

Economy-related identity promotion policies

ROSER CLAVELL

Approaching the end of this monograph, there is little left to say about the concepts of economy of identity and brand that have been defined by experts and analysed in detail. However, I would like to point out the certainty that both concepts are key items in the agenda of any country and forgetting or not giving them the priority they deserve will only harm recognition of the country and weaken its international projection.

The Government of Catalonia has always had this priority on its agenda and did many actions for projecting internationally our identity from very diverse perspectives.



In recent years, first at the Commission, later at the Vice-president Office, we wished to coordinate and bring consistency into the multiple efforts done at international level to provide a single image and multiply our international influence. This is why intensive work has been done in order to deal strategically with identity, differentiation, singularity, image and brand, thus including them into the specific action envisaged by the **Foreign Action Plan 2010-2015** passed by governmental agreement on last 9 March.

However, allow me first to explain the contents of the Plan, refer to its elaboration process, which to me has clearly been a piece of participation and creation of agreement including the experience of all those participating in and being at the forefront of foreign action, either in public authorities, the academia, the private industry or civil society.

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Many contributions related with the identity concept were made during the elaboration process of the Plan. Based on them, an attempt was made to single out four assets making Catalan identity, those items providing its distinctive personality as well as differentiated opportunities, competitive advantages and added value for its positioning in the world.

The first asset refers to the wish for self-rule as an expression of the own identity. Present-day Catalonia is a historical reality grown over the centuries. This attaches to it a clear feeling of identity, its citizens feeling they belong to a national community. This own identity translates into Catalan politics and institutions that were historically singular and differentiated.

The assets making Catalan identity are four: wish for self-rule as an expression of the own identity; an open and innovating economy and its entrepreneurial tradition; a committed and cohered civil society; and finally, a universal and singular culture.

Catalonia's second asset is based on its open and innovating economy and its entrepreneurial tradition. Catalonia is a country with a solid industrial and commercial tradition that together with its own personality, talent and vantage location as a place of transit, a crossroads of cultures and trade, has had its results all over history, placing Catalonia in the world and reaching an acknowledged role among Europe's most dynamic regions.

A committed and cohered civil society able to move forward and take a stance in the light of global challenges and international discussions is the third asset included in the Plan. Catalonia has a society with a great capacity to welcome people and live together with them, with a tradition of civilian associations and participation, a solid commitment for peace, human rights, people's security and sustainable development. These values are the basis of an open, receptive society ready to interact in a constructive manner with other cultures existing in Catalonia but also taking responsibility and acting in solidarity towards global phenomena.

Finally, the last asset refers to our universal and singular culture. Catalonia's geographical position has deeply marked its history, culture and language, which make an utmost valuable heritage. There is no other culture having no own state with such an international drive and a cultural, scientific and industrial output in its own language. Catalan is the thirteenth language with most speakers in the **European Union**, ahead of Danish and Finnish, and in Europe it has about



▲ Official presentation of the Foreign Action Plan by the Government of Catalonia.

the same size as Swedish, Greek and Portuguese. Preservation and defence of the Catalan language and culture over the history has defined Catalonia's character as an open society committed to linguistic and cultural wealth and diversity, which makes a clear attraction while placing a great responsibility on it *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world.

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These assets are the resource that shall allow us to carry out the Government mission regarding its foreign policy: contributing towards making Catalonia a responsible, efficient, influent and reputed global player guiding its foreign action according to its values whilst defending the interests and promotion of progress and welfare of the Catalan society in building a fairer and solidary global order.

Also, the Plan determines the strategic goals of the Government to carry out this mission: exerting all its legal jurisdiction regarding foreign policy, positioning Catalonia as a reference player for other governments, international organisations and interregional cooperation networks in order to have an influence on those global policies and decisions that may affect Catalonia and its area of international responsibility; deploying a public diplomatic strategy to project Catalonia's image to the world; promoting social and economic internationalisation of Catalonia and consolidating it as a committed, responsible and solidary international player.

Although all these strategic goals have international projection of our identity as their common denominator, the Plan provides for one addressed at creating a specific international promotion and projection strategy for our identity.

It is the will of the Government to deploy a public diplomatic strategy understood as the whole of initiatives and actions taken by both the Government and civil society aiming at having an impact regarding the image to be shown of Catalonia. To make this possible, the Government believes that it cannot do it on its own but it needs to articulate a dialogue with the whole of public and private social stakeholders acting on the international stage to reach their involvement in one same dissemination of a consistent and solid image of Catalonia.

In Catalonia we are lucky to have a great wealth of players that have been working for a long time in disseminating abroad who we are and what we do: civil society associations related with culture, health, sports, tourism, long-standing Catalan family companies, business schools taking the best positions in international rankings, universities, local bodies and people who are individually great ambassadors of Catalonia wherever they are. This wealth is joined by infrastructures with a great international appeal, such as the **Synchrotron**, the Supercomputer or **Circuit de Catalunya** racetrack.

The Government is fully aware of this wealth and believes therefore that it is necessary to work together with all these players to find out first how we are perceived and based on this information define better our identity competitiveness and set out a strategy to communicate it to the world.

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To be successful in carrying out this task, the Government needs to work very closely with the media as well as opinion leaders like Catalonia-based studies and research centres related with international relations. Organisations like Patronat Catalunya Món, Centre d'Estudis i Documentació Internacionals a Barcelona (CIDOB), the Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània (IEMed), Casa Àsia, Casa Amèrica and the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) do tasks contributing towards creating an opinion on and knowledge of the main challenges on the international stage, besides serving as a platform to project to the rest of the world the research and analysis done in Catalonia.

Barcelona is the third non-capital city of the world with most diplomatic legacies, with a total ninety-eight members of the consular corps who are the gateway of their country to Catalonia and inform their country of what is done here. It is hence idle to mention the asset this means and how the Government needs to care for and maintain these institutional ties.

However, any public diplomatic strategy also has necessarily an international side addressed at

Presence of Catalonia in the world

5 delegations of the Government and 63 sectorial offices of the Government of Catalonia abroad

123 Catalan communities abroad

Over 200 internationally recognised Catalan organisations

An academic network of Catalan studies encompassing 160 universities in 28 countries with more than 7000 students

4 airports and 2 ports

25 million tourists per year

2 internationally reputed business schools

12 universities

180 nationalities live in Catalonia

98 consulates

ensuring reliability and consistency of the information created abroad. This involves developing mechanisms to keep those in charge of policies and international information updated on the situation in Catalonia, establish a tight relation with international media, foreign correspondents and other opinion leaders.



▲ The Synchrotron is one of the infrastructures that can have the greatest international appeal.



▲ The wish for self-rule is an expression of the own identity.

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International visitor programmes addressed at influent personalities so they know Catalonia first hand, scientist and researcher attraction programmes to stay for research in Catalonia and optimising exchange programmes for young students or professionals so they eventually return to their country conveying our reality appropriately are tools to consider in a public diplomatic strategy.

It is equally important to work together with international organisations settled in Catalonia to promote the country as an optimal place to attract more. Efforts done at all levels to host the **Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean**

allowed to consolidate Barcelona as the Euro-Mediterranean capital and paved the way for the city to become the forum of numerous meetings of very different kind.

International scientific, commercial, technology, social and sports events taking place in Catalonia also need to be used to show our competence in many areas to the world as well as the country's capacity to organise such gatherings. Mass sports events are especially important as they create a dialogue and convey values in Catalonia. As a landmark of the international Olympic movement with globally recognised sports institutions, Barcelona is an essential asset for the whole of Catalonia.

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Attracting foreign investment to Catalonia results in a constant flow of international visitors with a great potential impact. At the same time, Catalonia is a prime tourist destination attracting more than twenty-five million visitors a year (fifteen million being foreigners). The Government needs to work in having all these visitors become a channel conveying the image of Catalonia we want to communicate abroad.

This is why any tourist strategy in Catalonia needs to focus on these properties, both tangible and intangible, that are differentiating and create the mindset and the picture we want to convey, materialising it by creating products or services and developing a marketing strategy allowing powerful promotion and positioning. Tourism allows to project internationally the mindset related with this differentiation as an added value as well as business, but also its expansion to other industries again based on singularity.

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In all this international projection strategy, the five foreign delegations of the Government play a key role as they add to the mission of representation and defence of our interests carried out by the representation offices in Alghero and Perpignan, thirty-five ACCIÓ offices, eleven Turisme de Catalunya offices, five offices of the Catalan Institute of Cultural Industries, four representations of the Institut Ramon Llull, one of the Catalan Employment Service and seven of the Catalan Development Cooperation Agency. Physical presence allows permanent contact with the political, economic, social and cultural reality as well as to forge direct relations with international organisations present in very relevant countries for Catalonia, as are UNESCO in Paris and the United Nations in New York.

Another public diplomatic strategy must be born in mind regarding the role of ICT in spreading knowledge and creating links between players, stakeholders and institutions all over the world. We need to deepen into experiences like the creation of virtual communities or the use of social networks in the internet as mechanisms to disseminate the image of Catalonia abroad.

Although the search of maximum synergies to project Catalonia to the world is a key line in the public diplomatic strategy of the Government, there is still another not less important item to be worked upon: agree on and single out the points defining Catalonia's image to settle all these items in a brand of its own.

A general country image has never before been defined in a structured and official way in Catalonia although many players have been able to create very powerful specific brands gathering largely recognised values and assets characterising our country.

It is in the light of this shortcoming that the Foreign Action Plan considers it essential that the Government fosters an analysis of the most reputed values abroad and those with the biggest capacity to project Catalonia, which should be done together with all players in the Government and civil society operating in this area. This is the only way to eventually build an architecture in which powerful brands such as Barcelona, tourism and Barça can be brought together.

The Foreign Affairs Commission asked Patronat Catalunya Món to lead the Catalonia Brand project. In 2010, the Patronat set up a very intensive working programme by which the Catalonia Brand Committee was created with the participation of public and private stakeholders and representatives from key strategic areas so this order could be carried out successfully. The technical direction of this project will be in the hands of a team of professionals from ESADE led by professor Josep M. Oroval, which ensures the stringency such a project demands.

Once a wide consensus is reached about the contents of this image, the Government will need to disseminate it with specific initiatives and count on the collaboration of all aforementioned stakeholders who will be the key players to ensure success.

All in all, I believe that the Foreign Action Plan and specifically the public diplomatic strategy set out and at which we are working intends to reorient by and by many actions that are being implemented, guiding them towards a more specific goal, setting priorities and encouraging participation of all those players working and fully

involved in Catalonia's international action to attract the maximum profit to the benefit of all. The world is one single market full of consumers, tourists, investors, entrepreneurs, cultural and sports events, media, governments, people, etc. Identity competitiveness is the identity of a nation, it is political and economic competitiveness, it is reputation and country image. This is why we need to work to play our role in this global market.

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<http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/Departament-de-la-Vicepresidencia/menuitem>.

