OUR MEDIA NOT THEIRS II

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GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW: LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY STRUGGLES

1. INTRODUCTION

New technologies of production and cultural diffusion behave important changes and suppose an extraordinary challenge of future for the Catalonian society. Even though to be a rich in talent and creativity country, Catalonia knows a difficult and compromised cultural situation, since their culture is shown very weak, and undecided, in those sectors that will play a strategic role in the XXI century. Maybe two of the most serious errors committed by Catalonian institutions—obsessed primarily in the defense and conservation of the tongue and traditional culture—are, first, do not to have understood the strategic importance audiovisual industry has, and secondly, do not have presented in an open way the narrow relation that currently exists among cultural and communication policies.

1.1. Beyond the cultural industry notion

In talking about culture in the current society it is necessary to consider the importance of communicative phenomena and, also, of cultural industry, both of them have become key aspects of the contemporary society and culture. Cultural industries—that have been converted in multimedia firms—have an essential role in the advanced societies. They are integrated by firms or institutions with a complex work organization. They use more or less sophisticated technological resources in industrial production in order to elaborate, distribute and commercialize symbolic goods in a large scale. The same can be said with reference to advertising promotion, financing and other related activities.

The cultural activity environment, therefore, is closely related to the relevance gained by the social communication media and to the existence of a group of industries that present a vertical integration of the cultural production. Thus, for example, it is necessary to have in mind that in Catalonia television is very important for the movie industry and, indirectly, for the theater. The industrial production is not the only form to produce culture. Other forms of creation and cultural diffusion, more traditional, still exist and have relevant strength, but they escape from industrial circuits. This is the case of the traditional popular forms of culture

(folk culture), but also of some cases of high culture, such as theater and opera. Nevertheless, cultural industries have become the hegemonic way to produce, distribute and consume cultural products in many instances. Social communication media, both new and traditional, are the main instrument of diffusion and promotion of the cultural forms mentioned. As exemplified by multimedia firms, the cultural activity world is at present inseparable of social communication media. As a consequence, when we analyze these cultural activity sectors (movies, television, video, radio, music, cd rom and so on) in Catalonia we should be done having in mind their close connection and mutual dependence. Both technological convergence in the digital era and business concentration phenomena reinforce this interdependence.

"In reality, there are two parallel phenomena: the business concentration and the technological convergence. (This) behaves a fundamental strategic change in communication: the big telecommunication firms entrance in the sector of the social communication, in the area of the content production" (COROMINAS-DE MORAGAS:2000:9)

Our starting premise is that communicative system plays a key role in catalan cultural identity making process. In every society, the relations among social communication media and the cultural identity making process are inseparable. Thus therefore, in our country we work in an environment marked by the dialectical process between globalization and localization, or to said in another way, among the globalization of media culture and its relation with our own culture (PARÉS:1991). However, the notion of industry, applied to the culture cannot be interpreted in a literal sense. Thus the cultural industry products have, at the end, their own specificity. They also are important in the building and maintenance processes of the countries cultural identities.

The audiovisual sector, that in the current globalization process phase has an hegemonic character, and that is generally linked to transnational firms, knows a period of deep changes and expansion in all around Europe. He has experienced, thanks to modern technological media of creation and cultural difusion –such as digital television and optical fibre- an extraordinary growth of the offering.

1.2. The cultural process of globalization

Keeping in mind the social importance that have achieved cultural industries obliges us to have very present the context and the international situation where at present the communicative and cultural processes are inserted. This does not imply that more "traditional" forms of culture should be ignored. Since most of them have usually a deep popular roots they have become real media spectacles –this is the case, for example, in Catalonia, of the every year more popular "Human Towers or Castles" or *Castellers* (see **PICTURE 1).**

Traditionally, socials scientists have maintained a conception of the states as independent, homogeneous, and unitarian realities. Social scientists have conceived national states as economic, political, and cultural units of a more or less homogeneous character (**BECK**, 1998). The globalization process has blow up this obsolete conception of the cultural facts. From one side, there is a political fragmentation and the proliferation of new states. On the

other, the market has gained a global dimension. It must be emphasized that we are engaged in a globalization process that affects us from economic, social and cultural point of views. We cannot continue to study societies and cultures as they were islands, or isolated territories. Globalization provokes that society and state dimensions go beyond the territorial limits not only of sovereign states like United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy and so on, but also of nations without states –or stateless nations- as Catalonia. The particular characteristics of Catalonia, a nation with a limited sovereignty and who lacked self-government during a key period of cultural modernization process, complicates our position. It is precisely when we analyze the audiovisual and information and communication technologies industries that we can state the difficulty to speak of the cultural identities as isolated facts. It is then when we can also consider the old-fashioned character that present some traditional or resistencialists conceptions.

Nevertheless, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are not exclusively to the service of large international groups. They can be useful to reinforce minority cultural identities and lesser used languages. Professor N.Garcia-Canclini refers to the continuity of traditional forms of identity notwithstanding the process of globalization (GARCIA-CANCLINI:1997). They are cultures that have survived thanks to his capacity to adapt to the new scenario using new communication tools. In other words, it is not true that globalization supposes necessarily a process of social and cultural uniformization implying in a fatal way the destruction of local cultures. Even in some cases it helps the revival of certain local or regional cultures. Globalization and homogenisationa are not synonymous terms. As stated by the World Report on Culture (UNESCO:1998), intercultural contacts and global markets stimulate art and local cultures.

PICTURE 1: CASTELLERS



1.3. Catalonia's cultural dimensions

Theoretically, it is in countries of reduced dimensions where a solid and coherent cultural cohesion is more easily to reach. However, it is precisely in this kind of countries where large scale cultural production, that defines advanced societies, collides with many difficulties. For instance, the high capital investments that require some sectors of the modern cultural activity -as the movie industry or television- implies that they need a wide audience in order to provide benefits. As a consequence, in a globalized world, it's law to be selective. So that Catalonia –a stateless nation, conscious of his own limitations- has opted to be selective, audacious and determined in order to have a say, to exist, at international cultural level. Of course, to reach this, it is indispensable cultural exchange with other regions and countries. At the same time, it is necessary to focus and to give top priority to those own cultural areas with more future and with a higher international projection.

In this sense, Catalonia has important obstacles to overcome. First is his own dimension, that is from an objective point of view, relatively –but not absolutely- small. We must add a second obstacle: a scarce tradition, or if you prefer a historic discontinuity, in some to-day key cultural industries. Third, we must give priority to an issue often ignored: the diffusion channels and the commercialization and distribution networks of the cultural production in catalan must reach all the Catalan speaking territories. We must bear in mind that to a large degree cultural products consumed in Catalonia (music, movies, literature, televisión

programs) are not available in Catalan language, and are neither made in Catalonia nor even in the rest of the Spanish state. That means that the most serious threat against minority cultures in Europe comes from the uneven competence that presents the American (U.S.) audio-visual industry, together with the arrogant cultural character of large European powers (states and multimedia corporations). As a matter of fact, this is not a Catalan exclusive problem. Even some cultures supported by –small- states face it. This is the case of Danish culture – or finnish, hungarian. As a consequence, institutions must be strongly committed to the development of ICT.

2. A LOOK AT CATALAN SOCIETY

From an European perspective, Catalonia is placed in a strategic position so much from a north-south dimension as from a west-east one. Thus, Catalonia historically has become a communication bridge among Europe and Africa, being converted in one of the most important areas of the Western Mediterranean. He has a double vocation: european and mediterranean. As a consequence he is going to play an important role in the EU immediate future, because of the growing weight of the relations among these two areas. This weight is corroborated by the consolidation of an influence area (in economic, social and cultural terms) that goes well beyond the territorial, political and administrative limits of the current Autonomous Community of Catalonia. Really, we can consider that Catalonia, and inside him, Barcelona, as the center of an euroregion that has close connections with other important cities as Tolosa de Llenguadoc (Toulouse in French), Montpeller (Montpellier in French), Menorca (Balearc Islands), Alacant and Saragossa (Zaragoza in Spanish), and which also includes a sovereign micro-state, the Principality of Andorra, who has the Catalan as his only official language (as established by the 1993 Constitution). Beyond this immediate perimeter of influence, Catalan firms are also present in Morocco, Portugal, the remainder of the European Unión, as well as in America. Ultimately, they also penetrate in emergent markets such as Central and Eastern Europe and Asia –with China as a top priority.

Currently, the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, has a surface of 31.895 km2 and a population of more than 6.300.000 (2001). The territorial distribution of this population, nevertheless, is very uneven, given that 4.300.000 of them live in Barcelona Metropolitan Area (BMA). In the following lines, we want to emphasize some linguistic and cultural aspects of the Catalan society.

2.1. Catalan language and catalan communicational space

A first remark to do is that the Catalan speaking territories are more extensive than those included at the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. So in this section we enlarge our perspective to the whole Catalan speaking territories (also known as **Catalan Countries**). As is well documented Catalan is a latin language, that is currently spoken or understood by near 9.5 million people – of a total of 11.96 million inhabitants distributed in a territorial surface of more than 66.000 square km. Catalan Countries are present in four sovereign states (See **TABLE 1**).

Almost 90% of Catalan Countries are located inside the Spanish State: three spanish autonomous communities have Catalan as co-official language together with Spanish.

Catalonia, Balearic Islands and Valencia (where it is re-named as valencian, that is a local dialect). Two more autonomous communities: Aragon and Murcia have small catalan speaking populations: the Western fringe and El Carxe, respectively. Currently, there is a legislative piece under discussion at Aragon Parliament in order to pass an Aragon Languages Act that eventually will recognize Catalan and give some rights to the catalan speaking citizens. No such thing happens in Murcia.

However, Spanish central institutions doesn't recognize Catalan as official, so from an international perspective Spain is a monolingual state. This limitation has deep consequences: one of the most important is that European Unión doesn't recognize Catalan at the same level of other official EU languages, because Spanish Central Government has not ask for it. The paradox is that Catalan has not official status at EU institutions even if it is spoken by a large number of current EU citizens than danish, finnish –or than future EU citizens like slovene, slovak.

TABLE 1: CATALAN GEOLINGUISTIC SPACE

Name (Autonomous Community, if different)	Surface (km2)	<u>Population</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>State</u>
Catalunya	31.895	6.361.365	Barcelona	Spanish
Valencian				
Community	23.255	4.202.608	València	Spanish
Balearic Islands	4.992	878,627	Mallorca	Spanish
Western Fringe				
(Aragó)	1.812	42.000	No Capital	Spanish
Carxe				
(Múrcia)	Not available	A few thousands	No Capital	Spanish
Andorra	468	52.000	Andorra La Vella	Andorra
Northern				
Catalonia	4.116	364.000	Perpinyà	French
L'Alguer	224	52.000	L'Alguer	Italy
TOTAL				•
(approx.)	66.800	11.960.000		

In France, Catalan is spoken at *Département des Pyrenees Orientales*, included at *Languedoc-Roussillon* Region. However, Catalan people call this part as Northern Catalonia (*Catalunya Nord*). Its capital is the city of Perpinyà (*Perpignan* in French). In France, the Catalan language has no legal recognition whatsoever. Even it is forbiden to give Catalan first names to our children, because catalan first names, literally, "aren't republicans" (that is, French). Nevertheless, at a local level there are initiatives to give a partial recognition to Catalan in the public, educational and administrative spheres, but they are severely watched by Paris-driven departmental and regional authorities.

In Italy, Catalan is spoken at the tiny town of L'Alguer in Sardinia. Currently Italian Parliament has recognize Catalan as a local language. Finally, as previously said, Catalan is constitutional established the only official language of the Principality of Andorra, a sovereign micro-state located at the Pyrenees. Andorra is nowadays a member of the United Nations system, and also of the Council of Europe. In the future, maybe he will join European Union. As a consequence, Catalan shall be recognize by Brussels-Luxembourg-Strasbourg bureaucracy—even against the Spanish and French will.

Properly speaking, then, we hardly can consider catalan as a minority language, or to said more accurately, a minorized language, It has more speakers than other european languages (danish or norwish, for example). Also we have to bear in mind that Catalan is not a language spoken by "a few rural people in their way to dissapear". The use of it is widely extended at public and private life.

Of course, there are problems to solve, and it is true that in some of the Catalan Countries, our tongue is spoken by a minority of the population. This is the case in Northern Catalonia, where policies implemented by French authorities since the end of First World War, had favoured the emigration of poor northern catalan youth to big cities like Lyon, Marseille or Paris, many of them to public service, and specially at police forces, and the arrival of French—and also Belgian- retired people in search of sun and quietness. Also we must mention the presence since the sixties of an important and very influential colony of *Pieds-Noirs*—Black Feet-, who came after the Independence of Algeria, and who represent an electoral stronghold for right-wing and racist *Front National* under the leadership of Jean Marie Le Pen. And of course they are fully opposed to the recover of Catalan language or culture.

We cannot finish this section without telling something more. On the one hand there is the occitan dialect, called *aranès*, spoken at Vall d'Aran, the only Atlantic-oriented Pyrinean valley who belongs to Catalonia. This dialect has an explicitly recognition at Catalonia Autonomy Statute (1979) and his protection and promotion is established at Aran Law passed by the Parliament of Catalonia. Currently there are a few thousands aran (occtian)-speaking people. This situation contrasts with the obstacles that Occitan language (spoken by almost a million people) faces in France.

Secondly, another linguistic community with deep roots in Catalan society is Roma (Gitanos or gypsies). As a matter of fact, many of them opt to live in closed communities in order to keep the purity of blood. However, they are well established in some urban areas: this is the case of *Barri de Sant Jaume* in Perpinyà; *Gràcia* and *Sants* in Barcelona, but also in Valencia, Alacant, Mataró, Figueres or Tarragona, among others.

Thirdly, we focus our attention to the linguistic situation in Andorra. As said, this sovereign state has constitutionally catalan as the only official language. However, Spanish and to a lesser degree French are also widely speaking. A recent law approved by the legislative body made attention to the customers in Catalan compulsory. This initiative has rise protests from the part of Spanish Government, arguing that this law goes against the Spanish tourists visiting Andorra. Paradoxically Spanish Government is not aware that a huge plurality of Spanish tourists visiting Andorra are... Catalan speakers, since they come from Catalonia and València. Finally, it must be emphasized the consolidation of a relatively important colony of Portuguese immigrants in Andorra, working mainly in tourist activities.

2. 2. Comprehension of Catalan language

In absolute numbers, we can consider that more than 10.4 million people understand Catalan and consequently constitute the potential hearing of the cultural production carried out in this language. To this quantity should be added an estimated number of 500.000 catalan-speaking people living away, all around the world, many of them in the remaining parts of Spanish and French states, but also in Europe, America and Australia.

TABLE 2 shows the Catalan language comprehension level in the three largest Catalan Countries. With regard to comprehension, the data is enough high (87%), but it goes down to 64% when we consider only Catalan-speakers. These data are even higher when we consider only the Autonomous Community of Catalunya, where the level of comprehension reaches 94% and the Catalan speakers are 69% of the population.

TABLE 2: CATALAN DAILY USE AND COMPREHENSION

	DAILY USE	COMPREHENSION
CATALUNYA	69%	94%
VALENCIA COMMUNITY	55%	80%
BALEARIC ISLANDS	72%	90%
TOTAL	64%	87%

The level of comprehension and management of Catalan Language has increased without stop in the last twenty years. However the situation is more complex that it seems at first sight. On the one hand, Catalan has increased its presence in public life, at the school system and in almost all communication media (GRAELLS i COSTA-VIVES i LEAL:2001). On the other hand, Spanish-speaking cultural industry has a large amount of resources in part because almost all Catalan-speakers living in the Spanish State and Andorra also can speak Spanish – in this sense Catalan may be a very particular case, since there is almost no Catalan monolingual people. The presence of Spanish language is overhelming in areas such as written press, television, internet, movie and disco industries. On the contrary Catalan is well placed in radio, theater and popular culture. Away from the cultural industry, Catalan language is almost an alien at the Courts system. Efforts done to introduce Catalan in this area have prove not enough satisfactory. May be we have to bear in mind that a large number of judges and prosecutors, as well as justice officials –and also spanish police forces- are neither from a Catalan-spekaing territory nor fluent in Catalan. They only want to be assigned to Madrid, "where the real power is", or to another autonomous community where the cost of living is lower and, as a consequence they will take more profit from its salary.

Finally we must have to take into consideration that Spanish is the language by excellence in many environments of the public life and, especially, in the not official world -that is the environment of the most impersonal relations than are produced to the public life (FLAQUER, 1996).

2.3. Immigration and Sociocultural diversity in Catalonia

Catalan culture is very often presented in an idealized and unitary conception. We tend to consider our cultural reality as an all coherent and harmonic. However Catalan cultural environment is not homogeneous, but plural and contradictory. People living in Catalonia come from diverse origins. As a matter of fact, Catalonia is every year more multicultural, racially mixed. This enriches us, our customs and ways of living. Experiencing immigration phenomenon is not a new reality in Catalan history.

In the Middle Age, as catalan christian armies expelled islamic adversaries from the territory, settlers coming from the Pyrenees colonized the lands conquered and established a new official culture and also a new language. Notwithstanding, christians, islamics and jewish communities shared the territory. This cohabitation, unfortunately, didn't last as jewish (1492) and islam believers (1626) were expelled by royal will, except in case they converse into christianity. This loss of population –urban jewish and rural islamics- together with other causes as wars, food shortage, epidemies and natural catastrophes (earthquakes) decreased in a dramatic way the catalan population –contrary to the cases of Castille and France Kingdoms where demography knew an important growth.

As economic trend changed for good in the Modern Age, a new immigration wave coming from Occitany (southern France) established in those Catalan rural areas abandoned. This wave had a key role in the recovering of Catalan agriculture and put the building blocks of late XVII and all XVIII Centuries astonishing Catalan socioeconomic development. The rural growth allowed the coming of the Industrial Revolution in Catalonia since the XVIII.

As Catalonia turned into a more and more industrial society, people from rural areas of Spain began to immigrate to Barcelona and other industrial Catalan cities. Two important waves can be established: a first 1920-1930 wave coming mainly from Aragon and Murcia; a second 1940-1975 wave coming from spanish-speaking Andalusia, Extremadura, Castilla, and also from Galicia, another stateless nation who has his own language very close to portuguese.

To sum up, the immigration process has historically influenced the Catalan society development. After the Francoist regime, the country knew a drastic change in his demographic and linguistic composition: the total number of inhabitants increased dramatically, but the percentage of catalan-speakers diminished sensitively. However most of the immigrants descendents —sons and grand-sons— and, not in a few cases, the immigrant himself, currently know and use Catalan language, usually as a way to gain a social position in the Catalan society.

But of course there are new challenges to face. "New Immigration" wave is one of them. This is a wave from not-spanish origin, and that is more recent beginning at the eighties and whose peak has not arrived yet. We can divide this "new" immigration in two groups: one which is perceived as unproblematic or less problematic –from a social and media point of view-, and the second, who is perceived as really problematic and who has give rise to fear about security, and public order. It is not a surprise that the big difference between these two groups is just one word: money.

The first group is composed by those mainly EU affluent citizens who in an increase number decide to live in exclusive areas of the Mediterranean coast: Mallorca, Costa Brava, Costa Daurada, Alacant are places where colonies of German, English, French, and also Swiss

people are mushrooming. These "immigrants" do not plan to integrate with local people, since they create their own shops, restaurants, clubs, visit their own doctors. As a consequence Catalan language for a certain number of them is at best "invisible".

The other group of "new immigrants" is composed mainly by extra-EU people, coming from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The number of legal and illegal people arriving at our cities has suffer a dramatic increase in the last five or so years. We can say now that Barcelona itself is truly a cosmopolitan and multilingual city. Arecent survey established that in our capital forty seven different languages are spoken. Even public signals or social services are now written not only in Catalan and Spanish, but also in Arab, Urdu, Tagalo... To have an idea about the importance of this phenomenon it will be useful to know that between 80 and 90% of the babies born in Catalonia have at least one progenitor from immigrant origin. A huge number of these babies will assist at public school network, which use Catalan as the vehicular language so they will have, in principle, the chance to learn it – a chance that is not so clear for kids from affluent families who are enroled in foreign schools – i.e., British, German. Japanese, Swiss, American, Italian or French Schools are available, among others, in Barcelona and surroundings. But even if they learn Catalan, that doesn't signify that they will resign from his ancestors identity.

In order to establish a solid market for in-Catalan audio-visual production, besides language comprehension it is also necessary a kind of content and referents with which "new" catalans can identify themselves. To sum up, it's imperative to develop a policy addressed to take into consideration the relations between immigrant communities and stateless nations **(KYMLICKA: 2001)**.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The Catalan culture overflows the strict borders of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, since embraces the territories of Valencian Community, Balearic Islands, Principality of Andorra, Northern Catalonia (France), Western Fringe (Aragon), el Carxe (Múrcia) and L'Alguer (Sardinia), etc. It is a reality extended in a territory in which more than 11 milion people live. Although Catalonia is where a large number of Catalan-speaking people can be found, it makes sense to having in mind potential consumers of in-Catalan audio-visual products who live in the remaining Catalan Countries, and even in the rest of the Planet, thanks to new forms of audio-visual and digital difussion such as satellites, cable, internet.
- 2. An important part of Catalan population –and as a consequence of the potential consumers of domestic cultural products- has deep family attachments with relatives living in other, spanish-speaking –or galician-speaking- regions. A number of them haven't no particular devotion or complicity toward catalan cultural identity. They only consume audio-visual products (television, radio, press, internet ...) in spanish. As a matter of fact when social scientists study such phenomenon as bilingual societies, it would be wise to realize that, in the catalan case, almost all catalan-

speaking people are also more or less fluent in spanish –except those living in Northern Catalonia and L'Alguer. The opposite is not true. As a consequence monolingualism can only be predicated with reference to a more or less important sector of spanish-speaking population living in Catalan Countries. In order to solve this asymmetry, language policies implemented in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, particularly at compulsory education system, are planned to allow alumini to be fully fluent in both official languages –and also to have a deep knowledge of a third (English) or even a fourth language. Bilingualism is not an acceptable solution, since when two languages contact, the big one eates the small one. Plurilingualism not only is the best solution, but also fits the promotion of diversity principle and true cosmopolitanism. Foreign immigrants, be they from First or Three World countries are in a huge plurality totally ignorant about the existance of catalan culture and language when they first arrive. The consequences... well you can figure out.

- 3. In current society, and even more inside EU societies, language is a very important identity marker. But it also can be an important cultural and social barrier. Nevertheless some firms or institutions have succeeded in doing business even if they use Catalan as the original language. This implies that the problem with catalan audiovisual industry is not a matter of demand, but of offering, and consequently about promotion, diffusion channels and distribution. Of course this areas are totally controlled by big, american-owned multimedia corporations. To convince a Hollywood major to use Catalan language is hardly difficult, but is possible if there is not only a pressure from political authorities, but particularly by civic citizens engaged in catalan language normalization. In fact political authorities only accept to put pressure to big corporations if there is a big citizen mobilization, and in this process alternative media –not corporate owned ones- play a key role.
- 4. Catalonia, is, from a socioeconomic point of view, clearly a have part of the Spanish State. It is a prosperous area with an important purchasing power, always at Spanish standards. It also has a notable cultural consumption level. Consequently it constitutes one of the most disputed market by cultural and entertainment firms and, of course, by advertisement industry.
- 5. Notwithstanding this notable cultural consumption level, Catalan firms in creative, production, and diffusion areas are not very important, at an European level, except with reference to theatre and publishing. More cultural consumption does not imply more domestic cultural production. The clue is a double dependency: to the traditional submission to multinational, american-owned, corporations in areas like music, movies, advertisement, among others, we must add in recent years a growing dependency to Madrid-based firms, where power decision of most firms is located. Even Catalan cultural firms had migrate to Madrid in order to access to a wider, spanish-speaking, market.
- 6. To face ICT challenges, strong investments in capital and also an strategic vision are needed. We have to bear in mind that for small countries –and even more for stateless nations- the cultural production in large scale, characteristic of advanced societies, presents serious problems. Large investments of capital required in modern cultural areas –as movie and television- doesn't produce benefits unless they are directed to a wide number of potential consumers.

7. Television has become, lately, a key element for the development of cultural industries in Catalonia. Catalan Government has managed to create a group of top television and radio firms, public owned, Those firms have a faithful and relatively wide audience and produce some satisfactory results. Now it is up to private and civic leadership to create multimedia groups acting to serve demand for new in-Catalan cultural products., but also with sufficient universal values in order to be exported around the world.

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