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**Games of Identification and Self-Presentation: Local Radio Broadcast in Skopje, Macedonia<sup>1</sup>**

*“Insofar as Macedonia is a metaphor for internal multiplicity, plurality is an unsurprising preoccupation.”*  
(Cowan and Brown 2000: 15)

In the 1990s, the media situation in Europe, especially in its post-socialist part, has changed rapidly. Democratisation was the magic word which radically reshaped the political and public domains of the continent. Among different kinds of democratisation, it was democratisation of media policies which was one of the most intriguing, but, at the same time, among the most neglected. It was not limited only to the former socialist countries. The bastions of national broadcast monopolies (e.g., Great Britain, Austria, Sweden) begun to democratise media, especially radio broadcast, in the late 1980s.

Democratisation of mass media in the former socialist countries differed from country to country. Everywhere, the state-sponsored and controlled giant public radio and television networks lost their monopoly. Private initiative came to the fore – together with its unintentional consequences.

**Colourful Air over Skopje**

*“Ni zgodovine brez prostora, ne prostora brez zgodovine.” [There is no history without space and no space without history..]*  
(Jezernik 1998: 249)

Macedonia is a rather small country with some 2 million inhabitants. The population of its capital is Skopje is somewhere between 600,000 and 700,000 people, i.e. one third of the country's population (Bošković 2000: 5).

As a part of Byzantium, the region of Macedonia was occupied by the Turks between 1371 and 1912. After unsuccessful Ilinden uprising in 1903 it was liberated from Turks during the Balkan wars between 1912 and 1914. Parts of the region with

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A few months after I made first a first part of the planned research in Skopje, armed conflict has started. Therefore, I was not in position to make the second part interviewing people from radio stations owned by Albanians, Roma and others. Nevertheless, I'll try to describe the subject from various angles – with hope that the air over Skopje proves that its citizens live in basically the same urban environment like citizens of any other world metropolis.

historical name Macedonia were annexed to Greece, and other parts to Serbia and Bulgaria. As a matter of fact, armed conflicts (the so-called Balkan Wars which were in fact petty imperialist wars) between then already independent Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, liberating Albania, and declining Turkey were to a great extent fought for the control over Macedonia.

Territories of the present-day Republic of Macedonia were annexed to Serbia and became later the part of the post-WWI Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (first Yugoslavia). The Socialist (People's) Republic of Macedonia was a federal unit in the Yugoslav socialist federation till its dissolution in 1991-1992.

Soon after Macedonia became an independent state, its private media – especially electronic – boomed in unprecedented way. In the early 1990s, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (as it is “officially” named internationally because of Greece objections concerning the use of the term Macedonia) – especially its capital Skopje – became a world phenomenon concerning unprecedented number of newly-established private radio stations. The estimation is that, beside 29 public local radio stations, somewhere around 190 private radio stations have been established in Macedonia and got a licence (European FM Handbook 1999-2000; Novkovska-Trajkovska 2000; Srd 2001). It is a large number, considering the size of the country. Furthermore, many stations broadcast without a licence.

Similar is the situation in some other Eastern European countries, for example in Macedonia's neighbouring country Bulgaria with more than 120 radio stations operating in 1996 (see Kurkela 1997: 186-187). In Macedonia the growing number of private stations created extremely diverse and intriguing broadcast formats, among which we can, for example, find several private radio and TV stations owned by the Roma minority.

The small private stations started to broadcast long before the Macedonian legislation was prepared. Their half-legal status was tolerated as long as stations have legally operated as pure private enterprises. But when the Broadcasting Council (*Sovet za Radiodifuzija*) was established in 1996 and after full implementation of the broadcast legislation in 1999, availability of frequencies became very narrow. Therefore, many smaller radio stations now share the same frequency with one another, following the rule of the so called “time sharing”, broadcasting 12 hours per day. According to the legislation, it must be added, the private radio station can apply for some funds collected from the compulsory radio subscription.

Nobody knows exact number of radio stations in Skopje. There are at least some stations that didn't yet get a license, but, nevertheless, they already broadcast. And many stations are in flux of uncertain commercial survival. According to the official data, which is unfortunately not quite reliable, there are 19 private local radio stations broadcasting in Skopje. In addition, there are two private stations that broadcast on national level plus the national (public) radio station (Makedonsko Radio, placed in the huge building of the Makedonska Radio-Televizija (MRT) near the centre of Skopje) with its four programmes (Srd 2001; as a matter of fact it transmits six programmes, but some of them share the same frequency). Other (European) sources present different picture: 28 local and national private and public stations are supposed to be received in Skopje (EU 2001). However, if you would check the FM

scale on a location somewhere in Skopje,<sup>2</sup> you would be able to receive signal from at least 35 radio stations (on my list of stations I was either able to catch or were stated on official lists were 46 different stations, but not all of the included in official lists actually broadcast – and there is undefinable number of pirates). There are certainly some pirate (and half-legal) stations, but there are as well some stations which are not included in Macedonian evidence at all, like, e.g., American military and other international stations and programmes which may be produced or transmitted in Macedonia (cf. European FM Handbook 1999-2000). In Skopje, one can listen to programmes in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Romany, Vlach, Serbian, English, and – some news – even in Greek and Bulgarian language.

The air over Skopje is thus overcrowded with radio transmission. Only the economic reasons prevent complete media chaos in Skopje. For me, a former part-time radio DJ and redactor, coming from the country which used to be a part of the same federation till 1991, this situation was very intriguing. Development of media in Skopje was quite different than development of media in Ljubljana during and after socialism.<sup>3</sup> At least in this regard, Skopje proves to be a modern multicultural city. After all, it is indeed modern, being rebuilt after the disastrous earthquake in 1963. However, economic, political, and security situation in Macedonia is, unfortunately, far from being perfect. Only a few months after I made a first part of my short research in Skopje, tragic episode of “ethnic” violence started.<sup>4</sup>

My initial presupposition was that obvious differences between the formats and apparent features of self-presentation among various radio stations from Skopje could, in a way, indicate, or even mark off, different audiences. In an urban context, it is obviously far more difficult to observe and analyse them with other social science methods. Furthermore, audiences based on musical taste, preferring particular radio formats, typically don't fit with other urban social groups. As a rule, urban imagined communities overlap. Study of radio format is a possible way of making existing “cultural complexities” (on the term see Hannerz 1992) less intricate.

Despite different news coming from the war zones in western parts of the country (and, before, from its surroundings), everyday life in Macedonia, as well as urban life in Skopje, was (and still is) “normal”. That means that Skopje doesn't differ much from other urban conglomerates with various (post)modern western lifestyles. Predominately pop and rock oriented formats of radio stations in Skopje prove it the most efficiently. Manifold faces (and voices, for that matter) of the place called

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<sup>2</sup> All the mentioned stations emit the programme at FM frequencies and they usually transmit their signal locally, which means that they are not reachable at all locations in the town with some 700.000 population.

<sup>3</sup> On the recent media situation in Slovenia see Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001; on development of radio media in Slovenia, and especially on the student radio Marš in Maribor see Muršič 2001.

<sup>4</sup> That is why my presentation is still not completed. I have chosen to visit Macedonian stations (i.e., national and commercial stations in Macedonian language) firstly and planned to check “ethnic” (i.e., Romany and Albanian) radio stations later. As I write this lines in September, when the Nato operation comes to conclusion, I still hope to be able to do the rest of the work soon. But it seems I will not be able to tell the whole story ever. On my list of stations that I didn't visit were some radio stations which does not exist anymore, for example Radio Aračina (Radio Arachina) in the village Aračinovo near Skopje which became a ghost village for a while.

Skopje, articulated in various forms of self-presentation at booming radio stations in the city, are too vivid to be neglected. Not only the quantity of broadcasting programs, but their diversity and openness to popular music productions of neighbouring countries and the rest of the world, are the most typical characteristics of the Skopje air.

A brief sketch of radio broadcast and visual and aural self-presentations of the chosen radio stations will present Skopje as one of the world's most interesting multicultural metropolises. But clearly divided as well. Recent violence was the most efficient way to sharpen divisions between Macedonian and Albanian population in the city. If only the demons of evil on any side of the conflict will not be too persistent... Ethnic affiliation is not inevitably problematic, but when it becomes the main – or the only – way of establishing political networks, it turns to the nightmare. Although ethnicities are “constructed, fluid and variably salient, rather than essential, fixed and already given”, they are, like any other kinds of identities and differences, experienced as ‘real’ (Cowan and Brown 2000: 3). That means that citizens of Skopje will have to face the differences, articulate them in specific kind of public culture, and live with them still further, not suppress them. Electronic media can help a lot – but it can easily make things even worse, much worse.

People in media are doing extremely responsible job. Whatever the risks exist, freedom of speech is perhaps the only guarantee – no matter how weak and manipulative it may be – for maintaining the mutually recognisable public markers of differences. Knowing and recognising their differences in public, literally on any step outside their willingly or unwillingly built ghettos, may well improve options for a peaceful cohabitation of different groups of people. The problem is not only in decision to give a voice to the different groups of people living together in particular place, the problem is to listen and understand the voice of the other. Media can make a lot in this regard, but not with naive bilingual (or multilingual) experiments with boring programmes. Boredom is the death of media. Their permanent strive for commercial survival may well become another problem. In multilingual and multiethnic areas the idea of the target audiences can easily become the generator of further separation.

At the beginning of commercial broadcasting in Skopje, the target audiences overlapped. As the number of stations grew, they became narrower and narrower. Although they still overlap, it is difficult to assess if the process of defining the audiences have at certain point started to reflect existing ethnic, social and other differences among the population of the city. Seen from the point of view from above – from the air, for that matter – it seems there is still enough place left for crossing the lines. At the moment of the writing I still don't know how the war operations near the town reflected radio broadcast in Skopje. It must have affected broadcasting of the numerous private radio stations, but let's hope that the successful radio formats still reflect plurality. My aim is not to analyse the complex political situation in the Republic of Macedonia and its capital, but to stress that the radio programmes in Skopje prove the extraordinary reach urban public culture in this Balkan metropolis. Specificity of the situation in Skopje starts with the outside recognition of Macedonia and Macedonians (both citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and ethnic Macedonians, i. e. the nationality) and the knowledge of the place and people. Historically, Macedonia is a geographic name for a much wider region than the present-day Republic of Macedonia, namely northern parts of Greece and some south-western parts of Bulgaria. People in the whole region still have quite strong regional identification. Due to the fact that the Ottomans recognised Orthodox Christians as

religiously defined unique group (Millet) within the political and administrative division of the empire, religion affiliation was, by the rule, in the process started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, transformed to ethnic affiliation (e.g., being affiliated to the Greek Orthodox Church meant that a person would be in censuses categorised as a Greek, although he or she would not speak any Greek, etc.).

Separate national identification of Macedonians has begun to develop in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was proved in the uprisings at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, during the Balkan wars (1912-1914), the territory of Macedonia was annexed to Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria. Macedonians were recognised as a separate South Slav nationality only during and after WWII. The Republic of Macedonia was then constituted as a federal unit of former Yugoslavia and became an independent state in 1992 (on these Macedonian knots see, e.g., Konstantinov 1988; Jezernik 1998; Bošković 2000; Cowan 2000; Vereni 2000).

However, it was far from being a happy end of the story. The old local petty imperialisms in the region survived (not only the Albanian one which finally provoked armed conflicts within Macedonia). Greece strongly opposed the very use of the name Macedonia for the country (for its international recognition, it was therefore forced to rename to The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and the use of the Alexander's sun on the national flag; Bulgaria recognise the state, but don't recognise separate Macedonian language and the Macedonian nationality; in Serbia, some old ideas survived about Macedonians as the "southern Serbs"; Albania and Kosovo Albanians support Albanisation of the western parts of Macedonia. That is why Macedonia and Macedonians are, so to say, blamed to be trapped in a special kind of virtual or hyper- reality – like the Balkans itself (see Bošković 1999) – indeed on "unreal location" (Vereni 2000: 50). Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia (and, later, Albania as well) were trying to rule the land claiming that inhabitants of Macedonia are Greeks, Bulgarians or Serbs. However, people of the today's Republic of Macedonia were never truly assimilated, neither gently nor with force (Jezernik 1998: 194).

The Balkan peninsula can be easily described as the multicultural region, especially if we have in mind the urban history of the area with unprecedented mixture of languages and cultures. However, the countryside by large remained monolingual. It is a paradox that urban centres have been more multilingual in the past than are today. This is not only a consequence of general education, based on one dominant language taught in schools, but also the result of recent migration of monolingual population from the rural areas to the towns.

In Macedonia, not many Macedonian speaking citizens would speak non-Slavic languages, including Albanian. On the other side, many Macedonian Albanians, educated only in Albanian language, are not fluent in Macedonian language. Only the speakers of true minority languages, like Romany, Turkish or Vlach, are indeed bilingual (or even multilingual). Therefore, it is obvious that language in which radio stations broadcast is very important. For example, Albanian speaking population of Macedonia is around 23 % (around 66,5 % comprises Macedonian speaking citizens of Macedonia) (Brown 2000: 127), and we would expect to find at least some bilingual radio stations in Skopje, where the Albanian population can be estimated even to one third of the city population. We can find them, but when we do, we soon realise that they are supposed to make such a format because of demands of international sponsors (Soros Foundation or European Union funds). Unfortunately, it is too artificial to become fruitful. What people need are attractive programmes – and reliable information – preferably from the "other" side in their mother tongues

(Albanians making programme in Macedonian and Macedonians making programme in Albanian). Whatever good wishes we might have, we have to understand that Macedonian language is a mother tongue of some 1,300,000 citizens of Macedonia, unrecognised and denied in the neighbourhood. It is a small language that can easily become endangered in the country with expectingly unbalanced demographic perspectives in the future.

Communication between the language groups is thus very difficult and it is obvious that radio programmes are pretty much language dependent. Hopefully, the recently launched project of a youthful bilingual radio programme – based on the format presenting universally attractive and acceptable international and domestic rock and pop music – will bring some results, although its effects will surely not be recognisable in the short term.

Let's finally face Skopje from its bright side. I will describe different co-existing cultural complexities in the city of Skopje through the discussion of its various radio formats and visual and aural promoting material of some chosen private radio stations. In the scope of the present paper, I will only be interested in music formats, shows, designs and material (including self-presentations in the auditory forms of avisos, jingles, signature tunes, promos, station-idents, call-signals, sound-effects and other characteristic signals), not in news and other parts of the programme at the radio stations in Skopje.

### **Media Complexities and the Plurality of Contemporary Everyday Life: Manifold Identities and Struggles for Hegemony**

*“So, Macedonia is a new country that perhaps exists and it is inhabited by people claimed and at the same time denied by their neighbors.”*  
(Bošković 1999: 5)

No city in the world is nowadays monocultural. As a matter of fact, the idea of monocultural areas is quite recent, developed together with the well-known ideal of the so-called national cultures, based on universal affirmation of literacy (i. e. high culture) since the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (on that point see Gellner 1983). Invention of press (and its impact on the so-called imagined communities; see Anderson 1983), modern electronic (mass) media, and, at the same time, infinitely reproducible works of arts as commodities (on political affects of this see Benjamin 1998), led to the inner pluralisation of recently emerged “monocultures” in the terms of “national” cultures. The so-called subcultures and “countercultures” were only some of the symptoms of the newly developed cultural plurality. Ethnic diversities are another aspects of the same phenomenon, which has much to do with something we could describe as “pluralisation effect of the media”, especially electronic. But diversification of people has its deeper historical roots as well. The “Macedonian multiplicity” is, for example, proverbial (Cowan and Brown 2000: 22).

As far as radio broadcast is concerned, mediascape (on the term see Appadurai 1990) of Skopje can be categorised into several categories, based on the following main radio formats: formats of the national radio network (incorporating 29 local public stations); domestic and Yugo-pop format; domestic and international youth oriented pop and rock format (incl. alternative format); international pop format; international art/classical and jazz format; and ethnic format. I will shortly describe particular sections of the Skopje mediascape and present some examples: radio formats of some chosen radio stations, a short description of their aviso, signature tunes, jingles (incl.

station-ident jingles, self-idents and sound-effects), as well as the elements of their visual self-promotion (when applicable).

Condensed symbolic messages of these self-promotion texts will, hopefully, mark or even characterise not only different sections of the Skopje mediascape but will as well indicate the complex, overlapping and fluid formation and transformation of different audiences reflecting unique local (post)modern disjunctive ideoscapes and ethnoscaapes of the city.

### 1. Modernist Yugo-Pop Format:

#### *Radio Fortuna*

This is – so it seems – commercially the most successful radio format in Skopje. It is based on playing of evergreens and oldies from the golden age of Yugoslav pop music in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (which was, though predominately limited to internal Yugoslav market, one of the liveliest popular music markets in Europe), as well as playing of the contemporary pop music from Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and present-day Yugoslavia.

The most popular among them are Croatian pop songs, especially those which are made and produced in the Mediterranean area (the annual festival in the Adriatic town of Split is still the most reliable resource of this production). These songs have a profound emotional appeal to the audience, not only due to the suppositionally nostalgic sentiments (well, there is nostalgia as well, especially nostalgia of ageing people for the golden times of their youth), but simply because they sing of love and other sentiments in very immediate and effective way, using proved melodic and harmonic formula.

Since the late 1950s, Yugoslav production of pop songs (influenced by American *evergreens*, Italian *canzona* and German *schlager*) was enormous. Annually, at least one large pop-song festival had been organised in each republic with a contest for the best song, singer, author, etc. (on the practice of how were prizes typically given by the audiences to the singers from their republic see Luković 1989). Some singers, especially female, were popular on the whole territory of the former Yugoslavia, while many remained more successful in their home regions and republics. Those who were singing in Croatian, Bosnian or Serbian language were obviously in better starting position. As a rule, Slovene and Macedonian singers were only popular in their own republics.

For me, coming from Slovenia, where Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian pop songs are nowadays played only occasionally, it was quite an experience to listen again to all these long forgotten singers and their golden oldies which were played in Skopje. Their popularity and attractiveness was virtually intact – at least among the large segment of the radio audience in Skopje. It was like the time machine that carried me back for at least 20 or 30 years! Not exactly – there were played many new pop songs, made in recognisable form as well. Almost half of the songs played are sung in Macedonian language, other mostly in Croatian, Bosnian or Serbian. Festivals in Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia are still going on and DJ's from Skopje, working at radio stations following the "Yugo-pop" format, still seek for the latest news from these festivals and supply newly released records. The owner of *Radio Fortuna* explained me that he can immediately recognise the new hit.

These stations are among the most numerous in Skopje, but also obviously commercially enough successful to survive and develop.

*Radio Fortuna* is one of the most noticeable stations in the town. We can often hear it in restaurants and other public places. However, it is a rather small station. As a matter of fact, its owner – a trained physician – has a total control, including music. *Radio Fortuna* is, basically, a one man station. Nevertheless, its public appeal is quite considerable. People in Skopje simply like it.

What surprised me is the following: folk or ethno-pop is absolutely unacceptable for *Radio Fortuna* (as well as for other stations of this format). The head of the station explained: if there are more than two bars of “folkish” tune, he would not play it on his radio!

High professionalism and a clear idea about the programme is encapsulated in the sound scriptures of the station. Jingles, station idents and signature tunes for *Radio Fortuna* are made exclusively (for a fee, of course) for the station by the well-known domestic pop singers. The typical lyrics of these songs (sung in Macedonian) are: “When you are lonely, the friend is here, Fortuna...” or “Every day when I feel boredom, I listen to a radio at 96,8, the whole Skopje is listening to good music and the whole Skopje prefer good times, Fortuna...” Its visual promo-material is rather scarce: the station promotes itself with its programme. It is worth mentioning that the outline of *Radio Fortuna* is made in Cyrillic script (Macedonians write in Cyrillic alphabet). The same is the case with other stations of this “Yugo-pop” format.

The format of the station *Radio Fortuna* reflects the modern (urban) way of life, as well as strengthens regional specificity. It is both local and cosmopolitan, and it promotes pop music similar to what can be heard in annual Eurovision festivals. However, radio stations like *Radio Fortuna* very rarely play “international”, ie. western tunes. There are exceptions, nonetheless, e.g. golden oldies, love evergreens, Italian *canzonas*, some French *chancons*. But rarely.

There are another radio stations following the same format, e.g. *Radio MJ (M Dž)*, *Radio Sky*, *Radio Ravel* and *Radio Buba Mara* which are also very attractive and successful. The audience of these two stations is a little bit younger, so they also play commercial rock from the regions of the former Yugoslavia (except, again, Slovenia). Only some of these stations would play Western pop and rock, and even they would do so only occasionally. The rate of played domestic music and music from the other parts of former Yugoslavia is ideally fifty-fifty. They are highly professional. You can check *Radio Muba Mara* on its carefully designed web-page with live Internet broadcasting (see [www.radiobubamara.com.mk](http://www.radiobubamara.com.mk)).

## 2. Domestic and International Youth Oriented Pop and Rock Format:

### *Radio Vat and Kanal 103*

In Skopje, there is no commercial rock radio station in its strict sense. The only apparently rock programme is an alternative programme of the national Macedonian Radio from Skopje, the programme *Kanal 103*. It is quite an interesting radio programme, because it is based on contributions of outside collaborators, coordinated by only one person from the national radio. The idea of the programme is to give a voice to everyone who would play some interested music for the youth audience and the people who go to the concerts of alternative rock, experimental music and jazz. Therefore one can listen an hour or two of modern electronic and techno music (the lively rave scene in Skopje is well-known abroad), switching to alternative rock or commented chapters from rock history... The overall format of *Kanal 103* is the closest to campus or alternative radio stations world-wide with the specific stress on

contemporary non-commercial music from all around the world. There is some Macedonian music played as well, but only within its international context. The audio self-promotion of the programme is rather scarce. Nevertheless, the listener would recognise the programme because nobody else in Skopje plays music from Frank Zappa to post-rock and from Kraftwerk to modern techno.

There are, as a matter of fact, some other radio stations in Skopje that play contemporary pop and rock music, presenting both international and domestic current production (e.g., above mentioned *Radio MJ*, *Kanal 4*, devoted to Macedonian domestic pop, rock and hip-hop production, as well as techno and hip-hop oriented *Radio Top FM*, and some other stations, like *Kanal +*, *Radio Grom*, and – occasionally – *Radio Ravel*; it is as well worth mentioning the show *Naši grafiti* [Our graffiti] broadcast for the young audience on the 2<sup>nd</sup> national programme). As far as rock is concerned, “domestic production” does not mean exclusively Macedonian rock production, but rock music from other parts of the former Yugoslavia as well. Especially rock groups from Serbia is still very popular.

In the category of non-commercial pop and rock format we can primarily find those radio stations in Skopje that are subsidised by international organisations. Their main aim is – though, for that matter, rather naive, because they are trying to persuade already persuaded – to “educate” the youth and make them more immune to ethnic exclusiveness. My personal opinion is that younger people don’t need such an education. They need infrastructure and possibilities to live and express their differences (subcultural, but not exclusively subcultural) in public. In other words, they need clubs and other venues (incl. places for rehearsal) and different kinds of financial assistance for development of a strong local rock and popular music scene with cheap prizes for tickets and drinks.

*Radio Vat* is a station, obviously sponsored by the international foundations. Its obvious aim is to attract younger Albanians with supposedly contemporary cosmopolitan urban sounds - and thus to “educate” them. *Radio Vat* emits a programme in Albanian language and plays various kinds of contemporary popular music, again both international and domestic production. Listening to this radio (with many “westernlike” designed call signs and avisos played between and in the middle of the tunes) you can catch some Albanian rap and rock. Typically, music played at *Radio Vat* would follow mainstream routes. It is a very modern, attractive music programme, but it seems its audience is not as wide as the sponsors have expected. It is seemingly attractive for younger urban Albanian population, but not so for Macedonian speaking youth, because they simply don’t understand Albanian. And what about bilingual programmes?

Recently, in 2001, the international community (the European Union, as far as I’ve been told) launched a radio programme designed for the youth from Skopje in Macedonian and Albanian language. Its format is supposedly oriented to younger audience with particular stress on rock and alternative streams of popular music. Speakers are supposed to announce the program in both languages simultaneously.

### 3. International Pop Format:

#### *Radio Antenna 5*

*Radio Antenna 5* – broadcast nationally, established in 1993 – is commercially the most successful radio station in Skopje (and perhaps in Macedonia). Although it is not large – concerning the standards of public radio stations and their designs – it is

highly professional. Its “contemporary hit” radio programme is attractive to younger, especially teenage listeners, and it has quite a substantial appeal (its rating is supposedly around 20%, even up to 30%).

Its format is based on playing of the latest international pop hits, almost exclusively in English. On the opinion of the manager of the station, Macedonian pop is absolutely incomparable to the Western standards of production, therefore they practically don't play it.

All the promo-materials, as well as dynamic use of call signals and other specially designed short aviso throughout the programme, prove that *Radio Antenna 5* (its name is written only in Latin script) is a highly professional station designed according to the Western example. Only a speaking part of the programme, jingles and signature tunes are made and played in Macedonian language, but even among them there are also some avisos, self-idents and messages broadcast in English (e.g., “From the heart of Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, you are listening number one music station Antenna Five,” or “Number one hit music station, 95,5.”

#### 4. International Art/Classical and Jazz Format:

##### *Radio Klasik FM and Radio Jazz FM*

Among the most interesting private (i.e., commercial) radio stations in Skopje are successful stations which present classical music and jazz. *Radio Klasik FM* play classical (or art) music, as well as – occasionally – a wide range of other similar kinds of music, like ambiental, New Age, and ancient music, plus some light jazz and instrumental pop. Its format is based on playing classical works in its entire versions, but they also produce some commented shows, like histories of particular styles or presentations of composers, etc. *Radio Klasik FM* was launched in 1993 and survived. It obviously has its audience. Many people would listen to this programme at their working place in the offices, in the cars and back home. This is one of the more pleasant faces of the Skopje mediascape. After all, one of the call signals proclaims: “The unique in our country and the first in the Balkans, Radio Klasik FM.” With Beethoven's Moonshine Serenade in the backup one can hear: “Radio that fulfil your spiritual needs, radio for prestige and guaranteed working success, radio that guides to Europe, Radio Klasik FM.”

*Radio Jazz FM* is even more interesting. It was established in 1997 by Ljupčo Hadžistefanov and his family members who have been staying for several years in New York. They have managed to collect extraordinary jazz disotheque and by themselves, both in New York and in Skopje, made many exclusive recordings. After all, Alen Hadžistefanov is a well-known producer and sound engineer making live recordings in New York and elsewhere.

The radio station is located in the basement of the private house at the outskirts of Skopje. Three family members are in charge of the programme and a female speaker goes live. An that is all. A rather small studio is still big enough to host live studio events. Indeed, *Radio Jazz FM* is something really extraordinary. Though its commercial effect is not extraordinary, the station will obviously survive. Concerning its professionalism, some people with whom I've spoken in Skopje ranged *Radio Jazz FM* on the second place among the radio stations in the city.

Since 1998 it emits its programme only for 12 hours per day (well, per night, for it broadcast between 11 PM and 11 AM), but at the beginning it was one of the few radio stations in Europe broadcasting jazz for 24 hours per day.

Some exclusively made jingles by well-known jazz musicians like John Zorn, John Lurie, Evan Lurie, Steven Bernstein, Tony Sherr or Billy Higgins would prove that. Listening to Jazz FM in Skopje is a privilege: “You’re listening to Jazz FM – this is John Zorn – and you better keep listening,” says one jingle. Another says: “This is John Lurie and you are listening to Jazz FM in Skopje. And I’ll go to sleep.” And the last but not least: jazz festival in Skopje has recently become one of the most attractive jazz festivals in Europe.

*Radio Jazz FM* proves the fact that Macedonians have learnt how to make radio in USA. Radio broadcast in Skopje follows the American standards. It is even not comparable to Greece or Italy with their liberalised radio broadcast policy. Skopje is a unique place – not only because of its ethnic diversity which generated another radio format in the town.

## 5. Ethnic Format:

### Traditionalistic Macedonian format: *Radio Ros*

Although someone coming from abroad would expect to find many radio stations concentrated on “Macedonianess”, especially with promotion of its traditional and modernised traditional music, s/he would be surprised finding only one programme, devoted exclusively to Macedonian traditional and ethno-pop music. It is *Radio Ros*, established among the first private stations in Macedonia back in 1992.

Macedonian traditional music comprises many mutually existing musical traditions from the region. Like other peoples in the Balkans – as well as elsewhere – Macedonians often consider “their” music as completely different and unique. Among the most characteristic elements of Macedonian traditional music are 7/8 meter of *oro* (the round dance; in Serbian and Croatian named *kolo*, in Bulgarian *oro* and in Greek *horo*) and – although not widely known – a-cappella singing in two voices in small intervals.

Since the late 1950s and 1960s the traditional music has been modernised, i.e. adapted to popular music. Various ethno-pop productions from former Yugoslavia are known under the Serbian/Croatian general term “*novokomponovana narodna muzika*” (newly-composed folk music). In Macedonian language this music is sometimes called “*novosozdadena avtorska pesna vo naroden duh.*” Since the 1970s it was an issue of controversy and often under attacks of music critics and redactors at the Macedonian national radio station (see Kolovski 1999). Recently, it was influenced by the kitschy and dancy genre “turbo-folk” which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Serbia.

Initially, Roma musicians played very important role in development of the Macedonian ethno-pop with their unprejudiced attitude toward current trends in popular music. It was sometimes difficult to classify the songs of, for example, extraordinary Macedonian Roma singer Esmā Redžepova who started the career in the 1960s, either as pop or as a Macedonian ethno-pop singer.

It is worth mentioning a considerable cassette production of the “genuine” Macedonian ethno-pop sang in Macedonian. Typically, it is performed by the ethnic Macedonian and (typically engaged as instrumentalists in such groups) by the Roma musicians. Traditional Macedonian rural music is only partly incorporated into today’s Macedonian ethno-pop. Other important influences are Turkish urban music traditions, music played in bars and inns, Roma influences and Western popular song.

Along with specific “Macedonian” meter, “oriental” melisms are the recognisable characteristics of “folk” in contrast to pop songs.

In a way, the format of *Radio Ros* could be described as Macedonian nationalist, but we have to be careful when using such denominations. There obviously are good reasons for Macedonians to stress their uniqueness and differences. After all, neighbouring countries put in question their nationhood, statehood or culturehood. Music is only one identification marker in the politically pretty unpredictable ideoscape of the area. Despite some apparent nationalist overtones of the ethno-pop production, it seems reasonable to claim that the radio station *Radio Ros* fulfilled the empty place in the Skopje air: “Nobody else presents only Macedonian music,” explained its owner in an interview I made with him in November 2000. *Radio Ros* combines informative and music programmes. Among the shows which are evidently patriotic, is the show *Tuka e Makedonija* (Here is Macedonia).

*Radio Ros* has only two or three members of the staff. A huge amount of its phonographic archive is based on cassette recordings. Additionally, *Radio Ros* also makes its own recordings. The cassette tapes were later recorded on the hard disc of a computer and are being played that way. Among the music genres mentioned in the presentation material are contemporary Macedonian folk music, old urban music (*starogradska*), authentic folk music, Macedonian patriotic songs, Macedonian *folk oro*, *čalgija*, etc.

*Radio Ros* popularise traditional and contemporary “traditional” music with organisation of larger concerts in the town. However, in comparison with other radio stations in the town it has a rather small and exclusive audience, most probably smaller than *Radio Klasik FM* or *Radio Jazz FM*. Although some surveys of ratings have been made, they are not reliable (and they are not publicly available).

Its jingles, self-idents and characteristic tunes are explicitly pro-Macedonian: “Macedonian musical pearl – Radio Ros.” Its aviso is prolonged tune sang by all the famous ethno-pop singers in Macedonia, naturally in typical 7/8 meter. *Radio Ros* is among the few stations in Skopje that strictly use Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet on its printed and promo material.

Among other similar stations is *Radio Noma* (*Radio Nova Makedonija*), playing domestic pop and ethno-pop.

#### Minorities Programme: The Vlach Programme within the Framework of the National Channel ‘The Radio of the National Minorities’

It is difficult to claim that Albanian radio programmes in Skopje fit to the ethnic format. Albanian population in Skopje is of the range between one third and – according to some estimations that include suburbs and outskirts – almost a half of the whole city population. However, only a very few radio stations in Skopje broadcast their programmes in Albanian language. And they would typically have less powerful transmitters. It is difficult to estimate their number, because not all of them applied for a license and their signal would cover only a small part of the town. But there are not many of them. They fit in the format schemes described above – with the exception of the Albanian programme at the national radio which fits to the ethnic format, together with Turkish, Roma and Vlach programmes. *Radio Skopje* broadcast special multilingual programme in main non-Macedonian languages spoken in Macedonia. Daily, there is six hours of programme in Albanian, four hours in Turkish, half an hour in Vlach and half an hour in Romany language.

The real “ethnic” programmes are those made for smaller ethnic minorities like *Cincari* (Vlachs), Turks and Roma. The latter are the special case, and I will briefly describe their part of the Skopje mediascape separately. Let’s take a look on Vlach programme on national radio.

The Old Balkan peoples were mostly nomadic pastoralists and traders. After Indo-European invasion they were partly acculturated, especially linguistically. Some preserved habits and other traits of traditional culture still proves their uniqueness. Today, only several thousand people in Macedonia claim to be of Vlach descent. They have some schools in which they can learn their language (especially if it is a variant of Romanian) and they have several cultural organisations. Every day at 19.00, the programme in Vlach language presents both music and information for the community. Its aviso is made in rather old-fashioned way with traditional music at the background.

#### The Roma Radio Stations:

The Roma population in Macedonia is of quite a considerable size. They are wide-known experts on music (and much more), being very adaptable. Several Roma-owned private radio and TV stations are located in the Roma district of Skopje, Šutka. At least three radio stations broadcast from that neighbourhood (*Radio Venera*, *Radio Ibro* and *Radio Džipsi* [Gipsy]), but – with the exception of the latter – their signal barely crosses its boundaries. Like many other private radio stations in Skopje, these stations are located in the private houses.

As far as their programmes are concerned, they are undoubtedly attractive for a foreigner who would try to find a confirmation of his/her stereotypes of the Balkans: the sounds of “truly” Balkan music with well-known brass orchestras, commercial electrified groups and similar attractions. Exactly in Roma music production, the multiculturalism of the Skopje region (as well as of the Balkans, whatever it is) finds its deepest and the most sympathetic expressions. The Roma stations are very important for everyday engagements of Roma musicians. They are a basis for local music production and the unique Macedonian Roma “cassette culture”.

#### Conclusion: The Puzzling Faces of Normality

*“By remaining ignorant of the world we have created we remain ignorant of ourselves.”*

(Wallis and Baran 1990: 253)

At the end of November, 2000, Macedonian mediascape, especially the private radio stations in Skopje, didn’t expose the nationalist overtones. On the contrary, radio broadcast predominately fit Western standards, if not exceeds them. In the 1990s, even the Macedonian national radio station, which is supported by the government to broadcast nationally important programmes and to promote Macedonian identity, language and music, has been facing increase of played English music in the programme. However, there is still a large amount of the so-called folk music (i.e. newly composed popular music with elements of traditional music) broadcast at the national programmes. A large part of 33% played folk music was played within minorities programmes. Another kinds of popular music comprised the main part of the programmes with 56 % share, and, additionally, classical/art music with 11% share (Kolovski 1999).

Macedonia with its capital Skopje is indeed a multicultural place. Radio broadcast proves that this multiculturalism can't be understood merely in the ethno-cultural sense. On the contrary: all the modern ethnic groups are already internally culturally divided with various "forms of expressive behaviour" (a syntagma borrowed from Bohlman 1988: 95). Among these internal divisions, the divisions based on taste are among the most subtle, but, on the other hand, among the most powerful (on the taste, its cultivation and social implications see Bourdieu 1984). Music taste and preferences have always been important social markers. Different musics attract different audiences. They can easily cross-cut any social group.

When social groups mobilise and employ a corpus of momentarily crucial cultural differentiation markers, it seems that all the other differentiation (and internal mobilisation) markers doesn't matter anymore. But that can happen only temporarily, mostly in the times of terror. Plurality of the air over Skopje is a good sign for its future. Diversified radio broadcast can help a lot in calming the hot heads (or, indeed, to make them even worse, for radio and television are immediate, emotional media [Wallis and Baran 1990: 246]), but it is not a miraculous remedy.

Macedonia is a modern country. Freedom of speech and public communication is its most recent achievement. It seems that plurality of identification options has been preserved. On individual as well as on collective level – despite the threats of war. Unprecedented plurality of radio audiences is the treasure of Skopje and its social capital for the future.

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