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Be My Guest: Nation branding and national representation in the Eurovision Song Contest

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Declaration

I, Albert Meijer hereby declare that this thesis, entitled "*Be My Guest*: Nation branding and national representation in the Eurovision Song Contest", submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the List of References. I hereby also acknowledge that I was informed about the regulations pertaining to the assessment of the MA thesis Euroculture and about thegeneral completion rules for the Master of Arts Programme Euroculture.

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Preface

The thesis that lies before you has been much contested. Whenever I was discussing my thesis with people in other fields than Cultural Studies, I felt I was trying to defend a topic which in the eyes of many was insignificant, silly even. The Eurovision Song Contest conjures up images of frilly dresses, bad singers and evil, mostly Eastern-European voters who seemed to disregard 'true beauty' (meaning the representatives of the Western-European countries from which the critical person was coming from) and would vote for atrociously glitzy acts from their own peripheral regions. Why on earth would I research what seemed like the most low-brow festival in the world: the Eurovision Song Contest?

I have to admit that I also had some doubts myself about my own decision to study this event. Unlike many Eurovision researchers, I can't call myself a true fan. I usually don't stay at home to watch the festival if there's something more exciting to do. However, since the beginning of writing this thesis, my opinion has changed: the Eurovision Song Contest might musically not always be my cup of tea, but it harbors a rich musical and performative diversity, with yearly performances that would light up the eyes of any cultural theorist with a hunger for semiotic sensations.

As a writer of a thesis on Eurovision, I found out I would have a right to a fan card to the 2012 ESC in Malmö, meaning access to dress rehearsals and fan/press areas. Coinciding with the festival was an academic conference, organized by Andreas Önnerfors at Malmö University. Although I hesitated to take advantage of this opportunity (as the event was scheduled to be only a couple of weeks before the first thesis deadline), I was very excited to experience the Eurovision Song Contest in Malmö. To actually go to the festival and discuss Eurovision with other academics was very inspiring, especially to see that other academics struggled with the same misconceptions about studying Eurovision, but still managed to passionately defend their excellent research.

I can't publish this thesis without first thanking some people who have been important influences on this work. First of all, I would like to thank my thesis supervisors, Kristin McGee at the University of Groningen and Benjamin Martin at the University of Uppsala, for guiding me through the process, encouraging my work and criticizing it where needed. I would've gotten lost without you. Secondly, I would like to thank my fellow Eurovision scholars in the Malmö conference for providing me with ideas, confidence and feedback, as well as inspiration: Saara Mero, Robbe Herreman, Andreas Önnerfors, Karen Fricker, Robert Tobin, Ivan Raykoff, Milija Gluhovic, Johan Fornäs, and other speakers and participants: many thanks. Thirdly, I'd like to thank my family, friends, fellow students and the Euroculture office for providing me with an endless array of coffee breaks and social gatherings. It's important to keep up a social

life when you spend most of your times in books or behind computer screens. Finally, I couldn't have dragged myself to the library every day without the music itself. All Eurovision songs might not be equally appealing to me musically, but it has been a joy and a pleasure to watch many wild Eurovision performances, battling it out to be the most unique, the most memorable and, sometimes, the weirdest. Thank you, artists of Eurovision, for providing me with your unique tastes in music and performance.

Introduction

Nation branding in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest

May 26th 2012 was a special day for Azerbaijan. In the capital Baku's Crystal Hall, which was specially built for the event, twenty-six acts performed their songs in the finale of the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC). Eighteen other acts had failed to qualify during the semi-finales earlier that week. The previous year, Azerbaijan's representatives Eli and Nikki had won the contest in Düsseldorf Germany, which granted Azerbaijan the opportunity to host the event in 2012. The twenty-six acts, all of them representing one of the participating countries, tried their best to wow the audience, each in a different way. While Albania presented a Björk-like performer called Rona Nishliu, exuding a more artistic aesthetic, Cyprus presented the viewers with a lighter pop song by the young performer Ivi Adamou. Ireland sent the energetic twins of Jedward to fight for the title, while Serbia tried to convey a more traditional sound with Zeljko Joskimovic's 'Nije ljubav stvar', or, in English, 'love is not an object'.

Some acts took the notion of 'representing their country' quite literally, using specific images to conjure up a certain image of their respective nation-states. Russia's Buranovskiye Babushki, consisting of six women, most of them elderly, combined their adorable grandmother imagery, along with their Udmurt folk-based choir singing style and a contrasting up-tempo dance beat with a decidedly traditional, folkloric image of rural Russia, by wearing a traditional Udmurt costume, consisting of embroidered red dresses, headscarves, golden necklaces and jewelry and shoes of woven reed over thick woolen socks. Romania, on the other hand, downplayed stereotypical representations of folkloric Romania[1], focusing more on a modern image with a Latin-American influenced performance, a 'Balkan Salsa' song, sung in Spanish. Finally, the winning performance, Sweden's Loreen with the song 'Euphoria', fit well within a brand of a modern, multi-ethnic[2] Sweden, emphasizing modern dance and an edgy image.

The show was a huge success for Azerbaijan, a country which is hardly even known by a large percentage of the European population. An age-old exporter of oil,

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[1] Such as the Transylvanian, transsexual aesthetics of the 2013 contestant Cézar
[2] Loreen is ethnically Moroccon

Baku is an important financial center of the Caucasus, but its fame doesn't stretch all over the world. In an article on Azerbaijan's role as a host of the 2012 event, German newspaper *Der Spiegel* describes Azerbaijan as an "often forgotten country"[3]. Over 64 million viewers tuned in to watch the finale of the Eurovision Song Contest; both semi-finales attracted almost 20 million viewers each.[4] This is a spectacular amount of people. Azerbaijan took full advantage of this media opportunity and chose to air little clips about Baku and Azerbaijan before each song in the finale. These 'postcard videos' often (but not always) tend to showcase the participating countries, but the Azeri broadcaster ITV chose to air videos that highlighted the treasures of Azerbaijan itself, branding it as 'the Land of Fire'.

Meanwhile, under the surface of the show's fiery glitz and glamour, the debate around the political situation in Azerbaijan too was heated. This seemingly apolitical event inspired some political debate, it seemed, as Swedish contestant Loreen met with human rights activists prior to the festivities. Critique focused on the government of President Ilham Aliev's arrests of peaceful demonstrators and the forced evacuations to make space available for the building of the Crystal Hall.[5] In a presentation on the 2012 event, Milija Gluhovic, co-editor of a new book on politics and identity of the 'New' Europe in Eurovision[6], showed a video published by *Change.org* that included shocking images of evacuations of locals in the area where the Crystal Hall was being built, as well as the arrests of peaceful protesters.[7] Despite these protests, Azerbaijan went ahead to promote itself as strongly as possible, investing in a festival that was glamorous and modern, presenting a nation brand of Azerbaijan as both modern and exotic through the 'Land of Fire' narrative.

Nation branding was important for Azerbaijan, as well as the participating

[3] "Powerful Pipes and Pipelins: Can Eurovision Burnish Azerbaijan's image?," *Der Spiegel Online* (15/05/2011), http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/powerful-pipes-and-pipelines-can-eurovision-burnish-azerbaijan-s-image-a-762622.html (14/06/2013).

[4] EBU, 'Over 100 million viewers watch Eurovision Song Contest 2012 final and semi-finals,' *EBU.ch* (Geneva: EBU, 2012), http://www3.ebu.ch/cms/en/sites/ebu/contents/news/2012/06/over-100-million-viewers-watch-.html (30/05/ 2013).

[5] Margarita Antidze, "Swedish Eurovision Star strays into Azeri rights now," *Reuters.com*, (25/05/2012). http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/25/azerbaijan-eurovision-idUSL5E8GP85U20120525 , (30/05/2013).

[6] Karen Fricker and Milija Gluhovic, eds., *Performing the 'new' Europe : identities, feelings and politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*. Basingstoke / New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd , 2013.

[7] Change.Org, "Video petition to participants of Eurovision 2012 Contest," *Youtube.com* (15/04/2012) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5H98dUwyHt4, (30/05/2013); Milija Gluhovic, "Sing for Democracy: Human Rights and Sexuality Discourse in the Eurovision Song Contest," Fricker & Gluhovic, eds. *Performing the 'New' Europe : Identities, Feelings and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (Basingstoke / New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd , 2013) [Proof Version], 194-217.

countries. Hosting the event gives a country the opportunity to present a specific nation brand, but there are other opportunities for those countries which only have a three-minute time-frame for their performance in presenting a national image. These performances are the main subject of this thesis. The main question is: <u>How do nation-states use the Eurovision Song Contest as a means of nation branding?</u>

To answer this question, I use three sub-questions. In the first chapter, I focus on the concept of identity: how does musical performance represent national and European identity in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest? In the second chapter, I study the translation of national identity into an image that should appeal to all of Europe, by creating a specific nation brand: how do nations use nation branding through culture as a tool to build an appealing image within the context of Eurovision? In my third chapter, I study the performance of these nation brands in specific cases during the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest: how is a nation-branded image performed in the Eurovision Song Contest?

The first two chapters of my thesis consist of an analysis of literature on identity and nation branding in combination with national representation in Eurovision. My third and last chapter consists of performance analyses of 2012 participants, focusing on performances from Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Montenegro, which in 2012 were some of the richest performances in terms of symbolism concerning national representation.

This thesis revolves around the concept of brand, in connection to national representation. The term 'nation brand' implies that nation is not only an "imagined community"[8], a collective identity construct bound to a political unity through the nation-state. Where there is a brand, there is a product. The term 'nation brand' then signifies a 'nation for sale' or, rather, a 'nation-state for sale', where the nation and all its symbols are used as if they were marketing tools. This includes the people of a nation themselves, whose images are in this way connected to a nation brand, positively or negatively. According to O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, "[s]tereotypes about the people of a nation can in fact arise from the association with their products"[9]. A second problematic aspect of nation branding as noted by O'Shaugnessy & O'Shaughnessy is that it seems impossible to capture the complexity of the nation-state into a simple

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[8] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London / New York: Verso, 2006), 6.
[9] John O'Shaughnessy & Nicholas Jackson O'Shaughnessy, "Treating the Nation as a Brand: Some Neglected Issue," *Journal of Macromarketing* 20:26 (2000): 57.

brand. "A nation's image has too many potential references for it to be anchored to a hard core of social facts, as is possible in the case of the brand image of a product"[10]. A third problem is that a brand strategy might only have limited power. Audiences will judge a country more on its merits and its political situation than on its marketing campaigns.[11]

In the case of Eurovision, I argue that there is a fourth problem concerning nation branding, a problem that lies within the field of production of a performance-as-brand. Eurovision performances are made by many actors. These actors don't necessarily incorporate nation branding strategies consciously into the making of a performance, although in some cases, which I will discuss later in this thesis, there are explicit nation branding strategies and bureaus behind some ESC performances. In this thesis, I use a broad definition of nation brand, not as something that is necessarily thought out by a marketing bureau, but as part of a possibly subconscious process of creating a performance of national representation, selected by national juries and/or audiences to represent the nation-state most appropriately to a foreign audience. Cultural sociologist Richard A. Peterson writes that there are many actors involved in creating such a performance. Culture is never the result of just one actor or network of producers, but is shaped by consumers, industry, and other societal actors.[12] This view on the production of culture as shaped by many actors is especially true in the case of Eurovision.

Performances are shaped by the artists themselves, by songwriters and lyricists, producers, musicians, choreographers, set and lighting designers, etc. They are created with the idea in mind that this is a representation of national culture, often incorporating cultural signs within the performance, so national culture plays a role. Of course the selection procedure itself has a huge impact on the representation of the nation-states, as national audiences and/or expert judges and the national broadcaster often choose their favorite in the competition, taking ideas on appropriate national representation into consideration. These selection procedures vary from country to country. Finally, the performances are shaped by audiences too: each viewer constructs meaning within the performance from his or her own viewpoint. All these actors make it hard to tell what the exact influence is of organizations concerned with nation branding, although some

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[10] Ibid., 60
[11] Ibid., 63
[12] Richard A. Peterson, ´The Production of Culture: A Prolegomenon,' *American Behavioral Scientist* 1976 19: 669. (London /Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications 1976), 672.

performances are specifically selected and shaped by these organizations, as I will discuss in the second chapter.

In this thesis, I focus on Eastern-European performances within the ESC, as debates on Eurovision and national representation always seem to be connected to existing power structures, often focusing on a divide between East and West. The contest originated in Western-Europe, but increasingly Eastern-European countries have successfully entered the contest, creating a perceived threat to Western-European countries. Karen Fricker sees this threat as a reason that some Western media, most notably in Great-Britain, have resorted to cynical humor in reporting on the festival. She connects the 'Eurovisionskepticism' in British reporting on the ESC to notions of crises in postcolonial collective identity, a Euroskepticism which reflects anxiety over an Empire lost, a Great-Britain that has to renegotiate its power position, facing perceived power loss in its membership of the European Union.[13]

This suggests that there is a discourse of Europe as divided between East and West, and that there is a power struggle that takes place within the Eurovision Song Contest. The ESC provides a chance for even the smallest countries to win over the politically (and also culturally) hegemonic powers of Europe. The event, which claims to be first and foremost apolitical, is indeed a playground for international rivalry, providing a possible stage for conflicts in a cultural instead of a political arena. I wouldn't go as far as to claim that this is an intended feature of Eurovision, which is extensively used by participating countries, but it does shed light on the dialectic between East and West that takes place there. To claim that nation-states are actively battling out cultural wars on the Eurovision stage is an exaggeration of both the power of the festival as well as the power of the nation-states in creating a performance. In the second chapter, I highlight the effects of this dialectic on representation of Eastern-European countries in the ESC.

Eurovision history

Before I go deeper into the subject of nation-branding in the Eurovision Song

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[13] Karen Fricker, ''It's Just Not Funny Anymore': Terry Wogan, Melancholy and the Eurovision Song Contest,' Fricker & Gluhovic, eds. *Performing the 'New' Europe : Identities, Feelings and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest,* (Basingstoke / New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd , 2013), [Proof Version], 54.

Contest, I first want to provide a brief history of the event. In the middle of the 1950s, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) started rallying countries for a light entertainment programme. The idea came from a committee, chaired by Marcel Bezençon, the Director-General of Swiss Television, to organize a song contest inspired by the San Remo festival. In 1956, the first 'Eurovision Grand Prix' was held in Lugano, Switzerland. Of the seven participating countries[14], it was host country Switzerland which could claim the title of being the first winner: Lys Assia, won, performing 'Refrain'.[15]

The following year, in an event hosted by West-Germany a new set of rules was introduced. The delegates forming the jury of each state could not award points to their own country anymore. In 1958, it was also decided that the winning country of the previous year should be hosting the event.[16] In the first years of the Eurovision Song Contest, the event was centered around seven Western-European countries. This changed when, in 1961, Yugoslavia joined the contest. Later, Israel (1973) Turkey (1975), Morocco (1980), several independent ex-Yugoslavian countries (from 1993 onwards) and a number of Central and Eastern European countries (including the Russian Federation in 1994) participated in the contest.[17] Where there were only seven countries in the first edition of the ESC, there were twenty-five participating countries in 1993; in 2012, the contest had grown to include forty-two participating countries.

The rules of voting were changed many times. Initially, each state sent its own judges, but in 1998, tele-voting was introduced. Around this time, in 1996, there were so many participating countries, that there had to be a pre-selection that gave access to twenty-three countries. A system was first developed in which countries that scored badly couldn't participate in next year's event; later, a semi-final system was introduced to give all performers a chance.[18] The famous '*douze points*' scoreboard system was introduced in 1975.[19]

A *Youtube*-compilation which lines up the winners from 1956 until 2010 shows some interesting trends.[20] The musical style changed from solo-performed, orchestrated ballads in the initial years to a wide range of genres, from Estonia's Tanel Padar and

[14] Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, West-Germany and Switzerland itself.
[15] N. Schwarm-Bronson, *Eurovision Song Contest: the Story* (Geneva: EBU/UER, 2001.), http://www.oocities.org/vaxi001/historyeurovision.pdf, (07/02/2013), 1.
[16] Ibid., 2.
[17] Ibid., 5-9.
[18] Ibid., 9.
[19] Ibid., 5.
[20] 'Eurovision Winners 1956-2010', *Youtube* (07/02/2013).

Dave Benton's Salsa song 'Everybody'(2001), to Finland's Lordi's metal-inspired 'Hard Rock Hallelujah' (2006) to Turkey's Sertab Ertener's Orientalist pop-fantasy 'Every Way That I can' (2003); the static singers developing into swinging chorus lines and highly choreographed dance routines; the change from native languages to, often, English; the shift from Western-European winners to 'peripheral' countries; the improving production value, cameras from every direction; lastly, of course, the outfits changed dramatically. The flowing dresses and neat suits of yore evolved into bright outfits in the eighties, oriental-inspired folk outfits and bizarre monster-costumes. It's remarkable to see the contest change over time.

These changes also reflect ideas on nation branding. The contest has always been a way to showcase nationhood. Ever since Dutch contestant Teddy Scholten sang her winning song 'Een Beetje' in front of a picture of a windmill in 1959[21], national and, sometimes, stereotypical imagery has played a role in Eurovision performances. In 1970, the introduction of performers was for the first time accompanied by a postcard video, in which the contestants were filmed in a national location. Irish winner Dana, for instance, was shown running around bridges, statues and monuments in Dublin.[22] These postcards added new opportunities for nation branding, in that they proudly showed the architectural and cultural highlights of the represented country of each performance, as well as highlights of the host country[23]. Although nation branding has, in some way or another, always been part of the festival, it only reached its height after the late 90s. A quick look at the winning performances of the last two decades showcases more connections to national folklore[24], stereotypical or exotic Self-representations[25] or performances of 'hypermodernity', which stress modern aspects of the national Self such as multi-ethnicity or queerness.[26] The focus of this thesis lies in these strategies of national representation and their possible connections to a specific nation brand.

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[21] Just like the other contestants, who each performed in front of a 'postcard' from their respective countries.

[22] 'Eurovision Winning Song Postcards (Part I)', *Youtube*, (27/07/2013).

[23] Such as in the 2012 event in Baku, Azerbaijan.

[24] Eg. Norway's Secret Garden (1995); Ireland's Eimear Quinn (1996); Norway's Alexander Rybak (2009).

[25] Eg. Turkey's Sertab (2003); Ukraine's Ruslana (2004).

[26] Eg. Israel's Dana International (1998); Estonia's Tanal Pader & Dave Benton (2001); Serbia's Marija Serifovic (2007).

Chapter One
National and European identity in the context of the Eurovision Song Festival

       The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) has changed much over time, but since its birth in 1956, it has always been a platform for national cultures to rival each other, a platform that gives a face to countries that many viewers only know through the performances they give on this broadly televised event. This chapter delves into the politics of these performances. How do they represent nation-states? And is there something to say for the claim that Eurovision is not only a representation of nation-hood, but also of a common European culture, even if it is only shared in its cultural diversity? How "Euro" is the Eurovision Song Contest?

       In academic debate, a common European identity is imagined as being culturally pluriform. The concept of cosmopolitanism, described and discussed by Delanty and Beck among others, is a way of thinking how a common European identity would ideally be: broad and inclusive of Others. The European Union tries to create such an identity, but it is not the only player in the field. The Eurovision Song Contest, organized by the European Broadcasting Union, might even be more active in the field of creating a common European identity. After all, the ESC is popular in most parts of the continent, and even outside of the continent; many millions of viewers watch the event every year, creating a certain type of bond with other viewers and fans all over the world which the European institutions could only dream of creating themselves. The sheer size of this community, however, is not necessarily a sign that this is a community that sees itself as a shared European community: people are still rooting for artists mainly because of their feelings of a nationhood which is represented by those artists. Still, in voting for a foreign artist, the festival creates international bonds, which are often criticized to be politically biased, but are nevertheless expressions of goodwill towards a different nation.

       The nation is central in the imagination of the Eurovision public: the scoreboard consists of country-names, not the names of the artists, even if they are doing the actual work. The performance they are giving is, to a greater or lesser degree, influenced by the nation-state they are representing. Cultural symbols and traditions have always played a key role in shaping national identities through narrating history and continuity

of the nation. The Eurovision performances are a yearly repetition of representing nations, be it in tune with national traditions and folklore, or not. There is always an imagined community which is inevitably part of the performance, even if it is only in the eye of the beholder, as she perceives the performance as a representation of a certain nation.

The centrality of the nation-state in the event points toward an obsession with nationality, but within the context of a competition between European nation-states in which mutual understanding and European cooperation are central values. Furthermore, many countries see participation in Eurovision as a means of getting involved in Europe culturally, paving the way for political and economic cooperation. In *The Telegraph* of May 19th, 2005, journalist Peter Culshaw writes:

> "Many of the countries in the old Soviet bloc have a particular affection for Eurovision, as it was the only such televised entertainment permitted in the old Soviet Union. Belarus, for example, sees Eurovision as a way out of its international isolation, and the entire country was caught up when they decided to enter for the first time last year. A Ministry of Culture spokesman said: "Participation in Eurovision is an excellent opportunity for a young state to establish a positive image and tell the world about itself."[27]

In the opening chapter of this thesis, I set out to answer the question: 'How does musical performance represent national and European identity in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest?' The keyword of this chapter is 'identity'. The Eurovision stage is a site of identity-formation as well as representation. In this chapter, I study this idea of identity, be it national or European, before moving on to how this identity translates into image (Chapter Two) and how it is actually performed (Chapter Three). To answer the main question of this chapter, I have divided it into three parts.

First, I study the process of national identity building, following ideas on nationalism and nation-building by Gellner and Hobsbawm and the concept of Anderson's 'imagined communities'. I take a closer look at the role of tradition and the part that cultural symbols and musical performance in Eurovision play in both representing and shaping national identities. Using Turino's study of participatory music in political movements and Bohlman's case study of Ukraine in discovering nationalism in musical texts, I argue that music and musical performance in Eurovision not only represent national identity, but are also part of nation-building processes.

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[27] Ivan Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe", in *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest,* ed. Ivan Raykoff & Robert Deam Tobin (Hampshire England / Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 7.

Secondly, I discuss European identity building and ideas surrounding cultural citizenship. How 'Euro' is the Eurovision Song Contest? The notion of cosmopolitanism as a common denominator for European culture, discussed by Delanty and Beck, points to a possible imagining of a common European identity, based on the European Union's idea of 'Unity in Diversity'. As an event that deals with European identity, but is not organized by the European Union but by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the Eurovision Song Contest is an interesting case of defining European identity by non-EU actors. I argue here that like national identity, European identity is a site of cultural identification that plays an important role in the dissemination of the Eurovision Song Contest.

In the third and final part of this chapter, I study how 'a-political', cultural contests such as the Eurovision Song Contest offer a nation-state the opportunity to discuss politics in a non-political arena. Through the Eurovision Song Contests, national performers and audiences can evaluate national, foreign or European politics, as is evident in many Eurovision performances and voting patterns. Taking these arguments together, I conclude by arguing that music and musical performance in the Eurovision Song Contest provide opportunities for processes of national and European identity-formation to take place.

1.1 The performance of national identity and the role of cultural symbols in the Eurovision Song Contest

Symbols are an integral part of nation-building. "[T]he use of symbols, flags, monuments is not a superfluous extravagance, a throw-back to a pre-rational age but a central component of identity creation and maintenance"[28], writes Schöpflin. One of the most known and most powerful of these national symbols is the precursor (and contemporary) of the Eurovision performance: the national anthem. As Hobsbawm and Ranger argue, "most of the occasions when people become conscious of citizenship as such remain associated with symbols and semi-ritual practices (for instance, elections), most of which are historically novel and largely invented: flags, images, ceremonies and

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[28] Schöpflin 29, as quoted in Paul Jordan, *The Eurovision Song Contest: Nation Branding and Nation Building in Estonia and Ukraine*, PhD thesis (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2011), 23.

music."[29] Anthems are part of the rituals of nationhood, and signify a national collective unity when performed, for instance, in World Cup soccer matches or in medal ceremonies at the Olympic Games, where the individual athletes are the proud representations of the nation-state. Music is a strong symbol of unity, in national groups as well as subnational and transnational groupings. But how strong is the power of music exactly? Can it really unite a nation? And can a popular equivalent of the national anthem, in this case a Eurovision song, be just as powerful?

1.1.1 Imagining the nation

Anthropologist and political scientist Benedict Anderson famously defined the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign"[30] . The idea of the nation as a "deep, horizontal comradeship"[31], regardless of the inherent inequality of most nation-states, is rooted in the ideals of 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité' of the French Revolution. It is also at the base of the emotional connection many citizens feel to their nations that makes them willing to die for their country.[32] The nation is an idea-made-reality, a socially constructed collective identity on which the nation-state has founded its sovereignty, with symbols, rituals and traditions strengthening an emotional connection between the members of the nation.

As eternal as nations often are imagined, the nation as the central institute of political sovereignty and as a central space for identification is quite a recent phenomenon. "Nationalism (…) is the child of the dual revolution"[33], writes Eric Hobsbawm in *The Age of Revolution* (1962), which refers to both the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution originating in England. It was in the context of rapid changes in the minds and lives of nineteenth century people that nationalism grew strong. The institutions of Church, King and Christendom started losing their grip. There was a need for a new institution: the Nation. As belief systems changed, there was a need for new meanings to give to life, a need for "a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together"[34].

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[29] EJ. Hobsbawm, Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, E.J. Hobsbawm, ed. & Terence Ranger, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12
[30] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London / New York: Verso, 2006), 6.
[31] Ibid., 7.
[32] Ibid. 6/7.
[33] E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962), 177.
[34] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 36.

As Hobsbawm mentioned, both the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution were responsible for many of the changes that people faced. Benedict Anderson discusses the role of capitalism. Calling Martin Luther the "first best-selling author *so known*"[35], Anderson traces back the origins of nationalism to the rise of print-capitalism early in the sixteenth century, when Luther translated the Bible into German, thereby creating the first monoglot mass-readership community. "What (…) made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity"[36].

Capitalism, then, played a profound role in creating a unified market based on a shared language community, which connected several smaller dialects into a wider language area, a standardized vernacular which people from a wide area would be able to understand, even if their own dialects were quite different. These wider areas offered a bigger market to which capitalist enterprises could sell their products. You would think that industrials would be the main instigators of a nationalism that created big, national markets. Hobsbawm, however, attributes a central role in the growth of nationalism not to industrials, but to a different group in nineteenth century life: the educated classes, a small but growing group of mostly students and 'new men' of the lesser gentry, lower and middle professionals in the administrative and intellectual strata. [37]

The middle-class nationalism of Hobsbawm, according to Marxist thought, would not be sustainable. Ernest Gellner says that in the minds of Marxist thinkers, "nationalism was doomed"[38]. Nationalism was a sustained state, built up by the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy, but without the support of the working class. These workers were mobile, nation-less, rootless and, most of all, exploited by the system, and if they employed any reason in judging their situation under nationalism, they would revolt. However, the Marxist thinkers, according to Gellner, "overestimated the power of reason"[39]. What Marxism overlooked was that human beings were much more complicated than the rational beings that they were thought to be. Gellner writes:

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[35] Ibid., 39.
[36] Ibid., 42/43.
[37] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, 165-169.
[38] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 148.
[39] Ibid., 148.

"Man is (…) the prey of his Dark Gods (…). The Apollonian illusions of the Enlightenment and its heirs are unmasked, and Dionysian reality stands revealed. Life and Reason are opposed. Without Dark Gods, life is grey: its mainspring is broken, its sources dry up (…). These dark atavistic gods include, apparently, the call of ethnic or territorial loyalty"[40].

Nationalism, Gellner says, is an idea that is supported by an emotional connection to ethnicity and territoriality amongst the people, even if it functions within a system that would, rationally speaking, be bad for the people. He says that nationalism is often mistakenly claimed to be natural.[41] Gellner, Hobsbawm and Anderson all agree that there is no naturally possessed 'nationality'. The feeling of belonging to a nation, however, does play an important role in the imagination of many human beings, and thus in culture and politics.

Gellner explains the important role of nationalism in modern culture by pointing towards the size of political units we live in. He says there is a clear link between the structure and size of the (political) community we live in, and the meaning we attribute to symbols and culture. In a small community, all relationships are well-known, which makes it less important to share strong cultural symbols to emphasize that this is a community: everybody *knows* that this is a community, as people in small communities know most or all other members. In bigger communities (like nation-states), most relationships between members are fleeting encounters, if existing at all. As Gellner states, "[t]his has an important consequence: communication, the symbols, language (in the literal or in the extended sense) that is employed, become crucial (…). Hence culture becomes of utmost importance"[42]. Culture in the nation-state, then, "does not so much underline structure: rather, it replaces it"[43].

The relationship between capitalism, power and nationalism which Hobsbawm, Anderson and Gellner describe, is evident in the Eurovision Song Contest. The performances on the Eurovision stage often signify a link to nationalism as well as the capitalist system in which nationalism came to fruition. Anderson's idea that nationality, nation-ness and nationalism are cultural artifacts[44] can be taken literally in the context of Eurovision.

Analyzing Eurovision performances as if their sole focus would be on signifying

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[40] Ibid., 149.
[41] Ibid., 150.
[42] Ibid., 155.
[43] Ibid., 155.
[44] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

nationalism would give insight in their function as cultural artifacts of the nation. In this view, a few similarities between nationalism and Eurovision come to the fore. Language, for example, has a similar role in the history of nationalism and in Eurovision. As a monoglot mass reading audience was created by print-capitalism[45], it laid the basis for national consciousness. Likewise, in Eurovision, language is one of the main signifiers of national consciousness, creating either a sense of belonging to the nation (where national languages are used) or to local (in case of local languages) or international (in case of the use of English or made-up languages, for example) communities. Gellner's focus on culture and cultural symbols as replacing rather than underlining the structure of bigger communities, leads to another interesting question: what exactly is the role of culture in shaping national identity?

1.1.2 The Role of Culture

Popular scholars have examined the function of art, culture, and especially music in shaping identity. In his book *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, Thomas Turino studies the correlation between power, collective identity and music. He finds that there is a strong link between music and political movements, not least as a tool for promoting a certain political agenda: "From Lincoln to Mao to Robert Mugabe, politicians in countless times and places have clearly understood and have effectively harnessed the iconic and indexical power of music to further their own pragmatic ends"[46]. These ends can be personal, but very often music was and is a tool for reaching unification. Turino discusses two cases, similar in the use of music in a political unification process, but radically different in what they stood for: the musical cultures of Nazi Germany and those of the American civil rights movement.

Earlier in his book, Turino discusses the use of music in creating a collective identity in several communities around the world in a positive way.[47] A later case study, the case of Nazi Germany, however, shows the dark side of musical unification. Turino points towards the political use of signs, and especially music as an important and highly symbolic tool which supported Hitler's seduction of the German populace. He refers to Gramsci's ideas of gaining and maintaining a hegemony position not only

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[45] Ibid., 43.
[46] Turino, *Music as Social Life*, 189/190.
[47] Ibid., 190.

through perceived good practice, but also through internalizing a political view through public imagery, discourse and education.[48] In the case of Hitler, this imagery is exemplified by swastika emblems on clothing and flags or the repetitive 'Heil Hitler'-salute. The repetition of these signs is of the utmost importance to internalize an idea, be it a political belonging to the Nazi party or, more innocently, in the context of marketing and advertising, of growing a positive feeling towards a certain product. Grouped together, these signs form 'indexical clusters', groups of signs that correlate organically into a semiotic field, which become stronger when they are repeated more often.[49] In national-socialism, music was an important part of these indexical clusters, often connecting several of the Nazi themes (blood, fighting, Anti-Semitism, love for Germany, etc.) together[50]. Songs were collectively sung at youth camps, meetings, political rallies, and in the army to create a collective bond. According to Turino, the indexical clusters that were formed by these songs were a powerful tool in creating a sense of a national-socialist community: "[t]hrough repeated performances, songs are an ideal vehicle for cementing new indexical clusters that typically involve the combining of iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs to link people's senses of the actual, the possible, and constructed symbolic abstractions"[51].

The case of the American Civil Rights Movement is similar in form, but very different in substance. In the early days of the movement, music was everywhere. It was a movement of sound, guided by hymns, gospels and spirituals, by leftist labor folk songs and, later, by soul and funk performances by artists like James Brown. "Almost all commentators suggest that mass singing was one of the primary forces that helped unite people to action and bolster courage in the face of white oppression and violence during the first decade of the movement"[52]. Turino describes participatory singing to suggest that these songs shaped a positive or a negative collective identity, as a powerful emotion-producing experience and/or an experience of unity.[53]

In no way do I want to compare the Eurovision Song Contest to Nazi Germany's

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[48] Ibid., 194.

[49] Ibid., 179.

[50] It is not surprising then that one of the first laws that were passed under the Nazi regime in 1933 was the introduction of the Reichskulturkammer (The Reich Chamber of Culture) which, under Goebbels, would expel Jews from musical positions, would ban 'entartete musik' (made by Blacks and Jews, of which jazz is the key example) and would promote German music, such as nazi-favourite Wagner, and attacking works by composers with Jewish blood, such as Mendelssohn (Turino 201/202).

[51] Ibid., 208/209.

[52] Ibid., 215.

[53] Ibid., 210; 217.

propaganda machine, and I do not want to suggest that the event has the same depth and power of the American Civil Rights Movement. Still, Turino's suggestions that songs do have a specific power to unite groups, to shape collective identities and can be used towards political ends are very relevant for the Eurovision Song Contest. According to Turino, "[s]ongs have the capacity to condense huge realms of meaning in an economical form through layered indexical meanings as well as the juxtaposition of varied ideas as indexical clusters without the requirements of rational ordering or argument"[54]. For a Eurovision performance, this offers opportunities to include information on identity and politics within a three-minute time frame. Musical texts tell stories about local experiences and can incorporate (sometimes several opposing) narratives about the nation. Music offers a synthesis of local experiences with shared memories and views, opinions and images of 'traditional culture' that imply a shared sense of cultural belonging, of community. In turn, this can lead to music functioning as an instrument of nationalism or, on the other hand, as an instrument in undermining nationalism.[55] It is the complex layering of different meanings in the simple form of a song that is crucial in understanding the politics of identity and national imagery in Eurovision songs.

Where Turino mentions several kinds of groups, this chapter focuses on one particular group: the nation, the imagined community upon which the nation-state is built. What is the role of cultural symbols, specifically musical performance (in Eurovision or elsewhere) in creating the cultural bonds that solidify the national community? As Gellner[56] describes, culture plays a very important role in the nation-state, as it is a substitute for face-to-face relations in smaller communities. In the nation-state, we don't know each other, so we need something else to connect to the other people in our community. Culture and traditions, then, tie the members of a nation together.

It is true that nationalist movements have often used culture and cultural symbols to stress a collective identity, especially symbols signifying an ancient folklore. "The self-image of nationalism involves the stress of folk, folklore, popular culture, etc. In fact, nationalism becomes important precisely when these things become artificial"[57].

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[54] Ibid., 218.
[55] Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett & Stan Hawkins, eds, *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity,* (Hants, England / Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2004), 3-5.
[56] Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 155.
[57] Turino, *Music as Social Life*, 162.

These images have played substantial roles in enticing people's imaginations to link to a collective, national identity. The grimmest example, of course, is the keen interest in folk culture and folkloric images of the national-socialist regime in Nazi-Germany.[58] In contemporary nationalist movements, folklore and tradition still play important roles, as is evident for example in the role of folklore in Serbian nationalist popular music, such as Serbian 'turbo-folk'.[59] Ernest Gellner claims that these folk movements are especially popular amongst those people who are culturally quite removed from the rural areas which they idealize, saying that urbanized people have more of a vested interest in staying linked to their origins.[60]

The images of folklore used in nationalist movements are an example of the use of traditions in constituting a certain identity, in this case a national identity. In some way or another, many of these traditions are invented. In the introduction to *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Eric Hobsbawm writes that the term 'invented tradition' includes traditions that are literally invented and purposely made into institutions, but also those which origins are more complex to pinpoint, but which have become institutions in a small amount of time. "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past"[61]. Traditions are invented by people, communities or institutions to accommodate change, to give a certain innovation real or invented roots in history, to make it seem natural. These actors formalize and ritualize new or existing traditions, through referencing to the past or just by imposing repetition.[62]

Hobsbawm states that inventing traditions is an important part of nationalist movements. Symbols, such as flags, anthems and emblems, are very important in creating a common identity: "The crucial element seems to have been the invention of emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership rather than the statutes and objects of the club."[63] A common language strengthens this identity, as it connects

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[58] As discussed in James R. Dow, ed. & Hannjost Lixfeld, ed, *The Nazification of an Academic Discipline: Folklore in the Third Reich* (Indiana University Press, 1994). In the last part of this chapter, I also discuss the role of (musical) symbols in national-socialism.
[59] As discussed in Robert Hudson, "Sons of Seduction: popular music and Serbian nationalism," *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 37-Issue 2 (2003): 157-176.
[60] Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 162.
[61] Hobsbawm, Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition,* 1.
[62] Ibid., 2-4.
[63] Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition,* 11.

all (or at least most) members to each other, and to the real or imagined forefathers.

The medium of music is a prime example of a symbol (or, rather, a cluster of symbols) creating a collective identity. Turino defines identity as involving "the *partial* selection of habits and attributes used to represent oneself to oneself and to others by oneself and by others"[64]. This set of habits[65] change in different situations (or at least, the habits we exhibit and value in those situations), and can change over time. When these habits of thought and practice are shared by a wider group of people, a certain culture is formed. Turino divides cultures into two levels: cultural cohorts, where specific aspects of the Self, such as age, gender, sexuality, race, occupation etc. are the main shared habit of thought; and broader cultural formations, which is when a group of people have several habits in common, without necessary belonging to the same cultural cohort. A nation is an example of the latter. A collective identity which includes individual identities that share certain habits of thought is necessary to form a nation-like bond.[66]

Musical practice is a way of actively sharing these habits of thought. "As public articulations framed to receive special attention, often the arts are key rallying points for identity groups and central to representations of identity"[67]. These representations are both consciously and subconsciously communicated; an American hip hop artist for instance may speak out about racial divides in treatment by the police, articulating an identification with the African American community, as a conscious communication; her musical genre as a representation of Black diaspora might (or might not) be a less conscious decision. Likewise, a Eurovision singer might consciously include orientalist musical signs in his performance, signaling a belonging to or identification with a belonging to an imagined 'Orient'; simultaneously, his style of movement and singing might subconsciously signal an over-masculine identity as reaffirming his heterosexuality in a competition which is often associated with queer culture.

Music, then, is a powerful tool in communicating belonging to a particular group, an affirmation of group identity, which can be used, for example, as a narrative device to inscribe a sense of national belonging. In an essay called 'The Nation in Song', Philip V. Bohlman, writes about the power of song in relation to nation-building,

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[64] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: the Politics of Participation* (Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 95.
[65] Turino's term 'habits' is closely related to Bourdieu's 'habitus' as a person's internalized dispositions and habits (Turino 120).
[66] Ibid., 106-112.
[67] Ibid., 106.

in his case, nation-building in Ukraine. He writes that "music narrates every nation in diverse ways, and (…) the power of music to narrate nationalism in varied forms arises from the vast array of genres that constitute national and nationalist musical repertoires and styles."[68] In narrating a nation, a song can create a stronger sense of nationhood. Bohlman points towards ancient songs, epic tales of great leaders leading a unified, collective people into greatness, songs that predated the modern nation-state, but which already expressed national aspirations.[69]

In the postcolonial twenty-first century, when nation-states slowly seem to lose their claim to power through the rise of globalization, there is a new increase in nationalist music, using new techniques of mixing and sampling. Bohlman argues that "[i]n the twenty-first century, music narrates the nation in hybrid forms, and musical genre moves across historical, geographical and linguistic borders, generating new processes of narration by mixing the old with the new."[70] In Eurovision, this is signaled by the rise of the use of national languages in performances after 2000.[71] International samples or styles are incorporated into performances, not to stress the international character of the nation, but to enhance local meanings and ideologies. In the case study of Bohlman, this is expressed in a Eurovision song by the Ukrainian group Greenjolly that expressed local meanings through an international style of music: hip hop.[72] Through identifying with African American hip hop artists, the members of Greenjolly wanted to point towards a common feeling of marginality, which stressed their local situation. However, this cosmopolitan assertion didn't help Ukraine to win the Eurovision: the song *Razom nas Bahato* finished at the bottom of the competition, at the twentieth position.[73]

1.2 European identity building & the idea of cultural citizenship

In the previous part, I have studied the processes of national identity-formation through the use of symbols and traditions. This part focuses on another space for

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[68] Philip V. Bohlman, "The Nation in Song'" in *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts,* ed. Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas & Andrew Mycock (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 249.
[69] Ibid., 253.
[70] Ibid., 258.
[71] Ibid., 259.
[72] Ibid., 259.
[73] Ibid., 262.

identity: the idea of being a citizen of Europe, or at least a citizen of the European Union. I aim to find answers for the question: how does musical performance shape and represent European identity in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest?

1.2.1 Inventing Europe

> "One of the most striking features of European identity is that the dynamics involved in its invention are not unlike the process by which regional identities were superseded by national identities in the nineteenth century (…) like nationality, it was also in adversity that the European idea emerged and was sustained more by conflict and division than by consensus and peace"[74] .

Gerard Delanty has written extensively on European identity. Inspired by the title of Hobsbawm and Ranger's *Invented Tradition* (1983), he wrote a book called *The Invention of Europe* in 1995. Just like national identity, Delanty says, European identity is not a natural state of being, but a culturally created idea, a construct with political motives. A construct, moreover, that is created to unify, but in fact is more divisive, and a product of a violent homogenization.[75] The question Delanty poses is if a positive, inclusive kind of European identity can exist: "can a European identity emerge as a collective identity capable of challenging both the cohesive force of nationalism and racism without becoming transfixed in either consumerism or the official culture of anonymous institutions?"[76]

Historically, the concept of 'Europe' was negotiated in terms of inclusion, but the discourse was also colored by exclusion and Othering. Is 'Europe' and European identity based on an exclusive European Union, or a Union based on participation and solidarity?[77] Or is this dichotomy central to the idea of European identity? Delanty writes:

> "Today, more than ever before, the discourse of Europe is taking on a strongly ideological character. In this transformation Europe becomes part of a hegemonical cultural discourse. Elevated to the status of a consensus, the idea of Europe, by virtue of its own resonance, functions as hegemon which operates to produce an induced consensus (…) with which a system of power can be mobilised"[78] .

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[74] Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (London, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: McMillan, 1995), vii.
[75] Ibid., vii.
[76] Ibid., viii.
[77] Ibid., 1.
[78] Ibid., 6.

The idea of inventing a collective European identity is connected to power structures. The Gramscian idea of hegemonic relations that Delanty mentions, conjures up the question: who are the main actors in the hegemonic relation in the European power structures which generate this identity formation?

There is a relation between identity and power, in the sense that a broader European project would gain more power if the European people would have a collective belief that they are a community. Thinking about 'broader European projects', the first thing that comes to mind is, of course, the European Union, but there are other projects that would gain from a stronger collective European identity: industrial enterprises profit from a common market with a common culture; media events such as Eurovision have a greater amount of viewers; the people themselves have more chances to move around; finally, even nation-states profit, arguably, from a broader European identity, as they can cooperate better with surrounding nation-states, resulting in peace, economic cooperation, a stronger common defense and common regulations on fields such as environmental issues, police investigations, research, etc.

In this context, the relation between capitalism, international media and Europeanization is especially interesting for this thesis. As mentioned before, Gellner (1983) already wrote that the rise of nationalism could not have happened without a culturally uniform mode of communication in an industrializing society. Europeanization, according to Delanty, is a very similar project. The only difference is the current lack of emotional attachment to Europe: not many people would die for Europe as readily as they would die for their country, for instance. The role of media and technology is a modern-day substitute for this emotional attachment, as it connects people in life styles instead of an inner emotional sense of community. "The new politics of Europeanism is very much a product of the media and is exhibited in life styles – food, advertising, tourism, satellite TV – and technocratic ideologies and not in the emotionalism of nationalism"[79].

A European identity fueled by international capitalism and media, then, is influenced by the pursuit of economic growth more than an inner sense of belonging. This can be valued negatively or positively. On the one hand, this influence means that the goal of European identity formation shifts from a first and foremost interest in human cooperation and peace-building to a goal which is mostly concerned about

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[79] Ibid., 8.

capital; on the other hand, this inherent capitalism does result in a wider cooperation which needs the inclusion of others to succeed. "Post-national Europeans do not see themselves as bearers of the whole, be it the totality of the nation or Europe, but as citizens whose identity is formed by their interests. If this is the case, then a European identity (…) could only be formed on the basis of intractable disunity and the democratic pluralism that this entails."[80]

If European identity is created through hegemonic forces, then, they would be based on a wide array of interests, coming from a pluralistic community. It is too complex for this research to go into the exact forces of European identity, the European Union and international capitalism, to really find out who creates a European identity. For now, it is sufficient to say that there are processes, both top-down from the European Union institutions as bottom-up from European citizens, which create a common European identity. If this European identity is becoming a reality, then who is identifying with it?

1.2.2 Cultural Citizenship

When speaking about a collective European identity, it is important to research who is included in this notion of Europe, and who is excluded from it. If the European community is so inclusive, then where is the border of Europe? And what defines a European citizen? Citizenship is first and foremost a legal term, and although some cases are contested, it is generally quite clear if someone is a legal citizen of Europe, or at least of the European Union. Citizenship is more complicated if we look at cultural citizenship, the notion of a shared European experience, a European identity which could be shared by all (or at least most) Europeans.

In 1964, Gellner wrote about the division between being a legal citizenship and a citizen in a broader, more cultural sense of the word. Proof of citizenship through a passport or ID card is only the minimal requirement of being a citizen, according to Gellner. "The real citizenship (…) is of course a matter of 'culture', of similarity in the tone of being, so to speak, of the manner of behavior and expression, etc."[81] If it's the case that citizenship depends on culture, then loyalties between community members

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[80] Ibid., 10.
[81] Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 157.

will also be expressed in terms of culture.

In a more recent publication, Nick Stevenson writes about the threshold between legal and cultural citizenship in the nation-state. Stevenson argues that even though culture is becoming more global, issues related to cultural citizenship are still mostly settled within the domain of the nation-state.[82] In earlier times, cultural citizenship was tied to national citizenship. Being a member of a nation automatically meant being a legal as well as a cultural citizen. In the modern world, however, there is a discrepancy between being a legal national citizen and being a cultural citizen.

This difference between being a legal citizen and being a cultural citizen has become clear in the context of the rise of globalization and immigration that many European countries have experienced. It is in immigrant populations that the concept of cultural citizenship plays a very important role in identifying (or not) with the nation, or even with the European Union. Immigration laws, as Gerard Delanty puts it, "are the crux of European identity"[83]. Immigrants and their (grand)children can be legal citizens of a nation, but can be excluded from cultural citizenship. According to Stevenson, inclusion of previously marginalized social groups and a cultural pluralism instead of domination of homogeneous cultures are central to the idea of cultural citizenship.[84]

Active citizenship could enforce social integration on a local level, but also on a European level. Delanty claims that to reach social integration and a collective European identity, there should be a focus on a new, culturally pluralist notion of citizenship, a cosmopolitan citizenship.[85] Instead of focusing on one homogenous community, the answer to true integration lies in accepting difference and including otherness. "[T]he focus of social cohesion shifts from consensus to the art of *coping with diversity and dissensus"*[86]*, write Jansen, Chioncel and Dekkers. According to Beck , the inclusion of Others can be reached by considering them as members of a universal humanity, not as second-class citizens.[87] He uses Delanty's idea of cosmopolitanism as "recognition of otherness, both external and internal to any society: in a cosmopolitan ordering of society, differences are neither ranged in a hierarchy nor dissolved into

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[82] Nick Stevenson, "Globalization, national cultures and cultural citizenship," in *Sociological Quarterly* 38 (1) (1997), 41/42.
[83] Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, 163.
[84] Stevenson, "Globalization, national cultures and cultural citizenship", 42.
[85] Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, 1.
[86] Th Jansen, N. Chioncel & H. Dekkers, "Social cohesion and integration: learning active citizenship," *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27:02 (2006): 191.
[87] Ulrich Beck, "The Truth of Others: A Cosmopolitan Approach," Trans. Patrick Camiller, *Common Knowledge* 10:3 (2004): 435.

universality, but are accepted.[88] Citizenship in the context of Europe then would ideally be of a post-national kind, defined by Delanty as citizenship "determined neither by birth nor nationality but by residence"[89], an international sense of citizenship that has loosened its ties to traditional ideas on culture and nationality, and is more based on the recognition of social rights, linking to cultural pluralism or cosmopolitanism, instead of assimilation.[90]

Looking inward to Europe, it is this idea of cosmopolitanism that should be the key field of identification for the citizens of Europe. European identity, according to Beck and Delanty, is a space which includes Others, both at its borders and its core. It's an identity where difference is not threatening the sense of commonality, but where it's the main point of identification itself: we are all different, but in our difference we are one. Cosmopolitan European identity exists in a world where national and global identities are still present, but it's located in a non-exclusive, international identity-dimension which is not contradictory to other identities.

1.2.3 European identity in the Eurovision Song Contest

European identity, like national identity, is a cultural construct, a feeling of belonging to an imagined community. European and national identities do not necessarily have to exclude each other: belonging to one group doesn't mean you can't belong to any other. In the Eurovision Song Contest, both spaces of identification, national as well as European, are being performed. As a competition between countries, it showcases national identity, but in its appeal to an international audience and in its discourse of 'Euro'-vision, a sense of cultural belonging to a transnational community can be felt. The idea of cosmopolitanism can play an important part in the event: in including several identities, and celebrating difference and similarities, the Eurovision Song Festival can be said to include Others. Differences between performances (not only of nationality and culture, but also of race, gender, sexuality, etc.) are central to the Eurovision stage, and can be valued positively as well as negatively by national audiences. How does the Eurovision event use these differences to communicate a common feeling of belonging to Europe?

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[88] Ibid., 438.
[89] Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, 162.
[90] Ibid., 162/163.

Discussing 'Europe' and European identity has almost become identical to discussing the European Union. Culture and identity indeed have become more central to EU policy since the 1980s. Since then, a cultural agenda was being formed, which was linked to an idea of European citizenship as a more cultural feeling of belonging than just a legal belonging.[91]

The Eurovision Song Contest is a showcase of a shared cultural experience which could easily exemplify the 'Unity in Diversity' EU ideals, were it not that it is organizationally not connected to the European Union at all. It is organized by a different Union, namely the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), based in Switzerland. It is more tightly connected to the Council of Europe, as members of these states are eligible for participation[92]. This includes countries such as Lebanon, Egypt, Lybia, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, of which only Morocco ever actually participated (in 1980).[93] Debates on Turkey's accession to the EU or where the Eastern border of Europe ends are much discussed in the European Union. In Eurovision, however, countries like Turkey, Russia, Israel and Azerbaijan are simply included in the event.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Eastern expansion of 2004 and the debates on and introduction of the EU Constitution, what Europe entails and what Europe means has changed and is ever –changing. "Eurovision (…) provides one context for re-examining the definition of "Europe" and notions of European identity in the new century. Modernity characterizes the ideal of post-war Europe to which the Eurovision Song Contest provides literal and figurative access: a society that is democratic, capitalist, peace-loving, multicultural, sexually liberated and technologically advanced"[94], write Raykoff and Tobin.

In the broadcasting of a smorgasbord of identities, the ESC communicates a common feeling of European Identity. It is uniting Europe in diversity, but it takes a different, more direct approach than the European Union. It is showcasing difference: many performances are over-the-top representations of nationhood[95], overt or covered

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[91] Clive Barnett, "Culture, policy and subsidiarity in the EU: from symbolic identity to the governmentalisation of culture," *Political Geography* 20:4 (2001): 405.
[92] H. Walraven & G. Willems, *Dinge-dong – Het Eurovisie Songfestival in de twintigste eeuw* (Amsterdam: Forum, 2000), 26.
[93] Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe", 2.
[94] Ivan Raykoff & Robert Deam Tobin, introduction to *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* by eds. Ivan Raykoff & Robert Deam Tobin (Hampshire England / Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), xviii.
[95] E.g. Turkey's Sertab Erener's Orientalist fantasy in 'Everyway that I can' (2003); Russia's Babushki Buranovskiye's folklore anthem remix 'Party for Everybody' (2012).

homosexuality[96] or camp capitalism[97]. These performances balance between representation of nationality and appealing to a wider, non-national audience. After all, it is not the Self, but the Other who is giving away the much coveted *douze points*. By appealing to foreign tastes, the Self is represented in a manner that might not necessarily be the most representative of the nation-state, but is more geared towards pleasing the taste of the Other.

1.3 Eurovision and Politics

Music can connect people; it can create an imagined bond between members of a nation or other group. In this light, the Eurovision Song Contest forms an ideal opportunity for these groups to represent their identity, be it local, national or transnational. But where identities are performed and celebrated, they can also develop political meaning. Although supposedly a-political, the Eurovision Song Contest stage has been used many times to fight out political issues. In this section, I ask: what exactly is the connection between Eurovision and politics? Both nation-states and the European Union are political realities that are, arguably, based on an invented and imagined collective identity. In the previous parts of this chapter, I have discussed the role of symbols and tradition in the identity-formation processes that take part in (and because of) these political institutions. In this last section of Chapter One, I argue that the Eurovision Song Contest offers a political playground, a stage on which identities are contested culturally, which is connected to larger political struggles and situations.

Much of the academic literature on Eurovision and politics, as well as popular debate is focused on voting patterns.[98] One of the popular complaints about the festival is that neighbor-states or entire blocks such as the 'Eastern Block' will often distribute most of their points to their political friends and neighboring nation-states. Although a clear pattern exists, many authors don't agree that voting is solely based on political

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[96] E.g. Serbia's Marija Serifovic's lesbian undertones in 'Molitva' (2007); The lesbian kiss at the end of Finland's Krista Siegfrids's 'Marry Me' (2013).
[97] E.g. Ukraine's Verka Serduchka's camp drag extravaganza in 'Dancing Lasha Tumbai' (2007).
[98] Victor Ginsburgha & Abdul G. Noury, "The Eurovision Song Contest. Is voting political or cultural?," *European Journal of Political Economy* 24: 1 (March 2008): 41–52; Marco Haan, Gerhard Dijkstra & Peter Dijkstra, "Expert Judgment Versus Public Opinion – Evidence from the Eurovision Song Contest," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 29: 1 (February 2005): 59-78; Gad Yair, "'Unite Unite Europe': The Political and cultural structures of Europe as reflected in the Eurovision Song contest," *Social Networks* 17: 2 (April 1995): 147-161.

ties. In his analysis of voting patterns, Yair refers to these blocks (giving prominence to the 'Western Block', which was still the dominant Eurovision area at the time of writing), but also less obvious 'islands of taste', where the voting outcome seems to be based more often on similar tastes instead of political ties.[99] In a more recent article, Ginsburgha and Noury argue that focusing on political alignments in determining Eurovision voting patterns is short-sighted, as the main determinants of success are actually quality of the participants and linguistic and cultural proximities between singers and voting countries.[100] Indeed, a shift from Western-European to Eastern-European winners has been shown in the last twelve years of Eurovision, but quality performances from non-Eastern countries still seem to be valued most in the voting outcomes.[101] Politics might influence voting, but not as much as many popular audiences seem to think.

A continuing trend in the Eurovision Song Contest which can be seen from the outset until recent times is that it's clear that this event is meant as light entertainment: the songs are composed to be entertaining, to make a good first impression. The Eurovision Song Contest is supposed to be just that: light entertainment, supposedly a-political. Still, the ESC and politics have had a long relationship. Ivan Raykoff writes, in the opening chapter of *A Song For Europe*, a collection of essays on the Eurovision Song Contest and politics, about the relation between the ESC and politics, and between the ESC and the European Union. "From its inception, Eurovision has seemed to reflect the political zeitgeist of Europe, even to anticipate certain political developments; the first contest (…) took place a year before the signing of the Treaty of Rome, which established the Common Market"[102].

The Eurovision Song Contest could be seen as an embodiment of ideals from the country in which its headquarters are based: Switzerland. Its goal is to be a neutral, non-political event, and to achieve unity and cooperation through a shared musical culture.[103] The supposed non-political nature however stands in stark contrast to the actual situation. The smiles on the faces of the performing artists cannot conceal what everybody is thinking: that the Eurovision Song Contest is a highly politicized event, a

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[99] Gad Yair, "Unite Unite Europe", 158.
[100] Ginsburgha & Noury, "The Eurovision Song Contest", 41.
[101] The last 12 winners in order of time from 2001 until 2012 have been: Estonia; Latvia; Turkey; Ukraine; Greece; Finland Serbia; Russia; Norway; Germany; Azerbaijan; Sweden, which is a diverse group of countries from all over (and, arguably, outside of) the continent.
[102] Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe", 1.
[103] Ibid., 2/3.

unique opportunity for nation-states to rival and judge each other without any serious consequences.

A short look at the history of the ESC shows many political events coloring the contest: countries giving political allies higher points, or no points at all to political adversaries; countries receiving little points from everybody supposedly because of political actions[104]; political protests at the festival[105]; language choices[106]; subliminal messages in performances[107]; boycotts of the festival[108]; performances banned by the EBU for being too political[109]; censorship practices[110]; and political threats.[111]

To prevent political interference, the European Broadcasting Union decided to accord membership and voting rights only to national broadcasting organizations instead of governments. Still, according to Raykoff, ideology was "a significant motivation during the 1950s, EBU's formative year […]. The development of Eurovision illustrates media technology's relationship to modernity and democracy and how it can serve as a catalyst for political transformation"[112]. The early Eurovision Grand Prix's cutting edge image and the modern technology associated with it, combined with a function as a friendly, international playground, made it an alluring tool for countries to experiment with international cultural politics. The EBU, however, reserved the right to revise or reject song if it was too politically colored, although some songs cleverly masked revolutionary subtexts in easy-listening love songs.[113] Some songs even pointed towards European institutional cooperation, such as Britain's *I Belong* (1965) which was written after Britain's denied position in the European Common Market, predating ascension to the European Community in 1973; the 1990

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[104] Belgium's single point score in 1961 was supposedly due to international critique on the situation in its former colony Congo; the zero points the UK received in 2003 was credited to opposition to UK involvement in the Iraq war, Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe", 8.

[105] Examples are the demonstrator protesting against Franco at the 1964 festival in Copenhagen, or, more recently, Sweden's participant Loreen criticizing Azerbaijan's human rights situation.

[106] The Spanish ban on Joan Manuel Serrat who wanted to sing in Catalan, comes to mind.

[107] Some of Portugal's participants, for example, includedAnti-Salazar lyrics. In the case of Ary dos Santos' *Tourada*, this eventually led to the incarceration of the Portuguese singer

[108] Greece boycotted the 1975 festival in Turkey, Turkey supposedly boycotted Israel in 1979.

[109] Georgia's 2009 performance of the song "We Don't Wanna Put In" by the group Stephane & 3G was deemed too political in referencing Putin and was told to change the lyrics. Georgia didn't want to amend the lyrics and decided to withdraw from the competition.

[110] Jordania, a broadcaster of the festival, replaced the 1978 performance of Israel with a three-minute, silent viewing of a picture of flowers. Eventually the Israeli contestants Izhar Cohen & Alphabeta won with their song *A-ba-ni-bi*, prompting the Jordanian broadcaster to replace the end of the festival abruptly by showing an American film.

[111] The IRA, for example, threatened to kidnap artists in 1971 and to disrupt the festival in 1993; Walraven & Willems, *Dinge-dong,* 139-142

[112] Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe", 3/4.

[113] Ibid., 5/6.

winning song, Italy's 'Insieme: 1992' ('together: 1992) is perhaps the best example of a literal connection to European Union politics, as it is a song which looked forward to the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht.[114]

The event has a longstanding relation with the European Union, although never an official one. Ivan Raykoff explains the ties between European Union politics and skepticism towards the Eurovision Song Contest:

> "Placing Eurovision alongside the history of the European Union clarifies some of the aesthetic contradictions of its reception – that is, why certain countries regard the contest with indifference or disdain while others take the enterprise more seriously, even if they also have some fun with it. […] The six countries that participated in the first ESC and signed the Treaty of Rome tend to be among Eurovision's main skeptics […] Perhaps French and Dutch voters rejected the new European Constitution in 2005 not only over worries about "the Polish plumber and the Latvian mason" taking their jobs, but because East Europeans had been stealing the ESC in recent years as well"[115].

In fact, countries that joined the European Union at a later time, such as Sweden and Austria, are more enthusiastic about the event. Nowadays, Eastern European countries are outdoing everybody, precisely because they have most to gain from good connections to Europe.[116] Mark Booth's conception of camp is interesting in this context. Booth argues that "camp is primarily a matter of self-representation rather than of sensibility"[117]. According to Raykoff, this means that as a performative practice, camp, a word often used in describing Eurovision performances, is connected to rearranging power structures and values, satirizing and parodying European power relations between the center and the periphery.[118] Raykoff studies the cases of Britain (a country which mocks others through frustrations what margins have more power in the context of the ESC), Norway (which mocks itself, abdicating any pretentions to power), Germany (which is indecisive about being banal or serious in its performances) and Israel (with transsexual winner Dana International (1998) a 'campy overvaluation of the marginal').[119]

Raykoff, then, claims that Eurovision and the European Union are very much intertwined. "Eurovision […] seems peculiar to the European context, where it serves as a popular-culture mirror to the unique political experiment of the European Union. The

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[114] Ibid., 4-6.
[115] Ibid., 6.
[116] Ibid., 7.
[117] Mark Booth, *Campe-toi,* 69, as quoted in Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe", 8.
[118] Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe", 8.
[119] Ibid., 9-11.

ESC's many contradictions reflect the many types of marginality that still define national and cultural identities across the continent today"[120].

1.4 Conclusion

Both idea and reality, the nation is fueled by symbols and traditions. Culture, symbols and traditions tie the members of a nation together, as they all appeal to the shared habits and experiences of the community. Music plays an important part in this identity-formation. From a historic perspective, it is clear that nations are continuously shaping and re-shaping identities. Anderson's 'imagined communities' have become institutions, after the institutions of yesteryear (Church, King, Christendom) have lost their grip since the dual revolution that Hobsbawm mentioned. In shaping a nation, music collects symbols into indexical clusters to narrate the nation, which, according to Philip Bohlman, happens in hybrid forms. It is clear that the medium of song asserts great power in shaping a collective identity. Turino's idea that the repetition of indexical clusters in (musical) culture has a profound effect on the processes of internalizing habits of thought in individuals points towards the use of musical culture as a means of reaching political ends, be they nefarious or benign. Global cultural symbols are recontextualized into songs that express local meanings. In this chapter, I argue that music plays an important role in nation-building processes. The Eurovision stage creates an opportunity for artists representing their countries to perform symbols of nationality and nationalism.

Like national identity, European identity too is a space of identity which is representing and creating a sense of belonging through the Eurovision Song Contest. European identity is often tied together with the concept of cosmopolitan cultural citizenship as discussed by Delanty and Beck, who say that cultural citizenship in the European Union is not (or rather, should not be) tied to a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural, mono-national idea of citizenship. Delanty points out that, like national identity, European identity is a construct, which may or may not be based on exclusion and Othering at times.

European identity in the Eurovision Song Contest is constructed in a peculiar,

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[120] Ibid., 12.

yet effective way. Each nation-state gets a chance to present itself in whichever way they want, but they have to appeal to a broader European public to win the competition. The participating countries are picked on a very broad, inclusive idea of Europe, including non-European Union countries like Russia, Turkey and Israel. These countries do not have to be part of the European Union: they only need to be members of the European Broadcasting Union. In participating in the Eurovision Song Contest, these countries on the borders of Europe get a chance to imagine themselves on a shared European stage as part of the European community.

In offering a platform for the performance of cultural identities, be they local, national or transnational, the Eurovision stage can also be used to perform *political* identities. The Eurovision Song Contest offers a political playground, where the contestations between identities are fought out in a cultural setting, but with political undertones and consequences. In the case of Eurovision, meaning is remarkably often politicized in an event which is supposed to be a-political. Many performers in the past have taken advantage of the politial function of the Eurovision stage, performing songs of dissent as well as songs cheering for European unification. Although voting patterns seem to be based mostly on cultural taste instead of political ties, it is hard to look at a Eurovision performance and not place it in a political context. As the event is a display of nationality as well as a celebration of a united Europe, topics which are most often discussed within a discourse of politics, it is difficult to treat the ESC as a cultural vacuum without any ties to political reality.

In answering Chapter One's main question, 'how does musical performance represent national and European identity in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest?', I argue that music is a powerful tool in both creating and representing a common sense of belonging. As Turino says, "[s]ongs have the capacity to condense huge realms of meaning in an economical form through layered indexical meanings as well as the juxtaposition of varied ideas as indexical clusters without the requirements of rational ordering or argument"[121]

I argue that a-political cultural contests such as the ESC are an important part of both creating and representing national and European collective identities. They literally offer a stage for national identities to present themselves. Despite being mainly meant as light entertainment, the musical performances in the Eurovision song contest create

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[121] Turino, *Music as Social Life,* 218.

an image for the nation-state, an international exchange of culture, to be viewed by millions of people as well as a playground for political discussion. In the next chapters, I aim to find out how nation-states are dealing with this power. How do they use the Eurovision Song Contest to brand their nation?

Chapter Two

Translating Identity into Image: Culture as a Tool for Nation Branding in the Eurovision Song Contest

The 2004 Eurovision Song Contest hosted in Istanbul, Turkey, was won by Ukraine. Singer Ruslana and a set of long-haired dancers, all dressed in bearskins and leather, sang and danced their way to the top. Their song "Wild Dances" was the first win for Ukraine, a country which only started participating in the ESC the year before. The performance was based on traditions, clothing and music of the Hutsul-people from the Carpathian region of Western Ukraine[122]. It was remarkably exotic in its representation of Ukraine, mixing modern-day music with age-old Hutsul dancing styles, exotic outfits and traditional musical instruments, such as the Surma horn. Interestingly, this was not just a coincidental idea of the writers and artists of the song. It was part of a deliberate marketing strategy to brand Ukraine, selected by the Ukrainian PR and government relations firm CFC Consulting,[123]

The first chapter of this thesis dealt with issues of identity. The Eurovision Song Contest as a cultural event offers a platform to negotiate European identities, where these identities are defined mostly in terms of nationally, but also constituted as part of a larger European identity. This second chapter will depart from these identity issues, discussing the concept of image. The collective identities from the first chapter are now defined in the context of a cultural stage, geared towards an international audience. How do nations translate their complex identities into a single national image like the one presented by Ruslana's performance, a brand of the nation that can attract tourists, foreign investors and political goodwill?

To study this transition from identity to image, I use the concept of nation branding. The main question of this chapter is: how do nations use nation branding through culture as a tool to build an appealing image within the context of Eurovision? I use the word 'appealing' in the sense that the image should appeal to tourists and foreign investors, as well as generate political goodwill. I use the term 'image' as a

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[122] Catherine Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves: Simulation, Essentialization, and National Identity at the Eurovision Song Contest, " *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 6: 3 (2008): 175;

[123] Gennadii Kurochka, *CFC Consulting Company: Official Promo Partner of Eurovision Kyiv 2005*, (Kyiv: CFC, 2005), 4.

means of communicating identity to an outsider. In the case of Eurovision, it means the representation of identity to an international, mostly European audience, through the medium of musical performance. This 'image' is not the same as identity, as it is less concerned with creating a feeling of collective belonging, but more about representing the Self to external Others. It's created in part deliberately, but also partly unconsciously. It consists of the input of the creators of the performers (artists, songwriters, producers, and in a wider sense, the culture in which the performance was created) as well as the possible interpretations of the audience. It is important to note that this image is not performed as a simple, one-dimensional text. The image is performed and received through many layers, visual, aural as well as lyrical.

The notion of image is strongly connected to the idea of nation branding, which is the 'selling' of a nation through its image to an audience of foreign investors and tourists. As I mentioned in the introduction, the term 'nation branding' has some problematic aspects. O'Shaugnessy & O'Shaughnessy mention that nation brands are connected to stereotyping of national communities; that it seems impossible to capture the complexity of the nation-state into one simple brand; and that brand strategies have limited power, as audiences will rather judge a country on its political merits than on a specific marketing campaign. [124].

For a relatively new term, nation branding has become an important subject of writing in recent academic discourse. Many journal articles, books and essays have researched the Power of the Nation Brand, mostly in the field of Marketing Studies, but also in other theoretical fields as political science and cultural studies. Here, this idea that a nation is something to sell, with a slogan, commercials, and attractive images, directed at tourists as well as foreign investors has gained currency. In 2002, it was the subject of a special edition of the *Journal of Brand Management*, and in 2005 it was listed in *The New York Times* magazine "Year in Ideas" issue as one of the most prominent and thought-provoking ideas of the year.[125]

In 2003, Keith Dinnie surveyed academic writing on nation branding to date. He found a strange disconnect between place branding researchers and national identity literature. Researchers seemed to ignore the cultural, social and political contexts in

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[124] O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, "Treating the Nation as a Brand". 57-63.
[125] Nadia Kaneva, "Nation Branding: Toward an Agenda for Critical Research," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 117.

which the determinants of origin image perceptions were grounded.[126] Eight years later, Nadia Kaneva undertook a similar study of academic writing on the subject. By then, the discourse was still led by marketing specialists, but she noted a recent increase of interest from the fields of political science and cultural studies, placing nation branding in a more sociological, political and cultural context. Kaneva divides the discourse into three separate, but sometimes overlapping approaches: the technical-economic approach (studies concerning conditions for economic growth, capital accumulation and efficiency); the political approach (studies concerning the impact of national images on the participation of nation-states in a globalized world of international relations); and the cultural approach (studies concerning the implications of nation branding for national and cultural identities).[127]

I structure this chapter partly by using Kaneva's distinction between the fields of studies, starting with technical-economic approaches (which is the bulk of writing on the subject), then moving on to political and cultural implications of nation branding. I start by discussing, amongst others, Simon Anholt and Wally Olins, whom Kaneva calls 'the founding fathers of nation branding'[128] and looking into general writing on nation branding. In the second part, I discuss scholarly writing on the political implications of nation branding, with a focus on the notion of soft power (a term coined by Joseph Nye) within a context of globalization and transnational flows of images described by Appadurai. In the third and final part of this chapter, I examine the role of culture as part of a nation brand. Here, using specific case studies by scholars including, amongst others, Bolin, Baker, Solomon and Miazhevich, I will focus on writing on the Eurovision Song Contest as an event that offers opportunities for nation branding and the implications of this event for representing a national image. I conclude by putting the technical-economic, political and cultural approaches into perspective to ascertain which strategies nations employ to build an appealing image within the context of the Eurovision international cultural event.

2.1. Technical-economic approaches to nation branding

The term 'nation branding' was coined by Simon Anholt in 1996, although he

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[126] Keith Dinnie, *Place Branding: Overview of an Emerging Literature*, 2003, http://www.centrefornationbranding.com/papers/Dinnie_PB_litreview.pdf (03/03/2013).
[127] Kaneva, "Nation Branding", 119/120.
[128] Ibid., 117.

now prefers the term 'competitive identity'. Anholt is an independent policy advisor who, in 2009, received the Nobel's Colloquia Prize for Economic Leadership for his work on nation branding. In his book *Competitive Identity*, Anholt discusses how nation brands are formed and can be changed. Who controls a nation's reputation? According to Anholt, most reputations are first and foremost made up by stereotypes, created because most people don't have time to investigate the specific qualities of all nations in the world: "When you haven't got time to read a book, you judge it by its cover"[129] As these stereotypes are not always positive, many nations want to change their image. This process might not be as easy as they think, according to some marketing professionals, who say that every place has an image, but "unlike brand or corporate images, *those of nations and other places are not directly under the marketer's control.*"[130] Still, a growing number of governments are setting up nation branding programmes to attract both tourists and foreign investors.[131]

Governments and national institutions are not the sole actors in changing a nation's brand: other stakeholders include tourist and trade offices, industrial actors, sports and cultural bodies, etc. The cooperation and coordination of these stakeholders in improving a nation's brand is the key to a successful nation brand or competitive identity, according to Anholt, who defines the term as following: "Competitive Identity (or CI) is (…) the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion."[132] Goals of a competitive identity strategy include a clearer domestic agreement on national identity; more innovation; more effective bidding for international events, investment promotions and tourism; gaining a healthier 'Country of Origin-effect'; gaining a better profile in international media; simpler accession to international boards and public diplomacy; and more productive cultural relations with others.[133] Moilanen and Rainisto add one of the effects of nation branding to this list: strengthening national identity and increasing self-respect amongst citizens.[134] A competitive identity strategy will not work if the policies and behavior of

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[129] Simon Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions* (Houndmills/ Basingstoke/ Hampshire/ New York: Pallgrave MacMillan, 2007), 1.
[130] N. Papadopoulos and L. Heslop, "Country equity and country branding: Problems and prospects," *Journal of Brand Management* 9: 4-5 (2002): 295.
[131] Ibid., 302.
[132] Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 3.
[133] Ibid., 28/29.
[134] Teemu Moilanen and Seppo Rainisto, *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations: A Planning Book for Place Branding* (Houndmills/ Basingstoke/ Hampshire/ New York: Pallgrave MacMillan, 2009), 11.

a certain nation-state are not 'good enough' to market in the first place.[135] In the case of Eurovision, this means that a certain nation can win and host the event in the next year, but this does not necessarily change the way we feel about a country if the politics of a country are against our beliefs.

Initially, Anholt only used the term 'nation branding' with regards to the 'Country of Origin Effect', which is the effect of a nation brand on the image of products that claim to be from that country.[136] Now, the term is more broadly defined as having an effect on tourism, industry as well as playing a major role in public diplomacy.

According to Anholt, there are many stakeholders involved in creating a competitive identity, coming from governmental, industrial and private spheres of the nation's community. The trouble with having so many cooks dishing up a nation brand is that they'll spoil the broth. It is hard to have a sense of direction when everybody is trying to sell something else. To prevent this, Anholt first defines the six main actors in influencing a nation brand and then goes on to discuss how these should cooperate. Anholt's defines the six actors (or communication channels) as tourism, brands, policy, investment, culture and people.[137]

One of the nation-state's most important communication channels, according to Anholt, is the people. As a huge body of individuals of which a part will travel and meet foreign people, they have enormous power to represent the nation. Anholt sees it as vital for this type of communication that the people are proud of their nation, in order to sell its brand:

"I would claim that the first and most important component of any national CI strategy is creating a spirit of benign nationalism amongst the populace, notwithstanding its cultural, social, ethnic, linguistic, economic, political, territorial and historical divisions."[138]

This seems to be a peculiar situation: competitive identity fueled by nationalism,

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[135] Anholt, *Competitive Identity,* 64.

[136] I came across an extraordinary example of this effect of a nation's image in selling products when I was in Osaka, Japan. On my bicycle, I noticed a store which sold cars of a German brand. To market these cars to the Japanese public, they used the slogan 'Wir leben Autos', a phrase I doubt that even 1% of the population would understand in a country where most people have a very limited knowledge of any foreign language. The slogan is not about the words, then, but about the language itself: if it's recognizable as German, then the image of a safe, reliable Germany will sell an image of German *cars* as safe and reliable.

[137] Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 26.

[138] Ibid., 16.

benign or not. Nadia Kaneva criticizes Anholt and other scholars who take a technical-economic approach, saying their approach "unapologetically espouses a form of 'social engineering' that allows elites to manipulate national identities. It ignores relations of power and neglects the implications of nation branding for democracy."[139] Anholt even speaks about including traditions: a nation brand should build on traditions, or even invent them: "one can *build* heritage, *invent* attractions, *make* a place magnetic."[140] With these words, nation branding becomes like a nation building project, which could easily be compared to Hobsbawm's notion of inventing traditions and symbols.[141]

Wally Olins, one of the most important practitioners of city and nation branding, sees many similarities between brands and nations, stating: "[…]any brands help to create a sense of identity, of belonging: just like the nation."[142] He encounters much critique from people that don't want to see their nation as a brand. They claim that nations are unchangeable, immutable, as opposed to corporations which are ever changing, merging, rebranding and reinventing themselves. Olins counters these criticisms with the example of France: since the eighteenth century and the French Revolution, France has changed its flag, its anthem, its measure system, its calendar, etc.[143] He furthermore conflates branding with nation-building, saying that branding has played a crucial part in the process of building a nation. Calling Bismark's Germany a 'Kaiserdomm'; Renaming ex-colonies; Atatürk's changed alphabet, clothing, ethnic cleansing, renaming of the nation and secularist policies: these are all examples of branding, according to Olins. [144] In a way, the emphasis on nationalism in nation branding seems logical. If a company has to sell its product, it needs to believe in itself, project a certain pride. However, a country is not a single product and a democratic government is in many ways very unlike a company. The term 'branding' implies that nations are reduced to a commodity.

Ying Fan asks the question of what exactly is being branded in nation branding. He starts by defining the nation as a "large group of people of the same race and

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139 Kaneva, "Nation Branding", 121.
140 Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 104.
141 E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition,* 1-14.
142 Wally Olins, "Branding the Nation: the Historical Context," in *Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition: Second Edition,* ed. Nigel Morgan, Annette Pritchard and Roger Pride (Oxford / Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann, 2004), 25.
143 Ibid., 18/19.
144 Ibid., 21/22.

language"[145], following an entry in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* from 1995. This definition seems outdated, as it refers to essential characteristics such as race and language to define the nation. In a postcolonial discourse, it might even be offensive to use this exclusive definition of a nation. Whatever the definition of nation he uses, Fan's working definition of nation branding is practical and useful: "Nation branding concerns applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image."[146]

Fan stresses that nation branding is not the same as product branding. It's in fact very different. A product brand is promoting a tangible, well-defined product or service, with a simple and clear image to promote sales, and with a clear intended audience and a single owner. A nation brand, however, isn't offering a single, simple product. Its product's attributes are difficult to define; its benefits are mostly emotional, intangible, ephemeral, and not functional; its image is a collection of multiple images, which each are changing, with diverse associations; it is not promoting sales, but its purpose is to promote a national image; there are multiple stakeholders and, finally, the audience is diverse and not well-defined.[147] In short: a nation is not a product, and by trying to sell the nation as a product, governments and industries have to be very careful.

Fan sees four main problems with nation branding: it is difficult to define; therefore it is difficult to attach one simple image or message to the nation brand that does not erase the old unique culture it possesses; the time dimension of a nation brand is important, in that it is a changing entity with different values attached to it in different points in history; and finally, it should not only focus on an external audience, but also to the domestic population: is the image oversimplifying and offensive to the nation itself?[148]

A nation brand is difficult to change. Stereotypes are more easily formed than broken down and it takes a lot of time to change the image and brand of a nation.[149] Besides, focusing solely on the nation seems to be outdated in times where local, regional and global identities are equally important. In the next part of this chapter, I will contextualize nation branding in the age of post-nationalism and globalization, and

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[145] Ying Fan, "Branding the nation: What is being branded?," *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 12:1 (2006): 5..
[146] Ibid., 6.
[147] Ibid., 7.
[148] Ibid., 9-11.
[149] Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 47; Paradoupolos & Heslop, "Country Equity and Country Branding", 300.

focus on the politics of nation branding. How does nation branding try to affect a nation's political strategies?

2.2 The political function of nation branding: soft power and cultural flows in a globalized world

Strategies of nation branding have many political implications. The political function of nation branding in spreading goodwill and strengthening political cooperation is increasingly becoming an important idea and reality in international politics. Simon Anholt calls his competitive identity "the quintessential modern exemplar of soft power."[150] He claims that public diplomacy has changed from private political arrangements (such as the Yalta Agreement) to national project that is shaped by all sectors that deal with a national reputation, such as embassies, cultural bodies, trade and tourist offices and national policies.[151]

Anholt seems to overestimate soft power, saying that it will ultimately replace hard power. In the conclusion of his book, he states that competitive identity might eventually lead to world peace.[152] Peter van Ham shares this optimism, claiming that nation branding as a collective identity construction is a less dangerous alternative to modern nationalism and will eventually supplant it.[153] Scholarly writing on the political side of nation branding ranges from seeing nation branding as a new type of propaganda to a ""post-ideological" form of reputation management for nations."[154]

The term 'soft power' was coined by Joseph Nye. He describes soft power as the power to persuade and attract, as opposed to hard power, which works through coercion and payment.[155] Where hard power is derived from force, payments, sanctions and bribes, soft power rests on the work of institutions, the sharing of (political) values and policies and, most importantly, the power of culture.[156] When other nations think

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[150] Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 127.
[151] Ibid., 12.
[152] Ibid., 127.
[153] Peter van Ham, "The rise of the brand state: The postmodern politics of image and reputation," *Foreign Affairs*, 8: 5 (2001): 3, quoted in "Nation Branding: Toward an Agenda for Critical Research" by Nadia Kaneva, *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 126.
[154] Kaneva, "Nation Branding", 126.
[155] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 2.
[156] Ibid., 8.

positively about a nation's values and culture, they will be more likely to cooperate with that nation and are more prone to follow a nation's political action. Joseph Nye puts it like this: "[s]oft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others."[157]

Cultural products, however, don't necessarily lead to goodwill. For culture to be soft power, it needs to include universal values, or values that other nations or groups share. Narrow values or parochial cultures will not have a universal effect of soft power and can actually create resistance among some groups.[158] Popular culture is especially effective in crossing borders and attracting global audiences. In this process, culture can create soft power, but if a cultural product shares values to which others are opposed, it can work counterproductively. Nye argues that "[p]opular culture can have contradictory effects on different groups within the same country. It does not provide a uniform soft-power resource"[159].

This doesn't deny the fact that culture, especially in the case of the United States on which Nye focuses, can make a huge difference. Nye refers to the power of popular music and entertainment, saying that they can contain "subliminal images and messages about individualism, consumer choice, and other values that have important political effect."[160] He goes on to state that soft power had greatly impacted the outcome of the Cold War, calling Elvis Presley and Bill Haley icons of subversion in Communist Czechoslovakia; the Beatles were popular icons of the West in Soviet Russia.[161]

The idea of soft power as a cultural force is appealing, but is complicated by the rise of globalization. The force of culture is a power that is not easily captured and restrained by governments, and it does not constitute a one-way relation between a national culture and an international audience. Arjun Appadurai studies the relations between culture and power in globalized networks of individuals and communities. In his seminal book *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai describes his view on the world as post-national and globalized. Describing the nation-state as a system plagued by self-perpetuation, violence and corruption, he claims that it is on its last legs.[162] The imagined community of the nation-state that Anderson described is surpassed by a new realm of global imaginations, fed by the transnational movement of both people and

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[157] Ibid., 5.
[158] Ibid., 11.
[159] Ibid., 52.
[160] Ibid., 47.
[161] Ibid., 50.
[162] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis / London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 19.

images. Through media and migration, diasporic public spheres are created, which are constantly inspiring new possible lives in the imaginations of the people who come into contact with these people and images.[163] Anderson's imagined communities turned into political realities and Appadurai believes the same will happen when the imagination of globalized communities will constitute a post-national political world.[164] The forces of separatism as well as transnationalism will take over.[165]

In his worldview, Appadurai refers to well-known theories on the relation between images, media and globalization, referring to McLuhan's global village and Deleuze & Guattari's idea of a rhizomic world, which is imagined as rootless, as less connected to any real localities.[166] In this world, the past is not a simple space of memory, but a "synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios"[167], in which images are used in media, music and film. Becoming disconnected from any reality, these images become signs which lose their connection to their signifiers, as in Baudrillard's idea of the simulacrum.[168]

This flow of images, but also the flows of technologies, people and money, results in a change in the flow of imaginations: what we imagine now is completely different than what our ancestors a hundred years ago could have imagined. Appadurai describes the link between the possible lives we can imagine and globalization, which he does not necessarily see as homogenizing or constituting of simple center-periphery power relations,[169] but as a number of fluctuating landscapes. He describes five dimensions in which these global cultural flows and the change in imagined worlds take place: ethnoscapes (fueled by global migration); mediascapes (the flow of narrative-based images of imagined lives of Others); technoscapes (the complex flow of technological knowledge and material); financescapes (the global flow of capital); and ideoscapes (the flow of images and ideas of state ideologies).[170] What is most relevant for this thesis is the dimension of mediascapes, which connects the idea of nation branding through culture to the context of globalization and transnationalism. According to Appadurai, "[w]hat is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide […] large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to

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[163] Ibid., 4/5.
[164] Ibid., 22.
[165] Ibid., 39/40.
[166] Ibid., 29.
[167] Ibid., 30.
[168] Ibid., 31.
[169] Ibid., 32.
[170] Ibid., 33.

viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed."[171]

In Appadurai's globalized world of mediascapes, images from all over the world are transported into the imaginations of people in all parts of the world, where they become imagined possible lives for many, and reality for some. One could sum it up in three simple sentences: media spread images; images feed imaginations; imaginations inspire reality.

What if governments could control these images? This seems to be the logical outcome of Anholt's competitive identity strategy: a search for control of images: if all stakeholders (government, industries, the people themselves, etc.) work together, Anholt presupposes, they can control the images of the nation that influence the imaginations of those outside of the nation in a positive way, creating political goodwill and income through industrial cooperation and tourism, amongst other things. In Appadurai's view, this idea of control seems outdated. In today's globalized, hyper-mediated world, millions of transnational images travel into billions of imaginations every day. The idea that stakeholders can control all of these images to build a stronger brand for their nation seems absurd in Appadurai's worldview, but in reality, they are trying:

> "national and international mediascapes are exploited by nation-states to pacify separatists or even the potential fissiparousness of all ideas of difference. Typically, contemporary nation-states do this by exercising taxonomic control over difference, by creating various kinds of international spectacle to domesticate difference, and by seducing small groups with the fantasy of self-display on some sort of global or cosmopolitan stage."[172]

However, as Joseph Nye pointed out, in liberal democratic societies, images and cultures are flowing freely: "[i]n a liberal society, government cannot and should not control the culture."[173]

2.3 The role of culture in nation branding: the case of Eurovision

In nation branding and soft power, culture (and in this thesis I focus largely upon cultural products, both high- and low brow) is a key factor. The importance of culture,

[171] Ibid., 35.
[172] Ibid., 39.
[173] Nye, *Soft Power*, 17.

the entertainment industry and media have been noted[174], but recently they have not widely been studied. Although cultural products determine a country's image, according to Dinnie, the subject is surprisingly ignored in most place-based branding research.[175] Kaneva agrees, but says that this subject is being studied more and more in recent times.[176] [177]

Anholt names culture as one of the major factors in building a nation brand, through institutions, events, famous citizens, music, etc. He states that culture adds a sense of humanity to a nation's image. It enriches a country's reputation and it leads to a deeper understanding of a country and its values for outsiders.[178] Anholt argues that culture also sets a country apart from others:

> "[t]he cultural aspect of national image is irreplaceable and uncopiable because it is uniquely linked to the country itself; it is reassuring because it links the country's past with its present; it is enriching because it deals with non-commercial activities; and it is dignifying because it shows the spiritual and intellectual qualities of the country's people and institutions."[179]

A well-known European project where culture is used in combination with branding a city or country is the European Capital of Culture-project[180], but according to Anholt, there is one cultural event that takes the lead in changing a nation or city brand: the Olympics.[181] Indeed, studies on the effects of the Olympic Games[182] on a nation's marketing strategy have proven the event to be very successful in raising

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[174] Kotler & Gertner, "Country as Brand, Product and Beyond", 251.

[175] Dinnie, *Place Branding*, 5.

[176] Kaneva, "Place Branding", 127.

[177] An example of writing on the role of culture in nation branding is an article by Fiona Gilmore. Gilmore explains the success of the rebranding of Spain by pointing towards the role of culture (Gilmore 281). After Franco, Spain was a poor country on the periphery of Europe, but by using culture in its national promotional it created a strong nation brand. Gilmore names Joan Miro's sun as the symbol of modernization, the Barcelona Olympics, the rebuilding of Bilbao with the Guggenheim Museum, the films of Pedro Almodovar and even the influence of actresses such as Penelope Cruz as part of Spain's success story (Gilmore 282).

[178] Anholt, *Competitive Identity,* 75.

[179] Ibid., 99.

[180] Each year, two European cities are chosen to be European Capital of Culture. These Capitals of Culture invest in culture, urban development, heritage, infrastructure etc., not only for the sake of the citizens, but also to attract tourists and investors. The European Commission profits from the project because not only the cities are polishing up their image, but an underlying idea of a shared European community is promoted as well (Sassatelli 441). The ECC project is a good example of the role of culture in the attempt to creating a strong brand as a city, as a nation, and as 'Europe'.

[181] Anholt, *Competitive Identity,* 108.

[182] Indeed, music and culture play a pivotal role in representing the hosting nation-state in the Olympics. In the 2012 event's opening and closing ceremonies, the representation of Great-Britain was thought of in terms of pop music, with prolific performances of Paul McCartney, the Who, the Arctic Monkeys, Dizzee Rascal and Mike Oldfield.

money and political goodwill in the cases of Australia (Olympics 2000)[183] and Spain (Olympics 1992).[184] However, hosting an event such as the Olympics does not necessarily mean that the country or city will improve its brand: they have to *do* something with the opportunity instead of just resting on their laurels. "It's a *media opportunity*, not a branding activity in its own right"[185], according to Anholt.

If the Olympics have a lasting effect on a nation brand, could winning and hosting the ESC have a similar effect? The easiest way to discover this would be to study Anholt's Nation Brand Index (NBI)[186]: the results of a quarterly enquiry to panels from all over the world about the image of nations from all over the world. Anholt's NBI seems like the perfect medium to find out what has changed in a Eurovision winner's image in the eyes of people from all over the world. Does winning the Eurovision Song Contest and hosting the event in the next year give the nation an opportunity to rise through the ranks of this Index? Unfortunately, it seems Anholt's research can't be used for making any definitive statements. The only accessible papers to be found on Anholt's website are those from 2005-2008, which rate different countries on different scales, omitting most of the 2005-2008 Eurovision winners[187].

Without proof in numbers, the question remains: is winning and hosting the Eurovision an incentive for nation branding? Most authors seem to suggest that nation branding techniques are central to many Eurovision performances. After all, according to Baker, "[t]he hosting of Eurovision offers a city, state, and broadcaster the opportunity to represent itself to Europe through the 'master narratives' it attaches to the entire show."[188]

There has been ample writing on the subject of Eurovision and nation branding. Göran Bolin, for example, writes on Eurovision as a brand strategy for Estonia; Catherine Baker investigates processes of essentialization in Eurovision performances; Thomas Solomon discusses Orientalist imagery in the self-representation of Turkey in the festival; Galina Miazhevich uncovers the role of sexuality in branding the Russian

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[183] G. Brown et al. "The Sydney Olympics and Brand Australia," In *Destination Branding. Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*, ed. Morgan N.J., A. Pritchard and R. Pride (Oxford: Butterworths, 2001), as quoted in Dinnie, *Place Branding,* 2003.
[184] F. Gilmore, "A country – can it be repositioned? Spain – the success story of country branding," *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol 9, No. 4-5 (2002).
[185] Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 110.
[186] Ibid., 45.
[187] For the full list of publications and a nifty online tool to see what some countries think of some other countries, visit http://www.simonanholt.com/
[188] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 182.

nation in ESC performances; and Stephen Coleman discusses the politics of identity and image in Eurovision performances.

Göran Bolin contextualizes Eurovision as a media event, comparing it to the Olympics, the soccer World Cup, the Academy Awards and the MTV Awards, but points out that of these events, Eurovision is unique in representing the politics of the nation-state in a mass-mediated cultural event, comparing it to the World Fairs of the age of industrialization.[189] He discusses the case of Estonia, which won in 2001. Estonia's tactics in Eurovision are remarkable as they are directly connected to the idea of nation branding. Estonia hired the British firm 'Interbrand' to sell the image of Estonia, which was later called 'Brand Estonia'. Winning Eurovision was an important part of the strategies Brand Estonia employed; winning tactics were discussed in detail in a paper on the branding strategy. When Estonia eventually did win, it was all the more prepared to use the opportunity to host the Eurovision Song Contest to brand the nation the following year, using amongst others 'postcard' videos to represent the 'treasures of Estonia'.[190]

An enlightening research is offered by Catherine Baker, who researches processes of simulation and essentialization in the Eurovision Song Contest, mainly focusing on Eastern European and former Yugoslavian countries. She writes that the ESC offers two opportunities for countries to perform nationality: firstly, the actual live performance, which is often linked to a promotional video of the band; secondly, the promotion of the host city and country of the organizing state broadcaster.[191] Baker goes on to state that these possible performances of nationality, which are presented to over forty countries in- and outside of Europe, create a certain pressure to represent the nation based on simplified, well-known, positive images of a country or region. In this process, "representations live up to televisual constructions of the nation rather than the complexity of the nation itself."[192]

In studying the case of Ruslana, the 2004 ESC winner for Ukraine with a song called "Wild Dances", Baker names one of the strategies for Eastern European states in representing the nation: mainly the focusing on folkloristic styles and representing 'old'

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[189] Göran Bolin, "Visions of Europe: Cultural technologies of nation-states," *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9: 2 (2006): 190.
[190] Ibid., 197/198.
[191] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 173.
[192] Ibid., 173.

or 'local' traditions.[193] Ruslana's performance is based on traditions, dances, costumes and rituals of the Hutsul-people from the Carpathian region of Western Ukraine, which are idealized as pure and timeless, but are combined with modern styles of music, language (the song is sung partly in English) and performance.[194] Baker, then, writes that this strategy of self-exoticizing might work best in a contest that is part of a wider European entertainment marketplace, which is framed by the domination of north-western economies, stating that "[a] critical approach (…) might conclude that marginalized regions of Europe maximize their chances of success in the European entertainment marketplace (…) by presenting something exotic and distinctive in an attractively modernized package."[195]

Like Estonia's 2001 representatives's performance, Ruslana's performance was also part of a deliberate nation branding strategy. Ruslana was internally selected by the Ukrainian PR and government relations firm CFC Consulting. A booklet on their involvement with the 2004 selection of Ruslana, as well as the hosting of the following year's ESC event in Kiev is proof that nation branding can play a pivotal role in the representation of the nation-state in Eurovision. The document stated that the selection criteria for a Ukrainian artists included the singer's popularity; the number of domestic sales of cd's; the state of the brand promotion; conformity to the ESC format; and the artist being able to represent Ukraine appropriately in the ESC.[196]

In Baker's analysis of several Balkan-countries, self-exoticizing is not the only strategy which is employed by Eurovision candidates. Another performance strategy Baker describes is that of the 'hyper-western' narrative, which tells a different story about national identity as being more modern.[197] In this 'hyper-western' narrative, non-Western countries use cultural symbols, often connected to a modern dominant Western-European or American aesthetic in the representation of the nation-state.

Casanova describes a similar process in the world of literature, which in her view is divided between centers with much literary capital (as used by Bourdieu) and

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[193] Ibid., 174.
[194] Ibid., 175; It's remarkable that the singer, Ruslana, is not from this region herself, and is not claiming to be authentic: her simulation of Hutsul traditions is combining old with new, and its inauthenticity doesn't seem to matter (Baker 176/177).
[195] Ibid, 177; Baker goes on to discuss the trope of the "warm South", which many Mediterannean performers in Eurovision employ. Through bright colours, rhythmical musical and dance styles, over sexuality and the primacy of olive skin tones, Mediterranean countries perform a self-exoticizing identity. (Baker 181-182).
[196] Gennadii Kurochka, *CFC Consulting Company: Official Promo Partner of Eurovision Kyiv 2005*, (Kyiv: CFC, 2005), 4.
[197] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 178.

peripheral regions. In these peripheries, authors use different strategies in relating themselves to their nation-states. To become successful, they can either reject national heritage by assimilating into an international style which is defined by the dominant center(s), or they can affirm their difference and succeed by creating exotic, essentialized products connected to their national traditions.[198]

The same strategies of assimilation into a Western hegemonic aesthetic and essentializing and exoticizing representations of the national Self can be seen in the Eurovision Song Contest. In case of Self-assimilation, there is a clear referential connection to the West, but often the 'hyper-western' could also be seen on solely focusing on being 'modern', not necessarily 'western'. In my analysis of the 2012 performances, I prefer to use the term 'hypermodern', as it encompasses both performances that are decidedly 'hyper-western' and those that seem to focus more on presenting a modern, not necessarily Western image of the Self.

Thomas Solomon describes the dilemma between representing a country as either exotic or hypermodern in his case study of Turkey, which at the time of writing is yet to be published. In Turkish public debate on the 2003 ESC entry (the singer Sertab Erener, who in her performance of the song "Every Way That I Can" used many Orientalist imagery such as belly-dancing, veils and Orientalist musical signs such as violin-melodies played in the Phrygian scale), the central question was whether Turkey should be represented by a performance that draws on Orientalist stylistic tropes to express the country's uniqueness, or if it should strive to be as 'European' (whatever that means) as possible.[199] For both Ukraine and Turkey, the self-Orientalizing strategy proved successful, as both Ruslana and Sertab eventually won the competition.[200] In some cases, this strategy leads to much internal critique. Baker describes the selection of a performance in Croatia which was perceived to be too 'Balkan', too exotic and most importantly, too Serbian: "The polarized reaction in Croatia to the song's selection demonstrates an implicit demand that Eurovision entries should represent the nation

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[198] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge MA/ London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 41.

[199] Thomas Solomon, "The Oriental Body on the European Stage: Producing Turkish Cultural Identity on the Margins of Europe,"[Unpublished, to appear in *Empire of Song: Europe and the nation in the Eurovision Song Contest* ed. Dafni Tragaki (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, expected publication: April 2013)], 1.

[200] It should be noted though that these performances were not simply self-exoticizing: the (partial) use of English language, the musical style of pop and the mixing of 'traditional' and modern dance styles express a combination of Oriental and Western aspects of both performances.

appropriately"[201].

A new question arises: what is an appropriate representation of the nation? If we see the nation as an imagined community, fueled by invented traditions, following Anderson, Gellner, Hobsbawm and others as discussed in the first chapter, it is not an easy task to represent the nation in one song without resorting to strategies of essentialization. If, on the other hand, the nation wants to express itself as a modern, pluralistic country which is part of a broader European identity, the problem of uniqueness arises: how can a nation safeguard its unique identity without resorting to clichés or stereotypes that imagine the nation as a monocultural, uniform space? Will the wish to be part of a modern Europe lead, as Baker describes, to "deterritorialized performances with little national character"[202], or is there a middle way?

Stephen Coleman describes the Eurovision Song contest as a spectacle of embarrassment, irony and identity.[203] In his analysis of the politics of identity in the Eurovision Song Contest performances, he concludes that the dilemma between choosing for a distinct national identity performance or one that is more part of a global[204] or European frame of identity leads to unease and embarrassment: "[a]s a showcase for national identities, Eurovision gives rise to contemporary unease about cultural disembeddedness, the state-centric nature of national identity and the gap between globalized/American popular culture and European/ethnic cultural forms"[205].

Calling the ESC a "festival of everywhereness"[206], Coleman claims that many nation-states are struggling to choose between strategies of self-Orientalization and the emptiness of immersing themselves in a multicultural, unrooted identity with which they associate the spirit of Eurovision. Coleman writes:

> "[i]n its functional attempt to transcend the cultural specificity of place and language, the 'boom-bang-a-bang' heteroglossia of Eurovision lyrics provides the quintessential background noise for an airport-lounge society. To compose and perform songs for an unknown audience of hundreds of millions, all traces of rooted experience have to be erased, resulting in formulaic rather than creative expression. Simultaneously, as if to compensate for this repression of the culturally particular, several of the performers are adorned in outfits

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[201] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 180.
[202] Ibid., 186.
[203] Stephen Coleman, "Why is the Eurovision Song Contest Ridiculous? Exploring a Spectacle of Embarrassment, Irony and Identity," *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture*, 6:3 (2008): 127.
[204] Specifically: American-influenced.
[205] Coleman, "Why is the Eurovision Song Contest Ridiculous?", 127.
[206] Ibid., 132.

designed to give a caricatured representation of contrived, ethnicized identities."[207]

 Here, Coleman discusses the key dilemma of national representation in Eurovision. On the one hand, nation-states try to adapt to a hegemonic, decidedly Western aesthetic. In trying to appeal to all, these artists create bland performances without any regional signs, a form of muzak that has no real story to tell about the national Self. On the other hand, there are those performances that do tell stories about the national Self, but in an exaggerated, contrived fashion. The nation-state here is represented as exotic, peculiar, different; as a mono-cultural stereotype of the Self.

In an article on Russia's previous representations in Eurovision, Galina Miazhevich notices a similar problem, which in this case is not surrounding ethnic identity or stereotypes of Orientalism, but which is about the performance of sexuality in branding the nation through the Eurovision Song Contest. In her analysis of Russian Eurovision performers such as t.A.T.u[208] and Dima Bilan[209], which use queer imagery in their image and performance[210], Miazhevich claims that Russia's queer representations bridge a gap between a rigid and Orthodox national idea of the Self and more fluid, personal forms of identification.[211] The result is a play (or manipulation) with identity and image. Miazhevich argues that "through their manipulation of class, gender, sexual and ethnic stereotypes, and by exploiting a *kitsch* idiom, Russian performances strive to articulate a European nationhood, which simultaneously stakes a position among other states of the former Soviet Union and reconceptualizes relationships with the shared Soviet past."[212]

2.4 Conclusion

In this second chapter, I aimed to answer the question: how do nations use nation branding through culture as a tool to build an appealing image within the context of

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[207] Ibid., 132.

[208] First runner-up in 2003.

[209] Bilan performed twice at the ESC finale. He was first runner-up in 2006 and won the contest in 2008.

[210] It is important to note that, like the example of Ruslana described by Catherine Baker, these performances are not meant to be authentic: whereas Ruslana wasn't a member of the Hutsul-community, the members of t.A.T.u. and Dima Bilan do not belong to the gay community themselves.

[211] Galina Miazhevich, "Sexual Excess in Russia's Eurovision Performances as a Nation Branding Tool," *Russian Journal of Communication* 3: 3/4 (Summer/Fall 2010): 249.

[212] Ibid., 252.

Eurovision? Following the first chapter on identity-formation, this chapter looked at the process of turning identity into an outward image to the world through nation branding, specifically through the Eurovision Song Contest. How do nations translate their complex identities into a single national image, a brand of the nation that can attract tourists, foreign investors and political goodwill?

Although in recent years, many authors have written on the subject of nation branding, very few have focused on the cultural aspect of the nation brand. Only in the last couple of years, there seems to be a rise in scholarly writing on the subject, although, according to Kaneva, most scholars still don't take a critical stance towards the notion of a homogenous national culture. The idea of the imagined community as a uniform, unique culture might be a powerful instrument in selling the nation, but it also impacts notions of collective identity and national belonging as in this statement by Anholt: "critical scholarship cannot forget that national communities are hardly homogeneous, and hence, their representations in branding narratives have consequences for subnational and transnational identities as well"[213].

There appears to be a disconnect between the technical-economic, political and cultural approaches to nation branding. Anholt's suggestion of inventing traditions to shape a uniform nation brand image is a good example of his stance towards nation branding. Claiming that all actors, namely tourism, brands, policy, investment, culture and people,[214] should be involved in creating the nation brand, he doesn't seem to take in the complexity of these actors. Tourist agencies might be quite uniform in their strategies, but two of the main actors, namely 'culture' and 'people', resist uniform representations of collective communities or ideas that can easily be represented by a few simple slogans or, in the case of Eurovision, performances.

The same problem appears in political writing on nation branding, in the context of soft power, which in this thesis is defined, following Joseph Nye as 'the power of image' as opposed to military and economic power. By dismissing the complexity of identity formations within the nation, writers like Anholt and Van Ham are overestimating the soft power of nation branding, which they see as a possible substitute for hard power. Nye's idea of soft power as persuading and attracting power is appealing, and culture does have the power to inspire imaginations everywhere. The problem is that this power is difficult to control. Besides, culture in the globalized

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[213] Kaneva, "Nation Branding", 132.
[214] Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 26.

worldview of Appadurai seems less and less connected to the traditional nation, and more and more to a transnational force, connecting imaginations across borders. Instead of one national image, Appadurai describes the free flow of images in mediascapes, undermining the power of the nation-state as the main space for identification. These images are not simple representations of a single national image, but are changing in the mind of the beholder. For example, a Bollywood-movie might inspire positive connotations about India in the imaginations of one subnational group, but might evoke negative feelings in another group. Likewise, a Eurovision performance might be either praised or hated by different publics because of political or aesthetic reasons. Controlling images and outcomes of political nation branding might be difficult, but it has become a technique in international politics. However, culture is still hard to harness, difficult to reduce to a commodity to serve a nation brand.

In the cultural analysis of nation branding, I have focused on issues of representation in Eurovision. One dilemma of national audiences and broadcasters, especially in the perceived cultural margins of Europe came to the fore in particular: how should the nation be represented in the light of European cultural relations that are dominated by the Western-European market? Although the Eurovision Song Contest is no longer dominated by the participating Western European countries, the main strategies of peripheral nation-states are still largely imagined in context of relations with Western European cultural performance. These strategies include representing the nation-state to be as European, cosmopolitan or hypermodern as possible, in which performances are cut loose from local realities and appeal to what is imagined to be European taste. This often translates into simple, recognizable pop songs which, in trying to appeal to everyone's taste, lose any deeper sense of cultural belonging. A second strategy is juxtaposing the national with the European, which in practice leads to heavy use of stereotypes and practices of self-exoticizing and self-Orientalizing. In trying to appeal to the rest of Europe as being exotic and unique, these performances place emphasis on simple, often non-inclusive images of the nation. This strategy might prove useful in winning the Eurovision Song Contest, it does perpetuate old power structures of center-periphery between West and East.

These two strategies often blur into one another, as many performances mix an image of an exotic Self with a performance of hypermodernity, emphasizing both difference and similarity to a European culture which is imagined to be dominated by aesthetics of the West. An interesting example of this is the past performances of

Russian entries described by Miazhevich, in which the use of overt (homo)sexuality alongside a Russian kitsch idiom is, on the one side, connecting with Western European popular performance, and on the other side conceptualizing Russia as a center for cultural power of its own in regards to former Soviet Union states.[215]

The choice, be it conscious or unconscious, of representation in Eurovision is connected to power structures. Countries in the power-center of Europe are more easily represented as plural and original. These countries don't have to rely on exotic stereotypes to create a strong nation brand: they already have a strong nation brand. Presenting plural identities on the Eurovision stage is easier for them, as the Eurovision performances are only a small part of the entire scope of national representation: countries like France, the United Kingdom and Germany are represented in news and global cultural outlets every day, so a Eurovision performance is less important for them to create a certain brand of the Self.

This is different for the nation-states in the margin. Winning Eurovision was a huge deal for a country like Azerbaijan. The event gives a platform to peripheral states to rival the powerful Western Countries, not in terms of political power, but in terms of cultural power. It offers countries that have a weak nation brand, as many people might have only heard of them in the context of war or crisis, to represent themselves as cultural powers that can symbolically combat Western cultural hegemony. Hosting the event offers peripheral countries the opportunity to both create a strong nation brand as well as receive tourists through the Eurovision event, who probably wouldn't have come to Baku, Kiev or Riga otherwise.

There is a problem for these countries: to win, they most often will have to take a stance in representing the nation-state to satisfy foreign tastes, which often means presenting the nation-state as exotic. In Eurovision as well as nation branding in general, representing a national culture causes the dilemma of having to define what that national culture is. Even when the nation is quite clear on what the exact complexities of the different group identities within its borders are, it still has to translate these identities into a clear image. Moreover, if that image has to be clear enough to be communicated to an audience during the time span of one Eurovision performance, it can't possibly cover all the nuances of the nation. Besides, in today's globalized world, there are many more platforms for representations of national (and transnational) culture. The

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[215] Miazhevich, "Sexual Excess in Russia's Eurovision Performances", 252.

Eurovision Song Contest is only one of many options. Stephen Coleman describes the cultural politics best in his conclusion:

> "Audiences no longer need to wait for nations to represent themselves in vertically-controlled events such as Eurovision; they can sample and remix their own versions of national culture, subverting the disingenuous features of national identity with ironic impunity. In an age characterized by the political vulnerability and instability of national self-representations, the spaces between and across nationally-based identities emerge as a site of cosmopolitan contestation. Alas for Eurovision, it remains trapped within a Westphalian world of "us" and others, destined to the cultural unease and embarrassment of the historically *passé*."[216]

To come back to the main question of this chapter, 'how do nations use nation branding through culture as a tool to build an appealing image within the context of Eurovision?', I have argued that national representation in the festival is an important part of many Eurovision performances, be it consciously or unconsciously. A three minute performance might not represent all nuances of the nation, yet it does offer a heavily mediated opportunity to brand a nation to a large international public, be it through the performances themselves, or through winning the contest and hosting the following year's show, giving the host opportunities to showcase a broad variety of national 'treasures'.

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[216] Coleman, "Why is the Eurovision Song Contest Ridiculous?", 139.

Chapter Three

Identity and Image in Eurovision Performances

When Florin Cezar Ouatu (simply known as 'Cezar') left the Eurovision stage in Sweden's Malmö Arena in 2013, he had left a lasting impression to many Eurovision fans and viewers. His performance as Romania's representative was one of the most memorable ones in the 2013 event. Dressed in a huge glittering black dress, with a black ring beard and his black hair slicked back and standing in an ominously red set, with a backdrop of thunderclouds, Cezar looked like a villain from a Disney movie. His dark image was sharply contrasted by his high, classical countertenor voice. His representation of Romania seemed to tie into tropes of Transylvanian images, complicated by queer elements such as his bejeweled dress and high voice. Did Cezar reappropriate the famous image of Dr. Frankenfurter from "Transsexual Transylvania" of famous Hollywood musical *The Rocky Horror Picture Show,* recontextualizing it into the actual Transylvanian region of Romania, effectively connecting Romanian identity and Romanian stereotypes to a global aesthetic?

In the previous two chapters, I have described how nation-states use musical performance in Eurovision in shaping national and European identities and images. In the first chapter, I focused on identity: how is identity, be it national or European, imagined in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest? In the second chapter, I looked at the translation of this identity into an image, by asking the question: how do nations use culture as nation branding in Eurovision to build an image which is appealing to tourists and foreign investors?

This third and final chapter will investigate the practice of these imaginations of identity and branded image in Eurovision. The main question here will be: how is a nation-branded image performed in the Eurovision Song Contest? By analyzing several case studies of Eurovision performances, I will try to find out which strategies countries employ to win the event as well as to represent the nation-state. In my analysis, I will focus on nation-states representing the perceived 'periphery' of Europe, the Eastern European states, including Romania's 2012 contestants, who, like Cezar, tied into global aesthetics to reshape Romania's image.

Björnberg states that "[a] Eurovision performance is filled with dense cultural

meanings, with signifiers that might be clear, but are also unstable and not very well culturally anchored, open to misinterpretation"[217]. For the analysis of Eurovision performances in this chapter, I try to untangle this web of cultural meanings. My own interpretations can be seen as suggestions of possible readings that I find most probable. However, it is important to note that a cultural performance, even a simple three minute Eurovision song, can mean completely different things to different audiences.

As I stated in the last chapter, the representation of nation-states in the Eurovision Song Contest, especially of those states located around the 'borders of Europe', can be analyzed as belonging to either side of a dichotomy between a national and international style, between strategies of self-exoticizing and hypermodernity, although often this distinction isn't clear-cut. Baker[218], Solomon[219] and Coleman[220] describe cases of nation-states that choose specific strategies of both self-exoticizing and hypermodernity, sometimes resulting in national political debate and public discussion, either about the appropriateness of a self-exoticizing performer representing the nation-state or about the disembeddedness of a musical performance that can hardly be linked to a specific national aesthetic. To win the Eurovision Song Contest, nation-states seem to have to choose between a performance that plays on essentializing stereotypes, or a bland pop-performance with a musical aesthetic that is more connected to Western-European and American popular tastes than to local national musical traditions. In the following part, I will discuss these two strategies as they are performed in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest.

I will specifically discuss four case studies from the Eastern-European region, along the lines of four 'themes': genre, language, ethnicity and political satire. I argue that these elements signify belonging to either an exoticized, essentialized national identity, or a hypermodern international style, often modeled after Western-European or American culture, or both. I have studied all of the 2012 performances, but selected four specific cases of Eastern-European performances (Russia, Romania, Ukraine and Montenegro) which very clearly communicate certain ideas on local, national, European and international identity.

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[217] Alf Björnberg. "Return to ethnicity: The cultural significance of musical change in the Eurovision Song Contest," in *A Song For Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*, ed. Ivan Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin (Hampshire England / Burlington VA: Ashgate, 2007), 15.
[218] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 174-178.
[219] Solomon, "The Oriental Body on the European Stage", 1.
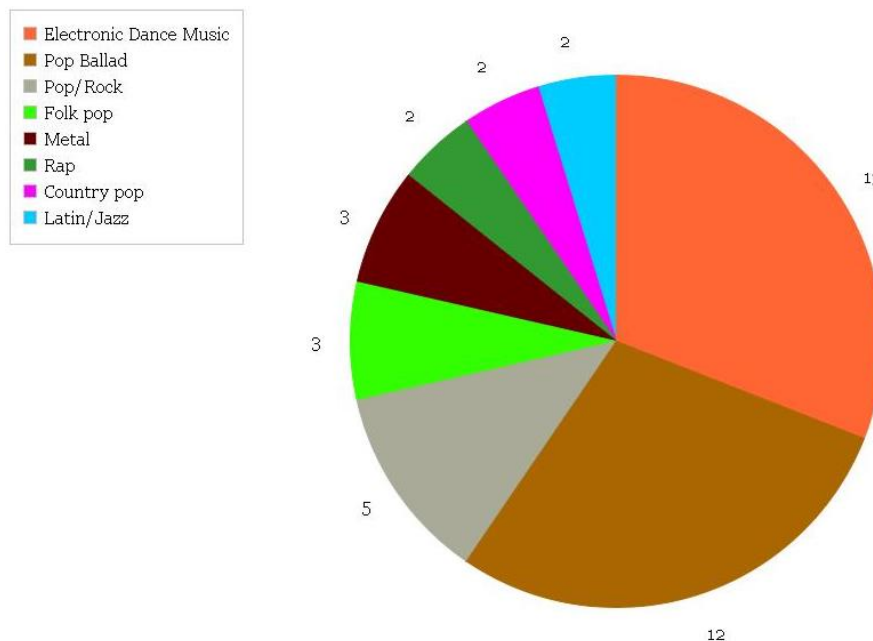[220] Coleman, "Why is the Eurovision Song Contest Ridiculous?", 127.

3.1 Genre

Figure 3.1. Genres represented at the ESC.[221]

Since its inception, popular music has always been imagined to be linked to one place: the United States of America. The global market today is dominated by the States; many genres originated there. In Europe, American songs and song forms influenced the popular music market from the outset. From the 1920 and 1930s on, many European songs in local languages were heavily influenced by American songs, genres (such as ragtime, blues, jazz and Tin Pan Alley songs) and performers.[222] Case in point is the influence of Elvis's popularity in Europe from the 1950's on, which spawned local 'imitators' such as Cliff Richard[223] (UK), Johnny Hallyday (France) and Adriano Celentano (Italy).[224]

It is too simple to state that Europe went through a simple, one-way process of Americanization. First of all, many of the American music itself was no uniform national culture, but was most often a result of mixing musical cultures. African and

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[221] Some songs could fit into multiple genres, but I have decided to place them into one single category which is emphasized most in the performance. For example, the case of Macedonia moved from a pop ballad into a metal song; as metal sets the main tone for the performance, I've placed the song into this category.

[222] Donald Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans: From 1800 to the Present* (London: HarperCollins: 2006), 1110.

[223] Cliff Richards participated in the Eurovision Song Contest twice for the UK.

[224] Ibid., 1346/1347.

African-American cultures most prominently had a profound effect on American popular music styles, but Latin-American, Jewish and European writers, performers and genres also influenced American pop to a great extent. Secondly, European culture influenced many of the American popular culture that took over the European market directly. A quick look at some of the most popular American musicals reveals that they were often influenced by European stories. Sassoon mentions amongst others *The Sound of Music*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *My Fair Lady*, stories that are set in Austria, Russia and London;. Even *West Side Story*, which seems decidedly American, builds heavily upon Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*[225]. Thirdly, although American popular music was very popular, performers still preferred singing in their own language, often because some countries (France, Italy, Spain) had a big national market for musical products themselves, which could also be marketed internationally, for instance in former colonies.[226]

Still, American popular music had a large influence on European popular music. In the Eurovision Song Contest, many songs are either performed in English, or borrow heavily from the Anglo-Saxon musical idiom. Some artists even take over distinctly American imagery, such as the Dutch contestant Joan Franka, who sported a native-American headdress in her Country & Western-style performance.[227] Others Anglicize their name, such as Lithuanian singer Donny Montell (actual name: Donatas Montvydas), whose performance of a pop ballad, like many of his fellow competitors', is devoid of anything specifically connected to his home country. Most genres that were represented in the festival derived either from a distinct American context (rap, jazz, country) or from a wider Anglo-Saxon context (Electronic Dance Music and heavy metal, and arguably pop/rock and pop ballads).

The heavy influence of American musical styles in the Eurovision Song Contest might seem like Europeans try to emulate American styles, but these styles are in fact often appropriated and recontextualized by performers that mix these styles with a taste of local folklore. The Eurovision Song Contest is known to present both global and local cultural styles, and twelve of the forty-two performances in the 2012 event added distinct local folkloric musical elements from their own country in their performances.

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[225] Ibid., 1111/1112.

[226] Ibid., 1354.

[227] The appropriation of 'Indian' headdresses by non-Native performers is very much contested in North-America itself (Richard A. Rogers, "From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation," *Communication Theory* 16: 4 (Nov. 2006), 476).

This doesn't only happen with acts that focus on folk pop. In fact, most of the 2012 represented genres offer some examples of traditional instrumentations or vocal styles.
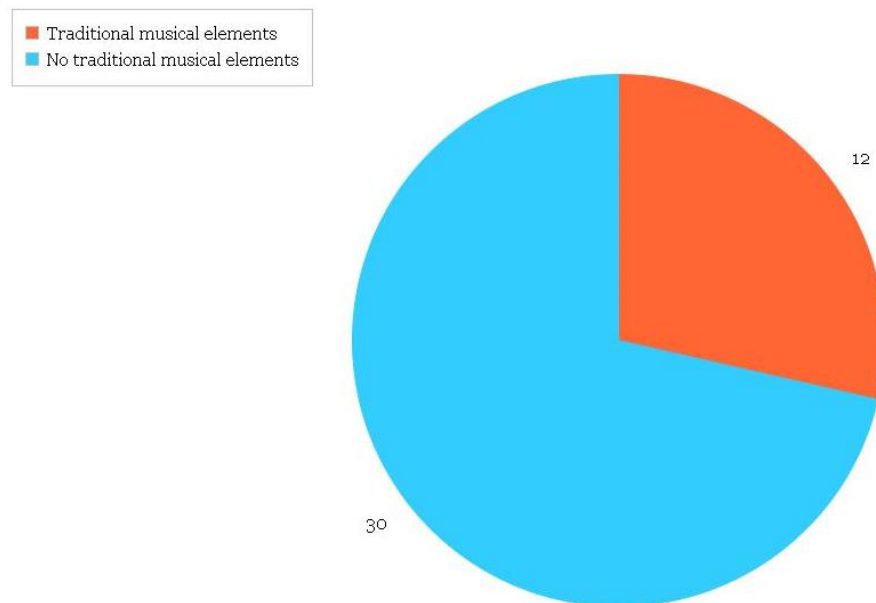

Figure 3.2: Elements of national traditional folk cultures in the ESC 2012[228]

Most prominent examples of the incorporation of folkloric musical elements are offered by the pop ballads, which often are reminiscent of traditional folk ballads, incorporating many stylistic elements. Portugal's Filipa Sousa, for instance, presented a pop ballad which incorporated elements of the Portuguese genre of fado (Portuguese guitar, emotional singing style) and Portuguese accordion. There were also some notable examples of folk elements in Electronic Dance Music performances, such as Bulgaria's Sofi Marinova, who's 'gliding' Romani vocal style was incorporated into a techno song.

I would argue that the mixing of genres, both from local and national folkore and of global (mostly Anglo-Saxon) styles, signals a process of appropriation and recontextualization. Many artists incorporate both sides of the spectrum of international hypermodernity and self-exoticizing, although Anglo-Saxon forms (and language, which I will discuss next) are dominating most of the performances. Looking at these processes from Appadurai's perspective of the transnational flow of images,[229] I would claim that the Eurovision Song Contest reflects global power relations, where the

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[228] 2012 performances that included traditional musical elements are: Israel, Turkey and Moldova (folk pop); Bosnia-Herzegovina, Portugal, Serbia and Azerbaijan (pop ballads), Greece, Russia, Bulgaria and Georgia (Electronic Dance Music); Montenegro (rap); Romania (Latin pop).
[229] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 39/40.

United States are an important, but not all-encompassing, center of power, which influences global popular culture to a certain extent. This influence is watered down, however, by the incorporation of local folkloric elements, which appropriate American forms to express local meaning.

3.2 Language

Language is an important factor in conveying meaning in Eurovision performances. Throughout the history of Eurovision, there has been a constant debate on which languages performers should sing in. This is reflected in the language policies of the EBU, which at different times had different rules to regulate languages, often constricting countries to only sing in languages that were native to that particular country.[230] Since 1999, the EBU has reinstated the rule which offers participating countries the opportunity to sing in any language they please. This has had an interesting result: English became the language of choice for most participants.
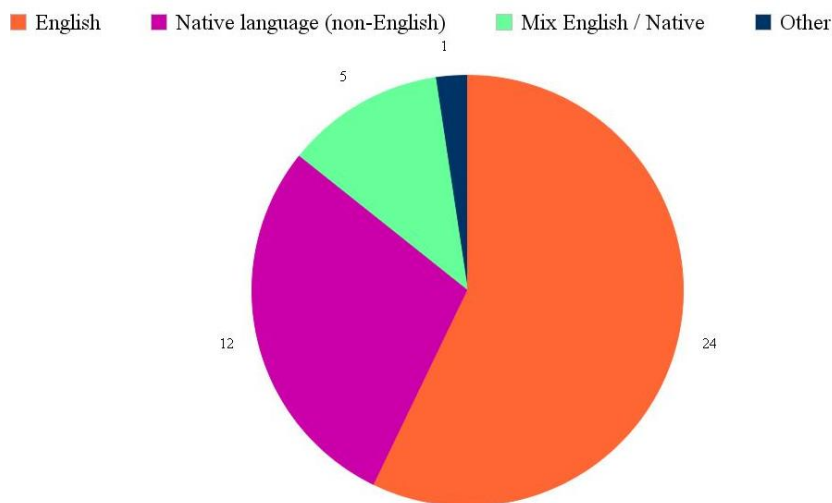

Figure 3.3. Languages used in 2012 Eurovision performances[231]

Since the introduction of the free language choice in 1999, thirteen out of fourteen winning songs were sung in English. Before the introduction of free choice of

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[230] Untill 1965, the choice was free. After Swedish participant Ingvar Wixell chose to sing in English in 1965, the rules were changed to prevent artists from singing in foreign languages. In 1973, this decision was overturned, but the rule was reinstated in 1977. When the EBU allowed free language choice again in 1999, which resulted in the massive use of English (and French) in the 1999 songs (Walraven & Willems, *Dinge-dong,* 99-101).

[231] Some performances, such as Bulgaria's, incorporated small sentences from other languages to appeal to foreign audiences. I incorporated this performance as 'Bulgarian' in my graph, as it is the dominant language in the performance.

language, from 1992 on, English was already very prominent in winning performances: five out of seven winners sung in English (four of which were performed by Ireland, one by the UK); the other two winners were either mostly instrumental (Norway's "Nocturne" by a band called Secret Garden in 1995) or had lyrics which were quite intelligible[232] to an international audience (Israel's famous transgender representative, Dana International, with the song "Diva"). The prominence of English in the Eurovision Song Contest signals a dominance of the English language as a lingua franca in a contest within a cultural context in which Anglo-Saxon music styles are dominant. In the 2012 event, most of the Eurovision artists used the English language in their performance. The winning song, *Euphoria* by Sweden's Loreen, was sung in English. However, in the top five, three out of five songs were performed in non-English, native languages. Of all forty-two songs, more than half (twenty-four) songs were sung (mainly) in English. Twelve songs were sung in a non-English native languages[233], five in a mix between a native language and English. Two of these songs were sung in a national minority language (Finland's entry was sung in Swedish, Russia's entry in a mix of Udmurt and English). One song was sung in a non-native, non-English language: Romania's entry, "Zaleilah" (by a group called Mandinga) was sung mainly in Spanish, with some English sentences intertwined.

Why is English so dominant in Eurovision? There seem to be two main reasons for this. Firstly, English can be understood by most Europeans, and serves as a lingua franca. This also explains why there is a high prevalence of easily understandable lyrics. Secondly, the general pop music business is dominated by artists singing in English. The language is connected to a wider sensibility that the United States dominate the modern cultural landscape, as most song styles are derived from a distinctly American aesthetic. The predominance of the English language, often linked to a generic pop ballad sound, can be read as a wish to appeal to a broad taste in anything 'Western', 'modern' or even 'American', thus fitting in to the hypermodern or hyper-western narrative. It has to be noted, however, that it's not only the peripheral states in the East that use English: most Western and Northern performances were also sung mainly in English.

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[232] A common strategy in Eurovision Songs is the use of nonsense-words. Winning songs with nonsense titles include *La La La* (1968), *Boom Bang-a-bang* (1969) and *Ding-a-Dong* (1975) (Walraven & Willems, *Dinge-dong,* 114). Many other non-winning songs incorporated nonsense-lyrics, or were even sung entirely in a made-up language.

[233] Although Bulgaria's entry, *Love Unlimited,* was performed in Bulgarian, it had included phrases in Turkish, Greek, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, French, Romani, Italian, Azerbaijani, Arabic and English.

Next to the predominance of English as the lingua franca of Eurovision performances, one performance stands out in the use of a foreign language: Romania. The song "Zaleilah" by the Romanian/Cuban group Mandinga is sung mostly in Spanish, a language which is foreign to the country, although it does belong to the same, Romance language family as Romanian. Mandinga's band consists of both Romanian and Cuban musicians. The band's website is keen to claim that it is "the best Latino band in the country", and notes that the band has even performed with the Buena Vista Social Club.[234] Although their songs are mostly in Spanish, the group's singer, Elena Ionescu, is Romanian. The band won the final of 'Selecţia Naţională', the Romanian national pre-selection for a Eurovision contestant, which is determined 50/50 by a jury and televoting. Mandinga was the favorite band of the audience and the runner-up of the jury members. In the ESC finale in Baku, the song reached the twelfth place.

"Zaleilah" starts out with two drummers in the center of the stage, drumming and shouting. The first melody sets in after ten seconds, when an accordion and a Romanian Cimpoi bagpipe start to play and one of the musicians starts moonwalking in with his bagpipe in his hands. In the Eurovision Song Contest, all musical accompaniments are taped, so none of the musicians on stage are actually playing their instruments. The moonwalking bagpiper is not even trying to pretend to be playing, as he is quite preoccupied with his choreographed dance moves. Elena Ionescu starts by singing the name of the band and shouts phrases in Spanish to the audience. While the five male musician/dancers are dressed in white, Ionescu, as the only female performer, is wearing a little red dress, which, together with her high pumps, red earrings and long dark hair, gives her a 'Latin' look. The song is accompanied by a lightshow, with hearts lighting up in mostly red and orange tones.

While the chorus and bridge are in English, the verses are sung in (simple) Spanish. The text is about love. A striking moment occurs when in the second verse, Ionesco sings "*mi chico bonito, un poco negrito, ven papito, ven aca.*" At this point, two of the musicians, the only black members of the band, come to the fore, kissing

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[234] Mandinga, *Mandinga: Playing Happiness*, http://www.mandinga.ro/playing-happiness/?page_id=24

Ionescu's hands and high-five each other right after. The song continues with a bridge, after which the final chorus sets in with pyrotechnics.

The first thing that comes to mind when analyzing this video is the Latin sound and imagery. The performers are both Romanian and Cuban, the singer's clothes and hair are styled in a Latin-American fashion, the music is Latin-inspired, the lightshow is in warm tones, and the dominant language in the performance is Spanish. The song is not only Latin-American: its instrumentation mixes drums with more traditional instruments which are common in Balkan folk musics, such as the accordion and the Romanian Cimpoi bagpipe, giving the song an upbeat feel. This might even link the performance to the Balkan Beat genre, which mixes traditional Balkan folk with electronic beat.[235]

Picture 3.1. Romania's Mandinga performing "Zaleilah" (1:55) [236]

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[235] This effectively links one of the most well-known Balkan Beat performers to Romania's image: Shantel (Stefan Hantel), who as a German-Romanian could be said to be one of Romania's biggest musical idols.
[236] Mandinga, "Zaleilah," *Youtube.* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3ruy639kTQ (15/04/2013).

In the context of the Eurovision Song Contest, it is interesting that a non-U.S. form of popular music is appropriated for this performance. Although Cuba and Romania are geographically far apart, this appropriation could signal a desire for Romanians to identify with the nation brand of Cuba, or the wider 'Latin-American' brand, which seems to be more sexy and exotic than the Romanian nation brand, a brand that would fuel Romania's commercial tourism sector. The identification with Latin-America falls into a common strategy for mostly Mediterranean performers. Baker discusses the trope of the "warm South", which links these performances in their sound and imagery. The use of bright colors, rhythmical music and dance styles, overt sexuality and olive skin tones are common in the "warm South"-performances. These images form a self-exoticizing strategy, making the country and the performance more exotic to the eyes and ears of the audience.[237] "Zaleilah" definitely falls into the "warm South" category, as it employs many 'warm' visual and aural signals in its performance.

This exotic image is only enhanced by the foregrounding of the two black musicians, which is emphasized by the 'pocito negrito'-text. A quick look at the 2002 Romanian ethnicity census reveals that African Romanians are certainly a minor population in the country. They aren't even specified and only seem to be part of the 'Other Ethnicity'-category in the census, which accounts for 0.07% of the population.[238] It is striking that Romania chooses to represent itself with such a small minority, but it is not an uncommon strategy in Eurovision representatives to accentuate a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial image. The African Romanian performers of Mandinga seem to be part of a larger Caribbean exotic aesthetic. Their accentuated participation in the performance is symbolic for a country that wishes to see itself as exotic and 'warm'. This image, finally, is enhanced by the gender division between the performers: the singer is sexualized in her little red dress, and is an object of desire for the (black) dancer/musicians. She operates as a personification of Romania as sexy, feisty and exotic.

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[237] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 181/182.
[238] Fundaţia Jakabffy Elemér, " Recensământ 2002", *Recensamant* (2002), http://recensamant.referinte.transindex.ro/?pg=8

One interesting component of the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest was that two countries chose to represent themselves with a minority language. Finland (represented in 2012 with the Swedish song "När jag blundar" by Pernilla Karlsson*)* usually chooses a song in English or Finnish to represent the country, although there was an earlier Swedish-language entry in 1990.[239] The song was the first to win the newly installed show 'Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu' (UMK), where viewers could vote for the entry they wanted to send to the Eurovision Song Contest. They chose this song with a small majority of 53,4 percent.[240] Swedish is spoken as a first language by 5.39% of the Finnish population (in 2011).[241]

The second country to choose a song in a minority language is Russia. The song "Party for Everybody" by the group Buranovskiye Babushki is sung partly in English and partly in Udmurt, which is spoken by approximately 500,000 people in Udmurtia, an area around 800 kilometers east of Moscow. The song was selected in a national pre-selection show by both a jury and televoting, beating previous Eurovision-winner Dima Bilan and twenty-three other contestants.[242] The song was quite successful at the ESC finale in Baku, and ended up as the first runner-up.

"Party for Everybody" starts with a traditional folk sound, a faint drum, which is edited with modern sound technology. On stage, we see six 'grandmothers', typical Russian babushkas, dressed in traditional red dresses, headscarves, big necklaces and traditional footwear. Two of them walk slowly towards a smoking stone oven, placing a tray inside of it. The babushkas are embracing each other and are singing in harmony. The lyrics are in Udmurt, the song is a folk song. They seem happy, but slightly out of place on the spectacular light show of the Eurovision stage.

After forty seconds of this folkloric choir-singing, suddenly a beat comes in. The babushka's move to form a line, and sing: "Party for Everybody, Dance. Boom boom!" The upbeat tempo is joined by the sound of an accordion. The babushkas are dancing now, and are singing in Udmurt, still, until the next chorus. There are some simple

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[239] In a private conversation with Finnish radio host Anne Lainto, who is one of the presenters at the national finale, she told me that the Finnish Eurovision pre-finals have traditionally been seen as a Swedish-Finnish affair, in which Swedish speaking Fins have often been chosen to represent the country.
[240] Henrika Juslin, "Pernilla Karlsson Till ESC", *Svenska Yle* (2012), http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2012/02/26/pernilla-karlsson-till-esc
[241] Statistikcentralen, "Population," *Stat.fi* (2012), http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_vaesto_en.html
[242] Olena Omelyanchuk, "See: Buranovskiye Babushki to represent Russia," *Eurovision.tv* (2012), http://www.eurovision.tv/page/news?id=48483&_t=see_buranovskiye_babushki_to_represent_russia

choreographed moves. The babuschkas are singing quite quickly now and seem to be enjoying themselves. When the bridge sets in, the Babushka's start yelling words to the crowd. It seems like they forgot that they had put something in the stone oven. One of them takes the tray out of the oven, which is now revealed to be full of cookies. Smiling at the camera, the smallest (and perhaps, the oldest) granny receives the tray and does a little dance. The last chorus sets in, after which the babushkas smilingly embrace each other and offer the cookies to the audience.

Picture 3.2. Russia's Buranovskiye Babushki performing "Party for Everybody" (0:32).[243]

The performance is quite unique for Russia, as the country is known to send performers that play on queer imagery, such as t.A.T.u (2003) and Dima Bilan (2006; 2008). As I have noted in Chapter Two, Galina Miazhevich claims that these performers represent Russia as queer, bridging a gap between a rigid and Orthodox national idea of

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[243] Buranovskiye Babushki, "Party for Everybody,*" Youtube,* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgUstrmJzyc (09/04/2013).

the Self and more fluid, personal forms of identification[244], resulting in a play with identity and image: "through their manipulation of class, gender, sexual and ethnic stereotypes, and by exploiting a *kitsch* idiom, Russian performances strive to articulate a European nationhood, which simultaneously stakes a position among other states of the former Soviet Union and reconceptualizes relationships with the shared Soviet past."[245]

While Dima Bilan was almost voted to represent Russia again, in the end, it was the babushkas which received the most votes at the national selection finale, setting a whole new tone in Russia's Eurovision repertoire. Their performance can be read as a celebration of folklore and community, although it is very likely that they won the most votes because their "old world" femininity was endearing and adorable.[246] Reading "Party for Everybody" as a celebration of traditional folklore also omits the importance of irony in this performance, humorous effect of combining the folklore of grandmotherhood with modern up-beat dance music. Still, the move towards a folkloric aesthetic is striking and points to a positive evaluation of old and local traditions. The fact that most of the song is sung in the local language of Udmurt is also significant, as it is a minor language in Russia. In this way, Russia is represented as a community which values the local, the minority, the traditional and the ancient.

This folkloric performance might stand out in Russia's Eurovision history, but it is not an uncommon strategy in Eurovision as a whole. In the second chapter, I discussed the 2004 Ukrainian winner Ruslana, who represented the country with local images, music and dance of the Hutsul-people. Here as well, the local and traditional were combined, as the song was sung partly in English and was mixed with modern styles of music and performance.[247] Baker argues that this mixing of traditional and new is emphasizing the exotic value of the performance, which signifies a self-exoticizing strategy.[248] Buranovskiye Babushki's performance fits perfectly in this self-exoticizing tradition, where local, timeless, 'pure' performance is celebrated. It plays on the well-known Orientalist stereotype of the Russian babushka, which is widely recognized in European audiences. In opposition to Ruslana, however, it recontextualizes this self-

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[244] Miazhevich, "Sexual Excess in Russia's Eurovision Performances", 249.
[245] Ibid., 252.
[246] The song is about the grandmothers waiting for children and relatives to come, baking cookies, celebrating being together, singing together, dancing together, overflowing happiness (William Lee Adams'Party for Everybody' lyrics – Buranovskiye Babushki (ESC 2012, Russia)". *Wiwibloggs.* 11/03/2012. http://wiwibloggs.com/2012/03/11/party-for-everybody-lyrics-buranovskiye-babushki-esc-2012-russia/15255/).
[247] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 174/175.
[248] Ibid, 177.

exoticizing tradition in a humorous setting: the juxtaposition of tradition and modern music is not only a sign of Russia moving from tradition to modernity without losing its exotic values, but is also used to emphasize a sense of humor.

3.3 Race & Ethnicity

The inclusion of African Romanian performers in Mandinga's "Zaleilah" might be striking, but it is a common strategy in Eurovision, and widely used in the 2012 event. What role does race play in determining a national image in Eurovision? And how can the performance of racial and ethnic identity be framed within the dichotomy between self-exoticizing and hypermodernity?

Striking races and ethnicities have been common markers of representation of national performers in Eurovision. Alf Björnberg discusses ethnicity in ESC performances, but with a focus on 'ethnic music', connecting musical stylistic markers of a specific nation-state that can be used as a free-floating signifier to represent any country. Björnberg mentions the Swedish tango song "Augustin" (1959), the Finnish "Reggea O.K." (1981), the Danish flamenco "Shame on You" (2004) and the Ukrainian rap "Razom nas bahato" (2005)[249]. Björnberg goes on to describe countries performing an ethnic sound of their own culture, which is a common self-exoticizing strategy by performers from the Eastern periphery, but is also used by Northern and Western countries such as Irish and Scandinavian performers, which integrate local folklore into their performances. In mentioning the actual race of the performers themselves instead of ethnic musical signifiers, Björnberg mentions a rise of performers with a non-European racial background, concluding that their inclusion in the representation of the nation-state is a sign of recognition and celebration of cultural diversity and cultural connections to others.[250] This ties in with Stevenson's concept of an inclusive idea of cultural citizenship, where previously marginalized social and ethnic groups are incorporated in a cultural pluralistic idea of citizenship.[251] I would argue, however, that the inclusion of racial diversity signals not only a celebration of diversity, but also the commodification of race as a performative selling point, as a way to represent a nation-state that celebrates political correct values of diversity.

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[249] Björnberg, "Return to Ethnicity," 20.
[250] Ibid., 23.
[251] Stevenson, "Globalization, national cultures and cultural citizenship", 42.

The 2012 Eurovision Song Contest offered a wide variety of performances with members of different racial and ethnic backgrounds than the majority ethnicity of the nation-state they were representing, especially in the Western- and Northern European countries. The performers from Austria, Norway, France, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands and Denmark exhibited a wide variety of ethnicities on stage, clearly representing the racial and ethnic diversity of those countries.[252] The most prominent example is the winner Sweden's contestant, Loreen, who is Moroccan-Swedish, sharing the stage with Texas-born dancer Ausben Jordan, who is of mixed Afrian-American and Native-American descent. Next to these countries, who have known to be represented by performances with different racial backgrounds, two Eastern-European countries were also represented by non-white, racially diverse performers: Romania (which I discussed in the previous section) and Ukraine. These performances are more striking, as both Romania and Ukraine are not known to be very multi-cultural, in the sense that they don't have large racially and ethnically non-European populations.

Radano & Bohlman write that the "imagination of race not only informs perceptions of musical practice but is at once constituted within and projected into the social through sound."[253] Like Turino, they argue that sound and music can function as a medium to project ideology or, in this case, race. They argue that in European nationalist rhetorics, as opposed to American semantics, race, unlike ethnicity, is not imagined as a signifier of separation, stating that "[i]n the European racial imagination, race and racism afflict American music; race is, moreover, often fetishized as an American condition, whose impact is all the more intense because of the absence of tradition, that is, of a sustained music history that can be claimed nationalistically"[254]. In the case of Romania and Ukraine, then, including performers of a non-white race (especially black performers) might signify a link to American music history's fascination with race.

Strikingly black: The case of Ukraine's 'Afro-Ukrainian voice'

In 2012, Ukraine was represented by the Congolese-Ukrainian singer Gaitana

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[252] Another notable performance in this context is Sofi Marinova, representing Bulgaria, who is of Romani descent.

[253] Ronald Radano & Philip V. Bohlman, "Introduction: Music and Race, Their Past, Their Presence". Introduction to *Music and the Racial Imagination*, edited by Radano & Bohlman (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5.

[254] Ibid., 27.

Essami, who, according to the Eurovision website, is "famous for her Afro-Ukrainian voice."[255] Her song, "Be My Guest", was chosen in the Ukrainian national finale by expert judges, representatives of the Ukrainian music business, as well as televoting. Although she was quite popular with the public, reaching second place in their evaluation, it was the expert judges' vote that made the difference and made her win the competition.

The performance of Gaitana starts with an upbeat pop intro. There are four screens on stage, showing a fiery light show. When the screens slide away from each other, Gaitana steps out behind them in a long white dress with a traditional Ukrainian wreath in her hair.[256] At this point, traditional Ukrainian surma horns are heard over the beat. With a powerful voice, Gaitana begins to sing: 'Welcome / Girl and Boy / Take my hand / Let's enjoy'. The screens behind her now showcase digital dancers in different bright colors, performing a street dance. In the first chorus, where Gaitana repetitively sings 'Now you can be my guest', four real dancers, all men, pop out behind the screen, playing trumpets. They are wearing white, traditional looking skirts with different color patterns on them.

In the second verse, the song structure turns to a dubstep beat. While Gaitana is in the foreground, the dancers perform a breakdance behind her. When the next chorus sets in, their moves are choreographed in the same manner as the digital dancers on the screen. In the bridge, the screens are moved together again. In the final chorus, the four dancers are blowing their trumpets again, and hundreds of digital people are dancing in sync on the four screens. This seems like a clever way to dismiss the EBU rule that only up to six people can be part of the on-stage performance. The song ends with a trumpet sound and pyrotechnics.

Musically and textually, "Be My Guest" fits well within the boundaries of Eurovision aesthetics. At first hearing, it seems like a generic upbeat pop song, with some musical folklore provided by the surma horns, instruments that were also included in Ukraine's winning performance of 2004 by Ruslana. The text is highly inoffensive, as it repeatedly addresses the listener to 'Be My Guest', filled with phrases of love and friendship. What makes this performance stand out is the race of the performer: Gaitana

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[255] Olena Omelyanchuk,"Ukraine: Gaitana is the Ukrainian Guest in Baku," *Eurovision.tv* (2012), http://www.eurovision.tv/page/news?id=46773&_t=ukraine_gaitana_is_the_ukrainian_guest_in_baku (13/04/2013).

[256] Paul Jordan referred to this headdress as traditionally Ukrainian in a presentation during the 2013 Eurovision conference hosted by Malmö University: 'A Transnational Vision for Europe? Performances, Politics and Places of the Eurovision Song Contest', 15-17th of May 2013.

Essami is Congolese-Ukrainian. In an interview with *Time Magazine*, Essami reveals some controversy that her performance has caused. Yuriy Syrotyuk of the Ukrainian ultra-nationalist Svoboda (Freedom) Party claimed in an interview with the *Kyiv Post* that Gaitana isn't fit to represent Ukrainian culture. He preferred a band performing Cossack rock, saying that Gaitana would "provoke an association of Ukraine as a country of a different continent." [257]

Picture 3.3: Ukraine's Gaitana performing "Be My Guest" (1: 22)[258]

From a perspective of values celebrating racial diversity and multi-ethnicity, which many Western- and Northern-European countries have proudly incorporated in their Eurovision performances, it might be admirable that Ukraine chose an African-Ukrainian performer to represent the country. Of course it is definitely racist to dismiss Gaitana as the country's representative based on her race, but it is an interesting choice to say the least. According to the Ukraine State Census of 2001, only 0.4 percent of the

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[257] William Lee Adams, "Ukraine's Eurovision Selection Marred by Right-Wing Racism," *Time World*, (March 5th 2012), http://world.time.com/2012/03/05/ukraines-eurovision-selection-marred-by-right-wing-racism/

[258] Gaitana, "Be My Guest," *Youtub*,. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLsTn_li5d8 (15/04/2013).

population was of an unspecified 'other' ethnicity.[259] How many of these people are African-Ukrainian is not specified. If Ukraine's African-Ukrainian community is so small, then the odds of one of them representing the country seem quite small. Why, then, did the Ukrainian judges (and audience) favor Gaitana?

Without dismissing her talent, it seems Gaitana's race is a determining factor in her success. It's what makes her stand out, at least in Ukraine. I would argue that her ethnicity serves a specific function in Ukraine's strategy. It's a physical signifier of Ukraine as a multi-ethnic country, which would mean that it would fit right in with the values of Western-European countries' ethnic strategies. Emphasizing the race and ethnicity of the performers as a physical reminder of multi-ethnicity fits within the strategy of hypermodernity. This strategy is enhanced by the technology of the digital dancers, which can be seen as another attempt to showcase Ukrainian modernity. The music itself signifies modern upbeat pop, even the recent dubstep hype. That the song is sung in English is another sign that this performance aims to cohere to an international, modern, Western-European popular music sound.[260] This idea is strengthened by the accompanying promo video, in which Gaitana can be seen singing in a soccer stadium. Here, she quite literally invites the world to be her guest at the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship, which was hosted in part by Ukraine.[261]

This focus on Ukraine as multi-ethnic and modern doesn't mean that Ukraine isn't building upon self-exoticizing practices. The outfits and the surma horns give the performance a distinct local flavor. The self-exoticizing isn't based on Ukraine's traditional culture alone. It's interestingly mixed with modern exoticizing of the Ukrainian Self, this time in the form of a black woman. The performance is a hybrid of old and new, a Self that incorporates a racial Other, appropriating foreign styles of music and ideas on ethnicity, recontextualizing it as Ukrainian. Radano & Bohlman write that music "occupies a domain at once *between* races but has the potential of embodying – *becoming* – different racial significations."[262] The musical incorporation

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[259] "All-Ukrainian Population Census 2001," *Ukrainian Census 2001* (2001), http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/

[260] It is important to note that modernity doesn't equal 'Western-Europe'. It is 'Eurocentric' (or, rather, 'Western-Eurocentric') to say that the inclusion of modern technology in a performance should be seen as a notion of 'Western-Europeanness'. Still, in combination with Gaitana's ethnicity, her use of the English language and the prominance of upbeat dance beats, I claim that the focus on modern technology fits well within a performance that tries hard to convey a message of being culturally Western-European.

[261] Gaitana, "Be My Guest (Ukraine) 2012 Eurovision Song Contest Official Preview Video", *Youtube.* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-LyyCxlSFc

[262] Radano & Bohlman, "Introduction", 8.

of an upbeat pop sound that combines 'Europop' and European dubstep with American disco aesthetics and the English language, an 'African' voice and Ukrainian traditional instruments then forms a musical hybrid, embodied by the contrast between a dark-skinned woman and her white dress and traditional Ukrainian headdress.

This brings a communist Eastern-European tradition to mind which is described by Bohlman, in which state-sponsored folk music ensembles weaved bits and pieces of several regions into one "folk fabric"[263], one unifying representation of the nation. Bohlman describes this musical superabundance and the merging of local styles as a tradition which confronted viewers with local difference by insisting that this difference didn't matter.[264] The idea of appropriating difference to deny difference seems a key element in Gaitana's performance, as her physical Otherness is appropriated to represent the nation, to deny that her race sets her apart from the rest of Ukraine, effectively erasing the idea that Ukraine itself is a place where racism could be an issue.

The color of Gaitana's skin is important if we discuss it within another tradition: blackface. In the history of American popular music, race has always been an element in music which fascinated audiences. Radano describes America's fascination with primitivist notions of 'natural rhythm' in black bodies, which was an important element in the reception of African-American musical styles, from swing and jazz to funk and hip hop.[265] Lott's account of the American tradition of blackface minstrelsy argues that this tradition was rooted in a white obsession with black bodies.[266] He argues that "[t]he very form of blackface acts – an investiture in black bodies – seems a manifestation of the particular desire to try on the accents of "blackness" and demonstrates the permeability of the color line."[267]

I would argue that Gaitana can be seen as an embodiment of blackface at large, within the context of the Eurovision Song Contest in which racial and ethnic

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[263] Philip V. Bohlman, "The Remembrance of Things Past: Music, Race, and the End of History in Modern Europe," in Radano, Ronald & Philip V. Bohlman, eds. *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) 666.
[264] Ibid., 666.
[265] Ronald Radano, "Hot Fantasies: American Modernism and the Idea of Black Rhythm," in Radano, Ronald & Philip V. Bohlman, eds. *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 459.
[266] Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.
[267] Ibid., 6.

appropriation are not uncommon.[268] Gaitana obviously doesn't have to blacken her face, but she is, essentially, a black face of a country and culture in which physical blackness is largely absent. Her race is commodified to 'sell' an image of a multicultural, modern, non-racist Ukraine. This is similar to the American context of blackface, where, according to Lott, "practices taken as black were occasionally interracial creations whose commodification on white stages attested only to whites' greater access to public distribution (and profit)"[269].

Lott discusses this process as "true to the [American] nation's internally contradictory makeup"[270], in which different vernaculars hybridized and proliferated.[271] Gaitana, however, as a Ukrainian contestant in a European song contest, stands outside of this American tradition. Her 'hybridized musical vernacular' is incorporating many elements from spaces outside the Ukrainian nation. Her 'blackness' signals different elements in the context of a popular music which is not only influenced by American traditions, but also by European traditions.

Although colonialism is largely outside of Ukraine's national experience, it does play an important role in the multicultural societies that Gaitana's performance of blackness seems to refer to. Rasaldo describes a feeling of 'imperialist nostalgia' in Western popular cultures, which mourns the loss of something that the colonial culture itself has destroyed[272]; similarly, Fricker describes a postcolonial country like Great-Britain's Euroskepticism and, connected to it, mocking the Eurovision Song Contest, as reflecting anxiety over an Empire lost. Great-Britain has to renegotiate its power position, facing perceived power loss in its membership of the European Union.[273] Fricker writes that Great-Britain has nonetheless been represented by racially and ethnically diverse solo artists and groups eight times since 1998.[274] Driven by nostalgia, a fascination with race or indeed a genuine will to represent the nation-state as diverse as it is, Great-Britain is one of many Western-European countries that have often been represented by a diverse mix of races and ethnicities in the Eurovision Song Contest.

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[268] Case in point is the Dutch 2012 contestant Joan Franka, who appropriated native-American culture by performing in an feathered headdress. Examples of musical appropriation of external and internal ethnical Others are discussed by Björnberg (Björnberg, "Return to ethnicity", 20).

[269] Lott, *Love and Theft*, 39.

[270] Ibid., 93.

[271] Ibid., 93.

[272] Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory,* 26 (Spring 1989) (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989): 107/108.

[273] Fricker, ''It's Just Not Funny Anymore', 54.

[274] Ibid., 73.

Gaitana's performance in the ESC might just be an imitation of these countries' performative aesthetics, in which race, deliberately or not, place a big role.

Gaitana's performance is reminiscent of another extraordinary representation of Ukraine in the Eurovision Song Contest: that of 2007 participant Verka Serduschka, who finished in second place in the 2007 ESC, after Serbia's Marija Serifovic. Serduschka, whose actual name is Andriy Danylko, is a drag queen who is popular throughout the former Soviet Union countries. Her participation in the 2007 competition angered Ukrainian nationalists, as they didn't want her to represent the country.[275] The choice for Serduschka, like that for Gaitana, seems like a choice to represent the country as modern, Western, and liberal.

Gaitana's "Be My Guest" can be compared to another striking performance: Estonia's *Everybody*, performed by Tanal Pader, Dave Benton & 2XL. This performance won the contest in 2001 and is special because Aruba-born Dave Benton was the first black artist to win the competition.[276] What really makes this fact interesting is that the 2001 win for Estonia was part of a deliberate nation branding strategy. Choosing a black performer to represent Estonia with a Latin-inspired disco-song was no coincidence. The Estonian Human Development Report of 2000 stated: "]t]hus the best tactical choice for success in the Eurovision song contest is not a simple orientation to the authentic West, but rather making oneself favorable to other regions. This means we are to offer western style songs to those who cannot vote for the West due to historical or cultural considerations."[277]

This is an interesting strategy: through appearing Western, Estonia wanted to win votes from Eastern-European countries which otherwise would not vote for Western countries. This is a prime example of nation branding: the nation-state's image is adapted to be more Western to 'sell' Estonia to an Eastern 'electorate', or Eurovision audience. The strategy eventually yielded success, as the artists won the competition. The following year gave Estonia the opportunity to represent Estonia in more depth, as they were hosting the competition and designed the 'postcard' videos. The strategy didn't work quite as well for Gaitana: her performance ended in 15th place in the Eurovision finale.

[275] Helen Fawkes, "Eurovision act angers Ukrainians, "*BBC News* (2007). http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6516927.stm

[276] Björnberg, "Return to Ethnicity," 22.

[277] *Estonian Human Development Report* (2000) (Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University, Institute of International and Human Sciences, 2000), as quoted in Bolin, Göran. "Visions of Europe: Cultural technologies of nation-states." International Journal of Cultural Studies, 9: 2 (2006): 189.

The prominence of race and ethnicity can be explained in two ways. First, it can be seen as a move towards a representation of the nation-state as being modern and 'Western' because of its multi-ethnic and racially diverse character. This perspective fits perfectly within the strategy of adapting a hypermodern character, although in the case of Ukraine's Gaitana, this is complicated by traditional elements in her performance. A second explanation is that these performances follow the 2001 winning strategy of Estonia, in which the country chose to represent itself as an alternative to Western competitors in producing a 'Western' cultural product to Eastern voters that wouldn't vote for Western countries because of political, cultural and historic reasons. In the case of Gaitana, this is less likely, as the performance was chosen by televoting and representatives of the Ukrainian music business and not as part of a brand strategy that includes calculating political views of foreign audiences.

Although Björnberg argues that the inclusion of performers with an extra-European ethnicity is a sign of recognition and celebration of cultural diversity[278], I would argue that the selection of these artists is rather more complicated. These artists seem to be chosen not despite, but *because* of their race as a physical reminder of multicultural modernity. This would be in line with previous controversial decisions by Ukraine, such as the selection of drag queen Verka Serduschka in 2007, to represent the country. It reflects a complex relationship between East and West, where the East tries to undermine the Western stereotype of the East as mono-ethnic, straight and culturally uniform, by adapting a Western image that celebrates difference in ethnicity and sexuality.

3.4 Humor & Political satire

The self-exoticizing/hypermodern dichotomy might seem like a simple division of two opposing strategies. However, many performances that are self-exoticizing incorporate elements in dance, language and musical style from a global aesthetic, often derived from Western-European and American forms, making the division not as clear-cut as it appears to be. One performance in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest in particular is complicating matters: Montenegro's folk-influenced rap song "Euro Neuro", performed by Rambo Amadeus. Despite the non-political character of the

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[278] Bolin, "The Return of Ethnicity," 23.

Eurovision Song Contest, this performance is decidedly political, as it discusses the European financial crisis. It's a prime example of the performance of political satire in a supposedly apolitical event such as Eurovision, as described by Raykoff (2007).[279] How does humor affect the presentation of a nation brand in a cultural performance? And how does a humorous performance fit in with the self-exoticizing or hypermodern strategies which I described earlier?

Rambo Amadeus, whose real name is Antonije Pušić, was internally chosen by the Montenegrin public broadcaster RTCG to represent Montenegro. Pušić explained that "the goal of his participation was to help branding Montenegro as an attractive tourist destination, a task he considered even harder than coming up with a song for the contest"[280]. Pušić is a comedian, and this is made very clear in his performance of "Euro Neuro". This was the first performance in the first semi-final, but it failed to place for the finals.

As the performance of "Euro Neuro" starts, the stage is covered in mists. Rambo Amadeus is unrecognizable, dressed in a black habit, singing the words "Eurosceptic / Analphabetic / Try not to be hermetic" in a low voice, accompanied by violins. After this, he lets out an evil laugh, throws off the habit, and the rhythm starts to kick in. On stage are a big wooden 'Trojan' donkey, and a band consisting of a drummer and a bass player. Rambo Amadeus, a slightly overweight man dressed in a black tuxedo-jacket, with long hair and glasses, is rapping (or rather, talking) in English, over a funk-beat. He's gesticulating with his hands and walking back and forth, making some movements, but not really dancing. His body language might signify that of a drunk man talking politics in a bar, which might be part of the joke: Amadeus is in fact discussing politics.

In the chorus, in which Amadeus is saying "Euro Neuro" (pronouncing it in a Greek way, instead of an Anglicized manner), three breakdancers come up on the stage. The music is accompanied by violins, playing a traditional-sounding melody over the funk beats. The frantic images on the electronic screen show flashes of cartwheels, small houses and glass business buildings, as well as euro-bills. Right after the chorus, Amadeus says "Hello Azerbaijan!", and some phrases in Montenegrin / German. One of the phrases is shown on a banner rolled out by the dancers, which reads "Euro Neuro

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[279] Raykoff. "Camping on the Borders of Europe", 3.
[280] Marco Brey, "Rambo Amadeus to represent Montenegro in Baku!", *Eurovision.tv* (2011),
http://www.eurovision.tv/page/news?id=42613&_t=rambo_amadeus_to_represent_montenegro_in_baku

Heute Habe Hobotnica". Combined with the previous lyrics "Blaue Grotte Ausflug do Zanjica", it could be translated to 'On today's trip to the blue grotto and Zanjica, we're having Octopus!'[281], referring to two of the main tourist attractions of Montenegro. In the promotional video for the song, in which Amadeus is shown riding a donkey through picturesque landscapes, as well as in rich, touristic environments such as a swimming pool, a yacht, a fitness club and a discotheque, he is yelling this specific line through a megaphone while guiding tourists on a little boat floating around the Church of Our Lady of the Rocks in the Bay of Kotor.

Picture 3.3: Montenegro's Rambo Amadeus performing "Euro Neuro" (3:04)[282]

In the following verse, other lyrics are rolled out on a banner: "Euro Neuro, give me chance to refinance", followed by "Euro Neuro, Monetary Break Dance", after which Amadeus is calling for the audience to throw their hands up. One of the breakdancers is wrapped up in the lyrics and carried away by the others. The song

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[281] William Lee Adams, "Montenegro's singer Takes on Euro-Zone Crisis," *Time World* (2012), http://world.time.com/2012/04/06/rambo-amadeuss-euro-neuro-eurovision-takes-on-the-eurozone/
[282] Rambo Amadeus, "Euro Neuro," *Youtube,* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHnqF5PLP2w (29/04/2013).

suddenly ends when Amadeus sings "Give me chance [or perhaps change] to re…", breaking off in the middle of the sentence. He shows his empty pockets, and breaks out in a big smile when he receives his ovation.

The musical signs of the performance point towards a strategy in between self-exoticizing and hypermodernity. The song is a rap song and the dance style (breaking) fits well within a hip hop aesthetic. As sampling is one of the key elements in hip hop musical performance, the more traditional Montenegrin/Balkan instrumentation[283] and melodies are easily incorporated into the overall hip hop sound. The use of traditional and modern instruments effectively mixes past and present into one specific sound. Local tradition is literally mixed with modern, American music and dance.

The lyrics of "Euro Neuro" are of central importance in this performance. As there is a lack of melody, the focus of the audience goes to the spoken words of Amadeus. His thick accent, bad sense of rhythm and many grammatical mistakes seem to be part of a performance that is meant to be more comical than musical. The lyrics are simple, and mainly consist of rhyming key words about the European economic crisis: "Euro neuro, don't be dogmatic bureaucratic / You need to become pragmatic / To stop change climatic automatic / Need contribution from the institution / To find solution for pollution /To save the children of the evolution." The song is about Rambo Amadeus reflecting on the Euro-crisis, possibly calling out the European Union to support the weaker member states financially.

The striking thing about this song about the Eurocrisis and Euroscepticism is that it's not from one of the 'usual suspects' or Eurosceptic states. Montenegro has the Euro as its official currency and is a candidate country for EU membership. It even gets financial assistance from the European Commission (34.6 million in 2013).[284] A public opinion poll conducted by the Montenegrin CEDEM (Centre for Democracy and Human Rights) in July 2012 shows that 66% of the questioned population supports the EU, against 18% of non-supporters and 16% having no opinion.[285] In this context, the selection of this artist performing this particular song by the national public broadcaster RTCG to represent Montenegro in the Eurovision Song Contest seems strange, at least

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[283] The song uses bass, drums, and an electronic sound that could possibly be a remix of the 'Gusle', a traditional Montenegrin string instrument, which can be heard in the center section of the song, as well as violins playing Oriental tunes in the 'exotic' Phrygian scale.

[284] *European Commission. Enlargement - Montenegro.*
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/montenegro/index_en.htm

[285] CEDEM, *Political Public Opinion: July 2012* (Podgorica: CEDEM, 2012),
http://www.cedem.me/en/component/jdownloads/viewdownload/42/342.html 29/04/2013, 3.

politically. The Eurosceptic undertones in Amadeus' performance do not seem to represent the general opinion of the Montenegrin population. Instead, the performance's skepticism might try to appeal to Eurosceptic audiences to win votes through politics instead of performing politics for politics sake. Amadeus uses the debate on the monetary crisis and financial aid to EU crisis-countries to gain support from national audiences who might vote out of political sympathy.

The message in this song, however, seems more complicated than a simple call to the European institutions to be less bureaucratic and to support the crisis-countries financially, and might actually be critiquing Eurosceptic countries. The lyrics do discuss institutional problems, but they are sometimes more nonsensical, mixing critique on nationalism and puritanism with other '–isms': nudism, rheumatism, bicyclism, etc. As this is a comic performance, the singer's lyrics shouldn't be taken literally: he is playing a character, the character of Rambo Amadeus, who seems to be a stereotypical backwards, middle-aged drunk man talking politics, pretending to know everything. His thick accent, his gesticulation and, in the video, his donkey, suggest that he is from a backward region that wants money from the European Union. In the video, the donkey eventually eats up the money in his back pocket. Combining this with the imagery on stage of the wooden, Trojan donkey and the lyrical content, with words that are almost all derived from the Greek language, the performance becomes satirical, with a focus on Greece as a problematic country. In one reading, the performance can be seen to critique the European institutions for being too bureaucratic and not supporting the poorer countries; from another point of view, however, this might be actually a critique on these countries which literally eat up all the money. The call to "give me chance to refinance", then, seems like a bad idea coming from a drunk in a bar, who says he has "no ambition / for high position in competition / with air condition".

I would argue that this satirical performance has been made to appeal to an international audience within a context of the euro-crisis and the debate on monetary funding on EU crisis-countries, focusing on Greece. It tries to appeal to viewers from these countries on one level, but on a deeper level also to critical audiences who sympathize with the European institutions. The song can be interpreted in both ways, depending on the viewers' horizons of expectation. Rambo Amadeus's strategy is to win over audiences through his humor and political satire, whichever side of the Eurocrisis-debate audiences might be on, instead of focusing on the musical quality of his performance. This strategy didn't work, as audiences seemed to judge the

performance mostly on the latter quality: "Euro Neuro" did not place for the finals.

To look at this performance in the context of nation branding, makes it all the more complicated. The accompanying video, which is lost to most of the Eurovision viewers, presents the beauties of Montenegro, as well as the satirical character of Rambo Amadeus 'spoiling the fun' by being a backward, rude man, who invades yachts and clubs. The message of the video seems to be a comedic take on a brand of Montenegro as beautiful, but filled with Montenegrins who might spoil your holiday with their rudeness. The actual performance in Eurovision presents the same comedic character, representing Montenegro through being backwards and drunk. Combined with the musical signifiers of hip hop mixed with traditional instruments, Montenegro is represented as a place where humor is important and a place which is not scared to give critique: a modern European place, that takes pride in its traditional culture, but is open to new imaginations of Self through the use of hip hop and humor. In mocking itself, Montenegro's performance presents us with the question: where does this fit within the strategies of self-exoticization and hypermodernity?

The answer to that question is complicated. I would argue that Montenegro's performance fits both strategies. It is presenting an exotic, although negative, image of itself through the persona of Rambo Amadeus. Simultaneously, like in Russia's "Party for Everybody", one of the key elements of "Euro Neuro" is the element of humor. A good sense of humor might signify that this is a country that isn't taking itself too seriously and is therefore on equal footing as the West. It might even reflect some of the developments described by both Fricker and Coleman in their discussions of satirist Eurovision discourse in the UK as a backlash to perceived power loss in a changing Europe, personified by BBC-commentator Terry Wogan[286].

By mocking both itself and the perceived peripheral regions of Europe, Montenegro's performance can be seen in light of a discourse of mocking and theatrical performances that has been used within Eurovision for a longer time.[287] At the same time, Rambo Amadeus is presenting Montenegro as a country which is part of the most important European debate of the moment: the euro-crisis. By being critical towards the financial aid that countries like Greece claim to have a right to, this performance places

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[286] Fricker, "It's Just Not Funny Anymore", 54; Coleman, "Why is the Eurovision Song Contest Ridiculous?", 136.

[287] Notable Eurovision performances which use (Self-)mocking include Germany (Guildo Horn, 1998).;Ukraine (Verka Serduchka, 2007) and Ireland (Dustin the Turkey, 2008) and Other acts that focused on theatrics and dressing up include Finland (Lordi, 2006); the UK (Scooch, 2007) and Latvia (Pirates of the Sea, 2008).

Montenegro not within the European periphery, but within the European center. In doing so in the musical format of hip hop and with a comical, satirical performance, I would argue that "Euro Neuro"'s combination of stereotypical and musical self-exoticization with the appropriation of a global musical style (hip hop) as an instrument to appeal to audiences from both East and West, center and peripheries, through presenting Montenegro as both modern and exotic, but most importantly, as humorous.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have put theories on identity and image that I discussed in the previous chapters into practice, by looking at the question: How is a nation-branded image performed in the Eurovision Song Contest? The representation of nation-states in the Eurovision Song Contest might not always be a conscious part of a nation branding strategy, but the choices that many national audiences and/or national public broadcasters have made do reflect a national drive to be represented in a specific way.

I have chosen to frame my research through studying two specific strategies that many participating countries from 'peripheral Europe' employ in deciding their position against a Western hegemony: self-exoticization and hypermodernity, based on the hyperwesternization, described by Baker[288], which can lead to national political debate and public discussion, either about the appropriateness of a self-exoticizing performer representing the nation-state or about the disembeddedness of a musical performance that can hardly be linked to a specific national aesthetic. Focusing on these two strategies, I chose to focus on four themes in which I would study the phenomena of self-exotic and hypermodern Self-representation and nation branding: genre, language, race, and satire.

The first two of these themes, genre and language, provide clues on a country's identity by focusing on modern or traditional images, presenting international or local style. The cases of Russia's and Romania's representatives, respectively Buranovskiye Babushki and Mandinga, complicate the linguistic politics in the ESC, where nation-states usually choose a national language or, in most cases, English for their performances. Like many performers, Buranovskiye Babushki mix the English language with a local or national language and a traditional folk-inspired sound and image. The

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[288] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 174-178.

English language seems to be employed mostly to convey the actual lyrics, as most people won't understand the original language of the performance, which is the local minority language of Udmurt. Mandinga, on the other hand, is making it hard for the viewer to know which country they are representing. Their song isn't in English or in Romanian, but is Spanish. Combined with a Latin American sound and a multi-racial appearance, it seems Romania is trying to identify itself with the Latin American brand. The language here becomes a sign, conveying not a message within the text, but as a text itself. It signifies a clear strategy of the hypermodern, heavily borrowing cultural signifiers from a global context (in this case, interestingly enough, a genre which is not dominated by the United States or Western-Europe). The same can be said about the use of Udmurt: its meaning won't be understood by most viewers, but it does communicate a nation brand of Russia as exotic, rural, charming and peculiarly interesting.

A strategy that is similar to Mandinga's use of Spanish is the performance of race in the 2012 ESC. Mandinga is not the only band to include non-white artists. Mostly Western- and Northern-European countries are represented by a diverse set of racial minorities, which, given the fact that there is indeed a high level of racial diversity in these countries, doesn't seem to be overtly strange. The representation of Ukraine by an African-Ukranian woman, however, seems peculiar, as the reality is that neither Ukraine nor Romania have large non-European ethnic and racial minorities living within its borders. Something interesting is going on here: the race of a performer in the Eurovision Song Contest seems to symbolize something. I argue that the prominence of race and ethnicity in the Eurovision Song Contest has two possible explanations. Firstly, countries like Ukraine and Romania are represented by black performers to present a nation brand of their countries as modern and Western, mirroring Western performers in their presentation of multi-ethnicity, which would fit in well with the strategy of hyper-westernization and, connected to it, hypermodernity. A second explanation is that these performances follow the 2001 winning strategy of Estonia, in which the country chose to represent itself as an alternative to Western competitors in producing a 'Western' cultural product to Eastern voters that wouldn't vote for Western countries because of political, cultural and historic reasons. This strategy was part of a deliberate nation branding strategy.

I argue that the representatives of Romania and Ukraine, which were both chosen by a mix of expert judges and televoting by a national audience, seem to be chosen not despite, but *because* of their race as a physical reminder of multi-ethnic,

hybrid modernity. This would be in line with previous controversial decisions by Ukraine, such as the selection of drag queen Verka Serduschka in 2001, to represent the country. It reflects a complex relationship between East and West, where the East tries to undermine the Western stereotype of the East as mono-ethnic, straight and culturally uniform, by adapting a Western image that celebrates difference in ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality.

Finally, the case of Montenegro's Rambo Amadeus proved an interesting example of the cultural representation of political satire. Although a decidedly apolitical event, the Eurovision Song Contest is a stage where different nation-states come together, which gives contestants the possibility to affect politics, at least if these politics stay under the radar of the organization. The Montenegrin representative Rambo Amadeus, who was asked to perform by the Montenegrin national public broadcaster, used the ongoing debate on the euro-crisis as the basis for his comical performance. Amadeus tried to appeal to audiences from both sides of the debate, offering different levels of reading his satirical performance. Eventually, however, Europe didn't get the joke: Amadeus was judged not on his sense of satire, but on his performance's lack of musicality.

Within the context of nation branding, the performance of "Euro Neuro" was interesting in that it represented Montenegro as exotic, but in a mostly negative way. The Rambo Amadeus persona is rude, backwards, and possibly drunk. The self-exoticizing strategy of incorporating national stereotypes, even if they're negative, is used here to present Montenegro as both exotic and connecting to a strategy of self-mocking: it is not taking itself seriously, and through mocking others and Self, Montenegro presents itself as a country with an opinion and a sense of humor. Moreover, by being critical towards the financial aid that countries like Greece claim to have a right to, this performance places Montenegro not within the European periphery, but within the European center. In doing so within the musical format of hip hop and with a complicated comical performance, I argue that "Euro Neuro"'s stereotypical self-exoticization is actually an instrument to present Montenegro as modern, critical, cynical and humorous.

To come back to this chapter's main question, 'how is a nation-branded image performed in the Eurovision Song Contest?', I would argue that nation brands play a pivotal role in the performances of the Eurovision Song Contest of 2012. Although these brands might often not have been chosen consciously, they do confer a certain

image of the represented nation-states on the ESC stage. The cases of Russia, Romania, Ukraine and Montenegro have proven that signifiers of music, language, ethnicity and political ideology are important factors in Eurovision performances, signaling specific strategies for winning the contest. In most cases, these strategies could be identified as trying to convey an image of the Self as exotic, or of the Self as Western, fitting right into the Western hegemony.

Conclusion
The role of nation-branding in the Eurovision Song Contest

Imagine, for a second, that you are on the Eurovision stage. In front of you are thousands of fans and in your mind you see millions more tuning in from the comfort of their own homes. You can feel the adrenaline rushing through your veins as the stage lighting lights up, the tape has started to play the intro and the crane-camera swoops over you. However, you are not nervous: you have practiced your song for a long time now, and you are confident that you'll perform it at your best. But what if you do fail? What if you don't remember the lyrics, if you sing out of tune, or fall on your face? It wouldn't just cause shame on you as an individual, but shame on your entire nation. You'd better bring it.

Eurovision performers are not only individuals that happen to be on the stage. They are an embodiment of the nation-state, a living representation of an imagined community. As such, these artists are not only pressured to perform well for their own sakes, but also have the duty of representing their country appropriately, whatever that may entail. The representation of nation-states in the Eurovision Song Contest, and its connection to nation branding was the central subject of this thesis. My main question was: how do nation-states use the Eurovision Song Contest as a means of nation branding? I focused on nation branding within the performances of Eastern European nation-states (particularly Ukraine, Romania, Montenegro and Russia) in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest.

The representation of the nation-state can be interpreted quite literally, as artists use symbols of their specific nation: traditional clothing, instrumentation, dance styles, etc. In the 2012 event, Russia's Buranovskiye Babushki fulfilled this role by representing Russia as rural, folkloristic, exotic and traditional, with a touch of modern pop culture and humor thrown in the mix. In other cases, the national representational aspect of the performance is not so clear. Many artists perform in styles and genres that can hardly be described as part of a distinct national folkloristic culture. Then again, that's how culture works: it's an organic form of expression, which can't be held captive to only express a few aspects of a national community. Moreover, as (musical) culture becomes ever more globalized, musical signs from foreign countries can be appropriated to express meaning which signals a sense of belonging: to the nation-state,

to Europe, to global culture, or simply non-belonging.

Some of the Eurovision performances do both. Ukraine's 2012 representative Gaitana incorporated signs of belonging to the Ukrainian nation, such as her headdress and the use of the traditional surma horns, as well as signs of a movement towards decidedly Western and Western-European aesthetics and signs of hypermodernity, such as the use of dubstep and English lyrics, technology and most notably, the color of her skin, which is a bodily signifier of Ukraine as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial and therefore modern nation-state. Gaitana's ethnicity is made into a gimmick, a tool to signify multi-ethnicity that is hardly connected to Ukrainian reality. The black community in Ukraine (as well as Romania, which in 2012 was also represented in part by black performers) is so small that a choice for Gaitana as a national representative seems intricately connected to the color of her skin, connecting Ukraine to the Northern- and Western-European countries, which have often represented themselves with non-white artists. These countries, many of them former colonizers, are at least reflecting a reality, as they include many non-white ethnicities within their borders. Still, even their choice to represent themselves with non-white performers could equally be read as constituting a gimmick, as commodifying ethnicity to communicate an open-ness towards (racial) difference which might not be as ideal in reality as it is represented on the Eurovision stage.

The performance of ethnic diversity is one way of analyzing the 2012 event in the context of national representation and nation branding. Another prominent perspective is using genre and language as a signifiers of belonging. The prominence of the English language might only be a sign that songs need to be understood by a diverse European audience. If there is one language which is understood the most by this audience, it is English. Still, the use of English and, connected to it, genres that are derived from an Anglo-Saxon context might also reflect a connection to a Western aesthetic, in which the English language is dominant. Similarly, Romania's representative Mandinga's use of Spanish links directly to Latin-American identity, which is reinforced by salsa music, the colorful light show and clothes and, again, the racial diversity of the performers. Here, language is not only used as a sign system to express meaning through words[289], but also as a sign in itself, signifying belonging to an exotic, Latin-American brand. This brand is decidedly more attractive than Romania's

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[289] Although Spanish is a language which many Europeans have at least some basic understanding of.

own brand. In the use of a Latin-American aesthetic and the Spanish language, Romania aligns itself with Carribean, South-American, and in a European context, perhaps, Mediterranean countries. Each of these regions has a strong attraction to tourists.

A Eurovision performance, then, can be a tool for branding the nation in a particular way. Still, such a performance is not a direct example of nation branding. Nation branding projects are most often carried out by specialized agencies. A Eurovision performance, however, is shaped by many actors: performers, songwriters & lyricists, national juries and voting audiences, etc. Often, these several actors are not even members of the represented nation-state. Many songwriters from Sweden are working for several nation-states; even the artists themselves don't have to be national citizens.[290]

Although there are cases known of Eurovision performances as being part of a specific nation building strategy (Estonia 2001; Ukraine 2004), it is unlikely that all Eurovision performances are consciously trying to brand a nation. If you replace the term 'nation branding' with 'appropriate national representation', however, then I would argue that many performances are conceived of, created, voted for and viewed as performances of nationality. This would certainly explain the prominence of 'ethnic tradition' in Eurovision genres, instrumentation, lyrics, languages, clothes, shows, etc.

Within these specific performances, national identity is often defined quite narrowly, representing local (invented) traditions[291] to create a clear (and often stereotypical) image of the nation, designed to easily communicate a national image to an international audience during the course of a three-minute performance. The identity of the nation (defined by Anderson as an imagined community[292]) here is transformed into an image that will present a certain nation brand to the Eurovision audience. In my research, I have looked at these nation brands through the perspective of power structures between East and West as represented by popular culture, using concepts of hypermodern narratives of Eastern Selfs juxtaposed with self-exoticizing notions of Self-representation, as described by Baker[293], Solomon[294] and Coleman[295] . From this

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[290] French-Canadian singer Celine Dion is the most famous example of a singer who is representing a country she is not a citizen from. She represented Switzerland in 1988, winning the contest with the song 'Ne partez pas sans moi'.
[291] EJ. Hobsbawm, Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition,* E.J. Hobsbawm, ed. & Terence Ranger, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.
[292] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London / New York: Verso, 2006), 6.
[293] Baker, "Wild Dances and Dying Wolves", 174/175.
[294] Solomon, "The Oriental Body on the European Stage", 1.
[295] Coleman, "Why is the Eurovision Song Contest Ridiculous?", 127.

perspective, it is interesting to note that many of the strategies which Eastern European 'peripheral' nation-states employ can be seen to use one or both of these narratives in their Eurovision performances. It's also remarkable that the two performances which I have argued as explicit components of nation branding strategies, Estonia 2001's Tanal Pader, Dave Benton & 2XL and Ukraine 2004's Ruslana are both representing one end of this spectrum. Estonia's performance was hypermodern in using a black performer as a 'national blackface', as an instrument to appear more multi-ethnic (and therefore, I would argue, more Western-European and hypermodern); Ukraine's performance represented Ukraine as a wild, exotic, rural and ancient country, effectively presenting a hyper-exotic image of the Self.

I now come back to the main question of this thesis: how do nation-states use the Eurovision Song Contest as a means of nation branding?, focusing on nation branding within the performances of Eastern European nation-states in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest. I have tried to answer this question using three sub-questions, shifting my focus from identity to image and performance of this image. How does musical performance shape national and European identity in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest? How do nations use nation branding through culture as a tool to build an appealing image within the context of Eurovision? How is a nation-branded image performed in the Eurovision Song Contest?

I have argued that the music and physical performance in the Eurovision Song Contest provide opportunities for processes of national and European identity-formation to take place; that national representation in the festival is an important part of many Eurovision performances, be it consciously or unconsciously connected to a particular nation brand, or as part of a deliberate nation brand strategy; that nation brands play a pivotal role in the actual performances of the Eurovision Song Contest of 2012, which emphasize a nation-state's exotic and/or hypermodern narratives through the use of language, ethnicity, politics, etc. Nation-states, then, use the Eurovision Song Contest for nation-branding by presenting signs on stage which can easily be understood by an international, mostly European audience, during the course of a three-minute performance. These signs can create a specific nation-brand (and sometimes are deliberately chosen to do so by marketing bureaus), either by presenting an exotic image of the Self, or a hypermodern Self-image, or both.

This thesis has focused on a small part of national representation within the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest, trying to see how race and ethnicity, language, genre and

political satire can create a particular nation brand for Eastern European countries. However, as the Eurovision Song Contest is such a huge and diverse festival, with so many ideas on the representation of the nation-state, there is a lot more work to be done. Future research might focus on representations of other regions or specific countries; it could compare the modern-day festival with the earlier stages of the ESC; it could look at other aspects of identity such as age, gender, or use of queer imagery encoded in ESC performances, for instance. The Eurovision Song Contest will surely provide many more interesting performances of nationhood in the coming years.

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