
COMMENTARY

Invisible Revolutions: Free Radio Music Programming in Barcelona

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Music plays a central role in free radio but what motivates unpaid free radio music programme practitioners in Barcelona? Drawing on in-depth interviews conducted in 2016 with personnel working at four long-standing stations in Barcelona – Contrabanda FM, Ràdio Bronca, Ràdio Línea IV and Ràdio RSK – this commentary outlines some of the context and impetus for their activities. Frequently showcasing punk heritage music these stations play a wide range of genres and styles from jazz to electronic music, often relying on copyleft licenses and under-the-radar musicians to fill their schedules.

Core values of practitioners involved include a belief in the value of non-profit radio as a space for articulating a plethora of views disseminated through a wide array of divergent and non-mainstream music.

Keywords: community radio; free radio; music; programming; practitioners; Barcelona

Barcelona's Free Radio

Why was there free radio in Barcelona in 2016? Is the free radio movement's connection to politics and protests the reason why its relationship to music has received so little attention? Music's emotional aspect is important to free radio that began and continues its output under cover. In-depth interviews conducted in 2016 form the basis of this inquiry conducted with programmers at four long-standing radio stations of similar background based in Barcelona that collectively make up part of the association Coordinadora de Ràdios Lliures de Catalunya: these are Contrabanda FM, Ràdio Bronca, Ràdio Línea IV and Ràdio RSK. The motivations of the practitioners interviewed reflect motivations arising from a working class profile. For those interviewed there was no doubt of the importance and value of free radio for themselves and for their listeners.

Free and community radio

Can we easily say what free radio is and the differences between the term and community radio? The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters' (AMARC) definition of 'community radio', consists of no less than eight sub-groups: 'community radio, educational radio cooperative radio, participatory radio, free radio, alternative, popular, rural radio' (AMARC,

2016). The term 'community' often relates to the perspectives of alternative broadcasting (Kidd, 1999). Neither under the control of the market or the state (Atton, 2002; Lewis, 2008), community radio could be said to be closely aligned with the lower rungs of society, or the so-called 'third-tier' (European Parliament, 2007) and its social behaviours (Carpentier et al., 2007; Fuchs and Sandoval, 2015).

In the context of this commentary free radio is here rooted in a Mediterranean tradition (Bassets, 1981; Prado, 1983). It is also a reference point for later activity as stated in the *Manifiesto de Villaverde*: using any of the following terms: 'unprofessional', 'self-managed', 'non-profit', 'uncensored' and '*representative*' (Coordinadora de Radios Libres, 1983). Free radio has remained unregulated ever since the early 1970s, as Franco's dictatorship began to end and emerged in Barcelona's case with Ona Lliure, the first station in the whole of Spain (Deó, 1990). It is still. (Calvo, 2011; Bergés Saura, 2012). Reflecting the politics of the time punk, became an integral part of free radio programming.

I have here likened this development to the idea of an 'invisible' or unheralded revolution bringing together unsigned musicians with the producers of free radio music programmes. Hardly visible with little media celebration such free radio in Barcelona has so far also received little academic attention. Many commentators who focused on the social and political ethos of community radio have labelled it a 'rhizome' (Carpentier et al., 2007), characterised by a high level of engagement (Fairchild, 2009b), and a shared notion of radio as a 'free space' (Milan, 2008). Accordingly, Catalan free radio has traditionally been defined as 'activist' (Fleischman et al., 2009), speaking to a wide range of listeners to be found on the edges of activism by 'enlisting the process of the everyday' (Foxwell et al.: 2008, 10). As such the depth of impact of music relies heavily on its power as a universal language (Hesmondhalgh, 2013), and its role in everyday life (deNora, 2000). Here music played on the radio has a double role: to entertain and to shape values (Crisell, 1986). Regrettably, hedonism that has long been associated with music has tended to obscure the realisation that music can be a powerful tool for instigating social change and cultural action (Baker, 2007; Fairchild, 2009a; Livingston, 1999; Pardue, 2011; Street, 2012).

Sharing liberal politics and some punk music heritage these stations actually play a wide range of genres from jazz to electronic music. They often rely on copyleft¹ licenses and under-the-radar musicians. One notion underlies their practice: the idea that radio is a free space for articulating all disparate types of views and opinions unregulated by advertisers' needs or state intervention and rules.

Free radio in Spain: an unregulated space

Free radio in Europe arose during the 1970s as a unifying voice for the student-led counter-culture movement (Bassets, 1981). The movement was particularly active in Italy, France, and the United Kingdom, and Spain joined in the 'communicational anomie' (Pérez Martínez, 2011) in the last days of Franco's oppressive dictatorship. In the early years of the so-called 'transition' several free radio stations were born (García García, 2013). Despite there being some debate over the identity of the first free radio station – Radio Maduixa in Catalonia or La Voz del Pobre in Madrid as possibilities – the majority verdict rests with Ona Lliure, that began in 1979 and quickly closed after only two weeks of broadcasting in the midst of anti-repression conferences (*jornades antirepresives*), a gathering celebrated in the Catalan city of Vic. In the 1980s, the movement grew and its power increased, with several national meetings

¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines copyleft as 'an arrangement whereby software or artistic work may be used, modified, and distributed freely on condition that anything derived from it is bound by the same conditions.'

taking place, including the infamous Villaverde meeting in 1983. Consequently, a handful of pioneering stations appeared: La Campana de Gràcia in Barcelona, Osina Irratia in the Basque Country as well as some feminist stations, such as Ràdio Venus in Barcelona, which saw itself as part of a tradition of critique and dissent. Other initiatives were also born, broadcasting to the present day, such as Ràdio Pica (1981) in Barcelona, Ràdio RSK (1985), Ràdio Bronka (1987), Ràdio Farigola (1987), (later Linea IV), Ràdio Klara (1982) in Valencia, Radio Kras (1985) in Asturias, and the first stations in Madrid: Onda Sur (1984), Radio Vallekas (1986), and La Cadena del Water, that closed in 1989. The 1990s was also a decade of change and reinvention. Several stations disappeared, others took their place including; Radio Almenara (1991) in Madrid, Contrabanda FM (1991) in Barcelona, Radio Topo (1993) in Zaragoza or Cuac FM (1996) in Galicia.

European radio policy is an area of regulation that remains under jurisdiction of individual state members (Council of Europe, 1994). Moreover, the 'Resolution on the Situation of Local Radio in Europe' reasserted the unique role of community radio in the protection of culture (Council of Europe, 1991). No surprise that European policy-makers have thus increasingly acknowledged the role of community broadcasters, especially their contribution to the European Union's values of social cohesion and promotion of culture (Council of Europe, 2009; European Parliament, 2007, 2008). Within this wider context and despite community radio being officially regulated in other European countries such as the United Kingdom (United Kingdom Parliament, 2004), in Spain community media continues to operate without regulation or a regulatory body – a fact highlighted by the European Parliament in 2007. Spanish radio likewise emerged in the private sector and it was not until 1934 that broadcasting was deemed 'as an exclusive function of the State' (Bustamante, 2006, 24). Ever since, Spanish radio has been characterized by the coexistence of public and private broadcasters, placing a great weight of importance on 'smallholding' (Franquet, 1986, 62). As a result of Franco's dictatorship, RNE was, for a long time, the only public broadcaster – a situation which remained until democracy and the start of regional corporations, some of them broadcasting in the co-official languages of Catalan, Galician or Basque (Bonet & Arboledas, 2011). Once dictatorship ceased, the assignation frequencies procedure, first completed in 1987 in accordance with the Telecommunication Law, deliberately put free radio on the edge of legality (Ministerio de Industria, Turismo y Comercio, 1987). Surprisingly, there have been few attempts in the ensuing decades to legalize free radio in Spain. In the 1980s, during the early years of Spain's newly founded democracy, the Catalan government tried to recognize the value of community media by saying it was replete with 'educational and cultural initiatives' (Parlament de Catalunya 1989). Years after, some recognition was given in Article 32 of the General Audiovisual Communication Law that recognized the role of community media in Spain (Cortes Generales, 2010). However, in Catalonia in 2005, the Catalan Audiovisual Communication Law set out not-for-profit audiovisual media as a sub-category within private media (Parlament de Catalunya, 2005), and in 2010 this was followed by trying to establish a licensing procedure that was instantly and unanimously rejected by the whole media sector community (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2010; Media.Cat, 2010). This legal ambiguity has been unjustly used to impose sanctions in Catalonia, as was the case with the unsuccessful attempted closure of Ràdio PICA, which came about after a lawsuit was brought by the Spanish Society of Authors and Publishers (SGAE), (Ràdio Mutant, 2011). This ultimately led to the blocking of the radio frequency used by Contrabanda FM during the creation of local public radio COM Ràdio, as well as facing the constant threat of interference on the new Contrabanda FM frequency from a commercial station (Diagonal, 2012). The other unsuccessful lawsuits brought by the SGAE include the cases of Radio Almenara (A.N.I.A., 2006), and Radio Kras (La Nueva España, 2013). Consequently, community media in Spain

exists in a permanent state of non-legality with the only exception being Radio Klara, a free Valencian station with a license. There have been a number of 'associational organisations' over the years in central cities, including Catalonia; the Coordinadora de Ràdios Lliures de Catalunya or in Madrid; the Unión de Radios Libres y Comunitarias de Madrid, and elsewhere in Aragón (Federación Aragonesa de Radios Libres), Galicia (Rede Galega de Radios Libres e Comunitarias) and Valencia (Xarxa Ràdios Lliures del País Valencià). Some of these radio stations take part in the Red de Medios Comunitarios, a creative association in which approximately 70 radio and television projects participate. Interestingly, none of these are Catalan free radio stations.

Music on free radio: local, diverse

Throughout its history, radio has continued to discover and support new local musicians on the periphery of the music industry (Rothenbuhler & McCourt 1987; Negus 1993; Kruse, 2010). In Spain, the music radio landscape is dominated by a formula whose principal focus is on ratings, with almost 20 per cent of the total share belonging to just one station: Los 40 Principales (AIMC, 2016). One constant within music radio programming, within private and public media (Mills, 2012), is that even on public service radio there are certain genres of music that cannot easily be found (Costa Gálvez, 2013). Under-the-radar musicians are usually connected to a local music scene, and this is where radio can play 'its role as an interpreter of collective time for small or large communities alike.' (Kaplan 2013, 774).

Community radio programming is usually required to offer a different voice to commercial broadcasters and public service media alike, as they have the ability and influence to 'speak to groups who have been misrepresented or underrepresented to mainstream media' (Kidd, 1991, 1). Music on community radio has had a long-term tradition, especially with the young, that has offered a space for alternative music and protest songs (Fuchs, 2010), and promoted local and 'under-the-radar' musicians (Meadows et al., 2005; Pardue, 2011). Localism has been one of the main characteristics of free radio and its contribution has been crucial for up-and-coming musicians (Gilbert & Pearson, 2003). One example of this in the UK would be Resonance FM, a British-based radio founded by the London Musicians' Collective (McKay, 2013), or in the Southern Hemisphere that of the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2010).

Likewise the programming typology of free radio stations in Barcelona (see **Table 1**, below) shows a very high presence of music and culture alongside information, which in some cases, such as Ràdio Bronka, is paramount:

Table 1: Contrabanda FM, Ràdio Bronka, Ràdio Linea IV and Ràdio RSK programming description (2016).

Name	Programming typology (number of programmes)		
	Music	Culture	Information
Contrabanda FM	10	11	7
Ràdio Bronka	4	4	13
Ràdio Linea IV	5	2	1
Ràdio RSK	5	1	3

Source: Compiled by author based on stations' websites.

The Interviews

Research has been carried out from a descriptive perspective. Data was collected from qualitative interviews based on a non-probability purposive sampling deemed relevant for the research. Since the purpose of this research was to offer a personal view of the motivations of free radio music programme practitioners in Barcelona, interviews were designed to let the respondents speak freely on selected topics. Nevertheless, some specific ad-hoc questions were designed in order to encourage the conversation:

- What is your relation with the radio?
- What does the free radio concept mean to you?
- Why did you decide to get involved with free radio?
- Why did you decide to make a music programme?
- What is your relation to the music?

The interviewees were contacted by different ways. Some of them were previously known and others were searched in broadcast events (named *kafetas*) and some of them were contacted by email. The ethics review process involved ensured that the information collected was treated confidentially and only used for the purposes of the current article, as was reported to the interviewees and stated and recorded at the beginning of each interview. So, informed consent was obtained for all participants. The interview information was analysed through its transcription and quotes selected for the text. The sample was composed of twelve interviews with music programmes practitioners conducted in 2016, in Spanish, Catalan, and English. The list of interviewees is as follows:

- Adrián, *El perseguidor*, Ràdio Linia IV (12/03/2016).
- David, José, and Laura, *Distrito Techno*, Ràdio RSK (12/03/2016).
- Yahaira, *Behind the clap*, Ràdio Linia IV (12/03/2016).
- Christian and Guillem, *Hiding Underground*, Ràdio Linia IV (15/03/2016).
- Nassim, *Jazz2Jazz* Ràdio Linia IV (15/03/2016).
- Pablo, *100.000 hormigas*, Ràdio RSK (23/04/2016).
- Nacho, *Letal Age*, *Contrabanda FM* (25/04/2016).
- Javi, *Distrito Apache*, *Contrabanda FM* (02/05/2016).
- Xavi and Pitu, *L'illa del rock*, Ràdio RSK (07/05/2016).
- Mad Pirvan, *Perrx de reservx*, *Contrabanda FM* (12/06/2016).
- Kika and MdC *Suingue*, *Caipirinha libre/ Caipirinha Appreciation Society*, *Contrabanda FM* (13/06/2016).
- Sergio, *La conquista de los sonidos*, Ràdio Bronka (22/06/2016).

The majority of programmes started between five and seven years ago, with a select few starting broadcasting a year or so ago. There are two programmes with a long history, *Letal Age*, which began in the 1990s, and *Distrito Apache*, conceived in 2012. In general terms, the digital profile has developed in every case, as nearly all of the programmes now have their own websites and Facebook or Twitter profiles. A summary of the radio stations' information is provided in **Table 2** that follows shortly below.

As stated in the introduction, free radio programming is based on certain kinds of boundaries. Terms used in the programming description describe a variety of options that either infer or denote 'culture', 'underground' or 'alternative', as we can observe in **Figure 1**.

Hereinafter, a brief description of the case studies will be detailed. The first of the stations was Ràdio RSK, which came into being in 1985 and was formed by people from Ràdio

Table 2: Sampled programming description (2016).

Station	Programme	First broadcast	Digital profile		
			Webpage	Facebook	Twitter
Contrabanda FM	Caipirinha libre/ Caipirinha Appreciation Society	2004	X	X	X
	Distrito Apache	2002	X		
	Letal Age	1990s	X	X	X
	Perrx de reservx	2015	X	X	
Ràdio Bronka	La conquista de los sonidos	2012	X	X	
Ràdio Linea IV	Behind the clap	2015	X		
	El perseguidor	2015	X	X	
	Hiding Underground	2015	X	X	
	Jazz2Jazz	2014	X	X	X
Ràdio RSK	100.000 hormigas	2010	X	X	
	Distrito Techno	2015	X	X	
	L'illa del rock	2010	X		

Source: Compiled by author based on the interviewees.

**Figure 1:** Tag crowd of the terms used in the sampled programming description (2016).

Source: Compiled by author based on stations' websites.

Table 3: Contrabanda FM, Ràdio Bronka, Ràdio Linea IV and Ràdio RSK description (2016).

Name	Year of beginning	Type of broadcasting	Number of programmes (2016)	Digital profile		
				Webpage	Facebook	Twitter
Contrabanda FM	1991	FM/Internet	28	X	X	X
Ràdio Bronka	1987	FM/Internet	21	X	X	X
Ràdio Linea IV	1987	FM/Internet	8	X	X	X
Ràdio RSK	1985	FM/Internet	9	X	X	X

Source: Compiled by author.

Farigola – and more recently Ràdio Linea IV – which started in 1987 and has the same data as Ràdio Bronka. Barcelona's Nou Barris neighbourhood can be considered the cradle of free radio in Barcelona, an area that is traditionally described as left-wing and one that has a long association with the associationist and the anarchist movement in the past. Indeed, three of the four stations sampled in this article are based in the neighbourhood. Contrabanda FM started broadcasting in 1991 in a different environment, with the station based in the Ciutat

Vella neighbourhood, an area that was a refuge for artists during the later years of Franco's dictatorship. At the start, the station shared the dial with the historic Ràdio PICA, based in Gràcia neighbourhood, but now it broadcasts and is in fact the only one of the sampled stations that can be heard properly listened on the FM up to now. For some time now, all the sampled stations have had websites and streaming listening alongside their high presence on a variety of social networks. Programming is, however, different from one station to another. Contrabanda FM and Ràdio Bronka, for example, have around 30 programmes, whereas Ràdio Linea IV and Ràdio RSK have eight and nine respectively. The information is summarised in the **Table 3** (see above p. 6).

'My fondness for jazz came from a radio programme'
(Nassim, Ràdio Linea IV)

At first sight, for most of the interviewees, their relationship with radio comes from the early years of their lives, when they were simply ordinary listeners. But, little by little, their passion started to grow. MdC Suingue, Caipirinha Libre's producer, remembers: 'I was one of those guys who called up the radio in the middle of the night. We belong to a generation where radio was very important in people's life'. Sports radio too has a place in some people's first memories: 'I am from Argentina, what can I say', states Nacho from Contrabanda FM. The same feeling is shared by Sergio from Ràdio Bronka, who discovered free radio when he was a teenager: 'The first radio station I discovered was PICA, which is the oldest and that means the door for most of us to free radios. From there, I discovered Contrabanda and Bronka and free radios all around'. Much in the same way, Pablo, from Ràdio RSK, remembers that he sat around 'playing with the dial, just discovering free radios those I cannot [now] remember the name of'. Music and radio have coexisted since its inception, with the invisible medium having played a crucial role in content prescription from the start. Nassim, a producer on Jazz2Jazz states: 'My fondness for jazz came from a radio programme'. Other participants such as Nacho from Letal Age, however, did not hold the same belief: 'Listening to music on the radio is like going to a bar where you like the music. If what I want is to listen to the music I like, I know where to find it: at my place'. As Spanish music radio is dominated by commercialism, there are certain music genres that never get a chance to break through onto some station playlists. Javi, the producer of Distrito Apache, says his experience listening to hip hop on the radio has led him to the conclusion, 'hip hop always gives me more bitter than sweet'.

One of the strongest motivations for participating in free radio is simply being a radio lover. Nevertheless, being a radio practitioner does not necessarily mean being a radio listener. While great parts of the interviewees are radio lovers, for others, listening to the radio is not part of their daily life. Pitu, a veteran figure of Ràdio RSK, says: 'I have been here since I was 14 years old and I have never been a radio listener'. In the case of some younger practitioners, the world of television is hegemonic: 'I work in radio with heavy music. I have always been more a TV fan but making a heavy programme on TV is more complicated', says Guillem from Ràdio Linea IV. What is paradoxical for some others is that their relationship with radio started simultaneously with a certain programme. 'I've never been into radio but nowadays I listen to the radio to pay attention to how they do it', says David, the producer of Distrito Techno, and his colleague José asked him: 'Do you follow radio and music less now? 'Yes, maybe', he answered, making both laugh.

'It is a project where everybody contributes and nobody criticizes what the other does'
(David, Ràdio RSK)

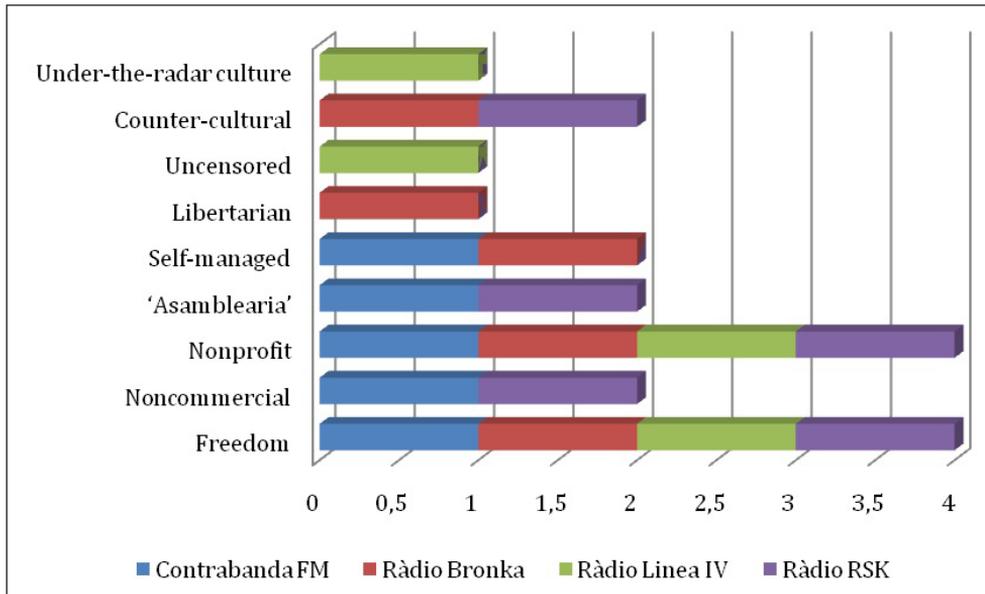


Figure 2: Contrabanda FM, Ràdio Bronka, Ràdio Linea IV and Ràdio RSK definition (2016).
Source: Compiled by author based on the stations' websites.

In the *Manifesto de Villaverde* 'free radio' is defined as 'unprofessional', 'self-managed', 'non-profit', 'uncensored' and '*asamblearia*' (Coordinadora de Radios Libres, 1983). Other terms are also proffered in the stations' description (See **Figure 2**, above).

These terms arose when answering the question: 'What does the free radio concept mean to you?' The majority of the participants agreed that 'free radio' is the most suitable term to define their activities, because, as Pablo from Ràdio RSK states, 'we are not here to make money'. Sergio from Ràdio Bronka believes that it is not related to 'alternativity', believing there is more depth to it: 'Terms like 'self-management' or 'assembly system' are more important, as they have a clearly politic meaning'. Others, however suggest terms like 'horizontal', 'because on the free radios the broadcaster and the listener are on the same level', says Javi from Contrabanda FM. 'Free radio is related to a political background and some people are not into this, but in our case politics comes second', stated Nassim from Ràdio Linea IV, who goes on to say that comes somewhere in the middle between 'free' and 'community'. Mad Pirvan, from Contrabanda FM, believes that 'community' is the right term as it is something made for the community and it is 'free' because the station does not have any advertisements or political restrictions: 'Freedom is never total in this life, so I would put it in the middle'. After having only a brief experience working on a university radio in Brazil, MdC Suingue started the Capirinha Appreciation Society programme on community radio in London. For him the differences between community and free radio are clear as daylight: 'Community radio replicates the level of power and decisions that exist inside this community and here nobody is from the same neighbourhood, everyone is kind of equal'. His station colleague, Kika, responded by referring to the 'assembly system' nature of free radio: 'It's less structured. It doesn't mean that it's easier, sometimes simple decisions take longer, but everybody has an equal say'.

'Uncensored' is the first term that arose when I questioned David and José from Ràdio RSK, who are sharing their first experience of making a radio programme: 'which is positive, is that there is no censoring, we can say what we want'. Freedom within broadcasting was often the

focal point of interviewees, alongside a shared 'political attitude', aligned with the nature of music in that 'at the end [it, the music] is a political attitude. 'We are here with another purpose, not to make adverts of companies or people who are on this field only to earn money; they make music – as they could do another thing to earn a salary', says Sergio from Ràdio Bronka.

Pitu was a teenager when he became part of Ràdio RSK out of 'because of a need for other types of information but also as a soundtrack; there is a list of groups of that time, from the okupa movement and here you could see the posters'. His station colleague Xavi points out that 'it was punk music', to which he answers: 'Yes, well there was every kind'. 'No future' is the claim made by a famous punk song, and it is a feeling shared by some participants. The legal regulation of free radio in Spain is both a demand and a controversial issue that attempts, in some aspects, to frame the core values of free radio: 'Once there are laws there are rules. Here, this business of 'no one has to tell us what to do' is an important part of the ethos of this place', says Kika of Capirinha Libre. Sergio from Ràdio Bronka expressed this belief, saying: 'Legalize these stations would also mean expenses, having a publisher, a hierarchy. This is against our own free radio philosophy'. Javi, the producer of the veteran hip hop programme Distrito Apache, offers a bittersweet declaration: 'I would like to have more future. I have a hoodie with a skull where you can read 'glorious future' and we are like that, the same as 25 years ago'.

'We are here because we want to and because we believe in it'

(Pitu, Ràdio RSK)

Participants shared their satisfaction at being involved in free radio, as long as they are part of a collective experience. Practical issues often arise at the beginning of the station's journey, 'to be honest because it was the closest I got and the content is not controlled', says Nassim, from Ràdio Linea IV. Javi from Contrabanda FM stated in a similar way: 'I started the programme on Radio Topo. I had to go to Barcelona and the first thing I thought was that after the move I had to continue with the fucking radio programme. I knew some free radios in Barcelona and I called Contrabanda because it was simply the first on the list, and there I found a pretty similar and receptive media'. Other participants were encouraged by the 'unprofessional' nature of free radio: 'I met people of Ràdio Bronka and seeing the natural way of their performing, made me lose my personal fear, you don't need to be a professional, anybody can do it', says Pablo from Ràdio RSK. In fact, friendship or its absence is mentioned numerous times as a factor in working in free radio. Nacho, presenter of the Letal Age, adds: 'When I arrived to Barcelona from Argentina I met some friends of Contrabanda. I did not have a clear idea of what the meaning of free radio was. I was only interested in making radio, although more because of the ideological side I now have a more alternative ideology'. Sergio (Ràdio Bronka) had a contrary experience: 'My case is a bit weird cause Bronka usually attracts 'praised' people, who are well-known on the radio and from that the programme is made. In my case I was a radio listener but I did not know anybody, my first contact was by email'.

Politics play an important role even if it does not feature in the programme: 'For me, taking part in this programme involves political action, although the content of the programme can be different', says Adrián from Ràdio Linea IV. His colleague Yahaira reaffirms this by saying, 'I did not enter in the radio by political reasons, although I believe if I were from another ideology I wouldn't fit with this radio'. Kika and MdC Suingue chose Contrabanda FM after their experience in community radio in the United Kingdom: 'From the moment we arrived in Barcelona we searched for a station. We spent days listening to it and we liked it. We were impressed that they'd been running for over 25 years without commercial support, that's

impressive. Look at the decoration, everything is anarchist and very left-wing, we identify with that and they accept us. We appreciate the liberty'.

Musical taste is also seen as an important issue when choosing the direction of one's career. David from *Ràdio RSK*, says the nature of free radio is intrinsically related to the music: 'We work with the most independent techno music and this would never suit a traditional or commercial station, only in a, let's call it radical one. In fact we tried to contact a station out of the free movement and we didn't receive an answer'. Javi from *Contrabanda FM*, shares this opinion: 'As the reality of Spanish radio is set up, free radio is the ideal framework for a hip hop programme. The base of hip hop is seen as urban culture, from the suburbs, from the daily life and from workers'.

'We are music lovers. We always dreamt of having a radio programme'

(Kika, *Contrabanda FM*)

In general, we may broadly divide the interviewees' motivation for making a radio programme into two main categories: those who always dreamt of having a radio programme and those who, more opportunistically speaking, found them by chance. Motivation stems from a variety of things. Yahaira, trained journalist and producer of *Behind the Clap* on *Ràdio Linea IV*, said her motivation derives from three things: 'I saw a movie a while ago about some pirate radios. Besides, they told me the degree was not useful for the radio and I thought it would be nice to practice on a neighbourhood radio. I also liked *Carne Cruda* (a *Radio 3* programme) and the way it was presented by Javier Gallego.' Anecdotal situations can lead to unexpected consequences. For Guillem and Christina, from *Ràdio Linea IV*, the beginning of their careers was fortuitous and simplistic: 'It was a bit of a joke, we were searching for some drinks and we found a friend who made a programme and we commented'. His colleague Adrián's career came together when two friends who had a programme in local radio asked him to get involved: 'I was amazed, I have never paid attention to the radio before'. Personal challenge is another reason also mentioned by some interviewees, as is the case of Mad Pirvan, artist and the producer of *Perrxs de Reservx*: 'It was a challenge. I have just arrived to Spain, my Spanish was not very good, and still it is not. Besides, I think the idea of making radio first appeared when I was 10 and I was listening to a song I liked and I thought I would like to have a radio programme even if it was at 4 in the morning'.

For Laura, the producer of the electronic music programme *Distrito Techno*, it was also about the musical challenge, having 'no idea about that kind of music'. 'We are music lovers. We always dreamed of having a radio programme, and we were frustrated with the radio in Brazil', says Kika from *Caipirinha libre*. His colleague MdC Suingue adds: 'It is addictive, exciting, the adrenaline'. Pablo from *100.000 Hormigas*, feels the same way: 'Music is my drug, my passion and I love it'. It is often said that presenters also have a type of curator role. Most interviewees mention the power that radio has over their life and this is reflected in words used such as, 'therapeutic', 'relief' (Pablo, *Ràdio RSK*), 'relax' (David and Xavi, *Ràdio RSK*) or 'personal pleasure' (Javi, *Contrabanda FM*).

'Music has always amazed me as the change engine'

(Adrián, *Ràdio Linea IV*)

Most participants have a personal relationship with music just as musicians, producers, and DJ's are aficionados. 'Brazilian music beyond clichés' is the slogan of *Caipirinha Libre*. MdC Suingue adds to that by saying: 'sometimes there are certain styles which are certainly not Brazilian clichés, which are not being playing on commercial radio, they are Brazilian but we

don't like them. We should rewrite the slogan: Brazilian music beyond the clichés and that we like'. Personal taste too naturally influences when selecting the playlist: 'I don't listen to everything, I listened to rock since I was 7 years old, and this is the music I put in the programme', says Nacho from Contrabanda FM. Other participants suggest that music selection is more of a democratic process: 'The music I put on the radio doesn't always match with the music I like. On the radio I try to take a middle road between what I would like to listen to when I am out and the instrumental 10 minutes song', says Mad Pirvan from Contrabanda FM. It was not always the case, however. Some interviewees said that political matters influence decisions even if it is not the main content. This is due to 'personal ideas and to be in Ràdio Bronka I like to make a programme with political content', says Sergio from Ràdio Bronka. MdC Suingue from Contrabanda FM says that the audience must agree entirely with the programme: 'If someone complains about politics they probably haven't ever listened to the programme'.

All the interviewees agree that the intentional use of copyleft licenses 'is vital from an ideological point of view' (Sergio, Ràdio Bronka). As previously mentioned, in Spain free radio is monitored by the most popular composers' association – the SGAE (Sociedad General de Autores y Editores). Free licenses could be one solution for the unsolved problem of copyright. One interviewee said, '[Suppose] we search the database of SGAE. If we chose a group from here, it will [have to] be with an interview and these things are kept in our database. Personally I believe that it is not fair because here we do not earn money', says Mad Pirvan from Contrabanda FM. Despite free licenses being important, almost all the interviewees said that they download music for their programmes 'for practical reasons' (Christian, Ràdio Linea IV). The balance between mainstream and alternative or 'indie' is difficult to define it accurately. The majority of participants said that they like indie, but not necessarily all bands or music, that is either under-the-radar or alternative: 'I search for the alternative side on the sound', says Mad Pirvan, the producer of Perrxs de Reservx. Sergio, from Ràdio Bronka, says of a particularly famous case: 'I would not invite the director of Sónar; first he would not come to my programme, and I am sure he is a person with an influential perspective but which I do not agree with or take part in'. Christian from Hiding Underground believes that the importance of locality is demarcated by boundaries: 'We pay quiet attention to Barcelona and Catalan bands but there are not that many of those'. Nacho from Letal Age says that he also plays local bands: 'we also include local groups that we know and we get to know because of the discs that arrived here at the station and if there are something interesting that we like, we include it'. Finally, David and José from Distrito Techno, state their open-mindedness in forming their playlists: 'We play everything: from basic music produced by someone with a PC to professional bands. The band that is well-known, however, is unlikely to collaborate with free radio'. My response to that remark is: 'What about Surgeon [electronic musician], would you invite him onto your show?' José's reply is that he would 'put rose petals on the floor for him'.

Conclusion

Free radio is now a unique space in Barcelona where less commercial music genres, local and unsigned bands or musicians not heard frequently on mainstream media, can gain invaluable exposure.

Practitioners of free radio show great levels of commitment to their tasks espousing the core values of free radio, believing it to be an ideal space in which to articulate disparate views and opinions via the music they play, with their own taste playing an important role. Emotionally free radio is seen as a 'refuge' or a 'safe place' for many and for some a way of developing their passion for music and radio and a source of gratification and happiness. Unlike in television, free radio practitioners feel that tuning into your favourite programme creates a sense of

community, with a select audience listening in, and also serves as a platform where personal views and beliefs are vindicated and progressive ideas (not often seen or heard on television that slowly and quietly) may take root. In this way such these voices are heard.

Additional File

The additional file for this article can be found as follows:

- **Annex 1.** Contrabanda FM, Ràdio Bronka, Ràdio Linea IV and Ràdio RSK programming description (2016). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.226.s1>

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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