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'We are Staying in our Country—Here': Israeli Mediascapes in Melbourne

Erez Cohen

This paper is based on participant observation and in-depth interviews with broadcasters of two distinctive Hebrew radio programmes in Melbourne. The two programmes are part of a weekly Jewish programme broadcast in Hebrew, English and Yiddish. They operate within the setting of a local ethnic community radio station, a manifestation of Australian multicultural policies whereby nearly 63 different ethnic and language groups produce radio programmes for their distinct communities. Focusing on the Israeli broadcasters who present the Hebrew radio programmes, I examine how different political identities and a sense of being away from Israel are translated into the programmes they make. Despite their shared cultural background, Israeli immigrants have different personal and collective readings of the past in Israel and of present life in Melbourne. The weekly programmes in Hebrew operate as a cultural site in which political and migratory experiences interact and intervene to produce migratory mediascapes in which contradictory interpretations of identity are played out.

Keywords: Israelis in Melbourne; Ethnic Media; Ethnic Radio; Migrant Identities; Australian Multiculturalism

Home and Away: Questions of Identity

So I left behind all languages/repeated goodbyes like an old door/changed cinemas, reasons, and tombs/left everywhere for somewhere else/I went on being, and being always/half undone with joy/a bridegroom among sadnesses/never knowing how or when/ready to return, never returning (Pablo Neruda, Adioses).

Emigrants, unlike refugees, exiles or asylum-seekers, are regarded by governments as individuals who have voluntarily left their place of origin (commonly another nation-state) and moved permanently or long-term to live in a new adoptive country. Actual

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migratory experiences, however, are not merely about detachment, relocation and adaptation to a 'new place'; rather migrants' lives are typified by a complex set of ongoing relationships with their place of origin. Terms such as 'transnationalism', 'diaspora', 'ethnoscape', 'life on the hyphen' and 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1992; Appadurai 1990; Basch *et al.* 1994; Clifford 1997) point to the theoretical and practical importance of studying the relationships that immigrants, refugees and exiles continue to have with their societies and countries of origin.

Attempts by different ethnic or migrant groups and indigenous people to maintain their 'original culture' in the 'new' place may often develop into a fierce political struggle. This is especially the case when migrants or minority groups encounter discriminatory or racist policies directed against them. The case of Muslim Algerian migrants in France (Gross *et al.* 1996) or Kurdish refugees and migrants in Germany (Leggewie 1996) are just two examples of many similar stories. Clearly, there are many structural factors that may shape and influence the identities and political struggles of such social groups. Ethnic inequality and differential access to the labour market are just two well-researched factors (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 2000). Cultural assimilative policies that encourage the 'absorption' of newcomers into the national ethos may also lead to social struggles, as the historical case of early migration policies both in Israel and in Australia demonstrate (Hage 1998a; Smootha 1978).

In contrast, multiculturalism as experienced in Canada and Australia since the 1970s is often presented as the antithesis of racism and the ethnocentric assumptions that fuelled the assimilative model. This notion of multiculturalism is different from that in the USA, where it is regarded as a form of 'politics of identity' and resistance by minority groups who challenge the hegemony of the dominant culture. In Australia the term multiculturalism is largely a government policy from above (Castles and Davidson 2000: 164–5). Multicultural policies, according to the Australian model, enable minority groups to maintain their original culture and identity and thus culturally enrich the new locality. Within the Australian context 'cultural maintenance' is constructed, therefore, as a positive process that may help to generate the emergence of local ethnic communities that are tolerated and perceived to be an integral part of the evolving multicultural setting.

Despite the multicultural rhetoric, the actual political power of non-Anglo-Celtic migrants in Australia is quite weak. It also seems that, for policy-makers, the model is more about managing diversity than generating equality and participation (Bottomley 1994: 140). Critics of official multiculturalism argue that, like the assimilative model, the policy enables the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture to maintain its hegemony. This culture is not just another in the multicultural collection; rather it is the culture organising the diversity and harmony of the collection (Hage 1998b).

The Broader Research Context: Ethnic Media in Australia

Minority or diasporic media play an important role in forging and maintaining migratory relationships and identities (Aksoy and Robins 2000; Dayan 1998, 1999).

The presence of such media within the national space can be seen as a 'social problem' when they are brought forward as both an indication and a symptom of a migrant group's detachment from, and even refusal to adapt to, the host country.

In the mid-1990s, the German conservative press rushed to interpret the extensive ethnic satellite television consumption by the Turkish minority as a confirmation of this group's attachment and loyalty to Turkey. As the extensive popular conservative debates of the time suggested, the Turkish population living in Germany looked for its cultural references within Turkish television and thus rejected the German cultural project. Within this discourse, Turkish satellite television was seen as ultimately restraining the Turkish population's integration in German society. Some even suggested that the domination of channels from Turkey in the Turkish households of Germany reconfirmed the impossibility of Turks becoming an integral part of German society and culture—Turks would always be Others (Georgiou 2001: 3).

Such a debate is virtually no longer taking place in Australia, where the category of 'ethnic media' has historically been linked to the emergence of multiculturalism as an official government policy in the early 1970s (Zangalis 2001: 17). Accordingly, ethnic media are perceived as a way to enable migrant groups to come to terms with their adopted country and its culture by broadcasting in their own language to their own communities.

Since their emergence in the late 1970s, Australian 'ethnic media' have been operating on two main levels. The first is a national government-funded radio and television service known as the 'Special Broadcasting Service' or SBS. The second level is that of predominantly community-funded, not-for-profit radio and television stations that serve particular geographic areas. Most licenced community radio and television stations—including those aspiring to gain such a licence—are part of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), a national representative organisation for community broadcasters. Ethnic public radio, as in the setting of 'ethnic radio stations', operates under the broader category of community radio in Australia and has its own national organisation, the National and Ethnic Multicultural Broadcaster Council or NEMBC (Zangalis 2001: 59–61). There are also some commercial non-English radio and cable television channels; however, these are mostly recasting programmes produced elsewhere and are not regarded as part of the 'Australian ethnic media'.¹

The emergence of ethnic media in Australia was initially accompanied by debates and social struggles surrounding the aims and the form that the sector should adopt (Jakubowicz 1989: 111). It is clear, however, that the emergence of ethnic media along with other organisations, social policies and institutions, helps to define and legitimise the notion of multiculturalism and of the 'ethnic community' as integral parts of the Australian social setting. Ethnic radio stations are constructed, therefore, on the multicultural model, with each programme broadcast in a different language and targeting a specific ethnic/language community. Volunteers, who are members of the ethnic communities they represent, manage the station and their specific radio

programmes. From the Australian government's point of view, broadcasting in 'community languages' is seen as the best method of familiarising non-Anglo migrants with the social, economic and political workings of Australian society (Patterson 1981: 45). At both the local and the national level, 'ethnic media' are repeatedly celebrated as one of the main means by which different migrant groups retain their original languages and cultures (Zangalis 2001).

The one-hour time framework and other limitations imposed by the ethnic radio station mean that the making of the programme is a process of multiple selection. Structural aspects, such as the demand that ethnic programmes broadcast news and community announcements in addition to musical items, or that they be broadcast in more than 50 per cent of the 'foreign language', influence the form and content.² However, it is essentially the broadcasters' understanding of what is important or what types of music their audiences would like to hear (and their own personal repertoire) which ultimately determines the selection process.

The Ethnographic Setting: The Jewish Programme on 3ZZZ

'3ZZZ—Melbourne Ethnic Community Radio' serves a large and diverse set of ethnic communities:

There are more than 5,000 financial members from nearly 63 ethnic groups affiliated with the station. All the major ethnic communities living in Melbourne are represented. Up to 400 volunteers broadcast in one of these 70 community languages for and on behalf of their own community (www.3zzz.com.au).

We also learn that '[It] is estimated that more than 400,000 people listen to 3ZZZ every week'. Like other community and ethnic radio stations, 3ZZZ is non-commercial and community-based, financed by listener subscriptions, donations and special annual fundraising events. In addition, 3ZZZ receives some government funding through the Community Broadcasting Foundation.

The Jewish Programme on 3ZZZ began operating in 1989, shortly after the station started broadcasting. Over the years, the programme took on different forms and altered its broadcast material, musical content and presentation style. During my research period, the programme broadcast for three hours weekly (two in Hebrew and one in both English and Yiddish). As is often the case with community radio programmes, such arrangements may change due to restructuring, a programme's inability to collect funds or when volunteer broadcasters leave and others join in. At times, such changes may produce struggles and social tensions among the broadcasters but there is a process of informal negotiation that usually helps to redefine the broadcasting process. There were nine volunteer broadcasters: five were Israeli migrants who are Australian citizens living permanently in Australia, the others were non-Israeli broadcasters born and raised in Australia. Most had some basic technical training, provided by the station, that involved operating the audio panel and managing the broadcasting process.

Each of the radio programmes that make up the Jewish Programme are broadcast live to air and, apart from the music, normally have no pre-recorded materials. There is also no direct rebroadcast of other media sources. While there are some general guidelines set by the station, the content of the programmes is fully in the hands of the broadcasters themselves. The programmes are not actively monitored or noticeably supervised. The station will only intervene if a formal complaint is received or if a particular programme has clearly breached the station's guidelines by, for example, exploiting commercial purposes or broadcasting offensive material.

Israelis living in Australia

As Gold (2002) and others note, there is some difficulty in defining 'who is an Israeli', because the category includes Israelis who were born in other countries before migrating to Israel, those who were born in Israel and growing numbers of individuals born outside Israel to Israeli parents. Consequently, there are difficulties in assessing the numbers of Israeli immigrants living abroad. Statistical categories such as 'country of birth' may exclude individuals who were born in another country. The category of Israel as 'country of birth' includes Arab Palestinians born in Israel. Self-identification as 'Israelis' living abroad may include temporary visitors, tourists, students and scholars who may return to Israel (Gold 2002: 22, 23).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, during 2004 there were 8,126 individuals living in Australia whose country of birth was Israel (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003–04: 36). Under the category 'language spoken at home', the 1996 and 2001 censuses report that there were 5,923 and 5,947 people respectively who speak Hebrew at home. The 2001 census also reveals that, out of 22,600 individuals who noted their ancestry as Jewish, 13 per cent were born in Israel and 84,000 identified their religion as Jewish (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001); the actual number of Israelis may be larger. In both Melbourne and Sydney, 'new arrivals from Israel' is a common phenomenon. There are also a number of Israeli web-based community forums that help both potential and actual immigrants from Israel to exchange information and build social networks that facilitate the migratory process. In recent years, many Israeli New Arrivals have come to Australia under the skilled migration policy.

Tensions between Israeli immigrants and local Jewish communities have been documented in works such as *An Ethnographic Study of Israelis in New York* (Shokeid 1988). Cohen and Gold (1996: 22) found that Canadian Jews used the typical stereotypes used to describe Jews in Canada in relation to Israeli immigrants, referring to them as loud, dishonest, arrogant and rude. Israeli immigrants in their turn described Jewish Canadians using the same stereotypes used by the Canadian Jews to describe their non-Jewish neighbours—formal, naïve, lazy and beer-drinking. In the US and Canada, most Israelis live close by or within established Jewish neighbourhoods even if they are not socially assimilated into either the American or the local Jewish community (Rosenthal and Auerbach 1992: 983). Rosen (1993)

argues that in many cases Israeli immigrants were not regarded as 'Jewish immigrants' who tried to establish themselves in a new country; as a result they received very little help from established American Jewish communities, in contrast to that traditionally offered to other Jewish immigrants.

In her book *The Jews in Australia*, Suzan Ruthland argues that Israeli immigrants do not live in areas of Jewish concentration and lack a sense of belonging to the Jewish community (2005: 144). This statement does not seem to be based on any substantive ethnographic data or close familiarity with Israeli communities in Australia. Gold (2002), on the other hand, found strong economic and cultural connections between Israelis and Jews, both in Melbourne and in Sydney, as in other places where there are large concentrations of Israeli immigrants.

My research examines the Jewish radio programmes in relation to the Israeli migratory experience. I therefore limit the discussion to the Israeli broadcasters themselves and look exclusively at the programmes they present in Hebrew. Such a distinction reflects an internal division within the programme (and more generally within the local Jewish community) where, despite relations with the local Jewish community, Israeli migrants are regarded (and often define themselves) as a separate social and cultural group. The Israeli broadcasters produce and broadcast the programmes in Hebrew and the Jewish non-Israeli broadcasters produce and present in Yiddish and English.

The main methodologies are in-depth interviews and participant observation. Over two years (2002–04), I broadcast a segment of the Hebrew-language Jewish radio programme and participated in the meetings and other activities of the programme's production team. As an Israeli immigrant, I was culturally and socially similar to the programmes' other broadcasters. I had further contact with some of them within the broader social context of the Israeli community in Melbourne. The others I met only at the radio station and within the setting of their programmes. During fieldwork I documented and reflected upon the things we as broadcasters do and the programmes we make. Furthermore, I had previously conducted fieldwork in Adelaide, where I studied Latin American ethnic radio programmes (Cohen 2003). This experience taught me to interact with participants of the programmes in a way that, methodologically speaking, does not radically challenge the social reality of the programmes. While it is possible that my presence as a broadcaster altered the programmes I was researching, it is also true that my own position did not challenge or shape the structural differences between the two programmes that I describe below.

I chose to be an active participant in the Wednesday programmes as I felt they were closer to my own political and migratory identity. Within that setting, where as a participant I had the potential to alter the programmes, I remained rather passive in the sense that I chose not to challenge the overall format or musical content of the programmes and was happy to fulfill the positions that others did not want to conduct. As such, I prepared and read the weekly news segments from the Israeli papers. Furthermore, in order to learn more about the broadcasters' personal understandings, practices and views of the programmes that they produced, I

conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the Israeli broadcasters on the programme.

Shortly after I joined the programme there were various on- and off-air disputes and disagreements amongst the different Israeli broadcasters. These conflicts were partly based upon different political views of the situation in Israel ('left-wing' versus 'right-wing', for instance). While there are many other points of contestation between Israelis in relation to religious, ethnic and social class, both in Israel and abroad (Gold 2002: 176), within the setting of the radio programmes the conflicts were mainly articulated along the ideological lines of the political division within Israel. In addition, broadcasters had very different approaches and understandings of the programme and the medium itself. A decision was taken to divide the two Hebrew weekly hours between the different broadcasters, thus creating two distinct programmes, one broadcast on Wednesdays and the other on Fridays. This paper focuses on these two programmes and I begin by describing each in turn.

The Friday Programme: Framing an Exclusive Ethno-National Jewish Site

This is how Orit,³ one of the broadcasters, describes the process of preparing the Friday programme:

I sit a lot in front of the Internet and listen to *Arutz Sheva*.⁴ I then choose articles that I find interesting. I rewrite these articles as a dialogue or I just read them as they are. It is important for me that the listeners find them interesting. I get many responses to the programme, some are good and some are bad. Overall, I think that people find what I choose interesting.

Orit's understanding of the audience and the programme shapes the selection process and her delivery style. The use of *Arutz Sheva* as a media source is clearly indicative of the broadcaster's right-wing political identity. At the same time, the presentation style and intonation that she chooses resemble Israeli government radio stations (mainly in the way that she reads the news). Another practice adopted from national Israeli radio stations was the 'toning down' of the programme's rhythm by playing subdued songs from the well-established repertoire of popular music that the Israeli radio stations play at times of mourning. This cultural practice works symbolically to link the programme to immediate events back in Israel.

The presentation style, alongside Orit's political views, helped to define the Friday programme as a media site that represents a popular version of Israeli (right-wing) nationalism. Furthermore, her choice of what in Israel is known as 'oriental music' (*Musika Mizrakhit*), a type of popular music originally associated with Jewish migrants from Arab and North African countries (Regev 1996), further marks the collective 'identity' of the programme. In addition to the music selection, Orit encouraged listeners (mainly people from her close network of Israeli friends who she acknowledged on air) to call the programme and send greetings to their friends and

relatives or share jokes or stories on air. These further framed the programme as a place of familiarity, a virtual gathering place and a communal site.

The presenter chose to bring to the programmes a version of her identity that is part of her sense of community and culture, both 'here' and back home. It is interesting to note, however, that she is able to do so without taking on the overall multicultural imageries or rhetoric regarding tolerance of other cultures that are not perceived to be part of the original or the new identity. In other words, her particular ethnic cultural space within the overall multicultural setting may take a particularistic position that rejects or even opposes the model of cultural exchange and diversity promoted by multiculturalism.

This aspect was illustrated by Orit's response to an official complaint sent to the radio station by one of the listeners. The complaint was made in response to a comment Orit made on air after reading a news item from Israel about an Israeli soldier who was accused of providing information and weapons to Palestinians. After reading the article, Orit added that, in her opinion, the death penalty should be applied in such a case. The listener, who obviously objected to the political line the broadcaster had taken, complained to the radio station that 'the broadcaster had expressed her personal opinion whilst reading the news'. Orit chose to respond to the complaint on air. She explained the complaint but, instead of apologising, she accused the listener of 'washing our dirty laundry in public'. In light of her view of the programme as a communal Jewish site, she expressed her anger with the listener and added, 'If anyone has a complaint to make they should contact us directly and not go to the gentiles'.

Eli, another presenter on the Friday programme, promoted similar political opinions and understandings. When broadcasting alone or together with Orit, Eli altered the content and presentation style of the programme by delivering it more in the form of a commentary on the ongoing political situation in Israel. The articles and views that he broadcast included statements arguing that there is no such thing as a Palestinian people, or that all settlements in the occupied territories form an integral part of the land of Israel (*Eretz Israel*). In a Hebrew play-on-words, he often referred to the Palestinian Authority with a term that can be translated as The Palestinian Evil (*Harishut Haplastinit*). Such statements are typical of the Israeli religious far-right in Israel and are found in abundance on the right-wing media sites that Eli used to download material for the programme.⁵

Interestingly, but in accordance with his political views, Eli refused to define his choices and the materials that he broadcast on the programme as 'political'. When I tried to coax him to define his political ideology he refused to do so, stating, 'If you want to put me in a box then you can put me in the Jewish box'. The notion of the 'Jewish box' was, for his part, a refusal to recognise any alternative political positions or diversity within Israel and the Jewish community at large, where, according to Eli, the political labels of left and right are irrelevant and wrong:

I don't have any political line, not at all. Anyway, the definitions of left- or right-wing across the world are not relevant, in my opinion, to the situation in Israel. There is no such thing as left and right. Left or right is nonsense, we are all Jews, we all want to live in peace and we all want to have a Jewish state.

Like Orit, Eli defines his Judaism and the Jewish programme as a site rooted within an exclusive communal Jewish national place, a place in constant danger from the Arab enemies (and other anti-Semites) who aim to annihilate it. Despite claiming that he did not adopt any specific political stance, it is clear that, in his understanding of the 'Jewish box', there was no room for any other political views and opinions. In response to one of the Jewish programmes in English, where a non-Israeli broadcaster, somewhat innocently, read an article she had downloaded from *Haaretz*, (a major Israeli newspaper known for its intellectual and centre-left-wing agenda) about the *Refuseniks*⁶ in Israel, Eli sent a collective angry email to all the other presenters, where he wrote:

I don't know where you obtained your news articles from, but it certainly did not sound like it came from an Israeli source. For five long minutes, I thought I was listening to the radio station of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. I mean our programme is called 'The Jewish Programme' isn't it? What's the point of attempting to keep our current format on 3ZZZ if we present articles and views befitting an Arab programme? It was quite disturbing to hear the anti-Israel theme throughout your show.

Furthermore, when I asked Eli how he saw the future of the programme in light of the lack of community support and of the difficulties in obtaining the annual A\$3000 needed for its continuation, he made a direct analogy between the programme's fate and the situation in Israel as he saw it. 'If we do not continue to run the programme, it will fall into the hands of the Arabs, because they, the Ishmaelites, will not hesitate [to 'occupy' it or take over]'

From a transnational perspective, it can be argued that the Friday programme does not reflect the 'local' and can be interpreted as a cultural practice that aims to maintain a well-guarded national identity, as if the presenters were still in Israel. At the same time it is important to note that this sort of 'long-distance nationalism', as much as it is evoking and using the 'elsewhere' and the 'homeland' in producing the sense of a Jewish/Israeli space, is embedded in a complex set of social relations and divisions within the particular contemporary social field of the 'community' and its locality.

The attempt to maintain an Israeli national identity whilst living in the diaspora is of particular complexity in the Israeli case. Like early Zionism's view of the Jewish diaspora, redefined negatively as *golah* or exile (Gold 2002: 4), disapproving attitudes against Israeli emigrants were common in Israel. Those who left the country were referred to as *Yordim* or descenders, literally 'those who go down', in contrast to *Aliyah*, ascent, which is used in both a moral and an emotional sense to describe Jews who are immigrating to Israel.⁷

This ideological national context meant that the broadcasters were aware of the symbolic and practical difficulties of maintaining a strong Israeli national position while living in Australia. Orit demonstrated this paradox on one of her programmes after playing an Israeli song entitled 'We Are Staying in This Country' by Uzi Hitman. The song recounts the difficulties of life in Israel but the chorus makes the point that, despite all these difficulties, 'We are staying in this country'. Playing such 'anti-diasporic' songs—categorised in Israel as *Shirei Eretz Israel* (songs of the land of Israel)—in Australia, after you have already left the country, is at odds with the ideological and moral position of the song. After playing the song Orit told her audience, 'Yes, guys we are all staying in our country [Israel]—here'. This is a paradoxical stand not only because it can be read as if, in a fundamental way, Orit had never actually left Israel, but mainly because the song itself openly denounces emigration. This particular song and others like it form part of the moral and ideological pressure placed in Israel on potential émigrés (Cohen 1988: 909, Gold 2002: 7).⁸

Such feelings toward Israel—a desire to leave alongside a commitment to stay, and living away while longing for an eventual return—have been captured in several ethnographic studies of Israeli immigrants (Gold 2002; Sabar 2002; Shokied 1988). Though such feelings relate to a particular ethno-national collective identity back in Israel, they are also a product of particular migratory experiences.⁹ Orit reports in her quote, below, that she feels torn in two—half of her is *here* and half of her is *there*—and at the same time, she acknowledges that she is no longer *there* but not yet fully *here*.

Returning? I think that, from the moment you get here, you are already torn. You want to be there because that is where your family and friends are. This is hard, so you are just torn in two.

The construction of the programme as a Jewish/Israeli national space makes sense from this point of view. Eli, like Orit, shared a similar migratory experience where, for a variety of familial reasons, he felt that he is 'stuck' in Australia and could not return to live in Israel. He sees himself as a reluctant migrant. His extreme nationalistic political views were flavoured by an essentialist sense of identity—which he based on a religious interpretation of being Jewish—in claiming that an Israeli can never really be an Australian. Despite living in Australia for over 14 years, Eli refused to define himself as an Australian or even regard himself as a migrant.

The Friday programmes can be read, therefore, as a migratory attempt to 'stay in Israel—here'. Like other communal formal and informal gatherings they become, for the broadcasters and maybe for their audiences, a 'Jewish/Israeli place' which, like the national space back home, needs to be guarded as an exclusive Jewish space.

The Wednesday Programme: Defining Secular Israeli Identity as Part of the Multicultural Setting in Australia

The Wednesday Programmes in Hebrew implemented a very different approach to that promoted by the Friday shows. By adopting a far less formal presentation style

and broadcasting diverse musical items, the Wednesday Programmes worked to redefine Israeli culture as an ethnic cultural identity that—despite its attachment to a particular national space—could become part of the Australian multicultural model. In a way this is an attempt to individualise the category of the ‘Israeli’ and turn it into something that, like the migratory move itself, enables individual migrants to reinvent their original identities in a new context (Chambers 1994: 24).

This is how Avi, who has been broadcasting the programme for over 10 years, described his initial involvement in the Jewish radio programme:

When I began broadcasting, my [left-wing] political ideas were very important to me. I wanted to promote my ideas because I realised that the Jewish community here is very conservative. So at the beginning of the show the music that I chose and the books that I talked about, were all there in order to stress my political ideas.

Before the Hebrew programmes split into two, political arguments between the broadcasters themselves and with the listeners were constantly broadcast. As within Israel (but also among Israelis and Jews in Melbourne) the political divide is largely a debate about the definition of the collective identity (Kimmerling 1984, 1996). In contrast to the essentialist and particularistic view of the ‘Jewish state’ promoted on the Friday programme, the Wednesday programmes tended to present an alternative understanding of Israeli and Jewish cultural identities. Such a model is more inclusive of the diversity and different aspects of Israeli society and the Jewish community and history in general. As Avi explains when referring to the diversity within the Jewish programme itself.

I see all the programmes [within the Jewish programme] as one single programme with many different aspects. It is important that the programme represents the diversity of the Jewish culture. It is important that our listeners feel that we have this diversity in the programme and that we don’t broadcast in one voice. Judaism is much broader and diverse and quite far from the narrow way it is often depicted in the conservatism of the orthodox or the right-wing Zionist groups.

As is the case for the other broadcasters, such an understanding is related to particular migratory experiences. While Eli and Orit saw themselves as Israelis who are ‘stuck’ or torn between their Israeli identity and their current lives in Australia, for Avi, it is the Australian identity that is inclusive and stronger than any other past identities.

I have a problem to define myself as an Israeli. I have been living in Australia for over 24 years. I feel Australian in many different ways. A part of me, but only a small part, is my Israeli background and another part of this identity is my Jewishness.

Saul, another of the Wednesday programme’s broadcasters, whose political identity was poles apart from the one subscribed to by the Friday programme, also had a very different understanding of the medium itself. His aim was to construct the

programme as an informal conversation, rather than as one imitating an official or formal radio programme from Israel. In his words, the idea was 'to talk as if this is not a radio, as if we are outside having a conversation'. This common radio format was rather challenging and was strongly opposed by the Friday broadcasters who saw the radio programme as a formal representation of the Israeli national space and the local 'community'. A conversation model is more personal as it is about differing points of view and opinions. Rather than presenting 'facts' and written statements in an 'official' tone, a conversation-like presentation is more fluid and less certain. Saul explains his understanding of the radio programme:

I don't see the programme as a means to anything. I don't have this feeling of a Jewish calling, or that I am here to say something to the nation or something like that. I don't even try to claim that I represent anyone.

Saul, who had migrated to Israel as a child, defined his current migration to Australia as relatively easy. As someone who had migrated once before, he found it easier to make the move once again. On the other hand, and maybe due to his early migratory experience in Israel, he had developed a strong relationship with the media and in particular with Israeli radio and music, his knowledge of which was illustrated by his impressive personal collection. As such, when he joined the programme he immediately altered its musical content, which he began organising around the particular themes of the programmes. He also began conducting interviews with artists and musicians back in Israel. In this way, and despite his own left-wing political views, he managed to somewhat detach the programme from its apparent political content and address political ideas and criticism through the music rather than through the 'chat' or 'news reading'.

The musical content of the programme is very important to me. I do not just pick disks from the shelves and bring them to the programme. During the week prior to each programme I choose articles or topics that I want to talk about. I then look for songs that will somehow relate to these topics. It is a kind of internal logic of the programme. I will give you an example. When there were all these attacks and difficult times with the Palestinians, I played this song by Shalom Hanoch where he sings something like 'This is your enemy but he is really just like you'.¹⁰ After I played the song, a listener called to complain. She tells me: 'I know what your "line" is. I noticed what you are trying to do.' So I told her 'I am glad that you noticed because I am not hiding my views and I think that it is important to see what there is behind the hatred and the fanaticism.' I told her that I am happy that she got the message.

The interesting aspect of the Wednesday programme is that it tends to represent a different type of Israeli migratory experience to the one studied by researchers (Gold 2002: 7). Israeli migrants such as Saul tend to be far more critical and cosmopolitan in their understanding of their Israeli and Jewish identities. Such individuals define the migratory act as a move away from the narrow nationalistic definition of the Israeli state. While they become part of a new Jewish/Israeli diaspora, they often do

not integrate with the local Jewish community, which they perceive to be nationalistic or too Zionist for their taste (Gold 2002; Gold and Phillips 1996; Shokied 1988).

Despite the different emphases and contradictory political views presented on these two (Wednesday and Friday) programmes, both almost exclusively looked to Israel for gathering the news, musical themes and other broadcast material. Both had very little local content in relation to major news stories in Australia or local events that did not relate directly to Israel. Clearly, such a focus is a direct outcome of the way the ethnic radio station frames its programmes. Yet, I will argue that the official definition of the station has little to do with the actual content or broadcasting style and formats that such programmes take.

We can read both programmes to be part of the diasporic experience, a negotiation of identity located within a particular socio-historic setting.

Thus, the term 'diaspora' is a signifier not simply of transnationality and movement but of political struggles to define the local, as a distinctive community, in the historical context of displacement. The simultaneous strategies of community maintenance and interaction combine the discourse and skills of what Vijay Mishra (1994) has termed 'diaspora of exclusivism' and 'diasporas of the border' (Clifford 1997: 252).

While this last statement fails to problematise enough the idea of the 'community', it nevertheless alludes to the notion of the 'locality', which is extremely important for the experience and notions of the diaspora. The historical and social contexts of the 'new place' and the relations to the homeland are part of a larger process, by which the 'ethnic identity' and the 'community' (that at times are assumed to be a given or 'natural') are constantly created and transformed.

Conclusions

Ethnic media are often celebrated in Australia as means by which migrant/ethnic communities maintain their original culture and linguistic identity in the new society. The assumption is that, by providing such a space, a more tolerant and culturally enriched society will emerge. For the particular ethnic programmes and their ethnic broadcasters, as the above case study indicates, the main issue is not that of multiculturalism but rather about making sense of the migratory experience and their collective identities in light of the migratory move. As in the case of the Hebrew programmes, conflicts amongst the broadcasters about the content and presentation style of the programmes are, to a large degree, struggles about different social and political understandings held by the broadcasters in light of their life away from 'home'. The Israeli broadcasters tend to frame their programmes based on their personal and collective interpretations of the migratory experience. The different references to Israel and Israeli culture and the meaning of being an Israeli in the diaspora, as interpreted by both programmes, reflect questions and debates within Israel itself.

In this sense, the distance from Israel is not merely a physical distance but should rather be understood as a symbolic practice. Like the migrants' own lives, the 'ethnic community' and its media sites are products of ongoing relations and personal feelings about both the symbolic and the actual distance from the place of origin. The Hebrew programmes are not simply about a sense of cultural loss and longing. Rather, they are a product of the ambivalence of the distance from a national space and a society that is in itself vibrant and socially divided.

'Ethnic media', as this media sector was historically constructed in Australia, face significant challenges and new opportunities. Present technological frameworks such as the Internet and new media technologies challenge the original logic of local 'community-based' ethnic media. New technologies provide opportunities for migrants to 'stay connected' and even actively participate in their mediascapes back home. Why bother with a local community radio programme when you can access online radio programmes and other media sites directly from 'home'? Will the role of the ethnic broadcasters be reduced to merely relaying media content from the country of origin for audiences who do not have the skill or resources to access the same material by themselves? Or will their role be to add something to the reports by editorialising or selecting the material in a way that reflects the experiences and needs of their local communities? Why worry about somebody else's representations when you can, in fact, live your original cultural identity on the web? And for the broadcasters themselves, why set yourself up within a local ethnic radio programme when you can produce your own blog or local podcast? Such questions take us to different sets of arguments about the construction of multiculturalism and the 'multicultural' space itself.

The Israeli radio programmes analysed in this paper illustrate that questions of identity and belonging may develop within the multicultural space but often refer back to individual migratory experiences and collective debates back home. The relationship between such internal debates and the multicultural setting, as defined within the 'ethnic radio station', are likely to continue. Such questions may take on new formats as 'ethnic media' transform and adapt to the current technological and political settings.

Notes

- [1] For more information on the community radio sector in Australia see <http://www.cbonline.org.au/>
- [2] Broadly speaking an ethnic programme must: 1) be mainly in a language other than English; 2) contain no more than 50 per cent musical content; 3) have no more than 25 per cent spoken religious material or references; 4) be produced under the auspices of a recognised local ethnic community language group; 5) be locally produced; and 6) be broadcast between 6 am and midnight (<http://www.cbf.com.au>).
- [3] All names are pseudonyms. As this is a very small setting, it is arguable that the use of such pseudonyms does not protect the identity of the participants. This aspect was clearly explained to them and all agreed that I may use their real names—I chose not to do so.

Furthermore, all but one of the broadcasters mentioned or interviewed in the paper are no longer involved in any of the radio programmes.

- [4] *Arutz Sheva* defines itself as 'Israeli National Radio'. It is a religious right-wing radio station, founded in 1988 and formerly broadcasting illegally on the Israeli airwaves from a ship in the Mediterranean outside Israel's territorial waters. The station was shut down by the Israeli government and currently broadcasts over the Internet.
- [5] Such statements, it could be argued, breach the station and public broadcasting guidelines in relation to defamation laws in Australia. Yet, as there were no official complaints made to the station, it has no way of knowing about such cases.
- [6] *Refuseniks* are Israeli soldiers who refuse to serve in the occupied territories for reasons of conscience. For more details see the *Seruv* website <http://www.seruv.org.il/english/default.asp>
- [7] In an interesting twist, as posted by a blogger in newzionist.com. 'Yordim' (expatriates) are no longer seen as 'bad Israelis'. In a lecture, delivered by Major General Uzi Dayan, in New York to a 'Young urban Israeli professional crowd of NYC', the General stated to his audience that they, the Israelis who left the country (*Yordim*), are not the cowardly deserters but rather the 'good Israelis'. Over the last few years *Yordim* are generally highly educated, secular and often regarded as members of the more 'Westernised' segments of Israeli society. Such a position is often presented as a criticism of the current political and social situation in Israel. (<http://www.newzionist.com/2005/04/on-good-and-bad-israelis/>)
- [8] Interestingly, many of Hitman's songs are on a similar theme and reflect a similar paradox. According to the songwriter's official website, his latest song 'How Many Tears'—*Kama Dmaout*, released on Israeli radio just before he died in 2004, reflects his ambivalent feelings towards Israel. His criticism of the difficulties and constant complaints when living *within* the country, and yet his strong patriotic feelings and the need to defend Israel from any criticism directed towards it, when he is travelling or living *outside* the country, dominate his official memorial website <http://uri.webpoint.co.il/uzi-Hitman/welcome.html>
- [9] Motives for emigrating are also relevant here. Gold (2002: 31) provides some interesting comments and case studies regarding such motives among the Israeli emigrants he studied. This issue was not addressed in my study mainly because, after many years of living in Australia, the need to talk or justify reasons for leaving Israel becomes less important than the actual experience of life as migrants in the new place.
- [10] Shalom Hanoch is a well known Israeli rock singer and a songwriter. The reference in the quotation is to his song 'Just Like You', *Bediyuk Kamocho*. Interestingly while I googled for the lyrics of the song I found that this particular song was chosen to name a peace building project by a Brandeis University radio programme in Boston. The programme, aired for two years, played songs in both Arabic and Hebrew and always opened playing this song. The lyrics of the song, translated into English, can be found on the website <http://www.shalom.org/Just%20like%20you.htm>

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