

## Television and the construction of identity: Barcelona, Olympic host

---

Miquel de Moragas; Nancy Rivenburgh & Núria Garcia



The Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (CEO-UAB) publishes works aimed to facilitate their scientific discussion. The inclusion of this text in this series does no limit future publication by its author who reserves the integrity of his rights. This publication may not be reproduced, neither partially nor totally, without the author's permission .

This document, originally published as part of the book *The Keys of success: the social, sporting, economic and communications impact of Barcelona'92*, comes from a larger study that looked at all aspects of television in the Olympics and can be found in its original version, in Miquel de Moragas Spà, Nancy K. Rivenburgh and James F. Larson (1996). *Television in the Olympics*. London: John Libbey.

Ref. WP033

To refer to this document you can use the following reference:

Moragas, Miquel de; Nancy Rivenburgh and Nuria Garcia (1995): *Television and the construction of identity: Barcelona, Olympic host* [online article]. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics UAB. [Consulted: dd/mm/yy]  
<[http://olympicstudies.uab.es/pdf/wp033\\_eng.pdf](http://olympicstudies.uab.es/pdf/wp033_eng.pdf)>

**Original reference:** Moragas, Miquel de; Nancy Rivenburgh and Nuria Garcia (1995): "Television and the construction of identity: Barcelona, Olympic host", in Miquel de Moragas & Miquel Botella, *The Keys to Success: the social, sporting, economic and communications impact of Barcelona'92*. Barcelona: Servei de Publicacions de la UAB, pp. 76-106.

[Date of publication: 1995]

The athletes never had a chance. No matter how well they jumped and ran and rowed, they could never dominate these Summer Games.

The city won the Games. The people of Catalonia won the Games. Always, there were the fantastic spires of Sagrada Familia shimmering in the background, or the fountains of Montjuic, or the towers of Tibidabo in the distance.

Day or night, no matter how exercised we got over the Irish boxer or the Canadian rower or the African runners or the American basketball players, we always knew something was happening on the Ramblas. Somebody was cooking calamaris. Somebody was pouring the cava. Somebody was singing. Real people were dancing the sardana, the sweet folk dance of Catalonia, in some haunting plaza. We could feel it. We could hear it.

*New York Times*, August 10, 1992.

Holding the Olympic Games in one's own home is truly exceptional for any world culture, and in particular for cultures largely unknown as was the case for Catalan culture and the Olympic Games. Catalonia is an Autonomous Community (Nation) within the Spanish state of which the 1992 host city of Barcelona is the capital<sup>1</sup>. Catalonia has its own national language (Catalan) and a Mediterranean culture, history, personality and folk tradition quite distinct from other parts of Spain.

There is a belief by Olympics hosts that holding a Games represents an opportunity to enhance one's image abroad. While this is not necessarily true, or is true to a much less extent than believed, it is nonetheless a compelling motivation for cities and countries to take on such a challenging and expensive feat of hosting an Olympic Games. For Barcelona and Catalonia, hosting the Olympics held the promise of having a global coming out party. A party where residents could carefully plan for six years just what to wear as their best clothes.

Along with this exciting possibility, however, also comes the inherent fear of hosting an unsuccessful or unflattering event. In reality, the amount of attention brought about by hosting the Olympics far exceeds the

---

<sup>1</sup> An introductory note about Catalonia. Catalonia ("Catalunya" in Catalan) is a historic and autonomous community that covers an area of approximately 32,000 square kilometers. The population is more than 6,000,000 which is about 16% of the total population of Spain. The capital is Barcelona whose metropolitan area has a population of approximately 3,000,000. It is a nation which has managed to preserve its social and cultural traditions throughout the centuries, even in the face of the most adverse political situations.

Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) brought about the repeal of the Statute of Autonomy which had been passed by the republican parliament in 1932. Within the legal framework of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, Catalonia now has a new Statute of Autonomy (1979) which recognizes its own government and parliament (the Generalitat) with different responsibilities in communication policies and exclusive legal control in education and cultural affairs. In 1992, the parliamentary majority and the government was made up of a nationalistic coalition (CiU) whose principal leader was Mr. Jordi Pujol. The main opposition is provided by the socialist party of Catalonia, associated with the PSOE (PSC-PSOE) in Madrid. The mayor of Barcelona in 1992 and president of COOB'92, Mr. Pascual Maragall is one of the Catalan socialist party leaders.

Catalonia's own official language is Catalan, a Romance language that reaches a population base of about 10.5 million (of which 6 million speak the language), primarily in northeastern Spain (i.e., Catalonia, parts of València and Aragon), Andorra, several counties of southern France, the Balearic Islands, and part of the island of Sardinia. The Catalan language is going through a period of linguistic normalization. Its use in public and in the mass media is slowly increasing, but it is still far from overtaking Spanish, which still enjoys the status of majority language in Catalan territory. Besides the presence of TVE, the Spanish state public television station, and the private stations Antena 3, Tele 5 and Canal Plus (pay channel), Catalonia has two autonomous television channels, TV3 and Canal 33, which broadcast in Catalan.

The Barcelona Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (COOB'92) was made up of the Barcelona City Council, the Spanish Olympic Committee, the Higher Council for Sports (Spanish Government), and the Catalan autonomous government (the Generalitat).

amount of control the host ultimately has over the outcome of the Games - despite meticulous planning. This tension is fundamental to understanding how an event which lasts only 17 days can hold a city in suspense for six years.

This study outlines the identity goals of the Barcelona Olympic organizers then compares what 25 international broadcasters presented to home audiences about Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain as Olympic host and Europe as Olympic setting. The results can be explained to some degree by the preparation of broadcasters, as well as their motivation to educate or entertain audiences. But it is also clear that the broadcaster portrayals are conditioned by domestic contexts, influencing, for example, whether to present Catalonia as a national and cultural entity distinct from Spain.

### **1. Planning an identity**

Present day Opening and Closing Olympic ceremony structures allow for significant amounts of cultural presentation by the host. For example, in the Barcelona 1992 Opening Ceremony a full 1 hour, 14 minutes of a 3 hour, 10 minute ceremony was dedicated to host culture performances. In 1986 when Barcelona was put forward as a candidate, well before the ceremonies were designed, the process of developing a host identity had already begun. That process involved a number of important steps:

1. Selecting the geopolitical reference for the host (in this case, "how much" of the host should be identified as Barcelona, Catalonia, or Spain, and how should these relationships be presented);
2. Defining a desired "character" for the host (or hosts as in this case), grounded in reality yet promoting the host's most positive features;
3. Choosing appropriate symbolic representations of that character, using existing urban and geographic features, as well as newly designed elements such as a logo and mascot;
4. Developing an approach for the dissemination of the host identity locally (e.g., sign, city, and venue design) and internationally (materials for media), and;
5. Creating Opening and Closing Ceremony performances which present the host culture in an accessible and appealing way to international audiences.

To locate a starting point, the ceremony producers Ovideo Bassat Sport conducted an international survey. The results revealed that there existed remarkably few image associations (outside of Europe) with Barcelona - beyond the fact that it would be an Olympic host. Further, there was absolutely no recognition of Catalonia outside of Western Europe. Finally, international associations with Spain were largely limited to tourist-oriented stereotypes: southern European location, beautiful women, sun, cheap wine, siestas after lunch, bull fights and flamenco. While many of these stereotypical images have been attractive for tourism over the years they were considered a drawback for the host in terms of presenting an international picture of Spain as an advanced economy and a modern democracy.

### 1.1. Establishing an Olympic peace among planners

In order to devise a workable plan a consensus needed to be reached between the various actors involved in the organizing efforts: the Spanish Government, the Catalan autonomous government (the Generalitat), Barcelona City Council, the European Community, and the Olympic Committees. These actors represented the different "image" stakeholders in the outcome of the 1992 Games.

For these planners it was a relatively easy task to develop a list of identity goals for each of the above host entities. The greater challenge was deciding how, which, and to what degree, these chosen attributes of Barcelona, Catalonia, and Spain would manifest themselves in the design of the ceremonies and elsewhere. To make the task even more challenging, good advertising principles dictated that a complex reality be consolidated into a relatively few identity attributes that were easy to grasp and well suited to audio-visual portrayals, thus raising the possibility that the groups involved might have to compete for the inclusion of "their" desired image agenda as part of the identity campaign.

To an amazing degree the identity goals (outlined below) were ultimately realized in the design of the ceremonies and look of the city despite the diverse interests of the organizing factions entering into the process. In large part this was due to the common desire of the organizing committee, and others involved, for everything to run smoothly. Along the way there came the realization that if the Games were not successful, then everyone would lose<sup>2</sup>. Also, each of the parties had slightly different priorities, making compromises possible.

This does not mean there was no controversy over those six years of planning. Quite the contrary. In Catalonia, and throughout Spain, there was much discussion, debate, and speculation over what the Olympic organizers should and would do in terms of the balance between Catalonia and Spain as hosts<sup>3</sup>. Interestingly, this continuous and at times contentious local dialogue never found the same intensity in international media and as such did not leave Spanish borders in any significant way.

### 1.2 Identity goals for Barcelona, Catalonia, and Spain as Olympic host

To get a sense of the success, or not, of the host's identity campaign as interpreted by international broadcasters, it is necessary to briefly review what was intended by the Olympic planners.

#### *A passionate and democratic Spain*

For Spain, one of the main cultural objectives of the ceremonies was to eliminate some of the tourist

---

<sup>2</sup> Two years before the Olympics there was a ceremony for the opening of the Montjuïc Olympic stadium. It rained. Everyone got soaked. The event was rife with problems and delays, including nationalistic demonstrations and police preventing Catalan flags from entering the stadium. According to sources, that event acted as a turning point of sorts in that it occurred to all groups that the Olympics could fail and everyone would lose if they did not work closely together to the end.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of local discourse about host identity issues see Blain, N., R. Boyle, and H. O'Donnell (1993). "Centrality and Peripherality at the Barcelona Olympics: Spain, Catalonia, Scotland, Portugal", *Sport and National Identity in the European Media*. London: Leicester University Press, 156-199.

stereotypes (siestas, bullfights, slow moving). However, not all of the existing stereotypes noted above were seen as negative. The organizers decided to promote the widely held image of Spain as a land of "passion". In addition, the "sun" (also a central symbol in Spain's tourist advertising campaign, "Spain. Everything under the sun") appeared as elemental to several ceremony performances. More broadly, it was desired that Spain be represented as diverse, democratic, modern, and cultured. To emphasize Spain as a land of "culture", it was decided to focus on artistic representatives that already had international recognition. For example, the artists Picasso, Dalí and Miró were chosen as design models for signs, color, and ceremony settings, and world famous entertainers such as Montserrat Caballé and Josep Carreras were chosen to sing in the ceremony. Politically, the image of the King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia in the dignitaries' box and at various venues throughout the Games constituted the primary symbol of Spain throughout the Games.

#### *A politically and culturally distinct Catalonia*

The producers of the ceremony themselves suggested that their project was to produce a 3-hour television commercial spot whose aim was to "put Barcelona and Catalonia on the map"<sup>4</sup>. It was a concern within many sectors of Catalan public opinion that Spain, as the familiar international presence, would overshadow any reference whatsoever to Catalonia and its national identity. Therefore the primary identity objectives for Catalonia were first to become known, and second to be understood as having a distinct political, cultural, and linguistic identity relative to Spain. Particularly in the ceremonies it was felt that the presentation of Catalonia and Catalan culture should be "undiluted" and differentiated from that of Spain (but not necessarily in conflict with Spain). This goal was primarily achieved through the use of Catalan language as an official Olympic language (along with Spanish, English, and French), the entrance of the Catalan flag along side the flags of Spain and Barcelona, the playing of the Catalan national anthem, and by dedicating specific performance segments to the avant-garde and Mediterranean spirit of Catalan music, art, and folk traditions (specifically the segments of the "Sardana", a traditional Catalan circle dance, and "Els Castellers" or the human pyramids). Catalan residents joined in the effort by displaying Catalan flags in the stadium, out windows, and over balconies throughout the city.

#### *Modern, yet historic Barcelona*

For the host city, Barcelona, the image objectives were more conventional and along the lines of what is termed "city marketing", a strategy aimed at attracting projects that encourage local economic activity and development. Barcelona wanted to present itself to the world as a modern city which welcomed economic activity and initiatives; it wanted to promote the city as the economic hub for southern Europe. It was desired that Barcelona be perceived as a thriving, cosmopolitan city ready for the next century, but also a city built upon centuries of colorful history. To serve these goals, it was obvious that the city's outstanding

---

<sup>4</sup> Bassat, Lluís (1992). "The Olympics and History's Longest Commercial", *Viewpoint*. Chicago: Ogilvy and Mather. Also, see Bassat, Lluís (1993). *El libro rojo de la publicidad*. Barcelona: Folio.

architectural character would provide excellent televisual symbols (for example, the Montjuïc Olympic stadium, the Gaudi-designed Sagrada Familia cathedral, the statue of Columbus, etc.). In addition, certain competition venues, such as that for diving, were designed to offer television cameras scenic background images of Barcelona during the competitions. RTO'92, as Olympic host broadcaster, set up five "beauty" cameras around the city to offer colorful and characteristic city scenes for international broadcasters to use<sup>5</sup>.

Another goal was to demonstrate that Barcelona was economically and administratively capable of successfully organizing one of the most complex and popular events of our times. In this sense, planners wanted the Games to be seen as technologically innovative and well-organized (yet friendly and human), dispensing with any generalized Spanish stereotypes of lateness, laziness, or inefficiency.

As is the case with any marketing or advertising process, the negative elements also present in the city (pollution, discrimination, rubbish, poverty, traffic, noise, transportation, humidity, asphalt, etc.) were left out of the image selection process.

#### *A Mediterranean Olympics*

Central to the host identity campaign was the decision to emphasize the 1992 Games' Mediterranean setting. Using the Mediterranean as an overall framework for the Olympic host identity both respected and solved many issues for the Olympic planners. First, because of the evidence that the Olympic Games are a sports and cultural phenomenon whose historic roots are found in the Mediterranean, and more specifically in Greek culture, this identity strategy conveyed an attitude of respect towards the protagonism of Greece in Olympic history. The Barcelona organizers felt this even more important when it became known that Athens would not be host to the Games in the Centenary year in 1996, and that the U.S. city of Atlanta had been chosen for this anniversary event.

Second, the Mediterranean provided the needed rubric within which the respective identities of Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain - and even Europe - could all comfortably fit. This concept facilitated the establishment of consensus among the different political actors involved in the organization.

Finally, the Mediterranean concept is not only an internationally recognized geographic referent, but also a recognizable "feeling" and cultural concept that links well to aesthetic expression. The Mediterranean concept was integrated in all design aspects of the host identity, including the Barcelona'92 mascot and logo, the design of the torch, signage colors, and ultimately the Opening and Closing ceremonies.

As an example, the Barcelona'92 logo, a vibrant blue, yellow, and red symbol, was intended as an expression of Mediterranean aesthetics. Blue represented the sea and the sky, yellow as the sun, and combined with red was intended to evoke the idea of passion, human qualities and friendship. The logo

---

<sup>5</sup> The host broadcaster, in this case RTO'92, is responsible for producing a visual and sound-only international television signal for use by international broadcasters. The international signal (IS) is intended to be a neutral and comprehensive

was also a reproduction of the human body in movement, thus expressing the humanist concepts of classicism, as well as the Mediterranean character of joy for life <sup>6</sup>.

## 2. Broadcast presentations of Spain, Catalonia, and Barcelona

This study used a quantitative (close to 200 content categories) and qualitative analysis of 25 Opening Ceremony broadcasts to better understand how broadcasters chose to characterize the 1992 Olympic host<sup>7</sup>. The broadcasts were chosen to represent a diverse selection of geographic location, media systems, and level of economic development. The broadcast countries include Greece, USA, France, Catalonia, Singapore, Mexico, Canada, Indonesia, Romania, Slovenia, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Brazil, Australia, Germany, Korea, the United Kingdom, Spain, Cuba, Egypt, Colombia, and China. The study also employed research "correspondents" native to each of the countries involved to provide additional observation and interpretation of the broadcast presentations concerning the perception of the Olympic host in their respective countries. While Closing Ceremony broadcasts were not subjected to the same analysis, it should be said that through correspondent reports and a review of Closing Ceremony broadcasts it was clear that knowledge about Barcelona and Catalonia as hosts increased substantially over the course of the Games (and should be kept in mind when reviewing the Opening Ceremony findings). Add to this the success of the Games and plenty of visual exposure for the host city and it is safe to say that broadcasters finished their Olympics commentary full of positive regard for its host. The broad identity objective of creating or enhancing a "favorable" image was certainly achieved.

### 2.1. Attention to the host

But what of more specific identity objectives? Reflective both of differences in the overall quantity of broadcaster commentary and interest in presenting cultural aspects of the Opening Ceremony, broadcasters varied in the relative amount of attention spent characterizing the host and narrating the cultural performances in terms which reflected on a host identity. Figure 1 compares these levels of attention by comparing the number of distinct comments or associations broadcast commentators made that relate in some way to the portrayal of the host either directly or indirectly (through the characterization

---

broadcast of all Olympic events. Once received, international broadcasters then add commentary to the IS. They are also free to edit and alter the signal in any way they choose before sending the Games broadcast to home audiences.

<sup>6</sup> The representation of this symbol during the Opening Ceremony caused various international television channels to recognize this "Mediterraneanness", and some others such as Russian television, for example, to make some quite amazing interpretations: *"Perhaps, after the first look it's hard to determine what this emblem means. However, as its creator Josep Trias believes, everything is obvious: a figure of the man in movement is pictured on the white background; and the colors in which the symbolic parts of the body are colored, unmistakably point at his Mediterranean origin. (...) Blue represents the sea, yellow the sun, red life (...). But, to tell you the truth, it (the emblem) also reminds me of a head of a bull; and corrida and Spain - these are inseparable"* (Ostankino 1, Russia, Opening Ceremony).

<sup>7</sup> The Barcelona Opening Ceremony broadcasts included in this study include the following: ET1, Greece; NBC, USA; TF1, France; Canal Olímpic, Catalonia; SBC 12, Singapore; Canal 13, Mexico; CTV (English language) and TVA (French language), Canada; TVRI, Indonesia; RTV, Romania; 2nd Channel, Slovenia; NHK, Japan; Ostankino 1, Russia; SABC, South Africa; TV Globo, Brazil; Ch. 7, Australia; ARD, Germany; MBC, Korea; TVE-2, Spain; Tele-Rebelde, Cuba; RCN, Colombia; CRTV, Cameroon; CCTV, China; BBC, UK; and ERTU2, Egypt.

Each broadcast was both visually and verbally transcribed (and translated if necessary) for analysis purposes. For a more complete description of methods and list of content analysis categories used in this study, contact the Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.



of cultural segments). This figure does not reflect purely descriptive commentary about the cultural performances ("There are now 1200 dancers entering the stadium"), but only commentary which educates or presents, in some way, information regarding the host ("they are now dancing the Sardana, a traditional Catalan dance"). Oddly, there is little to explain how broadcasters are distributed along this figure - except at the extremes, where the CCTV (China) commentator not only didn't say much in general, but showed no interest whatsoever in the cultural or political distinctiveness of Barcelona and Catalonia (discussed below), while ET1 (Greece) commentators clearly reveled in the "return" of the Olympics to a Mediterranean port.

## 2.2. The portrayal of Spain

### *The Royal Family*

Attention to Spain, across nearly all broadcasters, mostly focused on the King and the royal family, most often prompted by visual images of King Juan Carlos I and family in the tribunal. As organizers hoped, a few broadcasters emphasized the success and stability of Spain's democratic transition (in particular NBC, USA; CTV, Canada; Canal 13, Mexico), identifying the King as the protagonist of the new Spanish democracy.

And so does [King] Juan Carlos deserve this moment, so instrumental in guiding his nation through treacherous waters toward democracy and out of the dark ages of fascism under Generalissimo Francisco Franco (NBC, USA, Opening Ceremony)

Canal 13 (Mexico), Ostankino 1 (Russia) and ARD (Germany) emphasized the popularity of the King in the management of political power. The Russian commentator, in particular, communicated a sense of a country united by love for the King. Several broadcasters emphasized aspects of the King that were significantly less political, such as his sportiness (TVE, Spain; SABC, South Africa; 2nd Channel, Slovenia; and NHK, Japan). Strangely enough, this non-political approach to the royal family is also the case for the BBC which apparently did not want to establish any comparisons between the British monarchy which, at the time of the opening of the Games, was less popular than the Spanish monarchy. CCTV China did not make any political reference to the figure of the King whatsoever.

### *Passion for life*

With one of the performance segments (flamenco dance and opera) titled "Land of Passion" it was not surprising that 10 of the broadcasts specifically associate this attribute with the Spanish people. All told, 62% of the broadcasts characterized the Spanish people as having a deeply felt passion and love of life expressed through music, festival, and color. Only NHK (Japan) commentators refer to more traditional stereotypes of bullfights and joined NBC (USA) and TF1 (France) in remarking on the beautiful Spanish women. (Also, the BBC UK chose as part of its opening graphic for its daily Olympic broadcast a picture of a bullfighter, flamenco dancer, and red carnations). One Chinese press account after the Opening Ceremony was quoted as saying, "although there was not the symbol of Spain - bullfighting - in the

performances at the Opening Ceremony, the performances as a whole were very cultural and colorful<sup>8</sup>.

#### *A "cultured" host*

The goal of the Olympic planners for Spain to be associated with high culture was met in the sense that most of the broadcasts mentioned well known artists (Picasso, Miró, etc.) and nearly all made general comments about the Spanish love of music and art ("Spain has offered so much to the world in culture, art, architecture, music, sports", SABC, South Africa, Opening Ceremony). However, any sense of a specific artistic tradition (e.g., modernism) was tied much more to the presentation of Barcelona than of Spain.

Also, few broadcasts attempted to place various dance or music segments in their Spanish contexts (Andalusian, Aragón, etc.) or show much affinity for the relatively long segments of opera presented by some world famous Spanish artists. As an example, Langer described a central tension in the Australian Channel 7 broadcast as the commentators positioned as "uncultured" outsiders trying to grasp "European high culture" (opera, arts, theatre). He said that "a symptom of this tension was the virtual silence of the commentators while the opening cultural pageant unfolded compared with the verbosity of these commentators once the athletes joined in"<sup>9</sup>. In fact, across several broadcasts the relatively long, performance segments of opera, devoid of action, served more to silence the largely sports-oriented commentators than to provoke commentary about Spain and its high culture. Awatef Abd El-Rahman, reporting perceptions of the ceremony in Egypt, suggested that the opera singing, while consistent with the ceremony, was contrary to "the Arab mood which is not in favor with that sort of singing"<sup>10</sup>. This attitude was also reflected in the comments of the study correspondents from the United Kingdom:

Among the less relevant symbolism as perceived through the BBC's coverage was the sight of half a dozen people (including some conspicuous heavyweights) dressed in faintly absurd clothes and singing lollipop fragments of opera. [The BBC commentator] did not indicate what this meant in the context of the ceremony, and it was left hanging uncertainly as a celebration of Spanish or European culture. It also became (through costume, "classicism" and fat) a celebration of wealth and power...<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Wenhui Bao, 26 July 1992. This is a Shanghai newspaper geared to intellectuals.

<sup>9</sup> Langer, John (1992). "Correspondent Report for Australia", Television in the Olympics Project Archive. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

<sup>10</sup> El-Rahman, Awatef Abd et al (1992). "Correspondent Report for Egypt", Television in the Olympics Project Archive. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

<sup>11</sup> Izod, John, Peter Meech, and Tim Horticraft, with the collaboration of Richard Kilborn (1992). "Correspondent Report for United Kingdom", Television in the Olympics Project Archive. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

### 2.3 Catalonia's coming out party

Much to the delight of the Generalitat of Catalonia there was a much greater recognition of Catalonia in international media than expected. Looking specifically at the broadcasters in this study most found the idea of "Catalanness" something worth presenting to home audiences. For NHK (Japan), for example, the existence of Catalonia provided a basic introductory framework to the Opening Ceremony as a whole:

K: Mr. Hirano, for spectators to able to enjoy the ceremony, we need to explain something about Catalonia, right?

H: Yes, that's right, because Spain is a country with a strong sense of autonomy. The people of each region insist on his own sense of autonomy and among them the Catalans are strongest. Many centuries ago in this region was a time in which it was independent, very prosperous with its center in Barcelona. Accordingly, from the point of view of Catalan people and Barcelonans this opportunity is not a Spanish, but Catalan Olympics. (NHK, Japan, Opening Ceremony)

Table 1 summarizes the percentage of broadcasts that recognize Catalonia, either directly or indirectly, as a distinct political and cultural unit. It should be noted, however, that this particular table represents "mentions" only and does not mean there was an accompanying explanation of what, just exactly, Catalonia "is". For example, every broadcaster mentioned the visual entrance of the Catalan flag into the stadium, but CCTV (China) did not explain its meaning or ever mention Catalonia again in its broadcast.

**Table 1 | Recognition of Catalan Political and Cultural Symbols**

<b>Commentary References</b>	<b>% broadcasts*</b>
Refer to Catalonia as a nation or politically autonomous region	32% (8)
Refer to the Catalan anthem	60% (15)
Refer to the Catalan flag	100% (25)
Refer to the Catalan language	68% (17)
Refer to the "sardana" performance as Catalan folklore	76% (19)
Refer to the "human pyramids" as Catalan folklore or tradition	80% (20)
Name Jordi Pujol as the President of the Generalitat of Catalonia	64% (16)
Refer to Catalonia as having a distinct history	56% (14)

\* N = 25

While the majority of broadcasters recognized the existence of Catalonia as evidenced in the above table, they varied considerably in the clarity and theme of that presentation. Each of the broadcast presentations of Catalonia in this analysis could be described as falling into one of the following four identity orientations:

1. Catalonia is an autonomous political and cultural identity distinct from, and at times in conflict, with Spain. The Opening Ceremony design is seen as representative of both the cooperative and conflictual nature of this relationship.

2. Catalonia has a cultural and political identity distinct from, but fully compatible with, the rest of Spain. The Opening Ceremony is seen as an opportunity for audiences to experience Catalan culture, but the display does not hold any political connotations.
3. Catalonia is mentioned - and thus implied as distinct in some way, but it is not really explained. Catalonia is used interchangeably with Spain as host.
4. Catalonia is not presented in any way as a politically, culturally, or linguistically distinct entity.

#### *The Opening Ceremony as a victory for Catalonia*

In contrast to some of the negative pre-event media framing concerning the possibility that North Korea or student activists might disrupt the Seoul Olympics, the international media at Barcelona appeared to reject any central story line involving potential conflict or terrorism. For their part, the call for "Olympic peace" was well heeded by Catalan nationalist groups who, in line with their general tendency to reject violence as a way of defending their identity, at no time whatsoever decided on mounting a boycott. Instead, they proposed festive ways of demonstrating their identity at all times (encouraging of flags and decorations on balconies, streets festivals, etc.) which, given the inherently positive context of the Olympics, seemed to prove more attractive to international sports media than the staging of nationalist demonstrations. There was interest expressed by several broadcasters in the political dimensions of the Barcelona Olympic Games. In the end, however, this vein of discourse largely ended up as compliments on the ability of all parties to work cooperatively.

Even so, the broadcasts of NBC (USA), ET1 (Greece), CTV (Canada), Channel 7 (Australia), Canal A (Colombia), TF1 (France), Canal 13 (Mexico), NHK (Japan), ARD (Germany), BBC (UK) and TVA (Canada) fall generally within the first identity orientation in that they all recognized the political dimension of the relationship between Catalonia and Spain and saw the Opening Ceremony as somehow emblematic of that relationship.

Well after the bitter civil war and dictatorship, there was a sensitive question. Should the Games be more or less Catalan or more or less Spanish? It was only settled after semi-formal negotiations between the national government and the Catalonians and tonight we'll see the compromise (BBC, UK, in introductory comments to Opening Ceremony).

These broadcasters readily note the presence of Catalan symbols at the ceremony (flag, anthem, language, and folk performance, political representatives) and imply their presence as a victory of sorts for Catalonia. For example, when King Juan Carlos I of Spain made his official declaration of the opening of the Games, he spoke alternately in Catalan and Spanish. Here's how the NBC commentators reacted to the King:

C: The reaction of the crowd! King Juan Carlos spoke Catalan, and that is significant. The Mayor [of Barcelona] was quoted as saying only a couple of days ago, "let us make this an occasion of Catalan pride, pride in Barcelona, but not antagonism toward any other region of Spain at large, let's come together for this one". As apparently they have. E: Incredible concession. You heard

the appreciative reaction of the Catalans in the Olympic stadium... (NBC, USA, Opening Ceremony)

For NBC, these were definitely Catalan Olympics, and at times the U.S. broadcaster seemed to give the ceremony more political significance than the Olympic planners did. Earlier in the ceremony NBC even went well beyond the boundaries of the ceremony's official script to re-interpret the Mediterranean Sea segment as a representation of the Catalans' historic effort to defend their identity<sup>12</sup>.

E: Many of the great explorers of history were either Spanish or sailed under the Spanish flag: Columbus, Magellan, Ponce de León, Cortez, Pizarro. In a sense, you might think this [the performance] represents their adventures, the peril they encountered, seeking a new world, going off toward uncharted territory. In a sense, that's true, but it's also meant to represent the fierce independence of Barcelona and Catalonia, the vicissitude of their existence, rocked from to and fro by conquerors from other lands, dictators from Spain at large, their fierce determination to fight off those influences and be sovereign, determine their circumstances themselves, again, no matter what evil, what adversity...(NBC, USA, Opening Ceremony)

And, as if to underscore just who the "real" host was NBC commentators introduced the "Land of Passion" flamenco performance segment as "not a bit Catalan" then cut away to conduct interviews outside the stadium.

As noted, the U.S. broadcast was not the only ones to imbue political importance into some of the ritual, folkloric and musical performances of the ceremonies. Here is how two other broadcasters characterized the Catalan folk dance, the "sardana":

This sardana was prohibited during the Franco era. It became, like the language, a symbol of Catalan autonomy. (ARD, Germany, Opening Ceremony) The interlocked hands represent the solidarity and the collective strength of the Catalan people. (BBC, Great Britain, Opening Ceremony).

The BBC suggested that the tension between Catalan and Spanish nationalism was harmonized in several segments of the ceremony with the inclusion of both the sardana and some "flamenco steps", too. They also note that a musical "consensus" was arrived at when both "El Concierto de Aranjuez" (Spanish) and "El cant dels ocells" by Pau Casals (Catalan) were played<sup>13</sup>. This idea of consensus was also underscored by other broadcasters at more ritualistic moments of the ceremony, particularly in the choice of the final flame carriers:

---

<sup>12</sup> The "Mediterranean Sea, Olympic Sea" performance was produced for the Barcelona Opening Ceremony by the avant garde Barcelona theatrical group La Fura del Baus. The segment begins with a mythical, giant mechanical Hercules participating in the first Olympic Games. Then the Olympic spirit, symbolized by a boat, travels metaphorically through time and space from the first Games of ancient Greece, crossing the Mediterranean Sea (the stadium floor covered with performers elaborately costumed in blue), to the Barcelona Games of 1992. On its way, the ship and its crew confront a variety of fantastical monsters representing the evils that have plagued humankind and threatened the existence of the Olympic Games over the centuries: illness, war, hunger, etc. In this end, good triumphs and Hercules' renewed spirit arrives in Barcelona 1992 to pay homage to the achievements of modern civilization and stage a new Olympic Games. Key symbolic elements in this performance segment are water (the Mediterranean Sea), the sun, and Greek mythology related to Hercules as son of Zeus, hero and Olympic victor.

<sup>13</sup> Izod et al (1992), op cit.

It's [a final torch] relay...to Juan Antonio San Epifanio, a basketball player, representing the city of Barcelona, whereas Mr. Menéndez [who entered the stadium with the torch] was from Madrid, also a symbol of these two cities sharing the last race, that of the flame to its final destination, at least for 1992. (TVA, Canada, Opening Ceremony)

The French TF1 broadcaster, in particular, focused on the cooperative outcome of the relationship between Catalonia and Spain throughout its broadcast. Referring to the fact that the Spanish and Catalan flags are both red and yellow, the commentator said:

...different tones but ultimately there is that unity of red and yellow which expresses so well the relations between Spain and Catalonia, who are so different but have such close ties. It's something that is not very comprehensible, perhaps not even very logical, but which is profoundly rich and creative. (TF1, France, Opening Ceremony)

Although agreement was not always possible, as when the BBC commentator noted that the use of French to introduce entering teams during the athletes' parade was because "the Catalans and the Spanish couldn't agree".

Acknowledgment of the political dimension of Catalonia did not necessarily mean that these broadcasters delved into the same level of historical detail as, for example, the NBC (USA) broadcast did. According to Langer, most of the comments by Australia's Channel 7 about the "fervently Catalan city" of Barcelona were mostly "throw away" lines or "momentary gestures", passing by quickly, without follow up or substance<sup>14</sup>.

#### *The Opening Ceremony as an introduction to Catalan culture*

While the two primary "Catalan" performance segments, the "sardana" segment and "Els Castellers" were recognized by 75% of the broadcasts as based on Catalan folklore, not all broadcasters chose to bestow any political dimension to their presence in the ceremony. The broadcasts of Ostankino 1 (Russia), 2nd Channel (Slovenia), RTV (Romania), and SBC 12 (Singapore), for example, readily acknowledged the Catalan origins of these performance segments and other ceremony symbols, but did not relate these to any relationship between Catalonia and Spain. For these broadcasters "Catalanness" was a cultural presence, not a political one. For the Slovenian 2nd Channel commentator, for example, the linguistic attributes of Catalonia found some affinity with the strong linguistic nationalism associated with Slovenia. Again, while acknowledgments of Catalonia were distinct there was rarely a sense of depth to these comments, as our Russian correspondent noted, "Catalonia was mentioned, but ignored...[the image was] positive, but insufficient" <sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> Langer (1992), op cit.

<sup>15</sup> Zassoursky, Yassen, with Svetlana Kolesnik, and Andrei Richter (1992). "Correspondent Report for Russia", Television in the Olympics Project Archive. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

### *Catalonia as undefined*

For those broadcasters remaining, ERTU2 (Egypt), Tele-Rebelde (Cuba), TVRI (Indonesia), SABC (South Africa), and MBC (Korea), Catalonia "exists" in that it was mentioned. Any definition, however, not only lacked depth, but was decidedly vague - particularly in relation to Spain. Catalonia and Spain were used interchangeably to describe ceremony features, with Barcelona most frequently cited as host. For example, the Indonesian commentator said, referring to the sardana:

This dance is often performed in open spaces in the cities around Catalonia. (...). And as we are seeing on the television screen these dancers do not include only young people but also those who are not young any more. Older people are also participating. Because indeed this dance is owned by all Catalonians. (TVRI, Indonesia, Opening Ceremony)

He then referred to this as a "Spanish tradition" in the next sentence.

The South African broadcaster (SABC) missed the entire first segment of the ceremony intended to present Catalan culture to the world - and thus missed the opportunity to introduce the ceremony design as reflective of its Catalan host. (In fact, advertisements took up over a third of the cultural performances in SABC's broadcast, affecting any coherent cultural narrative that commentators might engaged in.)

### *There is no Catalonia*

The fourth identity orientation included only one broadcaster in this study: China's CCTV. Other than one brief and unexplained reference to the Catalan flag as it entered the stadium (alongside flags of Barcelona and Spain), no aspect of Catalonia - its language, culture or political autonomy - was mentioned at any time in the broadcast. That said, it should also be mentioned that little detail, if any, is offered by the CCTV commentator about the Spanish monarchy, Spain or even Europe. One Chinese press commentary actually wondered about the absence of Spain:

Although there was not the symbol of Spain - bullfighting - in the performances at the Opening Ceremony, as a whole they were very cultural and colorful <sup>16</sup>.

Instead the CCTV commentator's interest concentrated more on aspects such as the unifying tradition of the cultural segments rather than their national origin.

### *Domestic context influencing broadcaster recognition of Catalonia*

There existed a wide range of preparation and interest on the part of different broadcasters in interpreting, rather than just describing, the Opening Ceremony. For the most part ceremony planners got their wish that Catalonia would be "presented" as unique, in some way, to global audiences. The limits to their identity

---

<sup>16</sup> From an article in the Chinese newspaper Wenhui Bao, as reported in Kong, Xiang-an (1992). "Correspondent Report for China", Television in the Olympics Project Archive. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Kong does suggest that some press coverage of Catalonia did appear in China during the Games.

objectives were found in the presentation of Catalonia as an autonomous political community. This outcome, however, was likely beyond the efforts of the ceremony planners to control. Reviewing the findings concerning the presentation of Catalonia it is clear that the broadcasters associated with the three identity orientations that did not underscore the political dimension of Catalonia's character represented specific types of geopolitical and social environments listed below. These domestic contexts may well have affected their presentation of Catalonia as host:

- Broadcasters from countries that have cultural, linguistic or national plurality problems that politically condition the commentators. This is the case, for example, for CCTV (China) and TVRI (Indonesia).
- Broadcasters from countries that have social or development problems which clearly affect the interest their commentators may have in the problem of national and linguistic minorities in Europe. This is the case, for example, for ERTU2 (Egypt), and CRTV (Cameroon).
- Broadcasters from countries that are subject to situations of social conflict that cast a shadow over their interest in these questions of identity. This is the case of the extreme complexity for SABC (South Africa), whose television channel does mention that differences exist between Catalonia and Spain although hardly considers the political dimensions of this difference.
- Broadcasters from countries that are currently experiencing great transformations with dramatic nationalistic implications and which prefer to concentrate their attention on other aspects of the ceremony such as the freedom and creativity of expression (Ostankino 1, Russia), the union of the athletes and the value of Olympism (RTV, Romania and 2nd Channel, Slovenia).
- Broadcasters from countries that are culturally more distant from Europe whose commentators are more interested in the global aspects of a Mediterranean culture than in the specific features of the cultural or national identity of Catalonia. Specific descriptions related to Catalan culture are given more global interpretations. This is the case for a broadcaster such as MBC (Korea).

Before leaving this discussion of Catalonia as a host identity, it is worth reflecting on a few special cases.

Surprise and acceptance in Latin America. The image of Catalonia and Spain in Latin America, as a consequence of their important historic, cultural and linguistic relationships, deserves some special attention. Analysis of the commentaries of TV Globo (Brazil), Canal 13 (Mexico), Tele-Rebelde (Cuba), and RCN (Colombia) revealed two interesting reactions to the host identity in the ceremony. First, there is more surprise than in other parts of the world about the presence - and existence - of such cultural and linguistic variety in Spain. Second, there is a special interest that these diversities express themselves in a positive Catalonia-Spain relationship. The Brazilian commentator suggested to his viewers that "they are becoming immersed in the capital of Catalonia". With that identification, the duality of Catalonia / Spain or of Spanish / Catalan culture is fully accepted.

"Let's see...this is a symbol of the Olympiad. A smile of all Spaniards, not only Catalans, but from all Spaniards to everyone in the world". (TV Globo, Brazil, Opening Ceremony)



This surprise and acceptance of the Catalan / Spanish relationship is even more evident when considering the Catalan language, its protagonism as the official language, and its use by some of the most important dignitaries in the ceremonies.

Even more intriguing to several of the Latin American commentators, however, was the modernization of Spain, of which Barcelona seemed an admirable expression.

J.R.F. Barcelona is proof of a new Spain. A re-urbanized Barcelona, a modern Barcelona with its grand architecture and grand port that's a door to Europe...

J.S.: Barcelona has been radically transformed in the last years, a transformation that cost 7-8 million dollars! But today Barcelona is a beautiful city.(Canal 13, Mexico, Opening Ceremony)

Quebec and Catalonia: birds of a feather? One of the reasons that the French Canadian broadcaster TVA was included in this study was an interest in some of the similarities between Quebec and Catalonia - both nations with a sense of being linguistically and culturally unique within their home state. As it turned out explicit parallels between Catalonia and Quebec were not made by TVA commentators although, without reading too much into their commentary, they did show a special interest in Catalonia, in particular the Catalan language, and suggested at times a sense of camaraderie, as in the following comment:

[Our] Catalan friends... a generous people, a warm people... a people with traditions... a people which is marked by its culture, but its architects, but its artists and its painters... by its musicians and by its dynamism during the 1990s (TVA, Canada, Opening Ceremony)

The Spanish broadcasters: self presentation of the most humble kind. One final reference should be made to the truly unique treatment of Catalonia and the Catalonia/Spain issue by the Spanish TVE and Catalan Canal Olímpic television channels. There is a great degree of self-control on the part of the commentators (in contrast to the spontaneity and ease of several other international broadcasters) when dealing with the issue of the Catalonia-Spain relationship. The rhetoric seemed to avoid conflictive questions altogether. In fact, there is not one explicit reference whatsoever throughout both ceremony broadcasts to the national question of Catalonia or to its relationship with Spain. The exception is some emotional references to a Catalan symbol in TVE and making a single unqualified mention of the Catalan language in the Catalan Canal Olímpic broadcast.

#### **2.4 The presentation of the official host: Barcelona**

Because of the physical presence of Olympic activities within the host city, the image of Barcelona was by nature quite different from presentations of the more imaged entities of Catalonia and Spain. The city was uniformly seen through its unique architectural, artistic and urban planning features. Probably as a consequence of its visual accessibility, the number of items defining its image had more breadth and heterogeneity, but the resulting image was also remarkably consistent across broadcasts.

Most broadly, Barcelona was interpreted as the place where an historic event was occurring which affects the whole of humanity. Barcelona was identified as the capital of Catalonia in nearly half of the broadcasts,

but it was a city being transformed - for the duration of the Games - into a "capital of the world". This "special" Olympic capital city status allowed many commentators to present Barcelona as the most fascinating and compelling city, especially regarding the quality of life and the attractions it offers to people visiting it. These references would become more and more persistent and enthusiastic by the time of the Closing Ceremony.

A splendid city. It's a city that gives you a feeling after a few hours of an intensity, a vitality, a creativity, an intense creativity. Life is everywhere, art is everywhere, with a simplicity in community life that is stunning. (TF1, France, Opening Ceremony)

#### *A city of contrasts and creativity*

Specifically meeting the goals of the Olympic planners, Barcelona was interpreted at one and the same time as being old and new ("The old and the new mixed in Barcelona", TV Globo, Brazil, Opening Ceremony), as historic and modern, as a city that lives in the streets. Much of this was able to be expressed using the television cameras.

For several broadcasters "La Rambla", Barcelona's most famous street, offered an excellent visual representation of the "personality" of Barcelona and its inhabitants. For example, NBC (USA) began its broadcast of the Opening Ceremony with some camera images of this famous promenade, pointing out that the widest part was given over to pedestrians while the narrowest parts on each side were reserved for cars.

Eight o'clock, Saturday evening in Barcelona, and what you're seeing in this Opening Ceremony, a tribute to the signature boulevard of Barcelona, Las Ramblas. Flower people, bird people, here's a look at Las Ramblas. There's no other boulevard quite like it in the entire world, a pedestrian walkway where those on foot occupy the wide center cut and automobiles negotiate the narrow sidelines, as if they were consigned to the sidewalks. Newspaper kiosks seemingly almost every ten or fifteen yards. There's the huge food market, you saw just a moment ago, la Boqueria, and just about every twenty or thirty yards you'll see merchants selling caged birds or colorful flowers, and that's what the people down on the stadium infield are meant to represent here....Las Ramblas is a nearly 24 hours a day kaleidoscope of humanity, street performers, mimes, home to vagabond and aristocrat alike, you might say. If you had just one day or night to spend in Barcelona, and you wanted to absorb a good portion of what the city is about, you'd spend it strolling from the center of the city down to the Columbus statue alongside the Mediterranean, Las Ramblas. (NBC, USA, Opening Ceremony)

Through this type of commentary Barcelona was portrayed as a colorful and creative city that has been able to offer the world great "avant-garde" artists such as Gaudí, Miró, Picasso, Dalí, etc. Some broadcasters such as Japan's NHK, used specially designed studio sets which replicated Gaudi architecture or represented other artistic styles of Barcelona as background the television commentators.

### *A city of renewal*

One of the items most emphasized by the international press over the Games' preparatory period was the exceptional urban renovation experienced by Barcelona during the Olympic planning period. During the Opening Ceremony, the television commentators also referred to the urban renewal of Barcelona, especially as related it to the sports facilities (e.g., the renovation of the stadium). References to the modernization process, the wealth of Catalonia and Barcelona, and the efficiency of the organization of the Games were most frequent in the broadcasts of Indonesia (TVRI), Egypt (ERTU2), Cuba (Tele-Rebelde), Romania (RTV), Slovenia (2nd channel) and China (CCTV). Barcelona was definitely not associated with a siesta-style pace.

The progress achieved by Barcelona, in culture, economics...gives Barcelona a good chance to become the greatest city in the world. And they have proved this. They are capable of becoming the host of the 25th Olympics (TVRI, Indonesia, Opening Ceremony)

Broadcasters demonstrated little interest in more strictly economic realms, such as trade and industry attributes, although there were generalized references to Barcelona as the "economic capital" of Spain (e.g., ERTU2, Egypt). Despite a few references in some Opening Ceremony broadcasts to traffic, high hotel prices, unfriendly police, and the like, Barcelona came away looking through the lens of the television camera like a gem of art, and architecture with sports-loving and hospitable people, more than capable of hosting a successful Olympic Games.

## **3. The cultural context for the games**

### **3.1 Europe as part of the host identity**

The European Community in 1992 (now European Union) also saw itself as host. To this end, the European Commission established an EC Olympic Programme and contributed money to have a presence in Barcelona (through street flags and banners) and in the Opening Ceremony during a 22-minute performance part entitled "Music and Europe" which included opera, the human pyramids ("Els Castellers which linked a traditional Catalan folk activity to the symbols of the EC flag and its 12 member nations), and the playing of the European anthem "Ode to Joy" with accompanying fireworks<sup>17</sup>. Locally, the EC actively promoted itself to visitors and professionals in attendance at the Games. For example, broadcasters in the international media center were exposed to the EC's promotion of its high-definition television (HDTV) technology. The EC had involved itself in a similar way earlier in the year at the

---

<sup>17</sup> In the introduction to the Opening Ceremony Press Guide, a few indirect references to Europe were made: "Spain is the south-eastern gateway to Europe", "Barcelona is a great European city". The guide defined the European Community as: "Today, twelve countries go to make up the Community Europe, a land where 348 million speak at least nine different languages. United by the blue flag with twelve golden stars, the countries of the European Community share the goals of economic policy and are on their way to political union. Today, the European Community is the world's largest market and the cradle of freedom and democracy that reflects the richness of its cultural diversity. The EC is formed by: Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and the United Kingdom". (COOB'92, Opening Ceremony. Press Guide). The EC also provided a supplementary media guide to broadcasters, which was not noticeably used in the broadcast commentaries.

Albertville, France winter Olympics<sup>18</sup>.

Did broadcasters notice this publicity campaign? The answer would have to be only marginally and never to the level of centrality that Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain played as host entities. To understand this outcome, it is worth pointing out some of the challenges the EC faced in trying to promote its image through an Olympic Games.

First, the image of Europe that was projected in Barcelona faced the difficulty of confusion over the global idea of Europe and the idea of the European Union as a political and economic entity of 12 European states. The idea of European culture, moreover, extends beyond the present boundaries of the "Europe of the 12". Further, any incorrect delimitation could have caused dissatisfaction among the non-Community European countries and posed a problem of matching the European political identity to the cultural identity.

Second, the image of the European Union came up against some special difficulties in the framework of the Olympic Games, dominated by the central role that "nation-states" play in constructing the mythologies of sports representation and ceremony protocol. The European Union did not act as a nation among nations in the Olympic Games, and did not appear as such in the athletes' parade.

Finally, this was a time of great historic changes, which were presenting difficulties in the consolidation process (Maastricht Treaty), with unresolved expectations of extending the Union (Austria, Sweden, Norway, etc.) and the rupture of the historic division between East and West with the subsequent opening up of new European relations.

Under these conditions, the idea of Europe was developed at risk of appearing, in the eyes of other international communities, as a "competitive community", as a "market" or even as a yet politically undefined and incomplete entity. Given the challenges noted above, the EC chose the positive aspect of this image, the idea of the cooperative community of the future, as its image focus. However, in the end, even this fairly unthreatening strategy did not find its niche within the geopolitical images of Barcelona'92.

**Table 2. References to Europe and the EC in the Opening Ceremony**

<b>Commentary references</b>	<b>% of broadcasts (number of broadcasts)*</b>
Mention Europe and the European Community	58% (15)
Mention Europe but not the European Community	11% (3)
Do not mention Europe	15% (4)
Mention Barcelona as a European city	7% (2)

\* N = 26

Table 2 summarizes references to Europe and the European Community demonstrating the marginal focus put on this aspect of the host identity. The broadcasts that carried no explicit mention of Europe are ARD (Germany), CCTV (China), ERTU2 (Egypt) and Ostankino 1 (Russia). Over 70% of the mentions of Europe came during the human pyramids (Els Castellers) segment as intended by the ceremony planners. Only six of the broadcasts referred to Europe during the playing of the European anthem "Ode to Joy", and these broadcasters tended to link their mentions of Europe and its anthem with references to the values of universality, unity, solidarity, and so forth, more in keeping with the Olympic spirit. For the Japanese NHK

<sup>18</sup> For example, the EC backed a series of advertisements and banners in the streets of Barcelona and Albertville

commentators, the European anthem evoked reference to German unification. For Mexican (Canal 13) commentators, the European anthem was the "world anthem". For Russian (Ostankino 1) and Romanian (RTV) commentators, the anthem had more humanitarian and emotional connotations than European ones:

What's happening in the Olympic stadium now is very symbolic. The Ode to Joy is being performed by a 13-year-old boy (...) Here they are - the Olympic Games! The celebration, that unites all of humanity has finally begun". (Ostankino 1, Russia, Opening Ceremony).

Only Greek (ET1) television, the broadcaster that emphasized the European context most, described the "Ode to Joy" in terms of European unity as was the intent of ceremony planners.

And this is the Ode to Joy, the European anthem sang by a boy 13 years old. (...). This year's Olympic Games coincide with a historic event for Europe. Beginning with the first day of 1993 all economic barriers will be removed between the member countries of the European Economic Community. The Olympic Games and the Expo'92 both of which are being held here in Seville, carry a message, important for all Europeans: Unite. (ET1, Greece, Opening Ceremony)

While perhaps the image of Europe in the Games was in fact a faithful reflection of the limits and conditions in line with which the image of the European Community at that time, the marginal degree of attention paid to things European also relates to the structure of the narration of the ceremony, which did not situate things European in the center of its discourse. Inclusion of "Europe" in the design of the ceremony is as an arbitrary symbolic referent. Thus, for example, in the human pyramid segment, the references to Europe do not arise directly from the narrative of what it represents. Instead, they arise from indirect references: twelve human pyramids that represent the twelve countries of the European Community. Thus, two identification symbols are employed: Catalan folklore (cultural referent) and its homage to Europe (arbitrary symbolic referent). In addition, the segment lost some of its intended impact when, ignoring the instructions that they had been given, the spectators began to light up their flares (which were intended to present the EC flag) at the wrong time (earlier when the Olympic torch entered the stadium), effectively ruining the iconic force planned for this segment and, of course, losing the references to Europe that had been foreseen with the participation of the spectators <sup>19</sup>.

Finally in the segment dedicated to opera lasting 13.5 minutes, performances were given by Spanish singers only, and as such did not manage to evoke the idea of Europe in spite of the official indications ("The music Europe created for the universe", "A clear example of European culture") offered in the media script and guide. Instead, the opera segment acted more as a sign of prestige for the organizers - Catalan and Spanish - than as a sign of identification of Europe and its culture. The only broadcaster that referred to the European meaning of opera were TVE of Spain and Tele-Rebelde of Cuba.

---

representing the image of an athlete holding a torch decorated with the 12 stars of the community flag.

<sup>19</sup> Izod et al (1992) op cit. suggest that the design of the segment itself was quite ill-conceived. They said, "It was not a strong moment, not least because only some of the twelve castles were seen [on television]... Furthermore the major struggle in each tower building exercise was involved in building each castle [symbolically one EC country] - any overarching structure linking them would have been architecturally inconceivable. Thus the symbolism served its ostensible purpose weakly".

As NBC (USA) did with the political meaning of Catalonia, only the Greek ET1 commentators take their references to Europe, European culture and Europeanness of the Games far beyond the proposals contained in the official script:

We have to say to those who are watching what is going on now. People from Catalonia have begun to form 12 human pyramids. This officially marks the third part of the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games. What do these pyramids stand for? They represent the 12 member countries of the European Community. I think we mentioned earlier that the people of Spain have put great emphasis on their role in the European Community.

But so did we. In the ceremony that took place on the hill of Olympia on June 6 and during the festivities in the Panathenaikon Stadium two days later, in both cases we raised the flag of Europe and played the anthem of the European Economic Community (...) it is very obvious that Europe is the future of the world...These castells, these pyramids that are being formed represent the unity of strength and solidarity of the construction of Europe. (ET1, Greece, Opening Ceremony).

### **3.2. The Mediterranean culture of the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games**

Ultimately more attractive to the international broadcasters than the idea of a "European culture" hosting the Games was the host as Mediterranean culture. In fact, 17 or 68% of the broadcasts studied explicitly identify Catalonia as a Mediterranean country and/or Barcelona as a Mediterranean city, while there were no explicit references to identify either Catalonia or Spain as a "European countries" (and only two which identify Barcelona as European, Mexico's Canal 13 and Indonesia's TVRI). The Mediterranean, unlike Europe, appears to be a non-political and non-institutional concept, much easier to identify with the Catalan identity than with the concept of Europe. Further it was consistently interpreted as a positive cultural value: historic, representative of renewal, and creative.

As noted earlier, this interpretation by broadcasters was fully compatible with the desires of the Olympic planners who, from the initial stages of candidature, felt comfortable with the idea of expressing Mediterranean values as a starting point, framework, and common denominator in the cultural identity program. And, many broadcasters related well to the choice of this well known body of water as context for the aforementioned performance segment called "The Mediterranean Sea". It's worth noting that as with the European context, for Greek ET1 commentators the choice of the Mediterranean concept as central to the Games and to the Opening Ceremony held very special meaning. It represented the main link among classical Olympism, the renewal of the Games in Athens in 1896, and the "new Mediterranean Games" in Barcelona'92.

We hear the first notes of "Mediterranea" 360 drums shatter the silence with their loud beat (...). And the part that follows ladies and gentlemen has as theme the Mediterranean the Olympic Sea (...), the theme could have also been "return to the Mediterranean". After 96 years the Olympic Games returned to the Mediterranean. The first Games were held at the Panathenaikon Stadium of Athens in 1896. Since then all the Olympiads have been hosted by countries close to the Mediterranean but never bordered by this peace offering sea, the sea of civilization. And they

have come back to the Mediterranean after 96 years. Understandably therefore, the people of Spain, the Catalans, honor the Mediterranean, our sea, here in Barcelona (...). Ryuichi Sakamoto, Japanese, 40 years old has composed this piece dedicated to the Mediterranean and it is ironic the fact that someone from Japan has written a music honoring the Mediterranean (...). (ET1, Greece, Opening Ceremony)

#### **4. The plan succeeds**

The strategy to project a favorable host identity succeeded in the ways deemed most important to Olympic planners. They were not only able to balance the presentation the different geopolitical entities involved, but were able to consolidate the discrete needs of these different hosts into simplified visual and cultural themes that truly emphasized the intersection of these identities: Mediterranean, color, life, modernity, history, passion, art, and warmth. Further, the planners seemed to succeed in connecting these local cultural attributes to more universal feelings.

##### **4.1 Projecting a local culture as global**

In large part the identity goal for Catalonia - to get on the map - was readily met. Catalan culture was presented, by most broadcasters, as elemental to cultural aspects of the ceremony. However, it is doubtful that most international audiences came away with an understanding of Catalonia as a politically autonomous community within Spain. Only a few broadcasts really pursued a story line of a history of political and cultural conflict between Catalonia and the rest of Spain, and even this was primarily used by these broadcasters to promote a more transcendent, universal emotion of the Games as a place for resolution and not to further a political agenda for the Catalan people.

This outcome, however, does not contradict the identity goals of the planners. In fact, it was considered critical to the success of the Opening Ceremony to have the local aspects of the folkloric performances seen within the context of a global event, serving to connect the host to a broader global condition. Thus, for example, the stress the commentators put on the "Catalan", "Canarian", "Madrid", "Andalusian", etc. origin of the various singers and actors was hoped to seem perfectly compatible with the international nature of these same figures. The opera singer Montserrat Caballé, for example, was on many occasions in broadcast commentaries referenced as both "Catalan" and "universal" or "world famous", and her image upholds this ambiguity perfectly well. Similarly, it was the desire of Olympic planners to give the character of Barcelona, Catalonia, and Spain international essence and connection. Rothenbuhler admires the audacity of this attempt: "Ultimately, it was charming to realize that Barcelona was portraying itself as at the center of the origin of civilization - and doing it with convincing style"<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>20</sup> Rothenbuhler, Eric (1992). "Correspondent Report for the United States", Television in the Olympics Project Archive. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

#### 4.2 The influence of television on host identity

Thinking of television in the Olympics, most broadcaster presentations of the Olympic host discussed here were prompted by tangible, visual imagery strategically located by Olympic planners within the ceremony and around the city: Catalan flags in the streets of Barcelona prompted Channel 7 (Australian) commentators to characterize the city as "fervently Catalan", the linked hands of the sardana circle dance provoked an association with the collective spirit of Catalonia, a smiling King Juan Carlos speaking Catalan represented a positive Spanish / Catalonia relationship, and so forth. More abstract identity goals (democratic stability, encouragement of economic initiative, political history, growing industries, a European community) were less noticed by broadcasters and not brought up without some specific connection between a broadcaster's cultural context and the host (e.g., an interest in urban renovation) and in some cases was purposely avoided (China's CCTV not wanting to underscore the political autonomy or nationalism of Catalonia within Spain). In particular, several of the study correspondents wrote of the impact that visual images had on perceptions of Barcelona, by associating local landmarks, people, architecture, cultural performance, Olympic venue settings and design features. Somehow these images encouraged television broadcasters to link the host identity with passion, history, culture, innovation, modernism, Mediterranean, and so forth with great consistency across broadcasts. Thus, it was to credit of the 1992 Olympic organizers that they chose host identity goals not only compatible with the visual character of television, but which held a simplicity of meaning readily understood across many different cultural orientations.