

The adjectives '*catalufo*' and '*cholo*' as cultural productions

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Abstract

Based on specific examples, this article analyses the way the linguistic practices and identifications of young people link with other elements, such as music, youth style, social class or national identification. The aim is to see how the cultural forms that combine symbolic forms and "global" or "transnational" meanings with other local ones are produced.

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1. Introduction

The speaking of Catalan or Spanish and the way each of these languages is spoken play an important role in the way young people perceive one another and position themselves in relation to others. From this point of view, these things are important additional practices which, together with others like music, clothes, hair styles, ways of getting around and going out at night, make up what I call "youth geographies"; that is, the interplay of social distances and proximities in which young people are immersed. In this article, I analyse the way in which symbolic forms and "global" or "transnational" meanings link with other local ones – in this case linguistic practices and Catalan and Spanish national identifications – within the network of practices that are important in making up youth styles.

The pages that follow are based on research on musical taste I carried out during the 2000/01 academic year at three secondary schools in the city of Barcelona. One, which I will call the Catalan School, is in one of the districts with the highest house prices in Barcelona and has a majority of middle-class Catalan-speaking pupils. Another, which I will refer to as the Peripheral School, is in one of the districts that was created in the '60s to house growing Spanish immigration and caters for largely working-class Spanish-speaking pupils. Finally, the last secondary school, the Immigrant School, is in one of the districts of Barcelona with the highest percentage of new immigration, which is fully represented among its pupils. In all, I carried out a total of 32 interviews (the majority with pairs of young people) with 57 young people.

I have set out to approach "Catalan/Spanish" differentiation in the way young people position themselves with regard to others, both in terms of language and national identity, from a very partial point of view – the use of terms such as "*cholo*", "*quillo*", "*fatxa*", "*catalufo*" or "*independentista*" and their link with musical taste. Through the analysis of the use of these adjectives by young people from the three secondary schools, I will show the complexity and dynamism of the cultural production processes taking place there. In this way, we will be able to reflect, as Grixti does on this same issue, on the expression, of global and local flows of consumer items and meanings in the collective forms of experience of young people.

2. '*Catalufos*' and '*Cholos*'

I will first make a brief, reductionist description of the use by young people of the adjectives "*catalufo*" and "*cholo*". We have a record of the use of the adjective "*catalufo*" (or "*catalanufo*" or "*lufo*"), since the nineties¹. The word is used among young people in a

¹ See, for example, Martínez and Pérez (1997), Serra (2001), Martínez and Alegre (2002) or Marimon (2006). These studies were carried out in different places in Catalonia (Terrassa, Sant Cugat del Vallès

disparaging way to refer, in its strict sense, not so much to speaking Catalan but rather to being publicly proud of being and speaking Catalan, setting out a pro-Catalan, nationalist or, above all, pro-independence political project and, in a certain way, showing a degree of hostility towards the Spanish language and national identity: "[Catalufos are] the ones who support Catalonia. (...) What we call 'catalufos' are the ones who directly want independence for Catalonia, so they only go for what's really Catalan." In a broader, looser sense, however, the adjective can refer to the majority of Catalan-speaking young people, whether or not they are pro-Catalan, nationalists or militant pro-independence. In this case, the meaning of the label largely depends on the context in which it is used.

The importance of the term is that, although in its more restricted sense it refers only to a minority of young people, it has an important symbolic power in the cultural production of youth geographies, as it represents and marks – albeit in a diffuse and non-exhaustive way – a social and symbolic distance between "Catalan-ness" and "Castilian-ness" or "Spanishness". If at one pole we find the adjective "*catalufo*", at the other there are the terms "*cholo*", "*garrulo*", "*calorro*", "*lolailo*", "*quillo*", "*jezna*", "*del palo*", "*pelao*" and "*fatxa*", among others. These terms were often used during the interviews as synonyms referring to a working-class, Spanish immigrant origin combined with what we would describe as "street culture" and what Pujolar (2001) calls "stylised Spanish"².

At the same time, depending on the context, each of these adjectives also had a specific meaning. Roughly, we can say that when toughness and the transgression of street culture were emphasised, the adjective "*del palo*" was used. If an anti-Catalan attitude was being highlighted, it was done with the adjective "*fatxa*". If, however, the intention was to underline the stylistic proximity to the skinhead youth style, the adjective "*pelao*" was used. The more general adjectives, which tended to include the others, were "*cholo*", "*quillo*", "*jezna*" and "*garrulo*", which, in their broadest sense, referred to working-class Spanish speakers and, in a more limited sense, to an extreme and transgressive street style, on the margins of the criminality which is often part of urban gypsy culture.

By contrast with the term "*catalufo*", which never had a positive meaning (in that context, the adjective "*català*" (Catalan) would be used), "*cholo*" and its variants could be applied in a pejorative or a positive sense. In the negative sense, a young Catalan-speaker from the Catalan School defined "*garrulo*" as "an ignorant person, mmm... who... with apologies to Andalusians, has that Andalusian accent and coarseness. They don't know how to speak, they use swearwords...". In the neutral and even positive sense, other interviewees used it to identify themselves: "*I mean, I like 'cholo' stuff.*"

3. Links with musical taste

Later we will give more details of these opposing concepts and introduce some of the many nuances that are required. Before that, though, we will stress the fact that the difference between Catalan and Spanish is not merely a linguistic or political opposition between the two, it affects the interplay of differentiations that form part of youth styles and geographies, mixing with – and often camouflaged by – the differences between musical genres, ways of dressing and other significant practices. We can see, for example, how two young people from the Catalan School, when trying in an interview to differentiate the various groups at their school, said that, while the majority lay among those who liked *màkina* music and those who liked punk, there was also a third group who they described both in political terms and in terms of the music they listened to:

Jose: Yes, well [there is also a minority group] of pro-Catalan people and those (...).

Ramón: Who like commercial like... music...
Then, there's what's...

and Castellar del Vallès, among others), and they therefore transcend the geographical area of Barcelona.

² Pujolar uses the term to refer to the way of speaking that incorporates various elements of southern Andalusian dialect spoken not only by the children of Andalusian immigrants but also those from other parts of Spain and even by the children of Catalan parents. This "stylised Spanish" means, in terms of youth geographies, working class, street authenticity, in the sense of, as Pujolar, referring his field work with young people from Barcelona, observes, the degree to which young people used Andalusian traits not so much with reference to their family origin but to their commitment to particular masculine values (2001: 139).

Roger: Catalan rock?

Jose: Yes, Catalan rock.

The truth is that, although many musical styles (commercial pop, house, rap, etc.) were perceived by the interviewees as disconnected from the "catalufo/cholo" dichotomy, some were not. The majority of young people, like Jose and Ramón, perceived a taste for Catalan rock as having political and national connotations, as a "sign" of militant Catalan linguistic and national belonging (the same was not true, by contrast, for Spanish rock, which generally had more neutral connotations). A second style with "pro-Catalan" connotations was the one the young people called ska, although in this case it was less clear. Finally, punk-hardcore was seen, at the Catalan School, as "catalufo" in its broad sense, that is, not so much because it meant a pro-Catalan political project (and, in fact, the very people who liked it understood it as critical of the "system" and any kinds of "nationalism") but rather because it generally covered Catalan speakers. In the next extract, notice the way Joan and Marc explain how they perceive punk and being "cholo" as a contradiction in terms:

Roger: And are there any *cholos* who are punks?

Joan: *Cholos*, who are punks? You don't find many *cholos*, who are punks.

Marc: The thing is, a punk who looks like a punk can't be a *cholo*. He isn't... The *cholos* have a different look...

Joan: Well, *cholo* refers to the stereotypical... There are *cholo* families, for example, aren't there? So you can come from one of these families and be a punk.

Roger: Are there any of these?

Joan: There aren't... I don't know [they laugh] Well, there could be, but it's very weird.

Marc: Yes. I don't know any.

In the case of the opposite pole, everything coming under the "cholo" style was associated either with *màkina* music (and labels associated with electronic music, like "progressive", "hardcore"³ and "trance") or *flamenco* or "flamenco-type" music – and in many cases both. While *màkina* music was associated with a ("pelao" or "fatxa") style, *flamenco* and what young people called "gitaneo", "jaloteo" or "flamenqueo" was not. We see a paradigmatic example of the association between language, national identity, musical taste and other elements of youth styles, in this case at the Peripheral School:

Laura: The thing is that people often mix music with language, you know. It's hard to believe, but... it's true.

Roger: You mean...

Laura: Yes, because, look, pro-Catalan people like a range of music which the...which, for example, the "fatxas" don't [like]... And vice versa.

Roger: Because what does "pro-Catalan" mean? That they're Catalans, or what are they...?

Laura: That they live in Catalonia, that they speak Catalan and that...

Sonia: And that they want independence from Spain, come on!

Laura: That, too. As well. You see... you see a "fatxa" and a pro-Catalan person and you can see the differences from a hundred metres away. They dress differently, they talk differently... They talk differently.

Sonia: Pro-Catalan people almost always have spikes here...

Laura: They wear baggy clothes, they have their hair... The girls normally [have their hair] short... and dyed different colours. And the typical "fatxa" [by contrast,] has short hair. They are different. In everything: they wear Alpha, tight clothes... Or they always wear tight jeans or tight sports clothes, short. All designer stuff, or nearly all.

In fact, these differentiations are important because they not only point to differences in musical taste or speaking Catalan or Spanish, but also to the combination of all these and other elements in producing social distances and proximities. Of course, however, these links between the different elements are not nearly simple as my sketch might lead us to think.

³ Not to be confused with punk-hardcore, a completely different style with opposing connotations.

4. One experience, one culture

If we understand the differentiation between "catalufo" and "cholo" as the result of the cultural production of the expression of what is Catalan and what is Spanish, we can carry out the exercise of reading what we have called "cholo" in terms of a response to and channelling of a collective experience, in a similar way to the so-called "black culture" in the United States or England. Firstly, the term "cholo" is directly linked to a socially subordinate position in terms of class; this is why many interviewees opposed it not only to "catalufo" but also to "pijo" (posh). In fact, although for the Barcelona middle class "pijo" is associated with being Spanish-speaking and having a rather Spanish national identity, many interviewees associated "catalufo" with "pijo" ("*Almost everyone in society is the same [as me, they don't like Catalan stuff]. Except the "pijos", because they're from different districts, but in the more or less lower-middle-class districts everyone's the same*").

Secondly, as we have seen in the last quote highlighted, the term "cholo" is often identified (and this is a recent development) with "fatxa" (fascist), which must not be understood literally but rather as a diffuse expression of uneasiness at or even distance from what is Catalan. Let's look at an example:

María: *Màkina* music and that stuff is totally "fatxa", totally. but... Estopa and all that would also be "fatxa" in inverted commas. It's kind of more *cholo*.

Mariona: And then [on the opposite side] there's the more pro-independence Catalan stuff.

Roger: But, on the other hand, Estopa's lyrics aren't "fatxa" at all.

María: No, but, I mean. It's like...I don't know...As if, I don't know... They talked about your father, I don't know, it's as if... You understand it that way, right? I don't know, since I was little I've been played songs like that. I always speak Spanish, I always go to Andalusia in summer and all that. I think in a particular way. Don't ask me to answer because... because I want... [Don't ask me for a reason] why [I identify with] Spain and not Catalonia because I'm not going to give you one, because I don't know, but...

Maria's words express the non-literal meaning of the adjective "fatxa", which appears practically as a synonym of "cholo", emphasising the rejection of a Catalan identity and a sense of belonging to a Spanish one. It is still significant, however, that the use of a political adjective with such connotations and clear historical roots has become normalised. To understand this, we must look at the visibility of Spanish fascist skinheads as symbolic markers of the opposition to pro-Catalanism during the nineties and to their stylistic impact during the same decade on popular *makiner* musical taste – this is why it is sometimes called "pelao" – without also forgetting the experience by many citizens of a lower-class position combined with unease and alienation at the new situation where Catalan is the normal language at school, in the workplace and in the political institutions⁴.

Thirdly and finally, the collective experience also refers to street culture, which cannot be understood without reference to its connection with urban gypsy culture. The adjective "cholo" (and its variants "lolallo", "jezna", "calorro" or "quillo") are generally perceived as closely connected with the idea of "gitano" (gypsy) ("*Quillo, yes. Quillo, gitano, cholo, of course...*"), becomes both a source of musical authenticity (*gitaneo, flamenqueo* or *jaloteo*) and a symbolic marker of the most extreme features of transgression and street culture (which is at the same time a source of authenticity and stigma), as also happens with "black culture" in the Anglo-American context.

5. Intermediate positions, negotiation and normalities

Despite the dichotomy between the definitions of "catalufos" and "cholos", we must not imagine a reality where two groups of youngsters are separated by a clear boundary. On the contrary, as with adults, few young people place themselves at either extreme of this supposed continuum; there are quite a few who call these classifications into question and

⁴ The link between the adjective and rejection of the new immigration from developing countries is also important. This trait of the *makiner* style, very much present at the Peripheral School, was not visible at the Immigrant School, as the majority presence of immigrant pupils not only impeded the development of the explicit and crude racism shown by many young people at the Peripheral School, but also encouraged constant negotiation between the different ethnic and cultural identifications.

many who, in fact, refuse to be categorised in these terms. The importance and scope of these resistances, together with the absence of phenotype differential traits, are precisely the factors that make this differentiation unlike the "ethnic" differentiation between blacks and whites in the United States or England, to continue with the analogy from the previous section.

Firstly, the adjectives "cholo" and "catalufo", although their references are the two extremes establishing symbolic markers, really tell of a range of positions in relation to one another rather than in clear, well-defined opposition. And, secondly, the existence of a more or less shared "classification" does not mean that young people are not permanently negotiating, resisting and modifying it based on their personal experience, both themselves and with other young people. Let's look first at the importance of the nuances young people introduce when they classify people they know personally - in this case those with *makiner* taste:

Diego: There is a boy, who, for example, really likes *màkina*, techno and dance and all that, but who dresses normally. Pep [*both laugh*]. (...) But generally, for example, you see skinheads and you know they're going to really like *màkina*. (...) [There are some in] the third year of secondary school, but there aren't any in our year. There aren't any of the ones where you'd say: "Bloody hell, look at that a skinhead..." (...)

Diego: Well, you do see some who dress in Alpha, with the... all that. But I don't know, in our year they're not very... very extreme. For example, José does also like all that. Well, he's [one of the ones who say]: "I like all that Spanish Army stuff" [*they laugh*]. (...) He wants to be... he wants to be in the army and...

Roger: And what music does he listen to?

Both: *Màkina*.

Roger: So, all that's normally linked to *màkina*?

Diego: Yes, yes.

Roger: But just because you're into *màkina* it doesn't mean you're like that, from what you say? Or are you?

Besides the diverse nuances, we also have to bear in mind that each young person perceived these geographies of positions and meanings in a different way. Depending on the networks of personal relationships each one moved within, at school and outside school, the classifications could vary considerably. So, for example, while a girl from the Peripheral School categorically declared that at her school "everyone, everyone" was "fatxa" (understood as "cholo"), a classmate had a very different view: "Well, [*the Catalans and skinheads*] are all mixed up, aren't they? Because I think that... language has nothing to do with being on one side or another, I mean, it doesn't...".

Finally, each young person reacted differently when faced with the existence of these classifications, sometimes reinforcing them, sometimes resisting them and sometimes ignoring them. The interviewee who said that at her School "everyone was fatxa" and her classmate, for example, spoke as follows:

Elena: I'm not "fatxa", I'm Catalan and Spanish. A *fatxa* is...one of those people [who says] "I'm a *fatxa*, I'm a *fatxa*" [it doesn't make much sense]. You... think... [I'd say to them:] "Do you know what a "fatxa" is?" Look, [they say] "Spain, Spain", [but I say] "What about Catalonia? Catalonia is feeding you, it's given your father a job, your mother a job and..."

María: I don't care.

Roger: But the other people - the majority - would be more or less like that.

María: Most people, I mean... they repudiate it. They're Catalans and they repudiate the Catalans. The majority here [at school, I'd say to them: "But] you are Catalan, you're Catalan. What are you talking about?" Because I... as I don't understand... Well, it's not that I don't understand... [But] as I've never sat down to read what being "fatxa" or "catalanista" means, well...

Elena: The thing is, they're ideologies, you know? It's very strange.

Another good example of resistance to the classifications is provided by Susana, from the Catalan School, who likes *màkina* music and is the daughter of Spanish-speaking parents, although she answers the interview in Catalan (her friend Gemma, did the interview with her, spoke Catalan at home and did not like *màkina* music). Their example is interesting because as well as providing evidence for the existence and normality of hybrid positions – both in linguistic and national terms – between the poles we have identified, she also spells

out her unease and resistance to accepting the classification associating *màkina* music and being a "fatxa" (although she ends up recognising it in merely linguistic terms):

Susana: No, but it's one of those things, this image of being a skinhead, [according to which] just because you're a skinhead you automatically have to be repulsive and cocky and that's not how it is.

Roger: And the image thing, also means... being more of a "fatxa"?

Susana: That too, but all that "fatxa" stuff, pah! I mean, for example... I'm not a "fatxa". I'll just as happily say "Long live Catalonia" as "Long live Spain", because... I'm not from a Catalan family, but that's a personal thing. Just because you like *màkina*, you don't have to be...

Gemma: "Fatxa".

Susana: Well, that too... Normally, the revolutionaries or the pro-independence people don't like *màkina*, they like ska. It goes closely with the social circle you move in...

Roger: Yes?

Susana: Yes.

Roger: And the *màkina* people? Do the people who are more pro-Spain tend to like *màkina* more, generally?

Gemma: Normally, yes. Yes, the thing is... All the people I know... (...)

Susana: Normally they don't start speaking Catalan, they speak Spanish a lot more.

Gemma: [Susana] speaks Spanish [*she says it quietly, teasing Susana*]

Roger: So, it does have something to do with it?

Susana: Yes.

We are talking, therefore, about meanings which are "out there", objectivities in shared classifications in the sense that they allow communication between young people from different schools without too many misunderstandings, but which, at the same time, are not only negotiated in each interaction between young people at each school, they also make many young people who do not find them uneasy. This negotiation not only takes place in relation to the way young people position themselves in relation to the symbolic markers at the "extremes", but also, and above all, in terms of the less visible majorities, which are those which ultimately end up defining what is normal, and which, as well as defining the people who do not "stand out", mark what is taken for granted in each context and, therefore, what is expected of individuals.

This is why new terms and acceptances continually emerge and others cease to be used. Based on research and personal experience, I would date the appearance of adjectives like "cholo" and "quillo" to about 20 or 25 years ago, and we might understand them as the result of the social development which was previously labelled "xarnego". In the same way, the more recent terms "pelao" (more limited to the skinhead youth style) or "del palo" are developments of the last 10 or 15 years and will certainly give rise to new adjectives and variants in the future. The broad use of the term "catalufo" and its variants would also date to about 10 or 15 years ago. The cultural production of these symbolic forms and meanings, given that we are talking about terms not taught in the classroom, is not picked up at schools, nor do they appear in the communications media, they are largely produced from the bottom up, in a decentralised way, in every daily interaction – although with the fundamental mediation of consumer items, the media and the political economy; that is, the commercial network that makes the cultural forms that maintain them possible.

A clear example of this dynamic nature of the cultural production of meanings in youth geographies is the different way the differentiation between "catalufos" and "cholos" is experienced at each of the three schools. At the Catalan School, where there was a majority of Catalan speakers, the personal knowledge of these meant their internal variability was very visible. Only a minority of Catalan speakers were therefore considered as "catalufos". At the other two schools, by contrast, stereotypical (rather than personal) knowledge was normally used. At the Peripheral School, Catalan-ness was seen as distant and, in many cases, viewed with disgust, as by one girl who declared that "I don't like any of that Catalan stuff". At the Immigrant School, by contrast, the interviewees did not verbalise (in the interviews) any significant anti-Catalan attitudes and, for the majority of pupils, "Catalans" were basically drawn from a stock of diffused stereotypical knowledge; an alien, little-known reality appearing only sporadically in the interviews in terms such as the following: "I suppose the Catalan people like... they like Catalan rock..." or "[Catalan people] listen to the sardana, I suppose... and that, and Catalan rock and all that stuff...".

6. Conclusion: local cultural production amid global flows

Through the daily negotiation of meaning at each school and in each district, an expression of "local" meanings (in this case linguistic and national ones) is produced amid "global" flows of symbolic forms and meanings. The tension or interplay between local and global meanings is very rich in the sense that very localised elements are mixed with others that transcend the more local context in one way or another.

Firstly, youth culture has extended some shared normative coordinates right across the globe, based on the cool ideal, modernity, transgression (although this may be rhetorical) and informality, as well as the differentiation between commercial and underground, or between "arty" authenticity and "street authenticity", as well as some patterns for representing and expressing masculinity, femininity, ethnicity and the position of class through the different musical and youth styles. So, it is not only that many of the best-selling artists in England and the United States are also popular in other countries, above all Western ones, but also that their meaning in the local geographies is largely similar. For example, commercial pop, whose paradigm is the Spice Girls or Westlife, means an adolescent, very effeminate and majority taste everywhere. It does not generally have strong class connotations (although it is more popular among the working classes) and, in countries with ethnic diversity, it is generally identified with "white normality". Another example is indie music, which, when crossing borders, tends to acquire connotations associated with the white middle class and a high cultural level; or "harder" electronic music, which is linked everywhere to a taste with airs of working class street masculinity.

That does not mean, by a long way, that youth geographies are homogenous all over the planet, not even when musical forms are shared. There are meanings associated with music which do not travel with these forms when they cross borders. Clear examples are reggae, ska or drum 'n' bass – musical styles which in Jamaica or England, for example, have, or have had, heavy ethnic connotations and which in Barcelona take on a completely different meaning, recontextualised within local youth geographies (ska music, for example, with "*catalufo*" connotations). This reappropriation or recontextualisation is strongest when the styles are least commercial; that is, when they reach the majority communication and distribution spaces through alternative channels. Musical forms that circulate across borders are also always combined with local musical traditions and local creations based on global styles, which are often explicitly connected with the context of local meanings (Catalan rock, rumba or *màkina* would be examples of this).

The analysis of the expression of musical taste, national identity and linguistic practice in Barcelona has allowed us to get a taste of the complexity and wealth of cultural production among young people. In their daily negotiations, in dialogue with fundamental decisions of the political economy – that is, the cultural industries – this is how the future of youth geographies are established: locally but with the direct effect of global artefacts and logic⁵.

In conclusion, the expression of the differentiation between Catalan speakers and Spanish speakers, with meanings linked to musical and youth styles, and also to structural aspects such as social class, gender, sexual identity and national identity, decisively conditions the way in which linguistic practices are experienced and what they mean to young people. From this point of view, we might ask where the young people among the new immigrants position themselves within youth geographies, in order to find out their view of the differentiation between Catalan and Spanish. Incorporating oneself into youth geographies though one's own segregated musical styles (raï, bhangra, merengue music, etc.) is not the same as doing so by mixing with existing styles. If incorporation or hybridisation with existing styles predominates, it is not the same to do this with *catalufo* styles, in one sense or another, (such as *Catalan rock*, *ska* or even *punk-hardcore*) as to do so, as is already happening, has happened, and seems more probable, through class proximity and contact with predominant

⁵ It would be absurd to think that phenomena such as Operación Triunfo and the limited range of Catalan songs on Cantamania on TV3 would not have an effect on the Castilianisation of popular music in Catalonia or to forget that decisions such as not including speakers, adverts or songs in Spanish on Flaix FM – the landmark station for many years for *makers* and "*fatxas*" – should be irrelevant in the establishment of youth geographies. However, the length of this article does not allow us to develop this aspect.

cholo styles (such as *jaloteo*, *màkina* or rap) or with others which, although apparently neutral, in practice do not incorporate as the "normal" language of communication, such as, for example, the more commercial styles. Over the next few years we will find out.

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