

A GREEK COMMUNITY RADIO IN TURKEY: İHO TİS POLİS

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Abstract

In this study, community radio as a kind of alternative media shall be examined under a theoretical framework. After presenting the literature about the community radios, position of the community radios in the European Union member countries and Turkey shall be exposed by taking the membership process of Turkey to the European Union into consideration. Then the Greek community in Turkey and Greek community press shall be evaluated and following this, a case study evaluation shall be done about the “İho Tis Polis” internet radio of the Greek community in Turkey.

In depth interview which is a qualitative method is selected within the context of case study as the method of the study and an in depth interview is made with the founder of the radio. On the other hand, information received from the web site of the radio and the server to which the radio is connected and also the information in the Facebook and Twitter pages of the radio are analyzed.

The aim of the study is to measure whether or not the İho Tis Polis radio is a community radio practice case from Turkey, by matching the features of the community radios within the literature with the features of the İho Tis Polis radio provided by the findings which appeared as a result of the research. With the study, I shall try to prove that though there is no legal recognition and legislation in Turkey that exist in the West European countries about the community radios, there are community radio cases in practice.

Key Words: Community Media, Community Radios, Internet Radio, Greek Community in Turkey, Radio in Greek Language, İho Tis Polis

Introduction

It might be told that the community radios are the media which are used by a society or people who have common ideas, common

characteristics, interests or ownership (Possi, 2003: 167-169). The community radios are the kind of media which ensures media plurality, freedom to speech, diversity of content, and representation of distinct groups and interests of the society; which encourages public and gender balanced access, support for cultural diversity, self governance and media literacy, open dialogue at the local level and transparency and which voice the sound of the voiceless and which becomes the voice of the people. (Milan, 2009: 600). The community radios are used for mobilization, for sensitization and for education for holistic development. The community radios are small-scaled and they are non-profit seeking, they are open or accountable to the community which it serves, essentially they are run by volunteers, they are open to the participation of the community members in terms of program-making and governance, they enable participation and access in terms of integrating the non-professional media producers into the work, and they contribute to the social change. Community radios can serve communities of interest, geographical communities and cultural communities. The key role of the community radios is to green tolerance and pluralism in the society. Community radios provide public broadcasting service and presents accessibility for all. On the other hand, they serve to reproduction and representation of the common, shared interests. In this sense, the community radios present a tool of empowerment for the marginalized communities. Under the framework of all these features, the community radios constitute a separate subgroup within the media sector (European Parliament, 2007: 3).

An Alternative Type of Media: The Community Radios

This subgroup is an alternative to the established processes and conditions of media production; it is free from the intervention of the state, market actors and multilateral institutions; it is produced by the local communities in their own languages, about issues which they assume significance with regard to their own needs, and for their own consumption. Thus it is also an alternative to the dominant media as to the content (Saeed, 2009: 470). The community radios present news and information appropriate for the needs of the community members, they integrate their members in the public debates and it contributes to their empowerment in social and political aspects. In general, the ownership and control of the community radios is shared by the local residents, local administrations and community based organizations. The content is considered and produced at the local level (Jankowski, 2003: 8). The

community radios establish counterbalances against concentration of media power in the hands of a few numbers of people and against the homogenization of the cultural content. Community broadcasts present alternatives for endogenous development. It makes programmes over the basis of specific needs such as health, education, employment, gender, peace and environment. Community radios use the language (languages) of the community members. They accept the positive, moral and cultural values of the community to which it serves. The community radios are expected not to broadcast sexist or biased programmes against the handicapped and the minority groups. The community media may be an important tool for the disadvantaged members of the community to become active participants of the society and to participate in debates that are important for them. The sector in general also has been an educational basis for its volunteers to become future media professionals (European Parliament, 2007: 23). And distribution of the content may be by cable television infrastructure or by electronic networks like the Internet (Jankowski, 2003: 8). Funding of the community radios is not essentially commercial thought it may include total budget company sponsorship, advertisements with limited numbers and kind, and by governmental subsidies (Jankowski, 2003: 8). In some examples, both due to editorial preferences and as they do not constitute an attractive target for the advertisers, they do not broadcast advertisements. However lacking of stable financing resources, like subsidies that are governed by the state, endangers their existence (Milan, 2009: 600). And in some cases some of them are against receiving advertisements and state support on ideological or pragmatic basis. In administrative terms, they have a broadcasting board or boards or administrators. In other words, community radios are people's media made by the people for the people. These are services which influence the public opinion, create consensus and enhance democracy.

The European Union and Community Radios

Within the framework of the research, by taking the membership process of Turkey into the European Union into consideration, legal legislation and implementations about community radios in the European Union are examined. The Committee of Ministers of the European Council, on 11 February 2009, accepted the "Declaration on the role of the community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue". According to the Declaration, community radios which have activities in more than 115 countries also including various European

Council member states, provide opportunity to express one-self and interchange of opinions for such groups in the society, including cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious or other minorities. The community radios, thanks to this, contribute to the promotion of public debates, political pluralism and awareness about distinct opinions. According to the Declaration, community radios play a significant role for participation to the community at local and regional level and extension of democratic participation by promoting social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and tolerance. In this context, The Committee of Ministers of the European Council accepts community radios as another media sector alongside with public service media and private commercial media and recommends giving priority to community radios in frequency allocations (Council of Europe, 2009: 1-3).

As it may be seen in Buckley's study, there exist more than 2000 community radio stations in the European Union (Buckley, 2009). The countries (Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, and Sweden etc.) where a large community radio sector exists are in general countries which have a firm legal and regulatory framework, clear public political commitments about the development of the sector and financial support measures. In the European Union countries the community radios have a mixed financing model which includes public finance measures, public and private grants, advertisement and programme sponsorship and subscriptions (Buckley; Duer; O'Siochru & Mendel, 2008: 4).

Community Radios in Turkey

Community radios represent a vital input in the development processes by playing important roles in democratization, construction of citizenship, social struggles and promotion of awareness. However, despite this, community radios are still confronting difficulties stemming from restrictions caused by the national media legislations. Turkey is one of the countries where such difficulties related with community radios are experienced. It is not possible to tell the same environment of freedom experienced in the Western Europe is available in Turkey. The Law of RTSB (Radio and Television Supreme Board) makes the local radio definition under the "private radio and television broadcasting" and does not recognize identity of community radios in legal terms. Thus the radios which try to make broadcasting as community radios are also expected to comply with the same conditions in issues such as broadcasting permission and licence with commercial radios/televisions (Timisi, 2003:

70-71). On the other hand, as the financial conditions for establishing radios in Turkey are very severe, community broadcasters founded their solution by establishing Internet radios.

The first practical example of community radio in Turkey is Nor Radio, founded in 2009 as an Internet radio. Nor Radio started its road with the slogan of, “Voices of the whole world, unite” and broadcasts from the Internet address at www.norradio.com. The radio is now broadcasted in 9 languages including Turkish, Armenian, Syriac, Homshetsi, Adygean, Chechen, Pomak, Lazuri and Kurdish languages (www.norradio.com). The programmes are broadcasted in Nor Radio until today included workers, animal rights, women’s movement, LGBT, gender and the green movement (Algül, 2013).

The First and the Single Radio of the Greek Community in Turkey: İHO TİS POLİS

Together with the Lausanne Exchange of Populations among the State of the Turkish Republic and State of Greece implemented in between 1922-24, 1942 Property Tax practice, 6-7th September, 1955 events, 1964 exile (more than 12 thousand Greeks were deported) and 1974 Cyprus events, according to various resources, 1 million 200 thousand Greeks in the average from the Aegean, Trace and Black Sea regions migrated from the lands to which they belong. In nowadays, the number of individuals who constitute the Greek community in Turkey is about 2500 (Akın, 2014).

Greek community’s press in Turkey goes back to the years of 1800’s, simultaneously with the Turkish press history. In this time span, nearly 150 newspapers and 80 magazines were published in Turkey in Greek language. There were even times when 10 publications made in Greek language co-existed. At the moment only two newspapers of the Greek community in Turkey survives. One is Apoyevmatini which is been published for 89 year, and the other is İHO newspaper which is been published for 37 years (Personal interview with A. Rombopulos, 29.08.2014).

With İho Tis Polis, which was established in April 2012, the Greek community in Turkey had a radio. The subject of the research is the case study about İho Tis Polis which is the first and only radio of the Greek community in Turkey.

Method

In this research where the first and the single radio of the Greek community in Turkey, İho Tis Polis is examined in terms of the characteristics of the community radio; first by making a literature survey where characteristics of community radios are stated theoretically and by taking the membership process of Turkey into the European Union in consideration, by assessing the legal legislation and practices about the community radios in the European Union.

This is a case study about İho Tis Polis which is an internet radio. In depth interview, which is a qualitative method is selected as the method and on the other hand, the data in www.radio.ihotispolis.com, which is the web site of the radio and the information received from the server to which the radio is connected were analyzed. For the in depth study, Andrea Rombopulos, the founder of the radio was selected as he knows all steps from the establishment of the radio until today, and an interview was made with him on the date of 29th August 2014. With this interview, data was received on topics as the establishment stage of the radio, organisational structure, and technical infrastructure, communication with the audience, social media usage, promotion, installation cost, monthly expenses and finance. On the other hand, during the interview, the problems and demands of Rombopulos, as the founder of the radio, about the radio were asked.

By analyzing the web site of the radio, information such as the kinds of music and programme contents broadcasted by the radio were reached. On the other hand, by analyzing the information received from the server to which the radio is connected, data about the structural characteristics of the radio were received.

The aim of this study is to prove that İho Tis Polis is a community radio practice case in Turkey by matching the features that are provided in the theoretical framework about the community radios with the features of İho Tis Polis.

With the study, it is aimed to show that though there is no legal recognition and legislation in Turkey that exist in the West European countries about the community radios, there are community radio cases in practice. In this context the hypothesis established for the study are as the following:

H1: “İho Tis Polis radio of the Greek community in Turkey, is a community radio practice case.”

H2: “Although there is no legal recognition and legislation in Turkey that exist in the West European countries about the community radios, there are community radio cases in practice”.

Findings

With the in depth interview made within the context of the case study about the İho Tis Polis radio, examination of the internet site of the radio and the analysis of the data that were received from the server to which the radio is connected, the following findings were reached.

The founders of the İho Tis Polis radio, which was established on April 2012 are Andrea Rombopulos and Hristos Vasiliadis. The name of the radio means “Echo of the City”. The radio started with a testing stage of daily two hours during the establishment stage but later on 24 hours broadcasting started. The web site of the radio is bi-lingual, i.e. both in Turkish and Greek.

When the web site of the radio is examined it is seen that every kind of music in Greek as rembetiko, zeybekiko, layka and old and new pop music are broadcasted. Again on the basis of the data received from the web site it may be told that the program contents broadcasted by the radio are constituted by topics of culture, news, music, arts, travel notes and news about the Greek society. On the other hand, on Sundays and religious days the ceremonies are live broadcasted from Fener Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. Such ceremonies reach to the Orthodox Christian world with live broadcasts. A broadcasting approach which provides communication of the Greek community in Turkey and interested with its problems is prevailing in the radio. Again when the web site of the radio is examined it is seen that news bulletins are broadcasted four times daily in the radio. These are broadcasted at 17:00, 19:00, 21:00 and 00:00 o'clock (www.radio.ihotispolis.com).

When the data received from the server to which the radio is connected are analyzed it is seen that the radio is followed especially by three generations of Greeks who migrated from Istanbul to different parts of the world, in four continents and nearly 70 countries. Among them the first ten countries are Turkey, Greece, Germany, Australia, the USA, Russia, Cyprus, Canada, France, England and Belgium. The radio has a number of audience which changes in between daily 10 thousand and 22 thousand.

When the data which is received from the in depth interview made by Andrea Rombopulos, the founder of the radio, are analyzed, it is seen that, 17 volunteers work in the radio. The language of the programmes broadcasted in the radio is Greek but when the guests speak in Turkish simultaneous translation during the program is made. The decisions about the radio are taken in the meetings which are made on every two weeks by the participation of all volunteers. In such meetings, new ideas, the broadcasting policy, technical problems etc. are discussed. On the other hand, according to the information given by Rombopulos, the radio is open to the suggestions coming from the audience, i.e. the audience may turn into program makers. Rombopulos stated that the most important disadvantage of being an internet radio is that “the radio cannot be followed in the car during travel”. But in the latest launched cars in the USA there is 3G technology thus this problems has been actually overcome. This technology is not yet present in the cars in Europe and Turkey. On the other hand, the radio can be listened by the mobile phones by the Tuni-in programme. Sambroadcaster programme and analogue-digital compound microphones are used in the radio as the technical infrastructure. Rombopulos stated the installation cost of the radio as 3000 Euros. Again according to the information given by Rombopulos, the monthly expenses of the radio are as the following: as the radio studio is at the İHO newspaper office, the expenses (rent, invoices etc.) are afforded over the newspaper. On the other hand for the stationery costs, server fee, internet fee etc. there is a monthly expense of nearly 300 dollars. When advertisements are taken the invoices are given over the newspaper. The financing of the radio is provided by the İHO newspaper and the advertisements of the community firms during Christmas and Eastern periods. Rombopulos emphasises that İho Tis Polis is not a profit oriented enterprise and they do not need money in order to make its turn-out. As Rombopulos states, the radio programme makers provide their communication with the audience by Facebook, Skype, e-mail and telephone (Personal interview, 29.08.2014)

For the social media usage of the radio, Facebook and Twitter pages of the radio were examined. 4991 people liked <https://www.facebook.com/ihotispolis>, the Facebook page of the radio, by the date of 1st September 2014. Also each program has its own Facebook page. Instant communication is established over such pages with the audience. The Twitter page of the radio, <https://twitter.com/ihotispolis>, has 262 followers by the date of 1st September 2014.

Rombopulos stated that the promotion of the radio is largely made over Facebook and media (Turkish and Greek media) and several internet sites give links to the radio. When the problems they live about the radio are asked to Rombopulos, he told that they “have troubles in finding people to make broadcast in their mother tongue”. Rombopulos answered the question about their demands about the radio by saying that they “demand provision of frequency allocation under legal security in the coming ten years (as they believe that later radio broadcasts shall be totally made over internet)” (Personal interview, 29.08.2014).

Discussion

The concept of community refers to the existence of close and concrete human bounds, a collective identity and the concept of a “large family”. The founding concepts of the collective identity or group relations are common geography, ethnicity and interests (Morris&Morton, 1998:12-13). On the other hand, the research made over the influences of information and communication technologies over the daily life showed that the communities may form not only in geographically defined spaces but also in cyberspace as the user groups (Jones, 1995:10-35). And the interest communities may form on the scale of expending and uniting cities, nations and continents. In community media studies the community is used as a group of human beings who share common interests and/or live in certain geography (Milan, 2009:608). Thus the audience of the İho Tis Polis radio about which a case study is made, both according to the data received from the server to which the radio is connected and according to the information given by Rombopulos, the founder of the radio, are in addition to especially the Greek in Turkey and the audience in Greece, three generations of Greeks who migrated from Istanbul to different parts of the world, in four continents and nearly in 70 countries. Thus here, the İho Tis Polis audience form a “community” as both they share common interests and they form a group of human beings who live in certain geographic area.

As it is also mentioned in the literature part, the community radios are the kind of media which guarantee the content variety and representation of the different groups and interests of the society, which encourage support for cultural variety, self-governing, open dialogue at the local level and transparency and which voice the voice of the voiceless and which are the voice of the people. Hence also the İho Tis Polis radio became the voice of the Greek community which is a minority group in Turkey. As it can be seen in the findings, there is self-governing in the

radio. The decisions are taken in meetings made bi-weekly with the participation of all volunteers. Again as it may be seen in the findings, there is open door policy in the radio. The audience may transform into program makers. And this shows that open dialogue and transparency is encouraged at the local level.

The community radios have small scale, are not profit oriented, they are largely run by the volunteers, they are open to the members of the community in terms of program making and administration and they provide opportunities for participation and access in terms of encouraging the inclusion of non professional media producers (European Parliament, 2007:3). As it may be seen in the findings, Rombopulos stated and emphasised that they are absolutely non profit oriented. As it was mentioned above, İho Tis Polis provides opportunity for participation and access as the most important characteristics of the community radios, as the radio has open door policy and as the audience may turn into program makers.

The community radios provide a tool for empowerment for the marginalised communities. Thus İho Tis Polis became the voice of the Greek community whose voice cannot be heard.

In the community radios the content is produced by the local community in its own language, over issues which they deem important for their own needs and for their own consumption. Thus it is also an alternative to the main stream media in terms of its content (Saeed, 2009:470). İho Tis Polis radio too produces content in Greek, which is the mother tongue of the local community. 17 volunteers are individuals of the Greek community. In the radio there is a broadcasting approach which provides communication for the Greek society in Turkey and which is interested with its problems.

As it may be seen in the literature part, the financing of the community radios is not mainly commercial though it may include total budget company sponsorship, advertisements with limited numbers and types and government subsidies. Also the financing of the İho Tis Polis radio is afforded by İHO newspaper and the advertisements with limited numbers and types which are given by the community companies during the Christmas and Eastern periods.

When we match the features which are given in the literature section of the study within the context of the community radios with the features of the İho Tis Polis in the findings, it is seen that they overlap. Thus İho Tis Polis, which is the first and only radio of the Greek community in Turkey, is at the same time, a community radio practice

case from Turkey. Hence though in Turkey the community radio identity is not legally recognised like it is in the Western European countries, in the practice its cases may be seen. On the other hand, because of the hardship of the financial conditions in Turkey, the community radios found their exit by establishing an internet radio.

For a more democratic society, area should be opened for the identities in the society which are oppressed and marginalised by the dominant discourse. The community radios have such a function. Also in terms of a more democratic media environment and media pluralism, it is necessary to support the community radios in Turkey, which are independent both from the commercial interests and from the state, which are small scaled and which give alternative public service broadcasting. İho Tis Polis model should be encouraged in our country for developing democracy.

On the other hand, in the future studies, İho Tis Polis may be compared with the examples abroad or research may be done over the İho Tis Polis audience in terms of reception.

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