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**RADIOACTIVITY** looks into two seminal free radio stations – Radio Alice in Bologna and Radio Tomate in Paris – as singular case studies in which self-management, decentralised organisation and DIY coincide. The mini-series is an introduction to the free radio movement that sprung up in several countries in the seventies as a way of giving voice to actors who were outside the media establishment: an alternative to the dominant narrative that can also be seen as precursor of the horizontal rhizome structure of digital networks.

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Produced by Roc Jiménez de Cisneros. Interview and documentation: Roc Jiménez de Cisneros.

# RADIOACTIVITY #2

## Radio Tomate

François Pain is a filmmaker based in Paris. He worked with Félix Guattari on several alternative psychiatry and communication projects at the private clinic La Borde, founded by Jean Oury near Cour-Cheverny in the Loire Valley. One of these, Radio Tomate, is one of the most singular projects in the history of French free radio. Pain is also the co-founder of the Federation of Non-Commercial Free Radios in France.

### 01. Summary

Radio Tomate has gone down in history as one of the main players in the French free radio scene of the late sixties, but François Pain is a direct link between it and the situation in northern Italy during the same period. Initiatives such as Radio Alice in Bologna were more than just the initial spark for the French movement: the precarious technological infrastructures (homemade transmitters) were also a result of the experience gained in Italy in a few short but intense years of underground work. The interesting thing about this comparison is the enormous difference between the legal frameworks of the two countries. In the late seventies, Italy had freed the airwaves, opening the doors to dozens of small independent broadcasters. Meanwhile, in France, the first broadcasts by Pain and his collaborators were totally illegal. Before François Mitterrand came to power, and the subsequent legalisation of private radios (a gesture that also gave a green light to all kinds of non-commercial projects), Radio Tomate and similar collectives operated completely underground. In this sense, they effectively continued the work of pirate radios such as Radio Luxembourg and Europe no. 1, which had successfully dodged government prohibition since the mid-fifties, and had become popular beyond expectation.

Fruit of the (often conflictive) cooperation of a group of left-wing militants, thinkers and artists, Radio Tomate was launched in 1981 with the aim of encouraging a new notion of debate and an alternative form of communication that revolved around the local area and the streets; as Félix Guattari, who was an active member of the core team, put it: “collective-individual reappropriation and an interactive use of machines of information, communication, intelligence, art and culture.” Just like Radio Alice, the first incarnation of Radio Tomate did not last long. Two years after it began, due to police persecution and the chaos inherent to its decentralised structure, the project was abruptly suspended. And, as in the Italian case, the station’s later iterations (until the start of Fréquence Paris Plurielle in 1992) gradually moved away from the original idea, from the mix of poetry and politics that made the first free radio a radically different media experience.

### 02. Timeline

- 00:44 The birth of free radio in France
- 03:27 Organisation and dynamics of Radio Tomate
- 04:30 Guattari as a pivotal figure
- 06:26 Underground resistance
- 10:04 The Minitel experience
- 12:54 Conflict after the legalisation of free radio
- 15:58 The influence of Radio Alice

### 03. Related links

Article: “Félix Guattari et les agencements post-média”  
[www.multitudes.net/Felix-Guattari-et-les-agencements/](http://www.multitudes.net/Felix-Guattari-et-les-agencements/)



[A pirate during a transmission of Radio Tomate]

Article: "Un exemple de radio associative, Radio Tomate"

[fresques.ina.fr/jalons/fiche-media/InaEdu01239/un-exemple-de-radio-associative-radio-tomate.html](http://fresques.ina.fr/jalons/fiche-media/InaEdu01239/un-exemple-de-radio-associative-radio-tomate.html)

Article: "A Era Pós-Mídia Desenhada nas Rádios Livres: o Pensamento de Félix Guattari"

[www.ganesh.org.br/arquivosSGC/DOWN\\_220536radios\\_livres\\_\\_intercom.pdf](http://www.ganesh.org.br/arquivosSGC/DOWN_220536radios_livres__intercom.pdf)

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#### 04. Credits

Produced by Roc Jiménez de Cisneros. Documentation and interview: Roc Jiménez de Cisneros. Recorded with Beyerdynamic MC 930, a Tascam DR-100 recorder and produced with SoundStudio.

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