

Madrid's free radio stations: local media and neighbourhood participation in the 1980s

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Abstract

In the 1980s, two fundamental social movements coexisted in Madrid: the neighbourhood movement and the free radio movement. In this article we will see how both were related and what results their work together produced in terms of communication and visibility of local issues. With a series of examples, we will analyse how participation of the organised neighbourhood network in the free radio stations could have generated beneficial dynamics for both, giving a voice to residents of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the capital city and creating a space with different types of social activism.

Keywords

Free radios, neighbourhood movement, participation, alternative communication, local communication.

Resum

A la dècada de 1980 van coexistir a Madrid, entre d'altres, dos moviments socials fonamentals: el veïnal i el de les ràdios lliures. En aquest article veurem de quines maneres s'han relacionat tots dos i quins resultats ha llançat el treball en comú en termes de comunicació i visibilitat de problemàtiques locals. Mitjançant una sèrie d'exemples, analitzarem com la participació del teixit veïnal organitzat en les ràdios lliures va poder generar dinàmiques beneficioses per a tots dos, tot donant veu als veïns dels barris més desfavorits de la capital i creant un espai en què es van trobar diversos activismes socials.

Paraules clau

Ràdios lliures, moviment veïnal, participació, comunicació alternativa, comunicació local.

1. Introduction

The free radio movement appeared in the Spanish ether at the end of the 1970s, inspired by its French and Italian counterparts, and from the very beginning, it proposed a horizontal, open and participatory communication model. These radio stations had-and still have-inserted inside a broader alter-globalization worldview, the objective of breaking with the prevailing vertical communication dynamics. To this end, they guaranteed, by way of practice, right of access and citizen participation, opening their microphones, studios, telephones and assemblies to anyone interested in communicating.

This paper aims to bring us closer to one of the many concrete forms that this participation took: the relationship between Madrid's free radio stations and the neighbourhood movement of their neighbourhoods in the 1980s. The chronological framework selected corresponds, when speaking of free radio stations, to what we might consider the first stage in their history: from the emergence of the first experiences to the tender for licences under the National Technical Plan which accompanied the 1987 Telecommunications Organisation Act. With regard to the neighbourhood movement, we must

take into account that they would be difficult years, in which recomposing and participating in the demands of each area of the capital, such as the conflict around La Vaguada in the Barrio del Pilar, was complemented with intervening in other more general ones, such as mobilisations around the referendum on Spain's permanence in NATO.

We will relate the activity of two social movements, one barely studied and almost forgotten, the free radio, and the other, the neighbourhood, whose importance and memory have been vindicated. Nevertheless, and despite these differences, both share, in our opinion, the characteristic of constituting "movements of movements" (PÉREZ QUINTANA & SÁNCHEZ LEÓN 2008: 15). Based on this situation, we will analyse the different forms in which the resident associations and these stations established bonds, which were the potentialities and consequences of them and we will try to glimpse what dynamics of participation and feedback took place within these relations. Thus confirming, on the one hand, that it is worth continuing to study the neighbourhood associations in greater depth, since they were "privileged observers of the social and political tensions experienced during the late Franco years, the Transition and the first years of democracy" (ORTIZ HERAS 2016:

13); and, on the other, that the study of free radio stations offers new perspectives in which we must continue to delve.

To carry out this analysis we will rely on primary sources gathered over years of research, in which we have attempted to reconstruct the past of these radios. We must bear in mind that we are dealing with an object of study on which it is difficult to find complete series of sources, so we must make a virtue of necessity. On the one hand, we will work with documents from the stations themselves: fanzines, internal documents, manifestos, etc. On the other, some semi-structured interviews with activists of the alternative broadcasting movement of those years will be essential sources, which will allow us to know and fix details not included in other documents. The data from these sources will be completed and clarified with the consultation of both generalist and alternative press, and the pre-existing bibliography.

In this way, this paper is linked to the small number of publications on free radio produced by the Spanish Academy. This contribution is in addition to what can already be considered classic contributions, such as those made by Prado (1981) or Aguilera (1985) and new efforts, such as those made in different senses by the members of the Community, Alternative and Participatory Communication Research Network (GARCÍA GARCÍA 2013; RAMOS MARTÍN, MORAIS & BARRANQUERO CARRETERO 2018). Extraordinarily little attention has been paid to this phenomenon from historiography. General quantitative approaches have come to light in recent years (GARCÍA GIL, GÓMEZ GARCÍA & REGUERO SANZ 2018) and also contributions that have examined its past in specific regions such as Catalonia (CAMPS DURBAN 2019), the Basque Country (PASCUAL 2019) or Madrid (PÉREZ MARTÍNEZ 2018).

The reflections presented here follow the trail of recent work that is analysing the relationship between free radios and different social movements. In this approach, opened by Martín (1998) with his seminal text on free radios, occupation, insubordination and the solidarity economy, we can find some notes on the political role of these stations (GARCÍA GIL 2019) and others, which, from the point of view of ideological production and the construction of counter-hegemony, outline the specific cases of environmentalism, anti-militarism or feminism (PÉREZ MARTÍNEZ 2020, 2019 and 2013, respectively) and serve as a framework for this text.

In a first part, and as a necessary contextualisation, we will approach the development of both movements in those years; in a second part, we will attempt to understand the characteristics and the potentiality of the relationship between the movement for freedom of emission and other social movements. Finally, we will focus on describing, understanding and evaluating what the involvement of the citizens' movement and its neighbourhood associations with the free radio stations meant, through the study of specific cases about which we have been able to recover testimonies or documentation.

2. Neighbourhood associations and free radios: notes on two social movements in the Madrid of the eighties

Before we begin to carry out our work, it is necessary to provide a few lines that introduce these two social movements and their situation in the 1980s, in order to obtain a framework that allows us to understand in what situation this relationship between the neighbourhood movement and the free radio movement is beginning to take place. However, we must start from the assumption that this crossroads was natural, since we are convinced that the Madrid urban social movements of that decade constituted, according to Manuel Castells, "a system of practices resulting from the articulation of a conjuncture of the system of urban agents and of other social practices", so that "its development tends objectively towards the structural transformation of the urban system" (1974: 312), and of society as a whole, we would add. As integral parts of the same system, it seems that both phenomena were destined to be interrelated.

Madrid's neighbourhood movement took root in the 1950s, although it began to operate informally under the protection of the 1964 Associations Act, at which time the first Neighbourhood Associations began to appear in Palomeras Bajas, Pozo del Tío Raimundo, Usera, Orcasitas, Villaverde and other neighbourhoods in the south of the city. In the 1970s it was a key element in the anti-Franco struggle, which eventually spread to the rest of the region. In 1975 the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of the Province of Madrid was founded, which eventually accumulated an active militancy of more than 220,000 people, posed struggles as important as the "bread war" or negotiation of the Pradolongo Park, constituting a very important school of democracy (ACTIVA ORCASITAS 2005: 19 and 24), as well as being the germ of the current Regional Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Madrid (FRAVM).

The holding of the first democratic municipal elections after the dictatorship in 1979 marked the beginning of a series of key changes for the neighbourhood movement. One of the most important was the progressive "decapitation" of the movement. Many of its leaders came from, or ended up in, the various left-wing parties, from the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) to the Communist Movement (MC), via the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) or the Workers' Revolutionary Organisation (ORT), so that, in the face of the new political situation, they began to defend the new municipal participatory channels, thus abandoning many of these organisations to their fate.

In this way, the citizens' movement, emptied of content and without material and human resources, faces the challenges posed by the 1980s, that of "disenchantment". According to Carmen Espinar (2015: 12-14), during these years, there were several social and political changes. Firstly, the authorities introduced new rules of participation aimed at, in fact, controlling the neighbourhood associations. Secondly, the new democratic local councils began to cover, in unequal competition, various activities that had been covered by the

associative fabric. The same thing happened with the left-wing parties, which, by integrating into the electoral space and adopting a district organisation chart, began, in many cases, to compete with the neighbourhood associations. Finally, the slow bureaucratization of these associations reduced the dynamism that had characterised them until then, added to the internal division caused by the NATO referendum and an increasing inability to connect with the new generations.

Faced with these new and unflattering conditions, Madrid's neighbourhood associations began, on the one hand, to build alliances with other sectors such as the Parents' Associations or the environmental movement, with which they carried out joint actions and campaigns, and, on the other hand, they also approached a phenomenon that had begun to be established in Madrid at the beginning of the decade: free radio stations.

In fact, Carmen Espinar herself values the appearance of free radio stations as something positive for the 1980's neighbourhood movement, since they formed part of an alternative media that would have made it possible to avoid the ostracism to which the generalist media would have condemned the social movements. In her own words,

"(...) in the face of the media, which for some time now have not given prominence to the neighbourhood movement and which echo the political positions of the big political parties regarding the invisibility of the social movements of the time, free and community radio stations have emerged, with a territorial base in the neighbourhoods and with participation of the residents. Along with this, bulletins, magazines and neighbourhood newspapers are increased and improved as alternative means of communication" (2015: 13).

Indeed, free radios started to be developed in Madrid in the 1980s, although we can find direct antecedents at the end of the previous decade, both in the capital of the State and in Catalonia or the Basque Country. It is a heterogeneous and changing phenomenon, which has made it exceedingly difficult to establish a definition that reflects the diversity of projects that can be found within the movement. However, we can establish as common characteristics practically all the stations being non-profit projects, set up by the citizens, sometimes through cultural or youth associations, with horizontal decision-making mechanisms; being open to participation and independent of political, religious or economic pressure groups (GARCÍA GARCÍA 2017: 34).

In Spain, this phenomenon has also been characterised by its "illegality". In the years under review, these stations carried out their work without administrative concession, but from the firm conviction that Article 20 of the 1978 Constitution protected them. Thus, they shared, or disputed, the airwaves with legal stations, public and private, national or municipal, and illegal ones, such as pirate radio stations, private, unlicensed and profit-making stations (IBARRA, MAESTU & PORTUONDO 1987: 2).

The first experiences of alternative radio broadcasting, free

proto-radios, in Madrid date back to the end of 1976 with the appearance of Radio La Voz del Pobre, a short-lived station. After a few years of relative emptiness in terms of alternative experiences, in 1982 Radio Acción appeared in the Barrio del Pilar, a precursor of what would be the first wave of free radio stations in the city of Madrid: Onda Verde Vallekana, Radio Fhortaleza, Radio Luna and Onda Sur, projects which began to operate in 1983.

This year is a key moment for development of radio stations in the Autonomous Community of Madrid. In May, the 6th Meeting of the State Coordinator of Free Radio Broadcasters was held at the Ateneo Libertario in Villaverde, sponsored by the newborn Onda Sur and the Asturian Radio QK. This meeting followed the trail of those held previously, mainly in Catalonia and the Basque Country, and became a milestone in the movement's history. From this meeting came the so-called *Manifiesto de Villaverde*, a key document, since it contained a definition of the nature and objectives of free radio stations that, in fact, is still valid for many of them today (COORDINADORA 1983).

Between 1983 and 1987 the number of Madrid radio stations grew gradually, appearing in practically all the districts of the capital and surrounding municipalities. Projects such as Radio Vallekas, Radio Cero, Onda Verde, Antena Vicálvaro, Radio Jabato or Radio Carcoma appeared in these years, covering between them almost the whole of the Autonomous Community.

The work of Madrid's radio stations during this decade was continuous. Thus, they participated in the meetings that were held during these years, such as the one in Albacete in 1985 (GÓMEZ 1985); they mobilized for the "no" vote in the referendum on Spain's permanence in NATO (Casanova 2002: 29). They suffered closures and repressive episodes, such as the arrest of an announcer from La Cadena del Water in the context of the student strikes of 1987 (ECHEVARRÍA 1987); and they ended up facing, divided, the turning point that was the approval of the Law on the Regulation of Telecommunications (LOT) in December 1987. From that year until 1989, their activity was focused on how to deal with the tender for licences foreseen in the National Technical Plan derived from the LOT. The rupture that had been brewing in the Madrid movement speed up then, which led to several free radio projects being submitted to the tender.

As a condition for participating in the tender, the authorities demanded a temporary cessation of broadcasting, so that in March 1989 Madrid's free stations ceased their activity on the airwaves. This generalised halt was one of the most critical moments in the movement's history. The result of the distribution of licences favoured the free stations with two of them in the whole state: one in Valencia, still active, for Radio Klara, and another in Madrid, in Chinchón, for the Federation of Free Radios of the Community of Madrid (FERALICOMA), a project that would disappear in the early 1990s.

After the suspension of broadcasts and the results of the tender for licences, many Madrid free radio stations disappeared from the dial forever, while others returned to their "illegal" activity

over time. During the 1990s, the relationship between the two movements became closer, so that many radio stations gradually joined the FRAVM.

3. Madrid's free radio and social movements

As we pointed out in the introduction, Madrid's free radio was a real "movement of movements" in the 1980s. In other words, it was a space where collectives and individuals from different struggles and social mobilisations converged and found in this type of station a space in which to participate and a tool to propagate their discourses.

These radio stations were born within what, following Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (2014), we have called an "alternative subculture": a social subset made up of members of parties, unions, left-wing collectives, more or less radical, and different social movements, inherited from anti-Francoism and influenced by the ways of doing things in the counterculture.

The open and horizontal character of these stations allowed their guides to be built according to the interests of those who wanted to take part in them. Therefore, and given the relationship of these media with the alternative subculture mentioned above, it was quite common for activists and social groups to approach them to use them as a loudspeaker, not in vain their objective was to give voice to "the voiceless".

We must bear in mind that, although the free radio movement has its own demands, its own agenda and its own coordinating bodies, many of these stations were created by organised collectives that came from other specific social struggles, or that were more or less linked to political parties or unions, sensitive to the struggles of social movements. We find examples such as Onda Sur, in the district of Villaverde, set up by the MUA (Muchos Unidos Alternativos), a group composed, among others, of the Colectivo Ecologista de Villaverde (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2012c), with a clear environmentalist tendency in its programming; Radio Cero was the project of the Anti-NATO Commission of Madrid, with pacifism and anti-militarism as its hallmarks (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2008); Onda Verde Vallekana was born with strong links to the ecological bookstore El Bulevar, so from the beginning there was a very strong connection with this movement (Rodríguez Leal 2002: 121-122); Radio Negra, later Onda Latina, was a project initiated by the Latina district grouping of the PCE (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2014b), or Radio Luna, whose origin has some relation with the CNT Banking Union (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2011b).

For all these reasons, feminism, environmentalism or pacifism were some of the protagonists of hours and hours of broadcasting, turning free radio stations into bodies of ideological production and reproduction within and outside the limits of the alternative subculture in which they were born. In other words, they were spaces in which the different militant and activist discourses were shared, fed back and, through these contacts and the airwaves, expanded their influence

and social depth. The dynamics and operation of free radio stations facilitated this sharing, and their deliberative nature would encourage the different discourses to be shared within the stations, to be discussed and to arrive at unifying syntheses. Proof of this would be programmes such as *A por todas* on Onda Sur (ONDA SUR 1985), which put into circulation the demands of feminism; *La calle de todos* on Radio Luna, then *Libertad condicional* on Radio Cero, which was responsible for communicating the lines of work of the Anti-Repressive Committee of Madrid (PÉREZ MARTÍNEZ 2010); or *La lima*, on Onda Verde Vallekana, very close to the mobilizations that the Coordinating Committee of Prisoners in Struggle (COPEL) had been carrying out (Personal interview 2011c), which would have been in charge of putting all the members of its radio stations in contact with these concrete struggles.

The work of these radios, as *ideological apparatuses* (ALTHUSSER 1974), operated, as we have pointed out, on two levels: one of proximity, which would be the projection of their discourses on the limits of the very alternative sphere within which these stations were inserted, and a second, broader, constituted by the whole of society, Madrid, in this case. At this first level, and as the members of this alternative sphere came from different contexts and activisms, in the free stations they would come into contact with other experiences and would confront, share and debate their points of view. A woman coming from a feminist collective, for example, could come into contact, in a radio station like this, with environmental activists and feedback their repertoires of struggle through sharing and debate. The innate capacity of the radio waves to cross borders would give rise to the second level: either to their closest community or to the whole city, these stations had the capacity to be heard by broad sectors of the citizenry.

The two modalities of ideological circulation that we have just exposed generated in those years a "peripheral public sphere", different from the dominant central public sphere, which for this subculture would end up consolidating in "alternative hegemony" and which was characterised by "a greater pluralism of voices, ideological tendencies and diversity of agenda" (RESINA & SAMPEDRO 2010: 151). We believe that this space came to constitute itself as "counter-hegemonic" and that it forced the dominant culture at specific moments to have to negotiate its positions, as could have happened during the campaign prior to the referendum on Spain's permanence in NATO in 1986. The culture and the practice of the alternative subculture had to be incorporated, at least in part, and freed from its surreptitious components, to the heritage of the dominant groups in order not to lose its dominant position.

It is here that we can discern the potential and importance of the role played by the free radio stations of the moment, more specifically the Madrid ones, since we can say, based on the social impact of these radio stations during the 1980s, that they had this function of ideological instance. The presence of this movement in both generalist and alternative media, supports the hypothesis that it had a certain reach. Its appearances in

publications as disparate as the Sunday newspaper *Blanco y Negro* (CRIADO 1980), the current affairs publication *Diario 16* (ANTONA & REGUEIRO 1984), the libertarian reference magazine *Ajoblanco* (AJOBLANCO 1977) or *Onda 2001*, which was dedicated to amateur radio (LAPEÑA & MEDRANO 1984), reinforce the idea that their messages became part of the media, social and political agenda.

Thus, the free radio stations played a mediating role in the dynamics of negotiation of the social hegemony of those years and thanks to them both content and values, or ways of acting of the alternative subculture, were incorporated into the dominant culture, and struggles and social problems that, at times, would have escaped the interest of the generalist media became known. Advances in the assimilation of the agenda of the feminist movement or the concern for pacifism would not have become part what has been “normalised” if they had not first been part of the “alternative hegemony” that, thanks in part to free radio, spread through important sectors of Spanish society.

After these reflections, what we now need to do is to see what concrete forms this role of free broadcasters took in the relationship between them and the neighbourhood movement: how it was articulated, its potential and its results.

4. Madrid's neighbourhood movement on the waves

When we look at the ways in which Madrid's free radio stations related to the neighbourhood movement, facilitating their access to the media, we see that this reality materialised in two specific ways. As a starting point, we should point out that this rapprochement of the neighbourhood took place mainly in the radio stations that Rosa Franquet identified as “local”, in the neighbourhood stations, being less common in those that were metropolitan and intended to reach the whole capital (1984: 178).

The first form of participation of the Madrid neighbourhood movement in this type of communication is through radio stations set up, or supported, by the city's own neighbourhood associations. The second is the attention given by the “local” stations to the problems of their most direct environment. In both cases, however, it was the residents of each of the neighbourhoods that mainly fed the guides of these stations.

If we look at the census of free radio stations in operation in the Community of Madrid during the 1980s, we see that, out of a total of 45 stations, six were created by the organised neighbourhood movement:

One of the first examples of a free radio station set up by a neighbourhood association was Antena Vicálvaro. This arose from the interest of the youth section of this association and began to take shape at the end of 1983 and started broadcasting in 1984. Ceferino Maestu, president of the neighbourhood association in those years, acknowledged that, in line with what Espinar had said, the creation of the station “responded

to a need for social communication” since the neighbourhood movement's magazines “had a very close circulation, they didn't go any further, that would be very expensive [...]”, while setting up a radio station “first, it was cheaper and second, it was more immediate”, in other words, “it allowed you to access things that happened more quickly” (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2011a).

A media outlet that echoed the demands of an area that, in the 1980s, was immersed in a great many struggles to improve the material conditions of the district, which remained relatively isolated from the rest of the city and faced problems such as the absence of clinics and sports centres, the existence of an illegal market known as “Guarrerías Preciados” or the need to relocate a shanty town of almost 400 families (FRESNEDA 1988).

According to its promoters, the station had some influence on the district thanks to its involvement in the day-to-day running of the district, therefore:

“it did a lot of things, but always aimed at things in the neighbourhood, not at general political objectives, but at getting traffic lights on the streets, at getting schools [...], the subject of the shanties, the subject of the underground, communications, access, Vicálvaro was almost isolated from Madrid at the time, [...] the paving of the streets. Things that were normal, or cultural activities, such as the King's Day parade, or things like that, neighbourhood festivals, very local things” (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2011a).

A second example of this category of stations was Radio Carcoma, created a few years later in Canillejas, following similar dynamics to those of Antena Vicálvaro, as the radio itself recognised:

“the pernicious ideas of a group of young people who landed in the Canillejas Neighbourhood Association, with the idea of perverting the whole neighbourhood in any way, degenerated [*sic*] into giving birth to a radio even if it was as single mothers. [...] In spite of everything, at 1:00 p.m. the next day, with a transmitter borrowed from Radio Mercurio [...], Radio Carcoma's broadcast began, *el terror de la madera* (*the terror of wood*)... and the terror of the technique, because at 1:20 a.m. we had to disconnect due to a suspicious smell of burning from the transmitter [...]” (RADIO CARCOMA 1997: 1).

One project, this one from the station, was valued by the neighbourhood as “a very seductive story from the point of view of participation” that was “super attractive for the youngest people of the Association and that was extremely successful” (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2012a). Radio Carcoma maintained a varied programming, with many musical spaces, but centred around the life of Canillejas, which had been creating big problems since the 1970s, such as heroine (CANTALAPIEDRA 1987). This approach to local issues led the station to consider the need for its own news programme at the end of the decade, which provided another way for the local community to participate

Table 1. Census of active Madrid radio stations in the 1980s

Radio station name	Start date	End date	Collective owner	Location
90'5 Esstereo	1981	Unknown	Own collective	Madrid (unknown neighbourhood)
Antena Colectiva	1986	Unknown	Own collective	Cuatro Caminos
Antena Vicálvaro	1983	1997/1998	Neighbourhood Assoc.	Vicálvaro
Cadena del Water	1984	1989	Young people group (Radio La Voz del Pobre)	Malasaña
Onda Butti	198?	Unknown	Own collective	Getafe
Onda Lateral	1987	Unknown	Own collective	Madrid (unknown neighbourhood)
Onda Latina	1986	Active	Cultural Assoc. Pablo Picasso	Aluche
Onda Merlín Comunitaria	1987	Active	Own collective	Villaverde
Onda Sur	1983	199?	M.U.A.	Villaverde
Onda Verde	1984	Active	ex-Onda Verde Vallekana group	Arganzuela
Onda Verde Vallekana	1983	1984	Bookstore El Bulevar	Vallecas
Radio Acción	1982	1983	Own collective	Barrio del Pilar
Radio Actividad	1984	2005	Cultural Assoc. (Radio Imagen)	Alcalá de Henares
Radio Albatros	1986	Unknown	Own collective	Ventilla
Radio Caribe	1985	Unknown	Neighbourhood Assoc.	Zarzalejo
Radio Carcoma	1988	Active	Neighbourhood Assoc.	Canillejas
Radio Cero	1984	199?	Anti-NATO Commission	San Bernardo
Radio Cigüeña	1986	Active	Cultural Assoc.	Rivas Vaciamadrid
Radio ELO	1986	2008	Neighbourhood Assoc.	Orcasitas
Radio Enlace	1989	Active	Youth Assoc.	Hortaleza
Radio Fhortaleza	1983	199?	Own collective	Hortaleza
Radio Fuga	1985	Active	Own collective	Aranjuez
Radio Hola	1980	Unknown	Own collective	Madrid (unknown neighbourhood)
Radio Imagen	Unknown	1984	Own collective	Alcalá de Henares
Radio Jabato	1984	Active	Youth Assembly of Coslada	Coslada
Radio Keka	1981	1982	Unknown	Madrid (unknown neighbourhood)
Radio La Voz del Pobre	1976	1980	Own collective	Ciudad Lineal
Radio Las Águilas	1983	Active	Neighbourhood Assoc.	Las Águilas
Radio Luna	1983	199?	Own collective ex-CNT	Malasaña
Radio Manzanares	1980	1980	Unknown	Madrid (unknown neighbourhood)
Radio Mercurio	1988	1989	Own collective	Puerta del Sol
Radio Morata	1984	Active	Own collective	Morata de Tajuña
Radio Negra	1984	1986	PCE	Aluche
Radio ORNI	1988	Unknown	Own collective	Vallecas
Radio Paloma	1987	Active	Neighbourhood Assoc.	Vallecas
Radio Piel Roja	1984	Unknown	Own collective	Leganés
Radio Rara	1983	1987/1988	Own collective	Getafe
Radio Ritmo	1985	201?	Own collective	Getafe
Radio Tú	1983	1985	Casa de la Cultura	Parla
Radio Vallekas	1986	Active	Own collective	Vallecas

Source: Own elaboration from the author's personal file, personal interviews and other materials.

in the communication process, since the project was being promoted by *Boletín K*, or at least it was announced in its promotional leaflets, by reporters

“who are where the news is produced or are its’ protagonists. So that it is transmitted and spread as you want, without manipulation, without intermediaries ... directly. You, who lives newsworthy acts or knows things that others don’t, now have the way to communicate it” (RADIO CARCOMA ca. 1989).

An interesting dynamic, as it encouraged neighbourhood participation in the communication process, convincing them that anyone can become a news reporter.

Another noteworthy programme on this station was *Qué malditas son las mujeres*, a space coordinated by the Women’s Commission of the Neighbourhood Association. This is a clear example of the role of these stations as a “movement of movements”, since here the movement for freedom of expression, the feminist movement and the neighbourhood movement are intertwined, facilitating, through participation in the radio, the circulation of the feminist agenda among the inhabitants of Canillejas.

Radio ELO (Emisora Libre de Orcasitas - Orcasitas Free Radio Station) is the last example of a station founded from the neighbourhood movement that we want to cover in this paper. The Orcasitas neighbourhood historically suffered problems and shortfalls that made its neighbourhood movement one of the most dynamic in the capital (Fresneda 1986). Established in 1986, the radio station was important in the neighbourhood, because it articulated its youthful fabric, constituting a “meeting place where sociability was generated among young people”, and this is because in Radio ELO

“there were *heavies*, there were *punks*, there were *rebels* [...], there were environmentalists, there was a little bit of a representation of what the Orcasitas youth world was. Not all the youth world, but maybe, kids with concerns [...] to communicate and so on” (Personal interview 2012b)

Inside the station’s guide, which hosted music, film and cultural magazines, there was a local news programme *El noticiero*, *las noticias de la ELO*, focused, of course, on the neighbourhood’s social, political and cultural news, and a programme dedicated to Orcasitas’ grassroots sport, *El deporte es lo nuestro*. These two spaces are examples of the importance given local issues in alternative communication projects, supported by the neighbourhood movement. In the case of *El noticiero*, the dynamic would be similar to that of Radio Carcoma’s *Boletín K*, giving visibility and putting the problems and realities that are most immediate and closest to the audience itself on the agenda, and in the case of *El deporte es lo nuestro*, the emphasis on grassroots sport, which is normally not covered by the general media, has had an impact on this revaluation of the community.

Before moving on to the second type of relationship between the neighbourhood movement and free radio stations, we should note that these experiences promoted by the neighbourhood associations themselves did not always have a happy ending. The Carcoma Radio group broke away from the neighbourhood association, which took advantage of its studies to found Onda Diamante, and the closure of Radio ELO led to a conflict between the group of the station and the Orcasitas Association, which ended up giving rise to Radio ELA, a station that was active until the start of 2020.

As we pointed out in the introduction to this section, the “local”, neighbourhood radio stations gave preferential attention in their content to everything that had to do with their immediate surroundings, with the fabric of what constituted the community in which they were inserted. We would like, next, to point out some examples of how these stations facilitated the participation of the neighbourhood movement, more or less organised, in the communicative dynamics.

OMC, Onda Merlín Comunitaria, is a radio station founded in 1987 in the Villaverde neighbourhood that from the beginning connected very well with the neighbourhood fabric of its surroundings: the La Unidad Neighbourhood Association, the Pro-San Cristóbal Association or the Homemakers’ Association, among others, found in this new media a powerful way to “promote” their activities. During these years, the *Matiné* magazine was the preferential space to cover these associations, because in it, as one of our informants remembers

“[...] we talked about the park, that the City Council had thrown salt on the green areas to avoid having to water it, that is, they burned it [...], that kind of thing, “they tell us that in the street there have been a lot of potholes, and so on”. You gave small things, not that it was easy” (Personal interview 2014a).

This use of free stations as a spokesperson for the neighbourhood movement was not new in Villaverde, as it had been supported in the district of Onda Sur since 1983. This radio station, which as we saw was a pioneer in the capital, had from the beginning shown its involvement with its community. Thus, from very early on, it declared that it was open to all the residents of the neighbourhoods within its radius of action (Villaverde Alto y Bajo, San Cristóbal, Orcasur, Getafe and Ciudad de los Ángeles), and put its devices at the service of those who needed them either in a personal capacity or as representatives of an organisation. In this way, and in a district that continued to be plagued by important problems of industrial pollution, unemployment and lack of infrastructure, representatives of schools in the area and of the labour movement passed quickly through his microphones (Irigay 1983).

Another example of a free radio station that gave coverage to neighbourhood struggles in its broadcasts was Radio Acción, from the Estrecho neighbourhood, which during its short-lived life gave a broadcasting space to the Active and Unemployed Collective from the Barrio del Pilar neighbourhood. This collective even broadcast the takeover of La Vaguada, once the

“La Vaguada es nuestra” movement had been defeated, in order to “demand that at least people from the neighbourhood be given jobs in the construction of the shopping centre” (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2015). Through this exercise in participation, a voice was given to a neighbourhood struggle that had lasted for more than five years (EL PAÍS 1976) and was of vital importance to the neighbourhood.

A final, somewhat particular example of this type of relationship would be that of the San Miguel Neighbourhood Association in Hortaleza, with Radio Fhortaleza first and Radio Enlace later on. The former station, a personal project of two residents who broadcast from their homes, was totally focused on the neighbourhood and its problems, giving a voice to its residents and creating a sense of community in an area that was still receiving a large amount of migrants in the 1980s (RADIO FHORTALEZA 1983). This concern for the community made the neighbourhood end up giving them a space in their premises to develop their activity, with a guide organised by members of the association itself who made their programmes on Radio Fhortaleza (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2011c).

This station disappeared and at the same time, in 1989, Radio Enlace was created in the neighbourhood, a new project promoted by young people that soon began to broadcast from the space previously occupied by Radio Fhortaleza. In the case of Enlace, it once again opted for a clear centrality of the neighbourhood in its themes and for a close relationship, almost feedback, between the media and the neighbourhood, since the members of one group used to participate in the other. In this way, the antenna of Radio Enlace made visible the concerns of the residents of a neighbourhood that, even at the end of the decade, among other problems suffered from the absence of urban transport in decent conditions, in the public sphere, becoming part of the social and political agenda (PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2012d).

5. Conclusions

Based on the information presented in these pages, it is possible to draw several conclusions. The first of these is that, without a doubt, the relationship between the neighbourhood movement and the free stations was productive and intense. The radio stations, whether or not they depended on neighbourhood associations, allowed the citizens' movement to participate in communication and to actively integrate itself into the ideological projection dynamics we mentioned earlier. Thus, the demands and positions of the neighbours organised around the neighbourhood organisations were incorporated into the repertoire of struggles of the alternative subculture, at the same time as their demands were incorporated into the public sphere and passed on to the political and social agenda, to be heard and resolved.

Madrid's most disadvantaged districts and neighbourhoods had, thanks to the free radios, a means of communication

through which, by actively participating, they could make themselves heard and make visible some problems that, otherwise, would have remained hidden by the generalist media.

It is also possible to conclude that the space of the free radio stations became an important space of sociability in the neighbourhoods in which, as we pointed out earlier, activists from different movements, in this case the neighbourhood movement, came into contact with other militant realities, feeding their discourses and repertoires of struggle, think of the example of the feminist programme of Radio Carcoma.

The start-up of radio stations by the neighbourhood movement, as we have seen in the three examples discussed in these pages, attracted the attention mainly of the young people in the neighbourhoods where they were established: Canillejas, Vicálvaro and Orcasitas. We believe that it is possible to discern a double dynamic behind this reality. In the first place, it is possible that, taking into account the material conditions of abandonment in which these neighbourhoods were found, the proposal to young people of a form of leisure such as participation in the media was an alternative to the usual outings in contexts of high youth unemployment and environments exposed to delinquency and drug consumption, with which the associations would be doing an important job in their communities. Secondly, this relationship between young people and radio could also have helped to attempt to achieve a generational change for an associative fabric which, as we saw, was very unattractive in the 1980s.

Finally, it seems undeniable that it has been a prosperous relationship for both movements since, today, we can find federated broadcasters in the FRAVM, developing joint action plans in their communities and watching and fighting for the improvement of the living conditions of their neighbourhoods and districts, which are sometimes still the most disadvantaged in Madrid. Examples of this are Onda Merlín Comunitaria, Radio Vallekas, Radio Enlace or Radio Almenara.

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