



Dialogos Radio: A Dialogue with my Hellenic Heritage

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Since my earliest years as the child of parents who had arrived in the United States only a few years prior to my birth, identification with my Hellenic roots has been an indelible part of my personality. While I only attended formal Greek school for two years, I was exposed to and utilized the Greek language daily at home and in my community of Astoria, New York. Through the years, my identification with Greece and with Hellenism remained strong, through frequent trips back to Greece and through interaction with my family and other members of the Greek-American community. One critical community action was the founding of a Hellenic cultural club at my high school.

From an early age, I was fascinated by television, radio, books, newspapers, and any other means of conveying information. As time went by, this interest, along with what could perhaps be described as a natural inquisitiveness and a creative streak, led me to launch a website featuring Greek radio and television stations in 1997, the first such website in the world. This website eventually brought me in contact with many Greeks from all across the world, and as time went on, the necessity for me to read and to write in Greek in order to perform research for my website and to further my interactions. In August 2010, these two aspects of my life fully merged at last with the launching of Dialogos Radio.

Dialogos Radio was initially launched as a weekly radio program named Austin Hellenic Radio, which aired on the student-run KVRX 91.7 FM in Austin, Texas. Born out of a love for the medium of radio and the desire to branch out beyond my doctoral studies, Austin Hellenic Radio initially aired in the early mornings, but soon made a name for itself in the Austin area for its broadcasts, which featured quality Greek music,

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special segments on Greek music and culture, and weekly interviews with notable Greek and non-Greek personalities. The onset of Austin Hellenic Radio coincided with the beginnings of the economic and political crisis in Greece, which Austin Hellenic Radio covered from day one.

From the beginning, my goal has been to promote Greek culture and a more positive image of Greece and Cyprus. Although I was under no impression that I could overcome the deluge of negative publicity that was being heard about Greece in the major media, my objective was nevertheless to counter such negative portrayals by showcasing the many positive aspects of Greece and of Hellenic culture.

After a year of early morning broadcasts, Austin Hellenic Radio moved to a "prime time" slot on KVRX's schedule in August 2011, and in 2012, the program began to air as Long Island Hellenic Radio on a college radio station (WUSB 90.1 FM) based in Stony Brook University in Long Island, NY. Beginning in the summer of 2012, Austin Hellenic Radio and Long Island Hellenic Radio were unified under a new name, Dialogos Radio, aimed to reflect and promote the Greek language and to better convey the overall concept of the program.

In September 2012, having been awarded a U.S. Fulbright Scholarship to undertake research in Greece, I continued producing Dialogos Radio from Athens, in collaboration with the Star Radio Network, which provided studio space and also began to rebroadcast the program on Star Radio 104.6 in Rhodes and Symi. Since then, the program has further expanded, and it is now heard on ten radio stations across four continents and online.¹ Although the weekly program initially aired only in English, two different versions of the program, in English and Greek, are now produced each week.

The core of Dialogos Radio's informational programming is the weekly *Dialogos Interview Series*, which has featured interviews with notable personalities from the worldwide Greek community, as well as renowned individuals who are non-Greek. These interviews have covered a wide array of issues, ranging from politics and economics, to culture, music, business, science and technology, education, activism, athletics, and much more. The goal has been to give a voice to lesser-heard perspectives and opinions that are often ignored by "mainstream" media outlets, while highlighting the positive aspects of Greek culture and the noteworthy achievements of Greek artists, scientists, academics, students, athletes and others.

Some of the more notable interviews that have aired in the past have included discussions with world-renowned scholar Noam Chomsky, with bestselling author and investigative journalist Greg Palast, "economic hit man" and whistle-blower John

Perkins, culinary expert Diane Kochilas, renowned Greek artists such as Yiota Negka, NASA scientist Pericles Papadopoulos, prominent whistle-blower Zoe Georganta, comedian and actor Angelo Tsarouchas, award-winning filmmaker Alethea Avramis, and actress Katerina Moutsatsou. We have interviewed Dean Karnazes named by *Time* as one of the hundred most influential people in the world. We also have spoken with a number of economists such as Yannis Varoufakis, Richard Wolff, Mark Blyth, Ha-Joon Chang, and Costas Lapavistas, and writers such as Paul Ioannides, Elias Kulukundis and the *Nation* journalist Maria Margaronis.

Many predictions made by economic and political experts that have been interviewed on Dialogos Radio and Austin Hellenic Radio regarding the Greek financial crisis have, unfortunately, come true, even though at the time, their comments were considered controversial. The efforts of activists on a number of hot-button issues have also been featured, including interviews relating to the ongoing gold mining activities in the economically and environmentally sensitive region of Skouries, the efforts to prevent the privatization of Greece's water utilities, and the movement protesting against the planned destruction of Syria's arsenal of chemical weapons in the Mediterranean Sea. Interviews with representatives of the Greek-American community from organizations such as the American Hellenic Institute, AHEPA, and the National Hellenic Museum have also been featured. We have tried to highlight many of the pressing issues concerning Hellenism today, such as the ongoing occupation of Cyprus, the unresolved issue of unpaid German debts and reparations to Greece from World War II, and the efforts to repatriate the Parthenon sculptures, currently housed in the British Museum, to Greece.

Dialogos Radio aired one of the first interviews with investigative journalist Kostas Vaxevanis following his arrest for publishing the "Lagarde List" of alleged Greek tax evaders with bank accounts in Switzerland. Following the Greek government's shutdown of national public broadcaster ERT in June 2013, Dialogos Radio featured a special broadcast with a half-dozen interviews from ERT personnel, reacting to the closure. Another interview in November was with Christos Sideris, a volunteer at the Metropolitan Community Clinic of Hellenikon, which provides free medical care to the poor and uninsured in Athens, soon after that clinic was raided by police. In the period before and after the European parliamentary elections and municipal elections in Greece in May, a series of interviews was aired with representatives of smaller political parties that were shut out of the mainstream media.

The other primary objective of Dialogos Radio is to celebrate Hellenic culture. This has been accomplished through the airing of a diverse range of Greek music from a broad variety of musical eras and genres although pop music and other overly

commercial forms of music are usually avoided, in place of timeless Greek classics which appeal to both a Greek and Philhellenic audience. Dialogos Radio has also aired a number of special musical segments, including a feature on the music and compositions of the late Nikos Xylouris. The program included musical selections by and an interview with Xylouris' cousin, Niky Xylouris. Other musical segments have featured the music of Austin-based rembetiko band *The Souliotes*, and with artists and bands that participated at the prominent SXSW festival in Austin, including Imam Baildi and Haroula Rose.

Dialogos Radio has also bolstered its cultural and informational offerings over the years through a series of collaborations with such outlets as *GoodNews.gr*, *diatrofi.gr*, the Greek-American periodical *Portes Magazine* and the prominent Greek news portal *The Press Project*. The latter provides weekly newscasts that air on Dialogos Radio and features some of Dialogos Radio's content on its website.

In four years of operation, Dialogos Radio has branched out beyond radio, as "Dialogos Media." Several of the interviews that aired on the *Dialogos Interview Series* were put into print in write-ups that I've prepared for the *Huffington Post*, *Daily Kos*, *Truthout*, and Greek publications such as *Hot Doc* magazine and *The Press Project*. In addition to these write-ups, I've also occasionally written original articles, including the very first English-language article that was published which covered the riot police raid of ERT's headquarters in Athens in November 2013.²

Dialogos Media has also embraced new technology in other forms. This has included the popular Dialogos Radio podcast, where all of the show's interviews and special features are freely made available via dialogosmedia.org, iTunes, TuneIn.com, the Windows Marketplace, and other services.³ Perhaps even more ambitiously, since November 2012, Dialogos Media has operated Dialogos Radio 24/7, a web radio station which airs quality Greek music, as well as programming and interviews from the vast Dialogos Radio and Austin Hellenic Radio archives, commercial-free and in high-quality audio.⁴

All of the above efforts take place on an entirely non-profit, non-commercial basis while operating on a shoestring budget. Dialogos Radio began as a hobby, based on my love for the medium of radio. Since then, it has expanded far beyond anything that I could have imagined, but first and foremost, it remains a labor of love, albeit one that faces various challenges. Producing weekly programming in two languages; scheduling, preparing, and recording interviews, keeping the website and Dialogos Media's social media accounts updated, running Dialogos Radio 24/7, writing occasional articles, and constantly working towards expanding Dialogos Media's technological offerings is difficult and time-consuming, particularly in light of the fact

that "Dialogos" operates with essentially no income and with programming that is not necessarily "mainstream." It is especially challenging to promote the growth of Dialogos Media without any substantial economic means to draw upon.

Despite the odds, Dialogos Radio and Dialogos Media have managed, since 2010, to attain a steadily growing, worldwide audience. A number of awards and distinctions have been earned. Dialogos Radio was selected as "best podcast" and "best talk-news-interview program" at the 2012-13 Greek Radio Awards, and was named "college radio specialty show of the year" by Radioflag.com in 2012. That same year I was awarded the Peter J. Agris Memorial Journalism Scholarship. Dialogos Radio and its predecessor, Austin Hellenic Radio, have also been featured on the main evening newscast of Greece's Alpha TV, while Dialogos Radio's interviews and special correspondences have been featured by on Austin's NPR affiliate. Other outlets include Greek newspapers such as *To Vima* and *Ethnos*, and radio stations such Athina 9.84 FM in Athens.

At a time when Greece and Cyprus remained mired in crisis and when international (and even Greek) media coverage remains highly negative, the role of diasporic media is particularly significant, in promoting Greek culture and language, and in presenting perspectives and views that are otherwise often shut out of the hegemonic media narrative. This is even more important following the shutdown of *The Voice of Greece* and *ERT World* by the Greek government in June 2013, eliminating Greece's official global radio and television outlets. Within that context, my efforts with Dialogos Radio and Dialogos Media will continue, with plans to expand further. The informational and cultural nature of Dialogos Radio will remain, with more special cultural segments and features, while expanding to more radio stations. Development of additional technological applications that will allow users to take Dialogos on the go with them practically anywhere in the world are also planned. It is my hope that Dialogos Radio's first-ever official fundraiser, scheduled for fall 2014, will help provide the financial means to reinvest in this initiative and to further expand it. Anyone interested in knowing more about Dialogos can reach me at www.dialogosmedia.org.

¹ These stations include KVRX, WUSB, City International 106.1 in Thessaloniki, Kriti FM 101.5 in Hania, Crete, Star Radio 104.6 FM in Symi/Rhodes, Radio Olympos 100.2 in Karpathos, Radio Ena 87.6 FM & 152.2 MHz in Adelaide, Australia, Hellenic Radio 1422 AM in Johannesburg, South Africa, and online radio stations Radio Symi and Dialogos Radio 24/7.

² Furthermore, transcripts of select *Dialogos Interview Series* interviews are available online at dialogosmedia.org.

³ Dialogos Radio's applications which have been developed for Android, Kindle, and BlackBerry devices, plus the Google Chrome web browser. Dialogos Radio's past programs

and special features are available "on demand" through dialogosmedia.org and Dialogos Radio's Android and Kindle apps.

⁴ Dialogos Radio 24/7 is available via dialogosmedia.org, in iTunes Radio (where it is one of a very small number of Greek radio stations listed), in TuneIn.com, via Dialogos Radio's Android and Kindle apps, and elsewhere. In addition, Dialogos Radio maintains an active social media presence, on Facebook (facebook.com/dialogosmedia) and on Twitter(twitter.com/dialogosmedia). More information about Dialogos Radio and Dialogos Media can be found at www.dialogosmedia.org.

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