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# Media Access Revisited: A Social Marketing Perspective on Community Broadcasting

The European media system is facing a process of profound structural change comprising technical, legal, economic, political, and cultural aspects: (a) because of the growing world-wide interdependency of hardware and software producers, the existing links to the media industries especially in *North America* and *Japan* are becoming steadily tighter. On the other hand decentralisation and deregulation of the national audio visual markets have resulted in a greater segmentation and even dissociation of media audiences. (b) The process of European integration is bringing about new forms of international cooperation in all media sectors ('Euromedia'), while at the same time providing new opportunities for the reinforcement of subnational (regional) and local communication structures ('community of European regions'). The significance of regional and local media may improve to the extent that former national or ideological orientations are failing. (c) An entirely new mediascape is about to emerge in many eastern European countries, in the wake of the massive political and economic changes currently taking place. While legal and institutional structures of the press and the broadcast media are being reorganised, new media like video and satellite TV are spreading by consumers' choice, indicating a deep transformation of communication culture that is going on.

What do these developments entail for the production, presentation and reception of access programmes in the *European broadcast media* and the question of media access in general? Are the concepts of the seventies and eighties still valid by which access and community programmes were meant to overcome the deficits and limitations of the statutory (public or commercial) broadcasting system? It seems that growing commercialism and the diversification of media audiences will make it more and more difficult for access programmes to be socially significant, although the legal conditions and the availability of channels may further improve.

## 1. Early concepts

In support of the argument I shall first recall some of the key concepts underlying the early proliferation of access programming in *Germany* and the *U.K.* In these two countries the idea of access was actually promoted by a few individuals working in the public broadcasting systems, in the wake of a general striving in society towards more democracy and participation following the students' revolt in the late sixties and early seventies.

Public access to television on the *BBC* is said to have formally originated with a note (dated December 7th 1972) from the Director of Programmes, Television (then *David Attenborough*) for consideration by the BBC's Board of Management. The intention was described as follows:
"1. 'Access' or 'community' programmes, which are spoken of so frequently in the current debates about broadcasting, are taken to be programmes which are made by viewers who