Just a Teardrop in the Rain? The *movida madrileña* and Democratic Identity Formation in the Capital, 1979–1986

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By 1985 word had spread to the rest of the world that something was happening in Madrid.¹ The early and mid 1980s in particular were years of elation, almost euphoria, for the citizens of Madrid. Simply put, things had changed. That change could be heard on the local airwaves, seen in exhibition halls, experienced in neighbourhood bars, and felt, especially, on the street. The city was alive with art, music and a new-found sociability. The term *movida madrileña*, or ‘Madrid’s happening’, became the catch-all phrase to describe the apparently magical transformation of Spain’s capital city.

Seemingly overnight, Madrid was transformed from a dull, provincial capital into a vibrant modern city. It was as if someone had turned on the lights after thirty-seven years of dark and dreary dictatorship. In June of 1985, *Rolling Stone* announced that, since the death of Franco, ‘Madrid has been having itself one ongoing coming-out party. The kind you have when the folks are away for the weekend. Only this time the Old Man isn’t coming back’.² The article goes on to describe how Madrid has been transformed into a cultural oasis, where new music, crafts, intellectualism, drugs, free love, all-night clubs and boundless idealism have all become part of the daily scene—much like San Francisco in the Sixties. A city reborn to run.³

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¹ Articles describing the transformation of Madrid appeared in such diverse news outlets as *Time, Newsweek, The New York Times, Le Monde, Les Nouvelles Littéraires, National Geographic* and *Rolling Stone*.
While the radical changes occurring in Madrid may have appeared to an outsider as a kind of throwback to the counterculture of the 1960s, the transformation of the capital had much more to do with the particular political, social and cultural context of Spain itself after the death of Franco. The changes associated with Madrid in the 1980s did not represent yet another example of Spain’s backward or retarded development. Instead, the capital’s seemingly miraculous transformation was related to a broader effort to define a new set of democratic identities in Spain after the experience of the dictatorship.

Despite the tendency to equate Madrid and the centre with the ‘national’ and with ‘Spanishness’, this article argues that within the context of Spain’s newly decentralized political framework the capital’s transformation in the 1980s, along with the development of the movida madrileña, is best understood as a manifestation of regionalism. Granted, there was no Madrid nationalism, comparable to Catalan nationalism. Nor, of course, was there a radicalization of regional sentiment in the capital, as in the Basque case. None the less, there was a space in the first half of the 1980s where the newly elected Socialist and Communist leaders of Madrid undertook a project to distance the capital from its authoritarian past and create new democratic affiliations. As in the other areas of the country, this process of establishing a new democratic identity came in the form of a regional identity project, or the promotion of regional culture and regional pride, mainly because all forms of state-centred Spanish nationalism were seen as illegitimate in the post-Francoist period.

Evidence of this project in Madrid is located both in the implementation of an ambitious regionalism agenda by the capital’s intellectual and political elite between 1979 and 1986 and in the creation of new forms of collective identity based largely on a culturally vibrant present. Specifically, in the period following the first democratic municipal elections of 1979, Madrid’s new charismatic Socialist mayor, Enrique Tierno Galván, led a project to physically rehabilitate the capital and return a sense of pride to madrileños. This fostering of a renewed sense of pride for Madrid represented a conscious

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4 Throughout the text the term ‘local political elite’ is used to refer specifically to the group of Socialists and Communists that came to power in Madrid after the municipal and regional elections of 1979 and 1983. Of course, there were other members of the political elite in the capital, particularly those on the right, who opposed any transformation of the capital after the end of the dictatorship.


6 In one of the most important works covering the recent history of Madrid, Santos Juliá Díaz, David Ringrose and Cristina Segura describe the desire to ‘recuperar la ciudad’, focusing specifically on the need to ‘recuperar socialmente la ciudad perdida’, as the central and defining goal of Madrid’s Socialist administration after 1979 (Santos Juliá Díaz, David
effort on the part of the capital’s political elite to create new feelings of collective unity and collective responsibility—two prerequisites for a successful democracy. While the refurbishment of the city’s infrastructure and the restoration of its crumbling monuments constituted a major part of the programme to create a new kind of madrileño, the movida madrileña played an equally important role. The promotion of the colourful, and at times chaotic, movement proved to be an essential piece in the development of a new civic identity based on peaceful coexistence and greater cultural participation. The successful creation of this participatory and inclusive collective identity was something that simply rebuilding the city could not accomplish. Significantly, however, not just any cultural movement could have filled this role.

The movida represented a unique set of symbols and artifacts that neatly fitted Madrid’s need to promote new forms of democratic affiliation, especially in the absence of any ‘reclaimable’ tradition from the past. Unlike other regions in Spain, Madrid’s traditional customs and cultural practices were tainted and un-recyclable after the experience of the dictatorship. And, in general, the capital’s cultural past was closely associated with it, due to the fact that Madrid had served as the home of centralism and repression for almost forty years. Furthermore, a return to Madrid’s pre-Civil War popular culture, or lo castizo, was not possible because of the need to forget the traumatic memory of the period leading up to the war. As Paloma Aguilar has convincingly argued, this ‘forgetting’ was necessary in order to secure the peaceful transition to democracy after 1975.7

In the absence of a reclaimable past, the movida’s inclusive, participatory, optimistic and democratic character offered a set of modern symbols located in the present, which reinforced the creation of a new civic identity in the capital. In addition, the movement provided a peculiarly madrileño sense of identity, something that was neither imported Anglo-American culture, nor similar to the officially imposed Spanishness of the Franco period. As a result, the project in Madrid represented a unique example of an attempt to foster regional identification through the promotion of ‘modern’ culture, and not through the revival of traditional symbols and customs as in such regions as Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia.

While the local and regional administrations looked to the movida madrileña to help create a new democratic identity in Madrid in the mid 1980s, it is important to recognize that the capital’s political elite did not fabricate the movida. Instead, the movement developed largely spontaneously


between 1975 and 1983. Only after the specific characteristics of the *movida* had fully developed did the administrations take an interest in the movement, between 1984 and 1986. When it was clear the *movida* represented distinctively new and modern cultural forms, the mayor and the other local political elite appropriated the movement in order to further distance Madrid from its authoritarian past and transform madrileños into active democratic citizens. The appropriation of the *movida* was seen, in this way, as another means of changing the underlying mentality, habits, and behaviour of madrileño society. In short, the local and regional administrations specifically promoted the *movida*’s modern symbols to form an open and participatory cultural image of the capital which in turn reinforced the project to create a new democratic regional identity.

After first reviewing the ways in which the *movida madrileña* has typically been presented in the scholarship up to this point, the second part of this article describes why the movement was appropriated in order to help promote a new democratic identity in the capital. Or, in other words, it examines why some of its characteristics were so attractive to Enrique Tierno Galván and Madrid’s other local political elite. The goal here is to highlight some of the connections between the *movida madrileña* and the larger project to define a new post-Francoist democratic sense of place for the newly formed region of Madrid. Most scholars, however, have not made the connection between the *movida madrileña* and regionalism in the capital. In fact, the *movida* has not been well understood within the historiography of this period. The movement has either been analysed separately from the specific historical context of the capital or has not been taken very seriously at all. As a result, it has typically been understood as an apolitical and largely unimportant cultural phenomenon, rather than as one component of the project to construct a new democratic regional identity in the capital.

The failure to take the movement seriously has led to a relative lack of scholarly attention. As a ‘spontaneous’ culture movement encompassing film, the plastic arts, music and a roaring nightlife, most observers have described the *movida* as a brightly burning, but ultimately unimportant, youth or counterculture that had no lasting political or cultural impact either on the capital or on the country. As a result, since the 1980s, academics, writers and journalists, both inside and outside of Spain, have ignored or marginalized the *movida madrileña*. Apart from the colourful and provocative films of Pedro Almodóvar, it has attracted little attention from Hispanists working abroad. Inside the country, the *movida* has been almost completely neglected until very recently, dismissed as an ineffectual and ephemeral

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8 The films of Pedro Almodóvar have been easily accessible for English-speaking academics. This, along with their colourful and provocative nature, has led to possible overemphasis on his work. In reality, Almodóvar was just one small part of the *movida*. An example of this overemphasis can be seen in David Gies’ assertion that Pedro Almodóvar was ‘the putative leader of the so-called *movida*’ (David T. Gies, ‘Modern Spanish Culture: An
blip on the cultural radar during the post-Francoist period. In fact, not a single scholarly monograph has been written on the *movida madrileña*. It has also been left out of major historical and cultural examinations of the period. To cite one of several possible examples, in Santos Juliá Díaz’s comprehensive review of Spanish political and cultural history between 1975 and 1996, the *movida madrileña* is not specifically mentioned at all.

In the small body of literature that does exist about the *movida*, three main interpretive trends can be identified. However, all three of these trends try to...
place the *movida* in either a broader national or international context, rather than focusing specifically on the movement’s relationship to the capital itself. The first sees it as one part of a nationwide cultural renaissance that swept Spain after the end of the dictatorship. The second trend views the movement as a kind of belated counterculture. And the third trend understands it within the context of national and international youth culture. While each of these trends explains certain aspects of the *movida madrileña*, none of the perspectives are specifically rooted in the historical context of Madrid. As a result, all three of the academic positions emphasize the *movida*’s apolitical nature and none see a direct connection between the movement and the project to transform the capital into a new democratic region.

By returning to Juliá Díaz’s recent review of the cultural and political changes in the post-Francoist period we can identify the first trend more clearly. Although not mentioning the *movida madrileña* specifically, Juliá Díaz appears to understand the changes that took place in Madrid as part of a wider ‘explosion of modern cultural expression [...] which came to be associated with nightlife in the cities’. In other words, many observers such as Juliá Díaz explain the *movida madrileña* as simply one manifestation of a larger cultural phenomenon. They argue that the disappearance of government censorship, which ended the repression of cultural form and content, coupled with pent-up cultural demand, created the preconditions for a national cultural explosion after the demise of the dictatorship. Peter Evans, for example, has described the new cultural possibilities of this period: ‘for the first time in thirty-five years, questions of history, politics and...”

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14 For a general overview of the cultural changes after Franco, see Juan Pablo Fusi, *Un siglo de España: la cultura* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 1999), 149–62.
government, religion, ethnicity, regionalism, family, and sexuality could all be discussed openly and directly'. For Emma Dent Coad, the *movida* was also part of this sudden increase of cultural activity in which ‘painting, sculpture, fashion, jewellery, film, music, theatre, and dance blossomed overnight and were quickly hailed as the new hope of a new Spain’. Likewise, Juan Pablo Fusi places the *movida* within the context of a broader national cultural movement:

La ‘movida’ simbolizó de alguna forma—y eso era lo que importaba—el resurgimiento cultural de Madrid con la democracia. El cambio—ya veremos más adelante lo que pudo tener de contradictorio y engañoso—afectó, sin embargo, por igual a todo el país: tal vez fuera la masiva asistencia a actos culturales que se registró en toda España a partir de 1975 el hecho más significativo de la historia de la cultura en la transición de la dictadura a la democracia.

In an effort to explain the development and ambiguous character of the *movida*, many scholars have tried hard to place the movement within a wider national context. Unfortunately, this tendency has served to disguise its specific political meaning within the capital.

In addition to this propensity to understand the *movida* as simply part of a larger national cultural trend, there has been a second tendency to compare it to earlier cultural movements, with the added effect, although at times unintended, of highlighting Spain’s backward or retarded nature. Specifically, the *movida* is most often linked to America’s counterculture of the 1960s or London’s ‘swinging sixties’.

José Carlos Mainer was among the first to articulate this view in his work on Spanish culture in the post-Francoist period. Mainer argues that the *movida madrileña* was composed of a group of ‘desmovilizados, apóstatas y desencantados’ that made up ‘la tardía resaca de un 1968 que nuestro país [España] no vivió en modo directo’. Kathleen Vernon and Barbara Morris also subscribed to this view in their influential volume on Pedro Almodóvar and Spanish culture in the period after the dictatorship. They argue that, in terms of culture, ‘with Franco’s death in 1975, Spain embarked headlong on a belated journey into the late twentieth century’. For Vernon and Morris the

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films of Almodóvar, and the new culture from which they sprang, were the result of a ‘belated’ process of cultural modernization—again, another example of Spain’s slower than normal march towards modernity.

Subsequently, authors have generally accepted and expanded this interpretation without question, further obscuring the movida’s connection to a possible regional identity in Madrid. In comparing Madrid of the late 1970s and early 1980s with London of the 1960s, Mark Williams says, ‘something like London of the “swinging sixties” happened in Madrid around mid-decade [1980s], a social and cultural explosion deemed la movida’.20 More specifically, Elizabeth Nash argues that the Franco regime ‘postponed for more than a decade the youth revolt and the permissive society in Spain’.21 As for parallels between the movida and the older movement in London, Nash says,

> each reflected a joyous, hedonistic rejection of political conservatism and social conformity, especially for middle-class youth and students. Both movements spurred a flowering of artistic creativity that was energetically fuelled by drugs in a newly tolerant climate, and by alcohol. And both revelled in a new sexual freedom.22

John Hooper sees similar parallels between the movida madrileña of the 1980s and ‘swinging’ London of the 1960s: ‘Both were phenomena that arose among the young. Both reflected or channelled a certain amount of artistic creativity’.23 The main difference between the two movements was, according to Hooper, the greater extent to which the ‘movida madrileña’s centre of gravity was to be found in the nightspots of the city from which it took its name’.24 Graham and Labanyi also link the movida to earlier cultural movements in England. They define it as ‘the explosion of creative activity, centered around youth culture, which dominated the Madrid cultural scene in the late 1970s through till the mid-1980s’.25 They go on to liken the movida to cultural trends in England, but claim it was less of a response to unemployment than ‘to affluence and the new sexual permissiveness’.26 In this regard, they see it as a ‘delayed form of 1960s culture, but of an aggressively apolitical nature’.27

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Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas combine the above two trends in their interpretation of the *movida*. According to the authors, the movement’s backwardness and its relation to a larger cultural movement were both Franco’s fault:

because of Francoism, Spain’s experience of ‘swinging’ London and Woodstock would have to wait at least another decade. By the late 1970s, with Franco dead and all authoritarian taboos and prohibitions cast aside, starting in Madrid and spreading to other provincial capitals, young middle-class people (mostly students) began to spend their weekends drinking and chatting in bars and night clubs from dusk till dawn.\(^\text{28}\)

In this analysis, Franco is responsible for both the cultural rebirth, through earlier repression, and for its supposed backward character.

The third major trend in the analysis of the *movida* is the propensity to explain the movement strictly in terms of youth culture. From this perspective, it is not seen within the specific historical context of Madrid, but again within a broader national and international context. Similar to other youth movements both around Spain and throughout the West, the *movida* is understood as a younger generation’s attempt to transform the cultural landscape in its own image.\(^\text{29}\) Leading this line of thought, Mark Allinson firmly places it within the context of a national youth sub-culture that developed across the country after the dictatorship.\(^\text{30}\) Núria Triana Toribio also strictly classifies the *movida madrileña* as a manifestation of youth sub-culture, although specifically related to the international punk scene.\(^\text{31}\) In his most recent work, Allinson, like Triana Toribio, links it to the international punk movement as well. He argues that the *movida* and the British punk movement were both about the disruption of convention and normality; although Allinson also claims that the *movida* was not as aggressive, pessimistic, or political as the British punk movement.\(^\text{32}\) Stemming in part from the effort to highlight the *movida’s* relationship to

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\(^{31}\) Triana Toribio uses the works of Pedro Almodóvar to link the *movida* to the international punk movement (see ‘A Punk Called Pedro: *La movida* in the Films of Pedro Almodóvar’).

\(^{32}\) See Allinson, ‘Alaska: Star of Stage and Screen and Optimistic Punk’. In his analysis of the iconic status of pop star Alaska (Olvido Gara), Allinson does highlight the fact that the Ayuntamiento of Madrid became the friend and promoter of the *movida*, but he never questions its motivation or the significance of this support.
national and international youth movements, both authors downplay its uniqueness, its political nature, and its specific meaning within the capital.

With regard to the lasting or overall significance of the *movida madrileña*, all three of the academic positions outlined above conclude there were few. Practically no one sees it as having much lasting political or cultural significance on Madrid, or on the country as a whole. As for as political importance, the *movida* was understood as apolitical to begin with, so there has been little question of long-term political significance. On the cultural front, most agree it was a movement that burned too brightly for its own good, leaving behind almost nothing of value and making little impact on madrileño society. The spread of AIDS, increased drugs use, and co-option by the mass media are the usual reasons cited for the *movida*’s swift and permanent demise. In his popular oral history of the *movida*, *Solo se vive una vez: esplendor y ruina de la movida madrileña*, the editor, José Luis Gallero, concludes that only the ‘salir de copas’ habit remains. 33 Mark Allinson, on the other hand, sees only the work of Pedro Almodóvar as having any enduring cultural significance: ‘What survives of the defunct *movida madrileña*, the only real candidate for mythical status, is Pedro Almodóvar’. 34 Teresa Vilarós holds even a dimmer view, lamenting the lack of any lasting cultural legacy and insisting that apart from memorabilia nothing remains: ‘lo que queda de la movida es pasto de coleccionistas’. 35 Similarly, in one of the few articles devoted exclusively to the *movida*, Peter Scales concludes that, as a transitory and ephemeral movement based on fleeting audiovisual media, it was ultimately just ‘a teardrop in the rain’. 36

In addition to the three academic positions just described, critics on both the left and the right have also discounted the importance of the *movida* in the capital’s political and cultural development after 1975. As a result, they have failed to see any relationship between the movement and the creation of a new regional sense of place or democratic identity in Madrid. Generally speaking, both sides of the political spectrum have perceived the *movida* as apolitical, trivial, banal, and frivolous. The left has looked down on both the form and the content of the movement, and on the way in which it was popularly received. The flashy, brash and popular character of the *movida* clashed with the high cultural standards set by many of those on the left. Cultural critics, such as José Carlos Mainer, are often, in the same breath,

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33 Cited in Hooper, *The New Spaniards*, 345. Hooper correctly points out that this habit had caught on even before Franco’s death.


35 Teresa M. Vilarós, ‘Los monos del desencanto español’, *MLN*, 109 (1994), 217-35 (p. 232). The *movida*’s lack of any major literary legacy is explained by Vilarós as a kind of cultural hangover resulting from the long dictatorship. From this perspective, it represents a cultural void rather than a cultural rebirth in the post-Francoist period.

both critical and exasperated by those who participated in the *movida* and by what the movement produced: ‘diseñan objetos inútiles, decoraciones imposibles y ropas inverosímales que, sin embargo, se venden en toda Europa’.\(^{37}\) For Mainer, the *movida*’s cultural products were bought and sold despite their obvious uselessness.

In addition, many of the ‘progres’ of the left decried the *movida*’s apparent lack of values and believed that the movement was a distraction from formal political participation. The founder of *El País*, Juan Luis Cebrián, has described the movement as ‘un subproducto cultural’ advocating a reversal of values, which eventually leads to a kind of cultural fascism.\(^{38}\) For Cebrián, and many others, the *movida*’s character as ‘muy individualista, muy hedonista, muy volcado al exterior’ did little to further the left’s progressive political and cultural mission.\(^{39}\) While a direct political connection has typically not been made, a few on the left also accused Madrid’s political elite of promoting the ‘vulgarization’ of culture, through its acceptance of the *movida*.\(^{40}\) More often, however, the left has not directly linked it with the Socialist administrations in Madrid. For example, according to César Alonso de los Ríos,

Sería imperdonable relacionar el movimiento cultural de la ‘movida madrileña’, uno de los casos más claros de conexión de artistas con la gente, con el nuevo Ayuntamiento. Ni Almodóvar, ni Ouka Lele, ni El Hortelano, ni Ceesepe, ni Pérez Villalta, ni los chicos de ‘La Luna’, ni Alaska … tuvieron que ver políticamente con el Profesor [Tierno Galván].\(^{41}\)

For many observers like Alonso de los Ríos, the *movida* was simply the product of a new social and cultural blossoming after the end of the dictatorship. In sum, its ambiguous and apolitical outward appearance has caused nearly everyone on the left to overlook the relationship between the movement and the political project to transform Madrid in the 1980s.

In contrast to the left, the right was much more inclined to see the *movida madrileña* as political, but as ineffectively so. The movement was generally viewed as a blatant attempt by the new democratic administrations to construct an artificial culture exactly to their own liking. Conservatives such as Ricardo de la Cierva criticized the Socialists, and the left in general, for purposely intervening in matters of culture, and for doing so in a way that


\(^{38}\) Gallero, *Solo se vive una vez*, 314.

\(^{39}\) Gallero, *Solo se vive una vez*, 314.


produced a ‘red’ culture for the masses.\footnote{Ricardo de la Cierva was one of the early Ministers of Culture during the Transition period (see Ricardo de la Cierva, \textit{España, la sociedad violada} [Barcelona: Planeta, 1989], specifically the chapter, ‘El frente popular de la cultura’, 229–60).} It was also believed that this populist culture was promoted to the detriment of more formal and ‘authentic’ artistic traditions. Specifically, the right accused the left of inventing a kind of ‘light’ culture to serve their particular political goals and to win elections. In 1991, the long-time city councillor, and new mayor of Madrid, José María Álvarez del Manzano, summed up the right’s general understanding of the \textit{movida}:

\begin{quote}
Era algo etéreo, una propaganda política, no ha dejado un solo poso. Yo no recuerdo un solo libro, un solo cuadro, un solo disco; nada, de la ‘movida’ no ha quedado nada. Era un invento, y por tanto se ha desvanecido.\footnote{José María Brunet, ‘José María Álvarez del Manzano’, \textit{La Vanguardia}, 30 August 1991, Supplement ‘Revista de Agosto’, pp. 1–3.}
\end{quote}

For conservatives such as Álvarez del Manzano the \textit{movida} was simply an artificial invention of the left. It produced nothing, represented no one, and left no cultural or political legacy.

While almost all observers have insisted on describing the \textit{movida} as a sometimes flashy, but ultimately unimportant, youth or counterculture movement that had no lasting impact on Madrid or on the country, the \textit{movida} can better be understood by placing it within the particular political and cultural context of the capital itself. This is not to say, however, that the three academic positions outlined above are untrue. In fact, all three provide an important layer of meaning: the \textit{movida} was part of a broader cultural renaissance; it did have certain similarities to cultural movements of the past; it was influenced by the culture of Madrid’s youth; and it did largely manifest itself as formally apolitical. But, within the specific historical context of Madrid in the 1980s, the \textit{movida madrileña} also played a significant role in the effort to create a new democratic regional identity after the experience of the dictatorship. In fact, as mentioned above, the institutionalization and official promotion of the colourful, and at times chaotic, movement proved to be an essential piece of the programme to create a new democratic identity based on inclusion and greater cultural mobilization. While the refurbishment of Madrid’s infrastructure and the restoration of its crumbling monuments constituted a major part of the programme to promote this new sense of place in Madrid, the \textit{movida madrileña} shaped the forms of cultural mobilization in the capital and provided the foundation for a new official cultural image, or cultural identity. Together, these two separate aspects—the physical and the cultural—formed a more complete regional identity project. In this sense, and despite its apparently apolitical nature, the \textit{movida} was broadly political in that it...
played an essential part in the formation of the capital’s democratic regional identity.

Again, co-option and institutionalization of the movement occurred because the *movida*’s modern symbols and characteristics were far more effective in defining Madrid as an open and democratic region, than were traditional cultural symbols recovered from Madrid’s tainted past. The *movida madrileña* also offered a distinct set of characteristics that coincided with the project to create a new civic identity in Madrid. Specifically, the *movida* represented an inclusive, participatory, proud, and modern culture that could be used to promote further cultural mobilization and an official democratic cultural identity for Madrid. I will endeavour to analyse the specific characteristics of the movement that the municipal and regional administrations wished to promote. In the end, this new cultural projection of the capital was intended to include all *madrileños*, and not just certain privileged segments of the population.

First, the local municipal administration, under the leadership of Tierno Galván, and later the new regional government, led by Joaquín Leguina after 1983, were attracted to the *movida* because it represented a plural and democratic movement that embraced a wide spectrum of styles and groups. In this way, and in contrast to many contemporary cultural movements, the *movida* tended towards inclusion rather than exclusion. Support for such an inclusive or universal movement would also further reinforce the notion of peaceful coexistence, or *convivencia*, within the capital.

To begin with, there was no single dominant group or style. Nor was there a leader or manifesto. Instead, the *movida* was made up of a diverse number of overlapping groups: mods, rockers, punks, post-punks and heavys (*jevis*). Likewise, the movement was comprised of a diverse range of musical styles. Oviformia, Aviador Dro, Terapia Humana and CSI played techno music. The group Arco Iris dedicated itself to jazz rock. Alaska y Los Pegamoides dominated the new wave scene. Derribos Arias catered to the crossover ‘pop-rock’ audience. And Tritón, Barón Rojo, Obús and Goliath belted out *rock duro*.

All of these groups and cultural currents mixed together in the capital’s bars, cafes, galleries and nightclubs, creating a vibrant blend of styles and ideas, and symbolizing the notion of coexistence. At the usual *movida* locales, there were no doormen to decide who was stylish enough to enter. All groups were free to participate. In 1987, Fabio de Miguel recalled the scene in Madrid’s most famous hot spot earlier in the decade: ‘Estar en el Rock-Ola era como estar en el Arca de Noé; la mezcla de rockers, rockabillys, mods, punkies, tecos, nuevos románticos, todos apiñados y encantados, era algo bíblico’.

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Although leaning heavily toward the under-forty generation, this ‘ark’ of the *movida* was inclusive with regard to age and class. Despite various attempts to characterize it as such, the movement was not comprised only of disaffected teenagers. Instead, the *movida* represented diverse age groups. Although Alaska was only seventeen years old in 1980, many participants, such as Jesús Ordovás, Paloma Chamorro, Pablo Pérez-Mínguez, Moncho Alpuente, Diego Manrique and Pedro Almodóvar, were in their late twenties and early thirties. In addition, *madrileños* of all ages increasingly participated in the vibrant nightlife and general cultural scene related to the *movida*. Just as different age groups participated in the *movida*, different social classes also came together within the movement. Commenting on this phenomenon, the journalist Alfredo Villaverde wrote in 1987: ‘[Era algo] que pretende que nadie quede fuera de él y que nada permanezca anónimo o desconocido’.45

Rock-ola was especially known for its mixture of different social classes, from lower-class *macarras* to upper-class *pijos*. A broad cross-section of society also frequented the Bar Universal, usually presided over by the poet Leopoldo Panero. The *movida*’s cultural elite was also comprised of a mix of classes. Carlos Berlanga came from a prominent family, while Alaska was from a middle-class family in Mexico.46 Pedro Almodóvar hailed from humble beginnings in La Mancha. The second editor of *La Luna de Madrid*, José Tono Martínez, summed up the movement’s lack of class distinctions in 1987: ‘Somos muy poco clasicistas’.47

This feeling of universal inclusion was typified by the popular *movida* radio station, Radio 3. With regard to the music, the station offered programming that was ‘abierta, libre y desprejuiciada’.48 The director of Radio 3 from 1982–1986, Pablo García, recalls the diversity and inclusiveness of all of the programming

cuyos contenidos sobre literatura, lingüística, fotografía, arte, arquitectura y urbanismo, filosofía, ecología, sociología, son incorporados y debatidos con un nuevo estilo y con la participación de los oyentes sin mayores trabas que impuestas por la duración de los espacios.49

Rather than simply being motivated by the bottom line, the station’s programming was free to try to embrace all groups, including those

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46 Carlos Berlanga’s father was the famous Spanish film director, Luis García Berlanga.
49 García, ‘Radio 3’, 332.
considered marginalized at the time: ‘los homosexuales, los objetores, las feministas, los ecologistas, los inmigrantes, los presos’.

Representing a distinct break from the Franco regime, the *movida* also embodied greater coexistence through its inclusion of alternative lifestyles. Within the *movida*, gays and lesbians proclaimed their sexual orientation openly for the first time. In fact, with Chueca—the city’s traditional gay neighbourhood—as one of the centres of the *movida*, Madrid’s queer scene played a prominent role within it. Gabriel Giorgi has already described the importance gay life had in the formation of the cultural movement and in making Madrid a modern, open, and democratic city. In particular, the success and visibility of Fabio MacNamara, Pedro Almodóvar, and the couple known as *Las Costus* represented greater acceptance of homosexuality. Bibi Andersen was even able to achieve great popularity as a transsexual. Years later, the writer and poet José María Parreño commented on the role of homosexuals in the *movida*: ‘[Los gays jugaron] un papel bastante emblemático. Por una parte, era un índice de libertad y de tolerancia [...] había tal cantidad de homosexuales en el mundo de la pintura o de la literatura, que llegaron a funcionar como grupo de poder’.

The editor of *La Luna de Madrid*, Borja Casani, also recalled the importance of homosexuals in the movement: ‘La primera gran liberación la producen los homosexuales. Eso es totalmente evidente. Son los primeros en liberarse de todos los españoles. Nos llevaban quince mil kilómetros de distancia a los demás’. Due in part to the *movida*, one of Franco’s strictest taboos appeared even to be in vogue. After reading the book *Gay Rock*, by Eduardo Haro Ibars, Alaska told her mother, ‘quiero ser chico para ser maricón’.

Finally, the *movida* symbolized inclusion and greater coexistence because it incorporated the diverse styles and personalities of a cultural elite that, like the majority of the population of Madrid, originally came from some place

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50 García, ‘Radio 3’, 333.
53 Gallero, *Solo se vive una vez*, 20.
54 Gallero, *Solo se vive una vez*, 21.
else. For example, Alaska was born in Mexico, Alberto García-Alix and Kiki D’Aki in León, Pedro Almodóvar in Castilla-La Mancha, Jesús Ordoñez in La Coruña, El Hortelano in Valencia, José Tono Martínez in Guatemala, Enrique Costus and Miguel Trillo in Cadiz, Juan Costus in Palma de Mallorca, Adolfo Domínguez in Galicia and Rafael Abitbol in Tangiers.

These artists, writers and musicians came to Madrid from other regions of Spain, bringing with them their own unique set of customs and forms of expression. It was the combination of these diverse characteristics that made the movida and Madrid simultaneously unique and inclusive. The popular movida singer Nacho ‘Nacha Pop’ García Vega conveyed this feeling particularly well in 1987: ‘Es como una pensión o como un hotel de cinco estrellas. Todos son visitantes o hijos de nacidos fuera y eso es lo mejor. Nadie es más de Madrid que otro, ni menos, aunque acabe de llegar’. Everyone had an equal claim to the capital, and an equal opportunity to create an image of Madrid based on his or her own needs and desires. As a result, the movida did not emphasize traditional madrileño customs; instead, the cultural activity of the movement included a broad range of interests and themes. It was exactly this diversity and openness that made the movida attractive to Madrid’s heterogeneous population, and to its political elite. The movement’s inclusiveness of form and expression was particularly attractive to a political elite that hailed from various parts of the country as well: the mayor spent his youth in Soria, the mayor’s first lieutenant was from Jaén, the Concejal de Cultura was from Valencia, and the president of the Comunidad of Madrid was from Santander. The movida’s openness and inclusion of a wide range of people and ideas made it ideal to employ in the official project to distance Madrid from its authoritarian past and reinforce the creation of a democratic civic identity based on peaceful coexistence.

Second, the administration also supported the movida because it exemplified the idea of active and popular participation. The movida was not about sitting idly around in cafes and bars. It was about participation and movement—thus the term ‘movida’. In addition, although there was a core cultural elite within the movement, the movida was a public phenomenon open to everyone. The main sites of participation were Madrid’s streets, plazas, festivals, bars, galleries and cafes. For the most part, activity did not

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56 In 1985, only 46.7% of the residents of the Comunidad of Madrid had been born in the region; Comunidad de Madrid, Informe sobre demanda latente de cultura y deporte (Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 1985), 21.

57 The fact that the movida’s cultural elite was not from Madrid represents the historical norm, rather than the exception. The three authors most closely associated with the culture of Madrid in the past were not originally madrileños: the aragonés Pedro Laín Entralgo, the segoviano Anselmo Carretero and the sevillano Antonio Machado.

take place in private homes, in private clubs, or behind closed doors. Some of the main public spaces of the *movida* included the Plaza del Dos de Mayo, the Rastro and the open-air bars (terrazas) along the Paseo de la Castellana. The *movida*'s focus on public places closely coincided with Tierno Galván's desire to return residents to Madrid's streets. In this way, the movement further helped create a new kind of place to live where the streets and plazas were a prolongation of one's own home.

In general, social exchange and participation were also fostered by the *movida*'s decentralization and lack of hierarchy. While Malasan˜a may be the neighbourhood most closely associated with the *movida*, the movement was not centralized in any one location; instead it was spread out across the capital. In addition to the heavy rock played out in the periphery neighbourhoods, there were at least four major zones of the *movida*. In Arguelles, in the northwest region of the city, the bars and clubs frequented by university students were clustered around the calle Princesa. Extending from the Plaza Santa Ana to the Paseo del Prado, the area of Huertas was preferred by the most politically progressive, *los progres*. The area of Orense, located around the commercial centre of Azca, was the most upscale centre of the *movida*, featuring shops and bars frequented by upper-class *pijos*. Finally, Malasan˜a and Chueca, located just north of the Gran Vía, were home to some of the most active and raucous scenes of the *movida*. There were also hangouts, such as La Bobia, around the Rastro, in the southern part of the city, and various other hot spots scattered across Madrid, such as the Club Carolina in Cuatro Caminos. This decentralization increased accessibility and participation in the movement. At the same time, the *movida*'s own media outlets further increased popular participation in the movement. The numerous radio programmes, the television show, ‘La Edad de Oro’, and magazines, such as *La Luna de Madrid* and *Madrid Me Mata*, all helped popularize the movement beyond an exclusive cultural elite.

Within the popularized movement, the simple role of spectator was not satisfactory. Activity and creativity were the norm. No one wanted to be limited to just viewing paintings, sculptures or photographs; many wanted to become a painter, sculptor or photographer. It was no longer enough simply to go to the movies; making movies or videos became the goal. In the same way, *movida* bands did not play for money or fame in the beginning. They played for pure and simple amusement, or simply because they could. The *movida* also symbolized the belief that there was something more to life than simply economic production and consumption. Years later, one of the members of Los

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59 For further information on some of the different sites of the *movida*, see Acacia Domínguez Uceta, ‘Lugares de los 80’, in *Madrid, años ochenta*, ed. Rafael Sierra (Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1989), 59–84.

60 In 1982, for example, only approximately 20% of the musical groups in Madrid had made a record; Paco Martín, *La movida* (Madrid: n. p., 1982), 11.
Secretos, Álvaro Urquijo, recalled: ‘Antes no pensábamos en ganar dinero. Era todo pura afición y que triunfaras era casi una carambola’.61

With its embrace of ‘everything’s OK’ (todo vale), the movida also opened the way for new forms of participation, representing the idea that everything had value, especially those things that had been labelled ‘popular’ or ‘ordinary’. For example, it was at this time that the ‘popular’ art form of photography became accepted and even fashionable. The movida photographer Pablo Pérez-Mínguez spread the idea that ‘todo se puede fotografiar’.62 Photographers such as Pérez-Mínguez, Alberto García-Alix and Miguel Trillo increasingly took pictures of everyday objects and ordinary people. Pérez-Mínguez claimed at the time, ‘Creo que la fotografía es el arte más fácil y popular de la historia’.63 The popular nature of photography—and of the movida in general—helped break the association of artists and cultural production with elitism. It was no longer important, or even necessary, to have a big studio or fancy photographic equipment to be a photographer. Everybody could participate and take photos. This kind of liberty and lack of cultural elitism was typical of the movida. Anyone could pick up a camera, microphone or paint brush and participate. As a result, a popular feeling of active participation was created around the movement.

This participation, however, favoured cultural activity over other forms of engagement, specifically formal political activity. Without question, the movida failed to align with the traditional political positions of the transition and post-transition periods. Although representing greater cultural mobilization, it reflected a joyous and sometimes self-indulgent rejection of political conservatism on the right and of social conformity on the left. It supported neither the ‘traditional’ left of Felipe González and Juan Luis Cebrián nor conservatives such as Manuel Fraga and José María Álvarez del Manzano. As a result, formal political mobilization was not a significant part of the movement. In fact, as mentioned above, the movida’s apparently apolitical nature has been pointed to as evidence of its triviality and unimportance.64 However, in an environment where Madrid’s political elite wished to have sharp political positions forgotten, the movida’s emphasis on cultural participation coincided with the desire to avoid political mobilization, which might lead to polarization. Likewise, the themes of violence and political revolution were largely absent from the discourse surrounding the movida, thus making it more acceptable to Madrid’s political elite. Fun and sometimes frivolity based on active participation,

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63 11 fotógrafos españoles.
peaceful coexistence, and artistic creativity became, for all practical purposes, a political posture in and of itself. While this position displeased both the traditional left and right, it suited perfectly Tierno Galván’s desire to create a new participatory and inclusive madrileño identity in the capital.

Third, in addition to the movement’s inclusive and participatory aspects, the local and regional administrations also wished to take advantage of the confidence, pride and optimism associated with the movida. Despite its later spread to other parts of the country, the movement was firmly rooted in Madrid. Participants were enthusiastic and proud of their work, of the projects of others, and of Madrid in general. As the movement tended toward artistic creation and production, rather than destruction, self-loathing and cynicism, it also reflected a significant degree of optimism and vitality.  

Most importantly, and in contrast with the traditional image of ‘Spanishness’ promoted by the Franco regime, the movement offered cultural symbols that focused specifically on Madrid.

Without calling directly on traditional customs from the past, much of the movida was inspired by various aspects of the capital. Madrid’s flea market, el Rastro, lent a certain bric-à-brac aesthetic to the movement. Heavy rock influences came from the peripheral districts of Vallecas and Legazpi. As mentioned above, Chueca, at that time a run-down neighbourhood in the city’s centre, contributed a distinctively gay influence. Likewise, the cultural production of movida artists proudly feature symbols of the capital. For example, Ouka-Lele produced painted photographs of Madrid’s most famous fountain, Cibeles. Pablo Pérez-Mínguez took pictures of the Gran Vía that put the old boulevard in a stunning new light. The musical group Burning recorded an album entitled Madrid. The titles of the movement’s most emblematic magazines made direct reference to the capital: La Luna de Madrid and Madrid Me Mata. And the films of Pedro Almodóvar prominently featured the capital itself. Even the name of the movement, the ‘movida madrileña’, specifically highlighted the locality of Madrid. Furthermore, the musical groups of the movida sang strictly in Spanish, during a time when English songs were widely popular. For the municipal and regional administrations, the movida appeared to embrace many ‘authentic’ characteristics of Madrid.

Those madrileños associated with the movement were also very proud of Madrid and confident of its new culture. For example, journalists related to the movement were fond of comparing the Madrid of the movida to Florence during the Renaissance.  

Many madrileños even came to believe that Madrid had been transformed by the movida into the new ‘cultural capital of the world’. The journalist Moncho Alpuente first suggested in January 1984 that Madrid, with its diverse collection of poets, musicians, expositions and

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65 Mark Allinson has specifically described the movida’s optimism with regard to the singer Alaska (see ‘Alaska: Star of Stage and Screen and Optimistic Punk’).
fashion designers, would in fact become the capital of the world that year, at least culturally speaking.\textsuperscript{67} This idea of Madrid as the cultural capital of the world quickly became widespread within the movement. In a letter to the editor of \textit{La Luna de Madrid}, two readers of the magazine plainly observed: ‘Madrid está en un momento en que no dudamos en calificarla “Capital del Mundo” como lo han sido en su día París, Londres o Nueva York’.\textsuperscript{68} The same readers wanted to ‘comprar muchos ejemplares de \textit{La Luna}, y mandarlos a nuestros amigos de Nueva York, Londres, etc. para decirles “¿Veis? Ya quisierais vosotros tener una ciudad como nuestra”’.\textsuperscript{69} Even the head of the Centro Cultural de la Villa, Antonio Gómez Rufo, believed that the \textit{movida} ‘ha hecho de esta ciudad la capital cultural de Europa’.\textsuperscript{70} By the middle of 1984, there was the firm belief that, with the help of the \textit{movida}, Madrid had been transformed into the new cultural Mecca of the world.

It is less significant whether or not Madrid was actually the cultural capital of the world at that moment. What is important in this context is that many madrileños, especially those who participated in the \textit{movida}, believed that it was. As a result, for the first time in many years, Madrid symbolized cultural vibrancy, rather than political repression. In addition to inclusion and participation, the movement’s specific connection to Madrid inspired pride, new feelings of affiliation, and optimism towards the future. In this way, the \textit{movida} represented a new way of perceiving the capital and a new way of life of which many residents, of course not all, could be proud. The local political elite recognized the importance of this pride and chose to assimilate the \textit{movida} into the project to distance the capital from its repressive past and create an inclusive cultural identity based specifically on the symbols of Madrid.

Fourth, and finally, Madrid’s political elite wished to adopt the \textit{movida} because it represented a ‘modern’ culture that was in line with, or even ahead of, the rest of Europe. In fact, the dramatically different style, music, fashion and artistic production of the \textit{movida} made both intellectuals and the popular press at the time call the movement something completely new.\textsuperscript{71} It appeared to be so different from what had gone before that it was labelled ‘postmodern’.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{68} Miguel A. Rodríguez and José García Monge, ‘Cartas al director’, \textit{La Luna de Madrid} (April 1984), xv.
\item\textsuperscript{69} Rodríguez and García Monge, ‘Cartas al director’.
\item\textsuperscript{70} Antonio Gómez Rufo, \textit{Carta a un amigo sobre don Enrique Tierno Galván} (Madrid: Ediciones de Antonio Machado, 1986), 34. For similar comments see Antonio Gómez Rufo, \textit{Madrid, bajos fondos} (Madrid: El Avapiés, 1987), 17. Alaska also commonly referred to Madrid as ‘la capital del mundo’ (see Alaska, ‘La fiesta debe continuar’, \textit{Primera Línea de la Actualidad} [February 1986], 4–7 [p. 4]).
\item\textsuperscript{71} See Borja Casani and José Tono Martínez, ‘Madrid 1984: ¿La posmodernidad?’, \textit{La Luna de Madrid} (November 1983), 6–7. See also Éric Beaumatin, ‘Madrid, la décennie prodigieuse’, \textit{Autrement} (1987), 8–13.
\end{itemize}
With constant references to such French postmodern philosophers as Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, Spanish journalists, writers, professors and even politicians argued that the development of the movida symbolized Spain’s, or at least Madrid’s, entry into the postmodern age. According to the French academic, Bernard Bessière: ‘Aucun concept appartenant au champ des sciences humaines n’aura provoqué, au cours de la décennie écoulé [1980s], un echo aussi considerable parmi les intellectuals espagnols que celui de post-modernisme’. Despite its popularity, not everyone agreed with this designation, resulting in a debate between ‘modernists’ and ‘postmodernists’. This debate, which in the end comes down to little more than semantics, had the important effect of associating the movida with the cutting edge of cultural and intellectual developments and of increasing its visibility even further. Regardless of whether the movement was a modern or postmodern phenomenon, the movida clearly represented something novel and contemporary in the eyes of the new democratic administrations. Most importantly for them, it was obviously not a part of the culture of the Franco regime. In this way, the modern image of the movida symbolized a decisive break from the past.

Almost everything about the movement was the opposite of the Franco regime: new vs. old, open vs. closed, night vs. day, promiscuity vs. chastity, colour vs. greyness and popular vs. elite. Its nocturnal cultural activity seemed to replace the emphasis on administrative and functionary daylight activity of the former regime. Likewise, experimentation took the place of traditional ways of doing things, as the movida represented a fascination for what was new and untried. Instead of the clean, pressed uniforms of the Franco period, the young fashion designers of the movida assured, ‘the wrinkle is beautiful’. It also brought with it brand-new artistic forms, including the first major efforts in Spain in the areas of installation art and video as artistic forms. And, overall, the popular nature of the movida contrasted sharply with what was often perceived as the cultural elitism of

72 See La polémica de la posmodernidad, ed. José Tono Martínez (Madrid: Editorial Libertas, 1986); Francisco Umbral, Guía de la posmodernidad (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1987). For a further discussion of Spain within the postmodern context see Monleón, Del franquismo a la posmodernidad; Subirats, ‘Postmoderna modernidad: La España de los felices ochenta’; Vernon and Morris, Post-Franco, Postmodern: The Films of Pedro Almodóvar.


75 According to Bessière, the confusion surrounding the terms ‘modern’, ‘postmodern’ and ‘post modernity’ was ‘without a doubt one of the most trivial aspects of the period’; (Bernard Bessière, ‘El Madrid de la democracia: comportamientos culturales y crisol de creación. Realidades y dudas’, in España frente al siglo XXI: cultura y literatura, ed. Amell, 51–75 [p. 64]).

76 This well known quote is attributed to Adolfo Domínguez. See Jesús Ordovás, Historia de la música pop española (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), 226.
the former regime. Its forms, symbols and style all appeared as something new to Madrid’s political elite. As a result, the movement provided both an important aesthetic break from the authoritarian past, and useful symbols to create a distinctively new image of madrileño culture. For Madrid’s political elite interested in transforming the capital, the movida also represented a high level of modernization, at least in terms of culture. The types of modern music and art that were being produced in the capital at this time were comparable to those in England and the United States. Moreover, movida artists had their own unique look and musical sound. In other words, they were not mere copies of their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

Participants in the movement were even called ‘los modernos’, and the movida was claimed to have a ‘look moderno’. This modern ‘look’ was also aided by the fact that the movida centred, in part, on the region’s youth, and on the idea of ‘youth’. Without question it was, to a certain degree, a youth movement, as many of the participants were young adults under the age of thirty.\(^\text{77}\) Just as importantly, however, the movida also represented the characteristics that were generally associated with youth: freedom, spontaneity and curiosity. These were the same modern ‘values’ that were increasingly esteemed in the rest of the West at the same time.

Finally, the origins and inspirations of the movida were located not in the past, but in the present. While many observers have linked it to the 1960s counterculture movement in the United States and to the ‘swinging sixties’ in London, the movida was actually related to more contemporary cultural currents. The international punk scene and the contemporary ‘new wave’ phenomenon, originally from Manchester, were two of the most important early influences. Other inspirations included: glam rock (typified by David Bowie, Gary Glitter and Alvin Stardust), the work of Andy Warhol, and ‘alternative’ publications from California.\(^\text{78}\) Movida musicians, in particular, were inspired by a diverse mix of musical influences: the Sex Pistols, the Ramones, Souxsie & the Banshees, the Clash and Lou Reed. These

\(^\text{77}\) The use of the word ‘jóvenes’, both at the time and later in the historiography, has led to confusion and misunderstanding, especially for Hispanists working outside Spain. Unlike in the United States and England, the terms jóvenes and juventud refer to a population between 15 and 25 or 15 and 30 years old, not strictly to teenagers. See Equipo de Investigaciones Sociológicas (EDIS), La juventud de Madrid, 1985 (Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Concejalía de Juventud, 1985); Fundación Santa María, Juventud española, 1984 (Madrid: Ediciones SM, 1985). Young people (jóvenes) are even occasionally classified between 16 and 32 years old. See for example Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), ‘La actividad de los jóvenes madrileños’, Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (REIS), 26 (1984), 273–308.

\(^\text{78}\) The week-long visit of the master of ‘pop’ art to Madrid in 1983 had a significant impact on the movida in general and on some participants in particular. The movida singer Carlos Berlanga recalled: ‘Descubrir a Warhol es como para un cristiano descubrir a Dios’; Comunidad de Madrid, Andy Warhol y España: exposición (Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 1987), 28.
links to contemporary cultural movements made it more attractive to an administration wishing to redefine Madrid as a uniquely open and tolerant region than were those symbols retrieved from the past.

Looking ahead, the project to create a new participatory form of democratic regional identity ultimately failed in Madrid, ending shortly after the death of Enrique Tierno Galván in 1986. The failure primarily resulted from the fact that the specific project in Madrid was increasingly at odds with the national goals of economic development and European integration in the second half of the decade. Specifically, the space that had allowed for the articulation of a unique madrileño identity was closed after 1986 as the national leadership of Spain’s Socialist party, the PSOE, consolidated its power and re-appropriated Madrid as the capital of Spain. As the newly anointed capital of a European ‘nation of nations’, any plans for a separate path or a unique regional identity for Madrid had to be left aside by the end of the 1980s.

In conclusion, rather than simply representing one vivid aspect of a wider cultural phenomenon, or another example of Spain’s fundamental backwardness, the movida madrileña formed an integral part of the project to transform Madrid after the experience of the dictatorship. The movement was not, however, fabricated outright by Madrid’s political elite. It was first created by a privileged cultural elite, made up of photographers, writers, fashion designer, artists and musicians, who freely expressed themselves in an environment of tolerance and openness between 1979 and 1983. This new environment was created in part by the Ayuntamiento’s support of cultural diversity and civic participation, and by its insistence on returning the streets of the capital to the citizens of Madrid. In this sense, Madrid’s political elite did not originally create the movida, but rather opened the space for it to develop through its desire to culturally transform Madrid. In this new space the movida flourished and eventually became adopted first by the municipal administration after 1983, and then later by the new regional government. It was institutionalized because it offered another way for the political elite of Madrid to distance the capital from the past and to create a new democratic identity for all madrileños. Among other things, the movida symbolized greater tolerance towards homosexuality, an embrace of youth and youth culture, the liberalization of sexual norms, the popularization of culture, the inclusion of all segments of the population, and a significant degree of pride and optimism with regard to Madrid’s future. Such an open and universal projection of madrileño culture was meant to close the gaps caused by difference in class, age, political affiliation and place of birth. Also included in the movida’s symbolic meaning were the freedoms of creation, imagination and participation. In addition, the embrace of the movida’s

79 The PSOE was the national governing party in Spain from October 1982 to March 1996.
modern culture also made Madrid unique in the Spanish context in the mid 1980s, as no other region in Spain had opened itself to modernity, or at least to modern cultural currents, in quite the same way. Seen from this perspective, the promotion of a modern cultural image of the capital differentiated the region of Madrid from other parts of the country.

Thus, similar to other regions in Spain after 1975, Madrid’s political elite promoted specific cultural symbols and forms in order to reinforce a regional identity project. But, in contrast to other regions, Madrid had no viable cultural tradition to look back to. Nor was there a distinctive linguistic heritage to revive. Instead, the movida provided a unique set of symbols that neatly matched the need for a new cultural identity that would help redefine madrileños as active, proud, and modern democratic citizens. It also offered a new cultural identity based specifically on Madrid, and not on something that was imported from abroad or left over from the Franco period. Because of the specific context in which it was created, Madrid’s official ‘contra-castizo’ cultural identity demonstrated some additional differences in relation to other similar projects.

First, the official projection of Madrid through cultural symbols was consciously constructed on the present, and not on the past, as is usually the case. In other words, the goal was not to rediscover ‘authentic folk traditions’ or to revive traditional symbols and customs, as in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. Instead, the project to promote a new cultural identity in Madrid was an attempt to express regional differentiation through contemporary or modern culture. This embrace of a modern western culture was also what separated the capital from the rest of Spain, as no other region had identified itself with modernity to quite the same degree. In this way, Madrid’s regional identity was based on a culturally vigorous present, and not on a real or imagined past. Thus, in contrast to most nationalist and regionalist projects at the end of the twentieth century, the case of Madrid suggests that a shared cultural past does not have to be called upon to construct a new collective identity in the present.

Second, whereas culture is usually tied to narrowly defined ethnic affiliations, in this case it was linked to an open or universal identity in the capital. In this way, the project in Madrid was unique because the promotion of this new official cultural identity specifically reinforced an inclusive civic rather than an exclusive ethnic regional identity. Due in part to such factors as the region’s diverse and largely immigrant population, Madrid’s political elite chose to base greater cultural mobilization and the pursuit of a ‘crisol de culturas’ specifically on the modern and inclusive symbols of the movida madrileña. The amalgamation of cultural influences brought to Madrid by the principal actors of the movida created a set of symbols associated with the capital that was particularly non-ethnic. The result was a more tolerant and more pluralistic cultural phenomenon. The promotion of an official cultural image of Madrid based on this inclusive and tolerant movement demonstrates
that, unlike the examples from Eastern Europe or the Basque Country, culture does not have to be exclusivist or ethnocentric with regard to the formation of a new national or regional identity.

From this perspective, then, the significance of the *movida madrileña*, and of Madrid’s broader transformation goes beyond changes in musical tastes and cultural preferences in the capital. It was instead about both new regional affiliations and a shift towards democratic behaviour and mental habits. Likewise, institutional support for the *movida* was less about making Madrid modern—it already was—and more about using modern cultural symbols to give *madrileños* a new sense of pride and a new democratic sense of place. In the end, the transformation of Madrid in the 1980s was not simply about the formation of a youth sub-culture, or a demonstration of the capital’s laggardness or backward character; rather it was part of a complicated process of remaking a democratic Spain and democratic Spaniards in the wake of the dictatorship.