

‘Catalanism Only Will Win by the Force of Songs’, Revisited 100 Years After. The Role of Catalan(ist) Pop-Rock Music in Socially Sanitizing Working-Class Neighborhoods of Barcelona (1976–2000)

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Abstract: During the last years of the Spanish fascist regime, two politically contrary music scenes emerged in Barcelona. While Catalanist folk music emerged for political freedom, Spanished rock’n’roll, punk, and heavy scenes emerged in the working-class suburbs of Barcelona, denouncing bad conditions of everyday urban life. The great success of this last music scene in Barcelona in the 1980s led to the then nationalist, conservative government of Catalonia to promote a new socially and politically sanitized music scene in response to such class-based contestation. This study aims to explore how a new Catalan(ist) pop-rock scene was created to socially and culturally sanitize the working-class suburbs of Barcelona along the decades of the 1980s and 1990s.

Keywords: *music, cultural consumption, social and political dualization, youth, Barcelona.*

Introduction

‘Catalanism only will win by the force of songs’ is what some conservative Catalanists such as Santiago Rusiñol claimed against the popularity of flamenco in the first years of the twentieth century in Barcelona.¹ In the crucial moment of industrialization of the Catalan capital, its ruling classes aimed to socially sanitize the

then bourgeois city, which had to be one of the most important industrial cities of all Europe (Marfany, 1995; Duarte, 1999; Ucelay-DaCal, 2003). Largely due to the fact that a very significant part of social practices of working classes of Barcelona sheltered social contestations against political-cultural hegemony (re)produced by the Catalanist ruling classes from the inner city, together with the explicit

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aim of putting an end to the quasi-daily social conflicts that took place in Barcelona during the first decade of the twentieth century, the dominant classes began to strongly denounce what they pejoratively called as ‘Spanished’ working-class culture. More in detail, the term ‘Spanished’ refers to any social practice belonging to the Spanish-rooted culture (e.g. flamenco music), and the term flamenquism – already used in the following text – embraces the whole of flamenco-based art (music, dance, art, etc.), which was strongly denounced by the then nationalist ruling classes from Barcelona as the evidence of the ‘Spanishization’ of Catalan culture.

In fact, the problem of the so-called flamenquism – or also known as ‘the working-class question’ (Marfany, 1995; Ucelay-DaCal, 2003) – was the main challenge that the Catalanist conservative political-cultural project called Noucentism (1906–1923) faced. The result of many decades (1880–1930) of promoting the cultural colonization of working-class suburbs of Barcelona was the achievement of a reinforced Catalonia faced with the second wave of the European industrialization, the revolution of transports, and the so-called first globalization. All this helped to situate Catalonia as one of the most industrialized regions in Europe in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, economic, social, cultural, and political challenges owing to the instauration of democracy in Spain after the fascist regime have many similarities with those aforementioned for the first decades of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, the fact that one of the most important particularities in

studying Barcelona and Catalunya as well as their societies is that the so-called ‘national vector’ must be added to the classical ideological positioning of the individual should not be overlooked. In fact, even after 300 years, Catalonia still continues to be militarily occupied by Spain at a time which is the most important industrial engine not only in Spain, but also in Southern Europe. Such unresolved political tensions between Spain and Catalonia still continue to feature in daily life in Catalonia. For example, the last Barcelona Youth Survey (2003) incorporated the following question: ‘Do you feel only Catalan? Or more Catalan than Spanish? Or as Catalan as Spanish? Or more Spanish than Catalan? Or only Spanish? Or N/A?’ Certainly, it would be unthinkable to ask the Californians if they feel more Californians than Americans, or vice versa. In Catalonia, this dual positioning of individuals plays a key role in shaping youth identities and, consequently, cultural consumption as well (Nofre, 2009a, 2011). According to the Catalan Government (CEO, 2007), while the working classes feel more Spanish than Catalan or as Catalan as Spanish, upper-middle classes feel more Catalan than Spanish, or solely Catalan. Thus, ‘If you have money, you are Catalanist’ were the provocative headline that the Spanish newspaper *El País* released on 20 April 2007. This brief sociopolitical contextualization of contemporary Catalonia should allow easy comprehension of the following text.

This study intends to explore how, from the field of music consumption, the nationalist and conservative Catalan Government elected after the Spanish fascist regime aimed at socially

homogenizing the Catalan society. By examining the period of 1976–2000, this study shows how the creation of a new Catalan(ist) music scene in Barcelona by the nationalist Catalan Government aimed at combating those Spanish music – mainly punk and rock’n’roll – whose lyrics usually denounced bad daily living conditions in Barcelona working-class suburbs. As conclusion, this study suggests that the creation of this new Catalan(ist) music scene may be considered as the continuation of the Noucentist project interrupted since the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century by a convulse Republican period as well as a fascist dictatorship.

In this study, primary and secondary sources, especially recently published oral histories referring to the underground scene in Barcelona during the past three decades, have been used. Largely owing to the inexistence of qualitative surveys on young music consumption, this study has employed some qualitative information from the author’s doctoral thesis (Nofre, 2009a) on suburban nightscapes and music consumption, such as some direct interviews – carried out in April 2007 – with young consumers aged between 13 and 34 years. Thus, this study is about a spatial qualitative analysis, although the readers are encouraged to construct their own mental analysis.

The following text aims to remark the importance of considering punks and rockers as two Western youth politicized subcultures to better understand their local-scaled role in claiming for better daily living conditions in their cities. Subsequently, underground music scenes in Catalonia since the end of the 1970s will be

depicted to better understand how political-cultural hegemonies and resistances emerged in Barcelona, especially in the field of music production and consumption.

Introduction. Situating rock’n’roll and punk as politicized ‘contestations’

Music and its consumption have played an important role in the configuration of Western youth cultures during the last half century, but more particularly, in those so-called ‘subcultures’ (Murdock and McCrone, 1975; Willis, 1990; Machado Pais, 2004). Lawrence Grossberg (1992) argued that rock music is not considered as a youth cultural expression, but as a depoliticized, disposable, reminiscent commodity, and a false ‘escape’ from the real world (Brake, 1973; Laughey, 2006), whereas Lily Kong (1995) argued that music could express resistance or even hegemony.

Teds, mods, rockers, beats, and hippies – subcultures of noise (Hedbridge, 1979:90), as a metaphor that ‘possesses a deep, romantic, and poetic resonance for many scholars’ (Stahl, 2003:27). Many over-excited Marxists social scientists, and thinkers, mostly born in May 1968, considered subcultural styles as utopian resistances because they took objects from the dominant culture and transformed their everyday naturalized meanings into something spectacular and alien (Stahl, 2003:27); however, this could be largely discussed. For example, many authors observed the emergence of counterculture in the United States in the mid-1960s as a social, cultural,

and political issue created by young US-bohemian middle classes (Wilson, 1970, Clarke et al., 1975, Murdock and McCrone, 1975; Cusset, 2005). For most of these authors, counterculture was linked to the general radicalization and politicization (and later, de-politicization) of some middle-class youth strata belonging to a thinly disguised middle-class elitism (Clarke et al., 1975:45, 54). However, local social contexts help to determine the origin of some subcultures, such as punk:²

Early punk was a proclamation and an embrace of discord. It was begun in England by working-class youths decrying a declining economy and rising unemployment, chiding the hypocrisy of the rich, and refuting the notion of reform. In America, early punk was a middle-class youth movement, a reaction against the boredom of mainstream culture. (...) It sought to destroy the idols of the bourgeoisie. (Henry, 1969:89, quoted in Dylan, 2003:225).

Some authors have pointed out that punk – which was born as a feasible counterrevolutionary force in the late 1970s – has been recently ‘legitimized’ and ‘normalized’ by cultural industry, becoming a commodity for social distinction of individuals and consumed for pleasure, but not as a mere act of protest (Laing, 1985; Rimbaud, 1998; Clark, 2003). Despite the fact that rockers, mods, beats, teddy boys, punks, heavies, and so on were largely born as politicized youth (sub)cultures (Polsky, 1971; Cohen, 1970; Dylan, 2003), all of them were commodified

under the earlier postmodern pretext/ context of the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967). For example, mass media was the creator of mods and rockers, following societal reaction to their reporting of disturbances between two groups in Britain (Cohen, 1980). In line with this, Sara Thornton (1996) suggested that media is integral to the formation of subcultures largely due to the fact that it plays a significant role in defining their origin as well as its spatial and social reproduction. However, media has also played a key role in de-politicizing subcultures such as rockers and punks (Dylan, 2003).

Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (1975) argued that the de-politicization of cultural studies had its origins when British Marxism failed in contesting the neo-liberal Thatcherian project for building ‘the new type of [British] bourgeois worker, family minded, home-centred, security-conscious, instrumentally-oriented, geographically mobile and acquisitive-celebrated’ (Clarke et al. (2006 [1975]:14). Such Thatcherian project rapidly succeeded: Manual workers and their families were assimilated into the social world of the middle class (Goldthorpe et al., 1969; Cashmore, 1984). Conformity, acceptance, and even vindication of traditional masculinity seemed to feature British radical youth subcultures in the late 1970s.³

The above-mentioned facts would make one think that (neo)conservatism is filling in all postmodernism narratives about today’s youth (post)subcultures. In this sense, while Abramo (1994) argued that punks and darks do not have and are unable to produce any project of social, cultural, political,

and economic transformation, Feixa (1998) considered neotribes as mere social and cultural products ‘created’ and ‘manipulated’ by the market needs of survival’ (sic). In line with him, David Muggleton (1997) suggested that postmodern creative practices, such as fashion, art, and music become de-politicized cultural manifestations. However, would it be so in the case of Barcelona, Catalonia?

Punk & Rock scenes against the bourgeois Barcelona

Bad living conditions of young suburban working classes may favor youth neotribalization (Costa et al., 1996). In the case of Barcelona, since the late 1970s, some youth working-class subcultures, such as rockers and teddy boys came to express radical resistance against the Catalanist political-cultural hegemony (re) produced by the inner city’s ruling classes. This was especially visible in the field of music. However, before exploring how punks and rockers built a sociopolitical contestation to such hegemony, a retrospective view must be kept in mind.

While cultural industry in Spain supported Spanish pop-beat groups and other *kitsch* groups born under the fascist regime, some intellectuals and clandestine left-wing politicians belonging to the bourgeoisie of Barcelona supported the so-called Catalan folk (Sierra, 2007)⁴, a kind of french-like folk music sung in Catalan. However, they never supported progressive rock, considered as an underground style (Id.: 38). Nevertheless, since the beginning of

the 1970s, some sectors from the leftist Barcelona’s bourgeoisie began to support underground progressive-rock mainly played by ‘new elite musicians (...) [interested in jazz-rock fusion] came from (...) the Switzerland High-School, the German High-School, the American High-School and the Menéndez Pelayo High-School’ (Sierra, 2007:51-2), four of the most important high-schools for the bourgeoisie’s descendants. Yet, many catalanists folkies argued that Catalan progressive-rock music sounded too American: ‘it was pretty necessary to produce native, Catalan-rooted music (...), seeking authenticity by singing in Catalan tongue and writing lyrics regarding the land of one’s birth [Catalonia]’ (Sierra, 2007:17,59,87).

Once the Spanish fascist regime stepped down and democracy was reinstated, the Autonomous Government of Catalonia – then dominated by nationalist conservative forces – began to promote a strategy to support ‘authentic Catalan music’ by creating a new Catalan(ist) cultural industry, which aimed at fighting against what dominant classes warned about ‘the fragmentation of Catalan culture’ (Sierra, 2007:81). However, a critical reading of this would allow (re) considering the term ‘fragmentation’ as a metaphor of sociopolitical dualization of music scenes:

Barcelona, 1981. Lennon has been just killed and punk explosion has been assimilated by music industry (...). Barcelona is still the last redoubt for Layetan Rock fans, jazz-rock fusion and outdoor music festivals (...). But not all gets lost in December 1980. A group of rockers meet and decide

to record some sings (...) and wake up a half-sleepy city.⁵

At the beginning of the 1980s, both punks and rockers expressed their contestation against cultural and political hegemony (re)produced by the inner city's elites. New spaces of contestation emerged not only in most of the Barcelona suburbs, but also in the inner city itself. The first punk wave in Barcelona (1976–1978)⁶ was mainly played by both young working classes and lower-middle classes living in working-class suburbs and downtown:

There is a widespread anger... there is no way out (...) but total freedom (...) and people flung themselves into punk (...) It is about to be against the social, political established order (...) it's an act without being processed by your brain (...) it's a visceral 'no'. (Llansamà, 2011b: [05:27]).

Punk and rock'n'roll were rapidly interlaced by the development of an underground scene mainly played by some groups, such as Loquillo y Los Intocables, Dios, Decibelios, Brighton 64, Código Neurótico, Orquesta de Tacón, Rebeldes, Síndrome Tóxico or New Buildings, among many others.⁷ Although this music scene could first appear as marginal, a more detailed analysis may show that it was not so marginal as recently observed by some official historians.⁸ Examples of such centrality of punk-rock include some venues, such as Piano Bar at 106 Aribau Street, Las Rias at 145 Nou de la Rambla Street, Casal dels Transformadors at 64 Ausiàs March Street, Cafè Voltaire and El Corzo nearby Clinic Hospital, and many others located just in Barcelona downtown; Tarkus, El Fantástico,

Concentrik, Tarkus, Boogie, Incredible Pero Cierto, Descontrol, Bar bar, Marx JL, Piaf, etc.; and Fanzines, live music, bars, and social clubs for punks, demonstrations, violence, and police repression – all these featured the nightscapes in Barcelona downtown along the 1980s (JoniD, 2011). There is no doubt that Barcelona downtown turned into the main punk scene not only in an urban scale, but also a metropolitan one (JoniD, 2011; Llansamà, 2011a).

To be punk in Barcelona meant to be against the System, especially against both local and Catalan administrations. To better understand this, a detailed reading of the sociopolitical and cultural chronicle written by José María Sanz 'Loquillo' about the city of Barcelona in the late 1970s and early 1980s could be very useful. For most of the people in Barcelona (not only young), 'Loquillo' has been (and still is) the most widely recognized, legitimized suburban voice in Barcelona. His book *Barcelona Ciudad* shows a brilliant representation of the social and political duality that is still featuring the Barcelona's society:

The commonly-named 'chiriqueros'⁹ –enemies of all that labeled as urban, cosmopolitan, with their face seeming an spinach and more boring than a fungus– always walk holding a backpack in their backs, dreaming an independent Catalonia and hoping to bring us together to the Sinai Mount of the Catalan nationalism: Mount Canigó.¹⁰ If this seems us terrible, their individual aesthetics horrifies us, based on ugliness, beard and country-like witches' sabbathes. They spend

their days playing the flute and singing Raimon's¹¹ and Catalan folkie songs. We, young urbanites, consider country life and patriotism like national flags and revolution. In two words: A SHIT. We dream adventures lighted by neon and the promiscuity of the Lou Reed's rock'n'roll. In this orgy of protests, we see the city as the only world. (Sanz, 2010: 55).

Jose María Sanz 'Loquillo' (2010) pointed out how punk-rock lyrics in Barcelona during the 1980s usually dealt with 'street realities' really different from those that featured everyday lives of Barcelona's upper-middle classes. Punk in the Catalan capital was not only meant to hold certain aesthetics, but listened to both Ramones and local punk groups. If some sector of the Barcelona's punk scene initially showed anarcho-independentist positions, it rapidly turned into a 'Spanished' youth subculture,¹² despite the fact that they continued to denounce the bad living conditions in suburban areas as well as the lack of individual and collective perspectives for youth:

'The silent of one of the neighborhoods with highest levels of unemployment has been broken to defend that 'to be young is not a crime'. Social movements of neighborhood warn they have no intention to keep quiet facing with the forgetfulness showed by administration, bad daily living conditions, drug consumption and highest levels of unemployment (...). As one member of La Oruga youth collective asserts, 'Local administration does not like certain radical criticisms and therefore they answer by politically repressing. Police

patrols, arrest and imprisonment are a huge strike to neighborhood'. (JoniD, 2011:115, quoting, *El Periódico de Catalunya* 14/5/1987).

Many punk and rock'n'roll groups proclaimed themselves as speakers of the underground Barcelona by denouncing several social problems that existed in those suburbs where they lived (Torras, 2000).¹³ Such suburban identities expressed by 'Loquillo' have been shaped by everyday contexts, becoming radically different from the bourgeois order and the rationality prevailing in any wealthy neighborhood of Barcelona, such as Sarrià or Sant Gervasi. As Loquillo sings, 'now they see us passing / convinced to be able to escape / from the fate that could trap them / by cursing our identity'.¹⁴ However, which identity is it about? In the case of 'Loquillo,' it is based on being born and having lived in a Barcelona's working-class neighborhood named Clot: 'A pity that Bourbon / on hands of critics of Rock / highways, streets, what do I know / I wasn't born in the USA, but in Clot.'¹⁵

However, the selection of Barcelona to host Olympic Games in 1992 made it indispensable to rapidly eradicate such 'street realities,' which could make the socioeconomic and urban transformation of Barcelona difficult. To do this, some institutional strategies were accomplished. For instance, Catalan administration carried out a cultural colonization of the whole Barcelona suburbs, accompanied by police repression against some radical left-wing youth subcultures, such as punks¹⁶. In fact, punk as well as squatter movement were opposed to the 'construction' of a 'new' tertiary

sector-based city, because it meant construction of a new socially sanitized

city (López, 1991; Capel, 2005; Nofre, 2010).



Figure 1. *Barcelona in the 1980s. Some rockers (Loquillo y Los Trogloditas, left) and punks (Kangrena, right)*

Source: <http://www.loquillo.com> [06/09/2011, 13:27 p.m.] & <http://www.kikoamat.com>¹⁷[06/09/2011, 13:35p.m.].

Along the first half of the 1980s, the conservative Catalan Government conceived a strategy to socially sanitize the whole of Barcelona working-class suburbs (Nofre, 2010). The cultural colonization of Barcelona's suburbs, carried out by the nationalist, conservative Catalan Government (Nofre, 2007; 2009a; 2009b; 2010) aimed at importing the most important traditional cultural elements of the cultural scene in the inner city, such as theater, majorettes, folkie chorus, youth-led leisure houses called 'Esplais,' hiking associations, etc. (Villatoro, 1985). They had to be introduced in all Catalan capital suburbs to not only socially homogenize, but also (re)catalanize and (re)moralize the suburban working classes (Nofre,

2009b, 2010).¹⁸

It should not be overlooked that these suburban areas, created under the Spanish fascist government along the second half of the twentieth century, accommodated all slum dwellers immigrated to Catalonia after the end of the Spanish Civil War mainly from Southern Spain (Nofre, 2007; 2009a; 2009b; 2010). Facing with such a strategy of (re)catalanization and (re)moralization carried out by the inner city's ruling classes, a contested otherness emerged from the suburbs. The following section will describe the construction of a new institutionalized Catalan(ist) rock scene that was mainly aimed at de-activating such radical, politicized Spanish youth scene.

Against Spanished Rock'n'Roll: the construction of a new Catalan(ist) and sanitized pop-rock scene

In the mid-1980s, an increasing number of pop-rock groups emerged from Barcelona, mostly in rural areas of Catalonia. Although most of them originally sang in Catalan, others stopped singing in Spanish and started to do it in Catalan, such as Sangtraït - this group is considered as the commercial heavy forerunners in Catalonia (Gendrau, 2000: 209). During the second half of the 1980s, Catalan rock re-emerged again with the official support from the Catalan administration, and it was about a new rural-rooted music scene that took Barcelona as the headquarters for music production and mass diffusion. Lluís Gendrau (2000) pointed out that the first edition of the 'Festival de Música Viva de Vic' that took place at the small Catalan city of Vic in 1989 was conceived by the Catalan administration as the greater opportunity to set up a meeting point for Catalan(ist) music industry. Largely owing to the huge success of this event, a mass concert was held in Palau Sant Jordi, Barcelona, on 14th June 1991. In this concert, the then most-sold Catalan(ist) pop-rock groups, namely, Sopa de Cabra, Els Pets, Sangtraït, and Sau performed (Gendrau, 2000: 209-10).

As it has been previously argued, irrespective of whether punk and rock'n'roll were mainly used by the young middle-lower classes as well as young working classes, the Catalan pop-rock (re)produced by the official Catalan(ist) cultural industry was mainly employed by the youth

middle classes aged between 15 and 20 years, who were nationalists or even independentists showing special concerns about Catalan language (Gendrau, 2000:211). There is no doubt that radically different everyday contexts between suburbanscapes and rural/bourgeoisscapes may be considered as the reason for today's sociopolitical duality of music consumption in Catalonia. Besides, different socioeconomic problems of the Great Barcelona and the rest of the Catalan small cities largely justify a 'political-based' difference, a divergence between suburban and rural-rooted lyrics. The latter takes some semiotic elements from the above-mentioned Catalan Noucentist project – order, well-balance behavior, catholic moral, conservative values, admiration for Catalan Medieval Age, Catalonia itself as a God's deed, rurality as the very essence of Catalonia as a nation, among many others (Duarte, 1999; Ucelay – Da Cal, 2003).

Indeed, rurality appears in several Catalan pop-rock lyrics, as sung by Sopa de Cabra: 'I'm not interested in going to hell / L'Empordà is much more beautiful.'¹⁹ On the other hand, Sangtraït also sang: 'Heaven is a dream / where he wants to get / clouds and its mountains / sun, a far far horizon.'²⁰ In fact, rurality as a key factor of authenticity in Catalan contemporary music seems to agree that ruralist and idealist essence about Catalonia was invented by the Catalan Catholic Church in the late nineteenth century while trying to recover Catalan medievalism as the origin of the Christian Catalan nation. Despite the fact that this was not widely published,²¹ it was wonderfully depicted by Victor

Balaguer in his romantic view about the ‘national’ history of Catalonia (Duarte, 1999:143). In fact, some Catalan pop-rock groups took rurality as their branded images. For example, Els Pets’ leader, Lluís Gavalvà, asserted that ‘they are a rural group.’²² Furthermore, such ode to rurality may become a bucolic, sweet, romantic view of the Mediterranean Sea. ‘That sea’s turquoise / that magic of your eyes was lending me / taken from a medieval princess, / beyond him you always stay there.’²³

Despite the increasing number of Catalan pop-rock works published since 1985 (ACIC, 2007), the huge potency of the Spanish rock’n’roll produced in the suburban Barcelona was considered as a major problem by the Catalan(ist) cultural industry, which started to positively discriminate

Catalan pop-rock. In fact, it was about combating suburban, working-class, non-nationalist music (re)produced from the Catalan capital.²⁴ For that reason, small city councils from the so-called ‘rural Catalonia’ stopped hiring both the punk-rock groups from Barcelona and started to hire Catalan pop-rock groups that sang in Catalan language (Gendrau, 2000).

Meanwhile, the Catalan public TV broadcasting corporation (CCRTV) started to air Catalan pop-rock music, but not punk-rock. Together with what has been pointed out till now, it should also be mentioned that the local cultural industry aimed to strengthen teenage fans’ phenomenon by supporting those groups that were just singing in Catalan, such as Sopa de Cabra, Sau, Els Pets, and Sangtraït (Gendrau, 2000:215).



Figure 2. *Sau (top left), Sopa de Cabra (top right), Els Pets (bottom left), and Sangtraït (bottom right)*

Sources: for Sau, www.yesfm.com [06/12/2011, 18:31 pm]; for Sopa de Cabra, www.culturacat.com [06/12/2011, 18:48 pm]; for Els Pets, www.elspets.cat [06/12/2011, 18:31 pm]; for Sangtraït, www.sangtraït.com [06/12/2011, 18:31 pm].

As this author suggests, this has been recently identified as the three fundamental pillars explaining the great spatial diffusion of Catalan pop-rock beyond the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona itself. However, some Catalan pop-rock musicians strongly continue to refuse that this kind of music was supported by the then conservative, nationalist Catalan Government:

It is so simple that there was an audience that did mathematics in Catalan, played in Catalan at the school, saw television in Catalan, and needed music to get drunk in Catalan, and make love ... go to concerts

in the same language with which he studied and fought with their parents. This is why Catalan rock emerges, without any kind of support from the Catalan government: no conspiracies, simply normality (Lluís Gavaldà, a Roigé and Abenoza, 2006:15).

Why did Els Pets' leader, Lluís Gavaldà, implicitly quote subsidism? On 15 December 1988, new Loquillo y Los Trogloditas LP was recorded live at Sala Zeleste. After 2 years following this legendary mass rock'n'roll concert, the Catalan pop-rock boomed (see Figure 3).

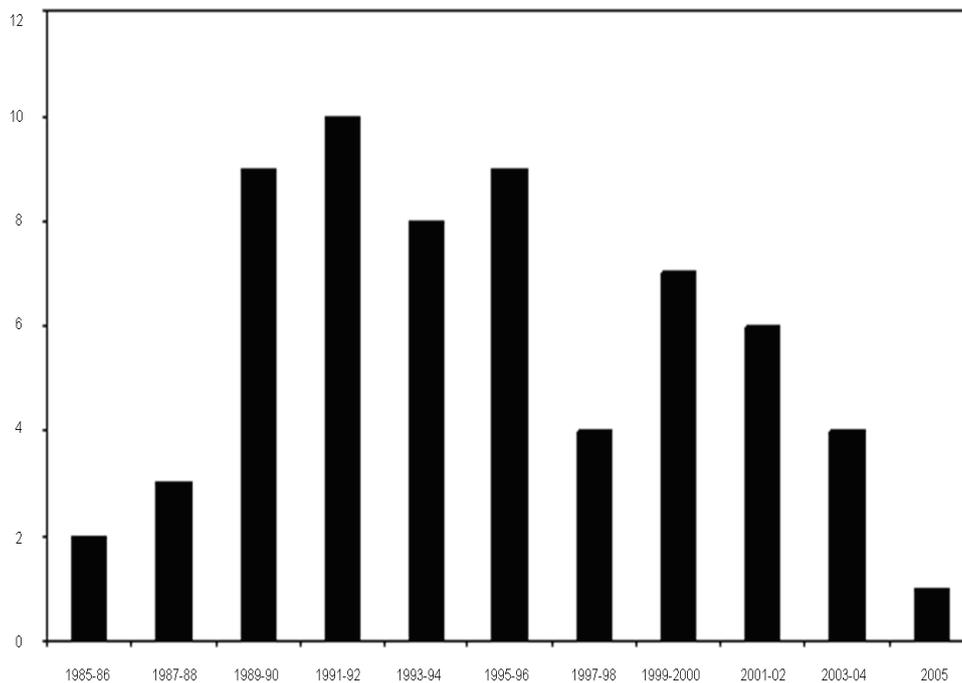


Figure 3. Evolution of discographic works edited by the most important Catalan Rock groups: *Duble Buble*, *Bars*, *Sopa de Cabra*, *Sau*, *els Pets*, *Ja T'ho dire*, and *Sangtraït* (1985–2005)

Source: Nofre, J. (2011). Data provided by Roigé and Abenoza (2006) and the Association of Singers in Catalan (ACIC, 2007).

In 1989, Sopa de Cabra, Els Pets, and Bars released their own LPs homonymously entitled, while Sau released *No puc deixar de fumar* and *Per la porta de servei*. In 1990, Menorca-born group, Ja T'ho Diré, also launched a homonymously LP. On the other hand, Sau again released (*Quina nit*), similar to Sangtraït (*Terra de vents*) and Sopa de Cabra (*La roda*). In fact, between 1989 and 1990, nine works produced by those groups were launched, which were later considered as major references for Catalan pop-rock. Moreover, a Catalan(ist) pop-rock mass concert took place in Barcelona on 14 June 1990, where they played all the then greatest Catalan pop-rock groups, namely Sopa de Cabra, Sau, Els Pets, and Sangtraït. This mass concert was organized in response to an earlier mass concert of Spanish rock'n'roll held in Sala Zeleste, in which Loquillo y Los Trogloditas presented their new LP. During 1991, six LPs, particularly targeting nationalist, independent young middle classes from the wealthiest neighborhoods of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, the so-called 'the great market,' were released. However, what role did the Catalan Government play in creating a music industry that primarily aimed at producing, promoting, as well as distributing only Catalan pop-rock? What role did it play in supporting private music companies, such as Audiovisuals de Sarrià, DiscMedi, Ariola, Música Global, Picap, among the other minor companies? The former question can be addressed with the argument by Lluís Gendrau (2000:225):

That so fiercely criticized institutional intervention to

manage Catalan pop-rock concert in Palau Sant Jordi [Barcelona, 14th June 1990] was motivated by the demand of promoters themselves who call for Catalan Government to take responsibility for paying any possible losses (Gendrau, 2000:225).

In fact, a well-established music industry helped to consolidate Catalan pop-rock as a sociological phenomenon largely owing to the quasi-fully supported public subventions given by the Ministry of Culture of the Catalan Government. However, it was also favored by the use of free advertising spaces assigned by the Catalan Public Radio and Television Broadcasting²⁵ (Gendrau, 2000:225). However, since 2000, Catalan pop-rock that succeeded in the 1990s began to wane. Music companies, such as Emi, Picap, Disc Medi, and Salseta Discos yielded to a new main music company, Música Global.²⁶ In this period of transition, some folkie voices have been claimed to come back to authenticity as Catalan pop-rock finally failed in the institutional-supervised adventure of attracting young people (Lara, 2007).

A suburban response against Catalan(ist) pop-rock

As previously pointed out, the contingent of Spanish immigrants (more than one million individuals), who mainly came along the period of 1940–1975 after the Spanish Civil War, should not be underestimated. While Spanish fascist regime folklorized most of the artistic expressions belonging to the former Spain peripheries, such as Catalonia, Valencian Country, Vasque

Country, and Galiza, flamenco music was commodified and nationalized as ‘the only true Spanish culture,’ but censoring most of its protest-related lyrics. Therefore, the then Spanish fascist regime created a new flamenco-like music under the umbrella of the so-called national flamenquism (Álvarez Caballero, 1992), which was much more festive, even carnivalesque, with no protest lyrics, as the so-called sevillanas.

Together with the commodification and sanitation of the most festive subtypes of flamenco, such as rumbas, what Franco’s regime termed as ‘Spain’s true culture’ largely featured cultural consumption of those individuals from Southern Spain who immigrated to the most important Iberian industrial areas, such as Barcelona. For that reason, the fact that today, a very significant part of the immigrants’ descendants in Catalonia prefer Spanished or Latin music rather than Catalan music should not be a surprise, and should be framed into a demand and consumption of Spanishness faced with that Catalanist political-cultural hegemony (re)produced from the inner city, as it has been previously mentioned.

Two of the most important subcultures that have recently played the demands of this ‘Spanished’ suburban otherness in Barcelona since the early 1990s are the so-called ‘cholos’ (boys) and ‘cholas’ (girls). They are both native-born working-class gypsy-like boys and girls aged between 13 and 25 years mostly living in Barcelona suburbs,²⁷ who take, transform, and enhance gypsy aesthetics²⁸ and ethics to claim a suburban otherness, faced with the one that Catalanist, conservative identity (re)produced by

the Barcelona ruling classes living in the inner city (Nofre 2009a; 2009b; 2010; 2011).²⁹ Indeed, their cultural consumption strongly holds Spanish nationalist symbolism, which ‘clashes’ with Catalanist symbolism present in most of the official products promoted by the cultural industry in Catalonia. Hence, Spanish nationalist symbols used by ‘cholos’ and ‘cholas’ belong to some cultural fields, such as garment, music, language, public space’s uses, gastronomy, shopping, and nightlife (Nofre 2009a; 2009b; 2010; 2011).

A very good example that would help to better understand what has been pointed out regarding flamenco-like music consumption by ‘cholos’ and ‘cholas’ is the case of Estopa. Whether El Fary, Los Chichos, Lola Flores, or what is commonly-known as ‘sevillanas’ may be considered as symbols of national flamenquism created under the Spanish fascist government, and Estopa has nothing to do with this. Born in Cornellà de Llobregat, a suburban city located in the Southern-side of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, Estopa emerged in the late 1990s as a rock-rumba group. They rapidly became the most legitimized suburban voice in today’s Barcelona after the death of the suburban rock’n’roll scene in the Catalan capital. In fact, Estopa’s lyrics usually deal with ‘the realities of the street,’ in line with those lyrics written by punk and rock’n’roll groups from the suburbs of Barcelona in the late 1970s and early 1980s.



Figure 4. *Estopa*, a suburban rumba-rock group from Cornellà de Llobregat (Barcelona)

Note: Please note the bull printed in David's t-shirt. This has become the most commodified new Spanish fascist symbol. Source: Estopa © 20111.

Few lines about a couple of questions were launched: 'Which music is produced for Barcelona's working classes?' and 'Which music do working classes use to consume?' 'Here you hear flamenkito (...). This a gypsy, a 'cholo' neighborhood, ou know?' is what Maria, a 17-year-old girl from a suburban small town near Barcelona answered.³⁰ Perhaps, it should not be too outrageous to wonder if what Maria said can be considered as a political contestation to nationalist political-cultural hegemony (re)produced by the Catalan administration. Some flamencologists argue that flamenco only sings personal feelings, but without political commitment, i.e., it is politically passive (Rodriguez, 1982; Gelardo Belade, 1985; Garcia Chicón, 1987; Herrero, 1991; Washabaugh, 2005). If so, it would make no sense that along the 1980s, the Catalan Government was committed to eliminate flamenco taverns by means of cultural colonization, as mentioned earlier. Paradoxically, the then nationalist Catalan government wanted

to get rid of such flamenco spaces in which subversion emerged against the Spanish fascist regime (Alonso Carrillo, 1978; Gilmore, 1985). Therefore, what some authors argue, suggesting to consider flamenco music as a 'weapon of cultural resistance' (Whitney, 1974) or an opposition to the sociopolitical order established in each historical period (Scott, 1990), may be useful to situate flamenco-like music consumption by young working-class people living in the suburbs of Barcelona as an expression of a 'contested' suburban otherness against the Catalanist political-cultural hegemony (re)produced from the inner city. In line with this, it should not be overlooked that both commercial flamenco and flamenco-like music were conceived as the very essence of the commonly known 'Pure Spain' (Álvarez Caballero, 1992). This fact would explain why today's Spanished flamenco-like music consumption by a significant part of Barcelona's native-born suburban young working classes has actually become a highly

politicized duality, such as Spanish culture vs. Catalan culture, suburbs vs. inner city, margins vs. center, and working classes vs. upper-middle classes.

Conclusions

Drawing parallels with Lily Kong's (1995) work, this study has explored how music in Catalonia was used to express both resistance and hegemony. This study has shown how the creation of a new Catalan(ist) music scene in Barcelona by the nationalist Catalan Government in the 1980s and 1990s aimed at combating those Spanish music scenes that sounded in Barcelona working-class suburbs, particularly, the punk and rock'n'roll music whose lyrics usually denounced bad daily living conditions in Barcelona working-class suburbs.

Undoubtedly, cultural consumption may indicate politicized protests. In the case explored in this study, the emergence of social resistances, especially expressed through music consumption and production, has become a part of the 'Spanished' suburban identity that strongly protests against the official Catalan identity reproduced by the ruling classes of the Catalan capital. The fact that still today flamenco and flamenco-like music are vetoed in all Catalan public radio stations (Nofre, 2009b) allows to state that social cohesion in Barcelona and its metropolitan area is currently questionable in spite of several efforts carried out by the local and Catalan administration in the past decades to reinforce social cohesion in the Catalan capital (Nofre, 2009a; 2009b).

Far from disappearing, social inequalities in Barcelona have redrawn its borders throughout its urban and metropolitan space, resulting in a ghettoization of spaces of cultural consumption. In fact, this could be seen as a failure of integration policies and marginalizing of new opportunities for local and global social justice. Thus, new 'contested' spaces emerged, claiming an alterity, and shaping new topographies of urban and suburban power. Is de-politicized youth simply a fantasy?

Today's music scenes in most of the post-Fordist cities seem to be dominated by a *persuasive agenda* for the *bourgeois-like* re-politicization of youth. It is about music scenes whose lyrics, aesthetics, and semiotics constantly aim to de-activate the so-called 'working-class question' by setting up a *carnavalesque atmosphere* providing better – but false – living conditions; i.e., a false evasion of the real world. Hence, today's commercial music scene emerges in post-Fordist cities as that space where de-politicized youth subcultures express their fears about the self, the future, and the *enigmatic otherness*. This is the very nature of the politics of today's commercial music.

Endnotes

¹ Information quoted in Marfany, J.Ll. (1987). "Al damunt dels nostres cants ...': nacionalisme, modernisme i cant coral a la Barcelona del final de segle," *Recerques: història, economia, cultura*, 19: 85-113. [Available online at: <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/Recerques/article/viewFile/137642/241453>, 06/28/2011,

13:16 pm].

² As Get up for your rights or Don't give up your fight, by Bob Marley.

³ For further information on traditional British working-class masculinity, see George Orwell's (1937) book 'The Road to Wigan Pier.'

⁴ Cançó Catalana in original.

⁵ Extracted from Biografía de Loquillo y Los Trogloditas. For further information, see: <http://www.loquillo.com/index1.html>

⁶ First punk groups in Great Barcelona were Peligro, La Banda Trapera del Río, Basura, Morimer, Rock Fumeta, and Marxa. At the end of the 1970s, many other punk groups were born, such as Último Resorte, Flee Handmade, Clinic Humanoids, Ruidos Molestos, Disturbio, Kangrena, GRB, Attak, and L'Odi Social.

⁷ L'Odi Social, Kangrena, Shit SA, Epidemia, Vómitos Clandestinos, atentado, BOE, Fimosis, Frenopaticss, Residuos Nucleares, Desechables, Coitus Interruptus, Attak, Kaoss, Napalm, Vuestra Puta Madre, Santa Alianza, Los Bastardos de la Reina, Anti/dogmatikss, Subterranean Kids, Extrema Unción, 7 Pies Bajo Tierra, Antimanguis, Piorreah, Código Neurótico, Síndrome Tóxico, Disturbio, Cristian Dios, Monstruación, Decibelios, etc.

⁸ What JoniD related in his oral history of punk has nothing to do with what official (and Catalanist) music historians, such as Karles Torra and Pep Blay, stated by devaluating what both punk and rock'n'roll scenes meant in the Catalan capital in the 1980s.

⁹ The term 'chiruquero' comes from 'Chiruca'®, a hiking-branded shoes originally manufactured in Catalonia.

¹⁰ Mount Canigó (2.784 m) is located at the French side of Catalonia, separated from Catalonia in 1659.

¹¹ Raimon (Xàtiva, 1940–) is one of the most important folkies born in the

Valencian Country (Southern Catalonia), who sang against the Spanish fascist regime.

¹² In fact, there were many meetings where boneheads and punk joined together largely due to similar tastes in music and football. For further information, see JoniD (2011).

¹³ For example: 'What bothered us is that City Council spent on facilities that no one had asked and not on venues we were claiming since several years ago. That venues would have served to practise music' (JoniD, 2011: 82, quoting La Vanguardia 19/5/1982).

¹⁴ Original: 'Y ahora nos ven pasar/convencidos de poder escapar/del destino que les pudo atrapar/maldiciendo nuestra identidad.' From the song 'Ser o no ser,' Los tiempos estan cambiando (Cúspide-Tritón, 1980).

¹⁵ Original: 'Una lástima lo del Bourbon/a manos de críticos de Rock/autopistas,calles, qué se yo/no nació en los U.S.A. nació en el Clot.' From the song 'Chanel, cocaína i Don Perignon.' Los tiempos estan cambiando (Cúspide-Tritón, 1980).

¹⁶ Article originally published in Amat, K. (2011).

¹⁷ Although it will not be treated in this study, it would be very interesting in further studies to observe how police repression and cultural strategies for urban renewal in Barcelona downtown have been linked since the Catalan capital was elected to host the Olympic Games in 1992. The following two newspaper articles show how skinheads acted as parapolice forces: 'El Raval, escenario de violentas peleas entre grupos de punks y skin heads' (La Vanguardia, 21 de gener, 1986, p.?). 'Batalla de bandas de jóvenes en Barcelona' (El Periódico de Catalunya, 28 de Abril de 1986, p.3), quoted in JoniD

(2011:100-5).

¹⁸ This was already pretended by the Noucentism project in the earlier twentieth century. For further information, see Marfany, J.Ll. (1995), Duarte, A. (1999) and Ucelay-DaCal (2003)

¹⁹ L'Empordà, a rural county located at northern Catalonia. Original: 'Anar a l'infern no m'interessa / és molt més bonic l'Empordà,' from their song 'L'Empordà', LP 'Sopa de Cabra,' 1989, Barcelona, Salseta Discos.

²⁰ Original: 'El cel és un somni/on ell hi vol arribar./els núvols les seves muntanyes/el sol l'horitzó llunyà,' from their song 'El vol de l'home ocell.' LP: 'Sangtraït', 1988, Barcelona, Picap.

²¹ This medievalist conception of the history of Catalonia was invented by the Catholic Church that played a key role in recovering Medieval Age as the origins of the Catalan nation. Although this was not widely published, it was wonderfully depicted by Victor Balaguer in his romantic view about the national history of Catalonia (Duarte, 1999:143).

²² Born in Constantí (Southern Catalonia), Original: 'Som un grup de poble.' Lluís Gavalaldà, a Roigé, and Abenoza (2006:29).

²³ Original: 'Per`em queda aquell turquesa de la mar/que em brindava la màgia dels teus ulls./era tret d'una donzella

medieval,/rere ell sempre hi ets tu,' from their song 'Turquesa.'

²⁴ In line with this strategy, it should be quoted that the punk radio broadcasting corporations, such as RadioPICA, was closed during the late years of the 1980s by the nationalist and conservative government of Catalonia (JoniD, 2011).

²⁵ Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió (CCRTV), in Catalan.

²⁶ Música Global Co. was created in 1993 coinciding with Ja T'ho Diré and Sopa de Cabra LP's releases (Gendrau, 2000:215). This music company, together with the Catalan Public Television, has recently managed Rock&Cat, The Movie, which relates the history of Catalan rock.

²⁷ In Catalan context, the origin of the term 'cholo' has no connections with the American Indian ancestry as well as the Mexican-Californian modern usage.

²⁸ For a definition about gypsy aesthetics, see Washabaugh (2005).

²⁹ Historically lower-class gypsies have been marginalized in Catalonia since the Modern Age; both 'cholos' and 'cholas' are examples of social and cultural resistance in a hegemonic cultural environment.

³⁰ M. 17 y.o., from Canovelles. Present informal interview carried out on April 21, 2007.

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