

Chapter 3

Airing the Differences: An Approach to the Role of Women in the Spanish Free Radio Movement (1976–2014)

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Abstract The free radio movement appeared in Spain in the late 1970s, right after Franco's death, claiming for a new model of doing and understanding communication. Taking advantage of the new sociopolitical situation and with clear references in both French and Italian movements, hundreds of small, alternative, free radio stations appeared all over the country, making the 1980s their golden decade. This article explores the ways this movement established a series of relationships with feminism and women attending to its two main representations: women-related programmes and women's groups. The article deploys, mainly, a diachronic perspective, analyzing the development of this relationship from the late 1970s until today (as the movement is still alive and struggling), although it also attends to address its transnational features, as free radios have been an international phenomenon since their inception and these women's groups have very often established international networks.

Conducting research on the Spanish free radio movement from 1976 to 1989 – the dates correspond to the appearance of the first station in Madrid and the passing of the LOT (Ley de Ordenación de las Telecomunicaciones) – I was surprised by the continuous references to women and feminism that appeared both in the documentation and the oral testimonies. According to this amount of references, the relationship between free radios and women was obvious; it was only a matter of measuring its significance.

Therefore, this article aims to present this relationship by analyzing how this phenomenon has dealt with Spanish women's struggles during the last decades and by checking how since its inception, the free radio movement has understood the

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specificity of women and their subaltern condition, giving voice to those who did not have the chance of appearing in the media.

Consequently, this chapter will focus on the different manners deployed by these radio stations to support feminism and women's struggles: women dedicated programmes (1976–1989) and the appearance of women's groups within some of these radios.

3.1 An Introduction to the Spanish Free Radio Movement

Although the Spanish movement was highly influenced by the Italian and French experiences, it is necessary to do a brief introduction, as the particular context – both geographical and chronological – gives these radios particular features.

The first free radios appeared in Spain in 1976, right after Franco's death and while the Francoist regime was starting to move towards democracy. Those first radios were *Radio La Voz del Pobre* in Madrid¹ and *Radio Maduixa* in Granollers (Catalonia),² and can be seen as the “prehistory” of the movement.

In 1978, during the celebration of an Anti-Repression Meeting at Vic (Catalonia), some experimental broadcasts were held. Historically, these precarious experiments have been considered the starting point of free radios in Spain.³

Right after, in April 1979, a new project was set up in Barcelona by a collective of “autonomous, gays, feminists, pacifists, anti-militarists, and communication students and teachers”.⁴ This radio, *Ona Lliure*, became the milestone of the movement in Spain. Its short life due to a government closure was broadcasted live and was turned into a legend within the free radios collective imaginary.

After these primary experiences, the phenomenon spread from Catalonia, Valencia, Madrid and the Basque Country to the rest of Spain, becoming a nationwide movement. Its development went through different phases: after the first radios appeared, the movement started some self-organization dynamics through “Coordinadoras” – these are coordinating groups – both local and national. Some national meetings were held, the first manifestos written and problems with authorities followed, as well as the first administrative closures. Because of its growth, the movement faced some internal debates,⁵ and finally in 1989, the Socialist Party government passed the Ley de Ordenación de las Telecomunicaciones – a law to reorganize the media – which meant the first general closure of free radios. Some of

¹Aguilera, Miguel. 1985. *Radios libres y radios piratas*. Madrid: Editorial Forja.

²Aisa, Manel. 2013. Las jornadas libertarias de 1977 y la transición libertaria 1974–1979. <http://manelaisa.com/articulo/articulo-1-las-jornadas-libertarias-de-1977-y-la-transicion-libertaria-1974-1979-version-2/>. Accessed 17 Oct 2011.

³Colectivo de Radios Libres. 1981. *Alicia es el diablo*. Barcelona: Hacer.

⁴Translations by the author.

⁵Within these internal debates, we should mention those related with financial aspects and the ones about the relationship between some stations and political organizations such as the MC (Movimiento Comunista) or the LCR (Liga Comunista Revolucionaria).

them reopened during the beginning of 1990s, and others disappeared forever. The last 30 years were full of twists and turns, but the movement has kept on struggling for democratic communication.

A free radio is, according to its essential features, an autonomous station, independent, secular, pluralistic, promoted and managed by non-profit organizations with a democratic functioning – usually based on an open assembly – that pursues the rights of information and communication, a participatory, pluralistic and protest way of broadcasting, and an improvement of social conditions. This is a general definition,⁶ since free radios are a changing reality depending on geographical, ideological and economic elements.

When defining Spanish free radio stations, it is also important to bear in mind that they shared the waves with other kinds of radios. First of all, we have to differentiate free radios from public or private ones. The first difference is that free radios broadcast without licence, this is illegally, while public and private radios have licence. The second different feature is their approach to communication: free radios promote, as seen before, a horizontal participatory way of making radio (e.g. open telephone lines during the programmes allow direct feedback and participation; anyone could lead a programme as membership was open; etc.), while public and commercial stations operate in the traditional vertical exclusive manner.

Secondly, we have to take into account that free radios are not the only ones broadcasting without licence in Spain since the late 1970s. We have to differentiate free radios from pirate ones. The point here is that free radios have never included ads in their broadcast due to their non-profit ethos. However, pirate radios do, so they clearly get profits from their activities.

We should also exclude municipal radios, that is, radio stations that existed during the 1980s, belonging to and promoted by some city councils. Although they did not have licences, they were close to different political powers; in fact, they usually worked as loudspeakers for political propaganda, which obviously excludes them from the free radio category.⁷

Concerning the origins of the Spanish free radio stations, there are some clear precedents in the French and Italian experiences, which got high repercussions in the Spanish press, both mainstream and alternative. Thus, we are facing a transnational phenomenon; so if we want to trace its origins, we should look for a common layer to all the known cases: France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany, etc.

Without pretending to minimize the impact of individual agency, it seems that the origins of free radio have to be found in the superstructure of Western democratic societies and the importance given to the right of free speech and the right to communicate within these societies. France and Italy's constitutions – direct models for the Spanish radios – include articles which are devoted to these rights. The Italian Constitution in its 21st article affirms that “anyone has the right to freely

⁶Pérez Martínez, and José Emilio. 2012. Libertad en las ondas: la radio libre madrileña (1976–1986). In *Coetánea. Actas del III Congreso Internacional de Historia de Nuestro Tiempo*, 333–342. Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja.

⁷Aguilera 1985: 66; Santos Díez, María Teresa. 1999. *La radio vasca (1978–1998)*. Bilbao: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco: 30–38.

express their thoughts in speech, writing, or any other form of communication”, always according to the law.⁸ In France, the Constitution proclaims the country’s attachment to “the Rights of Man and the principles of national sovereignty as defined by the Declaration of 1789” (1958),⁹ which expressed in its 11th article that “the free communication of ideas and of opinions is one of the most precious rights of man”; thus, any citizen may “speak, write and publish freely” except “what is tantamount to the abuse of this liberty in the cases determined by Law”.¹⁰

The Spanish Constitution carries on with this legacy, and in its 20th section, it recognizes and protects the right to “freely express and spread thoughts, ideas and opinions through words, in writing or by any other means of reproduction” and to “freely communicate or receive truthful information by any means of dissemination whatsoever”, eliminating “prior censorship”. It also guarantees the access to media by the significant social and political groups, “respecting the pluralism of society”.¹¹

As these ideas become part of the dominant ideology in Western democratic societies, we have to bear in mind how the organization of the media in these countries prevented the complete and satisfactory observance of these rights. The development of media networks through state monopolies and private oligopolies depending on economic and political interests prevented citizens to become active agents in the media. Any hope of establishing bidirectional means of communication vanished, and the idea of a more democratic communication, which is a requirement to accomplish a full development of the rights exposed above, remained as an unfulfilled dream.

This context leads to a situation of “communicational anomy”, using Robert K. Merton’s redefinition of Émile Durkheim’s idea of anomy. We are facing a situation in which some specific targets gather high importance, without a proportional importance of the institutional procedures available to reach those specific targets. Thus, there is a tension between the “culturally defined objectives, purposes and interests supported by the whole society or by individuals in different positions within this society” and “acceptable means to reach these objectives”.¹²

Translating Merton’s ideas into the Spanish context, we find a situation in which the groups involved in the construction of the newborn democratic regime’s identity took the rights to free communication and free speech and introduced them into the new dominant ideology. Once these rights are part of the dominant ideology, they are projected to and assimilated by the subaltern groups as something natural and given – through the dynamics of social hegemony. However, as it is not possible to

⁸ Senato della Repubblica. 1947. Constitution of the Italian Republic.

⁹ Assemblée Nationale. 1958. Constitution of October 4, 1958. <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/english/>. Accessed 25 Oct 2014.

¹⁰ Assemblée Nationale. 1789. Declaration of Human and Civic Rights of 26 August 1789. http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/root/bank_mm/anglais/cst2.pdf. Accessed 25 Oct 2014.

¹¹ Cortes Generales. 1978. Constitution. http://www.congreso.es/portal/page/portal/Congreso/Congreso/Hist_Normas/Norm/const_esp_texto_ingles_0.pdf. Accessed 25 Oct 2014.

¹² Merton, Robert K. 1964. *Teoría y estructura sociales*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

fulfil them legally, individuals and groups within the subaltern try to reach them using nonnormative/deviant means.

Within all the modes of adaptation given by Merton to solve the anomy, the one that comes closer to the origins of the free radio movement is probably the “innovation”.¹³ The groups and individuals that set up the free radios accepted that those rights were clearly desirable and considered that the normative ways to reach them (the mass media) were not enough, so they started their own illegal media. One more factor motivated the appearance of the free radio stations: the democratization of both the technological and the cognitive means needed to establish a small radio station. During the late 1970s and the 1980s, some low-cost do-it-yourself kits were widely commercialized to build a radio broadcaster. It was also possible to introduce illegal broadcasters in Spain from other countries such as Italy.¹⁴ This made the appearance of these projects possible, together with the increase of new telecommunications engineers – who had the knowledge to establish and maintain this machinery. Finally, we can also underline the fact that this phenomenon was born within a youth subculture existing in Spain during those years. This “alternative subculture” was a hybrid form, mixing influences from the New Left, the Counterculture and the opposition to Francoist dictatorship. It can be identified with the groups from the extreme left wing and the social movements (ecologists, feminists, Trotskyites, Maoists, anarchists, etc.). As any subculture, it had its own representations and cultural practices – listening to these radio stations was, in fact, one of these practices. Therefore, the free radios could be considered “subcultural institutions” as they took an important part in the reproduction of the subcultural ideology.

Amongst the subjects that were part of these radios’ contents (antimilitarism, ecologism, municipal and local issues, pacifism, etc.), feminism and women-related issues had a constant presence since the inception.

3.2 Women and Free Radio

The relationship between women – especially those involved in the feminist struggle – and free radios can be traced back to the movement’s first steps. References about this relationship appeared in the movement’s first documents; however, this link between women and free radio in Spain was never as deep as it was in France or Italy, where feminist collectives established free radios such as the French *Radioteuses* or the Italian *Radio Lilith*.¹⁵

As mentioned above, there was a feminist group in the collective that established *Ona Lliure*. Its role appeared in the radio’s founding manifesto: “When we talk about the Movement [referring to the different social movements], we consider that

¹³ Merton 1964: 149.

¹⁴ Gas, Julia and Pérez, Javier. 2010. Hay que seguir luchando por la FM, ya que es accesible a todo el mundo. *Diagonal*, 120. Accessed 16 Jan 2011.

¹⁵ Anonymous. 1981. Radios Libres, FM-92 Mc, el aire es de todos. *Bicicleta* 39, May.

the radio should not be just a resource to make these movements public (feminists, gays, conscientious objectors, ecologists, etc.), it should be a radio in which these movements take part to give a global sense to the audience's life".¹⁶ Feminism and its struggle would not be just a mere topic in *Ona Lliure*'s programmes; it had to become a central point of its agenda to become a central part of its audience's life.

Little by little feminist programmes appeared in almost every free radio, as shown by different sources such as personal interviews, pamphlets, underground magazines, scripts, etc. Due to their alternative nature, it is difficult to find recordings of these programmes. Consequently, we don't know how the programmes exactly dealt with women issues. Nevertheless, they were a really outstanding part of these radios' agendas, although women usually constituted about 24 % of the people involved in these radio stations.¹⁷

In *Radio Cero* (Madrid), a radio connected to the Comisión Anti-OTAN, there was a programme led "by the **feminist movement**" – which is not surprising considering that the radio was close to the "alternative movements".¹⁸ Amongst other guests, they interviewed people like Empar Pineda, a well-known feminist activist¹⁹: this clearly represents the significance given to feminism by *Radio Cero* and expressed in the radio's founding manifesto, which affirmed that one of its objectives was to "become a means of expression and communication for [...] the **feminist movement** and its fight for women's rights and freedom against familiar, individual and social discriminations".²⁰

One of the main aims of *Onda Sur Villaverde* (Villaverde, Madrid) was to become a "way of expressing the problems and ideals" of groups such as "youngsters, **women**, workers, unemployed and marginal people... as well as cultural, musical, sportive associations, etc."²¹ In the radio's founding document, called *A la desesperada*, the group behind the project clearly expressed its intention of dealing with "some subjects considered interesting and contrast obsessions [sic.] (ecology, labor movement, antimilitarism, **feminism**, etc.)".²² A script from "A por todas", a *Onda Sur*'s feminist programme, that was broadcasted in 1985, shows some fixed sections such as female health (contraception, motherhood, information about the body, etc.), cultural criticism and women (books, magazines, films and theatre reviews), women and education, women and leisure time and legends about women (myths and witches). It would also pay attention to female hot news, addressing women-related problems, ideas or projects. This programme talked about women from a small village in southern Spain called Ubrique. Its case was interesting because there were not enough single young men in the village and women were organizing a "men parade" to solve that. This programme also mentioned a female-

¹⁶ Anonymous. 1985a. Propuesta para una radio libre. *Germinal* 3: 12.

¹⁷ Anonymous. 1989. Censo de Radios Libres. Private Archive.

¹⁸ Portuondo, Ernesto. 2008. Personal interview with the author. Madrid.

¹⁹ Calero, Juan Pablo. 2011. Personal interview with the author. Madrid.

²⁰ *Radio Cero*. No date. *Declaración Fundacional (extracto)*. Madrid: Radio Cero.

²¹ Anonymous. 1985b. *Onda Sur*. *Germinal* 3: 34.

²² Colectivo Ecologista de Villaverde. 1982. *A la desesperada*. Private Archive.

managed textile workshop in Prádena (Segovia), a clear example of an empowering initiative that could become an example for the listeners.²³

Radio Piel Roja (Leganés) was established by a group of “belligerent squaws” which decided to build a “wireless telegraph” because “there was nothing to do with white people”.²⁴ Through this comparison with the American Indian struggle, they tried to inform on the restrictive access to the media in Spain during the 1980s.

Eguzki Irratia (Pamplona), in spite of its ecologist calling, decided to open its schedule to “collectives such as **feminists**, antimilitarists, etc.”²⁵ Unfortunately, the experience lasted only 10 days. The radio was closed by the authorities and became a referent for the rest of the projects in Navarra.

In Albacete, there were some free radios, one of them *Radio Karacol* was born after a proposal done by “a local left-wing organization to other political, union related and civic organizations as well as individuals”, and, in spite of their preference for musical programmes, they homed to “**women**, workers, antimilitarists, ecologists, etc.”²⁶

Onda Verde (Madrid) was the continuation of a previous project named *Onda Verde Vallekana*. This last radio defined itself as “ecologist [...], free, alternative and civic” with a clear preference, as for other projects, for subjects like antimilitarism and feminism.²⁷ *Onda Verde* kept on with this agenda, and both women and feminism became a capital part of its schedule.²⁸

In Coslada, a small town near Madrid, *Radio Jabato* used to have a feminist programme called “Nosotras”.²⁹ At this stage, nothing but its name remains.

In Bilbao (Basque Country), *Irola Irala Irratia* saw the appearance of a feminist space called “Arrimate” in 1986.³⁰ In the same town, *Illuna Irratia* (one of the pioneers in the area) had since its inception a feminist programme, which is symptomatic of the importance of women in this radio.³¹

Continuing with the Basque Country, *Hala Bedi Irratia* (Vitoria) had, as it appears in one of its fanzines, a programme called “El General mola” that apparently had a “marxists-leninist-maoist-pacifist-**feminist**-ocupacionist [sic.]-religious-abertzale-marginal and naff point of view”.³² That fanzine also contained a manifesto entitled “Y nosotras de qué vamos...?” which exposed the opinion of the members of “Adiós Penélope, adiós” – a feminist programme – on a really

²³A por todas. 1985. *Programa: A por todas*. Private archive.

²⁴Anonymous. 1985c. *Radio Piel Roja. Germinal* 3: 36.

²⁵Anonymous. 1985d. *Eguzki Irratia. Germinal* 3: 38.

²⁶Anonymous 1985d: 39.

²⁷Beaumont, J.F. 1983. *Onda Verde Vallekana, una emisora laternativa para grupos ciudadanos del barrio madrileño. El País*, 9 May.

²⁸Onda Verde. 1988. *Onda Verde*. Madrid.

²⁹Anonymous. 1985e. *Radio Jabato. J.A.B.A.T.O.* 6: 32.

³⁰Irola Irratia. 2000. *Irola Irala Irratia 107.5 FM*. In *Radios libres utopía comunicativa*, ed. Irola Irrativa, 21. Bilbao: Autoedited.

³¹Anonymous. 1984. *Los años de crecimiento. Irratia* 1: 4.

³²Anonymous. No date a. *Use las orejas. Halabedidatzita*. 1: 2.

polemic topic: abuses. The manifesto also expresses the relations between the radio and the feminist struggle against patriarchal society:

We are in a free radio like Hala Bedi, with a bunch of girls and boys that apparently have something in common with us: we all reject this imposed shitty society, we all hate it and we want to change it. In this process it is essential to reverse all the chauvinist ideas and attitudes because they are both really present in our daily lives and very deep inside our brains. Most of you ignore this struggle.

Maybe this page could open a debate about the subject. Our programme, every Thursday from 2 to 4 pm is also opened for this. We encourage you to phone or write us to make this debate useful.³³

We find in this paragraph the idea of how the feminist struggle, in spite of being part of the social movements and the free radios, needs its own spaces, due to its specific features and demands as well as its own dynamics to generate both discourse and consciousness.

In *Txapa Irratia's* first fanzine (Bergara, Basque Country), one can find a text written by a friend radio, *Radio Pottoka*, from Eibar (Basque Country) explaining the problems between the radio's feminist group and the local authorities, when the last ones did not allow the use of a public facility to hold a talk entitled: "Women and NATO".³⁴

There were certainly thousands of radio experiences related with women and feminism during those years; however, the lack of documents prevents a wider list of examples. We have verified that feminism was a constant presence in free radios' lives, and it is time now to focus on the "women's groups" existing since the 1980s in some of these stations. There were sections created, obviously, by women whose main aim was to analyze the role of women in communication and how these radios could be used to deal with the problems derived from women's situation in contemporary societies. These groups have usually generated international networks, which is a clear example of these radios' emancipatory potential.

The first existing group in Spain was the *Grup de dones de Radio Venus (Radio Venus' women's group in Barcelona, Catalonia)*. This group expressed in a document called "Mujer y radio libre"³⁵ the importance of women in the free radio movement, and it had its origins in a previous feminist programme in *Radio Gavina*: "El programa de la dona". Its clear objective was to denounce the "frustrations produced by the monotonous voice sounding every evening [referring to the pre-existing female oriented radio programmes]". All the media have exploited women, turning them into "a minor voice, a sweet and sensual sound", presenting them as "a sexual icon, stimulating male desires and always ready to serve them". These are the reasons why free radios are important as they allow to "listen to another kind of voice, non monotonous, non ritual, a voice that does not advertise, gives advice or talks about chastity".

³³ Anonymous. No date b. Y nosotras, de qué vamos.... *Halabedidatzita* 1: 11.

³⁴ Anonymous. 1986. Akaidada II eibarko radixo libria. *Txapa Radio Almorana* 1: 17.

³⁵ Grup de Dones de Rádio Venus. 1985. Mujer y radio libre. *Germinal* 3: 17.

For this group, the women working in free radios “don’t need to talk with that sensual voice or explain the life of any evil bastard who forces his wife to wash his house with Ajax”. Quite the opposite, free radios’ female-oriented programmes:

are for women in general, they try not to convert them into a marginal myth, they want to represent femininity as an active movement fighting to get a series of rights that society denied them a long time ago.³⁶

The group aimed at opening people’s eyes, while being more than “just a voice and a microphone”. During the time the group lasted, they organized programmes dedicated to topics such as women and the army, natural childbirth or abortion, with the clear intention of “communicating the truth without hats, moustaches or beards that could dull the programme”.

As women’s role within the Spanish free radio movement evolved, in 1986, Valencia held an “Encuentro Internacional de Mujeres de las Radios Libres” (“International Meeting of Women from Free Radios”).³⁷ A few years later, in 1992, during the Oaxtepec Assembly (Mexico), the *Women’s International Network* was established within AMARC (Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias) – World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters – the organization that has been representing the free and community radios since 1983. This network is a “mixture of good communicator women who work to secure women’s right to communicate and be part of the community radio movement”.³⁸ Amongst its principles, we find “supporting women’s empowerment, gender equity and a general improvement of women’s position in the world”, promoting “women’s access to every level in community radios, including the decision making ones”, supporting “women’s effort to express themselves both inside and outside their communities” and trying to change “negative representations of men and women in the media and challenge the stereotypes reproduced by them around the world”.³⁹

In parallel, within the *Network Interkonnexiones*, promoted by *Radio Dreyckland* (Germany) in 1989, the first working group composed exclusively of women appeared in 1993. This group concluded that “women had plenty of specific subjects to deal with, and that they are underrepresented in the media (including the alternative ones)”. In 1995 this group that had become an international network had a second encounter in Freiburg and a third the next year held by *Radio Klara* in Valencia. In 1997 the network held a meeting dedicated to immigrant women’s role in alternative communication in Freiburg and its fourth network meeting under the title: “Women, racism and media”. In 1998 they celebrated the second encounter

³⁶ Grup de dones 1985: 3.

³⁷ García, Javier and Sáez, Chiara. 2011. *¿Algo nuevo bajo el sol? El rapto de frecuencias de radio en el estado español y la discriminación hacia las radios comunitarias (1979–2011)*. Unpublished paper given up by the authors.

³⁸ AMARC-WIN. No date. ¿Qué es la Red Internacional de Mujeres – RIM de AMARC? AMARC-WIN. <http://win.amarc.org>. Accessed 4 Aug 2011.

³⁹ AMARC-WIN no date.

dedicated to immigrant women and communication, showing that there was a lot of work to do as of yet.⁴⁰

Women's groups have kept on with their activities both at national and international levels. In Spain we can find examples such as *Mujeres Conv-boca*⁴¹ from a radio called *Desencadena Usera* (Madrid). This group started a programme with the intention of "spreading the progress and the challenges of the feminist movement and contribute to women empowerment and gender equity".⁴²

There is also an interesting project that started as a women's group with local intentions and ended up as an international network. The *Área de la mujer* (Women's Area) in *Radio Vallekas* (Madrid) was created in the year 2000. The establishment of this group meant the integration of all the women-related projects that the radio had been developing for almost 20 years. Its main aim is to reinforce radio's role as a way of connecting women with society: they support women organizations by becoming their mean of expression and try to deal with information from a gendered perspective. Their objectives are clear: promoting equity through "information, dialogue, debate and opinion", as well as providing women access to "the resources, activities and announcements that increase their welfare, educational, labour, cultural and leisure chances" and promoting and supporting the work done by women's groups and associations.⁴³ In 2004 this group became an international network called *Nosotras en el mundo* (*Us* [referring to women] *in the world*).⁴⁴ The inclusion of an Argentinian woman in this group was the starting point for a network that nowadays includes three working centres: Argentina (Southern Cone), Spain (Europe) and El Salvador (Central America). This network claims to put women at the centre of communication and clarify that "a feminist pedagogy is of vital importance to raise awareness about the less obvious ways of chauvinism [...]" because, still today, "chauvinism is reproduced amongst the youth and the media play a disastrous role that has to be contested". That opposition would be the network's *raison d'être*.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Anonymous. 2000. Mujeres creando espacios de comunicación. Red internaciona feminista de mujeres de las radios libres y comunitarias. In *Radios libres utopía comunicativa*, ed. Irola Irrativa, 51–52. Bilbao: Autoedited.

⁴¹ Translating the group's name is a little bit complicated, as it is a pun. It means something close to *Women with mouth*, consequently, women who can talk.

⁴² Grupo de Mujeres Conv-Boca. No date. Grupo de mujeres Conv-Boca. http://www.cornisa.org/orientación_aymutua/grupomujeres.html. Accessed 4 Aug 2011.

⁴³ Radio Vallekas no date *Nosotras en el mundo*. <http://radiovallekas.org/spip/spip.php?artocleI>. Accessed 4 Aug 2011.

⁴⁴ *Nosotras en el Mundo* 2014.

⁴⁵ Oliveras, Lucía R. 2012. No nos representan. Mujeres en los medios. La experiencia de la Red.

3.3 Becoming Women's Voice?

Is it possible to measure the influence of these radios in the results of feminist struggles? As having statistics about the audiences is clearly difficult and prevents a quantitative approach, the only way is to read the phenomenon from a qualitative point of view, to understand it in a double perspective: one is to consider these programmes as a site of resistance, and the other is to read this relationship as a chance.

The free radio stations, and all their women-related programmes, constitute a site of resistance against the dominant ideology and its gender representations. Their amateurism and their alternative way of doing radio made it easier to break up with the pre-existing communicative models and the stereotypes that they produced and reproduced. Stereotyping is a cultural practice that “tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power”, so through these stereotypes, “power is usually directed against the subordinate or excluded group”.⁴⁶ Therefore, the female stereotypes developed by the general-interest radios, which depend on the dominant groups, constitute a clear example of symbolic violence against women, a subaltern group victim of contemporary societies' patriarchal oppression.

The way free radios deal with these issues clearly contests the dominant female representation, as we have seen in examples like the *Grup de dones de Ràdio Venus*. The abolishing of that image of women as mere “sensual voices” and their transformation into the centre, the subject and the object of the communicative processes turn the free radios into a site of resistance against dominant ideology. They replace the dominant paternalistic discourse with a new one in which women become conscious transmitter, activist and questioning receivers, and women themselves are the important part of the message. Through this new discourse, free radios contest dominant ideology, and their daily praxis can be understood as a subversion of that ideological order.

Free radios also constitute a chance for women, a chance to take part in public opinion, generate ideology, project it and finally be an active part in the processes of negotiating social hegemony. These radio stations are also a way of leaving the private sphere, where women have been historically set aside, and gain the public one through a media. They also strengthen, through the establishment of networks, female associationism. Free radio's role both as subcultural practice and institution and its close relationship with the rest of social movement allow a first access to the public and to a wider social network. Being part of these radios means for the feminist collectives a chance for making new contacts and creating solidarity networks with other social movements and other feminist collectives at both national and international levels. For women coming from social movements different from feminism, it would mean the possibility of discovering the feminist struggle and becom-

⁴⁶Hall, Stuart. 2009. The spectacle of the ‘other’. In *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, 223–290. London: Sage.

ing an active part of it. Finally, for all the anonymous listeners, it means the access to a new way of doing and understanding communication, a chance to be an active part of it and be finally represented in the media. It is also possible to think that due to their ideological role, free radios could have been an active agent in the establishment of social hegemony, so they could be, through the generation of a counterhegemonic discourse, a tool for introducing new elements into the dominant ideology.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter addresses a marginal phenomenon. It is marginal for three reasons: it comes from society's margins, it is part of popular culture and it has not been taken seriously by the academic world. Thus, the relationship between women/feminism and these radios constitutes a clear example of how subaltern exclusion can be fought from the margins. Going in depth, this relationship incorporates free radio to the feminist catalogue of means of resistance and is also a way to discover a relatively unknown feature of alternative radio. Although the first radio stations appeared 28 years ago, their struggle is still ongoing, enduring almost the same problems. So, have they finally been able to change communicative practices? Do women take a non-subordinated part in communication? Have female stereotypes disappeared from the media? Are women-related issues well represented in general-interest media? Unless we can answer in the affirmative to all these questions, subaltern groups will need a loudspeaker to spread their words, and free radios would probably remain a major part of it as they constitute a well-organized nationwide network collaborating with other community media such as televisions, digital platforms and medias, news agencies and media producers, e.g. the Red Estatal de Medios Comunitarios that counts 27 associated and 13 collaborator members.⁴⁷ The expansion of the access to the Internet has somehow altered the media landscape allowing for the development of different means of overtaking the communicational anomy, such as personal blogs or websites. However, they will not outpace free and community radios, as the latter play a community-based role that is not done by the firsts, which are usually individualistic initiatives. The Internet also had a positive impact on free radios. Firstly, it allows establishing "only Internet" radio stations, which means a lower economic investment, while secondly, it has increased radio's audiences. Listening "through the Internet" permits getting worldwide listeners, also giving the chance of re-listening and archiving programmes thanks to podcasting platforms. These facts have facilitated the contact between women's groups as well as turned local women-related programmes into global or national experiences. Although the legal context has not specially changed within these 30 years – most

⁴⁷ REMC. 2014. Anexo: Proyectos que integran la Red de Medios Comunitarios. http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anexo:Proyectos_que_integran_la_Red_de_Medios_Comunitarios. Accessed 15 Jan 2015.

of these radios still broadcast without licence (illegally) – we are now living good times for free radios as some of these projects are winning some awards and public recognition.⁴⁸

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