). In addition, the deployment of information and communication technologies within the context of new social movements promotes the very principles of activism – sociality, mobilization, and direct political action (ibid: 133). Finally, along the lines of the practices and processes that alternative media projects employ, Atton points out the educational value of the engagement in them, as it is gained through action.

[E]ducation can also come from the involvement in the production and organization of the media. Education in the alternative media leads to self-reflexivity ... Experimentation and creativity with alternative possibilities of 'being' and 'doing' will form the heart of such activity; autonomy and the absence of unbalanced power relations can develop a 'reflexive habitus' (Cox, 1997) that can connect the self with lifeworld (ibid: 154).

On the whole, although Atton addresses the practice of alternative media in terms of process as well as in relation to their sociocultural context, his theorization upon the characteristics

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<sup>37</sup> See also Downing 2001: 105-142, pointing out an overall tapestry of radical communication practices (graffiti, street theatre, performance art, culture-jamming, etc.).

<sup>38</sup> See also S. Duncombe (1997).

<sup>39</sup> "An editor is often the sole writer, designer, paste-up artist, finisher and distributor" (Atton, 2002: 5).



and values of alternative media is principally articulated in terms of “providing empowering narratives of resistance for counter-publics”.

From another perspective, Couldry prioritizes “mediation”<sup>40</sup> process rather than the media themselves, studying “media as a broader process which cut across the social terrain, without necessarily passing through the neat circuit of ‘producer-text-reader’” (Couldry, 2001b: 4). In this framework, Couldry evaluates alternative media practices in a broader context that of contesting the dominant conditions of media power, its symbolic boundaries and hierarchies. It is the concentration of symbolic power – “the power of constructing reality” in Bourdieu’s (1991, quoted in Couldry, 2001b: 1) words – in the media institutions in contemporary mediated societies that alternative media practices contest, declaring the right of their agents “to share in society’s resources for representing itself” (ibid: 2). Through this prism Couldry takes also into account practices of contesting media power which do not necessarily involve media production resources; rather they are activities that are articulated on the very limits of mediation process, within the frame of mainstream media outputs, challenging the operations of media power, as well as, in relation to the “media frame”, contesting its very constitution. Along these lines, Couldry points out the contestation of media power by the disenfranchised in terms of registering disruptively their ‘presence’, thus registering the inequalities of media power (Couldry, 2001a),<sup>41</sup> and disrupting the common sense separation between ‘ordinary people’ and events in mediated public space (Couldry, 1999).<sup>42</sup> Thus, by tracing alternative practices along the mediation process Couldry evaluates a wider field of disruption of symbolic power in terms of the registration of the “vastness of power differentials”.

In conclusion, the widening of the spectrum of alternative media in terms of encompassing instances of empowerment in reflexive as well as in symbolic terms has shifted the interest to the ‘agents’ of these practices, and the way social actors are engaged with and in these practices. From this perspective, and drawing on the field of reception, Downing (2003a: 621) points out that “[i]t is a paradox, however, that so little attention has been dedicated to the user dimension, given the fact that alternative media activists represent in a sense the most active segment of the so-called ‘active audience’”. Downing

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<sup>40</sup> Couldry draws on Jesus Martin-Barbero’s (1993) evaluation of mediation “as the mass of processes of doing things with particular media technologies having particular representational effects” (Couldry, 2001b: 5).

<sup>41</sup> The case of “The Umbrella Man”.

<sup>42</sup> The case of “Yellow Gate – Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp”.

sheds light on this aspect of alternative media practices as well, evaluating it along the lines of mutual relationship between alternative media and social movements. In this context, Downing (2003a: 642) employs the term “media users” in order to point out the active nature of alternative-media reception. In general, such an approach highlights another dimension of alternative media practices, the “blurring of producers and audiences” in them (Atton and Couldry: 2003: 583), advancing and enriching the field of alternative media.

### 2.2.6 *Citizens’ media*

From an overall approach, which takes into account instances of both production and reception process, Rodriguez (2001) evaluates alternative media practices, “citizens’ media” in her own words, in terms of the ‘lived experience’ of those involved in these practices. Thus, Rodriguez highlights another dimension of alternative media practices that has been absent from the theoretical approaches of both the communication and cultural studies; which in the first case are trapped in traditional concepts of oppositional politics (in terms of subversive action), and in the second one have focused exclusively in people’s interaction with the media texts of dominant media, neglecting the media texts of ordinary citizens (Rodriguez, 2001: 4). As a result, Rodriguez approaches diverse alternative media practices in terms of the way their agents, citizen’s groups and grassroots organizations, engage in/with them; they do it in a way that registers their ‘difference’. Thus, from this perspective, Rodriguez identifies the heterogeneity of alternative media experiments itself, shedding light on different aspects of their ‘lived experience’. A lot of cases of alternative media projects around the world that have been addressed above in various and different contexts (social, cultural, political and historical) – participatory, community/local/minority, alternative media – are reviewed here in terms of citizens’ media, out of an essentialist context.

Citizens’ media result from a complex interaction between people’s attempts to democratize the mediascape and their contextual circumstances. Therefore, as each one of these interactions takes a unique profile, citizens’ media exist in a polymorphic ensemble which rejects tight definition. This explains why it is possible to talk about citizen’s media when referring to [very diverse] communication experiences (ibid: 164).

Particularly, by probing into four different case studies<sup>43</sup> of citizens' media Rodriguez celebrates<sup>44</sup> the heterogeneity of the social actors and the diversity of forms citizens' media take, and highlights the "subtle processes of fracture" that citizens' media practices activate in the "social, cultural and power spheres of everyday life".

Rodriguez draws here on the lines of the conceptual framework of radical democracy, evaluating alternative media practices in terms of diverse processes of civic engagement, as they are articulated in the actual field of the 'lived experience' of these practices. Hence, from the radical point of view that conceives the constitution of the political in the realm of quotidian too – every aspect of everyday life constitutes a potential site of social/political struggle – Rodriguez points out the very relevance of citizens' media practices.

Mouffe declares that this new understanding of the social subject as a kaleidoscopic encounter of identities and differentiated "portions-of-power" is a necessary condition for understanding the richness of everyday political struggles. When applying this concept to alternative media, the richness of experiencing the reappropriation of mediated communication comes to life in all its exuberance (ibid: 18).

Moreover, the conceptualization of social/political subject as conveyor of multiple subject positions advances an understanding of citizenship as a form of identification – "something to be constructed not empirically given" (Mouffe, 1992: 231). From this perspective, Rodriguez evaluates citizens' media as significant sites for the enactment of citizenship; where the social subjects negotiate and renegotiate social definitions, their identities, cultures and lifestyles, on the personal as well as on the collective level. "Citizens have to enact their citizenship on a day-to-day basis, through their participation in everyday political practices" (Rodriguez, 2001: 19). Such a dynamic and liberated framework of understanding citizenship encompasses the fluidity and complexity of alternative media practices as social, political and cultural phenomena that challenge the very understanding of the notion of the 'political'. In this context, Rodriguez approaches citizen's media in

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<sup>43</sup> The movement of popular correspondents in revolutionary Nicaragua (Rodriguez, 2001: 65-81); the local community-based television stations in Catalonia (ibid: 83-108); the production of video stories by Colombian women (ibid: 109-128); and, ethnic minority (Latino) radio stations in the United States (ibid: 129-147).

<sup>44</sup> In contrast to other approaches (Paiva, 1983, cited in Rodriguez, 2001: 20-21) that had articulated such diversity as a limitation.

terms of negotiations and renegotiations of social identities, codes, and relationships that take place through their process, as fertile environments of “quotidian politics”;

a politics which extends the terrain of political contestation to the everyday enactment of social practices and the routine reiteration of cultural representations” (McClure, 1992: 123). The line demarcating the public/political and the private/non-political blurs. In quotidian politics, every dimension of everyday life becomes a potential site for social contestation (Rodriguez, 2001: 21).

Despite the differences on the focus, and as a result on the very term used, among approaches that trace alternative media practices drawing on agent’s engagement with, and in, them (Rodriguez, 2001; Couldry, 2001b; Atton, 2002; Downing, 2003a), “few involved in this field would disagree with Clemencia Rodriguez’s recent argument that at stake in the whole range of alternative media practice is the issue of *citizenship* in some sense” (Atton and Couldry, 2003: 580, emphasis in the original).

Along the lines of such a dynamic conceptualization of citizenship, the present study focuses on citizens’ involvement in alternative media practices and the appropriation of communication means within their own socio-cultural environment. Not only do such practices provide the space for the expression of citizenship but they also constitute agents for the enactment of citizenship of those engaged in them. Rephrasing C. Atton (2002: 6), ‘these media are central to experience because they are media that inform, reflect, express experience, our experience, on a daily basis – if not more than the mass media, then at least in a significant different manner, in that for those involved in their practice, the very process of such projects becomes part of daily life, of quotidian experience’. From this perspective, the study draws on the lines of these approaches that prioritize the ‘lived experience’ of alternative media, probing into the understanding and experience of their practice by their social actors, agents themselves. Finally, though the definition of the very term of such practices is not of primary concern here, this study employs the term ‘grassroots media practices’<sup>45</sup> in the sense that Traber (1985, cited in Atton, 2002: 16) has sketched it: “[t]hey are produced by the same people whose concerns they represent, from a position of engagement and direct participation”.

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<sup>45</sup> Both terms ‘citizen’ and ‘alternative’ are at stake in the Greek context; see chapter 3 and chapter 4 correspondingly.

In this context, the present study probes into the 'lived experience' of diverse grassroots media practices along with their contribution to, and intervention in public and political life.

## *PART II*

## CHAPTER 3

### *Greek literature*

The first chapter of Part II introduces the context of the present research in terms of the relevant literature review on communication and media studies.

The discussion about the public and the political sphere in Greek bibliography has been predominantly articulated in terms of elaborated accounts of the overall character of Greek political culture. In this theoretical context, the universes of political discourse and action have been mainly researched within the realms of the conventional public and political sphere, along the lines of specific features of Greek political culture that have been constituted both diachronically and contemporarily.

However, forms of political discourse and action, the social domains they are enacted into, and their practices that take place out of the dominant public and political sphere have been neglected by the research field. The very few studies that evaluate domains, actors, their discourses and practices, 'on the margins' have regarded them only in terms of their exclusion from the conventional public and political sphere. The only exception of researching grassroots media practices in their own field concerns alternative forms of radio broadcasting, regarding the extent to which they constitute partial public spheres.

By researching grassroots media practices in terms of their 'lived experience' this study employs diverse initiatives across different media.

### 3.1 *The traditions*

The special characteristics of Greek political culture have been drawn on various religious, social and political traditions of Greek society, highlighting its 'selective' nature. Moreover, the features of Greek political culture have been evaluated in terms of preventing Greek society from having vibrant public space and life, as they have been sketched in western experience across the concepts of 'civil society', 'public sphere' and 'citizenship'.

Most of the studies set the "selective tradition" of Greek political culture back in the years of the Byzantium Empire (6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> century) and its religious-political characteristics. The patrimonial nature of the central authority in Byzantium, as it is revealed in the dependence of the whole system of dominance on the person of the Emperor, along with a daedal bureaucratic machine; the absence of obligatory institutional regulations of power relationships; and, the idiosyncratic relations between political and religious power, have been the main aspects of the religious-political heritage of the Byzantium tradition (Demertzis, 1994: 42, 61, 62). In this context, people's social behaviour has been characterized by a profound fatalism, and it is void of any sense of social responsibility, preventing thus the principles of citizenship, the rights and obligations it encompasses, from springing out in Greece. As Demertzis puts it:

[T]he personalization of political structures and the personalized character of social relationships, the informality of roles, the overall atrophy of civil society, the private-individualistic perception of public interest, the conceptualization of rights as privileges, the high percentage of cynic political behaviour, the defensive attitudes against the modernization of society, and the low level of interpersonal trust, are some of the basic parameters of contemporary Greek political culture which are heavily based on the Byzantine selective tradition (ibid: 67).

Moreover, these characteristics have been reinforced by the Christian Orthodox conceptualization of the self that advances a sense of 'compliance'. The predominant role of religion, of Christian Orthodox discourse, in the traditional Greek society, has predefined the conception of the self in terms of the 'believer'. The individual is addressed here in terms of the 'believer', as person-member-of 'thankful community', engaged/united with God in a mystic way. Through this prism, the conception of individual is not articulated in terms of public rights and responsibilities but along the lines of a passive life attitude



followed by the believers that 'facilitates' deification process (theosis) (Demertzis, 1994: 63, 64, cited also in Barboutis, 1994: 27).

Furthermore, the long (for almost four centuries) Greek experience under the Turkish-Ottoman rule has perpetuated the patrimonial nature of authority, and shaped certain characteristics across Greek social reality over time. These characteristics, concerning people's attitudes towards politics, power, and the state, have been shaped within a deeply traditional, pre-capitalist social formation (situated at the periphery of the Empire), where the processes of social integration and organization were satisfied in terms of the 'defensive institution of the extended family'.

The political socialization of the individual within this state of affairs tended inevitably to emphasise suspicion towards the political authorities, to counsel caution and distrust in one's dealings with them, and to foster an attitude and a mentality which placed a premium on actions designed to evade state policies, blunt their impact and, ultimately, thwart state activity as such. If politics became a necessary and essential aspect of life for all alike, it was a politics which emphasized defensive action, reliance on primordial values, and a profound suspicion of the most powerful, and hence most threatening extra-familiar institution, the state. It was finally a politics which was excessively instrumental to, and hence potentially erosive of, the legitimacy of the state (Diamandouros, 1983: 45).

The years after the National Revolution (1821) were also characterized by the dominance of traditional 'selective' principles and characteristics in Greek society. Though the National Revolution "encompassed" in theory the Enlightenment ideas, these ideas "had not been implemented within the Greek society itself as the result of internal struggles, but, they were introduced from above" (Paparizos, 1994: 99). As such, Enlightenment ideas "did not question structurally the practices of the past and the organisational principles of Greek society ... but they were adjusted to the needs of the spacious communal society of Greece" (Demertzis, 1994: 31).<sup>46</sup> One main aspect of this condition is reflected in the reality of

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<sup>46</sup> In the context of the interrelationship between the old and new in Greek political culture (where the traditional and modern attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are interknitted), Demertzis (1994: 27) describes this condition as a situation where gradually the tradition itself leaves space to the modern elements, but it takes place in terms of a condition (reversible syncretism) where the interrelationship of traditional and modern element takes place in such a way that the developing modern elements take a formalistic scheme that facilitates the reproduction of traditional schemes of perception and behaviour. See also Diamandouros (1983: 48) for the adaptation of modern institutions to traditional functions.

Greek society in terms of the constitution of the terms/concepts of human being, person, citizen, believer, Greek, and their characteristics.

In the three first revolutionary constitutions of Greece there is not any definite distinction between the rights of human being, individual, citizen, and believer, and the identity/quality of being Greek. In contrast, the “belief in God” constitutes the essential and first component of the quality of being Greek, which is the base for the conciliation of the rights of Greek with his human, individual and political rights (Paparizos, 1994: 89, emphasis in the original).

From this perspective, the notions of human being, citizen, and their characteristics did not sustain themselves in the Greek context, but they were assimilated by the fact of being Greek, which is realized in terms of Christian Orthodox ‘belief’. According to Lipowatz (1994: 127) “the myth of ‘Greekness’ was, and is, based on the ideological hegemony of Orthodoxy, and the identification of the Church and state as being one against the constitutional stature”. This aspect had negative consequences for the development both of a free spirit of “courage civique” and of a “civil society” in Greece (ibid: 128).

### 3.2 *The national adventures*

Another crucial parameter in the formation of Greek political culture has been the central role of the state in the processes of political incorporation; the state has been in various modes the exclusive arena of their implementation.

Since the outbreak of the Greek war of independence (1821) the conflict between traditional and modern power blocks took place in terms of capturing the control of the state. Thus, state had been the ‘apple of discord’, both in the first years of independence – during the intervention of the three Great Powers (England, France, and Russia) in Greek affairs (directly, by bringing a foreign ruler, and indirectly, being the leadership of the three political parties); and in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century – the constitution of a centralized state after the first years of political confrontations was accompanied by a shift of the basis of the power of autochthonous elites from land property to the colonization of the state, from economic to ‘political paternalism’ (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 127, citing Tsoukalas, 1977: 224). In addition, attempts of rationalizing society from ‘above’ were accompanied

by the particularization of the 'new' from 'below'. Diamandouros evaluates this process as follows:

[T]he imposition of political institutions which were ultimately the products of capitalist social formation with powerful middle classes upon a pre-capitalist social order which lacked the structures to receive them created in Greece a tense and sterile symbiotic relationship between state and society that was to have lasting consequences on the modern Greek political system, and which profoundly reinforced inherited attitudes of distrust and manipulation towards the state, and helped produce a deeply alienative political culture. ... [T]he assumption that the state can be legitimately colonised and privatised became particularly ingrained during this early period of the operation of parliamentary government in Greece and has, to this day, remained a distinguishing feature of the political culture (Diamandouros, 1983: 47- 48).

This fundamental conflict between the new state and old society has been sketched in terms of the scheme of 'early parliamentarianism' – late industrialization' (Mouzelis, 1986), as well as, of the 'hybrid constitution of bourgeoisie' (Filiass, 1985). In contrast to Western experience, the introduction of parliamentary system in Greece has not been based in any structural social changes in Greek society; the industrialization process followed, instead of proceeding, any attempt of constituting a liberal state and its institutions (Mouzelis, 1986: 48-72). As such, the rationalization of society across different patterns of organization and distribution of political power never took place. In addition, "there was no distinction between people-conveyors of economic power and those of the political one – which was the basic principle of the liberal-democratic conception of the state in the phase of free competition; in contrast, these capacities were compatible in the Greek context" (Filiass, 1985: 95). In this context, both state and society were formed along the lines of clientelistic networks. The state was conceived as a mere instrument in the hands of economic/political elites and their parties, being used for the allocation of resources and rewards to their political clients, who perceived the former correspondingly as an instrument for the satisfaction of their individual needs. In addition, the prevalence of clientelistic practices was reflected, according to Tsagarousianou, in

the "vertical" organization of Greek society which it established and developed to such an extent that any "horizontal" way of social and political organization became almost impossible. The clientelistic rationale did not allow for the articulation of social contradictions and conflicts in the political

sphere. As Psomiades observed, in Greek society “[i]nstead of belonging to a number of functional groups, the individual tended to belong to one group, which served all of his needs” (Psomiades, 1976: 150). As needs were dealt on an individual basis, collective interests tended to be misrecognized and fragmented (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 131).

As a result, it was the political parties/cliques of the period that dominated the political sphere in Greece, mediating exclusively the relation between state and society. In this context, the ‘representative’ form of Greek political parties was compatible to the exclusion of social interests from the political process in terms of clientelistic practices, where collective interests were transformed into individual demands. Such a process perpetuated (taking into account that political parties were formed from above) the disengagement of politics from civil society and its socio-political divisions and conflicts. Furthermore, since “the only ways in which the population ... were integrated in the political life were the clientelistic networks, which in any case distorted and mystified any collective grievances or demands, it was evident that the emergence of a civil society independent from the state, or any national organization was thwarted in advance” (ibid: 136).

Three ‘political adventures’ of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the national schism, the civil war and the military dictatorship) have contributed to the perpetuation of the hybrid relations between state and society in Greece. The great ‘national schism’ (1915-16) concerned the confrontation between two sections of the Greek middle class, which became the “overarching cleavage” of the interwar period, concerning the control over the state (Georgarakis, 1994: 256). As a result, the idiosyncratic articulation of the relation between state and society in the Greek context developed its more negative features. The following defeat in Asia Minor (1922), a profound traumatic experience for Greek society, produced an ideological crisis, and a social and political vacuum, “replete with a deep sense of loss, disorientation, drift, and alienation coupled with widespread insecurity, moral agony, and despair which inevitably coloured both collective and individual attitudes towards state and politics alike” (Diamandouros, 1983: 51). Concerning the political system, the formation of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was a potential threat for the divided and traumatized middle class, questioning the existing political regime and the established social order. The maintenance of the exclusivist nature of the political system found its scapegoat in the name of the ‘common enemy’ (the Communist Party) that provided the ground for the reconciliation of the divided middle class, leading to the suspension of parliamentary rule

by Metaxas dictatorship in 1936 (supported by significant and influential segments of the middle class) (Diamandouros, 1983: 51). As a result, these developments reinforced the crisis of the legitimacy of the parliamentary rule, of liberal state, and its institutions both normatively and literally.

A new profound social and political division in Greek society, marked by the dominant position of the Greek 'right' and the resistant movement of leftist forces asking for autonomous participation into the political system, had thus been introduced, which resulted in the civil war (1946-49). The defeat of the left during civil war was then reflected on the constitutional order of post-civil war state that institutionalized the dominance of the victors. The institutionalization of this profound social and political division was achieved by the creation, through legislation, of a 'para-constitutional reality' during the following two decades, till the actual suspension of parliamentary rule by the military dictatorship in 1967 (ibid: 52). Thus, a new schism in the Greek society of the post – civil-war era was developed along the lines of 'national minded' versus 'non-national minded'. According to Komninou (2001: 55), "the historical differences were degenerated into a profoundly shattered civil society, where the national identity as well as the fundamental human rights of the vanquished, were questioned. From this perspective, the historical asymmetry between civil society and the state was expanded and reinforced by the new schism". Moreover, the discrimination against those who were (or were classified as) sympathetic to communism was implemented in institutional terms as well, through the 'exclusion of whole parts of the population from the state and the privileges it provided' (Moshonas, 1994: 167).<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the dualistic nature of the constitutional order of post-civil war era, as it was reflected in the introduction of a para-constitutional framework (administrative and legal emergency measures" over which systematic discrimination was built), perpetuated the central role of the Greek army in politics. The latter had "established its tutelage over the political process, by setting the limits of acceptable action or reform and by guaranteeing the supremacy of the para-constitution" (Tsagarousianou: 1993: 152, citing Haralambis, 1989). The Greek army established its privileged position in the Greek political structure through the military dictatorship (1967-1974).

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<sup>47</sup> Characteristic example is here the use of certificates of 'civic mindedness', "designed to regard political adherents by allowing them to colonize the state mechanism and the vast public and semi-public network of enterprises that it controlled and, above all, to exclude the vanquished in the civil war, those unable to obtain certificates of 'civic mindedness' because of their political beliefs, from similar employment on the grounds of national security" (Diamandouros, 1983: 52)

As a result, it is the political parties and their strategic role in the political sphere, as it is reflected in the political cleavages of that period<sup>48</sup> that dominate political life during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well. Here, the asymmetry between the powerful state on the one hand and the weak character of civil society on the other hand has been highlighted. Georgarakis (1994: 262) has evaluated this asymmetry in terms of “social under-functionality”, which means the guardianship of the ‘social’ by the ‘political’. From this perspective, the dominance of the ‘political’ over the ‘social’ has reflected the weakness of social structures to facilitate the autonomous articulation and reproduction of social and political interests. Besides, the atrophic nature of the ‘social’ has been perpetuated by the dynamic intervention of the ‘political’; it is the guardianship of autonomous voluntary associations by the state and political parties that has reproduced the conditions of social under-functionality. As a result, the political parties reinforced the centralised character of their own structures, as well as those of state, by mediating and controlling the constitution and reproduction of social interests (ibid: 262, 265). Under these conditions, the clientelistic modes of political incorporation are still prevalent, and implemented in more centralised practices. What has changed in the political parties, in relation to those of 19<sup>th</sup> century, is the nature of the “structure of patronage”, which nevertheless reinforced their centralised character (Mouzelis 1978: 80, cited also in Georgarakis, 1994: 262-263).

However, the emphasis of the respective studies on the centrality of political parties over social and political life across this period of ‘national adventures’ has turned the interest concerning the political process exclusively in relation to the conventional political sphere. Moreover, the ‘intermediary structures’ between public and private sphere have been evaluated exclusively along the lines of the interrelations between economic and political factors. In this context, the sphere of consumption has been evaluated as the prominent mode of “social hypostatization” for the population (Karapostolis, 1984: 269, cited also in Tsagarousianou, 1993: 150). Furthermore, the research interest on the political sphere, beyond the discussion about the dominance of political parties over the social structures, has been mainly drawn on political attitudes formed within the official political sphere. Thus, ‘confrontational’ aspects within the public and political sphere (the case of the

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<sup>48</sup> Moschonas (1994: 159-170) points out three main political cleavages that run the organization of the political sphere of that period: ‘national minded – non-national minded’; one more within the ‘national-minded’ cleavage between ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’, which goes back to the division of middle class in the national schism (1915-1916); and, that between ‘right’ and ‘anti-right’.

post – civil-war era figures prominently here) have not been taken into account but figuratively.

While this profound social and ideological division which has so indelibly marked post-war Greek reality allow us to speak of a divided political culture consisting of the subculture of the victors and that of the vanquished, the deeper impact of this development upon the national political culture can be seen in the quasi-universal attitudes of extreme suspicion, profound alienation, and moral ambivalence towards the state and the political system as whole which arose from the identification of the state and of the political system, in the eyes of the victor and vanquished alike, with particularism and nepotism, corruption, venality and pronounced partisanship. The glaring inefficiency of the state mechanism, itself the result of the hydrocephalous nature of the public sector, ..., made for an ever-widening credibility gap between state and society, exacerbating, ..., the negative and alienative aspects of the political culture that had slowly grown over more than a century of Greek political life (Diamandouros, 1983: 52-53).

In this context, the politicization of Greeks has been constituted in terms of the way they perceive and practice politics ('overpoliticization') within the official political sphere. "The over-politicization of Greeks ... was not a mode of political incorporation that guaranteed an overall participation in the political process. In essence, it was a mode of selective political exclusion via the partisanship of any field of the political confrontation ... [which] reflected the interests of clientelistic networks and promoted personal choices and objectives" (Georgarakis, 1994: 261-262).

Yet, the exclusive focus on the domain of conventional political sphere has not left space for taking into account processes of politicization that are articulated beyond it. By pointing out the asymmetry between an all-powerful state and the weak civil society, most of the studies have focused on the state and the political parties, disregarding in this way the wider public sphere and the cultural field (Komninou, 2001: 56). From another perspective, which draws partly on Habermas' theory of 'public sphere', as well as, on Jakubowicz's (1990) and Fraser's (1993) accounts on competing public spheres, Komninou (2001) sketches the public sphere in Greece distinguishing between a dominant, official public sphere and competing ones, which she traces along parallel discursive arenas and subaltern counter-publics. Thus, during post – civil-war era the public sphere was divided between a dominant sphere under constitution and the counter-public spheres of leftist movements; and, after the establishment of military dictatorship (1967) the public sphere was divided

between the official established public sphere and diverse, under formation, competing spheres (middle classes, leftists, radicals) (Komninou, 2001: 118-119). Such an approach takes into account different social domains and 'publics' that run through the wider public domain. Komninou focuses her analysis on the illustration of these counter-publics and their cultural codes in mass media,<sup>49</sup> highlighting 'deviant' cases of media reflection as well. The evaluation of practices that the counter-publics themselves develop is another interesting issue.

### 3.3 *The party system*

The research 'tradition' that focuses on the conventional political sphere is the dominant one in the period after the restoration of democracy in Greece as well.

The return of Greece to constitutional rule in 1974 has been accompanied by a new division of the political system into left, right and centre (the emergence of PASOK – Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement). Despite the threefold division of the political sphere the actual competition for government power has been the apple of discord for two of them – 'New democracy' (right) and PASOK (centre), excluding the left. Moreover, the predominance of these political parties over political and social life has been accompanied by the incorporation of 'populist-clientelistic practices' (Mouzelis, 1978: 80), implemented in terms of 'bureaucratic clientelism' (Tsagarousianou, 1994: 336). Hence, the democratization of the political system in the post-dictatorship period took place along the lines of 'party government'.<sup>50</sup> The political parties emerged as the main mechanisms for the canonization of the political system, establishing their privileged relation to the state.

A power system has been gradually established where the political parties, through their appropriation of power, the function of parliamentary system, their osmotic relationship with the state, and their control of bureaucracy, become power centers, having a dominant role and a largely mediating capacity regarding the articulation of the relation between the social and political, as well as, the setting of governmental boundaries (Georgarakis, 1994: 267).

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<sup>49</sup> Komninou (2001) draws here on the 'regime of signification' across Press and Cinema in Greece. From a different perspective Tsagarousianou (1993, 1994) points out also, as we analyze below, the 'politics of signification' in the case of Press.

<sup>50</sup> See Georgarakis (1994: 266-268), Tsagarousianou (1994: 336), Haralambis (1989: 323-324), Karabelias (1989: 167-179).



Furthermore, by being the main mechanism of social integration and organisation, the political parties became the intermediaries between society and the state, “[T]he political parties managed to displace other forms of social and political representation, and to effectively monopolize the universe of political discourse, and to dominate the processes of articulation of ‘legitimate’ political, or social interests” (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 155). As such, “though political parties facilitate[d] the integrative effectiveness of the political system they [did] it in an irrational way by representing interests through a clientelistic ruling of the state” (Demertzis, 1994: 33). What literally happened was “the reproduction of a form of state intervention both in economy and society where a peculiar benefits’ state virtually redistribute[d] wealth in order not to pursue any kind of politics but simply to enlarge the electorate clientele of the party in power” (Georgarakis, 1994: 273, cited also in Barboutis, 1994: 28). In this context, the “atrophic character of civil society” was perpetuated in terms of the guardianship of every social domain by the party system – “the subjection of most of the social requests to the hierarchically addressed priorities of the parties” (Sotiropoulos, 1996: 120). Under these conditions, it was the party system that, through its osmotic relationship with society and the state, provided the ground for the articulation of the relation between the ‘social’ and the ‘political’ in the Greek context.

In fact, the social integration within the Greek political system has been implemented in terms of both clientelistic and populist practices, which facilitated a ‘direct’ relationship between state and society, “setting a precedent deterrent for the constitution and development of political and social associations, which could contribute in the organization and establishment of the civil society” (Georgarakis, 1994: 254). Concerning clientelistic practices, the party-dominated political system used the state mechanism and its distributive potential, as the means for the satisfaction of the needs of its party members, which resulted in the creation of a “hydrocephalous public sector”. In addition, populist discourses contributed to the formation of a close and homogeneous collective identity, preventing the development of diverse discourses which incorporate different “interpretive traditions” and “interpretive codes”. From this perspective, the principle of diversity was cancelled in terms of the constitution of a populist identity along the lines of the “principle of equivalence” (Sofos, 1994: 135, 136). Such a populist rhetoric reproduced, according to Tsagarousianou, (1993: 157), “extra-institutional forms of political integration and perpetuated the ‘privatization’ and political other-determination of the ‘citizens’”. Under these circumstances, the imaginary identification of public with the community of ‘people’, as a

homogeneous, invisible community, cancels any form of representation for collective interests.

The public, being according to populist discourses one, homogeneous, and as a result not diverse, is not possible to be represented – as the concept of representation has been constituted in the realm of liberal democracy, that of the representation of partial social groups and interests (a condition that cancels the unity and homogeneity of the public) – but it is expressed or represented via its leadership. Correspondingly, the leadership can not be the result of democratic processes accorded to the classic conceptualization of the term, which means through the representation of partial, various discourses and interests, because this would question the fundamental principles of populist collective identity (Sofos, 1994: 141).

Both of the dominant political parties in Greece after the restoration of democracy (PASOK-center, New Democracy-right) have developed, more or less, populist discourses and practices, which resulted in the deconstruction of the social and political field from its various conflicting aspects and elements, promoting, in contrast, its dichotomization between the ‘popular’ and the ‘public’ on the one hand, and the ‘anti-popular’ and the ‘enemy’ on the other hand.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, both of these parties have drawn their populist rhetoric along the lines of their charismatic leaders (K. Karamanlis – New Democracy, and A. Papandreou – PASOK).

### *3.3.1 ‘Civil society’ and conventional political sphere*

Drawing on the centrality of clientelistic practices in the political sphere prominent is in the literature the account of the state, paternalistic, intervention in civil society, as it has been reflected in the patronage of voluntary associations and organizations. Yet, the emphasis on the terrain of civil society has been mostly put in forms of representation related to economic interests (income, social security, and the organization of labor in workplaces) than in non-economic, ‘post-material’ ones (movements related to environment, culture, and gender). Hence, the realm of ‘civil society’ has been predominantly researched in terms of party/state involvement in the politics of organisations and associations of economic interests, and the way it influences their policies.

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<sup>51</sup> See Sofos (1993) for an analytical account of the construction of ‘popular’ in Greece.

From this perspective, different terms of corporatist intermediation have been attributed to the system of collective representation of such interests in Greece.<sup>52</sup> The idiosyncratic osmosis between political parties and state in Greece has been evident in terms of the organization of labor, agricultural and local interests. Characteristic is here the decisive role of state in the politics of these unions in the case of Greek General Confederation of Labour.

If one by-product of this has been to create a conservative and pliable segment of significant size within the labour movement, another has certainly been the fragmentation of that movement, the intense antagonism between organisations loyal to the General Confederation and those opposed to it, and the failure of the labour unions to serve as the instruments whereby workers become socialised into a value system which promotes their interests through enlightened give and take and through institutionalised labour-management relations rather than through confrontation, and constant resort to strike action. (Diamandouros, 1983: 58-59).

Manifestations of state social control and intervention have been evident in every trade union,<sup>53</sup> incorporating institutional practices and policies (state subsidies or other protectionist policies),<sup>54</sup> which are implemented in terms of a centralised bureaucratic mechanism. As a result, trade unions in Greece have not managed to articulate an autonomous discourse, by setting their own requests; in contrast, the promotion of certain interests by the manipulated union leaderships reflected the tactics of their ventriloquist patron (Sotiropoulos, 1996: 137).<sup>55</sup> As Alexandropoulos (1990) points out, “since the restoration of democracy the system of collective representation in Greece has been

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<sup>52</sup> D. Sotiropoulos (1996: 125-127) points out some trends in bibliography: G. Mavrogordatos (1988) addresses the system as ‘idiosyncratic statist corporatism’; Tsoukalas (1986) as ‘clientistic corporatism’; and Mouzelis characterizes it as ‘incorporative’ (1986/1987).

<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, the pressure groups that represent different forms of capital (industrial, ship ownership, trading) have their autonomy, maintaining flexible relations to the state (Sotiropoulos, 1996: 133, Komninou, 2001: 61-62).

<sup>54</sup> In addition to these policies there was an extensive support to a vast number of family firms. According to Diamandouros (1983: 53), “it is particularly within this type of firm [where a single family is the sole owner and thus the sole source of power], so dominant in Greece, that sharply antagonistic attitudes, replete with profound suspicion and intense alienation, are fostered by the authoritarian nature of management which expects worker gratitude in exchange for work, and regards any attempt at union organization as evidence of disloyalty directly personally against the owner”.

<sup>55</sup> Those interests were articulated in terms of certain partial expressions attributed to the unions by the governing party of the day. Thus, the government was ruling at the same time the political power as well as the display of collective interests towards it” (Sotiropoulos, 1996: 137).

characterized by the prevalence of three modes of constituting social requests and interests, in terms of, populism, neo-clientistic relationships, and sectional interests” (Alexandropoulos, 1990: 232). Overall, there is an emphasis on the ‘underdevelopment’ of the network of voluntary associations related to economic interests. The state acting in a fashion of “late industrializer”, has stepped into much of the territory that properly belonged to voluntary associations, impeding in this way the development of the latter, and questioning their capability of acting as agents of secondary political association (Diamandouros, 1983: 58, 59).

On the other hand, other aspects of civic domain, beyond the realm of the articulation of economic interests, have not been approached intensively, since they do not challenge the main hypothesis concerning the overall ‘atrophic character of civil society’ in Greece. However, although the principal statement that civil society is weak is right, it must be viewed, as Sotiropoulos (1996: 120) mentions, in comparative terms, taking into account ‘post-material’ interests as well, related to environment, gender, culture and other more specific interests. “The various and diverse voluntary associations and groups that are active along the lines of different social movements (ecologist, feminist, consumerist, of social security, and cultural ones) give the impression of a pluralism in the representation of collective interests” (ibid: 132). Although such an approach takes into consideration non-economic interests, it does not go beyond the extent of their representation in the wider public domain. From this perspective Sotiropoulos highlights the under-representation of these interests in general terms. Characteristic here are the cases of ecologist and women’s movements. Thus, whilst Sotiropoulos recognizes the active role of local ecologist groups as well as of small liberal women’s and radical/feminist ones, it is the overall non-consistent character of the ecologist movement and the partial dependence of women’s movement on the political parties that are noteworthy in an account of their position in the public realm. In this context, diverse fragmented local associations and groups (cultural, voluntary, non-governmental ones) that are also active across the country do not challenge the synthesis of the overall public and political sphere.

However, if we draw exclusively on the representation of social movements and groups in relation to the wider public and political sphere, alternative forms of discourse and action will be disregarded from the beginning. The exclusive way with which civil society has been approached within the research field, bears a resemblance to the way civil society has been constituted in actual terms.

The contemporary Greek bureaucracy, being used to deal exclusively with the political parties that are in power, either regards social movements as a buried form of action of the non-governing political party or, when it has to do with autonomous initiatives of citizens, it does not take the latter into account because they have neither statistical value nor they are legitimized in partisan terms (Sotiropoulos, 1996: 137).

Thus, the neglect of alternative forms of 'discourse' and practices may have contributed to their marginalization in theoretical terms, in the same way that the "trend towards the constitution of a homogeneous public sphere, as it was expressed by the political forces in post-dictatorial Greece, may have contributed to the marginalisation of the social movements and groups" (Komninou, 2001: 195) in actual terms.

### 3.3.2 *Political participation*

Along the lines of the tense and sterile symbiosis between state and society which is mediated by clientelistic, statist, and populist practices, political participation has been respectively evaluated in the arena of the conventional political sphere. Prominent features here are the lack of processes and practices of social commitment and the individualistic engagement of people in things in common. By evaluating these characteristics in ethical terms, as values that are constituent elements of 'civic culture', Diamandouros (1983: 57, 58) points out the 'subjected', in contrast to the 'participant', character of Greek political culture.<sup>56</sup>

In this context, the modes of political socialisation within the conventional political sphere have determined the character of political participation. "The nature of the processes of political socialization (clientistic, bureaucratic system) itself has been a decisive factor in the individualization and privatization of political experience and action" (Tsagarousianou, 1994: 335). Hence, while conventional political sphere has been transformed into the exclusive arena for the realization of political socialization, political participation has been transformed into the main 'instrument' for the satisfaction of private interests and

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<sup>56</sup> Such an individualistic conception of the political and public sphere along with a pre-democratic conception of citizenship, as it has been sketched above in terms of the lack of a strong tradition of social contract and rights, consist prominent characteristics of Greek political culture (Demertzis, 1994: 60, 61).

privileges. From this perspective, the “overpoliticization”<sup>57</sup> of Greeks, meaning their ‘profound’ interest for politics, which researches focused on ‘political attitudes’<sup>58</sup> have pointed out, is not incompatible to the individualistic conception of political and public sphere that has been sketched above.

[P]olitics is transformed to a virtually private activity which though retains its public pretence. Thus, the participation in public political events, including the elections, party mobilizations, discussions, membership in political parties, could be interpreted as the necessary public manifestations of a virtually private activity, aiming in attaining private recourses and privileges<sup>59</sup>. On the basis of the nature of these political experiences and practices we can understand the lack of distinction between private and public sphere.<sup>60</sup> (Tsagarousianou, 1994: 335-336).

Accordingly, political participation in Greece is void of its social content, preventing forms of social, political representation and collective action to emerge. But, while the ‘exclusive’ character of Greek political culture - as it has been sketched within the conventional political sphere and through various characteristics of it - validates the extent of political alienation in Greece, the neglect of social domains and forms of social determination and autonomy that emerge out of the conventional political sphere by contemporary studies, ‘justifies’, in another way, the exclusion of potentially alternative definitions of politics from the research field.

Overall, along the discussion on Greek political culture, the concepts of ‘citizenship’, ‘public sphere’, and ‘civil society’ have been addressed as analytical categories concerning their ideal characteristics (normative and structural ones, as they have been developed in liberal-democratic societies), and the extent to what such characteristics are implemented to the reality of Greek society. At the same time these notions can provide the conceptual tools for transcending the boundaries of the conventional public and political

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<sup>57</sup> See Tsoukalas (1977).

<sup>58</sup> See Mavrogordatos, 1988, Kafetzis, 1988 about political attitudes and behaviours in Southern Europe, where Greece seems to have the first place in terms of the ‘interest of citizens for politics’, ‘their understanding of the political processes’, and ‘their positive attitude towards politics’.

<sup>59</sup> See also Demertzis, 1990: 85, Karapostolis, 1987: 31, Tsoukalas, 1977: 103, Lipowatz, 1988: 91-94).

<sup>60</sup> Demertzis (1990: 85) points out the historical roots of this osmotic relationship between private and public sphere (along the lines of the ‘selective’ tradition we have sketched above), and Kafetzis (1994: 241, cited also in Barboutis, 1994: 29) evaluates the normative implications of this relationship in terms of values and norms of the one sphere that are absorbed by the other, and vice versa.

realm in the Greek research field, and evaluating social domains ('on the margins') that are not 'representative' in terms of an overall political culture. According to Demertzis (1994: 15, 17), there is a considerable work by Greek scholars that has covered every aspect of the field of Greek political culture, but more work has to be done in terms of sub-cultures and other more specified issues; such an expansion of the research field has to take into account issues related to social movements, political discourses, and media. Besides, issues related to the practices social actors/groups employ 'on the margins' and the way they experience the process have to be elaborated in the research field.

### *3.4 Beyond the dominant public and political sphere*

As it has been mentioned above there is very little concern for social domains, discourses, and practices that are not integrated into the dominant public and political sphere.

Within the tradition of probing into the political culture, R. Panagiotopoulou (1994) has evaluated the political sub-culture of women in Greece. Taking as starting point the fact that there is not an overall political culture, but some general characteristics that constitute it in general, abstract terms, Panagiotopoulou evaluates the differentiations (across rural and urban areas) in the political attitudes and perceptions of women in Greece. The traditional distinction between the private and public sphere that resulted in the exclusion of women from the public sphere, which considered being the 'natural' space of men, has been challenged by the social mobility and changes of the last years. Although the presence of women in political process is also subjected to the existing paternalistic, clientistic and populist practices, new trends for the participation of women in things in common are in process (Panagiotopoulou, 1994: 322). Moreover, women's further engagement in public affairs questions the very constitution of their participation in public and political sphere exclusively in normative terms (the recognition of political equality), making possible for women's collective identity to emerge. Furthermore, the fundamental request of the feminist movement, "the personal is political", aims to evaluate the "necessity for the boundaries of the political to be set again, beyond the already recognized public sphere" (ibid: 297).

Beyond the theoretical framework of political culture there are few studies that have focused on social movements and autonomist groups away from their representative place in, or dependence to, the conventional political sphere (that justifies the reference to them), drawing instead on these social domains themselves and the articulation of different 'discourses' within them. Prominent here is the case of student movement.

The crucial role of student movement during the military dictatorship has been the main source of resistant practices in Greece. By probing into the emergence and evolution of student movement in that period, O. Dafermos (1992) puts emphasis on the extent of autonomy of the student movement towards the organized political forces. The main hypothesis of his study is that the organizational and political autonomy of the anti-dictatorial student movement was its basic principle which guaranteed the unity of the movement and promoted it as the main enemy of the military status. From this perspective, Dafermos evaluates the characteristics of student movement – autonomous organization, function, and action during the controversial period of 1972-1973. "The self-determining, 'from below', constitution of student committees (focal points) of resistance (FEA), without the interventions of political forces, was the most viable precondition for their democratic function" (Dafermos, 1992: 64, 65). Such an organization of the student movement, which was characterized by the absence of hierarchical, bureaucratic, and centralized practices, promoted its constitution in the quotidian field, and in reflective terms. In addition, the different definition of the 'political', as it was reflected in the function and action of the student movement, promoted its ideological autonomy, and evaluated its resistant spirit against any political leadership, including the leftist one (ibid: 229). The bloody suppression of the rebellion of Polytechnic's students did not leave space for the reconstitution of student movement along the lines of its self-organisation character in the post-dictatorial era. The introduction of the ideological differences of the left within the student movement cancelled its main principle, that of self-organisation; the political contradictions voided it of any social content. Thus, the student mobilization did not manage to develop beyond the context of an anti-dictatorial (its sole unifying element) movement, and to promote an alternative social organization of the society (ibid: 230). In a broader context, C. Lazos (1987) sets the history of student movement in more dynamic terms. Particularly, Lazos evaluates the activity, the social and political struggles, of a social group, that of students, and the reflections of its action in the social and political arena, from the war of national independence and the struggles for the unification of Greek territory, till the restoration of



democracy and the rebellion of Polytechnic's students. From this perspective, Lazos sketches the history of student movement along with contemporary Greek history, privileging a neglected arena of social struggles. Moreover, not only does the study present the history of student movement but it highlights its overall social-political activity as well.

The student movement has never stopped reflecting issues related to the improvement of social conditions, the development of political relations among citizens and, the quality and improvement of the daily life. From this perspective, it is a social movement experienced in practice, being structured by the public, within which it emerges, a human force, a live and always dynamic cluster, which, despite the various periodical contradictions, could always oversee the right way of opposition it had to follow. ... [I]t has always been in advance the leading force of every kind of social and political resistance (Lazos 1987: 18).

In the political changeover era (1974 onwards), students' movement (the students' occupations of the Athens Chemistry and Law schools in 1979) along with many anarchist, autonomist, extra-parliamentary left-wing, and rebellion/guerrillas groups,<sup>61</sup> and youth subcultures, which were increasingly being formed in the main urban centres of Greece after the fall of dictatorship, came together (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 238). A privileged space for various social and political groups, their discourses, their diverse forms of political action, and generally for their attempt to forge a distinct identity had been constituted.

In a controversial study, Karabelas (1985/2002) has sketched historically the space and the forms of the armed guerrilla movement in Greece during the first period after the fall of military dictatorship.<sup>62</sup> By making the historiography of armed guerrillas groups,<sup>63</sup> Karabelas puts emphasis on their main characteristics, their political identity, and their practices. Moreover, the study draws on the illegal brochures of these groups, highlighting their role; "they gave the ideological-political support to the armed grassroots movement, they propagandized the necessity for drastic resistance to the status quo, as well as, they provided information for practices and facts that were concealed or falsified by the Press"

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<sup>61</sup> These groups have been one of the most controversial issues nowadays because of the arrest of the members of the 'terrorist' organisation 'November 17<sup>th</sup>' and its 'implications' concerning the action of other extra-parliamentary groups and political activists in Greece.

<sup>62</sup> Here there is a long discussion concerning the armed rebellion groups and the practices they developed during and against the military dictatorship on the one hand, and the armed grassroots groups and their practices after the restoration of democracy on the other hand, distinguishing between 'resistant' and 'terrorist' groups correspondingly, which is out of the interest of this study.

<sup>63</sup> See analytically Karabelas, 2002: 26-183.

(Karabelas, 2002: 184). From a committed political-theoretical approach, another study, Karabelias (1986), has sketched the realm of an “alternative, autonomous movement”. By evaluating the ‘subject-conveyor’ of the political practice in macro (generally) as well as in micro (specifically) terms, distinguishing between two different fields of action, Karabelias supports the symmetrical articulation of the political practice in both of them. Through this prism, the study sketches the lines for the constitution of an alternative/autonomous movement and its practices, away from both a static ideological framework (the case of the marxist-leninist-trotskyist versions of leftism), and the extremism of a violent rebellion (the case of the armed grassroots movement).

It is a movement that incorporates issues related to the protection of the environment and the ecologic balance that capital destroys, as well as, to a different organisation of the production process and society. It is a movement that incorporates issues related to, women’s movement and the resistance towards sexism, as well as, to a different organisation of education and entertainment. It is a movement that has holistic characteristics, without being totalitarian and without proposing an ‘earthy paradise’. It sets a vision, an active ‘utopia’, and at the same time it struggles for actual changes in the present (Karabelias, 1986: 76).

Besides, beyond a ‘strategic’ evaluation of an alternative-autonomous movement there is a variety of different social and political groups that are not incorporated in, or assimilated by, the ‘political sphere’; they acquire a place in public and political life and claim their right to participate in the setting of the boundaries of political debate and action, producing thus potentially an alternative definition of the ‘political’. The interest of this study has been set in the media practices these groups incorporate in order to communicate their ‘discourse’. These social domains, constituted ‘on the margins’ of the conventional public and political sphere, have been considered in the research field only in terms of the misrepresentation of their discourses, practices, and actors in the mass media.

### 3.5 *Mass media and social groups ‘on the margins’*

In the context of the conventional public sphere, several studies have pointed out the role of mass media in the production and dissemination of the ‘definitions of the situation’ by drawing on the “politics of signification”.

Komninou (2001) researches here the extent of pluralism in the representation of different ‘discourses’ in mass media after the restoration of democracy in Greece. Komninou points out here the relative autonomy of the press and cinema the first years, as it was reflected in the representation of contesting discourses of new social movements and the prevalence of the political, critical paradigm, correspondingly.<sup>64</sup> This condition was questioned by the subjection of press to the bi-polar party system on the one hand and the introduction of television and the commercialization of cinema on the other hand the following years (end of ‘80s onwards), determining respectively the ‘regime of signification’ (Komninou, 2002: 179, 187).<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, there was no actual interest by the media for diverse social groups and movements but for those being under the parties’ patronage or in terms of the creation of ‘moral panics’ (ibid: 178, 183).

From a critical perspective, along the lines of the authoritarian character (“closure”, “rigidity”) of Greek political culture, R. Tsagarousianou (1993, 1994) points out the important role of the Greek press (particularly the daily press of Athens) in the construction of the “underlying consensus”. Moreover, her approach adopts a wider definition of the ‘political’, “including in the sphere of politics new forms of political action and discourse as well as new actors, or potential actors, hitherto neglected by the most studies in contemporary politics” (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 229). Social domains, their discourses and activities, on the ‘margins’ of the conventional public and political sphere have been constituted here as crucial parameters upon which consensus regarding the reproduction of relations of political domination has been constructed by press.<sup>66</sup> “[B]y regarding the party system and the institutionally sustained universe of political discourse as *just a part* of the political domain in Greek society, we are in the position to unveil the consensual core of

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<sup>64</sup> This condition is attributed respectively to the formation of a resistive trend (in addition to the official one) in the Greek Press (under the prism of ‘competing public spheres’, see above) during the military dictatorship that adopted ideas and positions which became dominant afterwards (Komninou, 2001: 155); as well as to the evolution of the political cinema at the latest period of dictatorship that put cultural codes in actual political terms (the case of outlaws – “paranomoi”) evaluating the distinct identity of their groups (ibid: 148).

<sup>65</sup> Komninou points out a less, than Tsagarousianou (1993), rigid field of the ‘regime of signification’, highlighting some exceptions – the representation of social groups and movements in a part of the Press (the example of ‘Eleftherotypia’) (Komninou, 2001: 179), and the active role of the ‘marginals’ in the agenda of some critical movies (ibid: 187).

<sup>66</sup> The evaluation of the construction of an ‘underlying consensus’ in general goes further than previous studies (Pesmagooglou, 1984; Komninou, 1990) that, adopting a limited definition of the ‘political’ and concentrating on party-political discourses and press performance before parliamentary elections, pointed out the reproduction of a bi-polar universe of discourse within the Greek political system (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 227, 228).

Greek political culture which has been obscured by the conflictual character of the party system and of the party-dominated universe of political discourse” (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 230, emphasis added). Such an approach highlights the attempts of diverse social groups, excluded or refusing to be incorporated into the conventional political sphere, to participate in the public and political life, transcending the boundaries of the ‘constitutional’ universes of political discourse and action. Social minorities, youth subcultures, feminist/ecologist groups, ethnic and religious minorities, immigrant and refugee communities, and political minorities/groups are included as potential conveyors of an ‘alternative definition of politics’. In this context, Tsagarousianou points out that the consensual character of Greek political culture is also

complemented by its “exclusive” facet, that is, the exclusion of dissent and the low level of tolerance towards any radical or alternative political opposition. Central in this respect is the closure of the universes of political discourse and action, which have systematically inhibited and frustrated the formation of new, alternative and oppositional collective identities which might challenge the very relations of political domination which sustain them. Thus, non-conformist or even merely different social and political groups are not able to be “heard”, while alternative and oppositional discourses, forms of political action and lifestyles are displaced and symbolically excluded (ibid: 231, emphasis in the original).

Hence, Tsagarousianou evaluates the exclusion of social and political minorities/groups from the public and political sphere in terms of the ‘politics of signification’ by mass media (the press here); namely, the way that ‘difference’, as it is reflected in oppositional definitions, values and lifestyles, has been isolated, repressed or symbolically excluded in press coverage. Particularly, the study focuses on a cluster of minorities (‘marginals’) – anarchist, autonomist and leftist groups – whose main characteristic is their “pronounced political character and their relative longevity”. In regards to the actual or potential challenges of these groups (constituting a ‘counter-cultural milieu’) to the relations of political domination, “the politics of signification, that is the particular ways in which the ‘marginals’, their repertory of political action, and their confrontations with the state were represented, became crucial, as signification became one of the battlefields in the struggle of political hegemony” (ibid: 234). By drawing on press representations of ‘marginal’

groups, and their forms of collective action, through a series of ‘events’,<sup>67</sup> Tsagarousianou points out the role of Athens press in the reproduction of a closed universe of political discourse. Social actors of the conventional public sphere gained access to the universe of political discourse, while dissent voices were excluded or undermined, “detering the formation of new, alternative social and political identities and setting obstacles to the articulation of new political discourses” (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 387). Moreover, the significantly restrictive of role Athens press in the setting of the boundaries of the universe of political discourse has been reflected in its ‘language’, in terms of producing certain definitions of the situation along the lines of a series of moral panics.

Insofar as it provided information regarding the acceptable (or not acceptable) participants in the political process, the legitimate (or not legitimate) methods and modes of political action, the political or non-political character of issues, press coverage of the events constituted an important medium for the diffusion and publicizing of specific definitions of the situation, especially definitions of the ‘political’” (ibid: 355).

In this circumstance, ‘marginal’ discourses and actions have been defined in press coverage as deviant and anti-social ones, constituting “a serious threat for law and order and the moral fabric of society”. Tsagarousianou, points out three dimensions of press’ ‘politics of signification’. Firstly, the ‘marginals’ were systematically represented as “social outsiders” – “press discourses are characterized by the expression of suspicion of the existence of ‘parasitic’ or ‘corrupting’ entities ‘within’, which are characterized by their generally anti-social behaviour on the one hand, and the creation of a ‘popular’ community, the existence and interests of which were in need of defence, on the other” (ibid: 373, emphasis in the original). Moreover, ‘marginals’ were represented as “outsiders in terms of spatial exteriority” – “[t]his was achieved through the ‘territorialization’ of the alleged threat of the ‘marginals’ through which the division between ‘them’ and ‘society’ became sharper” (ibid: 374). Lastly, “forms of collective action taken by the marginals in a variety of occasions were *de-historicized* and thereby effectively rendered meaningless” (ibid, emphasis added).

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<sup>67</sup> Four cases that attracted extensive press coverage – a series of occupations of empty buildings in Athens and other cities by marginal in November 1981; the policing operation “Operation Virtue” for the ‘cleaning up’ of the area Exarcheia in Athens) in 1984; the occupation of the building of the department of Chemistry of the university of Athens in May 1985; and, the anti-nuclear demonstrations in May 1986 (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 249-351).

From another theoretical approach, drawing on an empirical critique of authoritarian aspects of modern politics and media (propaganda), Loghotheti (2002) evaluates also Greek mass media as a main mechanism of manufacturing the consent in Greek society, facilitating in this way the repression of deviant discourses of extreme leftist and anarchist groups. “From the first years since the restoration of democracy in Greece till nowadays the extreme leftist and anarchist groups have been addressed by the dominant discourse and the state as the ‘common interior enemy’” (Loghotheti, 2002: 296). Moreover, their discourse has been “isolated and cancelled” through processes of manufacturing strategically the consent. By evaluating mass media as a mechanism integrated in the dominant economic system and the net of state as well as the main institution for the propagandizing of power generally, Loghotheti points out the gradual manufacturing of consent for the repression of alternative practices.<sup>68</sup> This manufacturing of consent by mass media took place firstly in terms of “setting in advance the context of a coming situation of panic, violence, and collapse of the state ... [a situation where] the ‘public’ is under the coming threat of the ‘common internal enemy’, which will disturb ‘our’ peaceful city and as a result the ‘social peace’ itself” (ibid: 305). Then, “a formed, in favour of the repression of the occupation that had not yet taken place, ‘public opinion’ was sketched in advance by mass media”; moreover, when the occupation took place, “it was presented as a ‘trouble without reasons’ that the 50 ‘known strange people’ caused, and which the state *had* to face by force” (ibid: 326, emphasis in the original). This is one of the most prominent examples of the way mass media in Greece have set the regime of signification concerning ‘marginals’, ‘identifying’ (in terms of the ‘known strange people’) their role in every social trouble. Finally, the arrest of 526 people “was presented as a completely necessary and legitimate action for the cleaning up of the post-dictatorial Greek political field from disturbing phenomena” (ibid). Such an approach puts emphasis on processes of control and manipulation of the ‘deviant’ by the dominant media that reproduce state prevalence over social and political life.

In conclusion, prominent in both cases has been the exclusion of social and political groups - which are antagonistic to the official ‘conveyors’ of the political sphere - from the public debate, and the rejection of their attempts to create alternative political spaces and articulate alternative political discourses.

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<sup>68</sup> Loghotheti draws here on mass media coverage of the occupation of the building of Polytechnic University of Athens in 1995.

The Athens Press far from constituting a public sphere that is relatively autonomous from the main political parties and open in attempts for the politicization of issues that the collective action of social movements, or minorities, addresses, constituted instead a restrictive factor in the field of political discourse. Being implemented in the context of an authoritarian political culture, where the reply to political deviance is the exclusion, the symbolic discrimination and repression, the Athens Press reproduced the cultural closure of the former (Tsagarousianou, 1994: 346).

Though these studies have evaluated the social milieu of the 'marginals', their 'deviant' discourses and actions, this has been done from 'above', in terms of their displacement and exclusion by mass media coverage which 'justifies' an underlying consensus regarding public and political sphere in general. But, at the same time, these approaches bring to the surface a neglected area in the Greek research field, the social milieu of various groups activated 'on the margins'. Greek scholarship has paid no attention to these diverse social domains, their discourses, and practices, in terms of their own implementation.

### 3.6 *'Alternative' media practices*

One exception in the work of C. Barboutis (1994) who evaluates the relationship between public sphere and civil society from 'below', setting its focus on alternative, oppositional forms of radio broadcasting in Greece. By drawing on the 'public sphere' theoretical framework, Barboutis researches alternative forms of broadcasting in Greece (municipal<sup>69</sup> and community radios), and the extent to which they constitute 'public sphere conveyors'. The study, taking into account the exclusion of important aspects, activities of social and political life and of non-politically organised social groups and actors from mass broadcasting media, deals with media projects that are originated in, or 'apply to', the Greek society itself, to different parts of it; practices that potentially incorporate different discourses and actors in the public realm. From this perspective, Barboutis draws historically on the activities of pirates/amateurs, political pirates, and contemporarily on cases of municipal radio and community radio stations. Concerning municipal radio broadcasting model the study points out the failure of municipal radio stations to provide an

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<sup>69</sup> For another applied research on municipal radio stations and their characteristics see also Antonis, 1994.

alternative model of broadcasting due to the particular affiliations of such an attempt to partisan tactics.

[T]he municipal broadcasting model that seemed to emerge as an alternative to the state model of broadcasting owed its existence to the consent and support of the political parties. It thus managed, according to our opinion, to maintain some illusionary aspects of a unitary public sphere only during the sort period that competition with private radio stations was not strong and political exploitation was at the beginning (Barboutis, 1994: 60-61).

On the other hand, the restricted development of social movements in Greece, in terms of constituting a unitary alternative, oppositional 'public', could not provide, according to Barboutis, the social capital for the establishment of an alternative radio model ('community radio'). As a result, the various projects that have been implemented by diverse grassroots groups are characterised by their non-consistent and fragmented character.

However, both the cases of municipal and community radio stations in Greece have been addressed in this study in terms of the extent to which they create "partial public spheres" by providing "local fora for the articulation of information and public opinions" (ibid: 61). In this context, the success of these experiments, either municipal or community ones, to "meet the needs of the local societies and/or their segments", has been a crucial parameter concerning the evaluation of them as potential partial public spheres. As it concerns municipal radio stations, the circumstances under which these experiments emerged, in terms of the political interventions of the local governments that promoted partisan interests, has been a fundamental deterrent factor for these ventures to form potential partial public spheres. Moreover, the potential of alternative, 'community' media projects to act as "genuine public conveyors" has been set in terms of the 'reach' and the 'place' of these experiments in the local public sphere. From this perspective, by drawing on the case of 'community' radios in the area of Thessalonica, Barboutis points out:

[T]he main challenge for Thessaloniki community radios to meet in the future is that of attempting to reach wider publics, developing a 'quality' approach in their programming output, and yet being able to retain or develop a collective identity that will enable them to provide a viable alternative to commercialism (ibid: 89-90).



Nevertheless, the evaluation of such grassroots media experiments on the research field raises further issues concerning the study of these practices in terms of the way people who are engaged in them communicate their experiences and grievances, and the way they experience this process. Such an approach from ‘below’ and ‘within’ puts emphasis on the ways people politicize social spaces beyond the realm of the conventional political sphere, and the ways they, themselves, understand and define such a practice, producing alternative definitions of the ‘situation’ and potentially of ‘the political’ in general. On the whole, the attempts and practices of some groups to “acquire the status of legitimate participants in public and political life, and to participate in setting the boundaries of political debate and action, often refusing to become assimilated to the ‘political sphere’ but retaining their identity and distinctiveness, should not be disregarded” (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 229, 230).

The present study focuses on diverse grassroots media projects run by various social groups ‘on the margins’ of the conventional public and political sphere in Greece, evaluating them in their own terms, in relation to the way participants themselves address and experience the implementation of these projects.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Greek mediascape: an overview*

This chapter is an attempt to sketch the mediascape in Greece by giving its synthesis and evaluating significant aspects of the role and the character of mediated communication. Prominent here is the hydrocephalous nature of Greek media system in geographical, political and social terms. The three parts of this chapter cover respectively the historiography of the mass media, of local/regional media, and of grassroots media practices, pointing out their characteristics.

The main feature of Greek mediascape is the colonization of communication space by commercial media. Both the fields of press and broadcasting media consist of a large number of titles and stations (public radio and television broadcasting have experienced a dramatically fast decline instead) correspondingly, which would not literally survive in such a small market in a healthy media system. These trends have taken place in local/regional level as well, revealing the “numerous but weak” sectors of local/regional press and broadcasting.

As it concerns grassroots media practices, press and radio initiatives have a long tradition, though neglected by the research field. They were boosted at the end of dictatorship and onwards; numerous alternative papers (anarchist, leftist, ecologist, and cultural ones) as well as radio political pirates (that challenged the state control over broadcasting matters at first place) took place that period. Moreover, taking into account the low, though increasing, penetration rate of Internet in Greece significant is its use by various social organizations and groups.

## 4.1 *Mass media*

In the previous section, respective literature highlighted the hegemonic character of Greek political culture along the idiosyncratic osmosis between political parties and the state, and the prevalence of clientelistic, statist and populist practices over Greek political and social life. This aspect has been significantly reflected in the institutions of mass communication.

### 4.1.1 *Press*

From the first moment of their appearance the Greek newspapers were deeply related to political struggles and projects of the time. The first Greek-language newspapers emerged outside the Greek territory in the pre-revolutionary era and had an overall political objective, that of the formation of a Greek national consciousness. These first initiatives provided mainly a forum for philosophical discussion on cultural and language issues and had as an aim to “spread the doctrines and ideas of western Enlightenment among the Greek speaking populations of the Balkans and Asia Minor, as well as of the diaspora, in an attempt to disassociate the Greek ‘nation’ from Ottoman dominance and its ottoman past and to ‘reintroduce Greece into western civilized world’” (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 169). In the post-independence era, the emergent press was closely affiliated to the political situation. In the first place the press was linked to the several different administrations that emerged the first year of liberation, and their authorities/political elites. In addition, the press was also tangled along the confrontation over the model of government – between a less centralized model that was guaranteeing the power of the established political fractions, in local/regional places, and a centralized one that was questioning these structures. “It is not surprising that the press had been deeply involved in these confrontations throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, given the association of newspapers with political fractions in the context of the developing patronage networks which were soon to become a prominent feature of political an social life” (ibid: 173). Moreover, the non-systemic nature of these political factions-parties, as it was reflected in their heavy dependence on prominent figures/personalities rather than being constituted as bureaucratic organizations, defined the character of the newspapers as vehicles for the foundation of the political power of each patron and the parties they supported. Thus, the operation of the press during the 19<sup>th</sup>

century was mainly addressed in terms of promoting the aspirations of particular political personalities. As a result, from their very beginning Greek newspapers were perceived by their owners more as means of political propaganda rather than as an economic enterprise (Leandros, 1992: 153).

The possibilities for an industrialization of press, facilitated by a combination of factors<sup>70</sup> during the last decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century and first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, were not grasped but partially; as such the few press enterprises guided by economic interests that emerged in that period were functioning in the shadows of the then political climate of the period and its conflicts, where the readership was regarded as political power. The perception of the press as a political advantage of the political personalities of the time was the prevalent one in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well. In the context of a new schism (“national schism”) between traditional political establishment and new social forces that dominated the Greek reality in the first decades of the century the press was adjusted to the various personal political parties that were formed under the veil of this national division. What is significant concerning this period is the proliferation of newspapers corresponding to the ‘blooming’ of specific political interests. The prospect of these publications depended on the personal political interests of their patrons. As such, they were provisional means to a political end. This process had further implications in the market, questioning the survival of newspapers, and generating consequently new forms of financial support.

By the end of the period 1922-35, the saturation of the market, which did damage even to the few dailies which were struggling to operate in amore entrepreneurial manner, made the publishers realize that their papers could not exist on the limited income they generated from the market and forced them to seek alternative ways of securing financial sources. Since the most obvious accessible source of finance was the state, the tendency for the press to become dependent on the state was gradually reinforced (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 185).

Moreover, the operation of the press in tandem with the established political patronage networks, which were developed across the division between the conservative and centre

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<sup>70</sup> “[T]he spread of literacy, the creation of a transportation infrastructure, the constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press which had been introduced in the constitution of 1864 (article 14) and the beginnings of ‘modern’ advertising created a more favourable climate for the activities of the press and eventually facilitated the economic and technological expansion of the press” (Tsagaroussianou, 1993: 178).

forces, continued after the civil war (1944-1949); and, it was reinforced by legal restrictions, or prohibitions, imposed on newspapers that were sympathetic to the 'defeaters', the communist and left forces, of the civil war. In this context, the press reproduces the historical cleavages of the political-partisan system in Greece. By drawing on the role of press in the post – civil-war era, Komninou (2001) puts Greek press in the category of the "Continental European model" (in contrast to the "Anglo-Saxon" one), where the press is dependent on the partisan-political system, highlighting though two significant particularities of the Greek case: "the operation of a framework of breaking laws that prevent the constitutional strengthening of the freedom of press, and the absence of big publishing organizations that would allow to publishers to gain political independence and follow the requests of the market" (Komninou 2001: 70). Although a new 'mushrooming' of political dailies took place that period, it was the old newspapers that finally, with the interruption of the colonels' dictatorship (1967 – 1974),<sup>71</sup> came to dominate the market and lead the development of press in the years of the political changeover era onwards.

However, the interventions of the state in the progress of the press, as well as, the affiliations between the political parties and the press were prominent trends in the era after the return of the democratic regime too. Firstly, the state has indirectly and/or directly determined the development of the press.<sup>72</sup>

[T]he state has regularly taken advantage of its ability to play a decisive role in the economics of the press by using a variety of overt and covert means; such is its economic power that it may not only support or burden financially, but may even compete with the existing publishers by providing the necessary capital for the publication of totally new newspapers as it has attempted to do in the past when it feared losing effective control over the existing ones (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 195-196).

Moreover, the relationships between publishers and political elites and the perception of the press by the political parties were set on a new basis. Thus, the political-partisan character

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<sup>71</sup> The 7-years dictatorship had implications in the structure of press – the banning of newspapers of the left, and moreover the refusal of publishers to circulate their newspapers under the state of the preventive censorship (Komninou, 2001: 154).

<sup>72</sup> Tsagarousianou (1993: 192 – 195) points out here three areas of state's decisive influence upon press: "[f]irstly, the state has the power to control the sums and the terms of bank loans to press organizations"; "[l]ess conspicuous forms of state funding can be concealed under the pretext of transactions between state-owned or controlled organizations and publishing organizations"; "[d]ifferent but quite effective forms of intervention by the government take the form of social security provision, or of initiatives which reduce tension between workers and employers".

of the press has been a significant characteristic of the Greek press. “Gradually, the close ownership ties between the press and the political parties are getting loose (with a few exceptions); however, they are replaced by a complex and extensive network of relations of inter-dependence among the publishers and the leaders of the political parties” (Leandros, 1992: 153-154). In this climate of inter-dependence, Athens press, which has been transformed into a “national” press along the centralized policies of the state, was subject to the motivations of their publishers to hold an influential political position, and/or gain economic power by participating in state’s projects. On the other hand, the increase in the number of newspaper titles that was facilitated by the restoration of parliamentary democracy and the technological and economic weaknesses of most of the press organizations, which perpetuated their status of dependence on state’s financial support and funding, revealed the economic problems of many of the newspapers. The consequences of the ‘vulnerability’ of the position of the newspapers in the market place became more threatening by the attempts of the government in mid-eighties to control and shape the sphere of press by creating new, party-sympathetic newspapers, or reinforcing the existing ones. As such,

[t]he publishers who saw these moves as an attempt to bypass and isolate them, and saw a threat to their participation in the sphere of state benefits, as well as to their share of a promising market, appeared determined to limit their dependency of the state and to increase their economic self-sufficiency. This decision seems to have been the turning point which eventually led to the formation, for the first time, of a dynamically entrepreneurial culture in the press ... (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 201).

This trend toward the re-organization of the press was reinforced by the introduction of new technologies in the press that promoted the rationalization of press organizations and strengthened the position of capital over that of labour force, and the creation of publishing enterprises that aimed at the extension of their activities to other areas of mass media and beyond it (Leandros, 2000: 203). Moreover, the “crisis of power of the political system” in the late 80’s (1986-1989) facilitated the process of press reorganization on economic interests, generating the conditions for the press to become relatively autonomous of the partisan-political system (Komninou, 2001: 180).

Another important factor toward the reorganization of the press has been the competition by radio and television media that challenged the monopolization of the

informative role of the newspapers and the share of newspapers in the advertising expenditure (Heretakis, 1997). Nevertheless, the crisis of the state broadcasters and the chaotic context and framework on which the questioning of its monopolization took place (see below), provided the ground for a privileged expansion of print-media industries in the broadcasting field; the Athens publishers, taking advantage of the political situation and the absence of any anti-trust legislation, entered the broadcasting arena by establishing private FM stations, and/or private television channels in cooperation with other businessmen. In this context of transition from the state of the interrelation between press and political parties to a situation of the development, though uneven, of market-orientated press organizations, the trends in press market have still to be formed. Despite the fact that the total circulation of the newspapers was falling in the first half of the 90's new publications entered the field of press market (Heretakis, 1997: 16); tendencies that are still prevalent. As such, the newspapers' sector consists of a large number of publications, many of which have very small circulation. This is the case for the periodical press too. The rapid increase of new periodicals publications, in new categories of periodical press ("special periodicals") that took place in the late 80s and onwards is indicative of the phase of continuous rearrangement that the Greek periodical press has been through (Leandros, 2000: 240-246). The perpetuation of such a transitional phase, which is reflected in the survival of so many titles in such a small market, is related to some of the trends sketched above. The communication field is more uneven in the case of broadcasting.

#### *4.1.2 Broadcasting*

What characterizes the history of broadcasting in Greece is the fact that both radio and television broadcasting were established<sup>73</sup> under different periods of dictatorship; the establishment of radio broadcasting took place under Metaxas' dictatorship (1936 – 1941), and televisions' beginning happened under the dictatorship of Colonels (1967 – 1974) (Dagtoglou, 1989: 15), been regarded as "arms of the state". Since then broadcasting media system has a strong tradition of being politically controlled by the state (Kastoudas, 1985).

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<sup>73</sup> Though in both cases the first attempts to set up radio (in 1920s and the first years of 1930s – Barboutis, 1994) as well television stations (in the 1960's and remaining in private hands till 1968 – Papathanassopolos, 1989; Dimitras, 1995) had their origins in experimental activities.

During the years of Metaxas' dictatorship and Nazis occupation radio was used for propaganda reasons. However, the abuse of radio broadcasting did not stop in the years to follow; radio broadcasting was subjected to the peculiarities of Greek political history, setting a unique exception. The monopoly over radio broadcasting by the Greek Broadcasting Company (EIR), which was founded in 1945 but did not acquire a legal framework until 1953 (as "a legal entity of Public Law"), was violated by the armed forces. Another compulsory law of 1951 gave them the legal right to install radio and then television stations in order to provide information, education and entertainment for the armed forces in wartime, and strengthen the spirit of the nation (Dagtolou, 1989: 31). Along these lines, the next law of 1970, under the rule of Colonels, outlined the framework for broadcasting with the establishment of Television (changing the name of the state broadcasting company to the Radio and Television Foundation – EIRT). This law gave the right to the military forces to change its "primitive television station into a nation-wide network"; a station (YENED – Armed Forces Information Service) that was independent of EIRT and was operating even after the restoration of democracy till 1982, when it was transformed into a state-owned broadcasting service. "[B]y setting up an untested venue for radio and television, the situation reflected the structure of Greek broadcasting" (Papathanassopoulos, 1989: 30).

The abnormal character of Greek broadcasting system, the state's intervention and guardianship over broadcasting remained after the restoration of Parliament in 1974 too. The state monopoly of Greek broadcasting was defined by the Constitution of 1975, Article 15, in a vague way – "radio and television will be under the direct control of the state" – that reinforced its overall dependence on the state. "Greek governments chose to interpret 'direct state control' to mean a state monopoly of the electronic media. They even stretched this interpretation to mean that radio and television should operate in a culture of extreme pro-government reporting" (Syngellakis, 1997: 102). In this context, state broadcaster<sup>74</sup> has been under the manipulation of the government of the day, along the lines of an interchange of power between the conservative and the socialist party, promoting their positions in an undisguised way.

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<sup>74</sup> Before 1987, there were two state broadcasting companies, ERT1 – consisting of a nationwide television network, three national radio stations, ten regional stations and a shortwave service; and, ERT2 (YENED till 1982) – of a nationwide television channel, one national radio station and eleven local ones; they joined in one state-run administrative body of television and radio networks in 1987.



As a result, ministerial censorship has been common practice and state control greater than is usual elsewhere. The general pattern in the Greek state has been that a transfer of power is followed by an equivalent changeover in the state media institution's executives, resulting in major changes in the message reaching the audiences. In other words, all key radio and television appointees were politically sympathetic, or affiliated, to the government of the day. The outcome was news and editorial judgments of particular importance were in close agreement, if not identical, to government announcements on a whole range of policies and decisions (Papathanassopoulos, 1990: 389).

Although the state's monopoly and its absolute, repressive control over the broadcasting sector had been first and fiercely challenged via short term activities of the "political pirates of free radio broadcasting" (as it is discussed below, on grassroots media practices), the crucial move towards deregulation occurred in terms of the fierce confrontation between the socialist government and the conservative party. The launching of radio stations by the mayors (all members of the conservative opposition party – New Democracy) of the three biggest municipalities (Athens, Thessalonica, Piraeus), after they had won the municipal elections in 1986, challenged the state monopoly in radio broadcasting, opening the way for the establishment of municipal non-state owned radio stations. The effects of "direct action" took the form of a snowball. Other cities and municipalities followed this example; as a result, the social government pronounced its intention to liberalize the radio frequencies in an attempt to defuse the situation. Such direct action occurred against state's monopoly on television broadcasting as well – one year later, the mayor of Thessalonica launched a television channel.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, this kind of direct action was in accordance to the liberal policy towards broadcasting ("Television without borders") of European Community, of which Greece was a member (ibid: 392-393). In the first place, the socialist government reacted by taking the mayor to the court (a case that then reached the European Court of Justice);<sup>76</sup> when relative challenges arose in other municipalities, the government responded respectively in an ad-hoc way – by retransmitting satellite channels through the state broadcaster (ERT); by launching also (1989) a third state channel (ERT3) in northern Greece in an attempt to compete with the conservative mayor of

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<sup>75</sup> "In 1988, the mayor of Thessalonica commenced retransmitting programmes received from the satellite channels by distributing them to the UHF antennae in the city" (Papathanasopoulos, 1989: 393).

<sup>76</sup> "Which ruled that the Greek legislation granting to the state a monopoly over radio and television broadcasting was in breach of the Treaty of Rome" (Syngellakis, 1997: 102).

Thessalonica's television channel; and finally, by announcing before the 1989 general elections its intention to launch private channels. After all, the deregulation of radio and television broadcasting took place in 1989 (new government, an extraordinary coalition between conservatives and the Left), limiting ERT's monopoly. However, this happened in a climate of partisan confrontation, both before and after the general elections of 1989, which had as a result an arbitrary taking of the frequencies by private interests.

In the context of the political confrontation between the main political parties the deregulation process of Greek broadcasting revealed its very weaknesses, failing to follow the paradigms of other European countries. Komninou (2001: 182-183) points out the notably irregular character of broadcasting deregulation in terms of the privileged entry of publishers/businessman into the broadcasting media and the atrophic role of the National Radio and Television Council (ESR) – the state's constitutionally-mandated control over broadcast media – in the regulation of the field. What makes the case of the entry of publishers into broadcasting media noteworthy is that the law 1866/1989 explicitly grants TV licenses favourably to media agencies.

According to the law, the licenses for private television will preferably be given to institutions that already have experience and a tradition concerning the operation of the mass media – specially the press – and the Organizations of local government (article 3, paragraph (d)). It is obvious that the Organizations of the local government neither have the required capital, nor the appropriate organization. Moreover, the local authorities do not provide the necessary knowledge to operate a TV station and to compete as an alternative commercial station (Panagiotopoulou, 1999: 192-193).

Moreover, while in all the other European countries the few private licenses were awarded to private networks by a public authority that had the right to define the programming commitments of the networks and check their fulfillment on penalty, even that of license's withdrawal, the licenses in Greece were taken free of any commitment (Tsimas, 2000). As such, an unbridled mushrooming of radio and television stations took place the years onwards;<sup>77</sup> the overall picture of both radio and television broadcasting fields is chaotic. According to research conducted by the Hellenic Audiovisual Institute (IOM) out of 1,734 radio stations across the whole country that had applied for license from 1988 to 1998 only

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<sup>77</sup> P. Zeri (1996: 241) describes the process of the unchecked development of broadcasting media in Greece in terms of a "de facto deregulation", characterized by the persistent lack of the implementation of the law and its provisions, which remain 'on paper'.

122 private, including municipals ones, had one. Concerning television broadcasting, 142 television stations had applied for license in 1998, which by then they were actually operating in defiance of law (Leandros, 2000: 208). In this context, legislation had to be adapted to the reality of the market situation, which was shaped by the violation of all legal provisions (Dimitras, 1995: 89).<sup>78</sup> As a result, the anarchic deregulation of broadcasting space has produced another saturated mass media market, raising questions about the viability of radio and television stations in the long run.

More crucially, although this process facilitated the weaning of broadcasting media in Greece from the state, the illogical and irregular character of this transformation had as a result the colonization of communication space by commercial media. The first years of deregulation public radio and television stations experienced a dramatically total decline in terms of both audience share and advertising revenues. Since the first years of deregulation Greek public service stations have been placed in the fringes of broadcasting field. In 1993, the market share of all public service<sup>79</sup> television stations was not more than 13.2%, when in most European countries it was between 33% and 43%; public radio stations experience a similar radical decline in ratings (Panagiotopoulou, 1996: 530-531).<sup>80</sup> Hence, the broadcasting anarchy of an unbridled regulation process had as a result the monopolization of broadcasting arena by the commercial stations, while public service broadcasting struggles hard to “awaken from hibernation”.

#### 4.2 *Local/regional media*

In addition, the processes of the formation of the communicative space in Greece and the privileged place of mass media in it, as described above, along with the overall underdevelopment of Greek province in both economic and cultural realms, and the dominant, centralized role of the state in Greek reality, have further implications for the development of local and regional media – “a numerous but weak sector”.

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<sup>78</sup> Concerning mass media, “the strength of the media tycoons ... who owned the major private stations had made all restrictions inapplicable. ... For example, most advertising limitations in the 1989 law were never observed and were eventually abolished” (Dimitras, 1995: 89).

<sup>79</sup> Since 1996 a plan for the transformation of state broadcasting stations into ones of public service (at least in nominal terms) has been set in practice (Kokkali, 1998: 145).

<sup>80</sup> Correspondingly, the share of public stations in the total television and radio advertising expenditure the same year was only 4% (Hellenic Audiovisual Institute – IOM, 2001: 26).

In the case of the provincial press, since the first years of its development (1834 onwards) it had a significant presence in the communicative space. According to Demertzis (1996), the reasons for this early (for a new-forming independent state) flourishing publication activity on the provinces have to do with national, political and social factors of that period: the national interests and claims, the partisan interests of the political factions and their clientelistic practices, and the underdeveloped transportation and communication networks; moreover, though the relevance of these practices fades in time, provincial press had established its position and grew further (Demertzis 1996: 77). However, the place of provincial press was challenged by the transformation of the Athens press into a national one that penetrated largely the provinces. According to Tsagarousianou (1993: 195-196), this development that took place after 1960 and increased significantly after the restoration of democracy, eventually led to the decline of the provincial press, restricting gradually its place strictly to the local level. Actually, this process has been facilitated by the availability of Athens press, mainly of the evening editions, in most areas across the country almost at the same time they appear in Athens news-stand, establishing a fundamental misbalance between local and 'national' press, in favour of the national press. This picture is clearly depicted in the penetration rate of Athens press in province that has been increased rapidly. While in 1977, only 30.5% of the evening Athens dailies were sold in provincial Greece, as opposed to 69.5% in Athens, in 1988 the proportions of the sales were 47.5% and 52.5% respectively (Demertzis, 1996: 85). Thus, almost half of the evening Athens dailies were sold in the provinces. Yet, while the penetration of Athens press in province has significantly led to the decline of the regional and local press, this trend has not affected the number of the publications of provincial press. Though most of the references to provincial press in Greece imply an overall shrinkage of provincial press, especially after the years of the political changeover, Demertzis' (1996) extensive and intensive study of provincial press in Greece (during 1989-1990) points out that the number of the publications has not declined. However, what is at stake is the framework of their operation. Demertzis evaluates the main characteristics of Greek provincial press, some of which are: a) "contrary to other countries Greek provincial press consists of numerous, of few-pages editions of limited circulation";<sup>81</sup> b) "their organizational infrastructure is underdeveloped"; c) "the readership of the most of the newspapers, especially of the daily ones, consists of citizens of the big

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<sup>81</sup> In very few exceptional cases, in big towns of province, the local/regional press manages to circulate more than 5,000 copies per day (Demertzis, 1996: 77-78).

towns of the province”; d) “the material depends on the frequency of their publication”; e) “editors’ subjective perception of their own role in local public sphere implies a strong wish for ascending the social ladder” (Demertzis, 1996: 185-186).

In this context, the provincial press has not managed to play a significant role in the local public spheres,<sup>82</sup> failing thus to address the local community in dynamic terms and within a wider context (region).

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The challenging of state broadcasting monopoly along the lines we sketched above, has predefined the development of local broadcasting as well. At first, local government authorities launched their own radio and then television stations. These actions were an attempt to promote political claims and interests (in the context of the political confrontation between the conservative mayors and the socialist government), setting by this way a precedent in the establishment of municipal broadcasting, which was followed by the governing party as well.

Regarding radio broadcasting, soon after its liberalization municipal radio stations experienced a dramatic downfall. This development is indicative of the purposes of their setting – characteristic here is the political exploitation of municipal stations that goes hand in hand with the entrapment of the local government organizations in the partisan politics, and their overall structural deficiencies. In the long run, the emergence of municipal broadcasting did not constitute an alternative to state-controlled broadcasting, but it was rather an ‘Iphigenia’ figure in the transition from a state monopoly to an unbridled liberalization of broadcasting. Hence, in actual terms, municipal broadcasting failed to set a communicative space for local societies, communities, according to their needs and interests.

[M]unicipal radios today find themselves at a marginal point: they do not have their own approach to radio broadcasting, they do not speak for themselves, they do not function as channels for communication for the local

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<sup>82</sup> Although more recent surveys concerning the readership of provincial press mention an increase for provincial press in combination with a decrease on the readership of national press the main characteristics of provincial press sketched above, and deterring for its further development, have not yet been overcome (Demertzis and Skamnakis, 2000).

community, they are not able to boost the local publicity, and at the end of the day they are not able to convince anybody that there can exist any special space for municipal broadcasting (Antonopoulos, 1991: 32, quoted in Barboutis, 1994).

Moreover, the single vital and overall proposal<sup>83</sup> for the development of municipal broadcasting made by EETAA (the local authorities' company carrying out research concerning local development), which was about setting an analytical framework for the creation of a viable municipal broadcasting model, questioning the awkward implementation and operation of municipal radio stations in the Greek context, was never taken into consideration. "The local authorities preferred copying the central model of communication to a regional level rather than setting the foundations for a network of local communication" (Antonis, 1994: 39).

In addition to the heavy reliance of municipal stations to the partisan politics at times, the blooming of local private/commercial radio stations that followed could not but question the very existence of municipal radio stations. The uncontrolled liberalization of radio broadcasting that followed resulted in the domination of the provincial communicative space by private/commercial ventures, which range from local radio stations that re-transmit the program of Athens' giant commercial stations to small, non-professional stations, most of which serving personal interests of local businessmen (Barboutis, 1996). Finally, the legal framework of the operation of local/regional media has been another significant parameter of this misbalance in the broadcasting field. In normative terms, the legal framework<sup>84</sup> put municipal and private stations in the same ground of operation, that of market, forcing them to compete for advertising revenues (Antonis, 2001). In actual terms, the persistent lack of the implementation of the law and its provisions, which remain 'on paper', has had as a result the consistent violation of the rules and principles in ownership, programming, and advertising by the private/commercial stations (Barboutis, 1996). After all, the picture of local radio broadcasting becomes even more uneven if we take into account the public service regional radio stations (22 regional stations), which were set as "an offset" to the explosion of local private stations that the liberalization of radio

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<sup>83</sup> For an analytic presentation of EETAA proposal see Antonis (1994).

<sup>84</sup> "In accordance to the previous law (1866/1989), no further distinction has been made between commercial radios, municipal radios and non-commercial radios. They are all described as 'local radio stations'" (Barboutis, 1996: 4).

broadcasting brought about (Demertzis & Skamnakis, 2000: 245). In any case, the local broadcasting field has still to be defined and formed.<sup>85</sup>

Concerning television broadcasting, the “direct action” against state monopoly on broadcasting matters by the launching of radio and then television stations in major municipalities, has had further implications for regional/local television broadcasting field. Firstly, as we saw above, the first “regional”, with a national coverage, television station of Greece (ERT3, established in 1988) was the response of the government to these initiatives that questioned the state monopoly – as such the attempt was neither planned nor coherent enough at first place. The uncontrolled liberalization of television broadcasting resulted in the domination of the field by private television stations during the early 1990s. Soon after the first two private national channels were founded at the end of 1989, many others, of both national and/or local coverage, entered easily the television broadcasting arena. Even though, the organizations of local government had been given a priority (together with institutions of mass media) on the granting of TV licences, they were not actually capable of operating a television station. As Panagiotopoulou (1999: 193) points out, “[t]he law refers to the organizations of local government in order to support the ideological spirit of populism that does not take into consideration whether or not the proposed institutions are adequate, or if they have the ability and the know-how to explore the urge and the privileges that are given to them”. However, the lack of any certified definition and classification<sup>86</sup> of television broadcasting field gave the opportunity to numerous regional and local television stations to receive temporary licences and ‘establish’ their place – continuing to broadcast even when their licences had expired. As such, private regional and local television stations have dominated, unimpeded, the relevant communicative space. Moreover, many of these stations survive under illegal conditions – not paying their copyright royalties to foreign program companies.

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<sup>85</sup> There is an attempt the last years, though not consistent enough, to draw ‘maps’ of radio broadcasting frequencies” across regions.

<sup>86</sup> It is remarkable that till 1995 no law includes any adjustment concerning the regional or local TV stations. Then, the first distinction of TV stations, according to their ability to cover geographical areas (national, regional, and local coverage), was made by the law 2328/1995 (Panagiotopoulou, 1999: 193).

Sketching the field of Greek local and regional broadcasting, Panagiotopoulou (1999)<sup>87</sup> highlights two categories of the regional and local stations that broadcast as independent companies: the large, professional stations, mainly of regional coverage, and the bulk of local underdeveloped initiatives that serve personal interests (those of local, political representatives; of businessmen who want either to establish their privileged position in the public sector, or advertise their products in local market; of people involved in relevant activities; and, amateurs) (Panagiotopoulou, 1999: 202). Nevertheless, the few recent studies that have shed light on regional television stations, their structure and functioning, highlight the inefficiency of ‘professional’ regional stations – their deficiency in technological support, in the training and specialization of the staff; the lack of information in regards to the new technological developments and abilities of networking (ibid: 210, 211); and the structure of programming, which does not diverge from the one that national private stations provide (Demertzis and Skamnakis, 2000: 255, 256). Finally, an attempt of drawing the map of television frequencies in national, regional and local terms has started since 1997, where a significant number of local and regional TV stations are excluded from the frequency map. Yet, the long standing tradition of “nothing is more permanent than the provisional” has to be overcome for a progress to be made.

### 4.3 *Internet*

Internet is a recent affair in Greece, and as such it is neither developed enough as a communicative space nor explored consistently by scholars. By sketching the overall Information Society profile of Greece, in comparison to the other members of European Union, P. Tonchev (2000) illustrates the late entry of the Internet in Greek communication matters as follows: in 1998, only 8 out of 100 Greek citizens had PCs; the internet penetration rate was the lowest one (6 per 1,000 inhabitants) among the fifteen EU member states.<sup>88</sup> However, Tonchev points out the considerable gap that it is noticed between the

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<sup>87</sup> Drawing on the scheme proposed by Moragas Spa and Garitaonandia (1995), Panagiotopolou (ibid: 198) distinguishes between: a) regional production centres; b) decentralized television; c) TV stations that broadcast as independent companies.

<sup>88</sup> Though Greece is not the only case of such low rates – Portugal (9 PCs per 100 inhabitants; penetration rate: 9 per 1,000 inhabitants), Spain (10 PCs per 100 inhabitants; penetration rate: 13 per 1,000 inhabitants) and Italy (11.5 PCs per 100 inhabitants; penetration rate: 13 per 1,000 inhabitants) are in the same group. In terms of ICT penetration there is a distinctive North-South split in the EU (Tonchev, 2000: 1, 3, 5).



demand for ICTs and the supply of related services in Greece – liberalization and competition in the ICT sector of Greece are in early days; “the Internet rapidly becomes part of political life as well. In the midst of the current [2000] pre-election campaign in Greece, 400,000 Internet users seem to have visited the homepages of Greek politicians so far” (Tonchev, 2002: 5).

Besides, an ambitious experimental project employing ICT for supporting and enhancing the democratic process was implemented at the level of local government at an early stage. R. Tsagarousianou (1999b) draws on the case of “Network Pericles”; a communication network that was developed in 1992 by researchers of the National Technical University of Athens, comprising a number of local authorities. Although “Network Pericles” had not been linked to the Internet or any other public network, it aimed at advancing the “provision and exchange of public information, debate and voting”.

The network has been designed to improve citizens’ access to information related to the political process, to help sustain, expand and organise forms of direct political action, such as the launching of citizens’ initiatives, referenda and processes of deliberation, and to enable authorities to consult citizens on policy issues and therefore to reinvigorate local democracy (Tsagarousianou, 1999b: 42).

Nevertheless, the project was not an initiative inscribed into social struggles and as such it was not grounded on the sociocultural realm; in contrast, it was a “top-down” intervention for the creation of a public space, providing citizens the prospect to participate directly in the political process of their local authority or region (ibid: 56, 57).

#### 4.4 *Grassroots media practices – ‘on the margins’*

Although grassroots press and radio practices<sup>89</sup> have a long tradition in the Greek communication space, there are very few studies that have thrown light on such practices (all of them concern radio practices). There is no study, either academic<sup>90</sup> or journalistic one, registering the history of press initiatives, not even within a specific field of interest

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<sup>89</sup> The field of television broadcasting is unsurprisingly void of any alternative experiment.

<sup>90</sup> With the exception of the references in Tsagarousianou’s (1993) work concerning the press representations of political deviance in Greece, see chapter 3.

(e.g. anarchist press). As such, the historiography of such experiments draws here on the few studies on grassroots radio practices, on leaflets of groups that have been running alternative radio stations, on an event-discussion concerning alternative/non-commercial/libertarian/self-managed/social radios, on personal research in alternative publication stores and standing points where alternative press is distributed in Athens, on special articles on the alternative publications themselves, as well as, on the interviews with a veteran radio amateur of old experiments, which still provides technical support to new ones; and, a veteran editor of old alternative periodicals and publisher of new ones. The terrain of Internet grassroots practices, though developed enough in respective terms is still unexplored in Greece.

It is noteworthy that the first initiatives to introduce press and radio in Greece, before they become firmly established, took place “on the margins”. The first Greek-language newspapers, published at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, were cultural papers of articles and commentary on language and generally cultural issues, promoted by the Greek intelligentsia outside the Ottoman occupied Greek territory, providing a forum for philosophical debates (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 169). Moreover, the first attempts, in 1920s, to set up radio stations and broadcast regular programmes had their origins in amateur’s initiatives – the cases of electronics experimenters and the amateurs’ club ‘Friends of the Wireless’ (Barboutis, 1994: 33-36). Even though grassroots practices have been implemented along the history of both press and radio in Greece – an anarchist wall-newspaper (‘Anarchy’) was published on 1933; and, numerous radio amateurs/pirates were broadcasting in the medium wave in 1960’s (Roumeliotis, 1991) – the present study focuses on practices that flourished in 70s, during the last years of colonel’s rule, and onwards; being the ‘spring’ of grassroots media practices in Greece.

During this period, a panspermia of social, leftist, anarchist, autonomist and sub-cultural groups emerged. Various groups of young people having common concerns on diverse issues that had been suppressed during the dictatorship, sought ways to develop and sustain their own social, political, and cultural interests. Moreover, the rebellion of students of Athens Polytechnic University against the dictatorship of colonels gave a boost to the formation of numerous small young movements across the urban centres of the country. More significantly, Exarcheia, a central Athens area, where the buildings of Athens Polytechnic University as well as many of the departments of Athens University, are situated, and as such populated by a large number of students, became the arena for the

development of a variety of alternative practices. Such a social space brought together many young people from different backgrounds, providing thus a “fertile territory for the formation of subcultures and counter-cultures”. As Tsagarousianou (1993: 247-238) puts it: “[Exarcheia] progressively became the melting-pot in which leftist and anarchist groups interacted with youth subcultures such as the rockers (rokades), the freaks (frikia) and the punks and formed the social milieu which has been called the ‘margin’ (perithorio)”. Within this social space, what activists themselves call the ‘alternative milieu’,<sup>91</sup> diverse, small social groups and movements protested, expressed themselves, co-existed, interacted, and promoted their own cultural life. Soon after the mushrooming of these activities in the centre of Athens, more, relevant ones, emerged in other cities of Greece too, especially in those where universities and technical schools were situated. As such, numerous, small, social groups and movements challenged the dominant social standards and values, claiming their distinctiveness.

[T]hey derived their distinctiveness from their alternative values, visions and lifestyles; they emphasized the centrality of ‘freedom’, ‘creativity’ and ‘imagination’ in their lifestyles as opposed to ‘traditional’, ‘common-sense’, ‘petty-bourgeois’ values of ‘restraint’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘pragmatism’. They were critical of a variety of aspects of social life such as its hierarchical organization, the institution of paid work, the distinction between work and leisure, the repression of sexuality, formal schooling and education, academic authoritarianism at the university, psychiatric violence, materialist values, consumption and consumerism, the destruction of the environment, militarism and military service, and of what they interpreted as the subordination of social life to the political parties and their subsidiary organizations (ibid: 235-236).

Moreover, these aspects were reflected in, and advanced by, the implementation of numerous communication practices – alternative periodicals, brochures, newspapers, and pirate radio stations.

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<sup>91</sup> The term ‘alternative milieu’, although controversial one, is the term that social actors from different backgrounds in Greece (autonomist, extra-parliamentary left-wing, radical, conscientious objectors’, anarchist, feminist, ecologist, and activist groups) employ in order to describe their area of activity.

#### 4.4.1 Press

By making the historiography of grassroots press initiatives that were published during that period a variety of anarchist, leftist (extra-parliamentary left), ecologist, cultural (art/music/literature), and of specific interest papers emerges. Soon before the fall of dictatorship, various publications, mainly anarchic and left ones, were denouncing the exploitative and repressive character of the society; some of them were published out of the Greek territory. Most of the anarchist and leftist papers of the political changeover era have their roots in these publications. After the restoration of democracy the mushrooming of grassroots press publications extends to various areas challenging the dominant social values and patterns, and introducing new ideas. Although, many of them were published irregularly, or discontinued their publication, new ones emerged; in any case, they were imaginative in every sense.

A prominent case in the anarchist press has been the anarchist newspaper ‘Epithesi’ [Attack] that was published initially in Italy (16-17 issues) and then in Greece (4 issues). According to a veteran on grassroots press initiatives, who has participated in several projects, be publisher of new ones, and keeps a historical archive of grassroots press,<sup>92</sup> ‘Epithesi’ proposed the organizational scheme for the anarchist movement in Greece, as it was reflected in the slogan of the newspaper, “Autonomist Groups of Action”, which has been adopted till nowadays (interview with M. P., May 2003). Another press initiative that took place out of Greece was ‘Rigma’ [Crack] that was published in England by Greek students across Europe. In the era of dictatorship a significant publication within the Greek territory was ‘Pezodromio’ [Pavement] (1972 – 13 issues) that had its subtitle – ‘Notebooks for anti-authoritarian education’ – written in French. Numerous relevant publications came up afterwards. ‘Ta Kimena’ [The Texts] was published by the group that had published ‘Epithesi’ [Attack] – a publication of theoretical articles and foreign news. Moreover, anarchist papers mushroom across various neighbourhoods of Athens. Another characteristic example is: ‘Edo ke Tora’ [Here and Now] by anarchists of Kokkinia (area of Piraeus). Another group publishes ‘Kokkoras pou lali sto skotadi prota’ [The cock that crows firstly at night] (1978), and then in cooperation with anarchists of the area of Kolonos (area in the city of Athens) they publish ‘Alilegie’ [Solidarity] (1982-1983, 2 issues).

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<sup>92</sup> Where most of the press projects of that period mentioned here have been found.

Furthermore, there were many anarchist zines at that time; characteristic example was 'Utopia' (1976). "What characterizes the alternative press of that period is the experimentation and innovation in every sense of their outlook, and content ... printing in black background with white fonts... printing on the negative of the film... being foul-mouthed ... inciting readers to steal it" (interview with M. P., May 2003). A series of leftist papers published by another group include: 'Poliko Asteri' [Pole-Star] – a Marxist periodical (1975, 1 issue); 'Otan' [When] (3 issues), the full title of which was: "When the last capitalist will be hanged on by the guts of the last bureaucrat the humanity will be happy" (price: 5 drachmas, you can steal it instead); 'Eleftheriakos Kommounismos' [Libertarian Communism] (1978); 'Mavros Ilios' [Black Sun, 2 issues] (1981, 2 issues). Another important publication at that time was 'Sosialismos i Barbarotita' [Socialism or Barbarianism] (3 issues), a progressive theoretical discussion by a group inspired by the philosopher Castoriadis.

Various left grassroots periodicals and papers were published that period as well, initiated by both intellectuals and political groups. A significant publication that was first published by left intellectuals during the dictatorship (1972) is 'Anti', as a 'protest voice'. The title of the periodical was an action of resistance itself. It aimed at opposing to every aspect of authority and at the same time to provide alternative proposals; to propose, through an open and without limits dialogue, ideas for a reformulation of the socialist project in politics and culture (Papoutsakis, 2003).<sup>93</sup> Another prominent periodical of extra parliamentary left that period was 'Antipliroforisi' [Anti-information] (1975-1982, 44 issues), which provided an extensive coverage of workers' and students' social struggles and movements, being distributed from hand to hand in the stamping-grounds of workers, students as well as to leftist ones, setting itself in the underground milieu (Ios tis Kyriakis, 23/02/03: 43-45). Other publications from a leftist critical perspective include 'Scholiastis' (Commentator), 'B Paneladiki' [B Pan-Hellenic] (1978-1979). There were also plenty committed leftist papers on Maoism and Trotskyism; characteristic here are the examples of 'Odofragma' [Barricade], and 'Deltio pliroforisis gia mia proletariaki aristera' [Newsletter of information for a proletarian left].

A different remarkable publication, 'Rixi' [Rapture] (1978-79), proposed for the constitution of an autonomist alternative movement in Greece; it was an attempt to create a

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<sup>93</sup> 'Anti' is still on press as a 'Bimontly Political and Cultural Review'.

forum among the various trends and networks developed across various issues (social, political, and cultural) and coexisted within the social space of the 'margins'. The interaction between the social groups and movements that were active 'on the margins' was reflected in various publications as well. Characteristic here is the communication among local ecologist groups (which emerged in late '70s publishing 'Ikologiki Efimerida' [Ecologist Newspaper], anarchist groups (which had published 'The cock that crows firstly at night' and then 'Solidarity') and alternative leftist ones (which had published 'Rupture'); this fusion was echoed in the publications of 'Deltio gia mia omospondia enallaktikon organoseon' [Newsletter for a federation of alternative ecologist organizations] – and then in another publication, 'Anthi tou Kakou' [Flowers of the Evil] (1987).

At the same time, various cultural trends were introduced in Greece after the fall of dictatorship, reflected in various publications; 'KraK' (the din of a state collapsing...) was published by a commune of artists and poets, which run a range of more publications on culture – 'Couros' [Young Man], 'Pantrema' [Matching], and the legend of that period 'Ideodromio' [Road of Ideas] (1978-1998; issues 123), being influenced by the surrealist movement, focused on arts and culture. The 'Roads of Ideas' was published again, for fifth time, on March 2003 (issue: 0 – test edition) with the slogan: 'here imagine gallops and waves'. Moreover, numerous specialised periodicals on arts – 'Convoy'; on music – 'Rock Encyclopedia'; on counter-culture – 'Ta theloume ola' [We want it all]; on madness/prison – 'Asylum'; on homosexuality – 'Kraximo' [Crying out against]; on feminism – 'Poli ton gynaikon' [City of women], and 'solidarity' ones – 'Latin America', took place from these years on.

Finally, this multitude of alternative periodicals, newspapers and brochures has been distributed by alternative publishing houses/bookshops – the autonomist, alternative 'Commouna' [Commune] and the anarchist, libertarian 'Eleftheros Typos' [Free Press], and in alternative stamping-points/bookshops – 'Poppy Level', and 'Octopus', situated in Exarcheia, the bulwark of alternative, grassroots activity. Although many grassroots press initiatives had to discontinue they can still be found in the alternative bookshops of Exarcheia. Some of them re-emerge along with new ones; the 'anti-editorial' team of 'Ideodromio' [Roads of Ideas] prefaces its new edition as follows: "As you see, sentiments, wishes and urges have not changed. On the contrary, today there is a pluralism of papers that adds to the passion even for the publishing of one periodical. There we lay, between the passion for continuity and for broad circulation of a paper such as Ideodromio, with ideas

and suggestions”. A plethora of alternative publications are, though some of them irregularly, in print nowadays; some of them are cited indicatively here: ‘Marmita’, ‘Ardin’ [Radically], ‘Eutopia’, ‘AUTONOMedia’, ‘Dromoi’ [The Roads], ‘Diadromi Eleftherias’ [Libertarian Route], ‘Contact’, ‘Theses’, ‘Kori Ofthalmou’ [The apple of one’s eye], ‘Smoke Signs’, ‘Hyper Siberian’, ‘To Stigma’ [The Mark], ‘Ikologiko Vima’ [Ecologist Stand], ‘Prasini Politiki’ [Green Policy], ‘To Nisi tis Alfabitou’ [The Island of Alphabet], etc.

#### 4.4.2 *Radio*

Radio grassroots practices have their own strong narration within the Greek communicative space. From the very beginning of radio broadcasting in Greece radio amateurs-pirates experimented with it, creating their own radio devices and broadcasting in the medium wave. The pirates of that period were using the medium to play their own music and share their interests. Numerous radio pirates were transmitting from various neighbourhoods of Athens, and not only. In many cases they had also created a ‘network’, using the transmitters to communicate with each other late at nights. A veteran of grassroots radio practices, participating in the experiments of that period points out:

There were a lot of conversations between pirates, the called ‘secret network’ – where each one was taking successively the microphone making comments for the others’ programmes. Most of us were crammed between 1500 and 1600 kHz due to the length of the antennas we were using; but a few of us had the chance to broadcast over 1700 kHz making far-away conversations with Yugoslavians, Turks, and other amateurs; it was the era of the ‘angry Balkans’ (interview with A. A., May 2003).

In the political changeover era an unprecedented flourishing of grassroots radio practices took place. “It was the biggest movement of youth communication that ever existed in Greece. 5-7 thousand pirate stations were on air” (Roumeliotis, 1991: 253-254). A decisive moment in grassroots radio broadcasting in Greece had been the case of the clandestine radio station of the Athens Polytechnic University that was set up during the dictatorship. Students who had occupied the Athens Polytechnic building broadcasted in 1973, in 1150 kHz, calling all Greeks “to a general strike and asking for a worker – student alliance to overthrow the colonels”. The occupation radio station was broadcasting with the

power of just 255 Watt; however, radio pirates-amateurs retransmitted its signal and it could be listened across the country (Roumeliotis, 1991: 253). The radio station of “free besieged” stopped broadcasting while it was on air by the bloody violation of the asylum by the army forces.

Soon after the restoration of democracy the emergence of “the political pirates of free radio broadcasting” (Barboutis, 1994) signalled the new era for grassroots radio practices. The political pirate radio stations that were set up by students, radio activists and intellectuals asked for the right to get their own space on air, challenging the state monopoly on broadcasting (Roumeliotis, 1991: 255). During the following years various grassroots radio stations were set up by students during their mass mobilizations, or by student movements in the universities. Characteristic examples here are the radio stations of the occupied Universities in 1979 that apart from music and discussions broadcasted declarations for the right on free radio broadcasting (ibid: 257). Moreover, in the early 1980s more experiments took place by different actors. In 1981, during the general elections, ‘To radio tou dromou’ [Radio of the Road] was on air, broadcasting discussions among member of the extreme Left, and getting out on the road broadcasting live talks with voters. It stopped broadcasting a few months later getting rid of the transmitter before police forces arrive (ibid: 257-258). ‘Typhlopontikas ton FM’ [The Mole of FM] that started broadcasting in the same period (20/05/81) was one prominent and lasting example of grassroots radio practices. It was set by radio activists, being actively involved in the developing movement in favour of free radio broadcasting, and broadcast programmes that had a social-cultural approach – including ones of social and political satire, of social critique and commentary, of national and international news, as well as on literature and music (traditional, music of the world, and rock) (Leaflet of Typhlopontikas FM). At that period more advocates of free radio broadcasting set up radio stations and some of them worked together – during 1984-1985 ‘Typhlopontikas ton FM’ joined forces with ‘Eleftheri Radiofonia’ [Free Radio Broadcasting] and ‘Eleftheri Radiofonia Pireas’ [Free Radio Broadcasting of Piraeus]. The voices for free radio broadcasting multiplied and spread through the country; ‘Radio-Epikinonia’ [Radio-Communication], and Piratis’ [Pirate] broadcast declarations in favour of ‘free radio broadcasting’ and ‘alternative radio broadcasting’ correspondingly (Roumeliotis, 1991: 263-266). At the same time, the repression of grassroots radio practices by the police forces became fiercer – in January 1985, ‘Typhlopontikas ton FM’ was forced to silence after the arrest of 3 of its members



and the confiscation of its equipment (Leaflet of Tyflopontikas FM). In 1986, the first pirate station that was broadcasting on a constant basis (24 hours) was on air in Thessalonica – ‘Panorama 86’, another one followed – ‘Mousikos Diaulos’ [Music Sound] (1987) in the same area (Roumeliotis, 1991: 263). One year later, ‘Typhlopontikas ton FM’ broadcast again by the same group of activists and in cooperation with local groups – its programmes were dedicated to alternative and ecologist practices; 5 months later it voluntarily stopped broadcasting as a symbolic act of protest against the obscure planning on issuing licenses and the possible capture of the FM band by economic giants (Leaflet of Typhlopontikas FM).

In addition, free radio broadcasting was promoted by pirate initiatives that were organized by intellectuals in terms of public-interest radio stations – the cases of ‘Radio Antilalos’ [Radio Echo] and ‘Kanali 15’ [Channel 15]. ‘Radio Antilalos’ was an initiative of the left intellectual magazine ‘Anti’. It first transmitted on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1983, in 108.8 MHz, as an ‘experiment on alternative radio broadcasting’ – “[w]hat matters in this attempt, what promotes the very meaning of the term ‘alternative radio broadcasting’, is that whatever the result of the experiment will be it does not reflect the plan of an executive team; it does not aim at ‘forming’ a specific ideological, theoretical or aesthetical approach. What has been produced is the result of an open relationship between the ‘medium’ and the ‘producer’” (Anti, 1983a: 26). The setting up of the experiment was at the same time a statement against public monopoly on broadcasting. A number of messages-declarations by public figures in favour of free broadcasting were being transmitted the first day of broadcasting (Anti, 1983b: 24-26, Roumeliotis, 1991: 258). The participants of this initiative questioned the state monopoly broadcasting and promoted the liberalization of mass media, long before its arbitrary implementation,<sup>94</sup> as follows:

[The liberalization of mass media] should be considered in two ways: the first involves the abolition of the direct state control over mass media, replaced instead by actual social control. The second aspect concerns the freedom and possibility for associations of public interest and social groups to raise their voices – at least in the radio broadcasting field. To go further; [e]ven in the case of the most “open” and “pluralistic” mass media systems, under state or social control, there will always exist some space that belongs to “civil

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<sup>94</sup> Along the lines of the setting up of municipal radio stations by mayors of big cities and leading members of the conservative party.

society”, namely, to the domain of inviolable rights of free expression, ideas, and human sensitivity (Anti, 1983c: 13).

The second day of its broadcasting, the police radio detectors were there; the police forces entered the studio/house, but the transmitter had already been tucked away (Anti, 1983d: 23). The second case, ‘Kanali 15’, was set up by the ‘initiative group for free radio broadcasting’, consisting of journalists, intellectuals and other professionals in various fields. It first broadcast in 1985, ten days before the general elections, making a call to the political parties to present their standpoints on the air. “In this way they gave their response concerning state monopoly over broadcasting, declaring their position about pluralistic information” (Roumeliotis, 1991: 261). Two more illegal broadcasts were transmitted by the same group. In March 1986, ‘Kanali 15’ was again on air, ‘practicing the constitutionally established right of freedom of expression’; shortly after the public prosecutor arrived at the house from where the station was broadcasting. The programme continued; the writer K. Tachtsis was on the microphone: ‘You are listening to Kanali 15 on 105 MHz, the only one radio station in the world that broadcasts under the presence of the public prosecutor. You can arrest me’. The ‘Kanali 15’ was forced in silence, the machines were confiscated and 17 people were immediately brought to the court (ibid: 262). The last appearance of ‘Kanali 15’ as a pirate radio station took place before the municipal elections in September 1986. The Mayor of Athens candidates (with the exception of government’s candidate) discussed with the presenter on the studio; the police forces were outside but they did not intervene (ibid: 264). Later, during a conference on free radio broadcasting organized by the initiative group of ‘Kanali 15’, the group settled on promoting the setting up of municipal radio stations by the local authorities. However their hopes for municipal radios to act as agents of independent and pluralistic broadcasting soon proved futile. A couple of years later, the leading figure, R. Koundouros, of the group initiative for free broadcasting stated that he had bitterly regretted this project (Barboutis, 1994: 46, citing Vayiona 1989: 54). Finally, after the breaking down of the initiative group for radio broadcasting, ‘Kanali 15’ broadcast again in 1989 (only Koundouros participated in the station, owned by a private company) as a private station; few months later Koundouros had been thrown out, and soon after that the station started broadcasting only music (Barboutis, 1994: 47).

Despite the fact that state monopoly on radio broadcasting had been a thing of the past after the ‘direct action’ of municipal radio stations and the emergence of numerous commercial ones, the struggle of radio amateurs/activist-pirates for alternative forms of radio broadcasting did not stop, attracting instead more activists. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1987 the alternative radio station ‘Radio-Paremvasi 95’ [Radio-Intervention 95] broadcasted from the stamping-ground of the youth of the area of (Korydallos) youth; among its participants were members of the movement ‘Intervention of the Citizens of Korydallos’, and radio pirates, activists. The station had a “free zone” where citizens could make their own dynamic intervention; various social groups/actors – prisoners, conscientious objectors, students and professors during the occupations of high schools, ecologists, and artists got a place in the station. One year later (25/05/1988), another alternative radio station, ‘Kokkinoskoufitsa 94.6 FM’ [Little Red Hiding Hood 94.6 FM], was on air, intervening in social matters – characteristic here was the mobilization of citizens of a north-eastern borough of Athens (Halandri) for the conservation of the gully in the area.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, since 1987 when Typhlopontikas FM stopped its transmission the technical team of the group provided voluntarily their help to alternative radio stations across the country – ‘Radio Orama’ [Radio Vision], ‘Radio Kivotos’ [Radio Ark], and ‘Radio Utopia’ (Leaflet of Typhlopontikas FM). ‘Radio Orama’ took place the first years of ‘90s in Agrinio, run by different collectives in the respective area. What makes the case of ‘Radio Orama’ distinctive is that it was an alternative radio station that had an administrating team under a low wage and it had the intention to use advertisements (interview with A. A., May 2003). Another interesting alternative radio experiment that took place in the north of Greece and used advertisements was ‘Enallaktiko Radio Kilkis 98.7 FM’ [The Alternative Radio of Kilkis 98.7 FM] run by the ecologist-alternative group of the area; in contrast to most of the alternative radio stations it had a morning zone (Asprogeraka and Asprogerakas, 1991). The other two initiatives, ‘Radio Utopia’ (107.7 FM) and ‘Radio Kivotos’ [Radio Ark] (92.5 FM) that took place in Thessalonica were organized on a self-management basis and were supported exclusively by the financial contributions and the voluntary work of their

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<sup>95</sup> The researcher attended an event-discussion on alternative/non-commercial/libertarian/self-managed/social radios – “Raising Waves: For the Social Radio, For the Direct-democratic Networking, For the Horizontal Communication” that took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2002 in *The Autonomist Stamping-point of Exarcheia*. Members of both stations, ‘Radio-Paremvasi 95, Kokkinoskoufitsa 94.6 FM, participated also in this discussion, giving a historical account of the experiments.

members. 'Radio Utopia' was on air in 1982, broadcasting music sporadically, and discussions on education, literature, ecologist issues and general social problems. Since 1989 the station was broadcasting regularly, with the participation of more radio pirates of both the FM and medium waves, and the engagement of various social groups (students of university schools – on medicine, philosophy, physical education; members of the local ecologist movement; the ornithologist company; members of the commission for the rights of the handicapped, various musical groups and many other social actors), all of which have their own programs in the station, expressing diverse interests (Asprogerakas and Asprogeraka, 1991: 24-25; Barboutis, 1994: 82-83). The other alternative experimental radio in Thessalonica, 'Radio Kivotos' set up in 1988 by a group of amateurs/pirates, transmitted programmes about social minorities; on ecologist, gender, cultural, and local issues; on alternative, radical citizens' practices; broadcasting independent, underground music as well as cultural productions for cinema, theatre, and art. "It was like an anarchist art, a deconstructed radio discourse but in an artist framework, a framework where everyone could experiment with the microphone and of course with the music and the discourse itself; it was a very dynamic radio" (interview with A. A., May 2003). Moreover, it was the only alternative radio station that managed in 1989, after changing five transmitting frequencies due to the fierce competition of commercial stations for a place on the airwaves, to obtain a broadcasting licence in 92.5 MHz for 141 Watt maximum transmitting power (Asprogerakas and Asprogeraka, 1991: 21). Till the mid 90's both of them were on air and managed to capture a minimal audience in a highly commercialized, due to the uncontrolled liberalization of broadcasting, environment of 65 broadcasting radios in Thessalonica (Barboutis, 1994: 89).

Along the lines of the struggle of grassroots radio projects for a legitimate place in the broadcasting field, a number of protest resolutions have been adopted by these initiatives, asking for the allocation of frequencies to alternative, social radios. In addition, a number of events-discussions have taken place among participants/representatives of these stations, with the participation of academics and legislators (Leaflet of Typhlopontikas FM). Moreover, a number of proposals have been made in terms of both a realistic framework for the function of these alternative, social radio stations, and the creation of an overall social network among such initiatives, in local and regional level, as well as, in relation to the introduction of new technologies (Asprogerakas, 2001). Finally, grassroots/pirate radio practices continue to emerge, though not as many as before, in radio broadcasting field,

especially in the province of Greece – ‘Anaixartitos Foititikos Radifonikos Stathmos 105 MHz’ [Independent Students’ Radio Station 105 MHz]; ‘1431 AM Radio’; ‘Antidراسي 90 FM’ [Reaction 90 FM]; ‘98 FM’; ‘Kokkinoskoufítsa Radio 88.2 FM’ [Little Red Hiding Hood FM 88.2 FM]; ‘FM Agathi Radio 104.7 MHz’ [FM Thorn Radio 104.7 MHz].

### 4.3.3 *Internet*

As mentioned above, Internet has recently become an issue of Greek communication matters, and as such, studies concerning the use of Internet in Greece are in process. However, taking into account the low, though increasing, penetration rate of Internet in Greece significant is the use of it by various social organizations and groups, even though most of the relevant Web sites are still underdeveloped. By making a comparative Web site analysis of environmental NGOs at a European level, from the perspective of the impact of new social movements on participatory politics and citizenship, Tsaliki (2003) points, out among other things, the amateurish look of most of the Web pages of Greek ecologist organizations, compared to the sites of North Europe, and their heavily informative character: “[t]he sites are generally poor, and underdeveloped in terms of content, restricting themselves in describing their mission and offering very modest interactive facilities. There is a lot that can be done to mobilize the wider public towards active participation and direct action. Also under-represented is the area of link provision” (Tsaliki, 2003: appendix 2, the case of Greece). Nevertheless, various grassroots groups become growingly active through the Internet, and the Web sites of some of them are advanced; few of them have a relatively high number of visitors (around 4,000 Internet users seem to visit the homepage of Indymedia Athens per day). Characteristic here are the cases of: Indymedia Athens [[www.athens.indymedia.org](http://www.athens.indymedia.org)]; Indymedia Thessaloniki [[www.thessaloniki.indymedia.org](http://www.thessaloniki.indymedia.org)]; ‘Papaki’ [Duckling] ([www.papaki.panteion.gr](http://www.papaki.panteion.gr)); E-Ecology ([www.e-ecology.gr](http://www.e-ecology.gr)); Media.WebRadio ([www.media.uoa.gr/radio](http://www.media.uoa.gr/radio)); Infofemina ([www.genderissues.org.gr/Infofemina](http://www.genderissues.org.gr/Infofemina)); ‘Anthropos’ [Human Being] ([www.anthropos.gr](http://www.anthropos.gr)); Porphyris ([www.porphyrís.com/gr](http://www.porphyrís.com/gr)).

The present research probes into different grassroots experiments implemented across the three areas sketched above (press, radio and Internet), addressing its research

interest – the extent to which these practices contribute to, and intervene in, the public and political sphere – along with the particularities of the Greek context.

*PART III*

## CHAPTER 5

### *Research methodology/methods*

The following research draws on various grassroots media practices across press, radio, and Internet in Greece. Its approach has evaluated another aspect of such practices, further than empirical assessments over the structural characteristics of them. In particular, it researches fragmented, heterogeneous grassroots media practices in terms of instances of representation and participation they encompass for people/collectives who are engaged in them.

The study has addressed its research interest – the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of the implementation of grassroots media projects in Greece – within a broader theoretical context. This theoretical context concerns, as it has been sketched before, the evaluation of such projects in macro perspective, in terms of the interplay between public sphere and civil society, as well as, in micro perspective, in terms of the ‘lived experience’ of their practice. Within this theoretical framework, the study probes into grassroots media experiments in Greece critically understanding the context, the practice, and the role of these projects, evaluating their contribution to, and intervention in, the public and political sphere correspondingly, pointing out their challenges and limits.

Lastly, the study is not a comparative one of projects that are applied through different media, but one which probes into the ‘social meanings’ of the practice of heterogeneous media projects, within the particular context (Greece) of their implementation.



## 5.1 *Research Interest*

- Research subject

Along with the theoretical elaboration on decentralised media projects in terms of encompassing alternative forms of communication as well as constituting key players in the process of the democratization of communication the research literature has focused on various aspects of these projects in empirical terms too. Core areas of research have been here the organization, product, environment, process, and the ‘users’ of these media.<sup>96</sup> Several issues have been raised and analysed along the lines of the above arenas in alternative media research. These issues concern the objectives and the structure of alternative media; the production and distribution process, the nature of the product itself; their social context, technological innovations, the communication/mediation process, and the actors-audience of these projects.

Concerning the research field on small-scale, decentralised media in Greece, the few studies about local/municipal media<sup>97</sup> have explored the place these media hold in the market (in relation to mass media), their programming, their institutional setting, and the challenges that new technologies pose for them. In regards to alternative media practices the only research study<sup>98</sup> on the field (about ‘community’ radio stations) has probed into the ‘reach’ and the ‘place’ of these projects in the local public sphere. The gap in the Greek bibliography concerning the evaluation of alternative media projects in sociological terms, along and across their process, has been a fundamental challenge for this research.

From this perspective, the following study researches heterogeneous grassroots media projects, probing into the “lived experience” of their practice. Accordingly, the research subject of this study is the ‘agents’, participants of grassroots media projects.

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<sup>96</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>97</sup> See N. Demertzis (1996) about local press, Antonis (1994) about municipal radio stations, and R. Panagiotopoulou (1999) about local/regional television channels.

<sup>98</sup> Barboutis (1994); see chapter 3.

- Intellectual puzzle

The present study focuses on diverse grassroots media practices that are implemented ‘on the margins’, drawing both in terms of their contribution to the public sphere (what this study calls the “spatial’ aspect), as well as, in terms of their intervention in the political sphere (what this study calls the aspect of ‘agency’). From this point of view, this study does not begin from a common conception of what is ‘wrong’ with these projects (their ‘fragmented nature’), but has as an aim to contribute to the identification of what is going on through the projects, critically probing into their role within the specific context (Greece) they take place, evaluating significant aspects concerning their practice in their own terms. Accordingly, by probing into the actual realm of grassroots media projects, this study suggests that participant’s motivations/ideas/views concerning these initiatives as well as the way they experience the process and practice of them are “meaningful properties” for the understanding of the implementation and role of these projects. Thus, it is people’s accounts of their engagement with and within these initiatives, subjects’ meanings, which will generate knowledge and explanations about the practice/role of grassroots media projects. Even though the study does not underestimate the significance of the institutional and structural components of these projects, it puts emphasis on people’s accounts in order to probe into its research interest. In the context of its theoretical framework, which evaluates the aspect of an active expression and enactment of citizenship in terms of the implementation of such projects, this study addresses the following research question: *Do grassroots media practices contribute to/ intervene in the public and political sphere in Greece?*

- Secondary research questions

The following set of research questions form the backbone of the research design that will be explored and developed in the research process.

- a) How and for what purposes are grassroots media projects implemented in Greece?
- b) How do people that are involved in these projects experience their practice?

- c) Do these projects contribute to the participants' experience of the public and political sphere?
- d) Do these practices intervene in the public and political life?

- The fieldwork

The selection of case studies has been made on the basis of their relevance to the theoretical position of the study, which evaluates the practice of such projects along the lines of the interplay between civil society and public sphere and in terms of their 'lived experience'. Through this prism, the study probes into media projects that are originated 'from below', run by various social groups and activists, setting its focus on the social actors of these projects, the people who are engaged in their practice, rather than on the organization or the product of the projects. A set of minimum criteria has been set for the selection of such cases:

- a. *They are articulated in terms of a 'community of social interest'*

Though such an interest can be formed via the individual engagement of different people in communicative practices (the case of zines/e-zines), this study is focused on projects run by social groups and activists. Moreover, the study, along the lines of the account it develops in relation to these projects, concerning their contribution to, and intervention in, public and political sphere, focuses on heterogeneous media practices that diverse collectives run, raising various issues. What makes the study of grassroots media practices important is the absence of strong social movements, and their communication practices, within Greek society.

- b. *They are run on a non-professional basis*

The projects are run by collectives and activists that have not a professional interest on them. The contribution of technicians is necessary in several cases; though some of them are activists as well; prominent here is the case of an activist group that provides technical support on grassroots radio experiments.

c. *They are 'not-for-profit' projects*

They are based on forms of 'self-financing', donations, subscriptions of members, proceeds of events-festivals; or they are set on the price of their cost in the case of some of the editions. There is marginal advertising on relative grassroots projects in some of these.

In terms of this strategy, cases that do not fit these criteria (to be run by social groups, non-professionally and not-for-profit) have not been included in this study. Characteristic is the case of experimental projects run by students of the departments of Communication and Journalism, which though advanced enough are run on the basis of participants' training,<sup>99</sup> and as such they have not been taken into account here. Finally, the study, drawing on diverse grassroots media experiments, is not a comparative one of projects implemented along different media, though differences are mentioned, but one which probes into the way people who participate in them understand, experience, and account the process/practice on the whole.

- Case studies

A variety of sources and a range of alternative public sites have provided the researcher with valuable material concerning grassroots media practices, which have also facilitated the contact with the projects. In the case of press, café, stamping grounds, and kiosks in the area of Exarcheia (a central Athens borough), which has become the 'melting-pot' of social and political minorities/groups, are the places where most of the brochures, periodicals, newspapers of these groups are circulated, where the material was collected and where the researcher came in contact with activists who participate in them. Alternative publications provided also a source for relevant experiments that run through radio and Internet. Regarding radio initiatives, the MA dissertation of C. Barboutis (1994) has been a significant historical account of grassroots radio practices in Greece. Moreover, although the projects on which Barboutis' study applies ('community radio stations') do not

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<sup>99</sup> The cases of the web periodical 'Papaki' ('[www.papaki.panteion.gr](http://www.papaki.panteion.gr)') run by the students of Communication, Media and Cultural department of Panteion University; and the experimental web-radio 'Media.WebRadio' ([www.media.uoa.gr/radio](http://www.media.uoa.gr/radio)) run by students of Communication and Media Studies of the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens.

broadcast any more they have paved the way for present experiments; people who had participated in those experiments provided information concerning present experiments. As far as the Internet sites are concerned, the personal exploration through well-established sites and their links, supplemented the process.

In the case of grassroots radio experiments, the stations that transmit regularly are limited – two ‘social radio’ stations and few students’ ones (12 to 18 hours daily). In contrast, there are numerous alternative/grassroots publications and several relevant Internet sites; as such the researcher had to choose, in addition to the criteria that have been sketched above, cases that are consistent enough in terms of their edition or the renewal of their electronic pages. Furthermore, the study took into account diverse cases that raise different issues, though in most of the projects several issues are incorporated in their ‘agenda’. The case studies include three press editions (two periodicals, one newspaper), three pirate radio stations (the area of broadcasting is not mentioned), and three Internet sites.

#### *“contAct”*

‘Contact’ is a three-monthly periodical press edition of anarchists from the western part of Greece. It was first published in 1999/2000, and it is distributed in main kiosks, bookstores and alternative standing points of Western Greece, Athens, and Thessalonica. A variety of issues run through its pages, including anarchist discourses, ecology, globalization, immigration, education, and a variety of local interests related to cities of western Greece. The articles are written by activists both individually and by groups of local interest. The periodical, around 80 pages, has a considerable circulation, about 1,500 copies, and it is sold on the price of 2.93 Euro. An electronic page for the periodical includes the presentation of the volumes of the periodical, and information about relevant (in terms of interest) sites on the net and alternative festivals-events that take place in different cities of Greece. The project welcomes the reader: “For a tour in the world of libertarian thought”.

#### *“Smoke Signs”* [Simata Kapnou]

‘Smoke Signs’ is a bimonthly periodical press edition dedicated to issues concerning Latin America and resistant practices, initiated by the ‘group of anti-information in Latin

America'. It was first published in 2000, and it is mainly distributed in the standing point of Immigrants in the area of Exarcheia as well as in main kiosks and bookstores of Athens, Thessalonica, and other big cities of Greece. Issues related to economic, political, social and cultural aspects of Latin America and resistant practices are included in its pages. Articles are written by the members of the anti-information group, activists, and groups of solidarity. The periodical, around 45 pages, has, taking also into account its specific interest, a large circulation, about 2,500 copies per issue, and it is sold on the price of 1.47 Euro. The project welcomes its readers to a: "Newsletter of anti-information for Latin America".

*"Green Policy"* [Prasini Politiki]

'Green Policy' is an ecologist bimonthly newspaper. It was first published in 1997 in Athens. It is part of a political movement that runs on the margins of the political system. Issues related to politics, 'green political movements', ecology, immigration, racism, globalization, and human rights, both within the country and globally are covered in its pages. Members of the group, activists, and local ecologist groups write on its pages. The newspaper, around 16 pages, is published in a considerable number of copies on the price of 1 Euro. The newspaper is distributed in its members-subscribers and in main kiosks of big cities of Greece. The project welcomes the reader to a: "Paper of ecologist and political information and discussion".

*"Little Red Riding Hood 88.2 FM"* [Kokkinoskoufitsa 88.2 FM]

'Little Red Riding Hood' finds its origins in a number of relevant experiments that had taken place in late '80s in the respective area. It first transmitted in 1999. Discussions on Greek culture (folk music, literature and art), education, ecology, local issues/problems, and a wide range of music interests are included in its programme. Its members, the subscriptions of its supporters, and the proceeds of occasional local events-festivals organised by it finance the station. Moreover, since 2001 the station consists part of a non-profitable civic organization of public benefit ('Centre for Research, Information and Communication'). The station has organized also a conference on alternative social radio (02/12/1999). Students, local groups and activists occasionally transmit programmes in the station. The project addresses itself as: "An alternative, social radio station".

*“FM Thorn 104.3 MHz” [FM Agathi 104.3 MHz]*

‘FM Thorn’ finds its origins in the attempts of a group of amateurs to set up an alternative, self-managed, non-commercial, libertarian radio station. It first broadcasted on 1989 for two years and then transmitted again in 1997. The provision of anti-information, discussions on ecology, anarchy, and a variety of music interests are included in its programme. Its members and the subscriptions of its supporters finance the station. Local ecologist/anarchist groups, activists, and students transmit also occasionally programmes in the station. An electronic page of the station includes the history of grassroots radio practices in Greece as well as information for contemporary experiments in Greece, and abroad. The project addresses its attempt as a: “Libertarian, social radio station for a society of our dreams, our desires and our needs’.

*“98.00 FM”*

‘98.00 FM’ is initiated by students of University and radio amateurs, and it first transmitted on 2002. The provision of anti-information and discussion on various topics – anarchy, education, globalization, immigration, ecology, alternative music, art and books – as well a range of experimental music interests are included in the agenda of the station. Students, autonomists, anarchists, and various activists transmit regularly programmes in the station. The members of the station and the proceeds of occasional local events-festivals that it organises in the area finance the station. The project addresses itself as “The free station of the city”.

*“Indymedia Athens” - [www.athens.indymedia.org]*

‘Indymedia Athens’ was created in October 2001, as a local part of the global network. An underground website network of anti-information and direct communication – including local and international news, political analyses, print-posters-proclamations, diary of events and protests across Greece, and forums of discussion – has been created by a group of activists, inspired by the idea of independent, collective and non-commercial information. The physical assembly of the group takes place at an autonomous standing point in Exarcheia. A monthly periodical, four-page, edition, including international and

local news and analyses on a variety of topics of the site, is distributed for free. The project addresses itself as: “An open collective of people offering grassroots, no-corporate, non-commercial coverage”.

*“Porphyris”* - [[www.porphyrism.com/gr](http://www.porphyrism.com/gr)]

‘Porphyris’ finds its origins in the attempt of a Youth Club originated in a Greek island (Kythira). The site was developed in 2001 as the result of the growing interest of young people for their island, and soon attracted more participants in it across the country (the youth club has now 500 members). Issues relating to culture (art, music, literature), the environment, tourism, historical and natural sites of Kythira as well as of other Greek islands, and relevant activities and events, are included in the agenda of the project. The project is funded by the members of the club and the proceeds of events it runs – mainly of the annual festival that the club organizes every summer in Kythira. The physical assembly of the group takes place in space provided by the pan-Kythiriaki community in Athens. A three-monthly 16-page newspaper is also published by the club. The site welcomes the user to an: “Escape from inertia”.

*“Infofemina”* - [[www.genderissues.org.gr/Infofemina](http://www.genderissues.org.gr/Infofemina)]

‘Infofemina’ is an initiative of the Centre of Feminine Studies and Research for the development of a forum for gender issues. The project, which was firstly initiated in 1999, was established in 2001, and it is supported by the members of the Centre. It includes a range of analyses and forums on issues related to gender, women’s’/feminist movements, human rights, racism, sexism, minorities, non-governmental organizations, anti-globalization movement, ecology, art, and music. Moreover, free courses for women on the use of PCs and the exploration on the Internet are provided by Infofemina. The physical assembly of the group takes place at the Centre of Feminine Studies and Research which also provides the technical support to it. The project addresses itself as: “The political discourse of women on the Internet”.



## 5.2 *Research context*

- Why qualitative research

The following study uses qualitative research. According to Mason, qualitative research

is grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly ‘interpretivist’ in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced. Whilst different versions of qualitative research might understand or approach these elements in different ways (for example, focusing on social meanings, or interpretations, or practices, or discourses, or processes, or constructions) all will see some of these as meaningful elements in a complex – possibly multi-layered – social world (Mason, 1996: 4).

This study, being interested in the social meanings of the participation of people in the practice of grassroots media projects, probes into these from the point of view of the people studied (people who are engaged in their practice) (Hammersley, 1992: 165, cited in Silverman, 2001: 38). The aim is to gather an understanding of the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of grassroots media projects, drawing on the descriptive narratives of the people who experience the practice of these projects.

[Q]ualitative work serves to establish contexts in which a thoughtful awareness of current media practices may develop. Such work may include an exploration of ... alternative ways in which the different interests and purposes of diverse social and cultural groups might be communicated in a public form (Green, 1991: 216).

From this perspective, the study is concerned with the motives and activities of the people engaged in these experiments and the meanings they ascribe to them as emerging from the experience of the practice of these projects. Thus, the study runs through the way people are engaged in grassroots media projects as well as the way they put/relate their experience in/to the social milieu, within the public and political sphere. As Flick (1998: 11) puts it, “qualitative research process can be represented as a path from theory to text and another from text back to theory. The intersection of the two paths is the collection of verbal or visual data and their interpretation on a specific research design”.

- Research methods

The critical issue of this research is not whether the setting of such media practices is a 'typical' one, but the evaluation of how the practice of these projects is understood, experienced by the people who are engaged in them. Thus, the following study is not interested in generating data by observing systematically and rigorously dimensions of the settings of these projects (organization, and product). But, being interested in generating data concerning the social meanings of people's engagement in grassroots media experiments – of their motives, aims, and the way they experience their practice, this study employs in-depth interviews as the main research method. "[I]nterviews are particularly suited for studying people's understandings of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world" (Kvale, 1996: 105). Interviews as a research technique vary from formal standardised examples to ones that provide qualitative depth. Oppenheim (1992), distinguishing between "standardised" and "exploratory" interviews, points out that "[t]he purpose of the exploratory interview is essential heuristic: to develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than to gather facts and statistics. It is concerned with trying to understand how ordinary people think and feel about the topics of concern to the research" (Oppenheim, 1992: 67). Namely, interviewing, in terms of entering into a dialogue with the interviewee (in depth), facilitates a kind of interaction with people that provides access to their accounts, articulations and discourses, evaluating further (deep and complex) aspects of their experiences concerning the practice of grassroots media projects. Thus, in-depth interviewing is concerned here with the engagement of social actors in grassroots media experiments and the meanings they describe when relate the projects. "[I]nterviews have the capacity to be interactional contexts within which social worlds come to be better understood. One way in which is this achieved is ... [by privileging] the social world under discussion and its stories over the stories of the larger society" (Miller & Glassner, 1997: 109).

The central characteristic of this form of interviewing is its open-ended character. This research technique enables the interviewer to answer questions within their own frame of reference, evaluating interviewee's concerns. "The subjects not only answer questions prepared by an expert, but themselves formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their

lived world” (Kvale, 1996: 11). This study is definitely concerned with the perspective of those being interviewed. The study draws on their experiences and self-understanding, clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on the practice of their experiments; by privileging their ‘lived world’ and its stories, the former comes to be better understood. Such a research technique advances qualitative depth approach by allowing ideas and meanings that interviewees attribute to their engagement in grassroots media projects to be understood in their own terms, providing subsequently a greater understanding of the subject’s point of view. “Thus flexibility and the discovery of meaning, rather than standardization, or a concern to compare through constraining replies by a set interview schedule, characterize this method” (May, 1997: 113). Through this spectrum, interviewing is not treated as ‘a mere technique’ that is used as a method of data collection, but as one that ‘creates’ data for analysis. In the process of interviewing, research subjects describe their lived world, their experience, they discover new relationships, new meanings in what they experience and do; and the interviewer condenses and interprets the meaning of what the interviewee describes, ‘sending’ the meaning back. Namely,

mov[ing] away from knowledge as a correspondence with an objective reality toward knowledge as a social construction of reality there is a change of emphasis from observation of, to conversation and interaction with, the social world. ... conceiv[ing] validation as communication with and action on the social world, the research interview based on conversation and interaction attains a privileged position” (Kvale, 1996: 289).

Moreover, the production of meanings through interviewing addresses issues related to the particular research concerns of the study. While people being interviewed are flexible enough to talk about the topic, the interview obviously involves the researcher having an aim in mind when conducting the interview. One answer of why interviewing is an especially useful mode of systemic inquiry “lies in the interview situation’s ability to incite the production of meanings that address issues relating to particular research concerns” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997: 122). As such the interview has been designed in evaluative terms. Interviewees and interviewer are actively, mutually engaged in the creation of data. “Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter” (ibid: 114). Nevertheless, the data produced through research interviews are “researcher provoked data” – “[u]sing research interviews involves actively creating data

which would not exist apart from the researcher's intervention" (Silverman, 2001: 159). As Holstein & Gubrium put it particularly:

[The researcher] does not tell the respondents what to say, but offers them pertinent ways of conceptualising issues and making connections – that is, suggests possible horizons of meaning and narrative linkages that coalesce into the emerging responses (Gubrium, 1993). The pertinence of what is discussed is partly defined by the research topic and partly by the substantive horizons of ongoing responses. While the active respondent may selectively exploit a vast range of narrative resources, it is the active interviewer's job to direct and harness the respondent's constructive storytelling to the research task at hand (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997: 125).

From this perspective, the study examines the practice of grassroots media projects in relation to participants' experience of public and political sphere. "A recognized bias or subjective perspective, may, however, come to highlight specific aspects of the phenomena investigated, bring new dimensions forward, contributing to a multiperspectival construction of knowledge" (Kvale, 1996: 286).

- Planning/conducting interviews

Given the fact that the study is designed to probe into interviewee's perspectives the establishment of a "rapport", a process of building up trust and co-operation, is very important. "Establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest, assuring confidentiality and not being judgemental are some important elements of building rapport" (Glassner & Loughlin, 1987: 35, quoted in Miller and Glassner, 1997: 106).

A variety of strategies were employed by the researcher in order to come in contact with activists/groups who implement such projects. Establishing trust and familiarity was the first step in the process of building a rapport. Issues related to the difficulty of approaching, and addressing, some of these groups had to be taken into account – concerning the character (political, ideological) itself of some of the groups which run such projects (anarchists, autonomists, extra-parliamentary political groups), and the specific context (Greece) within which these groups are active. One of the main characteristics of some of these groups is their rigid social network; you have to approach them on behalf of a 'known' and trustful companion in order to accept you. Moreover, the fact of the arrest,

during that period, of the members of the main terrorist organization in Greece (“November 17<sup>th</sup>”) and its possible connection to other armed, or not, politically resistant practices by the Greek police, had made these groups unapproachable enough to ‘strangers’. At first place, a ‘companion’ of them, who had participated in a previous research related to radio projects,<sup>100</sup> and as a result had a positive approach to research attempts of approaching this ‘space’, has been the primary link of the researcher to these groups. By being introduced to the old generation of ‘companions’ by one of them, it helped the researcher to establish trust and familiarity. The awareness of the history of groups, activists and practices originated in what has been inclusively defined in Greece as ‘alternative milieu’ in advance (through relative reading on them) was a necessary precondition for establishing a rapport. This kind of access, sketched above, was employed across both press and radio experiments where the most committed social, political groups are active. Concerning the case-studies that are implemented in other cities (four of the case studies are not originated in Athens) the researcher spent considerable amount of time there establishing familiarity with these cases as well.

Moreover, the participation (as audience) of the researcher in meetings, and open discussions organized by various social/minority groups was a part of establishing trust with them, confirming a genuine interest to their discourses and actions. Furthermore, the clarification of the non-judgmental character of the researcher’s interest was important, taking into account the vast ideological and political differences that are prominent along and between these groups. Finally, private data identifying the social actors of these practices have not been reported; subjects’ privacy is protected by using initials. In addition, in the case of the three pirate radio stations the location of the implementation of the projects is disguised to satisfy confidentiality.

Regarding the interviewing process itself, the interviews were conducted in the places, stamping grounds that interviewees perceive as their own space of activity – either the place where the project itself is organized, or in café and social clubs for discussion where interviewees go frequently. Out of 44 interviews 37 were recorded (lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour and a half), 5 interviews were taken down in shorthand as a way to establish trust with some of the interviewees when they felt not comfortable with the presence of a tape-recorder, and 2 of them were conducted by e-mails because of the

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<sup>100</sup> That of C. Barboutis (1994) on ‘community radio stations’.

presence of interviewees in different places than the one where the project was originated. The interviews were conducted within a period of four months, from February to May 2003 – the details of each interview are provided in appendix.

The research, drawing on research subjects' perspective on their 'lived world', was interested in eliciting answers in the interviewee's own words and frame of reference; as such the researcher evaluated in advance the importance of the participation and co-operation of the subjects for the conduct of research. The participation of the researcher in several general meetings, open-discussions of the projects gave him the chance to discuss with participants and evaluate the actual interest of the research for the implementation of grassroots media projects in Greece and particularly for the way they themselves understand their practice. Interviewing "rests its strength upon eliciting answers which are, as far as possible, in the interviewee's own words and frame of reference", which means that "interviewer must make the subjects feel that their participation and answers are valued, for their co-operation is fundamental to the conduct of the research" (May, 1997: 116).

On the other hand, the clarification of roles of the interviewer as well as of interviewees was a necessary precondition for the successful completion of the interviews. The researcher had to maintain a distance with the research subjects in order to avoid interpreting everything from the subject's perspective. Nonetheless, the research subjects were aware of the overall purpose of the investigation – the 'why' and 'what' of the practice of grassroots media practices in Greece. "The interviewer and interviewee ... need to establish an intersubjective understanding. At the same time, the pursuit of objectivity requires a 'distance' in order to judge the situation" (ibid: 115).

In addition, the interview/discussion guide was designed in terms of establishing a rapport. The latter has been constructed by using firstly descriptive questions concerning the experiment itself (its history, the medium employed), drawing then on issues the project encompass, towards more elaborated ones concerning the engagement of people in the projects (motives, interests, their way of participation), and the way they understand and experience their engagement in these projects, specifically and generally. Finally the construction of the guide, taking into account the diversity of groups that participate in these projects, is sensitive to the way it phrases its inquiries. Two veterans of grassroots radio and press initiatives accordingly, who participate occasionally in new ones, were the first sample of the study, providing both a historical and a critical account of relevant projects,

evaluating dimensions that the study had to take into account regarding the process of interviewing and the interview/discussion guide.

- Interview/discussion guide

The following interview guide indicates the topics and their sequence in the interview. Even though the sequence of the topics had been flexible in the interview situation, the way that the guide was addressed points out the interest of the interviewer to move gradually from obtaining descriptions of the phenomenon (of engagement in the process) to clarify and interpret the descriptions together with the subject. “*Thematically* the questions relate to the topic of the interview, to the theoretical conceptions at the root of an investigation, and to the subsequent analysis” (Kvale, 1996: 129, emphasis in the original).

1. a) I would like to know when this project was firstly established and how it came to employ the particular medium.  
b) Could you refer to the topics/issues that the project focuses on?
2. c) I would like to know how you decided to participate in this project. What were the incentives for your engagement in it?  
d) Could you refer to the ways you participate in the process of the project (creation, dissemination, decision-making process)?
3. e) What do you feel you gain by your participation in the project?  
f) How do you see the implementation of such a project? What do you think are the prospects of its practice in the Greek context?

- Generating data

I think it is more accurate to speak of generating data than *collecting* data, precisely because most qualitative perspectives would reject the idea that a

researcher can be a completely neutral collector of information about the social world. Instead the researcher is seen as actively constructing knowledge about that world according to certain principles and using certain methods derived from their epistemological position (Mason, 1996: 36).

Interviews with people involved in the practice of grassroots media projects:

- provide accounts of why people do engage in the practice of these projects; interviews will tell us something about the motives and the expectations of people who participate in these projects.
- provide accounts of how do people engage in the projects; interviewees will provide information about their role in the projects.
- provide interviewees' judgements of their experience in actual terms, being engaged in the process, revealing something of the 'value' of the particular experience.
- provide interviewees' judgements concerning the practice of such a project in normative terms, revealing something of the social implications of these experiments and their 'lived experience' in the particular context of their realization.

As a result, the researcher has drawn on interviewees' versions and accounts of their engagement in the practice of the projects and the way they make sense of it. Moreover, the way the researcher has read the data is interpretive and reflexive, along with the theoretical presuppositions of the study – situating the practice of grassroots media projects in relation to the public and political sphere.

In addition, the employment of case studies in the research raises the issue of qualitative generalization. The generality of qualitative findings in the case of the following study (through diverse grassroots media practices) has been drawn in relation to the theoretical sketches. In this case the goal of generalizability is not set in universal terms but in contextual ones, making claims that have a wider resonance. The analysis of data has highlighted the limits and challenges of the practice of grassroots media projects in Greece.

- Organization of data

Regarding the analysis-building of the outcome it starts from the moment of the organization of data that takes place soon after their transcription, and their translation (the whole interviews have been translated in an attempt to support the very process itself).



“[T]he data derived from interviews are not simply ‘accurate’ or ‘distorted’ pieces of information, but provide the researcher with a means of analysing the ways in which people consider events and relationships and the reasons they offer for doing so” (May, 1997: 130). As such, the data of the interviews have been developed gradually along their organization. The organization of the transcribed interview consists of three stages:

[F]irst, *structuring* the often large and complex interview material for analysis. ... The next part consists of a *clarification* of the material, making amenable to analysis; for example, by eliminating superfluous material such as digressions and repetitions, distinguishing between the essential and the non-essential. What is essential or non-essential again depends on the purpose of the study and its theoretical presuppositions. The *analysis proper* involves developing the meanings of the interviews, bringing the subjects’ own understandings into the light as well as providing new perspectives on the phenomena (Kvale, 1996: 190, emphasis in the original).

Through this prism, the organization of data has been made in three phases: a) arranging the whole material of the interviews along each case study; b) going through the material highlighting relevant to the theoretical hypotheses material, taking also into account new dimensions that interviews revealed,<sup>101</sup> and then organising it along the sketches of the theoretical lines; c) developing, evaluating the meaning of the interviews.

Subsequently, after the first organizing of data from the interviews along the case studies, further analysis has been drawn along two thematic categories, the ‘spatial’ aspect and the aspect of ‘agency’, which have been reflected in theoretical terms in relation to the public sphere and the political sphere correspondingly. These analytical ‘handles’ address the data across the theoretical concerns of the study, providing the realm for further comparisons and connections within the data. This means that these analytical categories are not used as variables and products in themselves across which data are indexed cross-sectionally, but as ways of seeing thematically across the data and exploring further on them. As such, computer software packages have not been used in order to support the process since the organization of the data set draws on analytical and explanatory logics rather than on the logic of variable analysis. Moreover, the thematic organizing of data has been used in tandem with the data ordering that draws specifically on the different parts (case studies) of the data set, bringing into the light their discrete explanations. As a result,

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<sup>101</sup> See next chapter on the analysis of data, the parameter of ‘historization’.

various aspects of each thematic category have been evaluated across the diverse case studies and their 'units' (people engaged in the practice of projects). Accordingly, the structuring of the analysis following has been treated in narrative terms. The whole text has been organized literally across and along the meanings expressed by interviewees' statements, developing and comparing their distinct explanations within the thematic categories employed here.

In conclusion, this study traces and accounts for the practice of grassroots media experiments in Greece by drawing on the meanings expressed by people who are consistently engaged in their practice. These meanings are developed along the lines of the theoretical sketches of the study that address grassroots media practices in relation to the public and political sphere. This theoretical framework provides the basis for evaluating grassroots media practices in a resonant context. Thus, the aim of this study is not just to describe and explore these projects, but also to understand critically their implementation, producing social explanations.

## CHAPTER 6

*Pretoria, Sunday 18/01/1942*

*Timo,*

*Since yesterday I've been obsessed again with the periodical, to such an extent that I have already prepared my first contribution.*

*It is approximately three pages...*

*Even more seriously, I believe it is time, for those who believe they have something pure in them, no matter how small and insignificant, to show it.*

*Look what's happening around us and you will see.*

*We must stay awake.*

*We must stay awake.*

*I am willing to do everything humanly possible to help you from where I am, but I would like you to undertake management.*

*I can share with you all the responsibilities you might want me to.*

*Of course I am speaking without taking into account the financial cost.*

...

*In the beginning let it be only a bimonthly issue. On cheap paper, easy to use, like the Penguin or even a bit bigger.*

*It is not that intimidating a task.*

*We won't be short of material.*

...

*We must do something.*

*We must do something.*

*Timo think, all of you think, tomorrow a bomb might fall onto our heads.*

(extract from a letter by the poet Giorgos Seferis, quoted in 'Ideodromio', February-March 2003, issue: 0).

## *Findings*

By encompassing diverse and heterogeneous grassroots media experiments the study focuses on how the people who participate in these projects address and experience their practice, within the public and political life in Greece. From this perspective, the analysis of data<sup>102</sup> will take place along two frameworks: a more general one, what I call the ‘spatial aspect’, which concerns the way participants situate these projects in the public domain; and the more specific one, what I call the aspect of ‘agency’, which concerns the way participants evaluate their own engagement in them.

In literal terms, the analysis has been built on the interviewees’ accounts concerning the implementation of the projects, their own engagement in their practice, and the way they experience the process. It draws on various aspects participants point out in relation to the different projects they participate in, relating them along thematic issues. Overall, the study summarizes main points concerning both aspects of ‘space’ and ‘agency’ in terms of the challenges and the limitations of these practices.

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<sup>102</sup> Interview quotes have been transcribed using the following conventions:

pause in interview	...
omission	(...)
interviewer’s comments only omitted	[...]

## 6.1 *Challenges*

Concerning the evaluation of these projects by participants themselves prominent is the role of these practices in terms of constituting a public space for information, discourses, and social actors that are excluded from the conventional public sphere in Greece. Moreover, participants evaluate another interesting aspect in relation to the implementation of these projects which concerns the ‘historization’ of social domains and their discourses, as well as, of the practice of such projects itself. In addition, the very practice of these projects encompasses for those who are actually engaged in them instances of intervention in civic life.

### 6.1.1 *‘Spatial aspect’*

By probing into the way participants draw on the implementation of grassroots media practices from different perspectives, the aims and objectives of these projects emerge, highlighting key aspects concerning the ‘place’ they acquire within the public realm.

#### 6.1.1.1 *(Anti)-information sources*

One important aspect of these projects run by diverse social actors and groups is, to a great extent, the building of their own information system.

I believe that the handling of information is vital for people’s engagement in things in common. In our times information is power and whoever has and handles it has the situation well under control ... if you want to intervene, in the long run, in the things you are interested in you must be part of this process, to provide your own information sources; otherwise you cannot make any sense for the small or the big issues that matter for you (interview with C. D., February, 2003).

Particularly, one of the objectives of such projects is the constitution of ‘alternative’ information sources. Despite the ambiguous nature of the term ‘alternative’, the common ground of these initiatives is their attempt to provide information of different nature from the mainstream one.

It is a project that aims to provide a different kind of information ... I would not say alternative or counter-information one because there is a whole discussion about both terms, but different than the information that is distributed, and on which most of people have access (interview with A. X., March, 2003).

As a result, the 'alternative' character of these sources has been defined in various ways corresponding to the nature of the projects. In most of the case studies the creation of an anti-information system is the main concern of their practice.

Though there is an overload of information it is one sided (...) This projects tries to evaluate the other angle of things, to give people the whole information, and address issues that have not access in mainstream media; then people can make their own judgment (interview with E. N., February, 2003).

Hence, such projects attempt to inform about neglected aspects of social reality. The Internet site 'Indymedia Athens' is the most overall alternative information system of the case studies included in this study. It advocates an information source alternative to what mass media provide,

The mainstream media give a massive picture and most of the times partial about society; it is this gap that you have to fill, challenging this partiality, questioning standards and promoting alternative views that have no place there (interview with A. P., February 2003);

that offers first hand information.

Though we live in an era of over-information, most of it is rubbish; the real interesting information is usually hidden [...] When you enter the site in order to give information about a protest, or as someone did in USA, who published details about the connection of members of the government with oil companies, it is much more worthy than many philological analyses ... it is an original statement that counts a lot (interview with A. Y., February, 2003).

Moreover, such a project facilitates multi-sited and synchronic information.

Its main purpose is to provide alternative information in both international and local level, informing people for issues on which they do not have access by any other means (...) It provides the main source of information for social

struggles, occupations, strikes, demonstrations that take place around; people from different areas who participate in these activities give the information, they cover them (interview with M. M., February, 2003).

Furthermore, the site constitutes a source of information for social movements and citizen's initiatives.

There is a wide range of information provision, for practices of social control and repression, activities and actions in the alternative milieu, direct coverage of events, anti-capitalist, anti-war, anti- ... protests and what is happening during them ... aspects that do not have a way through mass media but in case of violent disturbances that question the social order; as well as, for international social movements, anti-globalization movement and actions, solidarity movements to various countries (...) it is an open space where due to the open publication policy everything is happening in the field has a place here (interview with I. Z., February 2003).

Finally, since not many people have access to the Internet, there is also a small print edition that supports the site.

At the same time we issue a small newspaper in order to give the information to more people who have not access to the Internet, distributing it to café, open discussion points, the demonstrations (...) we try to reach everyone who wants to be aware for these issues ... it is also a means of advertising the site itself to people who do not know about it (interview with A. P., February, 2003).

Another project the periodical 'Smoke Signs' focuses on social movements, groups and their practices in Latin America.

Our intention was to constitute a forum of anti-information; initially we realized that we are interested in Latin America for many reasons [...] There is very few information concerning Latin America, and mainly there is no information concerning the social movements and the groups of resistance there (interview with P. S., March 2003).

The aim of the periodical is to use the original information sources in Latin America, in order to present the activities and practices that take place there.

We have plenty of information concerning what actually happens in Latin America [...] There is a constant flow of information related to the practices

of resistance in Latin America that is facilitated by the relationships we have established with these groups through the campaign of solidarity we run, having sent there 70 people till now ... nothing from this information has a place in mass media, and when something comes across them it happens in a filtered way ... in a very insignificant and folkloric approach for what people do there (...) Since we, from personal interest and following the latest developments, had the information we decided to find a way to put it out, in the public (interview with I. T., March 2003).

At the same time, this periodical is a resources directory for relevant grassroots initiatives.

Our interest in movements and groups of resistance, and their practices in Latin America, is related to 'our' practices of resistance here [...] There was the need to provide information for modes of resistance that are implemented in different places, addressing different ways of struggle; there is a 'public' here that employs various ways of resistance in diverse aspects of social life, and this information could teach us new ways of understanding and acting (interview with E. M., March 2003).

Finally, the periodical provides a general account of the history, culture and social life of the countries of Latin America.

We have also dedications to various issues, providing more overall information and analysis on different topics across the whole Latin America ... for example, on education, cinema, music, local communication practices (interview with A. X., March 2003).

One of the three pirate radio stations, the '98.00 FM', has an anti-authoritarian profile, providing a committed anti-information source.

Since most of the information get is controlled and addressed from above we need to find new ways to provide alternative information, to break the monopolization of information by mass media, for more and different news to spread (interview with V. K., March, 2003).

The project brings into light relevant information of issues that mainstream media have partially presented and provide others that have never been covered by mass media.

The dynamics of our attempt is the production and distribution of information that contest the distorted one of the mass media, which does not touch the actual everyday life (...) It is interested in what is happening there, such



working accidents, sackings, overexploitation of immigrants, which the dominant media do not touch since they do not bring money ... it is a way to propagandise alternative information, an alternative culture in general which opposes to the commercial one (interview with A. M., March 2003).

Two other experiments provide information sources on specific fields in a more systematic way. The newspaper 'Green Policy' sets an agenda on ecologist issues, addressing firstly aspects of general interest.

It is a way to point out the ecologist aspect on general social issues, on war, immigration, unemployment; to make known ecologist movements and initiatives that take place around the world. It is an attempt to bring into the light unknown political aspects of social reality, giving relative information, original sources that we find in other relative projects abroad, promoting dimensions that are neglected by the official media, and establishing by this way a data-source, which opens at the same time a forum for discussion on them. (personal correspondence with A. B., March 2003).

Secondly, the newspaper covers issues on a national/local level.

It is an attempt to point out environmental and ecologist issues, the protection of streams, oak forests, local consumerist initiatives, the problem of the absence of free spaces ... issues which address small but crucial aspect of everyday life on which there is little attention, promoting a political way of thinking about them (...) There are so many issues round but very little information and concern about them (interview with I. G., March 2003).

The web periodical 'Infofemina' constitutes an electronic information source on women's-feminist issues that comes to counterbalance the limited reporting on them as well.

The project has two aspects; one consists of news and information that we get from various relative sources about gender issues out of the Greek context, and the other one concerns issues that we bring in from our experience on aspects of our daily life and our engagement with mass media (...) The coverage of women's-feminist issues by women is underdeveloped in general terms [...] Attempts in the past to create a space for such issues have failed – the case for example of the creation of a sub-agency within the Athenian Agency of News ... yet, small attempts like ours bring these topics into the light (interview with P. A., May, 2003).

It is also the means of covering the social reality from women's position and perspective, which is not represented in mainstream media.

We want to fill the gap in information concerning women's issues (...) The mass media underestimate, consciously or unconsciously, issues that have to do with women and their activities; such as strikes of workers in factories and issues related to the violence against women (...) What is clear as far as the project is on is the vital need of women to give and take information, to address issues from their own perspective, as they see things themselves, not through the mass media ... we are angry of the way mainstream media cover social reality, so we do it by our means (interview with M. J., May, 2003).

The two pirate radio stations, 'FM Thorn', and 'Little Red Riding Hood FM', which are implemented in different local areas of western Greece, have been called 'social radios'. These social radios provide alternative information in local/regional areas, which are dominated by the mainstream media.

It is more difficult in the province to establish a social radio; the mainstream media have created a strong basis, promoting certain stereotypes, which is very difficult to contest. People expect from a new radio station to give them things with which they are familiar in order to listen you, similar to the ones mainstream media offer [...] A social radio station like the one we run aims to give the other information, about things that are never heard. If you take also into account that here there are not many alternative sources here, we are far away from the capital, you can understand how difficult is to set something different, but at the same time how crucial it is (interview with D. P., April 2003).

These radios cover a broad range of local interests and concerns.

We decided to set a social radio station because it is direct; we can provide information for things that happen in our area and which are neglected, from neighbourhood problems to citizens' initiatives against decisions that have an effect on protected areas and on environment generally. From this point of view, it is a powerful means through which we have managed to one extent to set an agenda of issues that concern the local community and our area (interview with T. P., April 2003).

And, they provide an original and consistent account of the local reality.

It covers a huge gap in information, a need of many people to be informed for things that take place right away (...) Besides, the information is addressed without any filtration, giving the chance to everyone to come across with what is going on and act correspondingly (interview with I. C., April 2003).

Moreover, there are projects concerning particular interests in a specific area that have as an objective the setting up of an agenda about relevant topics. One of them is the case of the periodical 'Contact', which evaluates anarchist issues and activities that take place in the overall region of western Greece.

There is a variety of topics that the periodical covers (...) Since 2000, when it was first published, there is an interest of people from neighbour local areas to participate in our experiment, addressing relevant issues. Gradually the coverage expanded, becoming more regional than local [...] It makes a difference; people, collectives from different local areas come together, they share information, problems, and address possible solutions ... The periodical supports also other activities and forums that take place in these areas; it becomes the common denominator for various collectives through different local areas (interview with S. A., February 2003).

Finally, the case of the Internet site 'Porphyris', run by young people originated from Kythira (Greek island) provides an account on local issues.

One of the purposes of the site is to provide information for the island, concerning its history and culture for everyone is interested in ... for example about historical valuable archives on which none has paid attention – people who have immigrated in other countries have been interested in them seeking their roots ... for natural sources of the island, and more general ones, on problems of the areas of the unprofitable shipping line, and on tourism (interview with P. D., May 2003).

This project constitutes also a common ground among young people who live there and others, who either study in different areas or, are interested in the island (they have become members of the youth club of the island), for the communication of interests and ideas.

It is the reference point with the members of our club, young people from different areas can come close, exchanging ideas, and information, sharing their problems, and their activities; especially for us who are isolated here this resource is very important since we keep in touch with what is going on in the capital (interview with M. E., May 2003).

For this reason, there is also a print edition that supports the electronic version.

We started with the site, since it was the most attractive for all of us and we wanted to experiment with new ways of communicating our interests (...)

Yet, we wanted our concerns to reach the whole community, to make known our ideas within the whole local context. Since not all people have access to the internet, especially the elder ones, we issue at the same time monthly newspaper that covers our main activities and concerns, and which we distribute around the island and to our friends-members in different cities (...) It supports also other cultural displays that we run sporadically in the island (interview with A. S., April, 2003).

#### *6.1.1.2 Representation of social domains 'on the margins'*

At the same time, these media practices provide an arena for the articulation of various discourses that are excluded from, or misrepresented in, the conventional public sphere in Greece. These attempts have been expressed whether in a form of a specialised project or in a more inclusive and all-encompassing scheme, aiming at representing different social actors 'on the margins' in Greece. The most representative example of an all-encompassing project is the case of the Internet site '**Indymedia Athens**'.

Although our project has its origins in the anti-globalization movement, being interested in social movements and their activity around the world, it covers a variety of issues in our territory, giving place to aspects that are neglected from public discourse and which are included in what has been generally called alternative milieu (...) What we try to do is to open a space where various marginalized issues find a place ... for all the tendencies, and all the aspects of the alternative milieu, including practices of resistance, local movements, ecologist issues, feminist ones, etc.; namely, a space where every discourse has a place, where various interests are met visually, a space of mutual influence between different trends (interview with M. M., February 2003).

Such an attempt comes to satisfy the need of different parts of society to articulate their discourse in a way that matters.

When there is a gap something else has to be put in its place ... I think this project was a need, someone had to do it [...] Since there are not societal organizations to institutionally intervene in things– the very few existing do it in a very smooth way- we had to find more effective ways. So, it was a few people that tried to open a space ... this will grow, more people will follow our example seeking new ways to intervene in (interview with I. Z., February, 2003).

In regards to the case of the periodical 'Smoke Signs' there is a representation of various forms of social action, resistance, highlighting neglected arenas of social reality.

We try to promote a different understanding of issues that have been underdeveloped in the Greek reality; our agenda is not an exclusive one, it includes any aspect of political, social and daily life that is neglected and suppressed (...) Moreover, our focus on modes of resistance that are developed in Latin America provides a new way of interrelating different aspects of social life and addressing social rights in a more demanding way ... thus, issues related to exploitation, environment, daily life, culture can be related and addressed in terms of a new discourse (interview with A. X., March 2003).

Moreover, the periodical opens up space for a discussion on these arenas and practices within the Greek context.

We offer space to various voices, views, not only the ones that are expressed within the collective itself; many times we have published contrasting views on the same topic [...] Not only does this give the chance to these concerns to find a place to be expressed, but it also cultivates also a space for contrasting views on relevant issues to be articulated ... it facilitates a dialogue between different perspectives on various topics as well as practices that are not developed [in Greece]. This proves that the periodical is not a 'one-dimensional' process (interview with I. T., March 2003).

On the other hand, the periodical 'Contact' has provided space for the representation of an anarchist discourse.

The periodical started as an attempt to promote a different discourse in what we define as anarchist milieu in Greece, and it tried to give a new perspective in the contact and communication among people of this milieu [...] We cover areas related to our perspective of society and politics, mainly autonomist movements and alternative cultural practices, that promote a different understanding of things, questioning the mainstream one ... these are the roots of the project (...) It expresses the need to publicly intervene through our discourse (interview with I. N., February 2003).

Although the roots of the experiment are local/regional ones, it has become a means of advancing this discourse in wider terms.

It was established as an attempt to satisfy the need for expression of a particular milieu, of anarchism in our particular area ... by now it has created links with people who are active in other cities in an attempt to give space to the broad anarchist milieu of the region, raising issues that are common between us, and establishing a general forum of participation (interview with S. A., February 2003).

Accordingly, the '98.00 FM' station constitutes a space for the representation of an anti-authoritarian discourse.

Our objective is to provide a channel of communication for the anti-authoritarian milieu; anyone who has something to say can have access to the station, to express their interests in the way they want (...) What we want is to give the chance to more people to express their interests ... a dynamic discourse which opposes to the traditional authoritarian practices and their overmastering discourse (interview with K. P., March 2003).

On the whole, it constitutes a space for the representation of an alternative culture, and alternative lifestyles.

We try to create an alternative radio, different than the conventional one; to pass social and cultural messages that have no space in the conventional media; to open a space generally for alternative styles of music and art that are not subject to the capitalist rule, a place for our culture ... to create a daily festival of all these alternative practices that do not have access outside there; this is what we try to bring about (interview with P. Z., March 2003).

Concerning the two social radio stations, 'FM Thorn' and 'Little Red Riding Hood FM', the representation of discourses and practices in the local context is prominent, in both the socio-political realm,

The station supports various underestimated practices that take place in our area, and the wider zone ... citizens' movements for the protection of forests and rivers, and, for a better living in the town, have a place in our programme [...] We have our place, where local political and generally social issues can be addressed, being heard by more people, involving those who have similar concerns, and opening a public discussion for these issues (interview with I. C., April 2003);

and the cultural one, giving place to various local cultural interests and activities.

The commercial radio stations follow the music recipe of the Athenian ones, playing the 'hits' that attract advertisements and money; there is the need for something else; our traditional music is neglected, there is also much alternative kind of music that never reaches the transmitter (...) People, groups can come and play their music here. The radio supports also any cultural activity, students' festivals, film tributes, which take place in the area (interview with M. P., April 2003).

As such, the social radio highlights local community issues, addressing the whole community,

We want our radio to become a forum for our local society where different discourses have a place in it, becoming public and reaching the whole local community ... it is an experiment; we try to create the conditions for it (interview with T. P., April 2003);

promoting at the same time a further discussion concerning the position of the local community within the broad society.

We try to cover every social, political, and cultural aspect of our own society, of local problems, conditions, and needs ... of everything that involves us [...] In the process you can open a dialogue in wider terms; the local applies to the general, and vice versa ... we have to declare our presence (interview with V. V., April 2003).

In another context the web periodical '**Infofemina**' creates a space for women to discuss on what matters for them.

The project tries to evaluate women's-feminist news stories, both local and international, and to raise concern on specific gender issues by creating forums of discussion on these, where women can exchange views and approach the theme in a more holistic way (interview with P. A., May 2003).

Moreover, the women's-feminist discourse runs through various social arenas.

[T]he other part is non-journalistic; we try to raise more general issues and create a forum for discussion where everyone can contribute her own analysis; we want to make our mark (...) There are various areas the discussion addresses, e.g. education, culture, art, in every social aspect of life generally (interview with M. J., May 2003).

Furthermore, the articulation of this 'discourse' takes place along the process of practising it.

The purpose of the project is to raise women's issues that are buried generally in Greek context, to approach various areas from women's perspective, both historically and synchronically [...] The approach of a theme from women's perspective it is not taken for granted, we have to evaluate it (interview with K. K., May 2003).

The newspaper '**Green Policy**' creates a forum for an ecologist political consideration on social reality.

It is a committed paper that fills the gap of critical ecology and political ecology, which is absent from mainstream media (...) It is a specialized paper that covers social issues and events from the perspective of citizens, promoting a political discourse among them, highlighting new aspects of the reality (interview with A. G., March 2003).

From this perspective, the newspaper promotes the expression of ecologist concerns in both theoretical and empirical terms.

There is a variety of articles, on theoretical issues; there are translations of original ones and other articles of readers that evaluate them; there are also articles on specific issues evaluating the ecologist perspective ... I write about the case of 'open spaces', a neglected area of interest in Greece (...) We try to give space to people's opinions as much as possible, everyone can contribute with their view. For this reason we have gradually increased the pages of the newspaper from 6 to 24, creating a forum of ideas (interview with A. R., March, 2003).

Finally, the experiment of the Internet site '**Porphyris**' provides the ground for the expression of social and cultural interests,

Given the chance of a festival where many young people gathered in the island, we decided to do something more than discussing generally our concerns, something more than gathering once a year ... to make a place for people who, although not all of them live in the island, share some things – they are young, and they have an interest for the island. It is a way to bring these two aspects together, the enthusiasm of youth and the interest in the island (interview with I. P., May 2003);



in a regular basis,

There was the idea to do a documentary for our island, but then we decided that we need not just to speak about the island but also to bring young people together. Thus, since some of us had the technical knowledge, we decided to make a site speaking about the island and us, keeping in touch in a regular basis, sharing our concerns and promoting our activities (...) We have organized special talks on environment, unemployment, tourism ... and we have also made special tributes to music, photography, theatre etc. (interview with A. S., May 2003).

More specifically, the site becomes the connecting point of young people on the ground of local and cultural interests.

We open up a forum for people to contribute their own views and proposals on books, music, plays etc., writing their opinion, exchanging things, and trying to organize cultural events and festivals [...] It is our reference point; people who live on the island make known the problems they face by living here, and look for new things that are around; and, those who are not currently living on the island and are studying for example in other cities, want to keep their contact with the island. Many of us want to stay on the island, and others to return, but it is very difficult; there is not much concern by local authorities for the young people and what they are interested in; there is so much negligence to them (interview with P. D., April 2003).

### *6.1.1.3 In the hands of 'ordinary' people*

Foremost, it is amateurs who run these projects, some of which had never participated in something similar before.

The most interesting aspect of the experiment is that we, some of us participating for the first time, opened and manage this forum ... and it is not only for us; everyone who wants to intervene in the things in common and had not a way to do it before has the chance now; either as a user providing information or as a participant in the process of running it as well (interview with I. Z., February 2003).

The case of the Internet site '**Indymedia Athens**' is the product of the need of 'ordinary' people to be consistently engaged in such an initiative.

We could have just created a site providing news for the anti-globalization movement and it would have probably been good enough, but we wanted to create a space that all of us could form and define; this possibility, for all of us to participate in its creation and practice without misappropriating it has been very challenging (interview with M. M., February 2003).

Moreover, everyone can become the storyteller.

The most important is that everyone can write an article, become a journalist [...] I believe it is socially vital for all of us to have the right to say our stories, to defend our own views. The project gives this right to us, the “ordinary people”, to form our opinion, to take a position on things and to do it in a way that matters (...) The medium provides the chance to everyone to intervene directly; we must take advantage of this possibility and intervene dynamically, in the way we have chosen to do it (interview with E. N., February 2003).

Another participant expresses her experience from the perspective of the user whose active engagement with the site made her become engaged in its practice as well.

I did not participate in the project from the beginning. I was a user, initially of the international website and then of the Greek one [...] It was a means of getting information about things that take place around the world from an alternative perspective. Since the local one was established I realized how things of our daily life might find their place, and this could be done in a dynamic way. You could take part in a protesting march and then describe the way you experienced it, in your own way, in the way you saw and lived it, from your own perspective ... this is what excited me, the possibility of evaluating something that you find important and which has not been raised by the mainstream media, addressing it and then discussing about it [...] The one day I would protest and the other I could make more people aware of what happened there by writing on the site; namely, apart from the moment of action itself, there is the possibility to register what happened and spread also the message to more people than those who were there, to share your experience with them. It was me and many others like me who did it (...) I liked it very much and I started to be involved more actively in the project, taking part in the regular meetings and then in the whole process of managing it (interview with A. P., February 2003).

And this forum is accessible to all citizens, especially those ‘on the margins’,

It is a general movement toward citizens, populations which because of special situations they are marginalized within the society, such as immigrants, poor, and other minorities that have requests but they do not have

a forum to promote them. All of them can be a part of this initiative, part of a wider discussion (interview with M. M., February 2003);

as well as to everyone who has not the chance to participate directly in social activities that take place out there.

It guarantees a way for some people to engage in public affairs; people with special needs who can intervene in their own way by a P.C.; and also for people who are far away and they cannot participate in actions that take place in Athens (interview with A. Y., February 2003).

Finally, such a project provides potentially the ground for a broader participation of citizens in the public realm.

The Internet can be used as the most sufficient means for people's participation in the 'handling' of information, taking into account its flexible nature in terms of both time and space in comparison to the other means of communication. Such a project provides a network of communication where everyone can participate (...) Moreover, the participation of people in such initiatives must take place in new, interactive ways. Apart from the traditional channels of communication (newspapers, poster-bills, brochures), the electronic ones must be employed in this process in order for people to express and develop their positions (interview with C. D., February 2003).

In the context of the periodical 'Smoke Signs', a project that is run by people who are actively engaged in solidarity campaigns for Latin America countries, some of them taking also part in operations there, the register of the experience by those who have been there is a matter of authenticity.

The idea of the creation of a newsletter of anti-information expresses a further need ... we were organizing discussions and festivals on issues concerning Latin America; yet, we wanted to create our means for speaking about these issues (...) Some of us participate in campaigns and missions in Latin America, coming in contact with local groups; we can share our experience, writing about it, and making in this way more people aware of what is actually happening there, without any filtering (...) It is original because people who are really interested in these issues run it; there is material from many sources we have ... it is not just an information we have to translate, we try to give the whole picture (interview with I. T., March 2003).

At the same time this practice mobilizes more people in the process.

It is an amazing experience to share the information you have with other people who are interested in it but who were excluded from it; and you can see how people react, welcoming your attempt, distributing it further, making more people aware and concerned for the issues ... It is an experience that has many aspects, you feel that you give access to other people who want to learn about it but they can not; and some of them become involved (interview with E. M., March 2003).

In addition, the participation in the production and distribution of such a project is addressed generally as an important dimension of people's engagement in public affairs.

It is a means to express and make known my concerns and views ... publicly; there is also a feedback that opens up a space between people who had not have the chance to be participants in a social medium (...) The process itself is part of my overall social and political life, facilitating the expression of my interests in equal terms, and intervening in things in common in a different way that matters (interview with A. X., March 2003).

In the case of the '98.00 FM' radio station people who are part of the process take their own 'world' affairs into their hands,

We want to express our concerns, our world, and we do it immediately, by ourselves; we give our own explanations, we run live debates as well; we play the music we like, we speak about the books and the films we enjoy (...) We set and run the whole project by ourselves, we discuss for everything in our meetings and we take the decisions ... we pay attention to everything; there are some companions who are experts on the technical stuff and they help us (interview with A. M., March 2003);

asking in this way for their right to be 'present' in public by their own means.

We have our radio to talk about what lies beneath appearances; we can do it ... we can define our place, our position by our means; there are not things that we cannot do, we need a forum and we create it (interview with V. K., March 2003).

In another context, the social radio stations, 'FM Thorn' and 'Little Red Riding Hood FM', apply to everyone interested in getting involved directly in the local/regional area.

The station is vital for our local community since it gives the chance to ordinary people to promote their ideas, views, to be active for the things that

matter for them; there are many things that people experience everyday but they do not have a place to express them, to communicate these issues publicly (interview with I. C., April 2003).

Along the same lines, another participant points out the collective nature of the practice of such a project.

The station provides a platform for people of our community to share their experiences and express their problems, something that they cannot do in the commercial local media, to get in public and create their own forum in the local society [...] All of us can get involved in the process, and we are in charge of it; the gatherings are open for decisions to be taken, everyone can participate in them, people who are just listeners as well (interview with T. P., April 2003).

In the case of the **'Green Policy'** newspaper, citizens who have not access in mainstream and local media can build their own public arena.

It is an arena for people and social groups who have not access to the mainstream media, both national and local ones ... since our voices were not heard we created our own means, promoting our field as a necessity; the small newspaper advances such issues; it is ours, we make it [...] We can promote our concerns, and we can do it the way we want ... ordinary people are the transmitters of their own messages; various minorities, immigrants, and people who have not an easy access to the town, can set other aspects of social life that are neglected, highlighting the civic face of the society. It is important for everyone to realize that they have the option to define things, that we can do it (interview with I. G., March 2003).

Moreover, such a project can provide a reference point accessible to everyone.

A small newspaper is more flexible; it can become a valuable tool for people who have something to say, you can keep it in your archive, you, and other people interested in it, can come back and use it. Internet does not give us this chance, it is a labyrinth, where you can find everything but it is difficult to come back to it; though a small newspaper keeps a record and the article keeps its value in time, so you can intervene substantially (interview with K. D., March 2003).

For participants in the local/regional anarchist periodical **'Contact'**, people who oppose to the dominant system have created an arena for doing it publicly.

We are against anything that keeps alive the system and its political and social situation; in this system there is not any place for anything out of the ordinary (...) We are people who share the same beliefs, and we decided to do it openly, in our own way. Though we have published some articles in alternative periodicals of Athens, we wanted to create something to cover our area, giving the chance to people who are away from the center to intervene in things in common again and again (interview with I. N., February 2003).

Moreover such a project has been constituted according to their 'needs'.

It is the most convenient means for us; it doesn't have to be as consistent as a newspaper, published in fixed terms, and in legal terms you are better protected than in the case of a radio station ... for a radio station you need more support, more people to join in, and if it is pirate you need the social approval, the support of the local society in cases of suppression. On the Internet you have greater mobility and the chance to avoid control but it is not popular enough (interview with P. T., February 2003).

As far as the web periodical 'Infofemina' is concerned, it is an attempt to bring women from every social arena together in order to produce their own discourse.

It is a call to every woman, to everyone that wants to express her views and interests concerning women's-feminist issues ... to women who are already active, even to women journalists who cannot speak through the mass media where they work – to use their cut articles, for example on body politics, on our website, and participate in the forums. This is what the site tries to bring about, women from different backgrounds together, to open a forum for all of us who produce publicly the discourse of women, a place where we discuss, choose and produce for us ... a process which is reflected in the periodical on line, in its format, content, in every aspect of it generally (interview with N. N., May, 2003).

Additionally, another participant highlights a further challenge that the implementation of a web periodical encompasses, the engagement of the young generations in the practice of such a project.

One of its objectives is the mobilization of young women, their engagement with issues related to women's and feminist movement through their participation in the process. Infofemina is an attempt to refresh the interest on these issues, which several periodicals promoted during 80s, appealing to the young generations. The new generations have a privileged relation to the new means and the experiment of an electronic periodical seems to be very attractive for them (interview with K. K., May, 2003).

In regards to the limited familiarity of women with the new technologies the project is also a means of addressing, through courses, women to produce their discourse by using the new means.

On the other hand, the introduction of technology maintains and reproduces those social divisions that already exist; thus, it is mostly middle class and educated women who have access to new technologies. For this reason, we have taken the initiative to give free lessons on computer software programs, and surfing on the internet, to women who are interested in; it is a way to give the chance to non privileged categories, students and minorities to use the new technology and become familiar with it (...) We must take advantage of the new technologies in order for women to become familiar with the new means, which is also male dominated. This is another dimension of our experiment; not only does it create a forum for dialogue, as we want it to be, but also it provides an arena for practice for women who have not the money to pay for it but they want to learn about and use new technology (interview with M. J., May, 2003).

Finally, the exclusion of young people from the public arena generally has been a challenge for the participants in the Internet project 'Porphyrus' to create their own means of expression.

We have our own place for our interests, which is the only means of expression (...) It started on impulse by people who had not any experience of doing it but they wanted to learn. It is the reference point of all young people and their interests, promoting them and opening forums of discussion among us, and hopefully between the local community and us (interview with V. M., May 2003).

In local terms, the running of such a project is a way for young people to keep themselves active,

We live in a small, isolated island and as such conservative enough, yet we want to bring new things in, especially for young people, for our concerns that are suppressed in a parochial context (...) We have many things to say for us, our generation and for the island. Especially during winter when there are very few things to do in the island, it is our main activity, keeping us alive; it is the outlet for our energy (interview with M. E., May 2003);

as well as, to make their presence evident within the local community.

It is a new experience for me, it started as a way to express my concerns for things happening or those not happening in the island, to propose new things and to make my point (...) It is an attempt to establish our position through action, to get out, we are not shadows, they do not take us seriously, they do not believe we have something to say and make for the island; yet, we can do many things (interview with P. D., May 2003).

#### *6.1.1.4 Summary*

In general, running through the way participants understand the role of these projects, prevalent is the evaluation of these practices as conveyors of the inclusion of marginalised issues, discourses and actors in the public domain.

The implications of the implementation of such projects in spatial terms concern their ability to enable collectives and citizens, who are excluded from the conventional public sphere, to open a space for them. Moreover, these grassroots media projects cover various aspects of social reality that are excluded, or misrepresented in the conventional public sphere; this attempt has been expressed in terms of focused as well as all-encompassing-issues projects, highlighting diverse aspects ‘on the margins’, of what is usually addressed as the ‘alternative milieu’. Although the starting point of these practices can vary, the need is the same: people who are involved in these experiments evaluate their engagement in terms of their participation in public life. From this perspective, these projects constitute a public arena for social actors ‘on the ‘margins’ of Greek society.

The extent to which these practices facilitate the constitution of a further, an overall, domain, which is based on the communication between such projects, is an interesting question that is discussed in the last part of this chapter by drawing on the way participants account for the actual practice of these projects. What is also interesting here is the context in which the participants address the creation of public arenas for the representation of diverse marginalized collectives, discourses, and their participation in public life. Following the interviewees’ accounts above we notice that these aspects are mostly addressed in relation to the questioning of mass media. The implementation of grassroots media projects is related to the conditions of the Greek media system on the whole, reflecting and contesting its inequalities. The overwhelmingly hydrocephalous nature of Greek media system, commercially, socially and geographically has been the main challenge to most of the experiments that are implemented on the margins of Greek public space. In this context,



grassroots media practices in Greece do mainly intermediate the disparities that the conventional public sphere has produced. People who are engaged in these projects put emphasis on their function as consistent sources of criticism on the practices and the role of mass media, evaluating also aspects of social reality that are misrepresented in it. Correspondingly, the 'alternative' character of these projects has been defined in various ways along the lines of the demystification of mass media, and across diverse interests that have not a place in them. On the other hand, these practices are less addressed in terms of the broader everyday social environment they apply to. Characteristic is the way one of the participants highlights this aspect.

The role of such practices is yet marginal in relation to mainstream media, not only because of the actual difficulties of setting and running it, but because, in most of the cases, they are heavily based on commenting on what mass media produce; they must go beyond it, developing their own space (interview with T. P., April 2003).

As such, the constitution of these projects has not yet taken place beyond the point of providing a counterbalance to mainstream media, namely in terms of evaluating their practice consistently within the quotidian realm, transforming and expanding by this way the public arena of their implementation. One participant highlights ideally such an aspect, by and large, as follows:

A social radio must be grounded on the society, including different social groups and collectives; as such it is a condition in flux that encompasses the social and cultural particularities of the society. Such a radio, which will represent a wide spectrum of aspects and consciousnesses, could find its place without pompous and illusionary objectives, to stand as a network of public service (personal correspondence with B. G., April 2003).

Besides, the weakness of such practices to transcend the narrow realm of their implementation is related to internal factors as well that are analysed in the last section of this chapter. Characteristic is here the way the participant who pointed out above the performance of grassroots media practices in Greece in the shadow of mainstream media sets this dimension:

However, if we take into account the realm [these practices] address and its peculiarities they do relatively well (interview with T. P., April 2003).

## 6.1.2 *Setting a precedent*

Nevertheless, participants evaluate another interesting aspect concerning the role of the practice of grassroots media projects in the long run; an issue that was not actually explored in advance by the researcher, but was rather the result of the open-ended character of interviewing, which brought up this aspect. The discussion here evaluates these practices in terms of setting a historical precedent, bridging also the preceding discussion on the 'spatial aspect' of these projects and the one that will follow on the aspect of 'agency'.

### 6.1.2.1 *Historization ...*

By drawing on the practice of such projects, participants evaluate the historization of marginalized social domains, their collectives and discourses,

The implementation of such an experiment is privileged by itself ... it sets a historical precedent, a tradition, a political statement; it is a large heritage, where you can trace back (interview with E. M., March 2003);

irrespective of their fragmented nature,

These experiments do represent original voices, providing an original view of things; despite the fact that they are small and they do not hold an established position, they perpetuate a social situation, by encouraging more 'voices' to follow this example ... they establish a practice that is developed in time, this is their dynamics (interview with I. G., March 2003);

and their non-consistent character.

Such projects keep people awake, people do intervene through them; in most of the cases it is for a short period of time since many of the projects cease to run, but generally they open a door for people to intervene. For this reason, though they are not consistent enough, new projects are coming in, following the paradigm of old ones (interview with P. T., February 2003).

The role of press and radio projects is prominent in terms of setting a historical precedent. Both of the social radios are characteristic cases of projects that have been drawn on the lines of other initiatives, which were taken place at that time in different areas,

The first phase of the project goes back to 1989, when in the era of the spring of free broadcasting an amateur, pirate station was established in our area; amateurs from the band of FM who belonged to the milieu of the renewing left and had ecologic concerns established the radio station; it stopped broadcasting on 1991. The second phase started on 1997, when people interested in the necessity of an alternative, social radio in the area re-established it. We were people who had experienced the radio experiments of Thessalonica, 'Radio Ark' and 'Radio Utopia', being students at that time in Thessalonica. The influence of the experience of these alternative stations, which were active in the anti-authoritarian milieu, has been great for our project and us (interview with P. L., April 2003);

or had been implemented in the same area in the past,

There is history behind it. In 1985 we made our first attempt; the union of anarchists of the [area] established a radio station, at that time there was no free broadcasting. The radio was anarchist; it had a very clear political perspective. Three years later the radio stopped broadcasting, when the group split. In 1999 we set it again (...) We gained experience through this experiment in technical level, and generally experience of speaking on the air. Older and younger people came together and we tried to create a wider space (interview with T. P. April 2003).

Participants in the press editions highlight also how their engagement in past attempts has paved the way for the contemporary ones,

As far as I am concerned, my engagement with this project is grounded in other attempts in the past related to movements of resistance that employed periodicals and newspapers, but which had a very short life; yet, this experience was enough to make me seek other relative ways to express my interests (interview with P. S., March 2003);

And, in general, they point out how the process of being engaged across different examples has been capitalised in the long run.

We have a taste for the press, we work with it all these years now (...) for some editions it takes a long time since a new issue is printed, others stop, but

new ones come also up, it is an endless process (...) It echoes our relation to the social things, it is our history, various social and political struggles have been illustrated on them, whole generations have passed and left their mark on it ... we have developed our own relationship to the press (interview with I. N., February 2003).

From this perspective, participants value the implementation of these practices in terms of making a tradition. This aspect is strongly reflected in the case of press experiments, so for existing ones,

There were also attempts in the past that stopped after a while, either because of financial reasons, or due to the lack of human resources to keep it running in a consistent basis [...] Yet, we took something from these attempts, we took the methodology of how to do it, and we try to do it better now. They were experiments, we took the experience and we go on, following the tradition (interview with S. F., March 2003);

as for ones to come.

When we started three years ago, our attempt looked hopeless, it could have stopped after a few months, but we continue ... this is a great achievement, to be out there tracing our road, the one that others will follow as well (...) In addition, the hard copy is something that stays with us through the years; it is a useful tool for anything new that comes around in the field (interview with A. X., March 2003).

The same case applies for radio projects, concerning the communication practice itself,

During the period that station did not broadcast we were trying to do other things to keep things go on, to be active [...] we issued some issues of a periodical, and several anti-information newsletters, trying to promote issues of the renewing left and ecologist ones. But we had always in the back of our minds our radio station, and we were trying to find more people to contribute to such an attempt (...) We believe in it, it is more direct and communicative; we have done it before, we believed that it was possible again and we did it ... we know it (interview with P. L., April 2003);

as well as in relation to the actual field of its implementation.

My previous participation in a similar project was an invaluable experience itself, establishing a relation with the audience of the province, which was not used to such a relation [...] At that moment there was no commercial radio

and we created illegally a public space with the few means we had as amateurs, demanding, as the time came by, its legitimacy. This experience has made a tradition in the area; there is audience for it (interview with V. V., April 2003).

In the case of Internet there is not a tradition of grassroots projects along its application since it has not yet expanded enough. On the one hand, there is not a strong interest of already established projects across the press and radio to promote their practice on line; there are only just some underdeveloped informative web pages. On the other hand, the on-line experiments have off-line supplements to support their attempt. The offline version is considered to register the attempt in historical terms; either the attempt is implemented in a specific context,

The periodical supports the site and vice versa, advertising each one to the other, we try to keep both of them updated, and make improvements (...) Even if our experiment in the internet does not last for long, we must keep by any means the newspaper; because it is the only way to express ourselves for a long time ... making our ideas known to our community and leaving our mark for the people that will follow (interview with A. S., May 2003);

or, broadly,

The periodical is supplementary to the site, for people who have not access to the Internet [...] Though it could cover the whole online agenda, where there are many international and local news, it satisfies a specific need: to create an archive of important articles on very important issues, that will exist beyond us and our attempt (interview with E. N., February 2003).

Besides, grassroots media practices are conveyors of a social condition, what participants describe as 'creating social climate'.

I think such projects are very important whatever the groups that implement them are and whatever the medium they use is. Though some of them stop running or other, different ones enter the field, they create what we call social climate, consciousness; people have heard about the experiment, they remember it, or they give a detailed account of it years later (...) It questions also the one-sided view on things, challenging new ones to come by setting a precedent (interview with C. D., February 2003).

In this context, participants in different projects point out the role of these practices in the direction of constituting a further call; either they are radio practices,

Our attempt sets an example; more people can become conscious of their possibility to intervene in their own way (...) A creative game can start, where people, collectives take part asking for their own place. We feel that we create a consciousness, some people will join us, other can do it in their own way, more initiatives will follow, and we are part of this process (interview with M. R., April 2003);

or, press ones,

At the same time this attempt gives the hint to other people who are interested in other areas to do the same, to create more fire sides, to ask, to demand for things to be done. It is not a lonely process that a few people have to run, it is something that concerns all of us ... this is what we want, to set an example, more initiatives like this can come up ... to demonstrate our will, and create a strong basis (interview with S. A., April 2003);

or, on line.

I feel that I contribute something for the continuation of a situation, where people set their own position in the public domain. Even if my participation does not change things it is a message for more people to join in and make the difference, even if not through Indy, by initiating their own project. In any case, it needs time and trust to the medium in order for more initiatives to come up there (interview with A. P., February 2003).

#### 6.1.2.2 *Summary*

In conclusion, participants in grassroots media projects evaluate the historical-political value of their practice in the long run. Although their practice is not consistent enough, they provide an overall settled exercise for various social domains on the margins of Greek public realm, promoting the activity of diverse collectives and the development of their discourses. In many cases past initiatives have paved the way for new projects to emerge, in terms of collectives of specific interests, as well as, in a particular area. Grassroots radio and press projects in particular have created a tradition for collectives and

their discourses, reflecting generally the social and political struggles of different generations, providing also the social capital (people and discourses) for the coming ones.

At least we, people who have been long engaged in such projects, believe that these practices make a chink in the 'wall', for more people to join in, declaring their position, and struggling for it [...] It is not an easy task, but the fact that you highlight the prospect is something. Young people are enthusiastic and positive to these practices; it is encouraging. Old experiments have showed us the way, along their own struggles and the problems they encountered; we keep these in mind and go further (interview with E. M., March 2003).

Although online grassroots projects are a relatively new phenomenon in Greece and still a developing practice, which is supplemented by offline versions, they are part of the demonstration of an overall political statement in normative terms.

Moreover, it is a note for social action; when you are ten people and you have made something from nothing you invite more people to do the same, to create their own space; we do not have to wait for someone, an authority, to give us a place, we will create it ... we do not have to wait for an institution to start it; we can create our own structures by developing practices where we interact and exchange experiences; the Internet gives us this chance (interview with I. Z., February 2003).

Overall, grassroots media projects create what people who are actively involved in them call 'social climate', encompassing the manifestation-historization of marginalized social domains, their actors, activities and discourses, as well as, challenging new relative practices to come up.

### 6.1.3 *'The aspect of agency'*

In regards to the way the agents of these projects experience the actual process, participants evaluate various aspects of their intervention in civic life along the lines of their engagement in the practice of such a project.

### 6.1.3.1 *Educational/learning value*

In terms of their active participation in the practice the agents of these projects put emphasis on the educational/learning value of being part of the process. People learn how to do things,

There is a proverb; I think it is a Chinese one, that says: 'you have to educate the heads of people, you do not have to cut them'. The most interesting in this story is that we can do it by ourselves; we learn how to do it (interview with D. P., April 2003);

and, this is a communal practice,

The process of working collectively to the same and of no profit end but of participation is the most you can take of your engagement in it, you learn things, you socialize your views and interests, you are part of a shared culture (interview with K. P., March 2003);

altruistically undertaken,

It is not a personal task that I have to bring to an end, but it is a concern that I share with the others, and for which we try to do our best and take from it as much as we can (interview with E. M., March 2003).

As one participant summarizes it,

It's a great school since you can come across all the stages of running such a project; from the original idea, the preparations and the long discussions over it on how to do it, to the actual practice. You know the medium because you run it, you produce and distribute it, there is not any distinction between intellectual and handmade work. It is a really valuable experience, a valuable heritage (personal correspondence with A. B., March 2003).

Moreover, the engagement in such a practice is interrelated to the overall participation in public affairs,

It is the most important thing I've been doing for the last years ... It opened up new horizons for me; I have revised many things I did in the past, ideas I



had, as well as I have re-evaluated my overall participation in things in common. (interview with A. X., March 2003).

In the case of **radio stations**, participants point out various aspects of their engagement in the process, in relation to the setting of such a project,

We had to experiment ourselves in all stages, recycling old machines that had been used in older experiments, trying to make new transmitters and antennas ... you see that you can start such an attempt with very few means, relying instead on your enthusiasm and the collective work (interview with M. R., April 2003);

as well as to its practice.

Everyone expresses himself spontaneously; I am engaged creatively in the process, experimenting with the technical part as well as within the program itself [...] The common denominator is that all of us learn at the same time different aspects of the process itself, and through this experience we learn how to ask from ourselves to do more both within and beyond the project itself (interview with A. C., March 2003).

It is a mutual process, people who had participated in previous experiments have gained the technical knowledge and they have the expertise for new initiatives,

We share roles, there are technical things that few are aware, but at the same time everyone is encouraged to follow the whole process and learn from it. Take my example, I knew very few things about the technical part of setting a radio but I learnt a lot next to people who had the knowledge in the previous radio station, and now I am the experienced one, who has the knowledge to support such a project [...] I feel in a way that I continue the tradition of radio amateurs (interview with T. P., April 2003);

next to other people who have the enthusiasm for doing radio.

I feel excited making my programme; at first place I had not the knowledge and the experience to support it technically, but I learnt many things next to people who have been in the field of radio amateurism for many years (interview with K. A., April 2003).

Moreover, participants enjoy this kind of involvement, yearning for going further.

It is a matter of art, you bring in new things and you are involved in their expression. At the same time you have invested there a part of yourself and you see it; that's why you want to improve it and go further [...] It excites me ... in parallel to our attempt to make the experiment as better as we can I get better by trying to respond to this challenge (interview with D. P., April 2003).

Furthermore, such an involvement makes participants concerned about things in common,

I am also more aware of things that happen around and to which I had not pay attention before, or they were not addressed to us, to the "ordinary people" (...) I have become more interested in local issues and I want to communicate these concerns with more people (interview with I. C., April 2003);

promoting a wider dialogue,

All of us have experienced the communication with the people out there, exchanging information [...] There is a means where you can express yourself in the way you want without boundaries, and make your own views known to more people, opening a dialogue (...) In the process everyone has shown a spirit of conciliation, taking into account at the same time other opinions ... by helping more people to do the same it could bring about a new situation (interview with P. Z., March 2003).

In regards to the **press editions**, alternative papers have also a long tradition that has nurtured generations.

It has been a great school for everyone; people come and leave but they have learnt something and some of them try then something more ambitious. On the other hand, many journalists on the mainstream media have done their 'internship' in these alternative papers (interview with M. P., February 2003).

In actual terms, participants point out their involvement in different aspects of the process which brings them together; they become concerned about it,

We all go through the whole process, writing, editing, and distributing the periodical. We have also other things to do, our own jobs, but we enjoy it; to put it in another way, we wait for the time to come to discuss, write and run for it. I feel it like our home; we work together for it, in both our good and bad moments (interview with A. X., March 2003);

and put great effort to it,

The fact that we can discuss and exchange views, go through our stories, things we have experienced or taken from sources, and put them on the paper, a palette of different stories; this is what we take (...) Since we enjoy the process we constantly look for ways to improve it, we try to learn more about the technical part and listen different aspects about how we can change things, what to improve, what to add, and how to do it more complete (interview with I. T., March 2003).

Here again, such an actual engagement in the process reinforces the overall participation in things in common,

I have gained my personal style of writing, liberal, creative; I make and produce my own view, being part of the creation of a condition that can change, or at least give new perspectives on things, and introduce others (...) My participation has reinforced a critical understanding ... you feel that you communicate your thoughts with other people and this sense makes you want to improve the way you do it, and to promote this relation (interview with I. N., February 2003).

Moreover, it promotes a further dialogue among people,

A special relation has been developed. I am more informed and concerned about issues of public interest; I write my aspect and I get feedback, a critical dialogue is opening in this way ... you give things and you also take from it (interview with A. R., March 2003);

which may be deployed along the actual field of their interest.

Personally, I consider the experiment of issuing this periodical a very valuable experience, especially the part of demonstrating our personal experience of being engaged with movements and groups of resistance in Latin America. Although this is a hard task it remains always our objective in our attempt to display these practices in real terms; our interest is not a typical journalistic one but one related directly to the actual practices and its implications (interview with E. M., March 2003).

Finally, in the case of Internet sites, participants themselves have the opportunity to set and run experimental projects along a new medium,

Our experience in the first year revealed the difficulties of setting up such an electronic project [...] we dealt with it as being a printed edition you put on line; it took time for us to become familiar with the nature of the medium, to become more flexible and take advantage of the chance it gives us to intervene directly and instantly [...] Although we still face various problems because we are not experts on technical issues it is productive since we learn how to deal with them; it is something on which we work, and for which we try to learn more (interview with P. A., May, 2003);

training at the same time more people to become actively involved in it.

Along this project I have learnt how to make a site, to set and run it ... It takes time; women are less familiar with the new technologies, they are more technophobic. The lessons we provide for women, in the place where our site is run, try to make them familiar with new technology, to get the knowledge and become involved in the process (...) Moreover, the need to bring women closer to the new technologies has challenged us to find new ways to make the program friendly to women as well (...) It is the experience of several attempts on this project that matters; it is a school for all of us (interview with M. J., May 2003).

Moreover, it is a shared process,

Everyone does everything, participating in the editorial process, the design of the site, searching, taking photos; we display initiative, though we arrange some roles when organizing something, we exchange them in the process (interview with I. P., May 2003);

where people contribute and exchange what they know.

People who had the technical knowledge, people who are interested in making translations, people who participate in various activist groups, have come together; through our co-operation we have learnt much more things [...] The abilities and information used on several occasions and just for personal interest, are now brought together, shared, and we try to produce something beyond us (interview with M. M., February 2003).

Furthermore, people who run such projects are devoted to, and enjoy, its practice,

The site was created of voluntary offer, but it is successful because it has professional devotion. Though most of us had not previous experience, we tried to make something good. I had some experience; you can see others who didn't have how much they have improved, they care about the site, the

aesthetic aspect, its organization, they are paying much attention on the translations they make, though their names are nowhere mentioned and nobody will recognize them, neither will give them a job; they are looking for good photos to put in ... and they do it without being paid, because they want to do it, they enjoy it (interview with A. Y., February, 2003);

and, they feel productive.

I have learnt a lot through my participation in the site; I have learnt how to articulate my thoughts, how to search for things, and disseminate the information ... In general terms, whenever I am doing something for the project I feel that I have done something, I have produced something ... personally my engagement in the process makes me feel productive. Moreover, you feel that this participation is useful for more people in the movement, and has also a value itself (interview with I. Z., February 2003).

In addition, participants point out further aspects of the learning value of being engaged in the actual practice of these projects, in terms of managing it,

There is huge difference between being just a user and an actual participant of the process. Firstly, you go through every step and you realize how difficult it is to find ways to keep the balance, both within a group of people working for the same purpose but from different perspectives, and as a whole project where everyone could use its forum to propagandize his/her positions and make it an arena of fights. You realize how difficult it is to be, in a micro level, part of the administration team, where you have to cut things, share duties, and be responsible for its organization (interview with A. P., February 2003);

and more specifically, in terms of clarifying its content,

It raises various questions to us, as to how we can make it accessible for everyone, avoiding at the same time it's commandeering; and more practical ones, the way you are dealing with it in terms of producing news. For example there was a long discussion concerning what news means and how it is produced (interview with C. D., February 2003);

as well as concerning the evaluation of its context.

I have become concerned about the political changes, the fabric of our local society, the problems and the interests of people ... On the other hand, it is easy to say anything about everything when you are not actually engaged in

such a project, but it is very difficult when you come to write about things, evaluate them and share with more people; there is much responsibility, what you are saying will be read by others. It is easy to make critique to local authorities and media, but when it comes to highlight neglected aspects of social life you must work responsibly for it; you feel you make a small contribution to your local society (interview with A. S., May 2003).

### 6.1.3.2 *Reaffirming ...*

Besides, these practices constitute places for social actors and groups to re-affirm their 'differences' along civic life.

It is a social means, through which you can express yourself more dynamically than 'outside' where your different way of conceiving things and acting is suppressed and you are forced to make concessions ... it is a protest march that expresses a profound need of ours, that of promoting our interests, in our own way ... our radio communes this need (interview with V. K., March 2003).

These practices provide the ground for doing it in a regular basis,

You have to do whatever you can in order to verify your position; if you want to change things, to find a place for your interests you have to do it in actual terms (...) It is a constant process, and this kind of regular performance is what makes things better, forms of action that take place in everyday life, making our mark on society (interview with A. C., March 2003);

and in a committed way,

I believe that a personal choice constitutes at the same time a call. It means that my personal choice challenges more people to do the same. My overall position is based on it; if I want to be engaged with something I participate in it, I cannot just agree with what is going on ... to agree on something without being engaged in it is a bit strange, waiting for others to do something about things you are interested in as well (interview with C. D., February, 2003).

In actual terms, this aspect of reaffirming the 'difference' concerns diverse interests and lifestyles, and takes place along various contexts; firstly, in a local one, either for young people who run their own Internet site,

Participating makes possible for all of us, both as a group and individually, to break the status of isolation and alienation we are in. What it contributes is our own spot, of our small community, of our interests. In this way we state our presence; we are not lazy young people who are only interested in how to entertain themselves ... we state that we are here and they have to take us into account as well. It gives a picture of how young people feel, what their anxieties and their problems are, what they need, they miss, they ask for, what discourages them, what they are enthusiastic about ... it gives our mark (interview with D. P., May 2003);

or generally for various social actors within a social radio station.

A new condition is coming up by the intervention of such experiments in the local level. In big cities they cannot make much 'noise', the voices cannot be heard, but in local level the possibility of these projects to intervene in public matters is greater ... you can make 'noise' in order for the local authorities to take you into account. You are not a puppet of their decisions, you have something to say and you state it; it is not what they are used to, or want to, hear, but it is about what people actually believe in and care about ... for this reason a social radio is important for the local society (interview with T. P., April 2003).

Moreover, specific discourses are re-affirmed in the process of such practices, either for example a women's-feminist one,

What we really get is the discourse, it is not taken as something for granted, this is where we try to arrive at; it is not enough to become conscious of the situation, but you have also to get the way to express it, transferring our own experience. Through this project we discover and create a language to describe and evaluate on women's-feminist issues; it is a process that never stops and this is very creative (interview with M. J., May, 2003);

or an ecologist-political one.

It is not simply an evaluation on social topics from an ecologist perspective, but at the same time you reveal the political implications of them; new issues are coming up, promoting new ways to conceive them ... the need to articulate a new ecologist-political discourse, where you have to be very precise without exaggerating wildly; this is the problem of ecologists, making wild exaggerations, and this is what we try to avoid here (interview with A. G., March 2003).

Furthermore, the practice of such a project itself employs a broader message,

The means and the ends go hand in hand ... it happens when the things I am interested in, the things I would like to point out, are brought out through a particular way that coincides with their message. This dimension is missed out by our everyday practices; still it is never a predetermined one (interview with E. M., March 2003);

and promotes generally new ways of conceptualising practices of resistance.

The periodical brings together different forms of struggle; I am referring to everyday forms of struggle where the social intertwines with the political, the cultural with the social [...] It promotes issues and aspects related to our understanding of the world, privileging neglected social interests, "trivial" issues of our daily life, and it is also a way to defend them in practice. The paradigms from Latin America show us the road to do the same in Greek social reality, to do it by ourselves (interview with I. T., March 2003).

In addition, these practices promote a different way of social organization,

The way the newspaper is organized and the way we participate in it are part of an alternative vision of the organization of society. It gives an example of how things can be done in another way, by ourselves; it shows up different ways of dealing with problems, pointing out hidden aspects of them, and the most important is that we, ourselves, are in the centre of these practices (interview with I. G, March 2003);

which is originated in the quotidian field,

This kind of alternative practices make a proposition for the establishment of our everyday experiences as ones that matter (...) These practices intervene productively in the society challenging its very structure because they are products of the society itself; they are part of the different social organization we envisage (interview with K. P., March 2003);

and advances it.

What this experience, as I see it in time, has given me is the sense of experimenting alternatively, an experimentation that takes place not only in the technical field as a radio amateur, but also in every day practices since I have become socialized in another way of dealing with things in common (interview with V. V., April 2003).

And, they challenge at the same time the dominant social conditions,



Not only does this experiment of social radio offer a channel for different aspects, but it is also an example itself of people's attempt to set another way of living, to free ourselves from the drowsy state that has been imposed on us (...) Both as individuals and collectives we can create the conditions for our autonomy, in all the levels, including communication (interview with K. A., April 2003);

and practices.

Such an attempt is itself a different approach of the society; it is the promotion of our belief that autonomy can become practice, being implemented in many aspects and sectors of our life ... we cannot just ask for things to be done, which before we address them in a realistic framework they have been dealt for good in institutional terms (interview with I. N., February 2003).

In this context, such practices advance another lifestyle, alternative to the one the mainstream media facilitate,

You are doing something different, evaluating other aspects of life that are totally neglected. Within the black or white image of the world that mainstream media built, we put our colours, our different way of thinking and conceiving things, our own way of living (interview with D. P., February 2003);

and generally to the established one,

It is a practice that goes against the mainstream; it includes aspects of life that are out of the established lifestyle (...) It questions the passive role they have given us; we, ourselves, define it, challenging the one-dimensional way of perceiving reality. It is a collective attempt of making sense of your own world, demonstrating your right to express your interests and declare your identity (interview with P. L., April 2003);

a process that has various manifestations,

Not only does the station provide a forum of challenging the dominant political discourse, and reveal misplaced aspects of social reality, but it is also a means to play the music we like, non-commercial music, against a mass culture where everything non commercial has not a place, passing also the message that nobody owns music, but it belongs to everybody (interview with A. M., March 2003).

Besides, these practices provide a platform for disputing social 'etiquettes'.

Such a project is part of us, of our quality of life, our culture and civic life. It can satisfy the need of people to address whatever touches and concerns them, for everything is misrepresented (...) It comes to fill a gap, to promote the views and interests of the alternative milieu, contesting the labels they put on us. It is a way to get out of the deadlock, to support our activities and demonstrate our way of life; we are not confined to our fate (interview with M. R., April 2003).

Moreover, this way is not a one-dimensional process. A characteristic example is that of the project of 'Indymedia Athens' when during the period of the arrest of the members of the terrorist organization 'November 17<sup>th</sup>' in Greece it was used by some mainstream media as a paradigm for 'justifying' the spread of terrorists' networking; in the long run this case addressed questions among participants in the project concerning the very way of 'questioning' itself.

When the case of November 17<sup>th</sup> came up our project was used as a means of propaganda by some media, for the creation of a terrorist panic; they were saying: terrorists are surfing, they are also on the internet now, making stories for the tabloids (...) At that time the number of visitors on the site increased enormously, and in the long run it brought more users (...) On the other hand, this case made everyone involved in this practice more mature and responsible, to understand that you do not just have to be there, blaming the dominant system; you have to argue also for what you are and what you want. In any case, I think that at the end of the day we are the ones who define what it is about (interview with M. M., February 2003).

Finally, in the case of a broad project here, the diversity of aspects and interests articulated 'on the margins' can be reaffirmed in terms of their interaction as well.

In some cases there are valuable discussions among different perspectives within the milieu, and by this way you can get a real picture about what people of the milieu are thinking about in terms of the exchange of arguments ... in contrast to the picture that mainstream media give about the milieu (interview with A. Y., February, 2003).

### 6.1.3.3 *Contesting ...*

At the same time, these practices provide the ground for contesting established social relations and roles.

What is challenging in the project is the logic of direct participation and action, and the horizontal way of interfering into things ... without having someone who is above all, who actually runs the project, leaving to the rest the execution of orders. It is people themselves who compose, discuss (...) The aspect of everyone is respected, this gives you the sense of being participant in equal terms, and this process releases a lot of energy (interview with I. Z., February 2003).

In regards to **grassroots radio stations**, the participation of those involved in the 'social radios' in the decisions taken for them is a liberating social activity,

It is a self-organized social formation, an original synthesis of all the people who feel the need to run the social radio [...] It is the product of the need of people to express and organize their discourse and activity freely, in terms of liberated social relations. It creates spaces, modes of communication where everyone can participate in equal terms, and express themselves and their views (interview with I. C., March 2003);

which can also include everyone who is interested in such a project.

We take decisions in the general meetings which are open to everyone is interested in it; not only people who make programs but anyone who wants to take place in it, friends of the radio, are welcome. This means that the radio is not a concern exclusively of people who participate in it, but it concerns everyone who is interested in supporting such an experiment ... everyone has a right to express their view in the general meeting and participate in the decisions, it is a collective process that characterizes the whole project, there is no hierarchy, everyone can be participant (interview with T. P., April 2003).

Along the same lines, participants in the autonomist radio station point out the libertarian character of participating in such a project.

It concerns a different constitution of the process itself as well as of the social relations in it (...) Such an experiment advances the de-passiveness of society; the creation of autonomist, libertarian practices is the means, it is a stimulus for more self-organized practices to take place (...) My engagement in this

project is a matter of social intervention; it is a communication vessel (interview with P. Z., March 2003).

In all of these cases the main challenge of the running of these experiments is the questioning of the distinction between transmitter and receiver,

Moreover, it overcomes the archetypical din between transmitter and receiver; here the receiver has the chance to become the transmitter and vice versa, as a result the authoritarian aspect between who is eligible to make a programme and who is not, whose discourse will be heard and whose will not, is cancelled (interview with K. P., March 2003);

favouring the experience instead of the professional standards in the making of the programme.

The main objective is the direct co-operation between transmitter and receiver, to cancel actually the distinguishing roles between them. You must join forces with receivers, to make the program together ... in this way you can make known activities that find no place in the conventional mass media. Moreover, the medium gives us the chance to do it live in some cases, when people are out there, taking part in the march and they can report things from the real place of action ... we experiment with these things (...) The standards are not the same with a professional station since in our case everyone participates voluntarily. However, it is a radio for everyone and this is the most important (interview with A. C., April 2003).

Accordingly, in the case of **press initiatives**, such projects are not implemented in a predefined way,

I think the most important thing is the way we work in order to produce this periodical; it reflects actually how we want to live and act (...) What matters for me is that we work comradely, all of us participating in it, and this is represented at the result. It is collective, participatory on the whole, there are no hierarchies and editors that define what issues we will cover (interview with P. T., February 2003);

nor along certain tasks.

My experience here has taught me how things can be done in another way, sharing duties. It affects the way I come across practical and daily aspects of my life generally; for example I call a friend of mine and say to her: instead of

both of us cooking every day, we can share the task and the days (...) It is a process you deal with in an ad hoc manner ... there are certain things you have to do in order to publish the periodical, but there are not allocated roles (interview with A. X., March 2003).

Moreover, the practice of such projects challenges established norms,

Although there is a managing team everyone can participate in our general meetings and publish an article in it, it is open (...) The newspaper is a small case but it challenges the traditional hierarchy between journalists and readers, between those who have the information and those who depend on what mass media provide. Since people realize that they can express their own ideas, without these ideas having been modified according to the standards of the medium they are eager to participate more actively, giving their own view of how to make the experiment better, becoming part of the process (interview with I. G., March 2003),

and patterns.

Our experiment is an example of how things can be done in another way addressing everyone in it, challenging the established traditional patterns, of who has access to what sources, to the sources themselves [...] There are so many aspects of everyday life to which there is so little attention; it is there where we can contribute, bringing them into the light (interview with P. S., March, 2003).

Finally, the grassroots **electronic initiatives** encompass various aspects of challenging social relations; either in terms of the running of such a project,

The project is actually a way to introduce our own ideas and concepts in the debate for local issues, and to do it in a concrete way. Not only do our views and concepts challenge the parochial way of dealing with the local, but also the fact that we promote these views by our own means questions the marginal role that local authorities have left to the young people ... It is our way of protesting against everything that is happening on the island for us but without us (...) It is critical in content, liberal in format, and full of intention (interview with A. S., May 2003);

or, on the grounds of projects' application, concerning the relation between gender and the use of technology,

Most of the software packages and environments do not take into consideration the gender factor. Our project is not only different in relation to the information it provides, the topics it raises and discusses, and the fact that women themselves run it, but there is also a different arrangement of the context, a more friendly categorization of its content, based on aesthetic criteria as well, where women find it easier to surf, challenging the established male-dominated pattern of software design (interview with M. J., May, 2003);

or, specifically in terms of the process.

The important aspects of such projects are that you are engaged directly and you participate in the overall process. It is not a guided procedure, where someone has the leading role and the others must agree and follow the instructions ... It is an example of how you can create a means of distributing information, creating your own space; like when you occupy a building where you try to create a space that is not mediated by commercial relations (interview with M. M., February 2003).

Moreover, such a project is jointly undertaken,

All of us participate in the decisions taken for the site, we have the list through which we exchange e-mails concerning issues for the day-to-day function of the site, discussing any problems raised; once per week, there is a physical gathering where general and technical issues are discussed among all of us, and everyone has the right to propose things and argue (interview with M. E., May, 2003),

and communally practiced.

There is not a structure that sets a framework that you have to follow, it is something that is defined in the practice by people who participate in it, both those who administrate it and single users, it is a participatory, communal process (...) There are no filters, as in the case of the official mass media, the information is distributed by all of us, there is not the principle of authority; it is not a product I make and I offer to you, but it is formed collectively; this is what is absent, that's why people look for new ways to make things (interview with I. Z., February 2003).

Furthermore, it brings the traditional receiver in the position of the producer,

We try to produce more information, news from primary sources, developing a network of sources by women in different areas and through diverse social sectors. Everyone has something to contribute; you live things and you come

then to report them, sharing your experience with others as well. We can do it as well; this means that the mystified character of the process, 'they know how to do it but you do not', is not a good excuse any more. In such a project we play the first role (interview with N. N., May, 2003);

questioning also the very hierarchical structure of a communication network.

In contrast to the mainstream media where information passes through many filters before it reaches the receiver, this project offers non-mediated information [...] The publishing process is open; there is not control, there is not a group that controls the whole process; every user can contribute an article, news, and they are open to discuss them; in this way we build our own structures of anti-information (interview with A. P., February 2003).

As such, a network of active contributors can take place across place and time, locally,

You have the chance to give information publicly about things that happen in your neighbourhood or your local area, or even to point out the other aspect of what the established media provide, to challenge issues that we are taken for granted; everyone can do it, at least you have the chance (...) You have participated in a demonstration and then you join the site to give your own view of what happened there, sharing it with others. Thus, experiences we lived become known and common by finding a place in the site (interview with E. N. February 2003);

as well as broadly,

The site is also the place for covering activities and actions that take place under the umbrella of the anti-globalization movement generally; as in the case of anti-war demonstrations where we could take information of what was happening in other cities and at the same time we could give a picture of what was happening here, in Athens and other cities (...) Not only does Internet cancel distances between people, giving you the chance to learn things that take place many kilometres away, but also you can cover activities that take place at the same time, creating a consciousness and even mobilizing people; you do not have to wait to pass through the printing press; you, yourself, are becoming the journalist (interview with M. M., February 2003).

#### 6.1.3.4 *Summary*

As far as the actual involvement of social agents/actors in these practices is concerned, grassroots media projects constitute conveyors of both individual and collective intervention in civic life. In the empirical field, participants are actually engaged in the whole process of setting, running, and promoting the experiment, learning how to do things, experimenting on it, and sharing this experience with others, introducing also more people in the process. This aspect of the appropriation of the communication process by the participants seems to be the strongest one concerning peoples' experience on grassroots media practices. Besides, participants evaluate more aspects concerning the practice of such projects in general; in many cases this has led to the implementation of new projects by already experienced participants, who are the social capital – providing in some cases (radio stations) the necessary equipment (from old experiments) in addition to the technical knowledge – for the perpetuation of such practices and the engagement of new social actors in new experiments. Moreover, this kind of direct engagement promotes also the overall involvement of participants in public affairs, in literal terms, by learning and being concerned about various aspects of social reality, as well as, in normative terms, by contributing, exchanging different views, and facilitating a potential wider discussion and dialogue on things in common among them, meaning among 'ordinary' people' too.

In addition, participants evaluate these projects in terms of providing the ground for re-affirming diverse interests, lifestyles, and discourses across different social groups/collectives and along various contexts. From this perspective, a range of social, political and cultural 'differences' are registered through the practice of grassroots media projects: an Internet site promotes both local and broad cultural interests of a youth group; social radio stations provide, more or less, the public arena for local social groups; press editions express specific interests – anarchist; ecologist, in a local, regional or wider context; a women's-feminist Internet site constitutes a specific public terrain for gender interests; an autonomist radio station promotes independent and alternative music and other relevant cultural forms; a periodical is dedicated to resistant practices in Latin America; and, an Internet site promotes anti-globalization practices in a 'local' context. Correspondingly, the practice of these projects depicts a colourful tapestry of manifestations of 'difference', from the very articulation of a specific discourse, questioning also predefined social 'etiquettes', to the demonstration of the possibility of a different way of



social organization, challenging its very conventional nature. At the same time, these practices constitute a terrain of modes of contesting established norms and patterns of institutionalized social relations and roles, envisaging collective, autonomist and libertarian ways of running such a project, across also specific social applications (youth, gender). Finally, they are an arena of challenging the hierarchical structure of a communication network as well as the very distinction between producer and receiver. Yet, these communication practices are addressed mostly as conveyors of contestation, but less as sources of empowerment of the social groups and actors involved in them that promotes their further participation in public and political life.

...

In any case, the implementation of grassroots media projects is not an easy process. Participants themselves point out some problems; generally, in terms of the way people employ such a project,

It creates a forum where you can discuss about everything, giving your own view and taking feedback; this means you must be ready to receive a critique on what you have written as well (...) The drawback is that people can use it in a selfish way, just for making sense of their beliefs, and this results in a mess where there are no points to be made, missing the essence of the process (interview with E. N., February 2003);

and more specifically, concerning the organization of the project.

It is an open process; there are cases of people who came in the team and they wanted to force their own view to the others. This kind of attitude, 'I know and I will tell you what to do', is not acceptable ... everyone has a right to the decisions taken. On the other hand, there are people who know some things more about technical issues, and their view counts more. I have an idea about the aesthetic part of the site, yet from theory to practice there is a long distance. We cannot lay down the whole project in the altar of the motto that says 'there are not experts here' just because the product we produce is not for sale; it's very naïve (interview with M. M., February 2003);

Moreover, already established social divisions are not erased in advance. The case of gender is characteristic, in the case of a specified project,

There are limits in any field, our project cannot open a dialogue with men; even women's movement itself has not managed to do it yet (interview with K. K., May 2003);

and in the practice of a broad one.

There is a difference because I am a woman and I participate as a woman [...] As in every social milieu, here it is more difficult for women to gain their place; the relationships between women and men are much more intensive. The reaction to my intervention is more personal, against the gender, than to what I am saying; this makes me feel that I have to justify my position every single time (interview with A. P., February 2003).

Furthermore, the open nature of the contribution to these projects raises questions in normative terms, concerning their validity as information sources.

It gives a pace to everyone and everything; information and proclamations that could never find a place in Athenian Press, and as such they would never reach the provision, are now available to everyone by the open publication policy. And, even if something is published in a [broadsheet Athenian newspaper] that has 150,000 readers, it is not sure that many of them will read it, but, you can find it in the Indy, where there are few users but it is more possible that they will read the article ... it is also an archive already. On the other hand, this capacity can be at the same time its weakness; it is difficult to confirm the extent to what the information you have taken is valid enough, or, whether a collective, group actually exists. As the publication becomes accessible to everyone, the misinformation is always possible; the nature of the medium makes it easier, changing some words, or even a photograph. The issue of validity is always on the agenda of such a project (interview with A. Y., February 2003).

Above and beyond, the way these projects are evaluated in relation to the realm they apply to,

When I said that all trends are represented in a social radio I meant they are welcome; very rarely all of them are represented there (interview with D. P., April 2003),

brings into light the limits of their practice,

However, many times these projects are self-confined, in the same way it happens at the standing-point discussions, which although they run very

interesting discussions, events and activities they do not address them widely (interview with M. R., April 2003).

This dimension sets a broad context for the exploration of grassroots media projects in Greece.

## 6.2 *Limitations*

Further issues concerning the role of grassroots media projects are raised when we take into account the communication of their practice within the specific context of their implementation; an aspect which has implications in terms of the lines of both the aspect of 'space' and that of 'agency'.

### 6.2.1 *Communicating: representation and participation*

As shown above, in terms of 'space', these projects constitute social terrains for various social actors/collectives, their discourses and their engagement in public life by their own means. On another, second level, in terms of 'agency', the practice of these projects provides potentially social terrains for the reaffirmation of 'difference' and the contestation of established social codes, relations and roles. Given as such, an interesting question arises concerning the extent to which grassroots media practices facilitate an enhancement and enrichment of the public and political sphere. Though the structural dimension of such projects – organization, content, level of participation, and sequence – is a significant parameter, it would be more enlightening to analyse the way their social agents draw on their mutual engagement as well as on the communication of diverse discourses along these projects. Concerning the position of such projects in relation to the public and political realm, two participants sketch in a characteristic way the preferable role for such practices in terms of instances of representation,

Basically, such practices constitute communicative poles that enrich public communication, which until now had a centralized core in which we did not participate. They create a wave towards more public communication; what we

largely want to show by our project is that our voice, and not only ours, is not heard. Let us make a space to be heard (interview with I. Z., February 2003);

as well as of participation through them.

It is a social means, through which you can express yourself more dynamically than 'out there' where your difference is suppressed and you are forced to make concessions ... It is a protest march that expresses a profound need of ours, that of promoting our interests; such a project communes this need of intervening in things in our own way (interview with V. K., March 2003).

In this context, the evaluation of these projects by the participants themselves situates their practice within the terrain of public and political life in Greece. Although the experiments are heterogeneous enough they share a concern for the representation of aspects of social life and the participation of social actors that are excluded from the conventional public domain. However, the fact itself that these practices are implemented 'on the margins' of the public and political sphere in Greece evaluates various controversial aspects regarding the role of these projects in terms of both their contribution to and their intervention in public and political life correspondingly. What follows concerns the way participants themselves experience the implementation of these projects in wider terms. Here, the way participants evaluate these practices and their engagement with and in them situates these projects within the "nooks and crannies" of civic life in Greece. Coming across the diverse grassroots media experiments employed in the present study we notice the limits themselves put in any attempt to set a broader context for representation and participation along the lines of their interests. Further interesting issues are raised here in relation to the focus of these projects, as well as, to the nature of the medium they employ.

The case of the periodical 'Contact' is an attempt to bring together anarchist discourses and activities that take place in different areas.

Such a project provides the ground for anarchist groups active in different areas to come in contact (...) We, a few people, established it as an edition of the anarchists of our town. Initially we tried to open a forum for these issues widely, in the whole western part of Greece as well as in the big cities, Athens, Thessalonica [...] What we want is the periodical to become a libertarian press milieu; where various groups can write in it, sharing information, giving their views. A necessary condition for this is that the people and groups who participate not to see the periodical as a brochure, as a

means of propagandising their own position, trying to establish their own story, version (...) The milieu must create a space for itself, this is periodical's purpose (interview with S. A., February 2003).

Yet, such an attempt, while focused enough on providing a platform for the anarchist milieu has to overcome the objections that the self-closed nature of these groups sets for their participation in such an arena,

Since the mainstream media are the dominant ones, there is the need for something alternative to evaluate the other dimension of things. The periodical is such an experiment; yet it has to become more pluralistic, to gain more diverse features, in order to be influential [...] There are collectives of different areas in the anarchist milieu that contribute with their articles, not regularly enough ... it needs time; most of these collectives dig themselves into their cushy position. We must gradually get out of our "air-tight" places, to overcome our obsessions and differences by opening a forum to discuss on them (...) The discussion in periodical takes place mostly between groups in our region (interview with P. T., February 2003);

along with the special relationship of these groups with the press.

The relation of the anarchist, or the anti-authoritarian, or generally of the alternative milieu to the press is an underdeveloped one, as much as the milieu itself is [...] namely, the obsession to produce a certain type of discourse and as such of a periodical press reflects the condition of underdevelopment of the milieu itself in Greece, in comparison to Europe. (...) The alternative milieu had to have developed its own medium, but we have not managed to overcome our deadlocks. In the area of press we try to redefine our relation to the periodical, in order for the periodical to become the place for all of us (interview with S. A., February 2003).

Moreover, though the participation in such a practice is a matter of the actual engagement of people in public affairs, it is subjected to the overwhelming end of defining the character of the project in advance.

It is an inspiration for me, not only for my inner understanding as an individual but also for my social understanding in general. The participation becomes action; people who participate and those who just read the periodical share a common concern for the pursuit of awareness, both of our individual and social status (...) We must have a common end, the periodical is our tool for this; it is necessary to get out having a clear position and objective (interview with S. F., February 2003).

When the discussion comes also to the medium employed, the need for a concrete and self-referring way of going out there is indicative enough. A participant elaborates on their choice of issuing a periodical as follows:

On the one hand, radio needs more people and much time; on the other hand, Internet creates an illusion for things [...] it brings you close to things that take place far away, but it can also bring you close to something that you are not actually so close. It gives me the impression of a virtual reality, but you never know ... maybe this is the new reality. However, if you want to fight the dominant system you must have a strong means to do it. Since we have worked with the press for so long, we trust it (interview with I. N., February 2003).

The case of the autonomist '98.00 FM' radio is an experiment, relatively new, of building a platform for relative discourses in the broadcasting realm. While it is addressed as an attempt to constitute a space for such discourses in wider terms,

Taking into account the absence of any representation of alternative discourses in the public realm, such an alternative project has the vital role of taking the lead, providing a platform of expression for collectives, to share a common place (...) It tries to create an autonomist place, for everyone interested in, promoting a different political discourse (interview with P. Z., March 2003);

at the same time it develops its defences.

There is great potential for such a project, as long as it stays away from the disputes of the milieu. It is not an easy task, that's why it took us so much time to start it, and we are still struggling to establish it (interview with K. P., March 2003).

As a result, the station is not actually open to 'everyone',

The project has not run widely yet, we are in the process of calling to other collectives and related projects of the milieu, coming in contact with them ... the attempt has firstly to strengthen itself, that's why it is rigid at first place, in order to avoid the conspicuous critique that is unavoidable in terms of the politics of the alternative milieu [...] There is always a conspiracy theory about everything that comes up in the milieu, 'who does it; how do they do it?'; but when the time to sit in the same table comes they can never agree on how to set it off (interview with A. C., March 2003);

in contrast, participants point out the need to run the station among few people, thus protecting its character,

There are not many people who actually run the station. We must defend it against any possibility of putting such an initiative in forms, following patterns that do not apply in the profile of the station (interview with V. K., March 2003).

In this regard, the following one is a more specific case,

The station must have an anti-authoritarian character, being protected by any attempt of intervening in the process for appropriating it that cancels its libertarian nature (interview with A. M., March 2003).

This claim for 'purity' characterizes also the way participants value the participation in such a project.

It is a self-organizing project; we make it, and since we run it we have the responsibility to keep it pure, ideologically and politically pure ... there is no point to run such a station and participate in the process if you do not have an overall political position, generally I mean (interview with V. K., March, 2003).

The struggles over the nature of the project are also evident in the actual practice, its administration,

There are problems when it comes to decide how to do it. It is difficult to agree on how to run the station; for example how to support it financially [...] Membership is open, everyone can contribute what one can afford, but in the long run this can create inequalities; so, we need a hard core in the first place to run the station (interview with K. P., March 2003);

as well as in the process of running the station.

We have the technical knowledge to improve the station since there are amateurs here who participated in previous experiments, but it is not enough to experiment with the antennas and inventing ways to broadcast widely ... there is still a long discussion whether we are prepared enough to do it; we cannot expand it unless we agree on how we get out on the air, as what (interview with A. C., March 2003).

Another participant in the station sets in a clear way this context.

I see the whole project as an anti-regime pole. This must be its overall orientation; our decisions and participation have to be compatible with this, otherwise it will become a conventional one (...) It is a matter of expressing our political position, we must do it in a certain way, promoting these special concerns which are at the same time social ones (interview with A. M., March 2003).

The social radio '**Little Red Riding Hood FM**', which has its roots in an anarchist radio that took place in the same area,

The first attempt took place in 1985 (...) run by the anarchist union of the area; it was an anarchist, political radio, that had a political position. It stopped broadcasting in 1988 when the group split (interview with N. I., April 2003);

is a characteristic example of the struggles held over the nature of such an experiment.

In 1999 there was a self-organizing joint point in [our area] but it was not open to everyone; it was much politicized of extreme anarchists views. (...) Some participants of the self-organizing joint point, who had participated in first experiment and had less extreme positions, had the idea of running the radio station again ... We had been in a concert in Athens in Villa Amalias [Occupied empty building] where we found some parts of an old radio station of Athens that were much more advanced than the ones we had made by ourselves in our previous project. When we all met again back in [our area] we agreed to set up the station. There was a long discussion about what the station had to be like, its identity [...] There were two different points of view; the politicized one of the extreme views of the joint-point which wanted an anarchist station, just to promote anarchist views. We disagreed, we had done it before, and we knew how difficult it was to run that experiment along certain lines, there instead of being interested in promoting our concerns we got bogged down in looking to define the identity of the station. On the other hand, we wanted a social radio, where everyone could have access. The radio could have political programs as far as it would not be used for partisan politics or as a means for propaganda. It had to be a social radio, where everyone had access to it, where everyone could participate in its organization. The militant side disagreed; they did not want to set up something like this. We did not have of course a problem for hard-core anarchists to participate, but we did not want the radio to have an extremist identity, in order to include everyone who wanted to express a view. We decided to run it by ourselves as a social radio (interview with T. P. April 2003).



Another participant in the 'Little Red Riding Hood' radio station highlights here the challenges of setting a 'social' radio experiment.

What we want to avoid is to set up a "store", to make a mouthpiece radio of an ideology, even of our ideology, which is very possible to be done when we start a discussion about the political profile of the station (...) The idea of the creation of an open, social radio that society itself participates in it is a great challenge for all of us (interview with V. V., April 2003).

Nevertheless, the establishment of such an experiment is a matter for the few.

Older and younger people came together and we tried to create a wider space ... there were disagreements with some groups for the character of the project; we had the previous experience, we knew what we could do and what not [...] We see that it is difficult for different collectives to come together and set a radio station, it cannot work; you have to do it with few people who must take care of everything (...) We had to set up the station by ourselves; it was impossible to agree on doing something all together, even in a small community. The station can provide our common denominator, for our social, local concerns; yet, there are small candles in the darkness (interview with D. P., April 2003).

Even though such a project has also provided the ground for more initiatives to take place, creating a local social centre, it is the political conflicts that deter the local collectives of taking advantage of it.

At the same time such an experiment opens the skin; more ideas come up, a library, a few PCs, a place for amateurs musicians, and a café are hosted in the same place from where the station broadcasts; we want to create a social centre for everyone, students, social groups, to take advantage of it, we need more people to run and afford it [...] Still, it is difficult to do it without coming across the old problems, the usual political conflicts that prevent such a project from establishing a space for ourselves, for all of us who have not a public voice (interview with T. P. April 2003).

Another participant points out here the need for various groups and minorities to participate in it and enhance its very 'social' appeal.

It usually provides support to different social groups and minorities in the local and wider area just when there is a problem; it is not enough, different groups must participate and express their views in a daily basis and as a matter

of fact to come closer, to exchange ideas, and to promote various issues. Students and ecologists of the area participate, but not consistently (...) Some people ask for a coherent agenda, programme, but I think this discourages people to join in, to make their own programme, whatever it is. I believe a social radio must give the chance to the local community to be expressed in its own terms. I do not think that our project is enough for changing things, more diversity is needed to make a difference (...) These initiatives can help the society to view itself. They succeed not when they try to promote a political gospel, the definite truth they only possess and which they want to express, but when they bring more views in, in the social debate (interview with V. V., April 2003).

Yet, the distinction line between a 'political' and a 'social' radio is vague.

Being active just as a political group you are isolated, even within the alternative realm. Now we have the chance to make our position known widely to promote our views in a wider scope, beyond sporadic local activist practices, beyond a single participation in marches and protests in Athens where you are invisible and nobody remembers anything after a month ... you can register your political will clearly and substantially (interview with N. I., April 2003).

These contradictions over the nature of such a project are evident also in the case of the social radio, 'FM Thorn'.

The radio is a public core for initiatives that take place in our wider area. Thus, it is open to various groups of the area; it constitutes a forum for exchanging ideas and experiences, and communicating these generally [...] There are internal problems which must be firstly solved in order to go further ... to agree on the character of it; do we want a social radio where every aspect can be heard or a left-ecologist one? (...) A social radio is essential in the province, creating a wider forum for more groups to join in, to rally together, not being out in the cold anymore (interview with I. C., April 2003).

The necessity of a political identity is the apple of discord.

The station makes calls to everyone excluded from the local public domain; yet, its origins are placed in the context of Left, specifically that of the anti-authoritarian milieu and that of ecology. It has a defined and clear frame of reference that supports it; the function of the station is based on definite political concerns (interview with K. A., April 2003).

Correspondingly the way participants conceive their engagement with such a project is different. On the one hand, it is conceived as an arena of socialization,

The most important aspect, thing you take is the knowledge of the 'other', of the different. It is very possible then to develop also a sense of solidarity among different groups that had not had the chance before to meet each other, exchanging and sharing their experiences (interview with M. R. April 2003);

and, on the other hand, as an arena of getting a political baptism.

I was an amateur broadcaster, not politicized person. Members of the ecologist group that was active in [our area] politicized me, and they incited me to the idea of making a social radio ... Before my engagement in the station I was not politically organized nor did I have a political understanding of the things (interview with P. L., February 2003).

Another participant in social radio experiments gives a parabolic understanding of being engaged in such a project.

Why are we amateur broadcasters? If we go back to the Pythagoreans they evaluated hearing as the method of educating their students. Many years later some romantic amateur broadcasters are doing social radio not only for making an audience attentive, but for all of us to intervene (personal correspondence with B. G., April 2003).

The answer to the question of "what kind of intervention" is not yet clear enough among the participants of social radios.

In regards to the newspaper of '**Green Policy**' the struggle for the articulation of an ecologist-political discourse goes hand in hand with its vulnerability to traditional politics, within the alternative realm,

It is a way to introduce an ecologist concern on social and political problems, to open up a dialogue, and to transfer this dialogue into a wider arena ... to promote an overall ecologist perspective (...) The Green Policy makes an attempt to bring together different aspects on ecologist issues [...] The newspaper welcomes any contribution, though it has to keep distances from traditional politics [...] to promote a new discourse rather than reproducing old positions under a new veil (interview with I. G., March 2003);

as well as, in general terms,

We try to co-operate with various local radio stations, to cover relative activities that take place in their areas, so that we can participate in their program opening a discussion for ecologist issues in local level. It is not consistent enough; on the one hand, the traditional political parties have sporadically employed in their discourse ecologist concerns since they have become popular, and thus, our perspective is often misunderstood; and on the other hand, the local authorities try many times to address such issues in the context of their partisan competition. We have not yet managed to make the newspaper a point of reference widely, though this is our purpose, offering another perspective on social issues and demonstrating another way of dealing with them (personal correspondence with A. B., March 2003).

Besides, the construction of a clear political discourse becomes a priority which sets a particular context for the project.

The newspaper is not a means to address issues for the environment and its protection, but it is a means to raise ecologist consciousness; for this reason we call it Green Policy (...) The spectrum we move in is of limited interest, but we know it; it concerns few people who are committed to it ... Green Policy is known in the realm of ecologists (interview with A. G., March 2003).

As such, although the ecologist concern of the project applies to various relative areas of interest,

It has to be an open forum, bringing more and different views in, expressing different streams. A relationship between the project and activist initiatives is necessary; we must develop and promote such a relationship, to be the reference point of groups that are active in the same area of interest; a vital osmosis between them is necessary ... I am interested in the case of open spaces, there is much to be said for these issues (...) When people from different areas can write about these issues a network is created. When there is a coverage concerning a specific area a few local newspapers and radio stations have used the newspaper as a source (interview with A. R., March, 2003);

the character of the project remains an issue at stake.

The fierce competition and fights between different groups makes any attempt of opening a forum of ecologist-political discourse problematic enough, even for local issues where the chances to make sense raising your voice through such a means are much better than in the city ... there is so much dispute; the newspaper must keep away from it (interview with I. G., March 2003).

Along these lines, another participant points out also:

The newspaper is a means of promoting ecologist views and concerns, but we have to stay away from the local politics; for this reason there is not a developed interrelated network of information. Yet, matters that our newspaper covers issues that have no place in the local media; this disregard by local media is the certificate of our identity (interview with K. D., March 2003).

These contradictions over the political spot of a project are also obvious in the case of the Internet site 'Porphyris' in terms of the very character of the project itself.

Something that unites us can work better than something that divides us. It is difficult to organize such an experiment on a political basis due to the narrow-minded beliefs that are stated in partisan terms. Here, we have something in common, the culture, which can provide the means of intervening, even in a more penetrating way (interview with M. E., May 2003).

As a result, the distance the project keeps from 'politics' is the point of reference, either the discussion comes to the local aspect of the project,

The orientation of the project is a local and not political one. It is important to keep our place distinct from political and parochial connotations, to demonstrate our concerns and ideas without putting political labels on them (...) All young people are welcome in our attempt since it is clear that the basis of our project is the island and culture, the promotion of issues beyond any political expediency; we have to keep this identity (interview with I. P., May 2003);

or, to the general ones of youth and culture.

It is essential to communicate with other relative groups, to exchange our views and to share problems and solutions [...] We try to do it, in relation both to other youth initiatives and to cultural groups; yet, it is important to avoid any manipulation of the situation for other purposes (interview with A. S., May 2003).

Hence, despite the wide spectrum of the interests the project encompasses it sets its limits when it comes to communicate them largely.

You have to be open, to be in contact with other collectives and their projects, if there is any possibility to make sense; you can offer your experience and take from theirs. However, we are not yet ready to do something like this [...] If you are confined to your own shell, because of the fear of being open to political interpretations, you cannot go further. we must be in touch with other initiatives (...) Such experiments must co-exist peacefully in order to raise a stronger and lasting voice, to make a *vox populi*, against the monopolization of public discussion by the mass media, to give people the chance to say something different, to keep a balance (interview with V. M., May 2003).

In addition, participants evaluate their engagement in the project in relation to the traditional political terrain, either in a local context,

You come in contact with the actual daily problems of people, and you get a more representative view of the local society you are part of. Writing for these topics makes you feel that you help in their evaluation; it gives you the right to criticize the political and the religious power of the island, not individually, which does not really matter, but as a whole, through our project [...] here there is a long discussion since we are not a political group neither we want for the local politics to take advantage of our case (interview with P. D., May 2003);

or in a more general one.

I had not been active in public affairs for a long time. My experience in the university, where the parties guide every single movement, made me be negative to any further engagement in that context. What I was looking for was a collective without any partisan or ideological preconditions that narrow your way of acting. This is what I like by being part of this process, the fact that it is beyond political interests and aims (interview with A. S., May 2003).

Characteristic is also the way one participant draws particularly on the concern of keeping the project out of the 'politics' of the social forums.

During the anti-war protests, someone had the idea of participating in the marches as a whole, as a group, by our name, Porphyris, but most of the members disagreed; they claimed that we are not a political group or organization in order to declare our presence. For others it was a good idea to make people there aware of our project, distributing the newsletter we issue ... finally, the aspect of keeping the project out of the politics of the forums and the political groups prevailed (interview with P. D., May 2003).

Concerning the web periodical 'Infofemina', its practice is also addressed in relation to the constitution of a 'clear' women's-feminist discourse.

As far as women's issues are concerned, there are the party sections that have a naïve and conservative approach. On the other hand there are some autonomous group initiatives, but there is not a strong and independent movement. If Infofemina continues to run well, it could support the development of women's-feminist movement (...) The electronic periodical is an attempt to create a forum for all women, including professional, like journalists and academics, to come closer, contributing their own view, developing a critical discussion and a political approach (...) It is an open venture, where we try to articulate a different discourse, every aspect is welcome; this is the purpose to cover a variety of different perspectives, except for the reactionary ones. Our main focus must be the promotion of the overall feminist movement (interview with M. J., May 2003).

However, its practice raises several questions along the lines of the diverse discourses on gender issues,

We need to find new ways of evaluating women's as well as feminist issues ... we must do it in a way that addresses all women and not only the feminist community itself in a self-referenced way. If we want to say something new, without the partisan umbrella, we have to use a language which is more accessible to women in order for them to participate in this dialogue, whether they have a radical view on things or not (interview with N. N., May 2003);

revealing internal contradictions concerning the character of the project.

The bet yet to be won is to go over our differences. Infofemina has as an objective to provide a common ground for women and feminist groups, opening up a forum for discussion, a forum that is not politically allocated. (...) There are disagreements between women's and feminists' perspective; this is a fact that we have to accept in order to widen our perspective and discussion, and address more people to it [...] Not only do we have to express a strong position, for example the traditional feminist one, but we must also take into account different and new ones; ones that may not belong somewhere but they have something to say. There are different ways of understanding things, but there are also many concerns we have in common and they can unite us, bringing us together in the same forum, where you do not need a political identity in order to be part of it. Even if we do not manage to agree on some issues we have at least discussed and exchanged our views on them (...) Having a specific perspective is not sine qua non for the periodical, whoever has something to say can write it and signs for it. (interview with P. A., May 2003).

These contradictions are also evident when it comes to situating the project within the wider realm of alternative practices; where participants evaluate here the communication of the project conditionally,

Such a small project has to justify its autonomy; Infofemina demonstrates another stance and it works in another setting. As such, it has to keep its place safe from the politics of a milieu that gives a fixed label to any experiment. If we add to that the fact that a man by definition cannot participate in our forum, any further expansion of the project for that matter is pointless (interview with K. K., May, 2003);

and, at the same time, unconditionally,

The practice of such a project is very important since it creates a place for many relevant activities to take place; it does not have yet the influence to run a wide campaign, but it must support any feminist group and initiative, and generally it has to be open in everything related to women's issues, providing a space for it; for example the anti-globalization movement raises relevant issues as well (...) The site can provide the ground for women to exchange their ideas and views, a place where women develop their positions and relate them to a wider context (interview with N. N., May 2003).

Finally, participants conceive their intervention in public affairs through such a practice either in a way detached from 'politics',

The aims are different than those of a political group; we are not a political group but a collective that manage the experiment though does not guide it [...] We try to create a space for exchanging ideas and experiences and not a means of addressing people in a predefined way. Our project has as an aim to present women's-feminist issues critically and apply some kind of pressure to one extent, but it must not produce politics (interview with P. A., May 2003);

though for others a standpoint is desirable,

It is another way of intervention ... activist groups have specific role, they have a clear structure and function, there is an agreed aspect and you get out protesting for it. The discussion that takes place here does not reflect a certain perspective, though it is what we want to gain, where we want to arrive at [...] It does not work in advance as a group with clear, defined points; we would like to form a position to one extent, but it is not a de facto purpose (interview with M. J., May 2003),



or in a committed way,

This experiment can mobilize women, to bring them in the public arena, requesting their own place in society [...] The recruitment of young women and a clear, strong discourse are needed in order to overcome our prolonged decline, our past; the periodical can support the development a feminist discourse that lacks a context in contemporary Greek society (interview with K. K., May, 2003).

Though the case of the periodical '**Smoke Signs**' has its roots in resistant practices in Latin America, it constitutes an attempt to develop a discourse of such practices in the Greek context. An important aspect of this experiment is again how the project and its practice are situated in relation to the politics of the alternative milieu.

Here, the fact that everyone who joins our project has different political colours, origins and beliefs, and different way of conceiving what the 'movement' is, what it does, what are the means it uses, and what its practices are, is taken for granted from the beginning ... I can say that it is an unmentionable precondition to our commitment to the periodical; it is known and clear for all of us who participate in it (interview with I. T., March 2003).

However, the attempt to address the particular 'discourse' of the project out there, in a wider context, is not an easy task,

Being motivated by our project we try to create different ways of expressing our interests, for example organising campaigns of solidarity or organizing general discussions, trying to create diverse circles of promoting our interests [...] Our attempt is respected in general terms but it is not reflected always in actual, productive terms. There are some characteristics of its practice that cannot promote the project further within the alternative milieu; we decide together, we do not follow a line, a selective view, which is very common for collectives in the milieu (...) There is a gap that prevents collectives active in the sphere from coming together and sharing things (interview with E. M., March 2003);

though, in contrast to other cases, there is here the intention of communicating it within the alternative milieu,

We are a bimonthly periodical, when something important comes around we do not wait; we try to distribute the information through other sources, through the Internet, through Indymedia for example, in order to make a direct

and wider call to people who are active in the milieu (interview with A. X., March, 2003);

as well as addressing it within the wider public sphere generally,

I can see some changes, there is an interest ... there are also few broadsheet newspapers for example where you can find an increasing coverage for issues we raise, of course through the necessary filtering, evaluating the aspects they want; but it is something (...) Our periodical though relatively small makes a consistent attempt; it tries to promote the messages further ... in this way a tide of public interest for these issues and practices could also rise [in Greece] (interview with I. T., March 2003).

In addition, participants highlight the chance of overcoming the barriers of 'politics' in terms of the actual process of running such a project,

It is a challenge for us to issue this periodical in terms of co-operating without imposing in front the views of the political stand we hold, thus forming a place together (...) It is not a political duty, an ordered service (...) It creates a space that is not exclusive, which does not set any limits to you (interview with E. M., March 2003);

collectively,

Although we get out as a collective we do not form a stiff aspect as a political group that publishes it, but we host different and contrasting aspects on various issues, developing a broad discussion (interview with P. S., March 2003);

but not committing to a political duty.

It is very important that everyone has chosen to participate in this project by him/herself; it is not someone above us who has chosen it [...] It is not a personal charge, a responsibility that I have to bring to an end, as in the case of a task that has special characteristic; it is in contrast a concern that I share with the others, and to which we try to give our best. Whoever participates does it as an activist, we have a yearning to do it (interview with A. X., March 2003).

In any case, the practice of such projects is always a challenge,

Everyone engaged in the milieu has to pay attention to such forms of self-organization; they constitute practices of resistance in the micro level ... it is a challenge for all of us. I think if the milieu in Greece takes these self-organizing projects seriously into account a new situation can come up (interview with I. T., March 2003);

since such a mode of engagement promotes potentially a new understanding of the 'political',

Yet, the most difficult thing for the 'milieu' is to generate self-organizing projects (...) It is the practice of such projects itself that matters. It is there where you as a person can intervene substantially in public affairs, but it is not generally conceived it as such [...] It would help us to reconsider our political activity; many things could change if we saw these projects as messages and not necessarily in terms of providing directions; unfortunately the milieu is used to act through guidelines (interview with P. S., March 2003);

which advances the very meaning of citizen.

I am looking forward the time when such practices multiply, to prove that we are not a flock of sheep, we are active citizens (...) Whatever we get from this attempt is very important for us, individually and socially (interview with A. X., March 2003).

Finally, 'Indymedia Athens' provides an interesting case since it constitutes the most inclusive example of all the cases presented here, in terms of facilitating a space for the articulation of diverse discourses across the alternative milieu as well as for the engagement of various social actors with it. As one of the participants points out:

It was not supposed to form a common basis for people that are active in the alternative milieu, but it seems that Indy can provide this basis since it is not a political group, but a group that runs the site. It belongs to none, and as such it is a place where anyone interested can participate in it (...) Indy provides ideally a place for exchanging information and aspects between groups and collectives which can never sit around the same table and discuss about things. Moreover, such a process can promote what some people have called the multi-dimensional character of the alternative milieu, by facilitating the exchange of views between different groups. Though it is important for every group to have their own place to express their interests, and evaluate their own important concerns, it is necessary for all these different groups to find a common denominator to come in contact with (interview with A. Y., February 2003).

As a matter of fact, the co-existence of diverse actors and discourses cannot but face the 'politics' of the milieu,

There are many people from different backgrounds in our project, and as such there is not a political position that is promoted through the site; there is not a solid political group that will use the site in order to propagandize their positions. It is a source of distributing alternative information across different fields. On the other hand, when a project is so open it can be easily undermined, by attributing to it different political labels. The milieu is so rigid and prejudiced; it can not accept that an initiative is not politically subjected to somewhere (interview with A. P., February 2003);

and deal with these,

The group is very diverse, there are people from different political positions; this is the challenge for us, to work collectively within this project, beyond sectionalist definitions and practices ... there are cases where the process is misdirected by the usual disputes of the milieu, but we have a common interest of running the site and we keep going (interview with C. D., February 2003);

which question also the medium, Internet, employed in this project. A participant of Indymedia Athens points out respectively:

I do not consider the engagement in electronic projects as being an alienating one, as most people active in the milieu believe. You take from the 'system' the things you need in order to express and develop own positions. The same happened in the case of press; it did not set up as our own means of communication, but we took advantage of it, and we do the same in our days (interview with M. M., February 2003).

Moreover, the site has provided the platform for further calls to relative initiatives within the alternative milieu,

Our project made an open invitation for the creation of dab radio and a film-documentary club.<sup>103</sup> The open invitations made by our site to anyone who

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<sup>103</sup> The researcher was present in both of meetings of these calls. The call on documentary proved very successful giving the chance for another experiment to be set up (Kinimatografos), which is a very interesting experiment in another area, that of filming, covering various areas of interest; but a case not yet developed in order to take into account in this research. On the other hand, the

was interested in the implementation of such projects, providing in this way the space and time to people who were interested in expressing their own aspects through a different way. Our collective is not responsible for these projects, we just made the invitation and people who were interested in running such a project came together and defined the form and content of the new experiment (...) Such an invitation could not be made but individually, to the users of the site; if it was instead to be made towards different social groups it would be a failure, taking into account the strict structure of most of the groups that are active in alternative milieu, which is reflected in their obsession to trade upon any attempt they participate (interview with C. D., February 2003);

though, it has at the same time to stay away from the 'politics of the milieu'.

The site has no intention to be the negotiator of various groups. It can contribute to bringing these collectives together, thus each one can learn about the theoretical and empirical context of the other, their positions and objectives, but for me this contact must be unmediated (interview with E. N., February 2003).

Hence, in terms of the association between Indymedia Athens and other projects in the milieu another participant points out also the need of avoiding making the site one more political channel.

We try to keep in contact with relative projects in the milieu, but there are limits; since we are not a political group in the narrow definition of the term we can not cooperate with projects that political groups run, where you must have a clear identity for whatever you are doing and using (interview with A. P., April, 2003).

In addition, controversial issues concerning the character of such a project arise when its practice is addressed within the wider public realm. Characteristic is here the case of the invitation made by one of the public service television broadcasting channels to the collective that runs the project to a discussion in the studio.

When the public television channel asked us to participate in a discussion about our experiment, some of us were against this invitation. I was in favour of participating in it [...] it is better to struggle out there than staying always

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discussion on the call for the dab radio started and finished in terms of a long discussion about the nature, profile it should have.

in our own shell, in our hidden place. What I actually want to do is to make the project known to more people; if a small minority criticizes it, in terms of bargaining away our freedom, I do not care, they are not the people I want to reach (...) We did not accept the invitation; one of the main reasons was that mass media are the ones we fight against (interview with C. D., February 2003).

Correspondingly, participants address their involvement in the project and its practice along the lines of the tension between being 'political' and the 'politics' of the milieu.

The participation itself in such a project is a political matter since it reinforces my overall participation in public affairs (...) Yet, the issue is to keep a distance from narrow political positions, otherwise the whole project is transformed into another means of propaganda, in a smaller scale (interview with E. N., February 2003).

Accordingly, another participant evaluates the participation in the project in terms of a social intervention that avoids making 'politics',

My participation in the project is an extension of my overall social activity, it reflects it [...] I do not see my involvement in the project as a way of making politics, I do not consider my engagement in the project as a process of consenting in a political group and a certain agenda, but as a matter of establishing the 'different'. I believe it satisfies the need for participating in public affairs, bringing in different perspectives on matters of public interest (...) The whole process addresses you in, to take a position in relation to things that happen in your everyday life, to critically account for the way things are presented to you. From a stage where you were expressing your objections in the context of your close friends, you can now share the experience with more people in terms of a wider community, you can express your views, agreeing and disagreeing. Although you cannot change the world just by participating in such a project it is a parameter of our active participation in things in common in general (interview with M. M., February 2003).

Even from the perspective of the 'user' the evaluation of the engagement with the project raises relevant issues, about 'politics'.

Since the project is open it has to face the various challenges of people and groups who want just to propagandize their positions without any intention of participating in a dialogue. They cannot understand that it is not a place where

you come to make announcements or distribute your propaganda sheet (...) The most important is to inform each other and in this way to open a discussion where everyone can participate; it is a very good way to distribute alternative information. Although I participate in political groups and organizations I do not access the site in order to propagandize any positions (interview with A. P., February 2003).

In this context, there is a high level of conspicuousness about the project itself.

Everyone complains and criticizes the running team for not 'cleaning' the space. The anarchists ask us to cut the articles of communists, the communists on the other hand ask us to cut the anarchists who make a mess and cancel any prospect of the project, and many other examples. But, at least they access the site and write something; of course there is a discussion on what they say (...) It is difficult for some collectives to participate in these terms, because the open publication gives to others the right to access the forum and make critique on them. It is the structure of such collectives and groups that although they like to publish their very own perspective they cannot stand the criticism, they cannot reply since they are adjust to their programme, schedule (...) In time collectives have stopped publishing group articles; on the other hand, people write and sign as members of a group, making clear at the same time that they express themselves; it is more flexible (interview with A. Y., February 2003).

As such, the constitution of an arena for exchanging and communicating ideas and experiences is a long process that inevitably has to face these 'politics', if there is any chance to transcend them.

The most important thing for me in political terms is not the exchange of views between the leaders of the political parties of the left for example; it is instead the exchange of ideas between people, not collectives that have accessed themselves in particular groups, in order to break down the wall that prevents them from communicating. A member of an extra-parliamentary left collective and an anarchist will only exchange their views in terms of a physical assembly by wrangling. From this perspective, even the fact that they come in contact now is important [...] Although they do not do it by sharing arguments but accusing each other for everything, in the long run I have seen some changes; something is produced. It gives the chance to people to communicate beyond the strict context of their ideological background, which is reflected in the adoption of a stance that says 'I am this and beyond that I discuss nothing' (...) It is very important for everyone to be part of such a process of exchanging and communicating ideas and experiences (interview with C. D., February, 2003).

### 6.2.2 *Further reflections*

In general, the prospect for such projects to constitute wide public forums is related to the extent of their reflection of 'politics'; an aspect which has implications for the social capital employed in the projects.

I believe that there are more people out there who are interested and they want to give their own views on things. The potential social capital for such attempts is much bigger than the existing one, but we need to find new ways to approach them, beyond a strict politicized context, developing a broader social perspective (...) A project instead where everyone will come to declare their party position, stuck on it, or to interpret things within this spectrum, is a failure from the beginning (interview with I. C., April 2003).

In addition, any possibility for the constitution of a broader, overall, network among such practices,

There is an ambitious plan of creating an overall radio network that will have direct-democratic characteristics; we ask for a self-organization of the alternative radio stations. It is a very ambitious and expensive project, but hopefully the use of Internet can make it easier; every single alternative station around the country will have the programmes of all of them. In the first place it can bring together different collectives, their ideas and activities; and then it can make the whole process more flexible reinforcing the diffusion of the control of the radio. There will be neither a central studio, nor receivers, just producers. It will be a small step further (personal correspondence with B. G., April 2003);

comes across the 'politics' of the realm they apply to, either such a network is addressed in specific terms,

A net of youth projects is necessary. The net models that exist in the context of the General Secretary of New Generation are very limited in scope and under guardianship. Moreover, the National Board of Youth does not provide the ground for local initiatives to take part since there is a limit of 400 members that a small community cannot satisfy. In addition, most of local/regional youth nets are guided by the local government and its partisan practices (...) What is needed is more autonomous youth initiatives that experiment with their own means and which can foster a ground for the communication and cooperation between them (interview with P. D., April 2003);



or in general ones.

I think that the establishment of a communication network in the alternative milieu is necessary in Greece. Yet, at this moment, taking into account the political narrow-mindedness of the 'alternative milieu' in general terms, any attempt of creating an all encompassing communication channel would be a failure, and possibly prohibitive for the survival of the already existed fragmented projects (interview with C. D., February 2003).

From all the case-studies employed in the present research, 'Indymedia Athens' provides, though it has not been initiated with the purpose of constituting an overall network for the Greek alternative milieu, a space where various social actors and collectives, their discourses and practices come across. On the one hand such a process reflects the political disputes of the alternative milieu; on the other hand, it gives them the chance to 'share' – arguing – the same space.

An open project like Indy is exposed to the competition among various collectives, yet it gives them the chance to come in contact, to smell the tail of each other like dogs doing [...] There are many pompous statements that various political leaflets promote but when these come under discussion in public they flat down. The discords are not cancelled, but at least it gives the right to everyone to say his/her view, a condition that discourages none. This possibility of communication can bring new things in; new communities of interest can be created. There are 100 things we disagree on but there are 10 on which we agree and for which we can work together (interview with A. Y., February, 2003).

In any case, no matter how the constitution of an overall network is conceived,

If there is a hope for something greater to happen this is through the creation of a network of circles, which will exchange information, experiences horizontally ... for different groups and collectives within the alternative milieu to manage to come close, to overcome the political disputes. The things we have in common are more than the ones that drive us apart. The only way to realize this is for us to come in contact, to create a network of different projects across the country (interview with T. P., February 2003);

the possibility of its realization depends on the exercise of such grassroots media practices, and people's interaction through them.

I think that the only way for us to overcome the barriers that we ourselves also set in the expansion of an alternative sphere is to be trained through the practice and communication of such projects that force us to co-exist through our differences (interview with C. D., February 2003).

### 6.2.3 *Summary*

The political connotations of the practice of grassroots media projects as well as of the participation of people in the process are at issue throughout the evaluation of these projects by participants, particularly the extent to which these practices are implemented away from 'making politics'.

Most of the initiatives in the alternative milieu have a certain policy, which is that of distributing a leaflet with some declarations, hoping to recruit by this way more people; there is not any intention of making people participants in the process but supporters (interview with A. P., February 2003).

Another participant gives an illustrative account of a case of 'making politics',

I was active in student experiments but I was very disappointed because of the partisan way we were addressing our issues; there was no space for the articulation of a discourse beyond its partisanship (...) I could not stand a political activity in which you were not participating substantially, where you were just following; you had to follow the guidelines from above, doing nothing more than sticking up bills and selling the newspaper (interview with A. S., May 2003);

which runs also over the nature of the medium itself employed in such a practice,

The political view can be clearly expressed by the press ... The radio is a strong means because it takes place in real time, so it mobilizes; in contrast the Internet is restrictive, it confines the user, it individualizes him (interview with I. N., February 2003);

as it is put generally across the context of the alternative milieu.

I think the Greek alternative sphere milieu is very underdeveloped, meaning that we are confined in myopic view that puts everything in the dualistic scheme of 'good' – 'bad', which says that electronic media are bad; for

example radio is bad, but if I had my own program I could discuss it; advertisements are bad, but the ones we have in our press are ok. We must get out of these positions. We must understand that the channels of communication with the public have been changed; even if you stick up one million bills around Athens, one 15minute spot on TV or Radio is much more effective. By participating in a social network I have several times proposed to set a radio, or even if we find the money a TV station, but you can see that there is a great fear for an experiment that is open, I felt as the devil's advocate in the discussion; there was instead a strong support for posters and the brochures we distribute in the demonstrations, 'they do a good job' (interview with C. D., February 2003).

Such osmosis between grassroots practices and 'politics' in Greece, which has its roots in the fall of dictatorship,<sup>104</sup> has been a deterrent factor for the development of the grassroots media projects.

In Greece, it is very difficult for the milieu and its collectives to create their own practices beyond the political situation. Although we had a strong Left it was exclusively intervening in terms of articulating a political discourse that accuses the official structures and transposes the solution to the day of the revolution's judgment, but in actual terms there was no intention of creating spaces and structures that cover the everyday experience of common people (...) My view, which is also our logo, 'do not hate the media, become the media', is that we cannot wait for things to be changed in the remote future from the revolution; we can create to one extent our own framework and practices according to our needs, expressing ourselves through them ... we must promote and support such practices (interview with I. Z., February 2003).

In this context, another participant addresses the implementation of a 'social radio' as a project that transcends these political divisions.

A social radio can promote the participation of the whole society, through its different groups and collectives that gain a place in public, challenging institutional and other barriers, bringing alternative ideas and lifestyles into the light. [...] It is difficult for us to fully manage something like that; there are the stereotypes that prevent people from expressing their views. If you do not agree with an aspect, you are addressed with the 'others'; it is very difficult to steer clear of political labels that pigeonhole you in advance (...) We want to form a space beyond these lines, where people who don't belong politically 'somewhere' can express their views. This is more difficult in the case of a small, local region where the discussion is articulated like in the case

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<sup>104</sup> See chapter 4.

of cafes, where everyone must have a political identity. Here the role of the station must be, to give the chance to various groups and citizens to articulate their discourse, to discuss out of the political divisions (interview with D. P., April 2003).

Overall, while such practices claim an arena for people's intervention in public and political life at the same time they meet their limits and cancel their potential,

The problem with all these projects, old and new ones, is that while they try to be open and independent, including more people and perspectives in them, at the same time they seek ways to constitute a political purity, meaning a clear political identity of the project (interview with I. T., March 2003);

revealing their controversial nature.

It is important for such projects to include, not exclude and discriminate (...) Their strength has to do with their consistency, expressing certain aspects, and being compatible with the image of the groups they represent; theory and practice must go hand in hand (interview with K. D., March 2003).

In conclusion, by probing into different grassroots media projects in Greece, in terms of the communication of their practice across diverse applications, the limits of these projects emerge, concerning both the representation of relevant 'discourses' and the participation of their 'agents' in the projects. Firstly, the discourses these projects encompass are not 'thrown into the public sphere' to see how they do in relation to other ones, either within the alternative realm, or in the broader public sphere. As such, the exclusive way in which their practice is communicated, sets their limits in spatial terms. Moreover, the conception of the 'political' exclusively in traditional, ideological-partisan terms is a barrier to the very practice of such projects and the challenges it encompasses in political terms – constituting potentially new forms of political action in the quotidian field.

In addition, the vulnerability of these projects to the 'politics' that 'mediate' their practice, either in a specific or in a general context, is reflected to an extent variably. Drawing on, and relating, the different case studies deployed above in terms of both the way participants understand and situate these projects in general, and the way they experience the process of being engaged in them itself, an interesting point can be made about their practice; projects which have not exclusively 'local' origins, 'Indymedia Athens' and 'Smoke Signs' – 'Indymedia Athens' is part of the well-known network of Indymedia Media

Centers (IMCs) and, 'Smoke Signs' has a strong interest in Latin America – are less self-limited, than the other cases, in the way they communicate their practice in the public and political life. Commenting on the implementation of new grassroots media projects in Greece the publisher of many alternative press initiatives and participant in various historical alternative papers evaluates a relevant interesting aspect, the possible 'weaning' of the new projects from the political connotations of the political changeover era in Greece where the mushrooming of such practices took place. In this regard and in reference specifically to the case of Indymedia Athens he points out:

Anti-globalization movement and the Internet promote more hybrid things to come up, and it may help us to get out of the era of the political changeover in Greece, finish this chapter and say something different (interview with M. P., March 2003).

Nonetheless, as the analysis on diverse projects across different media showed above, grassroots media practices in Greece are still realized, more or less, in the shadows of particular well established political and ideological predispositions.

## CHAPTER 7

### *Further discussion and conclusions*

The present study has addressed grassroots media practices in Greece in a broad theoretical context, in relation to their contribution to the public sphere, as well as, their intervention in the political sphere. The relevant discussion has evaluated important aspects concerning the political potential and the challenges such practices encompass for democratic communication. Here, democratic communication has been constituted beyond the traps of essentialist and static concepts that view the democratic process as a linear and planned one.

[W]e should approach democratic communication as a live creature that contracts and expands with its own very vital rhythms-rhythms ... we should look at how democratic and non-democratic forces are being negotiated constantly, and how citizens' media can strengthen the former, thus contributing to the—although sometimes ephemeral—swelling of the democratic (Rodriguez, 2001: 22).

Hence, from a radical democratic point of view, a more dynamic and radical understanding of aspects of representation and participation in public and political life has been advanced, which reconfigures the realms of both public sphere and civil society, as well as the very nature of citizenship. From this perspective, the politically relevant communication space expands to include practices and processes that are not realized within the formal political society, but across the 'nooks and crannies' of civil society and along 'multiple public spheres'. As such, the terrain of the realization of citizenship incorporates realms of the quotidian field as well, where social agents claim a public space in order to raise their voices and promote their interests. In this context, and in terms of an "evolving media milieu", Dahlgren (1995) evaluates 'civic media' and their potential of constituting an 'advocacy domain'. Moreover, Dahlgren (2000, 2002) grounds the advocacy aspect of such projects on their very field of realization, along with citizens' engagement in and with their practice, as part of what he calls 'civic culture'; "civic culture points to these features of the socio-cultural world – dispositions, practices, processes – that constitute pre-conditions for people's actual participation in the public sphere, in the civil and political society"

(Dahlgren, 2002: 2). This point of view gives priority to the agents of these projects, and highlights the attempt of citizen-actors to become, through these practices, “members and potential participants in societal development”. Strong here is an understanding of citizenship in plural terms, situating its constitution along the lines of features of the lived everyday culture too, as a form of identity.

[I]n our daily lives we operate in a multitude of different ‘worlds’ or realities; we carry within us different sets of knowledge, assumptions, rules and roles for different circumstances. All of us are to varying degrees composite people. For democracy to work, people need to see themselves at least in some ways as citizens, though it should be clear that few people find that the actual world ‘citizen’ gets their adrenaline flowing – what is at stake is not a label, but the subjectivity of membership and efficacy. Citizenship is central to the issues of social belonging and social participation. ... There are many ways of being a citizen and of doing democracy. Identities of membership are not just subjectively produced by individuals, but evolve in relation to social milieus and institutional mechanisms (ibid: 4-5, emphasis in the original).

Moreover, citizenship has been evaluated in actual terms across the multiple subject positions of the social agents. Such an approach promotes the active nature of citizenship, as “something to be constructed not empirically given” (Mouffe 1992: 231). In this context, citizenship is not conceived exclusively in terms of a formal guarantor of specific rights for people, as a legal status, but as a lived multidimensional source of empowerment.

A political being is not to be defined as the citizen has been, as an abstract, disconnected bearer of rights, privileges and immunities, but as a person whose existence is located in a particular place and draws its sustenance from circumscribed relationships ... These relationships are the sources from which political beings draw power—symbolic, material and psychological—and that enable them to act together. For true political power involves not only acting so as to effect decisive changes; it also means the capacity to receive power, to be acted upon, to change and to be changed (Wolin, 1992: 252, quoted in Rodriguez, 2001: 19).

Subsequently, the enhancement of the understanding of citizenship, evaluating its “subjective side” as well, in terms of the multiplicity of the social subject, advances the very realm of the political action.

[T]his new understanding of the social subject as a kaleidoscopic encounter of identities and differentiated ‘portions-of-power’ is a necessary condition for

understanding the richness of everyday political struggles. When applying this concept to alternative media, the richness of experiencing the reappropriation of mediated communication comes to life in all its exuberance” (Rodriguez, 2001: 18).

From this perspective, media practices enacted by citizens encompass “instances of change and transformation”, and as such they constitute political practices through which “citizens enact their citizenship” in everyday life too; what is called “quotidian politics”.

Within this framework, grassroots media practices constitute conveyors of the expression and enactment of citizenship. The negotiation of grassroots media projects through this theoretical prism is reflected in this study in terms of their evaluation along the lines of their contribution to, and intervention in, the public and political life. As such, the study has not rejected a priori the very existence of grassroots media practices in terms of their limited appropriation of the communication space and their overall structural weaknesses, which is the prevalent trend in research literature in Greece, but it has researched and evaluated them within their own terms. By giving priority to the research of citizens/agents’ engagement in grassroots media projects – the way they understand and account the position and role of these projects as well as the way they experience their practice, the whole process – the challenges and the limits of these practices have been pointed out, in relation to the specific context of their implementation.

...

What such grassroots media practices mainly promote is the creation of public spaces, “free spaces” in Melucci’s words, for various social groups, publics, and their concerns, interests; an aspect which, although usually taken for granted, becomes more crucial within the context these practices are developed. As it concerns the context of the implementation of these practices, a distinctive feature is the exclusive aspect (“closure”) of Greek public sphere – the isolation and exclusion of social actors and their different, deviant discourses from its realm. “[N]on-conformist or even merely ‘different’ social and political groups are not able to be ‘heard’, while alternative and oppositional discourses, forms of social action and lifestyles are displaced and symbolically excluded” (Tsagarousianou, 1993: 231). Taking also into consideration the void intermediary structures of Greek society, as it is reflected in the docile and quiescent civil society on the whole, any



fragmented, autonomous, and self-defining practices of citizens are crucial and vital for the very existence of social actors 'on the margins'. In this circumstance, diverse grassroots media projects in Greece aim firstly at addressing interests that are not represented, or that are misrepresented, in the public domain, thus counterbalancing their disadvantage within the conventional public sphere. Even though these projects are fragmented enough they make the constitution of public fora possible in various modes across their different applications. Some of them are also influenced, and inspired by practices that are not grounded exclusively in the Greek context; the influence of the anti-globalization movement and its practices is typical in two of the cases employed here. In the inclusive theoretical framework sketched above, the vital osmosis between social movements (within or beyond a nation's borders) and such media experiments (fragmented, heterogeneous ones) is taken into account without necessarily being entrapped in an essentialist definition of their interrelation.

Overall, the role of these grassroots media practices is central in the symbolic realm, in terms of registering the 'presence' of diverse social domains, actors and their discourses in public life. One important aspect of these practices is the building of (anti)-information sources; it is citizens who give out the information in their own terms. Such practices promote "in its direct form the principle of resisting media power: the idea that 'we', not media institutions, should be the source of information. This is, in a sense, the outer limit of alternative media practice, whose importance is not in its success as alternative media – which is highly debatable – but simply in its showing fact that it was possible, imaginable" (Couldry, 2001: 12). As such, these practices challenge, to one extent, the very "concentration of symbolic power in media institutions". As Couldry sets it, "[i]n practice, because mainstream media are so closely tied to values and beliefs which are mainstream in a social and political sense, those who want to challenge consensus will often need to confront media power, and themselves become involved in some kind of media activism" (ibid: 7, emphasis in the original). Moreover, these grassroots media practices enable marginalized segments of society to occupy a limited, though, vital for them communication space, promoting the articulation of a variety of discourses in the public terrain, in relation to diverse interests and perspectives – anarchist, ecologist, feminist, anti-globalization, local, and cultural. Furthermore, whilst the agents of such projects are in Melucci's (1989) words the "nomads of the present", their practice has further manifestations. Namely, this kind of media activism advances the historization of grassroots media practices themselves

as well as of the social domains and the discourses they represent; “practices become traditions, and experience becomes collective memory” (Dahlgren, 2002: 4). Despite the fact that these practices have most of the time short life cycles leaving at first place no success, they still leave their sign. Various social groups register their claims, their struggles and discourses along these practices, which provide a large heritage for new claims of gaining a space in public. So, what we find in the long run is, using Rodriguez’s (2001: 22) words, “a multitude of small forces that surface and burst like bubbles in a swamp”; in any case, “these bubbles are a clear sign that the swamp is alive”.

However, this kind of activism is not without limitations. Although these grassroots media projects constitute a protest for the representation of social actors ‘on the margins’ and their discourses in the public domain, this happens mostly indirectly, in relation to the demystification of mass media coverage from various perspectives, and less directly, in terms of the empowerment of the disenfranchised. In addition, the fact that ‘ordinary people’ themselves run these projects and participate directly in the actual process make it possible for them to be effectively involved in the very definition and (re)configuration of their position, discourse and activities; the participation in the process enables social actors, agents to (re)affirm themselves and to be recognized for what they are and wish to be. Yet, the relationship that social groups and actors develop with the media practices they employ is always a matter in flux as it has been pointed out through the analysis above. This brings us to the issue of the communication of these practices, and the way it is experienced, within the microcosm of their implementation. Characteristic here is the exclusionary character of the communication of these practices along the “micro levels of the lifeworld” in the Greek context, which prevents these projects from addressing a wider public.

After all, to interact discursively as a member of public, subaltern or otherwise, is to aspire to disseminate one’s discourse to ever widening arenas. Habermas captures well this aspect of the meaning of publicity when he notes that, however limited a public may be in its empirical manifestation at any time, its members understand themselves as part of potentially wider public, that indeterminate, empirically counterfactual body we call “the public at large” (Fraser, 1996: 124).

In general, there is an undergoing trend of keeping these practices ‘hidden’ from public view, even within the realm of their implementation. This kind of self-restriction is justified along the lines of the interference of conventional constructions of ‘the political’ in

traditional, ideological terms ('politics'), which mediate grassroots media projects in Greece both literally – in the actual process, and figuratively – in terms of avoiding relevant classifications of their practice. As such, the 'imaginary' these practices convey – “[t]he imaginary occupies a space between the actual and the non-existent; it is prospective, contestable, yet informs social practices and discourse ... it acts as a potential counterpoint to the reification of sense making” (Dahlgren, 1995: 133) – does not rid itself of the systemic political interpretations of such practices in the particular context of their implementation. In this context, the possibility of the constitution of an autonomous, self-defined civic-political space along with these practices is cancelled in the name of pre-given politics. The intervention of 'politics' in the realm of civic life as well prevents the emergence of a “nominal degree of affinity” (Dahlgren, 2002) among the disenfranchised and their practices, even within the realms of their shared experiences of social and political marginalization. Thus, grassroots media projects do not succeed in envisaging a broader societal dialogue in terms of “generating adversarial interpretations and cultural practices” and challenging in this way the very synthesis of the public sphere.

Overall, the exclusive way these practices are addressed and communicated does not leave space for the “mutual recognition on which citizenship is based”. By evaluating the constitution of an open-ended space for the mutual recognition in broad terms, Couldry (2001: 18) points out:

Crucial to that space is people's ability to exhibit their 'subject experience to other subjects' (Young, 1995: 131), to recognize each other as 'full participants in social interaction' (Fraser, 2000: 113). That, requires, however, recognizing the limits that prestructure existing communicative spaces, the way they work to exclude some and foreground others (Young 1995; Fraser, 1992).

Nonetheless, the way the conventional communicative space in Greece is structured and works has further implications for the practice of grassroots media projects too. Drawing on the lines of Dahlgren's evaluation of a plurality of 'civic media' in terms of providing an advocacy space for citizens to pursue special interests, and generate group-based cultural and political interpretations of society, considerable points can be made about Greek grassroots media practices. While these practices constitute conveyors of various social domains, their actors, interests and discourses, thus weaving a 'social imaginary', they fail to generate this 'imaginary' to their milieu of reference as well as beyond it. It is the

'common domain', and the conventional public sphere in general, that provides still the 'grammar' for grassroots media projects' practice, setting their limits in spatial terms.

...

In addition, further issues concerning the intervention of these practices in civic life have been raised by drawing on social actors' experience of the practice of grassroots media projects. A significant aspect of people's engagement in the practice of such projects is that they "learn to communicate about communication". Participants are actually involved in the setting of such experiments as well as their organization (production and distribution), and they become skilled in process, "through collective experimentation".

Education in the alternative media leads to self-reflexive practice. If the notion of mobilizing information, of information for action, is to be seen as 'action on action' (as Melucci has it), as the development of a reflexive practice that aims to change the 'lifeworld' of its participants, then self-reflexivity within a 'free space' such as an alternative media project may be seen as 'self-action on self action' (Cox, undated), where all individuals are able to realize their own potential and develop the self-awareness that can arise from understanding one's position within the free space and one's own potential to create and contribute from that position. Experimentation and creativity with alternative possibilities of 'being' and 'doing' will form the heart of such activity (Atton, 2002: 154).

The value of the appropriation of the communication process by 'ordinary people' along these practices has also implications in the long run, offering 'skilled' social capital for new experiments, and generally creating 'social climate' – challenging the further realization of such practices and the socialization of more people in the process. In addition, people's involvement in these practices provides potentially the ground for their further engagement in public affairs, reinforcing their interest for things in common and promoting a wider dialogue among participants. "Freire believed that certain communication strategies based on democratic interaction, human dignity, solidarity and empathy could liberate communities from their state of alienation, passivity and silence; he called this process *conscientizacao* ("conscientization") (Rodriguez, 2003: 180). However, Freire's (1972) suggestion about the empowerment of the 'disenfranchised' and marginalized through horizontal and dialogic forms of communication that are grounded in the everyday life and

experience does hardly apply to most of the cases of grassroots media projects researched here; the 'self-restricted' nature of their practice sets their limits.

Besides, the appropriation of the communication process along the practice of such projects has further implications concerning the very constitution of 'the political'. In this regard, grassroots media projects facilitate struggles in the realm of the symbolic, in terms of re-affirming the 'deviant', across diverse areas of interest, as well as, contesting established social codes, roles and relations. Participants in these projects evaluate their practice in terms of registering social, political, and cultural 'differences' – such 'differences' are reflected in the 'discourse', the context, the organization, or even in the 'lifestyle' that the projects encompass, promote – declaring their specificity.

Some new types of struggle must be seen as resistances to the growing uniformity of social life, a uniformity that is the result of the kind of mass culture imposed by the media. This imposition of a homogenized way of life, of a uniform cultural pattern, is being challenged by different groups that reaffirm the right of their differences, their specificity, be it through the exaltation of their regional identity or their specificity in the realm of fashion, music or language (Mouffe, 1988: 93, quoted in Rodriguez, 2001: 20-21).

This struggle for re-affirming the 'difference' encompasses also the contestation of various social 'etiquettes' that have been attributed to the social agents, collectives (the assumed 'passive', 'weak', 'abnormal' or even 'antisocial' in some cases character of social actors 'on the margins') that run these projects in tandem with their symbolic exclusion and displacement from the conventional public sphere. Moreover, grassroots media practices encompass also the contestation of established norms and patterns of established social relations and roles. As Keane (1998) puts it in a broader context,

[c]ivil societies constantly throw into doubt the conventional meanings and the accepted obviousness of social relationships. Civil societies promote an attitude of self-reflexivity, by which I mean the shared understanding among socially interacting and socially interconnected subjects that their world never stands still, that it is a puzzling product of their own making, and that as subjects of inquiry into the meaning of life they are intrinsic part of the object of their enquires (Keane, 1998: 51).

Moreover, participants evaluate their direct engagement in the process, that of becoming producers themselves, in terms of challenging exclusions and hierarchies which are

prevalent in the mass-mediated practices, promoting instead libertarian frames of participating in the communication process.

Alternative media actively elicit such participation by their very construction, offering it in the place of spectacle; identity instead of mere representation ([Peters, 1993], p. 559). As social practices democratize involvement in media production, such roles are further eroded. The desires and demands of agents are articulated through alternative media by a set of transgressive practices that challenge dominant forms of organization and cultural and political practice (Atton, 2002: 155).

Within this framework, grassroots media practices could “function as environments that facilitate the fermentation of identities and power positions ... spin[ning] transformative processes that alter people’s sense of self, their subjective positionings, and therefore their access to power” (Rodriguez, 2001: 31). According to Melucci (1996: 179, quoted in Couldry, 2001: 1-2), “the real domination today is the exclusion from the power of naming”.

Yet, the challenges the practice of such projects encompasses in political terms are at stake. On the one hand, the agents of, participants in, grassroots media practices in Greece question their very exclusion from the processes of “naming social reality”, acquiring their place in public and political life, in terms of participating potentially in setting the boundaries of political discourse and action.

To challenge media power is not irrelevant dreaming; it is part of reflecting on who we are and who we can be. Paulo Freire wrote (1972: 61) that ‘to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in work, and work in action-reflection’ (Couldry, 2001: 22, emphasis in the original).

On the other hand, these practices fail to function as agents of empowerment for social actors ‘on the margins’, meaning that the challenges they encompass for their participation in public and political life in definitive terms fail to be realised. What is characteristic about the implementation of grassroots media practices in Greece is that the ‘action-reflection’ process that these practices facilitate is actually mediated, as it has been shown above, by the conventional ‘politics’ and their established configurations. Thus, though these practices introduce new forms of political action in the sphere of ‘the political’, questioning the very

constitution (exclusionary) of the 'political sphere' in Greece, they remain entrapped in the bias of this political sphere. More specifically, whilst these practices become prospective sites of social contestation, for people to engage in renegotiations of what is socially and culturally legitimate and recodify their own identities, they negate this very political potential, that of grounding political action in every dimension of everyday life, by echoing, passively and/or actively, the established negotiations of traditional 'politics'. Thus, the prospect for the social agents of these practices to intervene in the political sphere is realized in the shadow of their affiliation, or not, to 'politics', rather than in terms of their own identity and distinctiveness.

...

To sum up, Greek grassroots media practices promote on the one hand the inclusion of marginalized social domains, heterogeneous discourses, and diverse social actors in public and political life, acquiring a legitimate place and space in it. On the other hand, the way these practices, their experience and grievances, are communicated within both their own micro-world and beyond it is more or less exclusive. In this case, what actually sets the limits of grassroots media projects in Greece is the exclusive way their discourses, activities and claims are addressed in and through their practice. Moreover, in actual terms, though such projects provide a significant source of struggles in the realm of the symbolic, envisaging new forms of political action that are produced in the quotidian field, their dependence upon established political, ideological predispositions is yet a barrier for the realization of the challenges their practice conveys in political terms.

As a result, the possibilities grassroots media projects encompass for the politicization of social domains, their discourses and activities 'on the margins' of the public and political sphere in Greece, as well as of their very practice itself, have to be grasped at the expense of their hetero-determination by 'politics'.

## EPILOGUE

In this discussion a new area of interest in Greek literature on communication studies has been introduced. The conceptualization of alternative media/communication within a radical theoretical framework powerful enough to address diverse aspects of ‘agency’ – in terms of expressing and enacting citizenship – across their practice by various social groups, activists, has provided the basis for shedding light on grassroots media practices in Greece. From this perspective, this study, giving priority to the agents of these practices, has probed into different grassroots media experiments evaluating their challenges and limitations within the particular context of their implementation. The precedent analysis and the discussion followed was a first step in understanding grassroots media practices in Greece; new questions are raised for activists and their perspective on such practices, as well as, for scholars, indicating the need for further theoretical elaboration on, and empirical research in, grassroots initiatives.

As it concerns the actual field of grassroots media practices, their weaning from traditional political, ideological predispositions is a matter at issue in Greece. Whether the emergence of new kinds of activism, across diverse social issues and along various communication applications will challenge or not the very constitution of respective grassroots media projects is an interesting issue. Further questions could be raised in a wider context as well. Bennett (2003) evaluates global, Internet-based, social networks in terms of the social and cultural implications of globalization process. In parallel to an increasing fluidity and mobility of products, information, and identities a shift of the field of social conflict has taken place, from the ideological foundations of social identification to the “collective individualism” of lifestyle politics (Bennett, 2003: 31). The extent to which and how this shift is reflected in the actual field of the practice of these projects is an interesting question.

At the same time, further issues for scholars are raised concerning the need to create new conceptual ways of capturing and understanding the democratization of communication, beyond the realm of the conventional public and political sphere, which in the Greek case is static and exclusive, “address[ing] the full range of mediating practices in society (and the struggles that underlie them), not just those which pass for the mainstream” (Couldry, 2001b: 21). As Rodriguez (2001: 23) puts it, the struggle for the democratization



of communication has to take into account all the forces that are active within the communication space, grassroots practices included.

## APPENDIX

### *Interviews*

- Interview with A. A., veteran radio amateur and member of group that provides technical support to grassroots radio experiments, 05/02/03
- Interview with M. P., veteran press editor of grassroots press initiatives and publisher of news ones, 07/02/03

#### *“Indymedia Athens”:*

- Interview with A. P., 11/02/03
- Interview with I. Z., 13/02/03
- Interview with M. M., 14/02/03
- Interview with E. N., 15/02/03
- Interview with C. D., 18/02/03
- Interview with A. Y., 19/02/03

#### *“Contact”:*

- Interview with I. N., 22/02/03
- Interview with P. T., 23/02/03
- Interview with S. A., 24/02/03
- Interview with S. F., 26/02/03

#### *“Smoke Signs”:*

- Interview with A. X., 04/03/03
- Interview with E. M., 10/03/03
- Interview with P.S., 11/03/03
- Interview with I. T., 13/03/03

*“Green Policy”:*

- Personal correspondence with A. B. 21/03/03
- Interview with A. G., 22/03/03
- Interview with K. D., 23/03/03
- Interview with A. R., 24/03/03
- Interview with I. G., 25/03/03

*“98.00 FM”:*

- Interview with V. K., 16/03/03
- Interview with A. C., 17/03/03
- Interview with P. Z., 18/03/03
- Interview with A. M., 19/03/03
- Interview with K. P., 20/03/03

*“Little Red Riding Hood FM”*

- Interview with N. I., 04/04/03
- Interview with T. P., 05/04/03
- Interview with D. P., 06/04/03
- Interview with V. V., 07/04/03

*“FM Thorn”*

- Interview with M. R., 17/04/03
- Interview with P. L., 18/04/03
- Interview with I. C., 19/04/03
- Interview with K. A., 20/04/03
- Personal correspondence B. G., 27/04/03

*“Porphyris”*

- Interview with P. D., 10/05/03
- Interview with M. E., 12/05/03
- Interview with A. S., 13/05/03
- Interview with V. M., 14/03/03
- Interview with I. P., 15/03/03

*“Infofemina”*

- Interview with P. A., 24/05/03
- Interview with M. J., 26/05/03
- Interview with N. N., 27/05/03
- Interview with K. K., 28/05/03

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