MTV Europe: An Analysis of the Channel's Attempt to Design a Programming Strategy for a pan-European Youth Audience

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ascendancy of MTV (Music Television) in Europe. It concentrates, above all, on the period between 1987-1996, which represents the phase when the channel was transmitted as a single pan-European network. This thesis is an interdisciplinary study that offers a reading of music television texts in relation to the institutional context in which messages are produced and the different cultural contexts in which they are received. The analysis begins by locating the phenomenon of MTV within the political economy of the music and media industries. The factors which constitute the 'novelty' of MTV as a particular type of TV (i.e. a branded channel) in relation to a particular type of audience (i.e. the 'youth' who were traditionally out of the reach of terrestrial broadcasters) are assessed. The pan-European dimension of MTV is subsequently incorporated by way of a comparative analysis of the relative failure of the EC's initiatives to develop a pan-European broadcasting strategy and the relative success of MTV in this venture. A separate chapter explores the possibility of creating a sense of being European through shared tastes in music. The proposed arguments are then illustrated by case-studies conducted across the contrasting terrain of selected Western and Eastern European countries.

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CHAPTER 1

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INTRODUCTION

> In the midst of the cold war between the capitalist West and the communist East, an American Coca-Cola salesman[1] is trying to break through the Iron Curtain and sell his product to the Russians. Confidently, he says: "Napoleon blew it, Hitler blew it, but Coca-Cola's gonna pull it off!".

MTV[2] (Music Television) in Europe was launched on 1st August 1987, as part of the international expansion of MTV Networks. MTV was initially 50% owned by British media mogul Robert Maxwell and British Telecommunications and the American media conglomerate Viacom (each holding 25%), and was completely taken over by Viacom in February 1991 (cf. Banks, 1996:91). What began as an experimental pan-European version of the MTV format turned out to be the most successful of the several versions of MTV in the world, including the original MTV which was launched in the United States (US) in August 1981.

MTV's debut was viewed sceptically, partly because competing pan-European TV channels - the music video shows on media mogul Rupert Murdoch's Sky services, and ten hours of *Music Box* per day on Richard Branson's Super Channel - had proved to be unsuccessful, and partly because some questioned whether there would be enough advertising revenue to support such a service (cf. Banks, 1996; also see Collins, 1992; Frith, 1993). However, by the time that MTV moved from rented accommodation into newly bought Headquarters and studio facilities in London's Camden Town in July 1993, the company's financial prosperity was evident.

MTV not only found substantial advertising revenue but it also became the most convincing attempt to create a single channel for a pan-European youth audience, to date. No matter how corny MTV's representation of Europe was, no matter how

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[1] Played by James Cagney, starring in *One Two Three* (US/1961; dir. Billy Wilder).
[2] I shall use MTV meaning MTV Europe; if reference is made to another MTV network, it will be stated explicitly.

transparently manipulative its slogan 'one nation - one television station', there was something about MTV that transcended cultural and language differences and appealed to an international audience. Indeed, as Andrew Goodwin (1993a:xvi - whose study of MTV US is the most influential reading informing this analysis) remarks, it is difficult to ignore the 'cynical brilliance' behind the two most prominent features of MTV (as a cultural phenomenon): the issue of pleasure (i.e. MTV is 'fun to watch') and the fact that it invented a solution to the perennial problem of cable/satellite TV (i.e. how to generate revenue).

What makes MTV's success in Europe even more worthy of attention is that it cleverly capitalised on the socio-political currents surrounding its launch, that were beyond its makers' control. One has to bear in mind that MTV came to life at a time when the idea of a united Europe was fervently promoted by Western European politicians in preparation for the unification of twelve countries into a single market in 1992. Then, unexpectedly, in 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War. For the first time in decades, political circumstances fostered the hope of a united Europe. In an atmosphere of Europhoria, television was hailed as an indispensable tool in forging a sense of European identity, which will be a central theme in this thesis. The European Community's (EC) politicians talked of a 'television without frontiers'. However, their initiatives to create a form of television that could appeal to nationals of twelve countries failed, while MTV reached audiences in 37 countries (see appendix). Moreover, for the first time in the history of television, Western TV networks became accessible (without political restrictions) to Eastern Europeans. MTV was one of the first foreign channels to be available there on a daily basis. In this context, the Coca-Cola salesman's words quoted at the outset are quite prophetic. In fact, they can be rephrased as something like: 'Murdoch blew it, Branson blew it, the EC blew it, but MTV pulled it off'.

To put it simply, this thesis is an attempt to explain how MTV 'pulled it off'. To my knowledge, this is the first substantial study of MTV as a single pan-European channel. As such, it provides a historical account of the rise and fall of MTV's Europe (1987-1996), from a cross-cultural perspective. This thesis is written by an MTV fan,

someone who has not only routinely watched MTV since around 1990[3], but also had access to MTV in a way that an average fan does not, through close friendship with some 'MTV people'.

This thesis is also written by a scholar. As a scholarly piece, this study of MTV Europe covers three main research areas: (popular) music, television and (European) identity. As a contribution to the field of popular music studies, this thesis will provide an insight into a relatively untheorised aspect of the music video clip, that of its function in MTV's playlists. As a contribution to knowledge about television, this study will, above all, draw attention to another relatively untheorised phenomenon - narrowcasting - mainly, by drawing upon two disciplines: political economy and cultural studies. The question of European identity will be addressed by way of an "interdisciplinary dialogue across the social sciences" (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997:ix). It will be posed in manner that seeks to provide an understanding of contemporary identity-formation processes without privileging readings from either Western or Eastern European empirical loci and without limiting interpretations to either commercial or political concerns. Underlying this 'identity' discussion will be a critique of the cultural imperialism/globalisation framework, as articulated in relation to MTV. Thus, the wider arguments of this thesis are best summarised with references to ongoing debates within mass communications-related disciplines about global and local dynamics.

This thesis may, therefore, be of interest to both 'MTV philes' and 'MTV phobes' from different walks of life. However, what I refuse to do - but cannot guard against once this thesis is out of my hands - is to create a division between industry practitioners who "actually 'live' the culture of pop and therefore know more about it than the poor unfortunates who can only analyse it [...] and the elitist professor who writes about 'communications' with a secret (or not so secret) hatred of popular culture" (cf. Goodwin, 1993a:xxiii). Here, I wholeheartedly concur with Goodwin that one can both "enjoy popular culture and understand its appeal while also seeing at work its mechanisms of manipulation and its relationship to political power, as well as

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[3] Except for about 15 months (1996/7) when circumstances prevented me from watching MTV on regular (i.e. daily) basis.

its more liberatory aspects" (ibid.). In order to describe how I enjoy watching MTV while also putting it to scrutiny, this analysis begins by describing the methods that were employed to study MTV and by outlining the 'overarching frame of interpretation' (cf. Jensen, 1991a) of the arguments in relation to MTV.

1.1 METHODS

This section informs the reader about the subjectivities, sites and analytical tools employed in this thesis.

1.1.1 *SUBJECTIVITIES AND SITES*

My first experience of MTV dates back to around 1990 when a satellite dish was illegally erected on the roof of the building where I lived in Sarajevo. As a fashion-conscious woman, just turned twenty, I was completely fascinated by MTV from the moment I set my eyes on it. What I loved most about MTV was the immediacy of access to the latest fashion and music it provided. Any urban teenager in Yugoslavia knew that being in tune with trends in Western Europe was synonymous with being cool. Many Yugoslavs regularly travelled abroad, mainly on business or to visit relatives, but only a small fraction of those who travelled would bring back records or books or know the story line of the latest block_buster, that would only be screened in Sarajevo with a time lag. This latter group was considered cool among what were effectively avant garde sections of the population. Travelling abroad was, therefore, not so much about being able to afford the trip as it was about the need to open up to international cultural happenings.[4]

I was very much part of this avant garde, not just because I regularly travelled abroad but also because when I entered university in 1987, I joined the newly launched Youth Radio which was broadcast across Bosnia and Herzegovina and also reached the

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[4] This will be developed into an argument in chapter 8, notably by analogy with Wilk (1994).

neighbouring parts of Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, at times even Slovenia. The Youth Radio became one of the major counter-cultural outlets in the former Yugoslavia. We were a team of students with bright ideas who had the support of a visionary editor, Boro Kontić. It was a peculiar time when we - presenters and creators of programmes - could get away with criticising the political system in an unprecedented way (without being imprisoned for that) and offering a wide range of topical and music programmes without having to pander to any sponsor. One of the shows that I did was called *Europe*, which literally provided an international dimension to what was a cosmopolitan-oriented radio station. My success as a radio broadcaster opened the door to television. Again, I was either doing shows with foreign celebrity-guests especially 'flown-in', or 'on location' abroad in a way that had never been done before. My main asset was my fluency in French and English. Even on radio and TV, very few people in Yugoslavia could actually speak a foreign language.

My first encounter with MTV was via my television work. I invited a VJ (video jockey) to one of my live phone-in programmes. I realised then how influential MTV was. I had had foreign celebrity-guests before on my show, but none of them were received by the audience in the way the VJ was. For the first time, callers were talking to the VJ directly (Yo, how you're doin'!) without asking for my help in translating their questions. For weeks after that, I was congratulated for this show by people on the streets. From then on, I was the one who 'brought MTV to town'.

I moved to London soon after this and continued to be involved with MTV in the years preceding my research (1991-1993), as the partner of one member of MTV staff and a friend of many others. I thus had access to many social events involving MTV and was aware of some of the day-to-day activities and intrigues at the company. I also had the opportunity to travel to a number of European countries with a VJ, which enabled me to witness the different reactions to MTV - usually embodied literally in a VJ. Most notably there was a sharp contrast between the reactions of young Eastern Europeans (Yugoslavs, Poles and Russians) and Western Europeans (notably young Germans, French and Britons) to MTV.

This cross-cultural perspective into MTV's impact on Europe and the awareness of MTV's corporate expansion, from the sidelines, as it were, contributed towards the development of my interests as a researcher. The groundwork experience for this research was also conditioned by the British music industry's attitude to MTV. I couldn't help but notice occasional unflattering comments about MTV on the British national popular music Radio 1. Back in Sarajevo, we - the most self-conscious crowd in town - swore by MTV. I couldn't understand why Radio 1 did not like it. However, from taking part in conversations with MTV staff I realised that, as one informant said, 'people in the industry tried to avoid MTV when MTV was building a business'. It was also by reading an article about MTV in the British press that I first heard that MTV was 'American'. How could it be 'American', I wondered, when I was in no doubt that it was a European channel?

Being alien to music-media related business practices in the UK while being accustomed to the Yugoslav way; being foreign in some cultural environments while feeling native in others; being familiar with attitudes to the Western star system in Eastern European countries while discovering the nuances of attitudes towards the same in Western countries all played a crucial part in positioning me as a researcher. Such a multicultural perspective enabled me to problematise what appeared to be obvious within one particular cultural entourage, as I had experienced the same phenomenon differently in another. By seeing beyond the horizon of the self-evident, I was thus better able to formulate my research questions (cf. Alasuutari, 1995:135).

Initially, I was interested in MTV's distinct lack of popularity in France, compared to many other countries where it was tranmitted. My hypothesis was that the impermeability of the French market regarding MTV was related to French protectionism over their cultural identity. The derogatory claim that MTV was 'American' made more sense to me in a French context. Through my studies of French *civilisation* at University, I learned about the French *grandeur*. Furthermore, French culture has always been part of my own identity as I grew up in France and spent all my school holidays there, once I moved back to Sarajevo (where I originate from). However, the data I collected from fieldwork trips to Paris between September

1994 and April 1996, refuted my hypothesis (see chapter 7). I was in a situation where I could neither draw general conclusions about MTV solely on the basis of a smaller case study of MTV in France, nor could I generalise about the history of France's attempts to protect their culture from foreign (American) imports. Moreover, there was a paucity of literature about MTV. To talk about MTV in France without having previously established a European framework of analysis was not feasible. The focus of my research therefore shifted from Frenchness onto Europeanness.

Other developments which prompted this change of focus in my research were: the launch of a competitor to MTV in Germany, which began to affect the whole idea of MTV Europe; the escalation of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia - which also challenged MTV's vision of a 'happily united Europe' - and MTV's reaction to it; and finally, the opportunity to conduct fieldwork during a visit to Hungary with an MTV VJ. The assumption that MTV 'Europe' was not 'American' remained the underlying motive in my research. Only now I was better equipped to deal with this issue of Europeanness, because I had a fair share of data from Eastern and Western Europe. I could not do a comparative analysis of MTV in European countries because I had no consistent method of gathering data across these different empirical locations. However, what I could do was to incorporate a research strategy which would question accepted Western representations of 'reality' - à la MTV is 'American' - by 'anthropologising' the West (cf. Rabinow, 1986). At the same time, I problematised the assumptions - à la MTV is synonymous with cool - about MTV that I (as a young urban Eastern European) had taken for granted.

Another research strategy that enabled me to turn fieldwork data into evidence was to employ multiple methods - commonly known as 'triangulation' (see for example, Jankowski and Wester, 1991:61; Morley and Silverstone, 1991:157) - which are presented next.

1.1.2 *RESEARCH METHODS*

A combination of four methods of enquiry investigated and corroborated the arguments[5] of the thesis: interviews, print research, participant observation and textual analysis.

1.1.2 (i) *interviews*

I undertook interviews with industry operatives, which I then transcribed and interpreted, in order to negotiate an understanding of the subject matter in question (cf. Jensen, 1991b:32). For the most part, I was fortunate to have enough contacts not to have to confront the problem of access, which can often limit the opportunities for corporate industry researchers (see for example Newcomb, 1991; Alasuutari, 1995). This meant that access to informants was developed out of recommendation, reference and trust (cf. Newcomb, 1991). Interviews were conducted with MTV employees (or former MTV employees) working in the strategy and planning, marketing, advertising-sales, corporate affairs departments; production (producers, VJs, programmers) as well as the chief executive officer. I have also conducted interviews with relevant staff working for networks competing with MTV. Interviews were particularly useful in gathering historical data about MTV, most notably for the period (1990-1993) when MTV began to expand significantly. Interviews also served as a heuristic device, in that they provided new information which led to new perspectives (cf. Newcomb, 1991). New questions, in turn, required more interviews in MTV-related industries; for example the need to conduct research in youth marketing and advertising agencies, in an attempt to gain a picture of MTV's audience profile (see chapters 2 and 3). Each interview was considered as a more or less honest, objective and accurate description of the subject matter, because interviews were not treated as the reality but part of the reality (cf. Alasuutari, 1995:63). In order to alleviate the occupational hazard that occasionally involves asking questions that will confirm or refute the researcher's own assumptions, I used additional methods in conjunction with the interviews (cf. Newcomb, 1991 in Burston, 1998:37-38).

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[5] I found Burston (1998: chapter 1) a useful model in this context.

1.1.2 (ii) *print research*

I regularly consulted a variety of print sources, which included broad-sheet press and magazines, specialised music business and industry press as well as MTV's own press releases and in-house memoranda (when available). I also had access to transcripts from youth marketing conferences organised by MTV and other types audience surveys. When relevant and available, I consulted press releases and annual reports of channels competing with MTV. The policy documents, statistics and surveys provided by the French Higher Audiovisual Council (see chapter 7) were valuable sources of information about satellite/cable TV in Europe in general and French (terrestrial) television in particular. A collection of published accounts of young Bosnian exiles all over the world[6], war-diaries, military and civilian gazettes initiated ad-hoc during the war and articles from the bulletin *Alliance to Defend Bosnia* all constituted part of the evidence for the arguments about MTV in war-torn Bosnia (see chapter 9).

Print research was used as a means of cross-checking interview data. Another reason why print research is an essential method for any investigation of cultural production is the secrecy surrounding any financial details. Press articles sometimes state figures. However, researchers need to be cautious when dealing with them. As Jonathan Burston cautions, when corporate entertainment companies do reveal some numbers, it is precisely to publicise them, so immediately calling their reliability into question (cf. Burston, 1998:40). A degree of suspicion regarding other types of quantified information - such as ratings or audience surveys commissioned by MTV and the like - is also required on behalf of the researcher. In this respect, MTV potentially represents a real trap for the researcher. It is a channel that is labelled the 'most researched channel in history'. And, indeed MTV supports any of the findings about its audience with substantial qualitative research, which at times involves audience samples of thousands of people. However, such information cannot be taken at face value but must be assessed in conjunction with data obtained through other methods

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[6] The Open Society Institute is a network that financially and morally supported hundreds of Bosnian students abroad, through regular meetings and summer schools.

of enquiry. The purpose of cross-checking data is not simply to reveal that MTV 'lies' or to provide additional evidence from other sources to 'authenticate' MTV's research. The purpose is, rather, to gain a fuller understanding of MTV as a cultural phenomenon.

1.1.2 (iii) *participant observation*

Following Jankowski and Wester (1991), I too found that participant observation is well suited for case-studies of this type. The degree of evidence derived from obervational data varies from one case-study to another. As already indicated, case-studies do not serve the purpose of providing a comparative analysis of the cultural effects of MTV in different European countries. Rather, each case-study is a version of reality that contributes to the overall argument of the thesis. In order to argue that MTV's impact on Europe is not uniform, each case-study 'tests' the appeal of MTV in a given territory (see chapters 6-9).

What makes my observational data particularly valuable is that it was gathered by what is called 'unobtrusive' measures (see, for example Webb et al., 1966; Alasuutari, 1995), i.e. it consists of material which occurred 'naturally' in situations where I was present. For example, the fieldwork carried out in Hungary resulted from an opportunity to travel to Hungary as the companion of an MTV VJ. The VJ, in turn, was invited privately to represent MTV as a consequence of being a face on the channel. It could have been any VJ. Consequently, the 'Hungarian reaction' to MTV - embodied literally in a VJ - was spontaneous. Even during events organised by MTV - such as MTV's annual event, the European Video Music Awards - MTV was in no position to orchestrate 'local' press coverage of the event or the fans' response to this event. Hence, the participant observation that I carried out diverges from other studies of cultural production - be it of the process involved in the production of television drama within the institution of commercial television (Newcomb, 1991); the production of avant-garde music within a state-funded music research institution (cf. Born, 1995); or the production of the mega-musical (cf. Burston, 1998) - in that my observation 'on the ground' tends to originate from outside MTV's ground. In this

context, it is not so much the duration of the fieldwork that is important but the fact that I was able to participate unobtrusively in situations that generated valuable data that could not have been otherwise acquired.

From fieldwork, I collected both non-verbal and verbal data, through informal conversations. During each fieldwork trip I was a 'knowledgeable' researcher (cf. Newcomb, 1991:101) in that I had knowledge about the events investigated from a previous experience during a similar occasion. For example, I did not go to Hungary to find out about the Hungarians' reaction to MTV. Rather, I wanted to discover the extent to which the visit of an MTV VJ to Hungary for a similar purpose (and under a similar deal) to the previous visits to Poland and Russia would be comparable.

Another method employed was that of gathering data through observation but without actual participation: I watched hours of unedited TV footage either from the war in former Yugoslavia or charity-type events that raised awareness about the war. Here, the problem of investigation quite literally dictated the method of use (Jankowski and Wester, 1991:60): I investigated the case of MTV in war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) but could not go to BiH. Footage data was used in conjunction with print research and experience from my own involvement with the Bosnian cause as well as information gathered upon my return to BiH after the war.

1.1.2 (iv) *textual analysis*

I describe this final method as 'textual analysis' for lack of a better way to describe the 'case of visual communication' (cf. Jensen, 1991b:37-40). The reason for my reluctance to describe my method of analysing MTV's text as 'textual analysis' is twofold. First, I am interested in MTV as a cultural form. Hence I analyse images on MTV primarily for their communicative aspect rather than their aesthetic value per se. To stress this, I would prefer to expand Georgina Born's (1995) framework for a 'social semiotic of music' to music television. Born builds upon Laing's (1985a) study of punk music to describe how ethnographic research and formal semiotics can be productively allied into a social semiotics. In such an approach, two semiotic concepts

are used, and this where my study of MTV and 'social semiotics' meet. My study of MTV is 'multitextual' in that I analyse the meanings of MTV's text as operating "through many simultaneous, juxtaposed, and interrelating symbolic forms or mediation" (Born, 1995:16-17). My analysis is also 'intertextual' in that I consider that meanings are created "by signs referencing to other cultural realms through connotation" (cf. ibid.:17). In this analysis, these other cultural realms will be other TV channels: for example MTV's (meta)language will connote Europeanness with reference to other TV networks that connote another 'nationality'; MTV will be described as 'cosmopolitan' in relation to 'parochial' representations of similar events on other TV networks.

The second reason for my disassociation from pure 'textual analysis' is that this method - when derived from film and mass communications studies and applied to MTV - provides an incomplete understanding of this cultural form. Content analyses of MTV interpreted within the postmodern framework have been under extensive criticism for their lack of examination of the relation between 'content' and institutional practices (see Goodwin (1993a&b); also Banks, 1996). Instead, Goodwin and Banks, respectively, explain the ascendancy of MTV as a cultural phenomenon in relation to the institutional context in which messages are produced. However, Banks' study is embedded in political economy, without cross-field integration of approaches from other disciplines, whereas Goodwin's project is an interdisciplinary synthesis of historical/economic institutional analysis, text analysis and musicology. While Banks mainly concentrates on the economic impulses behind the MTV format, Goodwin puts greater emphasis on an interaction between the changes in the processes of music-making and related ideologies about rock and developments in the broadcasting industries.

By conflating economics with cultural effects Banks goes on to generalise about the consequences of transnationalisation, without direct investigation of receiving local cultures. His arguments will serve as an example of a cultural imperialist/globalisation approach, which will be criticised on a number of counts. In contrast, Goodwin realises the limitations of his own approach when it comes to elucidating how

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different audiences within different national-cultural contexts inflect meanings. From this stage, Goodwin's analysis could no longer serve as a model for an analysis of MTV in Europe. Instead, I resorted to literature about satellite/cable TV in Europe, of which MTV is an example. Such literature (see chapter 4) is predominantly grounded in political economy, which, broadly speaking is divided between theorists of 'cultural imperialism' and those who challenge such assumptions. The latter position will be taken in this thesis. However, the limitation of 'satellite TV literature' is its lack of empirical evidence about how TV audiences inflect meanings. In this respect, ethnographic-based audience reception studies are still the most reliable indicator of audience preferences. A champion of the cultural imperialism thesis such as Herbert Schiller (1991) would claim that one cannot generalise about the effects of imported foreign (read American) programming solely on the basis of micro-studies, which is what reception studies provide. However, there are a considerable number of reception studies all investigating the same phenomenon - namely the impact of imported TV entertainment - in different cultural environments. Not only do they all come up with similar findings that challenge any simple thesis of cultural imperialism, but their findings are also compatible with macro-market surveys about European audience preferences.

The limititations of reception studies in the context of an analysis of MTV are of another kind. First, they do not offer an "especially good vantage-point for examining how large cultural collectivies constitute their identites" (Schlesinger, 1987:233). Second, they are confined to the domestic context of TV consumption, thus ignoring the consumption of TV in public places (see chapter 3). Last but not least, they say very little about the different ways in which contemporary culture attempts to restructure the public service model of 'subject-as-citizen' along the lines of the 'free market' model of 'subject-as-consumer'. Yet, according to Goodwin: "This is especially important for advertising-funded services, where the viewer will constantly be addressed as a potential consumer, and where [...] that address is likely to 'leak' into the programming" (1993a:169).

Extending this argument on a transnational level, it can be said that addressing viewers primarily as the 'public' of 'national communities' fails to grasp the ways in which the development of the international economy is itself undercutting the role of the nation-state. In particular,

> it neglects a crucial component of current developments, whereby as the cultural/information sectors grow in economic importance, the State's ideological functions [...] are progressively transferred to the market with the active collaboration of the State [...] This, in fact, can give rise to a situation in which multinational producers of culture can actually engage in battle with the State for the allegiance of its citizens (Garnham, 1984:5).

The question of the transnationalisation of television in Europe - and particularly the EC's and MTV's respective attempts to design a programming strategy for a pan-European audience - provide an insight into how this fight for allegiance might be taking place. What is required to investigate this process is a theoretical approach that would move beyond the paradigm 'viewer-as-citizen of a nation-state'. The next section locates the issues that will be addressed in this thesis within a broader theoretical framework.

1.2 OVERARCHING FRAME OF INTERPRETATION

Broadly speaking, this thesis addresses the 'public service versus the market' debate, following the shift in regulatory principles which took place in the media industry during the 1980s. An examination of the shift from the public service era towards an era driven by entrepreneurial imperatives helps reveal how MTV effectively found a niche for itself by filling a vacant cultural space in the newly emergent European televisual landscape. There are three main concerns in this context which are well articulated by Scannell (1989); Murdock (1990); Murdock and Golding (1990) and Collins (1992).

The first is related to the ways the economic dynamics of the new television industries push them away from genuine diversity towards marketing more of the same product in a number of different ways. Instead of the 'mixed programme stream' which characterises terrestrial television, satellite TV 'only offers thematic programme

streams' (cf. Collins, 1992:93). However, this is precisely what made these thematic services attractive to advertisers and audiences. This thesis will demonstrate how MTV constructed an audience for its type of programming, which was then delivered to advertisers. In effect, MTV was more inventive than public service TV stations in that it found a new way of imagining the audience. MTV's model of the viewer was a commercial one, of course, but it was nonetheless formulated differently from the available commercial model on terrestrial TV. In contrast, public service TV was unable to find a new approach to the audience beyond adopting the discourse of the market place. Hence the boundaries of 'diversity' and 'quality' on public service TV are dubious because they operate within rather than beyond the overall consumerist framework (cf. Ang, 1991).

It follows from this that, on the one hand, services like MTV became successful not just because they pandered to advertisers, but also because public service TV was effectively in 'crisis'. On the other hand, MTV still needed to locate an audience to appeal to them. For this reason, an analysis of 'viewers as consumers' entails an examination of the cultures of consumption at the interface between media images and the 'lifestyle' clusters formed around them (cf. Shields, 1992a). As Rob Shields remarks, this exercise is not intended as a celebration of the triumph of marketing lifestyles. Rather, it is intended as a "critical marking of the interdependence of the private spaces of subjectivity, media and commodity consumption, and the changing spatial context of everyday public life" (ibid.:1). The second concern about the future of public service can be addressed in this context.

This concern is related to the way television's role in securing and developing resources for citizenship is being affected. As the logic of mass production replaces not just the democratic principle of diversity but also that of accessibility, the consequences for the vitality of democracy are far reaching. It seems to me that there are two issues here, entangled into one. One question regards that of equal access to information, which is a democratic principle that should be preserved. The distribution of new commercial channels has indeed been restricted to selective upper-income markets in some European countries, such as the UK and even more so, in

France. However, one should equally acknowledge that in other countries, cable/satellite TV subscription is fairly cheap, such as in the highly cabled Benelux region.

The other issue concerning citizenship and democracy is more pertinent for the 'battle for allegiance'. I have reservations about a position such as Murdock's (1990), which assumes an unproblematic relationship between citizenship and democracy. This thesis will go on to examine how citizenship - which has traditionally embodied two components, the principle of rights and the principle of nationality, that ensured the exclusivity of membership within a state - has undergone profound changes (cf. Soysal, 1996). The right to participate in the political community no longer necessarily entails the right to 'belong' to that community, as numerous ethnographic studies about second generation immigrants in Western European countries reveal (see for example Bouchet, 1995; Gillespie, 1995; Sansone, 1995; Wulff, 1995). It is from this perspective that I want to examine the third concern voiced by public service advocates in relation to the emergence of new channels of distribution.

This concern regards the 'quality' of programming provision on satellite TV. In this context, this thesis will examine the European elite's fears of erosion of their cultures. In brief, this fear is based on the assumption that the increase in the number of channels will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of cheap American programmes on their grids. The negative consensus of the European cultural elites was expressed in one word - 'Americanisation'. 'Americanisation' is associated with the levelling down process which threatens to erode European cultural values (see Hebdige, 1988; Morley and Robins, 1989). The problems with such an assumption in relation to European TV will be examined in chapter 4. Here, by looking at the case of the United Kingdom (UK), I want to draw attention to how, each time new commercial TV services were introduced, they began, in fact, to fill a vacant cultural space. A number of studies reveal how the discourse of 'Americanisation' in the UK ignored all the positive images of America that were sustained among large sections of the population, underneath and in spite of the official discourse (see Worpole, 1983; Collins, 1988; Hebdige, 1988). As regards the BBC particularly, it can be

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argued that it was produced for the middle classes by the middle classes (cf. Curran, 1977). Consequently, with the advent of the first commercial channel, ITV, the working classes deserted the BBC (cf. Mulgan and Worpole, 1985). In contrast, a considerable number of middle class*people* deliberately chose not to buy the new antenna capable of receiving ITV, to preserve themselves against 'American barbarism' (cf. Root, 1986:72).

This battle of tastes was renewed when satellite dishes in the UK began to function as non-verbal signifiers of taste, within the networks of relationship and discourses which pre-existed technological innovation (see Brunsdon, 1991). However, it appears that once again this focus on 'Americanisation' ignored the extent to which satellite TV began to fill another vacant cultural space. I want to suggest that new commercial services began to cater for the unmet needs of minority groups.[7] While actual ethnographic evidence about the reception of satellite TV among minority groups is still scarce (exceptions include Moores, 1996), the criticisms concerning the representation of minority groups on public service TV are consistent and revolve around 'ghettoisation' and 'tokenism' (see for example, Daniels, 1990; Jivani, 1990; McIntyre, 1990; Sharma, 1990). The more radical aspects of black politics and its cultural expression in the arts also threw into question the multicultural consensus of Channel Four. This channel was precisely mandated to provide "for the unmet needs of various 'minority audiences', as a new public service which explicitly recognised the diversity of audiences in a plural society (cf. Mercer, 1988:6). By looking at the case of black music, this thesis will provide some evidence to support this criticism (see chapter 5).

On a more general level, this thesis will examine how visual communication "through its modes of address and the subject positions offered to audiences [...] also may entail different modes of socialisation and acculturation" (Jensen, 1991b:39). The comparative analysis of the EC's and MTV's Europe, in chapter 4, is primarily an attempt to grasp how international communication flows contribute towards the

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[7] Following Jivani (1990), the term 'minority' loosely describes groups bound together by race, gender and sexuality but it also includes all sorts of special interest groups, such as gardeners.

creation of alternative identities shared between nation-states. By way of a comparative analysis of two competing interpretations of European identity, this thesis will reveal how the EC's public service model, which addressed 'citizens of Europe' had no accompanying pan-national symbolism to support its idea of a supra-nation. In contrast, by focusing on symbolism which had a genuine appeal among a target audience and reducing by citizenship to just one component of European identity, MTV succeeded.

This thesis is premised on the assumption that 'identity' is a complex process of interconnection between stable social categories (notably 'nationality') and more fluid associations. In this sense, it owes something to champions of postmodern theory, Baudrillard (1988) and Jameson (1991), who have brought into focus the fact that individuals are longer just citizens with civil rights but also consumers (cf. Poster, 1988:7; also see Thompson, 1992:243). However this thesis departs from their respective theories of self-referential signs, as well as more recent attempts to grasp the 'image society', which resulted in either pessimistic conclusions about the hegemony of dominant classes through images (as proposed by Langman, 1992) or the celebration of the fragmentary nature of the postmodern subject, free to sample and select any number of roles (as proposed by Firat, 1995). From the latter, however, I shall accept that the expansion of visual media have made us aware that cultural identities "have been historically constructed, then transformed and reconstructed, on the basis of different forms of power" (cf. ibid.:123). Following de Certeau (1984), this thesis will suggest that in a 'show biz' society, where economy encourages reading to the extent that the binary set 'production-consumption' could be substituted by the equivalent 'writing-reading', the activity of reading is an active process which contains all the characteristics of silent production. In this thesis, these silent reader-producers are subjects who are brought together through the collective euphoria of a concert or another similar convivial interaction (cf. Shields, 1992). Their engagement in such activities is both temporarily confined and spatially diffused (cf. Amit-Talai, 1995).

Following the idea that MTV filled in gaps in broadcasters' existing audience reach, chapter 2 demonstrates how, by conceptualising viewers as consumers, MTV delivered the desirable youth segment to advertisers. Chapter 3 introduces the concept of narrowcasting and demonstrates how MTV complements rather than competes with terrestrial TV. Chapter 4 is a comparative analysis of two competing interpretations of European identity. It suggests that MTV succeeded precisely because it confronted all the problems involved in transnational broadcasting that the EC failed to do. Chapter 5 examines MTV's music playlist policy and, again, it reveals that MTV managed to self-consciously promote itself as 'hip' because it initially played a considerable amount of popular music outside the European mainstream airwaves. Underlying the discussions in both chapter 4 and 5 will be a critique of cultural imperialism/globalisation theories as articulated in relation to MTV. Chapter 6 then proposes a more suitable framework of analysis for an understanding of the global and local dynamics, at least when it comes to music television, a phenomenon that has globalised quite drastically. At the same time, chapter 6 is a study of MTV in Germany, which applies the arguments presented in the previous five chapter in a concrete case-study. Chapter 6 acts as a bridge between the 'theory' and the other case-studies that follow. Through an analysis of MTV in France, chapter 7 looks at the market where MTV's impact was most limited. In contrast, by 'anthropologising' the 'West', chapter 8 demonstrates how the impact of MTV in Eastern Europe was considerable. Finally, a longer consideration of MTV in Bosnia during the recent ethnic conflict and its immediate aftermath, examines how transnational communications networks give rise to new communities of affect, which are organised around issues of universal moral concern. This last chapter draws attention to the realms of symbolic identification and the way these new types of 'participatory gatherings' - which appear to defy conventional socially-constructed categories of division - challenge traditional politics.

CHAPTER 2

MTV IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

INTRODUCTION

Research conducted by Denisoff (1991) into the origins of MTV in the USA reveals that the incentive to develop MTV was, above all, led by the developments in the broadcasting industry rather than developments in the music industry. Initially, the music industry was nervous about investing considerable sums of money into the making of music video clips, anxious that the idea of music television would turn out to be a fad (cf. Goodwin, 1993a:37). It was only after reports of increasing record sales at music stores in certain cities which had cable systems carrying MTV, and significantly in the light of the growing demand for artists featured on MTV (who received little or no radio airplay), that the record company executives came to believe that MTV could create consumer interest in their artists (cf. Banks, 1996:36-37; also see Jhally, 1990:95). A similar situation occurred in Europe (see chapter 5). Thus, although the *music* video clip is an essential component of MTV, it is the *television* angle to which we must, first and foremost, turn our attention.

This analysis of MTV begins by contextualising MTV within the political economy of the media industry in Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This chapter argues that the expansion of satellite/cable channels in the European TV landscape is first and foremost related to finding new ways of generating advertising revenue. It begins by demonstrating that MTV is a channel in partnership with advertisers. Subsequently, the device of branding that enabled MTV to market itself as a new kind of TV is examined. In this context, this chapter will also look at the role of extensive audience research on MTV. It is important to note from the outset that the same tactics that created a brand were deployed by the channel to develop a pan-European programming strategy, so that the brand MTV in Europe became synonymous with

being European. However, as this chapter will establish, it is impossible to talk about MTV's Euro-culture without first considering the channel's material base.

2.1 CONCEPTUALISING 'YOUTH' AS A MARKET

MTV in Europe came to life on the basis that it would reach the youth target audience that could only be addressed 'imperfectly' and 'wastefully' (cf. Collins, 1992) by traditional broadcasters. In this context, two simultaneous developments need to be taken into account, which can be called the 'crisis in youth broadcasting' and the 'crisis of normative knowledge of audiences'.

2.1.1 *THE CRISIS IN YOUTH BROADCASTING*

The work of Andrew Goodwin (1993a&b) clearly demonstrates that the incentive to develop MTV in the USA was, above all, advertiser-led rather than being a response to audience demand. According to Goodwin:

> MTV had to *construct* an audience for music television [...] [MTV's] budgets were underwritten by an expectation that an all-music service would deliver to advertisers those young consumers ([18]-34-year-olds) who were traditionally difficult to reach through television. MTV was to be the 'environment' that would narrowcast the right kind of music and thus target an elusive socio-economic group (1993a:38).

As in the US, the ascendancy of MTV in Europe can be seen as a response to the failure of traditional broadcasters to reach the young audience. In this context, Simon Frith (1993) cites market research which reveals that almost half of the percentage of what constituted the young population in Britain in the late 1980s was outside the broadcasters' reach. Furthermore, statistics showed that TV viewing time among those young viewers within the broadcasters' reach was ten hours below the average weekly viewing figure. This came to be known as the 'crisis' in youth broadcasting. On the basis of such evidence, music programmes which were once considered to be flagship youth programmes such as Channel 4's *The Tube* and BBC's *Whistle Test* were axed. As this thesis will go on to demonstrate, in one way or another, public service broadcasters throughout Western Europe were confronted with a similar problem

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while Eastern European television was going through even more drastic changes as the communist system collapsed.

Frith (1993) argues that this 'crisis' in youth broadcasting raises the fundamental question of what the concept of 'youth' actually means. He also rightly observes that this question should be answered with reference to the changes in the European television landscape, i.e. the advent of new commercial services. In commercial terms, the 'crisis' in youth broadcasting of the late 1980s in effect described the attempt to redirect pop programming from an audience of 12 to 24-year-olds to an audience consisting of 18 to 34-year-olds. The former were 'youth' as traditionally defined by the music industry, while the latter were those whose disposable income was more significant from the point of view of the new advertiser-led services (cf. Frith, ibid.). This latter group's relatively high level of disposable income was precisely what advertisers were after. Moreover, the 18 to 34-year olds were also the demographic group who watched television the least.

What follows from this is that for a TV service aimed at youth to be profitable, it needed to convince advertisers that it would effectively reach this elusive group. This is precisely what MTV did. MTV's makers understood from the outset that their particular target audience spent little time watching television, as the following words of MTV's vice-president of advertising sales, Louise Angus, illustrate:

> We're looking at the 16 to 34-year-olds, and then you're looking at the 16 to 34-year-olds who want to watch some music. And, 16 to 34-year-olds, as you know, have a lot of other things to do, they got parties to go to, clubs to go to, movies to go and watch, dinner parties to go to, there is a lot of other things competing for their time. Not just TV. That's why MTV has been so successful, because they don't watch much TV. Genuinely. But, when they do watch TV, they often watch MTV"
> (interview, 18/08/94).

In order to convince advertisers that MTV was 'the most effective medium' to reach 'the traditionally out of reach', MTV was marketed as a television for a lifestyle, namely through branding. As we shall see, branding enables MTV to present itself as a 'unique' viewing experience rather than just watching a TV programme. To achieve

this effect, MTV concentrates resources on creating a strong channel identity. In more straight-forwardly economic terms, this 'lifestyling' involves constructing differentiated consumer groups who are then delivered as audience segments to advertisers. In this process, not only is an elusive group (i.e. the youth) converted into a calculable unit (i.e. audience segment) which then becomes the 'real' product delivered to advertisers (cf. Smythe, 1981). On MTV, advertisers themselves become part of the channel's programming by virtue of sponsorship that enables them to be associated with the MTV brand. Consequently, by cultivating brand awareness MTV ensured substantial advertising revenue at a time when TV sponsorship was either underexploited or unavailable on terrestrial TV, as in the case on MTV's most lucrative market, Germany (see chapter 6). The words of one of MTV's sponsors[1] best illustrate the argument that MTV is primarily a television in partnership with advertisers:

> Why have these big corporations spent their money with MTV? I think the answer is simple. They like the audience and they like the style. It's relevant to the advertising and marketing they are faced with. And I think MTV has not shirked their responsibilities in producing the total communication package to answer the needs of advertisers.

Another potential selling pitch for new commercial services that MTV fully benefited from was their technological capacity to reach a large transnational audience at a stroke. Economically speaking, transnational channels such as MTV could generate revenue through developing economies of scale and scope by targeting the shared tastes and TV viewing habits of its particular audience segment at a pan-European (global) level. However, the selling pitch of new services, founded on a consumer view of individual freedom, has resonance beyond the market. As will be suggested in section 3, such claims to individualism are a response to socio-cultural changes. In this context, social historian Eric Hobsbawm (1994) talks of a cultural revolution of the late twentieth century, characterised by the triumph of individualism. Here, young people not only constitute a 'separate social stratum' with a purchasing power, but they also have in common their 'internationalism, jeans and rock music', even a shared language and the rejection of moral restraints. In other words, they are 'youthful' (see next section).

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[1] Tim Cox, European media director, BBDO Europe speaking at MTV's WORM conference, London 15/09/95.

There are two favourable factors for the development of MTV in this respect. First, audience surveys "repeatedly showe[d] that when new and privatised services are introduced, they are patronised particularly heavily by younger elements of the population - which are precisely the segment that advertisers wish to reach and are prepared to pay premiums for" (Blumler, 1992a:19; also see Collins, 1992; Frith 1993). In Western Europe's most developed cable markets "foreign television" became "to a large extent young people's television" (Roe quoted in Frith, 1993:69).

Second, MTV's thematic choice - popular music - was another asset when attracting advertisers. Keith Negus rightly observes that:

> Popular music - less dependent for its comprehension upon language, education and the acquisition of a sophisticated body of knowledge - is one of the forms of mass communication which has been able to globalise most dramatically; constructing audiences around the commonly shared experienced of a cultural event (such as Live Aid and the Nelson Mandela Freedom Concert), or an artist's lifestyle and identity, rather than a purely local experience in a discrete time and place (1993:297).

Indeed, Frith observes that MTV in Europe entered the market "with a similar belief in music as the basis for international sales strategy" (1993:71). Not surprisingly, the best known international brands aiming at the same audience segment as MTV all put their money into this channel. In fact, MTV signed a sponsorship deal with denim manufacturer Levi Strauss almost before it went on air because this advertiser believed that - as a 'lifestyle TV' - MTV successfully merged youth, jeans and rock n' roll. Similarly, the soft-drink manufacturer Coca-Cola invested in MTV believing that music was the "best way of breaking through linguistic and cultural barriers" (ibid.). Contrary to Richard Collins' claim that "to date no programme stream, whether thematic or general, has built a transnational audience of sufficient size to deliver returns commensurate with costs" (1992:95), MTV achieved just that. By 1992, MTV broke even. In 1993, it took more than $171 million in advertising revenue (Walker, 1994a:31). In that year brands such as the sneaker manufacturer British Knight and the computer game manufacturer Nintendo poured 100% of their European sponsorship

budgets to MTV (Fedarko, 1993:62). Until July 1995, when MTV's signal was scrambled, 90% of its revenue came from advertising.

2.1.2 THE CRISIS OF NORMATIVE KNOWLEDGE OF AUDIENCES

Apart from the centrality of advertising in the process of fusion of music and television, another contributing factor in the ascendancy of thematic channels such as MTV is what Dominique Wolton (1990) describes as the 'wearing off' of public service TV (also see Blumler, 1992b). Wolton's notion of 'wearing off' corresponds to the crisis of normative knowledge of audiences. This term, borrowed from Ien Ang (1991), refers to the erosion of the conviction that public service broadcasting should 'know' how to address the audience in order to enlighten them. It also draws attention to public service TV's inability to find an alternative beyond the commercial model of television, which relies upon quantitative information about the size of the audience. In this context, Ang draws upon Garnham (1983) who talks of a "lack of imagining new ways of knowing the audience that are qualitatively different from the commercial way of knowing" (1991:106). Consequently, the advent of new commercial channels can be seen in terms of a reorganisation of the public sphere, i.e. the move from 'viewers-as-citizens' towards 'viewers-as-consumers'.

In the late 1980s, the public for television - traditionally drawn as a single viewing nation - was becoming increasingly differentiated and presented as a series of market choices to be sold to advertisers. One of the most important aspects of the shift towards the 'viewer-as-consumer' has to do with the way the new television services have constructed their model of youth. As Frith observes: "'Youth', in this account, no longer describe[s] a particular type of viewer, who is attracted to a particular type of programme but, rather, describes an attitude, a particular type of *viewing behaviour*" (1993:75). Such viewing behaviour can be described as 'youthful'. According to Janet Street Porter - who was appointed as youth adviser for the BBC to solve the 'crisis' of youth broadcasting - this 'youthful' behaviour is common among people who

don't have a lot of responsibilities. The minute you have a *lot* of responsibilities, you stop being receptive to new ideas. As soon as you have a really big mortgage or maybe a baby, you probably don't have as much money left to go out and buy records, or perhaps you can't go to clubs as easily, or you go to the cinema less frequently. That's not to say that your brain dies, it just gets harder to do a lot of things (quoted in Frith, 1993:75).

Sarah Thornton (1995) observes in a similar context that by investing in leisure, youth can reject being socially fixed. The freedom from adult overheads enables youth from different social backgrounds to enjoy a momentary reprieve from necessity. According to Thornton, they therefore procrastinate what she calls 'social ageing' (following Bourdieu, 1984), that is the process of having to resign oneself to one's position in a highly stratified society. For this reason, youth culture is often attractive to people well beyond their youth. "Freedom from necessity", Thornton argues, "does not mean that youth have wealth so much as that they are exempt from adult commitments to the accumulation of economic capital " (1995:103). Rather, the considerable discretionary income which exists among over seventy five percent of young people is spent on self-indulgence (ibid.).

The appeal of the apparently carefree lifestyle of youth suggests that 'youthful' viewing behaviour - although common among the demographic section aged between 18 to 34 - is not so much related to the age factor as it is attributed to a certain attitude to life. Here, Alberto Melucci's (1992) remark is pertinent:

> People are not young because, or only because, they have a certain age, but because they follow certain styles of consumption or certain codes of behaviour and dress (1992:56) [...] In contemporary society, in fact, youth is no longer merely a biological condition but rather a cultural definition. Uncertainty, mobility, transience, and openness to change, all traditional attributes of adolescence as a transitional phase, seem to have moved well beyond biological limits to become widespread cultural phenomena which individuals assume as part of their personality in many different stages of life (1992:61).

New youth programmes were designed to accommodate their own 'cultural definition' of youth. Their answer to the problem of attracting viewers who spend little time watching TV became the use of sophisticated computer graphics. Sophisticated

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visuals gave the new wave of youth programmes - and in the case of MTV the channel as a whole - the appearance of being young. Consequently, in the initial period of MTV's expansion, 'youth TV' somehow became synonymous with 'good looking' TV. MTV became particularly influential in setting new standards of TV production. Given that MTV commissioned talented film makers and animators, many of them from Eastern European underground artistic circles, MTV was at the cutting edge of television. Indeed, MTV won numerous awards for its idents (short for channel identification). As we shall see, compared to many terrestrial TV services in Europe, MTV was stylishly distinctive. Hence, MTV became a model of TV *par excellence*, surrounded by a lot of media hype.

However, although MTV undeniably benefited from such a media hype, MTV's makers have remained aware that, after all, MTV was a narrowcaster with small viewing figures and developed their programming strategies accordingly. By the mid-1990s, the novelty factor had worn off throughout Europe and the use of computer graphics became the norm on many television networks. What then became obvious was that the equation between visual sophistication and youth TV was more of a programme (or in the case of MTV channel) promotional strategy than an actual fact about youth preferences for TV programmes. As MTV's creative strategy manager, Jonathan Lewis, explains:

> MTV has an aesthetic, and a flair, and a tone, which makes one feel that it is a young person's channel but [BBC's soap opera] *Eastenders* is an amazing young people's programme. It attracts more young people than any other channel. It just doesn't look like a young person's programme [...] So you need to make a distinction between channels which look like they're for young people and channels which really appeal to young people (interview, 22/05/97).

Stripped down of its looks, two features about MTV's 'nature' were revealed. Firstly, MTV is not so much of an original idea as it is clever one. MTV may look expensive but to produce a music video programme is, in fact, cheap because the costs involved in producing music videos - which constitute the bulk of MTV's programming - are covered by record companies. Second, the equation between sophisticated imagery and youth TV preferences grossly neglects the relationship between MTV's design

and its economic imperative. MTV needed a strong identity to find a space for itself in the new European televisual landscape. In contrast, terrestrial TV makers do not need to allocate the kinds of budgets that MTV spends into their overall design simply because the former's place in the TV landscape is secured. This will be examined in the next chapter.

To sum up so far, Frith (1998) pertinently observes that new technologies - in this case satellite/cable TV - supplement rather than replace existing technologies - in this case terrestrial TV. The introduction of new technologies has to be considered in relation to new modes of consumption and shifts in the private and public domain. This will be clarified once the difference between narrowcasting and broadcasting is examined in the next chapter. Before moving onto narrowcasting, however, it is necessary to concentrate on branding: the domain at the intersection of the economic imperative of new satellite/cable to construct audience segments for advertisers and the need to produce innovative programming. Branding serves to convince advertisers that such new programmes were the answer to the problem of how to attract the audience target in question.

2.2 MTV AS A BRAND

Wolton rightly observes that:

> There is no thematic television possible - beyond that dedicated to films - without innovation and imagination on behalf of its producers to construct a market that is waiting to be open. Thematic television - in economic terms - is a call for an air of innovation (1990:105-6).

The novelty of thematic channels is that, on the basis of their 'imaginative' design, thematic TV makers constructed a market for this new type of TV by extracting specific audience segments from the mass TV market. This represents a move away from the principle of selling advertising space on the basis of large ratings, as customary on terrestrial TV. Thematic television demands a new professional mentality, which is examined in the next chapter. What is of interest, here, is how this

process of audience segmentation occurs. This is where marketing enquiries into lifestyle come into play.

Frank Mort (1990) observes that during the 1980s' shift towards lifestyling campaigns in retailing, there were two basic concepts at work: "the move to market segmentation, and the input from design and visual communications" (1990:167). Greater market segmentation brought into focus new consumer profiles, which in turn demanded different methods of communication. According to Mort, "this is where the other factor in lifestyling comes in - the upbeat stress on design and visual awareness" (1990:168). In a society where large swathes of population already possessed consumer basics such as kitchen appliances and TV sets, advertisers had to find a different language from that of the 1960s and 1970s campaigns, which stressed the functional side of products and their price competitiveness. Advertisers began to promote product awareness with messages which were 'emotional' rather than 'rational' or 'informational'. In the words of Mort: "Colour, sound and shape are the things which mark out individuality, nudging consumers to identify with commodities through mood and association" (ibid.). Mike Featherstone similarly observes that "within contemporary consumer culture, [lifestyle] connotes individuality, self-expression, and stylistic self-consciousness" (1991:83).

By extension, new thematic television services such as MTV began to present television viewing as a matter of personal consumer choice. As Frith remarks: "TV pleasure had to be described in terms of specific programmes, rather than by reference to 'watching television' as a generally suitable activity" (1993:77). In the case of MTV, the pleasure of viewing TV was not only described in terms of viewing specific programmes but more importantly, in terms of the experience of watching the channel as a whole. As will be examined in chapter 3, advertising services such as MTV are not only designed to prevent the desired audience from switching off but also to ensure viewer loyalty for short spans of attention but on regular basis. Indeed, "this makes for a rather different account of the youth audience than previously common on TV" (Frith, 1988a:209). In this context, Frith compares *The Tube* - the show that was

taken off air during the 'crisis' of youth broadcasting in the UK - and MTV. According to Frith:

> *The Tube* simulated a youth group on the screen itself. Their emphasis was on a 'live' atmosphere. The young people dancing in the studio were the audience among whom we, as viewers, could place ourselves. MTV (like radio) sets up in contrast a 'community' of consumption, an atmosphere to be entered through individual opportunity, mood and fancy (ibid.).

It is in the context of the 1980s' advertising campaigns with a stress on 'individuality' and 'atmosphere' that MTV's promotional strategy as a 'unique' service which catered for a specific lifestyle should be understood. MTV markets itself as a brand. Branding makes it possible for MTV to portray itself as a different kind of TV, a special 'environment'. This section examines how, on the one hand, branding enables MTV to promote itself as a music television that has an 'added value' to just simply playing music videos. On the other hand, branding ensures viewer loyalty - crucial for the survival of MTV in the market (cf. chapter 3) - by creating " a form of semantic flattery" (Berland, 1993:36), which operates at a meta-textual level of communication.

2.2.1 *THE 'ADDED VALUE' OF MTV*

Daniel Soubeyrand (1991) argues that sophisticated audience research was the key to successful media competition in the late 1980s. In the context of a growing number of channels in Europe competing for a fixed number of viewers, it was the channels' responsibility to ensure that they understood what alchemy generated the repeated encounter with consumers; to imagine how to reproduce it in order for the established consumer-product relationship to last; to know how to become rooted into everyday life; and to anticipate its own transformations in order to evolve accordingly. Taken all together, these factors give a product an 'added value' on the basis of which a product becomes a brand. This 'added value' is an important factor for the explanation of the success of MTV and the failure of other pan-European music programmes - notably *Skytrax*, *The Power Station*, *Music Box* - which were launched around the same period as MTV. Although there were no significant sociodemographic

differences between MTV viewers and viewers of other music channels, the channel with 'added value' was prosperous and the others declined [2].

The success of MTV lies in the fact that as a brand, MTV appeared to be a desirable individual viewer choice. MTV was self-consciously promoted in a way that the experience of music on television was not just about watching videos but it was about watching MTV. As Martin Davidson observes:

> Brand advertising [...] sees its mission less as one of telling people facts about products than of adding value to them, helping them become, and endure, as brands. It's the advertiser's business to understand the complexities of consumer behaviour rather than to judge them. Branding is about matching a product with what is thought the most plausible and appealing relevance for its intended consumer. It offers a broader canvas on which to define products than that of function alone. The advertiser mediates between how we live our lives and how manufacturers set about manufacturing their products. That is because it is in the brand that consumerism and culture meet (1992:26).

For the reason that lifestyle marketing focused on the emotional rather than functional side of products, it was ignored by orthodox economists. In *Lifestyle Economics* (1986), the economist Peter Earl challenges traditional economics. Earl argues that understanding consumption in terms of a lifestyle involves taking into account a wide range of factors which determine people's needs and motivations. According to Earl, traditional economics pays little attention to the complexities of consumer behaviour in a way that makes the problem of choice trivial:

> choices are made to seem clinical, via references to 'commodity X versus commodity Y'; or homely, via references to 'pints of beer versus loaves of bread'. They are not represented explicitly as hazardous, expensive to reverse and caught up in the march of structural and technological change (1986:3).

Consequently, advertising campaigns were devised by correlating consumer choices with simplistic demographic classifications according to factors such as class or gender. In contrast, lifestyle marketing has developed more sophisticated systems of categorising population data. The use of lifestyling by MTV enabled the channel to

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[2] This is a paraphrase of Soubeyrand's observation about the success of 'Magazine X' and the 'flop' of 'Magazine Y' (1991:384-385)

predict tendencies in conduct within a given profile and anticipate the demand for trends - be it in fashion, music or other - featured on MTV.

Another advantage of being a brand for MTV - as opposed to 'just being a music television' - was the fact that potential viewers in Europe had already vaguely heard of the name MTV. Gordon Foxall (1991) [1980] realised early on in the development of 'lifestyling' that apart from recognising that consumers are not "as economically rational as basic economics would have us believe" and acknowledging the informative and persuasive function of advertising in promoting products and brands, there is another element in consumer choice: interpersonal influences. According to Foxall:

> It may be that the desire for the product originated through the consumer's contact with another person; it is almost certain that, in the case of a fairly expensive, infrequently bought item, he will seek information from friends, neighbours or relatives about the relative merits of different brands. Indeed, several studies indicate that informal, word-of-mouth communication may be much more effective than formal advertising in moulding consumers' decision (1991:23).

The word-of-mouth is a crucial promotional tool for MTV. In fact, awareness about the channel extends beyond the channel's actual viewing figures (cf. next chapter). In the context of the promotion of the new television services in Europe, David Morley is right in saying that " a new technology [...] may often be principally 'made sense of' via its integration into the very old 'technology' of the peer gossip network." (1991:9). Similarly, Frith points out that these new services sought to reach domestic subscribers via their adolescent off-spring who were generally more fascinated by the new technologies (Frith, 1993: 82, footnote 16).

MTV makers are well aware of the two-way flow in communication between the consumer and the product as well as the role of media hype in raising channel awareness. Gossip in newspaper columns about 'what Madonna did at an MTV party' which is then retold among peers is important in building the channel's kudos[3].

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[3] Source: Thierry Thouvenot, marketing director, MTV in Paris, interview (04/09/95.)

The importance of word-of-mouth in relation to promoting brands was evident in the discussions at the two consecutive marketing conferences (in 1995 and 1996) organised by MTV. Both were entitled WORM, which stood for 'Word Of Relevant Mouth'. The opinion of Simon Aboud[4] is perhaps representative of many in the advertising industry. According to Aboud, the most successful brands are those which not only attempt to satisfy consumer needs but also utilise the media in a way that helps them generate the relevant word-of-mouth about the company so that the "WORM runs through the right community of individuals". The latter is, understandably, the targeted consumer.

In a competitive media environment, marketers are constantly on the lookout for new tactics to attract consumers. Tactics such as controversial advertising campaigns that get 'banned' can often increase sales of the product advertised. This was the case of American designer Calvin Klein's controversial 1995 jeans advertising campaign which simulated auditions for porn-films. In the words of Aboud:

> Maybe Calvin Klein did want his ads to get banned. How far can the tactics go without undermining what the real brand attributes are? Perhaps what we really should be talking about, here, is not just about making brands noticed [...] but making positive emotional connection with consumers. But how do you achieve this in such a difficult environment? You have to market from inside out [...] you have to make the message relevant and most importantly you have to let them [consumers] discover it for themselves.

Perhaps the most striking example in this context are the advertising billboards by the high-street fashion brand Benetton that - in the words of their creator Oliviero Toscani[5] - "get banned in one country get a prize in another country for being the best picture". Between 1982 and 1995, Benetton profits increased from $125 million to $2 billion (cf. ibid.). The next section looks more closely at the methods MTV employed to promote itself.

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[4] Vice president, European communications, McCann-Erickson/Magic Hat youth marketing division, speaking at WORM '95 and also interview with author (15/05/97).
[5] speaking at WORM '95.

2.2.2 MTV'S (META-) LANGUAGE OF THE 'FEEL'

Like any brand, MTV has to establish a relationship with its viewer (cf. Davidson, 1992: 24/40). This section examines how MTV established a complicity with the viewer by devising a programming strategy that combined a conventional televisual mode of address with a rock n' roll attitude.

Lawrence Grossberg remarks that: "while television and rock were never simply or totally opposed, the relations between them have traditionally been rather cool [...] For many fans, television has often been seen as part of the dominant culture against which the rock culture is defined" (1993:1989). The ambiguous relationship between rock and television was due in part to the low technological quality of visuals and sound on TV and in part to television's inability to find narrative forms which address the youth outside the domestic context. In contrast, rock has focused on youth as a peer culture. However, Grossberg argues that the 1980s' exploitation of youth-oriented films gradually began to shift the location of "the central representations and languages of youth culture" (ibid.:192). This new wave of films exhibited an originality untapped by earlier films, which provided a crucial condition of the possibility of music videos. What made such films appealing to youthful audiences was their focus on fairly ordinary youth and the use of soundtracks to promote these films, i.e. rock videos.

On the one hand, the use of music videos as a promotional tool was a response to the music industry's crisis of profitability, which was apparent in the slowing down of the velocity of innovation within the album-rock mainstream (see Straw, 1993). As a solution, record companies began to reorient themselves from commodity manufacturers to "rights exploiters", most notably through the sales of music videos to television companies (cf. Frith, 1987; 1988b). On the other hand, this trend of using music videos should also be understood in terms of consumer needs, i.e. demographic changes in music consumption: "the ageing of the rock audience [...] and the growth of a youth culture that was not centred on music" (Goodwin, 1993a:39).

In effect, MTV responded to both these economic and demographic shifts. The box office success of the 1980s' youth films (see Grossberg, 1993) already demonstrated the mutual benefits between film - traditionally considered to be within the realm of 'vision' - and soundtrack - traditionally within the realm of 'sound' (i.e. rock). I want to suggest that MTV applied the same basic strategy as these films to appeal to its audience - namely through the use of music videos (instead of 'live' performance) and its portrayal of ordinary youth on the channel. MTV became the first channel as a whole - initially in the US and subsequently in Europe - which successfully combined the two discourses - i.e. rock and TV - that were traditionally opposed, even hostile. Hence, MTV became a TV with a rock attitude. By emulation, other TV programmes that were considered to be innovative in the 1980s, such as the series *Miami Vice*, subsequently employed soundtracks and sophisticatedly edited sequences derived from the MTV model. In fact, *Miami Vice* was sold to the NBC TV network on the basis of its description as 'MTV Cops' (cf. Goodwin, 1993a:186).

The central imperative of MTV - not just to be 'hip' but to be seen to be 'hip' in constantly new ways - is, as Goodwin (1993a&b) observes, an ideology directly drawn from rock culture. The influence of rock and roll on MTV is also visible in the way the channel seeks to establish a house-style with a stress on mood. The use of rock aesthetics serves the purpose of distinguishing MTV from broadcast TV. Jack Banks rightly observes that:

> MTV developed a non-cerebral approach to programming that 'relies on mood and emotion rather than on the traditional television approach of story and plot'. MTV also tried to cultivate an irreverent, informal style that appeared to be unplanned and unscripted. The program service intentionally departed from the technical perfection of conventional broadcast television by having a messy, cluttered set and poor lighting and allowing the hosts to make mistakes on the air, all of which gave the channel a spontaneous, casual feel (1996:34).

Goodwin similarly notes that:

> VJs were encouraged to take a casual attitude to fluffed lines and on-air mistakes, which are often broadcast despite the fact that these segments are recorded and could thus be corrected before transmission. Here, the VJ portion of the MTV is clearly drawing on rock and roll, rather than

televisual conventions, in which 'feel' is more important than accuracy (1993b:56).

In addition, VJ links appear to be 'live' rather than pre-recorded, which emphasises the sense of direct address and rapport with the viewer.

From traditional TV, MTV borrows methods of recruiting and keeping the viewer's interest, by promoting itself in a very specific way. MTV positions itself as some sort of delegate that looks at the world the same way as the viewer does, but, at the same time, it investigates that outside world (cf. Ellis, 1982). Like broadcast TV, MTV

> assumes that it has a certain kind of viewer, and it speaks for them and looks for them. Interviewers base their questions on 'what the viewers at home want to know' [...] Both notions have much that is purely mythical about them. Nevertheless, the effect of such an address to viewer from TV is that viewers will tend to see themselves in the terms used by TV (Ellis, 1982:164-165).

In order to explain how MTV merged these two discourses into one single medium, I suggest we look at Charlotte Brunsdon's and David Morley's (1978) analysis of the discourse of the British broadcast television programme, *Nationwide*. A parallel can be drawn between their analysis of *Nationwide* and MTV because their analysis is an attempt to look at the programme 'as a whole' rather than in terms of specific items. As I already indicated and will elaborate upon further in next chapter, MTV should be regarded 'as a whole'. For this reason, *Nationwide*'s strategy of 'linking and framing' is also relevant for MTV. This strategy enabled the programme - and by analogy MTV as a channel - to firmly set every item in its context in a way that they all appeared to be 'linked in' and presented as part of MTV's televisual 'environment'.

The 'linking and framing' discourse should be considered as the 'meta-language' of MTV, or in other words the language of the 'feel'. This 'meta-language' operates through various visual and verbal tactics with which the divergent realities of the items featured are encoded with a privileged reading. MTV is essentially articulated through the 'axis of difference' through which the channel presents a series of disparate items and the 'axis of combination and continuity' "which binds, links and frames these differences into a continuous, connected, flowing 'unity'" (Brunsdon and

Morley, 1978:61). Consequently: "The discursive work of linking and framing items binds the divergent realities of these different items into the 'reality' of the programme itself - reconstitutes them in terms of their reality-for-the-programme" (ibid.). Two strategies are employed to this effect, thematisation and ambiguity.

Thematisation is an essential resource on MTV which is used to solicit the viewers' attention. In order to grab the viewers' attention and have them 'stay tuned', MTV has developed a range of patterns in exploiting the same music video clip. Video clips on MTV are thematised according to MTV's own sense of time. Each time a clip is thematised, it is presented in a new light that connotes a particular - unmistakably 'hip' - facet of MTV. For example, a clip on MTV can be promoted as an 'MTV Fresh', which connotes that MTV is the channel that plays new artists. A clip can also be promoted as an 'exclusive', which indicates that MTV is the channel that plays the latest releases by the biggest stars. Once the clips are thematised into separate shows, the shows (rather than the videos) are self-consciously promoted by MTV's visually sophisticated idents. Presented in such a way, video clips become part of the channel - i.e. MTV's 'environment' - which is more important than the video clips themselves.

One particular effect that MTV achieved through combining rock and television's modes of address is the ability to promote itself as a TV channel which is a member of the peer group. MTV's discourse is a specific kind of ambiguous discourse. MTV is constantly playing with opposites so as to establish a complicity with the viewer. For example, by fusing 'show biz' excitement and commonplace experiences of its average viewer, MTV is both glamorous and ordinary. In the channel's representation, there is little difference between a feature from the street - what is called a 'vox pop'- and a celebrity interview. The 'modest' viewer and the 'glamorous' star are treated equally on MTV. As the 'friend of the viewer', MTV is as thrilled with celebrity and it is in the position to offer lucky winners exciting competitions to win the opportunity to enter that extra-ordinary world of fame. As such, MTV is both a point of identification for the viewer and a teenage dream factory. In this context, VJs are crucial in anchoring meaning on MTV. They represent the ordinary viewer as opposed to the star. As Goodwin remarks:

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> The VJs offer a girl/boy-next-door point of identification for the MTV viewer that is mirrored in the gossipy, humorous scripts, in the mise-en-scène of the MTV set [...] and in the interactions with the viewer during phone-ins, contests and outside broadcasts [...] (1993a:140).

Goodwin argues that like other 1980s' 'novelty' pop images - music videos, films and TV series - MTV attempts to "construct a mass market by playing upon confusions about critical distance, so as to generate simultaneously two sets of images that can be read both innocently and self-consciously" (Goodwin, 1993a:165). To paraphrase Goodwin, MTV is eager to sell us a tease while leaving open the possibility of social criticism. A central argument in Goodwin's analysis of MTV is that the 'teasing', 'playful' side of MTV has been extensively theorised in post-modern accounts - which describe MTV as a mere pastiche - at the expense of the 'serious' side of MTV which offers possibilities for counter-cultural readings of MTV's text.

Such a potential of MTV suggests that the concern with lifestyle involves a dual focus: one that gives a materialist explanation for MTV's stylisation of life; the other that accounts for "the cultural dimension of economy, the symbolisation and use of cultural goods as 'communicators' not just utilities" (Featherstone, 1991:84). An interest in the symbolic dimension at work in the process of consumption of cultural signs needn't be used to argue that we live in a world of free-floating identities and self-referential signs, as implied in much post-modern writing (cf. chapter 1). Rather, following David Marquand, I want to suggest that:

> Through marketing, layout and style, the 'image' provides the mode of representation and fictional narrativisation of the body on which so much of modern consumption depends [...] Young people, black and white, who can't even spell 'postmodernism' but have grown up in the age of computer technology, rock-video and electronic music, already inhabit such a universe in their heads (1990:128).

2.3 LIFESTYLE AND IDENTITY: MIXING MARKETING AND ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

This section looks at what knowledge of the audience MTV's research actually provides and then suggests as to how such an insight into identities can be used in conjunction with academic knowledge.

2.3.1 *MTV'S EXTENSIVE AUDIENCE RESEARCH*

Prior to the launch of MTV in the USA, the owner of the programme service to be called MTV, Warner Communications, commissioned a series of audience research studies to provide specific information about the prospective audience for MTV and their music preferences. Hence, MTV became known as 'the most researched channel in history'. MTV's programming and playlists were to be designed to satisfy the taste of the desired demographic group. Research revealed that the most likely viewer for MTV was the white, educated, affluent suburban male in his early twenties (cf. Banks, 1996:33-34). Equipped with such 'sophisticated audience knowledge', MTV in the USA justified its policy of exclusion of black artists from the channel. The channel claimed that its narrow audience segment was into rock, which was dominated by white artists. However, as will be revealed in chapter 5, after an incident involving a black artist and a precedent involving a music genre of black origin, MTV US included non-rock music genres into its main playlist. The fact that MTV US not only went on to play black music but also played it extensively casts a doubt about the channel makers' knowledge about the types of demography of their audience. If it is, indeed, the case that MTV US' sophisticated audience research corresponds to an in depth knowledge of the channel's audience, then there appears to be a divergence between MTV USA and MTV Europe's audience 'knowledge'.

Based on an analysis of MTV Europe's audience research, I want to suggest that 'sophisticated' audience research should not be confused with actual knowledge about the audience. MTV's 'in depth' audience research is aimed, above all, at advertisers and cable operators. Collins rightly observes that "authoritative audience research is

necessary in order to demonstrate to advertisers the utility of satellite television advertising" (1992:60). MTV's audience studies aimed at advertisers can, indeed, be described as 'sophisticated' in that they use substantial audience samples and qualitative research techniques.

For example, one of the audience research agencies that was used by MTV is called the Yankelovich Young Adult Europe Monitor. Yankelovich' methodology is based on in depth face-to-face interviews of a duration of forty five minute and over. In the period August/September 1994, the Monitor surveyed over 3 thousand of 16 to 34-year olds in nine Western European countries. The information gathered was then quantified and presented in the form of tables and statistics. The Monitor's research findings provide a meticulously detailed break-down of young European's consumer attitudes towards the products and services advertised on or provided by MTV. The findings are spread over at least a hundred pages with details that range from 'what young Europeans like to chew' to 'how many Mars bars they purchased in the past month'. For advertisers, the Monitor clearly indicates that a satellite/cable service such as MTV could be a useful advertising channel. In this context, the words of MTV's sponsor quoted earlier, that MTV 'didn't shirk its responsibility towards advertisers', make perfect sense. However, this does not mean that MTV has an 'in depth' knowledge of its audience. On the contrary, the Monitor tells us nothing about who the young Europeans surveyed are beyond the categories of 'viewer' and 'non-viewer'.

MTV's research aimed at cable operators is also presented in terms of 'viewers' and 'non-viewers'. The purpose of such research is to convince cable operators about the role of MTV in raising cable awareness. For example, a typical promotional kit geared towards cable operators states facts such as:

- **MTV VIEWERS VALUE CABLE MORE HIGHLY THAN NON-VIEWERS.**
  - 83% of MTV viewers believe that cable is 'good' or 'excellent value', compared with 73% of non-viewers.

- Non-viewers are twice as likely to describe cable as 'not very good' or 'very bad value' as MTV viewers.

Source: RSL Cable and Satellite Monitor, May/June 1992

- **MTV IS SEEN AS A PARTICULARLY UNIQUE CHANNEL.**

- 62% of viewers agree with the statement 'I expect to see things on MTV that I'll never see elsewhere'.

- even non-viewers agree that MTV is unique: 56% agree with the same statement and only 9% disagree [presumably, having heard of MTV through the word-of-mouth, or seen the channel in a public place].

Source: RLS Auditorium Test, January, 1993

On the basis of such evidence, MTV argues that the channel should be part of what is called the 'basic cable offer'. Being part of the basic cable offer guarantees the channel's distribution in any country without additional cost to that of the basic cable subscription fee. For thematic channels such as MTV who have negligible viewing figures compared to terrestrial TV, to have a maximum distribution on available cable outlets is crucial for generating advertising revenue. However, the research that MTV commissions for the purpose of advertising sales is of no direct relevance for the actual programme-making process.

As already indicated, the research that has the most impact on MTV's programming strategy is the research that gives an insight into TV viewing behaviour. According to Lewis: "Such research makes the people who make the programme see it in the way that the people who watch MTV see MTV" (interview, 22/05/97). The implications of this are important for designing MTV. The influence of MTV's strategic planning on the creative programme-making side can be explained with reference to Murdock's (1982) concepts of 'allocative' and 'operational' control. The allocative control consists of "the power to define the overall goals and scope of the corporation and determine the general way it deploys its productive resources" (ibid.:122). For MTV, this means that the channel has to be designed as a narrowcaster and that the budgets have to be allocated accordingly (see next chapter). The operational control is

confined to "decisions about the effective use of resources already allocated and the implementation of policies already decided upon at the allocative level" (ibid.). Murdock suggests that allocative control puts limitations on the operational side of the business. Indeed, tension between strategic decisions and creative flair does occur at MTV. However, it should be noted that in the initial period of MTV's expansion, there was an 'unusual' degree of autonomy for a large corporation at the programming level, which will be examined in the context of MTV's music playlist (cf. chapter 5).

In order to translate the language of allocative control into a language that speaks to the viewer, MTV employs production staff who are in touch with the latest youth cultural trends. They are called 'native speakers' by the allocative staff. In the words of MTV's former senior vice president of marketing, Sanjey Nazerali, speaking at WORM (18/09/96):

> So, how do we do it at MTV?...We have a group of people at MTV who actually produce and present the various shows we broadcast. Each of these people is passionately dedicated to their genres, and they know it back to front. They are celebrities within the genre. The audience listens to them, respects them, understands them. Most important, the audience aspires to them. We involve these people, these native speakers, in marketing. [Trendy programme creators] do not determine the message necessarily, but they do determine the language we use. And by language what I do not mean is that we take ads to them at the eleventh hour and get them to vet the copy and edit out all references to 'kids' and 'disco'. It is more serious than that. What I mean is that they input into the actual tools that we use, right across the board from the initiative as a whole, right the way through to media choice and actual copy. I mean, how on earth are we supposed to know that 'club kids' love advertising and 'metal chicks' hate advertising? How on earth are we supposed to know that *Metal* magazine is hipper or less hip than *Kerrang*, or *Mix Mag* more or less than *DJ*? How do we know if sponsoring gigs is necessarily more or less credible then fly-posting? We do not. But our producers for their specific audiences know. It is their life to do this. It is their life to reflect and most importantly to lead these audiences. They are relevant mouths.

Once the language of allocative control is translated by native speakers and encoded into programmes, the appeal of these programmes is tested. This is where marketing research comes into play. Marketing has an influence on programme-making in the pre-production and post-production stages. The pre-production stage is that of setting

the channel's agendas. The post-production is the verification of whether or not the agenda was successfully achieved. Setting the agenda raises questions such as "who are we talking to?", "what are we trying to get them to do?" and "what do we need to say to get them to do it?". The verification process asks "how will we know if we have been successful?"(cf. ibid.). Marketing research provides the answers to such questions.

In order to communicate messages in an environment where a number of brands compete for the same 'media literate' consumers who are thought to be cynical of advertising, marketers constantly try to develop sophisticated viewer profiles. A fictional character named *Steve* - a "post-modern stylesurfer" [6] - who refuses to be stereotyped represents the archetype-MTV-viewer. However, *Steve* does not represent the average teenager. Rather, he is an 'aspirational' teenager. I want to suggest that 'lifestyling' can be used towards developing what Dick Hebdige (1990) called a 'sociology of aspiration' and secondly, that it can serve as evidence to support what has been one of the major themes developed by cultural studies - that 'identity' is a constructed category.

2.3.2 *TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF ASPIRATION*

Hebdige observes that the forms of knowledge which are provided by marketers depend for their success on the accurate outlining and anticipation "not just of what (some) people think they want but of *what they'd like to be*" (1990:89-90). The types outlined in commercial lifestyling "don't present descriptions of living, breathing individuals so much as hypothetical 'analogues' of 'aspirational clusters'. In other words, the new intensive but speculative forms of market research are designed to offer a social map of desire which can be used to determine where exactly which products should be 'pitched' and 'niched'" (ibid.:89). The leading role given to market research and packaging suggests that the classifications of social types, which became pervasive in the 1980s, actively create and sustain one version of the social.

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[6] Ted Polhemus, author (and exhibition organiser) 'Streetstyle', 'Stylesurfing' and 'The Customised Body', speaking at WORM, 18/09/96.

As Hebdige put it:

> We live in a world and in bodies which are deeply scored by the power relations of race, class, sexuality and gender but we also live - whether or not we know it consciously - in a world of style-setters, innovators, sloanes, preppies, empty nesters (working couples with grown up families), dinkies (dual-income-no-kids), casuals, sensibles, the constrained majority, and today's prime targets, the pre-teens and woofies (well-off-older-folk) (ibid.).

In a similar context, Paul Willis argues that:

> The interest of marketers in differentiating and meeting the 'needs' of different consumers through ever more sophisticated analyses of market 'segments', 'niches', 'life styles' and 'life stages' [...] may well serve to supply - even if more by accident than purpose - a continually wider range of appropriate symbolic resources (1990:131).

Stuart Hall (1990a) suggests that the need to relate to objects symbolically may be even more pronounced in poorer societies. According to Hall: "In a world tyrannised by scarcity, men and women nevertheless express in their practical lives not only what they need for material existence but some sense of their symbolic place in the world, of who they are, their identities" (ibid.:130). All of this will be pertinent in the context of MTV in war-torn Bosnia.

Another theme that will be developed in this thesis is that lifestyling provides an alternative sphere of identification that coexists with stable forms of identification. As Davidson remarks "advertising was the industry quickest to exploit the extent to which identity is something constructed, something invented and controlled" (1992:178). Given that these new forms of identification tends to be formed around consumption - material as well as symbolic - it is necessary to seriously engage with consumption practices. This entails looking at spaces in which various forms of sociality occur, such as shopping malls, concerts, sport gatherings and similar. According to Shields "sociality exposes plural subjects who duplicitously drop their individuality to adopt a persona which allows convivial interaction with a given group at a given time and place" (1992b:107). Social gatherings allow "simultaneous

identification with the gang at the bar, the group of the day-care volunteers, pals at the sportsclub" (1992a:15).

These ad-hoc and, to an extent, fluid associations actively challenge traditional social arrangements, such as divisions along the lines of class but also what Ernest Gellner referred to as 'tacit assumptions of nationalism' (1983:53). Following Ernest Renan's (1994) definition of the 'nation' as a group which 'wills' itself to persist as a community, Gellner has remarked that the same applies to many other communities such as gangs, teams, conspiracies. However, Gellner argues that it is only because nations have become 'preferred' objects of identification in the modern nationalist age that we take nation(alism) for granted. For the reason that 'lifestyling' is based on alternative symbolisations of the self, it is important to take it into account. An insight into 'lifestyle' does not imply that markets shape identities more powerfully than nation-states. Instead, it recognises that engaging in different dimension of social and cultural life as 'consumers', even when ephemeral, is an active process in the construction of new identities. New identities can produce new antagonisms but they can also challenge old ones.

Finally, if 'lifestyling' is not to be regarded as an autonomous, playful space, then the alternative is to consider the proliferation of individualities in the 1980s as the outcome of the numerous campaigns which were fought in the previous decades, i.e. 'new social movements'. These movements highlighted the issue of difference, which was subsequently hyped by advertising in the 1980s, which offered 'different you's'. As Mort remarks:

> We may disagree with advertising's conclusions but we would be foolish to dismiss the insights thrown up about shifting class relations or the redrawn maps of cultural experience going on inside people's heads. And whisper it not too loud, but aren't there some uncanny resemblance's between lifestyle market segmentation and the politics of identity which have been argued for by the new social movements. For the fracturing of solid market blocks read the break-up of post-war class certainties and the eruption of quite different political subjects with alternative agendas: women, gays, the elderly etc. Both the market and formal politics are being forced to adapt to these sea-changes (1990:168-169).

CONCLUSION

This chapter argued that in order to understand the ascendancy of MTV in Europe, it was necessary to contextualise MTV within the political economy of the media industry of the period when MTV was launched. A major factor in the development of MTV was the increase in the number of television channels in Europe, following the 'deregulation' of broadcasting. This led to the launch of a new type of channel - the thematic channel - which was in partnership with advertisers. In effect, by capitalising on the circumstances in the TV market at the time, MTV convinced advertisers that it was the most effective medium to reach the youth audience segment - traditionally out of their reach - pan-Europeanly. This entailed reconceptualising 'youth' as a market category which exhibited a specific kind of viewing behaviour to which MTV accommodated its design. To achieve this appearance of being young and different, MTV was promoted as a 'unique' brand.

In order to convince advertisers that was an audience for this new type of channel on satellite/cable TV, thematic channels employed extensive audience research. The research that tells 'how many Mars bars MTV viewers eat' or that 'MTV viewers believe that cable is excellent value' is necessary to convince advertisers and cable operators, respectively, of the utility of services such as MTV. Marketing research attempts to define the most likely viewer profile for MTV. It tells less about who the viewers are than who they would like to be. Finally, the research that reveals 'how they view MTV' is the most important in relation to the channel design, and this will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NARROWCASTING AND BROADCASTING

INTRODUCTION

A number of commentators (Hartley, 1987; Morley, 1990; Ang 1991) are critical of the way television institutions equate the generalised information obtained through forms of audience measurements - i.e. ratings - with actual 'knowledge' about audiences. Such measurements convert the occurrence of people watching television into calculable units for economic purposes. The underlying argument of these works is that the 'television audience' is not a pre-existent category. Rather, it is a symbolic construct which is created by the discursive procedures of audience measurement that 'lump' people together only in so far as they have the observable activity of watching television in common (cf. Ang, 1991:35). In this process, all the idiosyncratic differences have to be suppressed so that calculable categories of ratings which emphasise averages, regularities and generalisable patterns of viewing behaviour can be created (cf. Morley, 1990:7). Predominant modes of audience research measure factors such as the presence of a TV set in the room and assume that switching the TV on is both a reliable indicator of viewing and an index of wanting to view the specific programme turned to (ibid.).

As examined in the previous chapter, from MTV's institutional point of view the audience is also a discursive construct. MTV's viewers are a socially and culturally diverse group of music fans - unified, above all, by one demographic factor only, that of age - who form an entity on the basis of their common use of television and MTV, in particular. Thus, on MTV just as on any terrestrial commercial TV service, the audience is a 'taxonomic collective' (cf. Ang, 1991, following Harré, 1981). However, what makes MTV different from terrestrial broadcasters, is that MTV was designed to accommodate a particular viewing behaviour in order to fill the gaps in these broadcasters' reach rather than compete with them for ratings. To identify how MTV

filled these gaps, as it were, we need a new set of assumptions about television. In this context, Goodwin rightly points out that the culture of a television institution and its resultant programming "has something to do with the manner it is regulated and funded" (1993a:170). In other words, broadcasters generate revenue on the basis of delivering a mass market to advertisers while narrowcasters such as MTV generate revenue on the basis of 'extracting' a particular audience segment from that mass market. There is a significant difference between creating a programme for a mass market and creating a programme - in the case of MTV, a whole channel - for one audience segment. The latter demands a different professional mentality than the former. As Lewis explains:

> Satellite TV, of which MTV is an example, is a different sort of TV to normal terrestrial TV. Most people who work in terrestrial TV (which has one set of rules), tend to come to satellite TV with a terrestrial mind-set. They tend to apply the rules from terrestrial TV to satellite TV, which doesn't tend to work (interview, 22/05/97).

This chapter examines how this different professional mentality is reflected in MTV's design by arguing that MTV is, above all, a complementary choice to terrestrial TV; that it is designed as a continuous option for short bursts of viewer attention and that it is, primarily, a background channel like radio.

3.1 MTV: A COMPLEMENTARY CHOICE TO TERRESTRIAL TV

MTV was not predicated on the assumption that it would enter the ratings-race with other broadcasters. According to MTV's director of production and programming[1], Brent Hansen:

> It's hard to be competition to terrestrial broadcasters when they are broadcasters and we are narrowcasters. We are never going to affect them number-wise. We might be leading the [viewing] charts in terms of thematic channels coming into Europe, which, in the end, when you add them altogether, will take a share away from the broadcasters. That's true (interview, 18/08/94).

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[1] One month after this interview was conducted, Hansen was appointed president and creative director and later promoted to president and chief executive officer. Hence, this change of position will apply in relation to interviews conducted at a latter date, from which quotations will be cited in chapters to follow.

Similarly, Angus remarks that "MTV is never going to get the sort of huge ratings that *Eastenders* could get, because it's only looking at a very niche audience" (interview, 11/08/94).

Instead, as already indicated, MTV attempts to fill the gaps in these broadcasters' reach. This effectively means not competing for the 'peak time' viewing slot but being a desirable 'off peak' time viewing option. As Lewis explains:

> MTV's size is limited by the fact that 99% of viewers are watching something else. [MTV] kind of does and doesn't compete with terrestrial TV. It does compete with other [terrestrial] channels in that other channels stop people from watching MTV. It doesn't compete with them in as much as you don't tend to go 'shall I watch MTV or BBC1?'. You tend to go 'if there's nothing on BBC1, I'll watch MTV'. MTV is like default viewing. It's like for when there's nothing better on (interview, 22/05/97).

Meter panels, such as BARB (The Broadcasters' Audience Research Board), which simply signal when TV sets are switched on in a sample households - and, for this reason, are considered by many audience researchers as unreliable methods of determining how, why and who is actually watching TV (cf. introduction) - are the most useful indicators of the common use of MTV. BARB tells the programme makers at what times of the day the channel is switched on. Such research suggests that MTV is, above all, a 'between peak time' and 'end of peak time' channel, although people tend to 'flick through' all day long. And, this is precisely the research into viewing behaviour on the basis of which the channel is designed. Given that MTV is mainly watched at times when terrestrial TV is not - and particularly during what is considered to be the terrestrial 'off peak' viewing time - the channel as a whole was designed as a complementary choice to broadcast TV. The exceptions are certain programmes on MTV for which people tune in specifically (see next section). Consequently, MTV concentrated its resources on creating a strong channel identity so that it could market itself as a 'unique' brand.

It is worth noting, here, that despite the fact that MTV was primarily envisaged as a complementary choice to terrestrial TV, in a number of European countries, MTV was,

initially, one of the main viewing choices for young viewers, as this study will go on to reveal. This is because there were no youth programmes to match MTV on terrestrial TV, as in the case of Northern European cable markets. In the case of Eastern Europe, MTV was the main channel that people (of all generations) watched either because there was no other broadcast TV transmission at all during certain periods of the day, or because MTV's signal was pirated on terrestrial networks and was, therefore, accessible to large audiences. Consequently, media hype surrounding the 'novelty' of MTV was created, to the extent that sophisticated TV became synonymous with youth TV (cf. chapter 2). While I am not denying the innovative aspect of MTV as a channel format and its creative merits, I do want to draw attention to the dependency between the channel's good looks and the marketing device of branding. Chapter 2 established the difference between branding and more traditional functional economics. The next section looks more closely at how - by being a strong brand - MTV created a space for itself in the competitive European televisual landscape, following the broadcasting 'deregulation'.

3.2 MTV: A CONTINUOUS OPTION FOR SHORT BURSTS OF VIEWER ATTENTION

As indicated in chapter 2, MTV makers were aware from the outset that they had to produce a channel for viewers who spent little time in front of their TV sets. To accommodate such sporadic TV viewing, the channel as a whole was conceived as a continuous option for short bursts of viewer attention and promoted as a brand. This section demonstrates how the channel's sophisticated design is related to its market imperative.

The first wave of scholarly literature about MTV US focused on the channel's design, which can be described as a constant stream of sophisticated visual images edited into brief cut sequences. In his influential study of MTV US, Goodwin (1993a&b) demonstrates how this appearance of seamless images misled scholars who were writing from a post-modern perspective (*Journal of Communication Inquiry* 1986,10(1);

Kaplan, 1987). They failed to recognise that MTV had discrete programming slots, even during what Goodwin calls the first phase of MTV, when the channel most resembled post-modern descriptions. Post-modern arguments were further undermined only two years after MTV's launch when the channel was restructured. Narrowcasting and flow were replaced by two classic audience-building techniques of broadcast media schedules, dayparting and stripping. The former is the practice of scheduling different kinds of music during separate blocks of each day's programming. The latter is the practice of screening the same TV series at the same time each day of the week.

An attempt to understand the principle of narrowcasting is also almost entirely missing from the literature about satellite television in Europe that was published in the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Instead, the debate surrounding the implementation of satellite TV has either revolved around the inability of satellite TV to deliver programming comparable to that of terrestrial TV or it overestimated the cultural effects of satellite TV. Moreover, commentators such as François Mariet (1991) who does recognise that the implementation of new communications technologies in Europe created the opportunity for a new type of channel to be launched - the thematic channel - falls into the same trap as post-modern theorists. Mariet argues that channels with specific content such as those channels whose primary make-up consists of all music, sports or news - what he calls the 'most prototypically thematic channels' - have no strictly determined viewing slots. In the case of MTV in Europe, the channel appeared to have no schedules because - throughout its pan-European phase - it was designed like MTV US had been during its first phase. Thus, MTV in Europe was characterised by narrowcasting and flow. However, this does not mean that MTV is not scheduled nor does it mean that advertisers in Europe have different expectations concerning the length of TV viewing attention. Rather, MTV's programming strategy needs to be explained in relation to the particularities of Europe, which prevented MTV Europe from simply replicating MTV US' programming decisions.

Unlike in the USA, in Europe there was the language barrier to consider. This acted as a major obstacle to producing more wordy, non-music programmes. The lack of wordy

programmes, in turn, gave MTV Europe the appearance of not being scheduled because all music programmes follow the same format: short VJ link - followed by two to three music video clips - smoothly edited into the commercial break mixed with MTV's idents. However, this section will reveal that MTV is scheduled. It is just that instead of employing traditional TV scheduling methods - most notably listing programming times in the TV guide - MTV resorts to its own tactic of thematisation to solicit viewer attention (cf. chapter 2). MTV also relies on self-promotion, partly because it tends not to be listed in TV guides. Consequently, regular viewers - those to whom the channel's meta-language speaks - are very much aware of MTV's schedules, which serve as a point of identification for them. These viewers also tune into non-music shows - *Beavis and Butthead* (cartoon), *MTV Sports*, *The Pulse* (Euro-fashion and arts) *The Real World* (real life soap) and *Most Wanted* (see chapter 4)- which are kudos-building programmes. In contrast, for occasional viewers - those to whom it does not matter that Madonna released a new single - MTV appears to be like music radio with pictures.

The difference between the regular and occasional MTV viewer brings us to the issue of revenue. In Europe, both advertisers and record companies have lobbied MTV to air more non-music programmes, which the channel refused to do (cf. Clarke, 1992). This section will reveal that the appearance of constant flow has the ability to attract viewers in multiple viewing settings, not just domestic, which in turn, requires new methods of ratings data. It will also demonstrate how this apparent flow ensures viewer loyalty among a core group, the maintenance of which is essential for generating revenue.

The first stage of analysis is to establish the connection between 'flow' (as a specific form of narration) and the profit motive in order to then revise the traditional understanding of 'flow' to accommodate MTV. The second stage is to examine how good looks - at any time - serve to attract viewers and subsequently ensure their renewed custom, as is customary with branding.

3.2.1 *RETHINKING TV 'FLOW' TO ACCOMMODATE MTV*

At the origin of this analysis is the concept of 'flow' as introduced by Raymond Williams (1974). According to Williams, in the process of viewing TV: "There has been a significant shift from the concept of sequence as *programming* to the concept of sequence as a *flow*" (ibid.:89). Although back in the 1970s this was difficult to see because the older concept of programming - "the temporal sequence within which mix and proportion and balance operate" (cf. ibid.) - was still active, the real experience of broadcasting was different. Most of us, in describing it, would say that we have been 'watching television' rather than that we have watched 'the news' or 'a play'. Williams argues that with the introduction of commercial TV, the organisation of broadcasting where the interruption between discrete programme units is marked by conventional intervals has been fundamentally revalued. Intervals were replaced by advertisements. Although there was a formal undertaking that programme interruptions were only allowed to take place in 'natural breaks' (such as between the movements of a symphony), in practice this became any moment of convenient insertion. Programmes such as news, plays or films began to be interrupted for commercials. While this can still be residually seen as 'interruption' of 'programmes', it is also important to recognise that: "What is being offered is not, in older terms, a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow" (ibid.:90). For: "It is evident that what is now called 'an evening's viewing' is in some ways planned, by providers and then by viewers, *as a whole*; that it is in any event planned in discernible sequences which in this sense override particular programme units" (ibid.:93).

This notion of 'flow' had a considerable influence on the works of John Ellis (1982) and Rick Altman (1987). However, they are both critical of William's claim that 'flow' can be related to the 'television experience itself'. Contrary to this, Altman argues that there is no such single experience. Rather, 'flow' is related to the commodification of the spectator in a capitalist, free enterprise system. 'Flow' only replaces discrete programming to the extent that "competition for spectators is allowed to govern the broadcasting situation and television revenues increase with increased viewing" (1987:

567). According to Altman, it is in countries with the highest coefficient of 'flow' that the ratings systems are the most developed. To support this statement - and writing prior to the advent of narrowcasting in Europe and the collapse of communism - Altman points out that the lowest level of 'flow' is in the State controlled Eastern block countries; that it is to some extent higher in countries such as France, where TV production and programming is quasi-governmental and quasi-independent; and that it is the highest in the United States where commercial networks compete for spectators more openly and directly than in Europe.

Ellis similarly observes that 'flow' as a feature of TV "severely compromises and alters the separate texts that TV has manufactured" (1982:118). For him, Williams' model of "texts which appear in a context that reduces their separation from one another" underestimates the "the complexity of broadcast TV's particular commodity form, which has very little to do with the single text" (ibid.). According to Ellis, it is the 'spot' advertisement which is the quintessence of TV and the furthest developed form of broadcast TV's segmental commodity. Other programmes also began to adopt this segmentalisation such as news bulletins where it is the standard approach for each item to be separated from all others.

I want to suggest that MTV is even more segmented than terrestrial TV. In fact, MTV is segmented to the extent that the difference between a programme on MTV and an advertisement is almost blurred. Here, I concur with Sut Jhally who sees this intensified 'blurring' as a consequence of narrowcasting and the ways advertisers "sought to have their products placed within the programme itself" (1990:91). Indeed, by blurring the message content of advertisements and the message content of programmes, MTV created an 'environment' for advertisers to become part of, especially by sponsoring a show (cf. chapter 2). A crucial difference between MTV and broadcast TV, in this context, is that the former is envisaged as 'channel viewing' while the latter is envisaged as 'programme viewing'. For this reason, the concept of 'flow' as described in relation to broadcast TV is not an entirely adequate model for MTV.

MTV introduced a new form of TV narration which does not correspond to descriptions of broadcast TV. A significant proportion of what is broadcast on MTV does not consist of "small segments that fill the gaps between substantial programme units" (Williams quoted in Ellis, 1982:119). As already indicated, 'substantial programming units' on MTV hardly exist. With the exception of few non-music programmes, the main units to 'fill the gaps' are three to four minute long music video clips. They are not much longer than advertisements or trailers. As a matter of fact, the whole concept of MTV takes the form of an advertisement. Not only is MTV the first channel as whole to look as sophisticated as an advertisement, but MTV, like an advertisement, demands short bursts of viewer attention. MTV was designed with the knowledge that the average MTV viewing span does not exceed 18 minutes (see Clarke, 1992). MTV is not intended to be watched for longer periods of time. Rather, it is created as a continuous option. Viewers can tune in at any time because there is no intrigue to follow in MTV's programmes. As Hansen put it: "[Viewers] know exactly what they gonna get. [MTV] will be stimulating and you can turn it off as often as you want and come back to it. It will always be there [...] It's like a programme that runs twenty four hours a day" (interview, 18/08/94). And, it is precisely by being a continuous option that MTV can survive in the market as a complementary choice to terrestrial TV. Viewers switch to MTV when they don't feel like sitting and watching a 'proper' programme on TV.

If the concept of 'flow' cannot fully describe the experience of watching this 'programme that runs twenty four hours a day', then what is the alternative description? Towards a more appropriate description of MTV, 'continuity sequences' as described by John Morey (1981) serve as a useful analogy. In a paper dedicated to investigating these items which occupy the 'space between programmes', Morey argues that such items are "by definition an 'un-programme', one neither intended by the broadcasting institutions to constitute a programme, nor perceived as such by the audience" (1981:1). According to Morey, their indistinct status of 'un-programme' is probably the reason for the lack of critical attention to this phenomenon. However, by raising questions about the nature of continuity sequences, the way they operate and their relationship to the other images and sounds which constitute programmes, Morey concludes that: "Continuity sequences are

not peripheral to the experience of watching television, but central to it, contributing far more than might initially be supposed to the encoding and decoding of televisual meaning" (ibid.). Indeed, the distinction between 'programmes' and 'un-programmes' is particularly unhelpful in the case of MTV.

The provisional typology of continuity material that Morey proposes is an attempt to demonstrate how these sequences are relevant for the experience of watching television. His detailed analysis shows how continuity sequences are "a system of codes which in turn contributes to the set of meanings constituting what is commonly referred to as the experience of watching television" (1981:21). By extension, continuity sequences on MTV - i.e. short films, animations and trailers which constitute the channel's idents - are crucial for MTV's viewing experience because they enable the channel to present itself as a different of kind of televisual 'environment'. MTV is probably the most striking example of the use of continuity sequences. With the emergence of MTV, those features ceased to be essentially marginal ephemera, and were put into the spotlight. MTV capitalised on their potential in structuring

> the relationship with the audience to maximum self-advantage, employing particular formal conventions composed to avoid discomforting, puzzling or otherwise alienating an audience which had been made familiar with a certain set of codes, a naturalised system of practices and house styles (Morey, 1981:2).

By putting larger amounts of "time, money and effort into perfecting and maintaining these elaborately-constructed modes of communication with the audience" (ibid.), the numerous MTV idents are designed to be experienced as an indispensable part of the channel. In the words of Hansen:

> MTV puts creative money where creative is expected [...] We've got to take those risks. We've got to put more of an edge into the environment to make those generic pieces of performance come alive [...] Just playing videos on TV does not make a television station. We have to create an environment where Sting looks better on MTV than anywhere else (interview, 18/08/94).

The fact that terrestrial broadcasters increasingly began to use continuity sequences as an indispensable part of their channel is indicative of their importance. In the UK, for

example, commercial channels, and, subsequently, by emulation BBC 2, use their channel 'idents' as the key feature of construction of their image. By the late 1990s, terrestrial channels also began to emulate this idea of TV 'environment' by dedicating a whole evening's viewing to a theme, usually a music or film genre. This is a tactic that enables the channels to renew viewer attention throughout the evening and, in the case of commercial channels, generate sponsorship revenue. This is a branding tactic that MTV employed from the outset to establish a relationship with the viewer, which is examined in the next section.

3.2.2 *MTV: SUCCESS IN TERMS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH VIEWERS*

Broadcast television assumes that viewers tune in to watch specific programmes. Programmes which generate the highest rating figures are considered to be the most successful. In this section I shall argue that unlike terrestrial television, MTV is conceived with the widespread use of the remote control and the multiple increase of channels in mind. The average MTV viewer is a zapper who 'flicks' through channels. Television which *looks* good at any time is necessary to attract such a viewer's attention. Furthermore, as already noted, MTV's fate does not depend on ratings but channel identity which is sold to advertisers. Hence, instead of concentrating resources on specific programmes, MTV cultivates brand-awareness. Once again, MTV's sophisticated visuals are important because they are considered as an intrinsic part of MTV's identity.

3.2.2 (i) *the TV zapper*

MTV's 'environment' was conceived with the widespread use of the remote control and the multiple increase of channels in mind. Such a context has given rise to a new kind of viewer - the zapper - who has ceased to respect the rules of the narrative. As indicated in the previous chapter, the solution to the problem of the lack of interest from viewers for whom television was not an exciting activity and who were also in 'remote' control, was to produce programmes with sophisticated imagery. Such visuals had the ability to

'arrest' (Porter quoted in Frith, 1993) the viewer whose "TV pleasure and displeasure could, for the first time, be registered instantly by zapping" (Frith, 1993:77), as the following quotation describes:

> You are surfing through the TV channels. *Zap*. Into focus comes an old friend, *Mustela nigripes* [2]. Yes, viewers, it's another nature programme from Aunty BBC on the mating habits of the black-footed ferret. *Zap*. An announcer is introducing the next gem, from a French channel: a live debate on the Maastricht treaty... *Zap. Zap*. Then - *cowabunga*! - you find it. A 23-year-old blond with a figure that would wipe any channel surfer off his board bursts upon the screen. She is Rebecca de Ruvo and this is MTV Europe, the continent's fastest growing satellite channel, scourge of the staid, and prime purveyor of Euro-cool. Rebecca, a top MTV Europe veejay, is from Sweden, but speaks mid-Atlantic English (like totally). She gives a cue, and the sound system erupts with a techno blast of the latest hit by 2 Unlimited, a Dutch group. The beat is thumpingly catchy. The graphics are mesmerising and that couple stimulating something that looks suspiciously like fornication as they lip-synch their way through the song. They are certainly more engaging than the BBC's amorous polecats. Next comes an utterly avant-garde film clip: a cow contentedly chewing the cud. *Pause*. Then *cut* to a small dog, which appears to be suckling the breast of a smiling young woman. No kidding. The surreal interlude concludes with a bewildered postman wandering off into an urban landscape: the caption, in Russian asks: 'What do you think?' (Fedarko, 1993:61).

The zapper is a skilled viewer who had acquired competence through years of practice. As a result, he or she can effortlessly adjust to the thread of the (usually predictable) story or as easily switch onto another channel at the touch of a button (facilitated by the remote). The zapper is a viewer who is not loyal to the narrator (cf. Mercier, 1991). Viewers' infidelity raises the issue of TV reception not in terms of consumption of programmes but in terms of viewers' relation to them. Indeed, new television services in the 1980s, which were first to realise this practice, began to market themselves as brands and subsequently became prosperous. For TV-brands, viewing figures are a matter of rapport between the viewer and the whole channel, rather than with a particular programme. For example, the French Canal Plus based its advertising campaigns on the relationship 'viewer-channel'. Their message was: 'we are a big family'. In the words of vice-director of foreign relations, Laurence Gallot, over a length of time, at Canal Plus:

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[2] Type of weasel (Latin).

"We created a sort of shared culture between the people who are our viewers and pay to watch us and us who work in this company" (interview, 06/09/95). In the case of MTV, as I argued in the previous chapter, the stress is on 'atmosphere' which is promoted self-consciously through the channel's meta-language.

The fact that the viewer can switch off or over at any time is what renders the routine of TV-watching tolerable to the 'unfaithful' viewer. However, this option of fast programme selection ultimately works to the narrowcaster's advantage because it turns the apparent infidelity towards a programme (which results from boredom or impatience) into an overall fidelity towards the channel. As a consequence, MTV's discourse allows the occasional 'dipping in and out' but the 'meta-discourse' attempts to ensure that this 'dipping' occurs on regular basis. The viewers who do tune in on regular basis represent MTV's core viewers. According to Lewis:

> 20% of our viewers account for 90% of our ratings. We get all our ratings from 20% of people who watch. Small group of people. We don't get ratings from just everyone flicking into MTV when there's nothing better on. We get all our ratings from 20% of people flicking into MTV quite a lot when there's nothing better on (interview, 22/05/97).

3.2.2 (ii) *the awareness of MTV exceeds its ratings*

As already implied, another difference between MTV and terrestrial TV is that MTV is unable to get viewing figures to match even remotely the numbers generated by programmes on prime-time broadcast TV slots. At its peak, MTV's share of the overall European viewing figures was approximately 1%, which decreased with the increase of the number of new thematic channels in Europe (see chapter 6). Hence, instead of ratings, MTV is sold to advertisers on the basis of its brand-identity. I have also argued in chapter 2 that an important factor in generating brand-awareness is the peer-gossip network. In the case of MTV, the channel-awareness exceeds the channel's ratings. MTV discovered this when a large discrepancy emerged between the computer-registered viewing figures and the percentage of 16 to 34-year-olds who were familiar with MTV occurred. The latter was far greater than the former.

For example, research revealed that in the UK, 81% of young people were aware of MTV, while the relevant computer-registered viewing figures showed only 25%. 'Finding' the 56% of remaining viewers required additional audience research with a more qualitative approach. The results of new surveys revealed that there was a 'black market' in MTV tapes among school-children. Youngsters who had satellite or cable would tape certain programmes and exchange them with youngsters who did not. Consequently, youngsters without cable at home could watch MTV on their video-recorders. Alternatively, people claimed to have seen MTV in youth clubs, health clubs, gyms and similar. MTV also became a social mode of exercise: people would gather in someone's home in order to watch it (source: Angus, interview, 11/08/94). In fact, during the early days when MTV was truly a novelty music channel, it was almost like a cult-TV. Musician Thomas Dolby recalls that people used to stay at home to watch MTV[3].

This draws attention to what can be described as the nomadic consumption of television. This kind of viewing suggests that viewers of thematic channels are not only nomadic because they can zap through channels or zip through programmes recorded on video and thus 'cannibalise' the TV viewing schedules (see Ang, 1991). Rather, nomadic viewers are those who catch a glimpse of programmes while physically moving. MTV is not just a channel where viewers can watch hip hop on television at home. As Kevin Fedarko remarks, MTV is also 'hip-hopping' in public places:

> Its dazzling colours, animated graphics and beautiful bodies draw viewers in a bar on the outskirts of Moscow, a kibbutz near Massada, a pizzeria in Cannes and the Reykjavik hotel where Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev held their second summit. MTV is leaving its imprint even in places where the majority of households lack cable [...] In Budapest the windows of boutiques, coffee shops and even the local Burger Kings display video terminals tuned to MTV (1993:61).

Similarly, one of the most moving memories of one time NATO officer turned MTV Europe President, Bill Roedy, was his discovery of an old nuclear shelter in Bratislava,

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[3] Private communication with an MTV VJ.

which had been converted into a 'disco' where MTV was constantly transmitted on TV monitors (cf. Eudes, 1995).

Thematic channels, which are especially produced for 'dip in' viewing - and therefore encourage short-span TV viewing - are particularly suitable for consumption in non-domestic settings. For example, if someone chooses to 'go out' or go to the doctor's, it is for the purpose of socialising or medical treatment. It is obvious that watching television is not a primary concern. However, most of these places have monitors because, in public venues, where people are likely to wait, they are also likely to look around. Consequently, if there is a monitor showing a thematic channel like MTV, tailored for short bursts of attention, people will occasionally glance at it. For the same reason it is newspapers or magazines that can be found in waiting rooms - because they, like these channels, can be 'sampled' satisfactorily in short 'bites' - not books, as there is no time to complete them and they require a level of concentration hard to muster in such a situation.

In an attempt to draw the attention of cable operators and potentially advertisers to the phenomenon of nomadic consumption of TV, MTV commissioned research into this kind of viewing such as the 1997 UK 'Pub-goers study'. This study also reveals that sports channels are, in fact, ahead of MTV in terms of channels that people like to watch in pubs. In this context, it is also worth noting that the 24-hour news channel CNN regularly advertises hotels across the world in which CNN can be viewed, because their target audience tend to be travelling businessmen. As Ang observes, "suddenly, the [traditional audience measurement's] lack of accuracy mattered, because it tended to result in statistics disadvantageous for the cable companies" (1991:72). However, apart from this commercial potential for thematic channels, the nomadic consumption of TV also highlights the social aspect of television. This social aspect will be taken into account in the next and final section of this chapter, which further examines the connection between distracted, even disinterested TV viewing and sophisticated channel design.

3.3 MTV: A BACKGROUND CHANNEL

A number of commentators (Medrich, 1979; Kubey, 1986; Taylor and Mullan, 1986; Morley, 1990) observe that the act of switching on the TV set (on the basis of which ratings are measured) does not necessarily mean that people intend to watch the programme the set is tuned to. Switching on the TV set can be understood as a means of escape from various uncomfortable feelings. For example, TV can provide a welcome and soothing alternative to the voids of solitude and unstructured time (cf. Kubey, 1979:170-171); or an excuse to escape the demands of domestic interaction (cf. Morley, 1990; also see 1986); it can be a mechanical act, just like turning on the lights in the house (Taylor and Mullan, 1986: 182). In certain households, television is a constant background to all activities (cf. Medrich, 1979; Taylor and Mullan, 1986) .

As a continuous option, MTV is conveniently designed to be on unobtrusively in the background of other daily household activities and social gatherings in the house or outside. Rather than aiming at producing the types of programmes which generate high ratings, MTV attempts to maximise on its potential as a background channel. In the words of Lewis:

> Naturally, MTV is a sort of background channel. And, perhaps people are not watching every single minute of it. But, the people who watch MTV a lot, or have it on a lot, are very familiar with the channel. They know the VJs, they know the programmes, they know what time things are on. So clearly, they're watching the channel. It might be that they're only watching it 50% of the time. But if you watch something 50% of the time for 6 months, you'll know an awful lot about it [...] If you half have something on in the background for very extended periods of time, you come to understand it (interview, 22/05/97).

There is a difference between MTV and a commercial channel whose primary intention is to be simply switched on for the purpose of ratings - as, indeed, is the case with many second rate channels on cable which recycle the same old programmes over and over again (see Gitlin, 1983). As Jhally remarks (1990), MTV is an exception in this case because it is like an advertisement. MTV attempts to communicate a message in order to sell a product or a service, or even draw attention to its own self-promotional idents.

Thus, although MTV is designed as a background channel, it is "the one aesthetic novelty" (cf. Gitlin, 1983:ix) to find its way on cable. This section examines the aural and visual tactics that MTV developed to direct the viewer's attention towards the screen and thus communicate messages both in domestic and non-domestic viewing settings.

3.3.1 *THE ROLE OF TELEVISION SOUND IN ANCHORING MEANINGS*

In the sections of their works inspired by Williams' concept of 'flow', Ellis (1982) and Altman (1987) concentrate on a particular model of spectatorship - spectatorship in a domestic setting. They both argue that the multiple distractions of this domestic setting mean that television cannot assume a high level of viewers' attention. Consequently, television has to develop specific forms of narration and organisation of material suitable for distracted viewing. This suggests that 'flow' "is not a natural concomitant of television technology, but it is rather the result of a particular consumption configuration" (Altman, 1987: 571). Considering that the continuous viewing time is often affected by the amount of distractions at home, it is more appropriate to say that "the presence of flow is not so much dependent on competition between channels, as Williams claims, but on the competition with the household flow" (Altman, 1987: 571). In countries where commercial TV is established, "the development of programming flow is inseparably linked with the interpenetration of household flow and television programming, a connection which is strongly supported by a tendency of measurement systems to confuse viewers with auditors" (Altman, 1987: 572).

The most obvious result of this process is "the investing of the soundtrack with a special responsibility, that of making sure that no potential auditor will turn off the set" (Altman, 1987: 572). Hence, the focus on the importance of sound as "the major carrier of information and the major means of ensuring continuity of attention" (Ellis, 1982:129) in the works of Ellis and Altman. However, because their respective models of analysis concentrate on the domestic setting, they can only serve as a partial account of the way MTV functions. It leaves the domain of non-domestic consumption intact. In

places such as fast-food restaurants or bars, it is virtually impossible to rely on the sound to anchor the meaning. In settings of that kind, it is often the case that while the image can be seen on television monitors, the sound is hardly discernible from other noises, or it is switched to 'mute'. Moreover, as a pan-European television, MTV focused on visual communication in order to overcome the language barrier (see chapter 4). The self-conscious 'visual' method that MTV developed to suit an international audience is also appropriate here. 'Mute' viewing for an anglophone is hardly any different from viewing with sound for a non-English speaker. Therefore, if the image is strong enough to grab the latter viewer's attention, it is likely that it will also achieve the same goal with the former viewer. In order to explain how MTV communicates messages, it is necessary to consider sophisticated visual images as a specific form of televisual narration. The next section is an attempt to demonstrate how the image can perform the same function as sound, which is especially pertinent in public places, when the TV monitor sound is switched off.

3.3.2 *THE FUNCTION OF TELEVISUAL IMAGE IN ANCHORING MEANINGS*

The aim of this section is to advance the argument that continuity sequences are explicitly "confronting the audience with direct messages concerning the medium itself" (Morey, 1981:5). The question here is rather one of how, among so many beautiful images, MTV manages to differentiate one visual representation from another. Considering the fact that some messages are more important than others, what strategy does it employ to hold the viewers' attention during these brief moments when it is dedicated solely to the screen? To explain this, we need to introduce the concept of the 'speaking' image.

3.3.2 (i) *the 'speaking' image*

The 'speaking' image is a specific form of visual narration which operates to attract the viewer's attention but does not centre "upon the significant at the cost of detail", as Ellis (1982:137) claimed for broadcast television. Furthermore, the 'speaking' image does not

rely upon the sound as 'carrier of continuity', given that there is no sound. It has to rely upon itself to perform that function. Consequently, it is the detail which becomes significant. Morey rightly points out that: "Continuity material is representative of television at its most televisual, in its purest state, as it were[...] Intensification of this auto-referentiality would entail a slippage into an aesthetic dimension, into the poetics of video art" (1981:5).

Because of MTV's high level of televisual sophistication, instead of comparing MTV to traditional broadcast television programmes, watching MTV can better be described in the way that Ellis described advertisements:

> Watching advertisements is often an exhilarating experience because of their short span and their intensity of meaning: they are expensive (more expensive than the programmes they come with) and precisely calculated (often better than TV drama). They are also the supremely televisual product (1982:118).

Indeed, as noted earlier, MTV invests considerable sums of money in the creation of its 'idents' and trailers and commissions young film-makers and animators to do them. [4]

Morey (1981:5) argues that "broadcasting institutions make use of continuity sequences to engage directly with the audience, communicating with the consumer of their images in ways remarkable for their directness" (1981:5). Because of their sophistication, images on MTV are unlikely to remain un-noticed. The metaphor of television as 'a window' used by Morey is very appropriate in this case:

> Instead of looking through a transparent window to a world that lies beyond, continuity sequences encourage the audience to observe the window itself, to look *at* it rather than through it. The continuity window is a stained glass window, studied for itself rather than being disregarded as transparent (1981:6).

As I have already argued, sophisticated visuals do tend to attract distracted viewers and zappers. However, what tactics does MTV employ in order to differentiate images? By what means does it redirect our attention towards the screen when there is a programme-

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[4] See BBC 2's *Picture This* (22/09/97)

trailer on rather than an 'ident' in which a cow is contentedly chewing the cud, or when VJ Rebecca is talking rather than when 2 Unlimited is lip-synching? To answer this question, I suggest we look at how attention-seeking techniques traditionally performed by sound on TV can be also be performed by the 'speaking' image.

3.3.2 (ii) *the phatic function of image*

In order to answer the questions raised above, first, we must presume that like any 'verbal culture', the 'image' culture "involves programmatic, planning, normative endeavours" (Ja kobson, 1972: 87). As a decoder of visual messages, I shall explore "the relation between discourse and the universe of discourse" in the same manner as linguistics, although here we are in the realm of 'extra-linguistic entities' (cf. ibid.:86). Here, the focus of analysis is the non-verbalised sphere. For this reason, what is "verbalised by a given discourse and how it is verbalised" (Ja kobson, 1972: 86) will be substituted by what is 'pictured' and how it is 'pictured'. In order to do so, I suggest that we accept the premise that any 'verbal structure' (and, by analogy, 'image structure') is 'non-casual' - i.e. of 'purposeful character' (cf. Ja kobson, 1972: 87). Its behaviour is 'goal-directed' (cf. ibid.). Our preoccupation is to determine how this goal is achieved.

Here, Roman Ja kobson's model of the 'phatic function of language' is a useful one:

> There are messages primarily serving to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works (Hello, do you hear me?), to attract the attention of the interlocutor or to confirm his continued attention (Are you listening?) (1972:92).

TV also uses this function. As Morey (1981) remarks the use of deitics - the mode of address that beckons a person as if to say 'Hey you! Over here!'- on broadcast TV in a domestic setting contributes to the broadcasting institution's effort to structure a relationship with the audience on a personal or group family basis. It is the role of sound to perform this function. On MTV, it is particularly the VJ's task to produce the utterance of direct address 'I to you'. As Goodwin observes: "VJs' talk is used to redirect the viewer's attention towards the screen by previewing the images that are about to be

screened - a vital function for a televisual form that is especially open to distracted, sporadic viewing" (1993a:140). In effect, VJs are 'sound in advance' (cf. ibid.). However, in public places, the sound cannot be expected to perform this function effectively.

When competing with this 'public place flow', MTV employs its 'motion versus static' distinction. This is a technique whereby the 'phatic' function is performed through the channel's visual meta-language, in the absence of audible speech or sound. As Roland Barthes (1993) argued in his classic *Mythologies*, the meta-language no longer takes into account the details of the linguistic schema but its total term or global sign. This entitles the semiologist - in this case, MTV's viewer - to treat writing and pictures in the same way. For: "what he [or she] retains from them is the fact that they are both *signs*, that they both reach the threshold of myth endowed with the same signifying function" (Barthes, 1993: 115).

MTV is presented as a series of constantly changing images. Indeed, the main characteristic of the channel is 'motion'. However, when the intention is to get some particular meta-message over to the viewer, there is a contrast in representation. The screen becomes static for a few moments. It is at these particular moments that the channel signifies its intention to communicate a particularly important message, or 'frame' for succeeding messages. For example, every trailer has a moment of pause. This pause is always at its end, when the day and time of the broadcast are given, so that the viewer can read it. The message 'watch the show' is transmitted, regardless of the sound (and also regardless of the language, as 'telling the time' is international). Even in cases when there is a voice-over, there is always an accompanying written version of it. This can happen with any feature. It does not necessarily have to be a programme announcement. It can also be a short film which is engaged for a cause, such as ecology, anti-racism, AIDS awareness and other. Each spot is a series of sequences relevant to the issue, with a short written message at the end, when the screen briefly remains static.

The 'static versus motion' technique is also employed with VJ segments. When VJs cannot act as 'sound in advance', they are a visual sign for potential information, or 'image in advance'. However, in order to ensure that the VJ link does not get confused with an advertisement or part of a video, there is a sudden change in motion. When the VJ appears, there is a close-up, and both the VJ and the camera remain stationary. As Goodwin describes:

> Often, there will be distracting moving images in the background, but the VJ will generally remain motionless and, generally speaking, so does the camera. In contrast, then, to the aurally motivated camera movement in the video clips, the framing of the VJs gives us a single point of view from which to position ourselves, utilising a direct mode of address that is a routine broadcast TV code (1993: 140-141).

The appearance of the VJ can, therefore, mean 'the worth looking at' (cf. Altman, 1987:574). Indeed, the VJ's appearance, in the absence of sound, can act as 'guidelines' in the constantly changing whirl of images: "in fact it is for this very change that we are always there" (Altman, 1987:574). It is the sign which signals that something worthy of listening is about to be said and encourages the viewer to turn the volume up, to find out what it is.

3.3.2 (iii) *the image hermeneutic*

'The sound hermeneutic' is another characteristic of 'sound' that can be appropriated by 'image'. This function is observable in situations when the sound initiates the viewer's involvement by informing the viewer that he or she is about to see what he or she desires: "When the sound piques my curiosity, I can nearly be sure of satisfaction simply by turning my gaze to the screen" (Altman, 1987: 575). Alternatively, it can also discourage the viewer from watching. For example, Sarah Boston (1987) describes how her young daughter Jessie had a deep distaste for kissing on television and would always turn her back when such behaviour occurred on screen: "Watching *Dallas*, Jessie has become so clued up about the music cues that she can detect when a kiss is about to happen. What is even more impressive, she can - with her eyes still closed - tell from the music alone when the kiss has finished" (Boston, 1987: 44). Parallel to this, the image

can also 'pique' someone's curiosity and guarantee satisfaction. For example, if 'coming up Madonna' is written on the screen, then for those who like that artist, it is worth switching from the 'glance' to the 'gaze', and also putting the volume up, if possible.

Altman further argues that the voice of a favourite star can get us to turn toward the screen to complete our sense of his or her presence. The image of our favourite star can have the same effect. It can raise our interest. We will put the volume up, if possible. Furthermore, this image can be used to inform us of the new video, or a feature on news, or a 'special' on the artist, or a weekend dedicated to the artist, all of which can be done with no sound. The mark of a particular visual presence is "a sign that someone else thinks that an important phenomenon is taking (or going to) take place on the screen" (Altman, 1987:576).

In fact, all these functions of image as sound do get to be performed in public places. Given that there is a paucity of recent scholarly literature on the social aspect of TV in non-domestic TV viewing settings where the sound cannot adequately perform these functions, I shall draw upon Daphne Lemish's (1982) study of this phenomenon. According to Lemish, in public places, incidents of completely turning away from the television set are very rare. As one would expect, in places like bars lonely people not only tend to watch television but they are also most engaged in viewing. For them, it is "a form of social involvement which relieves them from the awkwardness of the situation" (cf. Lemish, 1982:766). However, people with company, too, orientate themselves towards the screen by choosing a place to sit or stand facing it, even when they do not watch (ibid.:765). Despite their apparent motivation towards some other activity besides television viewing, people in public places (where there is a television set) are very likely to glance at it often. When interested in what they see, people would also turn the volume up, if others agree.

In places of multiple distractions, 'catchy' images, like those on MTV, can often redirect the attention of one person or, via one person's comment, that of a whole group, towards the screen. Similarly, the appearance of a newsworthy item of which the public is aware

or the slow motion replay of the scoring of a goal can be a sign for attentive viewing. Considering the fact that segments last only for a short time, they tend to be consumed as 'a whole'. This suggests that in competition with the viewers' activities which had been interrupted by an image that aroused their curiosity, a short programme message is always more likely to be fully consumed than a large one because the viewers' attention will be more likely to be retained for the duration of the shorter message.

Finally, the link between the role of 'sound' and the role of 'image as sound' could be better understood by stressing one further circumstance. In domestic viewing, the fact that the set is turned on without being watched does not necessarily mean that the viewer will always listen with the same level of intensity. As a matter of fact, if the viewer is engrossed in something else or talking on the telephone, it is likely that he or she will not pay any attention to the broadcast. This implies that, although the sound is 'on', it does not always successfully direct our attention towards the screen. The power of the sound is, therefore, inversely proportionate to the viewer's other simultaneous engagements at any particular time. When viewers' concentration on other activities falls, the chances of attraction by the TV soundtrack increase correspondingly.

CONCLUSION

Given that MTV cannot compete for ratings with broadcast TV, MTV is conceived as a complementary choice on TV. MTV's design is guided by a different professional imperative from that of terrestrial TV. Professionals on terrestrial TV tend to allocate the biggest share of their budgets to prime-time viewing programmes. Unlike broadcast TV, MTV encourages sporadic viewing, which can occur at any time of the day, both in domestic and non-domestic viewing settings. Hence, MTV is designed as a continuous option, catering for short bursts of viewer attention and concentrates its resources on the general quality of the channel as a whole. As a result of this, MTV invests heavily in its image by exploiting the role of continuity sequences to a maximum self-advantage, thus slipping into the 'poetics of video art'. Sophisticated visual images have the ability to

attract occasional TV viewers and zappers as well as communicate with non-Anglophones.

I have also argued that sophisticated visuals can compete against other distractions in the domestic setting. Furthermore, visuals can perform the function of sound in anchoring meanings in settings containing multiple distractions where the sound cannot be heard. I have introduced the concept of a 'speaking' image as a specific form of narration, which communicates with the consumer of images in ways remarkable for their directness. The use of sophisticated visuals became MTV's trademark - a point of identification for viewers, on the basis of which MTV developed a relationship with them and, at the same time, became a point of identification for advertisers who invest their budgets in MTV in order to gain a tightness to the brand.

Finally, I have drawn attention to nomadic consumption of TV and called for more research into this phenomenon. Nomadic consumption of TV raises important questions about the social aspect of TV and, by extension, the effects of new technologies, which are associated with changes in demographic patterns and cultural trends, as well as state interventions into broadcasting policy. This call for further research into the subject is based on my experience of living in London where the trend of gathering in pubs to drink and watch TV, especially sports-channels during major sporting events is prominent. However, I am perfectly aware that within different socio-cultural circumstances, nomadic consumption of TV might not necessarily be linked to watching programmes (mainly) transmitted by satellite/cable in public places. This type of viewing can result from necessity, as in countries where the TV set is still a luxury that few people can afford. Understandably, in these instances, it would take on a different set of meanings.

CHAPTER 4

TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PHRASE 'UNITY IN DIVERSITY' AS A MODEL FOR EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND TV CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

So far, the politico-economic factors involved with the ascendancy of MTV have been examined that is, the changes in the broadcasting regulation in Europe from public service towards a more market-oriented system. I argued that the incentive to develop a thematic music channel was advertiser-led. MTV effectively reached the youth segment - that advertisers failed to reach via traditional terrestrial broadcasters - by providing a televisual service that caters for their needs as a separate market with distinctive consumption and viewing habits. MTV's programming strategy was designed accordingly. MTV's makers conceived of "the 'gaps' in televisual fare and [thematic channels'] differences from terrestrial television services" (Negrine and Papathanassopoulos, 1990:153).

Another factor which contributed to MTV's expansion in Europe was technological. The channel took advantage of the new communications satellite's ability to offer full regional, continental or global coverage at a stroke (cf. Williamson, 1988), thus offering advertisers "an integrated advertising market and audience of an unprecedented size" (Collins, 1992:5). As a transnational narrowcaster, MTV generated advertising revenue by delivering to advertisers specialised audience targets - defined in terms of lifestyle on the basis of their consumption patterns - which were then globalised.

However, while narrowcasting is primarily driven by the motivation to find new forms of generating advertising revenue, we cannot simply reduce the developments surrounding the introduction of satellite television in Europe to economics. I suggested in chapter 2 that images of lifestyle on MTV offer the scope for the

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formation of new identities by "creating a common world taste around common logos, advertising slogans, stars, songs, brand names, jingles and trademarks" (Barber, 1995:17). The potential for imagining identities which transgress 'nationalities' under the impact of global image factories such as MTV draws attention to the cultural dimension of the transnationalisation of television. This chapter is a contribution to the current debates about the extent to which processes of globalisation erode differences between nations and, at the same time, lead to the proliferation of other types of differences by fragmenting the apparent unity within nations. The question of globalisation and fragmentation will be addressed by way of a comparative analysis of two simultaneous attempts at creating a 'European' identity - that of the European Community (EC) and MTV - both premised on the assumption that transnational television could act as a cultural homogeniser. To establish this connection between technology and identity, these 'Euro' identity debates need to be contextualised within socio-cultural currents in Europe.

The implementation of satellite TV in Europe coincided with a wave of Europhoria. In the years preceding 1992 - the year of the official unification of the 12 Western nation-states in a single European market - the EC's political elites showed much enthusiasm for a common European identity. This spirited drive for a European unity was intensified by the unforeseen collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. The change of direction in European politics following this event was symbolically marked by the dismantling of the Berlin wall which had divided the city - by extension the German nation-state and, by further metonymy, the European continent - into its antagonistic Western (capitalist) and Eastern (communist) sides. The opening of the Iron Curtain in 1989 started a new chapter in European history. Instead of the fear and frustration which characterised the post-second world war decades up to the second half of the 1980s, the Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev talked of a 'common European home'.

Gorbachev's metaphor serves well to highlight a central motive which will run through this chapter, namely that 'space' (metaphorically described as 'home') is defined both as a symbolic (through the talk of a shared European culture) and

physical boundary (through the aspiration to develop new markets across geographical borders) at a time when our sense of place and space is being reconfigured under the impact of new communications technologies. This chapter will go on to demonstrate how the political rhetoric about place and space allows politicians to stress the cultural dimension of new communications technologies while conveniently ignoring the primary motivation behind the ambition to create of a pan-European audio-visual space, which is economic: the EC aimed at creating a 'television without frontiers' in order to compete with American and Japanese conglomerates (see, for example, Morley and Robins, 1995).

However, European officials spent much of the 1980s in drafting projects for a 'European television' for its twelve members which were all unsuccessful. In contrast, MTV - a conglomerate-owned attempt at pan-European television - not only became commercially successful beyond its makers' expectation. By 1994, MTV in Europe overtook the mother network, MTV US, in the number of homes it reached (see Dutta, 1994) as the appeal of MTV's form of communality extended beyond the EC into Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and even Turkey, Israel, the Lebanon and Nigeria. MTV in Europe also became "the nearest thing to a pan-European television network" (Coopman and Laing, 1991: cover page). According to the 1992 British Cable Authority Annual Report, MTV had the highest EC programme content of any cable channel in the UK. The 1993 National Heritage figures showed that with 84% of European content, MTV was the channel with the highest amount of European programming in Europe. Jason Toynbee (1994) rightly observes that paradoxically "as a private, American owned television channel, MTV has been more effective in creating a European audio-visual space, a common culture even, than the meta-national media initiatives of the European union and its predecessors". Indeed, as MTV VJ Simone Angel once said in an interview: "All those politicians are still sitting in stuffy old buildings talking about how to unite Europe. We're doing it" (quoted in Levinson, 1995:47).

I want to suggest that at the heart of this divergence lay two competing interpretations of 'unity in diversity' as a model for European identity, each relying on information

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as an instrument for forging a sense of belonging. What makes a comparative analysis of these two interpretations relevant for identity debates is the insight each interpretation provides into the conflict between two visions of Europe: one that is premised on an ideology grounded in geographical boundaries, the other on a deterritorialised social experience. In order to begin this Euro-identity discussion, I suggest we raise the same question Featherstone posed with regard to the problem of common culture. According to Featherstone:

> It becomes impossible to talk about a common culture without talking about who is defining it, within which set of interdependencies and power balances, for what purposes, and with reference to which outside culture(s) have to be discarded, rejected or demonised in order to generate the sense of cultural identity (1990:11).

Politicians' 'talk about uniting Europe' is examined first. 'How MTV is doing it' is analysed in the second part of this chapter.

4.1 THE EC'S INTERPRETATION OF 'UNITY IN DIVERSITY'

Kobena Mercer rightly claims that "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty"[1] (1990:43). This section suggests that the resurgence of debates about '(trans)national identity' and/or 'cultural identity'- which was triggered by the implementation of satellite TV in Europe - is symptomatic of a crisis of the predominant conception of citizenship. This conception posits that "populations are organised within nation-state boundaries by citizenship rules that acclaim 'national belonging' as the legitimate basis of membership in modern states" (Soysal, 1996:18). In effect, conceptions of national identities - hitherto assumed to be fixed - were now threatened by the potential of satellite channels - which ignore established physical and cultural boundaries - to undermine them and build new loyalties (cf. Price, 1995).

The political rhetoric surrounding the introduction of new communications technologies, which centred on cultural protectionism, is indicative of the process

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[1] For a similar argument in the context of a discussion about 'disturbed' identities in Europe in the 1980s, see Pitch (1993).

whereby national citizenship is increasingly becoming less significant in terms of holding and enjoying personal rights and privileges. By identifying the underlying problem with the 'cultural protectionist' rhetoric - i.e. the conjunction between economics and culture - attention will be drawn to what will be referred to as the 'sensible layman's' view of culture, which was at the heart of the 'identity crisis' in Europe. By extending the 'sensible laymans's' view of culture to Europe, I shall go on to argue that 'unity in diversity' as the EC's model of (European) identity is problematic because it is based on classical conceptions of citizenship, which are no longer adequate for understanding the dynamics of membership and belonging in contemporary Europe. The resultant European audio-visual policy, reflects "incongruities between official rhetoric and institutional actualities" (Soysal, 1996:28).

4.1.1 *ECONOMICS AND CULTURE: THE SAME STRUGGLE* [2]

Armand Mattelart et al. observe that, although the nation-state remains vigorous, it runs the risk of being steadily drained of its strength as "the current development of transborder flows establishes and amplifies the dominance that multinational systems are achieving over individual countries" (1984:13). In early 1980s, nation-states, France in particular, began to express concern about the loss of its history and even its sovereignty under the impact of these global communications flows. The then newly elected and now late French president François Mitterand claimed that a handful of firms were expropriating the necessary networks for electronic transmission, and by controlling the distribution of information, they were influencing the traditional media (ibid.). In this context, Mattelart et al. also cite a fragment from the speech by Jack Lang - then Minister of culture - delivered at the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policy, in which he declared that 'culture and economy' was 'the same struggle'. Lang's speech was an alarm call for nation-states to organise themselves against the system of multinational financial domination, which Lang described as "financial and intellectual imperialism" (quoted in ibid:14). According to Mattelart et al., for many observers at the time, such a declaration was a 'non-event'. Ignoring Lang's conjunction between economics and culture, the French media focused on 'American cultural imperialism'

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[2] Title from Mattelart et al.'s chapter 2.

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instead, although, as Mattelart et al. point out, the United States had not been named once in Lang's speech.

Similarly, Stuart Hood observes that: "It is resistance to an internationalism purveying predominantly American cultural values by satellite that we must see [as] an important reason for the assertion of national cultural identity" (1988:30). However, Hood rightly notes that cultural resistance which is based on blanket anti-Americanism needs to be viewed with scepticism. Such an anti-Americanism is often expressed in the form of cultural nationalism which "assumes that nations are monolithic and denies the importance of subcultures based on regionalism and class within the political unity of the nation. It is frequently based on a concept of high culture" (ibid.). Indeed, in the manner of the 'Americanisation' debate in the UK (cf. chapter 1), the debate around 'American cultural imperialism' in France turned into a battle of value judgements, in which "paradoxically, the loudest demands for 'cosmopolitanism' were [...] accompanied in France by localism that bordered [...] on illiteracy" (Mattelart et al.:1984:15). However, as Mattelart et al.'s analysis seems to suggest, the way to go about identifying the kind of 'localism' and 'illiteracy' to which these authors refer is not by focusing on the shallow level of debate in France concerning 'American cultural imperialism' in which a contemptuous tone is used to denigrate the culture of its origin. Rather, it is by focusing on the neglected aspect of Lang's speech, i.e. the conjunction between economics and culture, that the real problem begins to emerge.

What is really at stake, here, is the threat to national cultures (which have hitherto dominated other sources of cultural identification) posed by the processes of 'globalisation', which operate across national boundaries and connect communities in new time-space combinations (cf. McGrew, 1992; Waters, 1995). As Jodie Berland remarks, at a time of growing tension between transnational strategies in the cultural sphere and national governments,

> the technological capacities for international cultural reciprocity are
> countered by the economic and political power of transnational corporations;
> economic concentration is accompanied by a similar process of
> concentration at the symbolic level, so that the joining of cultural and
> economic struggle becomes synonymous with autonomous resistance"
> (1988:150).

And, in the words of Jesus Martín-Barbero "as transnationalisation is primarily at work in the field of communication technologies - satellite, telematics, data banks - it is in that field that the national question is coming into sharpest focus" (1988:452). Similarly, Eric Hobsbawm observes that

> the 'national question'[...] is situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation. Nations exist not only as functions of a particular kind of territorial state or the aspiration to establish one [...] but also in the context of a particular stage of technological development (1990:10).

This point will be expanded in chapter 9. It is sufficient to remark here that, given the importance of the connection between technological development and territorial boundaries, it is hardly surprising that the audio-visual media were at the heart of the 1980s' internationalisation strategies. It is in this decade that the flow of images across national borders - which potentially leads to the creation of new 'post-modern geographies' (Soja, 1989) whose boundaries are defined by satellite footprints - became a reality.

The symbolic boundaries of language and culture - as transmitted by satellite TV - are perceived as a threat to the physical boundaries - as defined by mountains, wastelands and oceans - along which the borders between nations-states are drawn. This situation produces new conflicts which need to be brought to the surface. The issue is not simply a matter of weakening national economies (and, by extension, cultures) in the context of the international economy. Rather, these new conflicts are situated 'at the intersection of the crisis of a political culture and the new understanding of cultural politics' (Martín-Barbero, 1988:453). According to Martín-Barbero:

> It concerns a new perception of the problem of identity - far more ambiguous and dangerous than the term seems today. [...] Because this identity not only has to face up to the blatant homogenisation at the transnational level but also to another, disguised, form of homogenisation which comes from the national level as it acts to negate, deform and de-activate the cultural pluralism that constitutes these countries (ibid.).

While these concerns about 'blatant homogenisation at the transnational level' were loudly expressed in the 1980s, the cultural protectionist rhetoric (in which the call for a national cultural defence sounded perfectly legitimate, and thus went unquestioned by the media) also worked to suppress the 'disguised form of homogenisation at the national level'. Let us, once again, use speeches by Mitterand and Lang for the purpose of illustration of Martín-Barbero's argument. As Duncan Webster notes "we have Mitterand talking of his worries about a Europe [conveniently used as a euphemism for France] watching American images on Japanese screens" (1989:74). Clearly, the problem is economic - the national productions in Europe are unable to compete with American software and Japanese hardware. However, the discussion centres on 'culture'. As a result, 'America' is demonised on the pretext of cultural protectionism. Lang was concerned about "Coca-Cola satellites attacking our [once again, the 'our' is ambiguously used to signify both European and French] artistic integrity" (quoted in Collins 1992:5).

The conclusion that one may draw from this is that the audio-visual arena is a suitable battlefield for cultural struggles. As Philip Schlesinger observes, following Mattelart and Piemme's argument (1982 quoted in Shlesinger 1987:228),

> the rhetoric of creating an [audio-visual] space plays with the inherent ambiguities of the cultural industries: the 'audio-visual' is both a symbolic arena and an economic one. That ambiguity allows one to make a cultural and economic argument at one and the same time. The fundamental intention is to reinforce and extend the production bases of those presently disadvantaged in the world audio-visual market. The public appeal, clearly, is to the sentiment that *national* [...] production is essential to the maintenance of particular kinds of identity which would otherwise be threatened (1987:228).

Thus, by appealing to the 'national sentiment', the denunciation of the 'evil other' is acceptable while the fact that such a denunciation is never exempt from "a certain 'holier than thou' attitude to be found at the heart of the notion of 'cultural identity'" is ignored (cf. Mattelart et al., 1984:17). Such an attitude which can be described as the 'sensible layman's' view of culture is put to scrutiny in the next section.

4.1.2 *THE 'SENSIBLE LAYMAN'S' VIEW OF CULTURE*

The implicit assumption of cultural protectionists is that European cultures are "somehow static objects under assault" (Schlesinger, 1987:224; also see Hall, 1990b). Such a view of culture does not recognise the cultural contradictions of contemporary nation-states. It corresponds to what Schlesinger characterised as the 'sensible layman's definition'. Its logic is the following:

> Cultures are the shapers of 'national characters' and culture-bearing national entities are seen as producing homogenous effects upon their citizen-members, and as being collective actors with singular identities. Such a definition takes 'culture' as a finished product and the nation as a stable given. This layman's view, then, is also a perfect instance of a top-down *official* view of what a national culture might be: integral, integrating and integrated (1987:225).

The 'sensible layman's' vision of culture precisely suppresses the 'disguised form of homogenisation' which comes 'from within' (cf. Martín-Barbero, above). This form of homogenisation (which is ignored by those cultural protectionists who fear the potential threat of homogenisation coming 'from outside') is not insignificant, especially if we take into account that warnings about 'Coca-Cola satellites' were accompanied by pleas to 'stop drinking Coca-Cola and drink good French wine' (cf. Autant-Lara, *Front National* MEP quoted in Webster, 1989). This call for the return to some essentially French values may be seen as a link between anti-Americanism and "a focus on national identity that excludes not only *Dallas* but North Africans, Turks, Asians, Afro-Caribbeans, Europe's Other as it were" (Webster, 1989:74). There is, indeed, growing evidence that anti-American feeling in France nowadays seems to have diminished in the face of new 'dangers'. The main supposed threat to French identity is now increasingly seen as posed by Arab and Islamic immigrants (cf. Fitzpatrick, 1987; Duhamel, 1993; Kuisel, 1993; Toinet, 1990; Brulard 1997a). The extreme right - whose politics perpetrate a nationalism which makes "the world of national territories 'belonging' exclusively to the native, who keep strangers in their place" (Hobsbawm, 1990:174; also see Patterson, 1977; Horowitz, 1985) - has considerably capitalised on this atmosphere of growing xenophobia in France to expand their electoral support. Whereas in the previous decade the French extreme right party *Front National* could

barely muster 1% of the votes, in the 1990s it regularly attracted between 12 to 15% of the electorate (stated in Billig, 1995:46-47). In both academic and journalistic accounts, this figure is perceived as alarming.

However, and this is the central argument advanced by Michael Billig (1995), it is not just extreme right politicians who incite nationalism. Nationalism is the endemic condition of mainstream politics. For example, the 1993 linguistic bill introduced by the French Minister of culture Jacques Toubon - which was promulgated into a controversial law in 1994 - stipulated the obligatory use of French language in compulsory areas on behalf of private individuals, the media and public-funded research (see Brulard, 1997b; for a parody of *loi* Toubon, see Chiflet, 1994). The main motivation behind this legislative proposal was to protect the French language from 'foreign' (read Anglophone) invasion. Notwithstanding this concern, one may ask what are the repercussions of this form of linguistic protectionism for the French citizens - above all second generation immigrants - whose native language is not French? (on this issue, see for example Lietti, 1994; Durand, 1996). To what extent does Toubon's nationalism differ from that of the *Front National*'s leader Le Pen? This is not to put on an equal footing what is effectively a fascist movement and what Billig calls the daily 'flaggings' of the nation, which pass unnoticed. In order to distinguish the two nationalistic expressions Billig introduced the concept of 'banal nationalism'. It is there to "cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced" (Billig, 1995:6). Billig stresses that 'banal' does not imply 'benign' and that banality is not synonymous with 'harmless', not least because of the military power of the nation-state institution which 'banal nationalism' reproduces.

It is precisely by raising banal (but not benign) questions that 'banal nationalism' can be challenged. Such nationalism is at the heart of the identity crisis in France (cf. Silverman, 1996; Weil, 1996) and more generally in Western Europe (cf. Cesarani and Fulbrook (eds.), 1996; Garcia, 1993). The combined effects of migration and free market capitalism have disarticulated citizenship, nationality and culture. In Eastern Europe, it is the collapse of the non-market economy accompanied by the dismantling of communist states that has brought uncertainties (cf. Luthar, 1993). In this process

nationalism turned from banal-but-not benign into malignant, full-blown armed conflict, an aspect of which will be examined in chapter 9. The nation-state has yet to create a form of citizenship that is enlarged to include the 'stranger' - who has exposed the artificiality of the dichotomy between the 'friend' and the 'enemy' on the basis of which national, as self-perpetuating social groupings, define themselves (cf. Baumann, 1990) - in its social imagination.

By extension, the EC's model of Europe was not equipped to accommodate 'postnational citizenship', that is "a new model of membership anchored in deterritorialised notions of personal rights" (Soysal, 1996:21). The EC's attempt at unification was doomed to fail from the outset because the Europeanisation rhetoric was an affirmation of a European identity that did not exist (as yet) (cf. Schlesinger, 1987; Keane, 1989, 1992; Smith, 1990; Heller, 1992; Papcke, 1992). Historically, national cultures which constitute Europe were always in conflict, competition or neglectful of one another (cf. Waever, 1990; Heller, 1992; Heater, 1992; Young, 1993). 'Europe' - or the 'West' - remains an abstract idea of modernity (ibid.). By taking this abstract idea of 'Europe' as a finished product, the 'sensible layman's' view of culture was effectively transposed on a supra-national level.

The problem, here, is not the idea of 'Europe' per se but the historically configured relations of power in which the 'West' came to think of itself in terms of its noblest achievements and the non-West in terms of its deficiencies (cf. Shohat and Stam, 1994; also see Amin, 1988). In his influential book, Edward Said (1978) has used the term 'Orientalism' to describe how the relationship between Europe(ans) and non-Europe(ans) has been transformed into a tension-filled relationship of superior and subaltern identities, in such a way that the 'West' included the former while the construction of 'Otherness' embodied the latter. Similarly, Arnold Toynbee argues that the appropriation of the term 'Europe' as a name for a secularised Western world led to two historical aberrations. Firstly, the Western and Orthodox Christendom which were deemed to coexist in a single society in fact constituted two cultures. Secondly, the neglecting or forgetting of the Jewish contribution to the Western civilisation and the Asiatic Greek contribution to Hellenism was the intellectual price at which "the Western

belief in a 'rationalist' civilisation's continuity" was achieved (quoted in Smart, 1992:29). These factors led Toynbee to conclude that the imaginary 'European Civilisation' was equated with 'Civilisation': "In adopting the name 'Europe' as a substitute for Western Christendom, the Modern Western World had replaced a misnomer that was merely an anachronism by a misnomer that was seriously misleading" (ibid.).

However, in spite of the dubious origin of what came to constitute the Western tradition, this assumed common Western tradition was attributed a pivotal role in the creation of European identity. This supports the point made by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994), namely that although the idea of the 'West' first emerged as a discursive rationale for colonialism, as a form of vestigial thinking, it permeates and structures contemporary practices and representations even after the formal end of colonialism. Indeed, in official discussions about European cultural identity, the relationship between 'Western' tradition and 'European' identity was taken for granted. At Unesco's 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies, the General Secretary explicitly said in his closing speech that: "Cultural identity was the defence of traditions, of history and of the moral, spiritual and ethical values handed down by past generations" (quoted in Schlesinger, 1987:226). Similarly, in a pamphlet on 'European Community and Culture' it was stated that despite the continent's diversity there existed a "common heritage which was created over the centuries through the contributions of different individuals, ideas, styles and values" (Commission of the European Communities 1985:3, quoted in Schlesinger, 1987:221).

The 1980s' Europeanisation rhetoric corresponds to what Ernest Gellner describes as being 'nationalist-in-the-abstract' (1983:1). Like any nationalist principle 'unity in diversity' can be asserted in an "ethical 'universalistic' spirit" considering that it is

> unbiased in favour of any special nationality of [its] own, and generously preaching the doctrine for all nations alike: let all nations have their own political roofs, and let all of them also refrain from including non-nationals under it [...] As a doctrine it can be supported by some good arguments, such as the desirability of preserving cultural diversity, of a pluralistic international political system, and of the diminution of internal strains within states (1983:1-2).

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However, in effect, 'unity in diversity' - supposedly an answer to the problem of how to circumscribe pan-European identity in a way that would be compatible with the Continent's diversity - is a vision of Europe that flattens its cultural diversity. This chapter will go on to argue that compared to such a parochial vision of Europe, MTV's cosmopolitan Europe was a welcome alternative. Before that, the next section looks at how the contradictions within the Euro-rhetoric were reflected in the EC's audio-visual policy.

4.1.3 *EUROPEAN AUDIOVISUAL POLICY: A COMPLICATED STORY TO TELL*

A number of commentators observe that the EC's audio-visual policy is the result of the interaction of differing priorities and perspectives of several distinct power centres (Schlesinger, 1987, 1993, 1994; Negrine and Papathanassopoulos, 1990; Tunstall and Palmer, 1990; Wolton, 1990: chapter 7; Collins, 1994; Hitchens, 1997). Even when agreed policies began to emerge in the late 1980s, they were policies without clear goals. The contradictions within the European audio-visual regulation are well documented (see ibid.) and there is no need to rehearse the complexities involved in drafting policy. Instead, this section focuses on three issues concerning pan-European TV that were neglected by the EC, which proved to be fatal for the development of pan-European TV. The next section will subsequently demonstrate how MTV confronted these same issues and became successful. Second, this section highlights how, paradoxically, the EC's measures to monitor the influx of foreign TV programming into Europe benefited, rather than inhibited, the expansion of MTV in Europe.

The EC's first experimental pan-European channel - Eurikon - was launched in 1982 and was short-lived. The second - Europa - was established by a consortium of European countries in 1985, only to close down in 1986. The underlying problem of both these attempts - and, for that matter the initiative to create the legislative framework for a single (audio-visual) market, known as *Television without Frontiers* - is the technological and cultural determinism which characterises these policies. They assume that first,

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technological change, notably satellite television, will reshape European broadcasting and second that the changes in the content and character of European broadcasting consequent on technological change will reshape cultural, and hence political, identities of European viewers and listeners (Collins, 1994:43).

The repercussions of this for the prospect of European TV were threefold:

Firstly, audience preferences were not taken into account. Instead, concerns about "the dependence upon an international market dominated by a few US suppliers" (Garnham, 1984:2) - known as 'Wall-to-wall *Dallas*' - took priority. The problem with these concerns is that they remain assumptions without adequate empirical evidence to support them (Sepstrup, 1990; Benson, 1995/1996; Golding and Harris, 1997). Cultural protectionists (such as former Minister Lang) attribute a homogeneity to European audiences, which is not truly there and assume that the American model is accepted passively. The findings of a major survey into the consumption of *Dallas* conducted by an international team of researchers are representative of the findings resulting from a large body of cross-cultural research into the impact of US programmes on foreign audiences, European in particular:

> *Dallas*, and American serial fiction in general, is always the loser when competing with fiction by European countries; but [...] [if], in each country, national programmes occupy the top positions in the audience ratings, the public's second choice *never* falls on programmes produced by other European countries. American is the *lingua franca* of the European market of television fiction (Silj ed., 1988:199; also see Tracey, 1985; 1988; Liebes and Katz, 1990).

Exceptions, here, are programmes from other European countries in similar languages, a point that will be expanded in chapter 6.

Secondly, the role of public service TV in nurturing national mythology was ignored. Policy makers assumed that there was a causal connection between the medium of transnational television and European identity. However, no mechanism whereby this shaping process might occur was ever specified. Instead, an essentially national conception of television was transposed to the supranational level without addressing

concerns such as cultural, linguistic and political diversity (cf. Schlesinger, 1993). In addition, advocates of a TV for European citizens disregarded research which suggested that there was a dissatisfaction with public service TV (cf. Negrine, 1988).

Thirdly, a public service supranational channel corresponds to a generalist channel, which raises two additional problems regarding its viability. The first concerns funding. Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated that successful satellite TV channels are thematic channels which deliver specific audience segments to advertisers. A supranational public service TV aimed at a collective of European citizens was unlikely, and indeed it did not attract advertisers. The second problem is related to the issue of raising a pan-European profile. As a supranational version of public service TV, the Euro-channels were unable to sustain an idea of a European people beyond the convenience of its citizenry. This idea of a European citizen proved to be unpopular considering that the 'Eurobarometer' surveys that had been carried out on behalf of the EC in the years prior to 1992 revealed that there was great public dissatisfaction with a 'Europe' governed by 'an outsize bureaucracy in Brussels' (cf. Reif, 1993). What was required of a potential pan-European channel, instead, and what successful thematic channels provided, was a new European common denominator. Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (1991) rightly observe that thematic channels are "working with their own specific *lingua franca*" (1991:164). Music and sports channels are easily comprehended across frontiers while news channels, which do require a certain competence in the English language are targeted at the

> news *aficionado* [who are likely to be] already conversant in the language in question. CNN is not aimed at the general audience but at specific business people; the same is true of the European Business Channel which is mainly in English. Like sport and music, the targeted audience already 'understands' the language used (ibid.).

Taking all of this into consideration, it is possible to assess what went wrong with Eurikon and Europa. Both were launched in the first half of the 1980s, a period during which there was a clear tendency directed towards the establishment of a single competitive broadcasting market in the EC (cf. Collins, 1994). However, disregarding the three points about the European market and audiences made above, Eurocrats

bypassed the national level. They misread and misunderstood the apparent success of cable in the Benelux region and Northern Europe. This relative success was not a sign of a craving for European programming. Rather, audiences were either using new technologies for better reception of terrestrial TV or to tune to programming from neighbouring countries in their own or similar languages. The smallish audience for programming in English was mainly confined to Scandinavians and Northern Europeans but much of the material viewed was actually American (cf. Tunstall and Palmer, 1991). In addition, research showed that there was too much emphasis on information and highbrow culture on Eurikon (cf. Negrine and Papathanassopoulos, 1990). An attempt was made to solve this imbalance in favour of more entertainment on Europa, but its format, nevertheless, failed to attract sufficient funding. As for audiences, in retrospective, viewers clearly recognised the different character of European TV, but for them it was 'just another foreign channel' to which they preferred their national services (cf. Collins, 1994).

Another lesson learned about pan-European television is that for it to develop satisfactorily, what it requires is not only a common culture but also a common language, this being English. However, as soon as signs of surmounting the problem of culture and language appeared, 'diversity' rather than 'unity' became the slogan on which EC cultural interventionists fought. The prospect of an Anglophone EC immediately led to a retreat from the idea of unity. Hence, from the mid-1980s onwards, "integrated European audio-visual markets themselves were seen as the enemy of cultural diversity and a threat to the authenticity of the Community's endowment of national languages and cultures" (Collins, 1994:46). 'Unity in diversity' became a convenient phrase for policy makers because it acknowledged the difficult problem of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe without having to confront it.

Collins rightly observes that in the context of the failure of Eurikon and Europa caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions about European TV generally from the experience of EC's initiatives. Had the viewers been exposed to a different diet of programmes, responses might have been different (cf. Collins, 1994:48).

Indeed, MTV confronted all the problems that the EC failed to recognise and became prosperous. One particular aspect of the 1989 EC Directive *Television Without Frontiers* - which was drafted once the idea of a shared pan-European channel was given up - is of interest for the rise of MTV. This Directive concentrates on measures to protect European production from 'Coca-Cola satellites' - i.e. 'quotas' - championed by France. Yet, paradoxically, European 'quotas' appeared to have achieved precisely what they sought to avoid. 'Quotas' were prescribed for what is effectively a generalist channel model. Thematic channels either fell under exceptions from 'quotas' on the basis of their content (news, sports) or under 'European quotas where applicable' as in the case of MTV (see, for example, Tunstall and Palmer, 1990). However, the channels that emerged as the most successful - in that they benefited most financially from the broadcasting 'deregulation' in Europe - were precisely those thematic channels owned by the conglomerates against which the EC sought to compete. What is even more peculiar is that without being subject to 'quotas', as indicated in the introduction, MTV was the channel in Europe with the most European programming content. MTV's Europe is examined next.

4.2 'UNITY IN DIVERSITY' WITH STRESS ON 'UNITY': MTV'S 'CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY'

How MTV constructed an audience for advertisers on the basis of being a narrowcaster was examined in the previous chapters. What is of interest, here, is how MTV made this audience pan-European. Unlike the Euro-officials who ignored audience preferences, MTV's makers were aware of the popularity of domestic productions among European audiences from the outset, as the words of MTV's senior vice-president of strategy and planning research, Simon Guild, illustrate: "Everyone knows you're better off having local programming. You get better ratings if you do local programming" (interview, 26/07/94). This section looks at how MTV incorporated a local flair into its programming so as to pander to its European audience by promoting itself as a pan-European channel with a 'we feeling'.

However, MTV's apparent loyalty to 'Europe' can only be understood within the context of the market, which is, by definition, "a place of no intrinsic loyalties except to the market itself" (Price, 1995:238; also see Held, 1990). Benjamin Barber rightly observes that: "To create the cultural values necessary to material consumption is McWorld's first operating imperative" (1995:109). Barber coined the term 'McWorld' to refer to the market forces of globalisation, which he sees at tension with the 'Jihad' world of particularising tribalisms. While Barber pertinently accounts for McWorld's 'first operating imperative', as Roland Robertson observes in a critique of Barber's argument: "it makes no good sense to define the global [as if it] lies beyond all localities, as having systemic properties over and beyond the attributes of units within a global system" (1995:34). Indeed, it makes no sense to define MTV's global ambition by excluding the local.

MTV's Euro-culture is the epitome of what Stuart Hall (1991) describes as a "new kind of globalisation" which has to do with a new form of global mass culture, very different from either a particular national identity or cultural identities associated with the nation-state in an earlier phase. This global mass culture is

> dominated by the modern means of cultural production, dominated by the image which crosses and recrosses linguistic frontiers more rapidly and more easily, and which speaks across languages in a much more immediate way. It is dominated by all the ways in which the visual and graphic arts have entered directly into the reconstitution of popular life, of entertainment and of leisure. It is dominated by television and film, and by the image, imagery, and styles of mass advertising (1991:27).

Unlike the EC, which stressed the shared European tradition as a basis for unity, MTV promotes a new European *lingua franca*: the 'universal' language of consumerism and that of rock 'n' roll. Being typical of the 'new global mass culture', MTV has its two most important characteristics, as identified by Hall (1991:28). Firstly, MTV's Euro-culture is centred in the West and speaks English. However, as we shall see, it speaks English as an "international language" which is inflected by a variety of broken forms of English (Anglo-French, Anglo-German, even Anglo-English). Secondly, MTV's form of global mass culture is a 'peculiar form of homogenisation':

> It is a homogenising form of cultural representation, enormously absorptive of things, as it were, but the homogenisation is never absolutely

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complete, and it does not work for completeness. It is not attempting to produce mini-versions of Englishness everywhere, or little versions of American-ness. It is wanting to recognise and absorb those differences within the larger, overarching framework of what is essentially an American conception of the world (ibid.).

It follows from this that if MTV's culture has a national provenance, "then what appears to be global may not be quite so transnational" (Billig, 1995:129). Rather, as Billig put it, it is 'flagging' an American identity, but because

> 'America' may not be flagged as a particular place: it will be universalised as the world (ibid.) [...] [Hence], Levis and baseball caps have become universal apparel as Coke and McDonald's have become universal foods: and all have become universal symbols. Hollywood stars are not generally 'American stars', in the way that a Depardieu or a Loren always remain a French or Italian star: a Costner or a Streep drops the confines of nationality and is simply a 'star', a 'mega-star', a universal icon (ibid.:149).

By extension, the American brand MTV also drops the confines of nationality. This invisibility of America's global presence enabled MTV in Europe to claim a 'pan-national' status by encoding the 'feel' of this 'universal' brand with a 'Euro-feel', so that the two became synonymous. The first obstacle in this transnational TV venture was the 'flagging' of the nation on national TV.

4.2.1 THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICE TV IN NURTURING NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY

In his vision of the new social landscape and new group identities formed under the impact of television, Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) observes that regardless of physical location and traditional group ties, television makes it possible for people to experience the world from other places and other role perspectives. According to Meyrowitz:

> Through visual portrayal of real and fictional events, television presents most members of our society with a crazy-quilt pattern of perspectives...Media create new 'communities', and a large portion of their content is shared by most people in the country. Many jokes, phrases, expressions, and events heard and seen on television provide a common set of 'experiences' for people across the land (1985:144-145).

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Ellis similarly remarks that:

> Broadcast TV is the private life of a nation state, defining the intimate and inconsequential sense of everyday life, forgotten quickly and incomprehensible for anyone who is outside the scope (1982:5).

John Hartley (1987) is critical of Ellis' statement. Hartley claims that Ellis fell into an essentialist position in that he took 'television' as an invariable form. Instead, Hartley argues that, like the concept of the 'nation', 'television' - one of the prime sites upon which a given nation is constructed for its members - is a discursive construct which only exists in relational terms. While Hartley is right in drawing attention to this fact, I want to suggest that national myths which are 'reflected' on TV operate precisely within the relational system of various European television grids. Programmes which are thought to be 'too nationally specific' are indeed incomprehensible for members of other nations, regardless of the issue of language, which functions as an additional barrier in European televisual exchange. Any narrowcaster aiming at a pan-European audience needs to overcome this obstacle.

The argument in this section is that for a TV channel to achieve a convincing representation of Europeanness it is necessary: firstly, to identity the most spontaneously available and widely shared mythical representations of a nation, i.e. national stereotypes; secondly, to take advantage of their communicative aspect because stereotypical images of a nation can, in fact, be a useful means of acknowledging cultural difference in the process of transnational communication.

4.2.1 (i) *the 'nationality' of a TV grid*

Nathalie Coste-Cerdan (1991) claims that national television networks are characterised by distinctive features which betray their origin. According to Coste-Cerdan, despite the appearance of similarity at first glance between European television grids, the viewer soon realises that the style of Italian variety programmes and game shows is distinct from that of variety programmes or game shows from another European country. The same applies to British comedy series or French

literary debates. These programmes are constituents of national cultures and it is possible for the viewer to guess their 'nationality' almost immediately. In the words of Coste-Cerdan: "It is the '*habillage*' and the '*look*', the behaviour and the gestures of the presenters, the colour of the outfits of the speaker, the intensity of the smiles, in short the style and the general tone which contribute in differentiating these televisions"[3] (1991:65) .

Because of their strong national flair, programmes aimed at national audiences cannot easily be exported. The pan-European strategy of the British channel Sky failed precisely because its programming was culturally specific, i.e. it was made for a particular institutional representation of the British public. Consequently, British humour in the situational comedies featured on transnational generalist channels was not translating well enough in the cabled countries of the Benelux (whose population is generally fluent in English). Audiences from the Benelux preferred American programming which had less cultural discount[4]. In chapter 1, I have also drawn attention to the problems of the public service definition of Britishness, which effectively excluded parts of UK's population. As Ashawani Sharma observes, for immigrants who settled in the UK, the problem with many British programmes is their 'Britishness': "As Asians we are excluded by their language, stories, humour and subject matter" (1991:61). Consequently, the Sharma family - like many other Asian families in the UK and for the same reason as audiences from the Benelux - watch American programmes. They are enjoyed for their entertainment value: "With American products these factors [i.e. lack of adequate representation on TV] are not important, because we do not expect [them] to be addressed" (ibid.).

Nevertheless, national stereotypes remain persistent. Any attempt at creating a pan-European TV had to confront the fact that public service TV has played a significant role in nurturing national mythologies. As Barthes (1993) observed, the difficulty in

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[3] '*Habillage*' in French literally means 'dressing', and it s often used in reference to the 'image' of television programmes/channels. It would correspond to what I referred to as the channel's 'environment' in the case of MTV. The English word '*look*' is used in French to describe someone's dress-style. There can be different '*looks*' within the same channel '*habillage*'.

[4] This is a phrase coined by Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus to describe the cross-border reduction of cultural appeal of particular TV programmes: "A particular programme rooted in one culture, and thus attractive in that environment, will have a diminished appeal elsewhere as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, institutions and behavioural patterns of the material in question" (1988:500).

dealing with myths is that they are neither a 'true' nor a 'false' representation of reality. Instead, they 'deform' reality by turning the mythical representation into a 'natural' representation without historical context, so that the myth appears as if it has always been there. As a result of this, the 'nationality' of a television grid can, indeed, be associated with the easy shorthand way that people use to describe the population of a particular country. For example, Pierre Musso (1991:54, quoted in Coste-Cerdan) describes Spanish television as 'feminine', 'baroque', 'riddled with advertisements', Italian television as 'talkative' and 'soapy', German television as 'calm or even stiff', 'provincial' and 'bland'. These TV portrayals comply with the popular belief that a typical Spaniard is passionate, an Italian is nonchalant and a German is straight, which, in turn, conform to the reputation of Southern Europe as being relaxed as opposed to the more regimented Northern Europe. Myths needn't be scientifically proven. They are simply a matter of common sense.

According to Stuart Hall:

> What passes for 'common sense' in our society - the residue of absolutely basic and commonly-agreed, consensual wisdom - helps us to classify out the world in simple but meaningful terms. Precisely, common sense does not require reasoning, argument, logic, thought: it is spontaneously available, thoroughly recognisable, widely shared. It *feels*, indeed, as if it has always been there, the sedimented, bedrock wisdom of 'the race', a form of 'natural' wisdom, the content of which has changed hardly at all with time (1977:325).

Hall argues that what makes the realm of the conscious (i.e. the way we think, talk, reason, explain and experience ourselves) appear unconscious is the 'spontaneous' quality of common sense. Although common sense has a content and history, it is the effect of immediate recognition, transparency and naturalness which renders the examination of the premise on which it is founded unnecessary. The taken-for-grantedness of common sense is what establishes it as a medium which functions like an ideological form. In other words, although common sense consists of a system of representations, images and concepts, we do not 'think' about it. Instead, we 'experience' it. Common sense touches the sphere of 'the lived'. As such it has

resonance in popular thinking which enables it to be at one and the same time unconscious, ideological and spontaneous.

Indeed, all the remarks about stereotypes which were made above can be substantiated with empirical evidence. For example, research reveals that "for the most part, each country does see themselves as they are seen by others"[5]. This, above all, means that young Europeans describe themselves (as members of a 'nation') and their fellow Europeans by using the 'absolutely basic and commonly-agreed consensual wisdom' according to which they 'classify out the world in simple but meaningful terms'. The understanding that Northern Europeans are 'rational' and that Southern Europeans are 'sensual' is widely shared: "it concerns widespread and common habits of thinking, which transcend individual difference" (Billig, 1995:9). The main evidence about national mythologies is the fact that stereotypes have their resonance in popular thinking. The strength of stereotypes, therefore, lies not in scientific proof but in their 'spontaneous quality'. Having established that national stereotypes are 'common sensical', the question is how to deal with common sense in order to portray as convincing a representation of a 'European' prototype. This is examined next.

4.2.1 (ii) *the communicative aspect of stereotypes*

I want to begin by introducing in this context Homi Bhabha's (1983) work about stereotypes and colonial discourse. Bhabha argues that the discursive strategy of 'ambivalence' is central to the production of any discourse with discriminatory power (be it racial, sexual or other kind of discrimination) and that it is, therefore, important to identify the constitutive elements of this strategy. According to Bhabha, stereotypes rely on the effect of probabilistic truth and predictability, which must always be in excess of what can be scientifically proven. As such, the stereotype is a simplification which denies the play of difference in social relations. Furthermore, stereotypes require a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes for their successful signification. Combined together, all these elements produce the appearance of 'fixity' which is "the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of

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[5] Ann Clurman, Yankelovich Partners speaking at WORM '95.

colonialism" (Bhabha, 1983:18). Bhabha cites, among others, the example of the 'same old story' about the 'stupidity of the Irish' that must be told again and afresh in order to be gratifying and terrifying at the same time. However, such a negative definition of stereotypes provides one way of thinking about stereotypes, which understates their communicative aspect.

Another important intervention in the way we think about stereotypes is provided by Tessa Perkins (1979). The underlying argument of her article is that to presuppose that stereotypes are always erroneous will prevent us from understanding stereotypes as ideological concepts. Stereotypes may appear as simple classifications of social groups but they nonetheless imply knowledge of complex social structures. According to Perkins:

> The strength of a stereotype results from a combination of three factors: its 'simplicity'; its immediate recognisability (which makes its communicative role very important), and its implicit reference to an assumed consensus about some attribute or complex social relationships. Stereotypes are in this respect prototypes of 'shared cultural meanings'. They are nothing if not social. It is because of these characteristics that they are so useful in socialisation - which in turn add to their relative strength (1979:141).

This 'social' facet of stereotypes is as important in face-to-face interaction as it is in the domain of transnational communication. Without an understanding of what constitutes 'shared cultural meanings', no communication is possible. It follows from this that, firstly, any stereotype will perform an ideological function only in so far as most people involved in the communicative process are aware of a particular stereotypical image. For example, in the former Yugoslavia, the 'stupid Irish', to use Bhabha's example, has no resonance in popular thinking. The 'stupid Bosnian', however, has, but only former Yugoslavs relate to it. Secondly, in cases where a consensus about a stereotype exists, a reference to it needn't necessarily be a chauvinistic provocation. Whether the same stereotype is intended to be pejorative or laudatory will depend on the way it is presented. Stereotypes have what Perkins calls a 'flexible range': "Essentially, the same stereotype [the 'stupid Irish'] can be presented very starkly and blatantly or relatively complexly and 'realistically'. Cartoonists or

comedians often appeal to the most stark (an exaggerated) version of a stereotype" (1979:146). The 'flexible range' of stereotypes suggests that stereotypes needn't necessarily deny the 'play of difference in social relations' (cf. Bhabha, above). On the contrary, by exaggerating 'difference', comedians appeal to stereotypes for their humorous value.

It is, therefore, important to identify the various forms taken by stereotypes in order to gain a fuller understanding of their ideological function. As 'simplifications' stereotypes can, indeed, deny the 'play of difference in social relations' by taking the form of a "universal syllogism that prevents undifferentiated thinking and exceptions" (Gannon, 1994:15). However, because stereotypes are 'simplifications', they can also be a useful means of acknowledging cultural difference - particularly in the context of transnational communication, as I shall go on to argue by examining the case of MTV - "if they are descriptive rather than evaluative, the first best guess, based on data and observation, and subject to change when new information merits it" (ibid.).

Taking all these observations into account, my suggestion is that it is useful to think of national stereotypes - the 'straight' German, the 'passionate' Spaniard, etc. - in terms of the concept of 'cultural metaphor' which Martin Gannon (1994) employed in studying global cultures. According to Gannon, the metaphoric method is a good starting point for "understanding cultures and providing an overall perspective on cultural differences" (1994:11). Gannon is very much aware that, considering the complexity of any society, the 'metaphor' cannot encompass all of the reality that is found within each society. However, Gannon's position is that regardless of the many socio-demographic differences contained in any society, there are some "cultural strands that unite the members of such groups" (1994:13). The 'cultural metaphor' which is used to describe a society is not so much a stereotype, which Gannon defines as: "a mental picture [which can be erroneous] that each of us possesses of different groups and their supposed characteristics and on the basis of which we tend to evaluate individuals from each groups" (1994:14). Rather, the 'cultural metaphor'

tends towards 'sociotyping'[6] in that it relies on "the features of one critical phenomenon in a society to describe the entire society" (ibid.).

Television can be regarded as a 'cultural strand' which can unite different groups of a society into a similar cultural mindset. What was defined as the 'nationality' of a television grid, above, represents a 'cultural metaphor' for that society. Although not all the members of a society adhere to the behavioural patterns suggested in the 'metaphor', the 'metaphor' is nonetheless "a guide, map or beacon to avoid cultural mistakes and to enrich cross-cultural communications and interaction" (Gannon, 1994:16). Having outlined this analytical framework, I will now examine how MTV made use of 'cultural metaphors' of this type in order to project a pan-European image and thus position itself as a 'European TV' in relation to other 'national TVs'.

4.2.2 MTV: A EUROPEAN TV AMONG NATIONAL TVS

As Anthony D. Smith (1990) observes, essential to the success of the new transnational media corporations, and MTV in particular, is their ability to deliver suitably packaged imagery and symbolism by relying on a transnational *lingua franca*. Smith points out that although the emerging global cultures are essentially memoryless - in that they are tied to no place and cut off from any past - they nonetheless have to make use of "bits and pieces of pre-existing national and folk-cultures" (1990:178). According to Smith: "A global culture is here and now and everywhere, and for its purposes the past only serves to offer some decontextualised example or element for its cosmopolitan patchwork" (1990:177). This section examines how MTV made use of 'bits and pieces of pre-existing national cultures', notably 'cultural metaphors', in order to construct a pan-European channel.

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[6] In Gannon's analysis sociotypes are taken to be "stereotypes empirically verifiable for the bulk of a population or group" (1994:15).

4.2.2 (i) *MTV's Europe: a cosmopolitan affiliation*

The concept of the 'cosmopolitan' as offered by Ulf Hannerz[7] (1990; 1992: chapter 7) is particularly pertinent in the context of MTV, because he explores cosmopolitanism as a state of mind or a mode of managing meanings. According to Hannerz, cosmopolitanism includes

> a stance toward diversity itself, toward the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience. A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrast rather than uniformity (1990:239).

Hannerz makes a distinction between cultures which are territorially defined and those which are "carried as collective structures of meanings by networks more extended in space, transnational or even global" (1990:239). Cosmopolitans tend to be involved in cultures which are carried by transnational networks rather than by territory. However, at the same time "among the several cultures with which they are engaged, at least one is presumably of the territorial kind, a culture encompassing the round of everyday life in a community" (1990:240).

In the case of the symbolic boundaries of MTV's culture, the culture of the territorial kind with which MTV had to engage was the culture defined by the physical boundaries of the nation-states in which it was transmitting. In the context of macro- and micro-structural changes, it is too early to write off the nation-state and its relation to questions of collective identity because it still remains a crucial point of reference" (Schlesinger, 1994:318-319). As James Lull put it, "the inherited overarching culture, demarcating in terms of national boundaries, language and ethnicity, provides a basic framework of rules that guides the construction of everyday life" (1988:240). MTV had to 'operate through it' in order to absorb national differences into a unity, a strategy for which MTV coined the term 'celebration of diversity'. In the words of Hansen:

> MTV is like a social experiment. It's internationalism [...] without being the old melting pot for people in the blender. To a degree, the similarities - the fact that someone in Greece and someone in London could be into the

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[7] Friedman (1995) has a similar understanding of the cosmopolitan.

same piece of music - are what makes the channel gel. At the same time, the fact that they look and appear different is crucial to make it seem Europe-wide [...] We celebrate those diversities and that's important. We're not the *Eurovision Song Contest*. This is a much more sophisticated scene than that. Adding points for countries around Europe, it's nothing to do with that. This is about a commonality, this is about being a diverse member of a club. It's a parliament. It's a form (interview, 18/08/94).

Before going on to examine how MTV achieved a representation of Europe with the 'we' feeling as opposed to Eurikon and Europa, which were considered by European audiences as just another 'foreign' channel (cf. Collins, 1994), I want to draw attention to the fact that cosmopolitanism is open to various interpretations. In the words of Shohat and Stam[8]:

It has become an empty signifier on to which diverse groups project their hopes and fears. In its more co-opted version, it easily degenerates into a state of corporate-managed United-Colors-of-Benetton pluralism whereby established power promotes ethnic 'flavours of the month' for commercial or ideological purposes (1994:47).

However, Shohat and Stam argue that this view ignores the extent to which multiculturalism as represented by Benetton and the like offers a more egalitarian vision of social relations:

In a transnational world typified by the global circulation of images and sounds, goods and peoples, media spectatorship impacts complexly on national identity and communal belonging. By facilitating an engagement with distant peoples, the media 'deterritorialise' the process of imagining communities (1994:354) [...] Just as the media can 'otherise' cultures[...] they can also promote multicultural coalition [...] (1994:7).

That media can promote 'multicultural coalitions' is a crucial to understand MTV's appeal and chapters 8 and 9 will examine how MTV's idea of a cosmopolitan Europe offers possibilities for fictional narrativisations of life. Before that, however, it is necessary to establish how MTV achieved this cosmopolitan representation.

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[8] These authors use the term 'multiculturalism' rather than 'cosmopolitanism'. For them "multiculturalism means seeing the world history and contemporary social life from the perspective of the radical equality of peoples in status, potential and rights" (1994:5). As a state of mind, 'multiculturalism' has the same meaning as 'cosmopolitanism' in this analysis. Hence I use them as synonyms.

4.2.2 (ii) *MTV's representation of Europe with the 'we' feeling*

In chapter 2, by analogy with Brunsdon and Morley's analysis of the British programme *Nationwide*, I argued that the strategy of 'linking and framing' is MTV's 'meta-language', which firmly sets every item into the channel's televisual 'environment'. This same strategy enables MTV to appropriate items and encode them with a 'Euro-feel'. Like on *Nationwide*, within the discourse of MTV "the concept of the nation is not presented as a monolithic entity immediately embracing us all - rather the unity of the [European] nation is constructed out of the sum of our regional [which corresponds to 'national' on MTV] differences and variations" (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978:80). MTV's pan-European 'nation' is a complex but not contradictory unity where "differences are each to be savoured and enjoyed for their own peculiarities and distinctive flavours" (ibid.:82).

Hansen explains this strategy as follows:

> We deliberately went out of our way to find the kind of people who would be on the channel. Presenters and vox pops - the man on the street stuff - people who actually looked different from people from another country. That's part of the celebration of diversity. It was a way of stopping them looking like it was some kind of blending melting pot. Everybody kind of said 'there is a funny European accent' and that makes it really the same. The fact that people **were** different, we thought was quite groovy. The fact that an Italian kid looks different from a Finish kid, it's just perfect, because that makes them look somewhat similar and somewhat different. And that actually celebrates diversity. We try as much as possible to do that (interview, 18/08/94).

The way 'national' items are put together and unified into the channel is as if the channel first locates 'you' in your own country and from that point of identification enables you to construct a view of Europe (cf. Brunsdon and Morley, 1978:81). MTV's message is "we're as local as you are and as international as you are" (cf. Hansen, interview, 18/08/94). The *local* versus the *international* is an instance of MTV's ambiguity strategy, which enables MTV to generate simultaneously two sets of images. This ambiguity is part of the work of MTV's meta-language which is articulated through the 'axis of difference' and 'axis of continuity'. The former

allocates an international status to national items featured on the channel, so that the viewers can feel "a little more cosmopolitan [...] without going away at all" (cf. Hannerz, 1992:254). The latter brings disparate national items together to convey an international image so that MTV becomes "a cosmopolitan among the locals...one of us and yet not quite one of us" (ibid.:254).

On the basis of the simultaneous work of the 'axis of difference' and 'axis of continuity', MTV has succeeded in establishing a rapport with viewers across Europe. As Hansen observes:

> I think that's where we've been successful. We don't put up national flags. We don't deal with quota systems [...] That's the side of MTV which is kind of subtle [...] The presenters on the channel are having a dialogue with you as an individual, whether you're in Sarajevo or whether you're in Helsinki, or whether you're in Moscow. It's just you and the presenter. It's kind of a 'bond' issue, in terms of dialogue, it's very intimate to a degree (interview, 18/08/94).

Despite the use of English as the language of the channel and a few flagship shows from MTV US, Yves Eudes speaks for many commentators when he says that a distinctively European flavour is coming out of MTV's pot-pouri:

> MTV Europe is the only channel which is systematically addressed at the youth of all the Continent's countries. The VJs speak directly with their fans in Madrid and Helsinki, which suddenly appear very close. The starting hours of the programmes on the screen state different time zones, which gives the fugitive impression that the Old Continent is one big country (1995:17).

Marc Levinson similarly writes that:

> No one espouses the ideal of a united continent more fervently than MTV Europe. It is a single programme shown in 37 countries [...] MTV Europe draws its staff from a generation of worldly youths for whom English is a second language and national borders are outdated relics. The mix of music videos, news briefs and zany promotional spots is instantly recognisable as MTV. The content is largely produced in London for trend-conscious viewers like Graciela, who recently rang up 'MTV's Most Wanted', a live music show, from Bucharest, Romania. Her on-air question for host Ray Cokes: where could she find someone to install a nose-ring? 'In my country, there are not these possibilities (1995:47).

Having established how MTV's 'environment' (cf. chapter 2) was encoded with a 'Euro-feel', the rest of the chapter looks more closely at the mechanisms that MTV employed to convey Europeanness, namely: the way the English language became an 'international' language on the channel as well as the way other items on MTV were used as signifiers for a putative Euro-identity.

4.2.3 THE 'MTV ENGLISH'

I argued in chapters 2 and 3 that sophisticated visuals are central to the way MTV communicates with viewers. Not only do MTV's visuals attract the short-span attention of TV zappers, but they also function as a way of breaking down the language barrier in Europe. It is also worth noting that MTV initially expanded in the countries of Northern Europe, where the population is generally fluent in English as a second language. For this reason, the use of English did not slow down the consumption of MTV in these markets. On the contrary, English was part of MTV's appeal among a niche audience - a recurring theme in chapters to follow.

English became the language of the channel. In the words of Hansen "we had to have a common denominator language and English was kind of like a default language, we went with that as the language of broadcast" (interview, 18/08/94). In 1990, English was indeed used far more than any other single language on transnational European television channels (see Collins, 1994:13 for figures). According to statistics from the same period, English is the second most spoken language in the world, after Mandarin (Bouvaist, 1991:104). Eighty per cent of Europeans spoke English in 1992 compared with 60% ten years earlier (cf. Moran, 1992). Apart from being the most spoken second language, English is also the language of rock n' roll, which has an important ideological function (see chapter 5).

English used on MTV is a very specific kind of English, which became MTV's trade-mark. Syntactically, it is very basic. With few exceptions, it consists of short sentences in which VJs greet the viewers and introduce video clips or shows, in their short links between the videos. Grammatically, it is sometimes incorrect. Again, with

few exceptions, the non-British VJs come to London once they have been offered contracts with MTV, with little previous experience in spoken English. The man from the European streets featured on 'vox-pops', people interviewed 'on location' and the callers on MTV's live phone in programme, *Most Wanted*, all speak 'pidgin' English. All this gave birth to a new English accent on MTV- the 'funny European accent'.

The 'MTV English' is a variant of English inflected by different European intonations, which caught the 'ear', as it were, of a number of commentators, particularly native English speakers. For example:

> Simone Angel became an MTV presenter four years ago after moving to London from her native Netherlands when 18. A bouncy blonde with the kind of hyperactive features that have you reaching for the remote control, she speaks excellent English compared to Enrico's very good, though her accent can shift confusingly from Amsterdam to East London to Liverpool at the drop of a diphthong (Spillius, 1995:16).

> The presenter is Kristiane Backer, one of MTV Europe's hip-looking, mildly flirtatious female 'VJs', who speaks perfect English with a slight 'European' accent (Bradby, 1993:160).

> From nowhere or - to be more precise - Denmark, comes this stunning debut [...] only a few consonants and vowels away from cult status. Even that sometimes irritating mid-Atlantic MTV accent seems apposite (Lee, 1997:16).

Jason Toynbee (1994) remarks that, to the casual observer, the dominance of English on MTV might appear to give the channel an Anglo-centric skewing. However, Toynbee argues that this is not the case:

> Critically, though, the British identity of the VJs gets subsumed under the panglossian discourse of the schedule as a whole. The English language is made to stand as a common European language. Certainly, it's inflected by different accents, but this just means that British intonation (invariably Southeastern 'estuary' English) is no more than one among several regional variants [...] On MTV Europe the Anglo-American axis in rock is pulled apart by the effacement of English as a transatlantic signifier. Rather, it becomes a universal language of youth and of music.

The words of Price appropriately conclude this section:

> Language here means not a series of words, but rather a vocabulary of images and a syntax of forms. One way to approach this new form of

language is to determine whether any of the new global channels are developing a different voice - not an extension of a pre-existing one; not a global version of a national station, but one that has some non-identifiable source - not American, not British - but perhaps from nowhere. One could look at MTV for an additional set of clues, closer to a global channel with a new video language, perhaps closer to the idea of some new place. Global television produces a vocabulary and syntax of consumer imagery which becomes a language of non-loyalties, inherently subversive of existing orders. The language of consumer sovereignty suggests a power to shape existence that does not depend on the state (Price, 1995:53-54).

4.2.4 *SIGNIFIERS FOR A PUTATIVE EURO-IDENTITY ON MTV*

Apart from 'language', other items encoded with a 'Euro-feel' on MTV are the VJs, the *serious* MTV and MTV's *Most Wanted*. The way music on MTV is used to create a 'Euro-feel' is separately examined in chapter 5.

4.2.4 (i) *VJs*

As I have already suggested by analogy with *Nationwide*, MTV's meta-language enables the channel to construct "a particular understanding of the world which is both specific to the channel and its production of the [supra-nation Europe-wide] but also draws on and is read in the context of already existing representations" (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978:88). In MTV's representation of Europe, individual European nations are geographical units which are often reduced to stereotypes or characters (ibid.:86). MTV produces a discourse in which "the structures of class, gender and race are absent. What we see is a cast of individual characters through whose activities [MTV] constructs a picture of [the European youth], in their diversity" (cf. Brunsdon and Morley, 1978:92). These characters are, above all, VJs on MTV. Hansen explains MTV's decision to recruit VJs Enrico from Italy and Hugo from Spain:

> What we were looking for, there, was a different male perspective of what we wanna have on the channel...We felt we were looking for these types of people rather than specific nationalities. They just had to have a little bit of Latin excitement about them. That's the theory, anyway (interview, 18/08/94).

The already existing social representation which MTV draws on in this case is that of the 'Latin lover'. Given that the cultural construction of gender, in general, and the representation of the 'Latin lover' as a type of masculinity, in particular, is extensively explored in film studies, I shall draw upon this discipline here. The 'Latin lover' is, above all, associated with the silent film actor Rudolf Valentino. On the one hand, Valentino "personified the Italian man's stereotypical penchant for fashion, by flaunting his spats, ties custom-made suits and furs, his flamboyant suspenders and notorious slave bracelet" (Hansen, 1991:259). As such, he violated the codes of American masculinity, rooted in a Rooseveltian virility which was typified by the dutiful husband slaving away in his downtown office (cf. Studlar, 1993). On the other hand, by exploiting the non-Anglo ethnicity, Valentino seemed to transcend the virulent xenophobia directed at immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe during the 1920s USA (ibid.). The stigma attached to the dual scandal of Valentino's erotic ethnicity and ambiguous sexuality made him hugely popular among female audiences, which obscured his popularity among a large number of men, gay and straight (cf. Hansen, 1991). The 'Latin excitement' about Southern European VJs as internationally appealing 'types of people' rather than 'nationals of a country' on MTV, evokes this idea. For example, VJ Enrico is described as the 'heartthrob' who is "craved by pubescent females all over the Continent" as he "purrs in a heavy Italian accent" (cf. Spillius, 1995:16).

More specifically in relation to MTV's representation of Europe, the 'Latin excitement' is contrasted with the Northern European 'stiffness'. As I have already suggested, 'cultural metaphors' on MTV are processes of connotation, i.e. "they are ways of generating a spread of signifieds around a given signifier" (Thwaites et al., 1994:57). In this case, the given signifier is the Italian VJ and the myth of 'Latinity' generates particular connotations around the VJ. Andy Medhurst's (1993) analysis of the 1950s British film, *The Spanish Gardener*, serves appropriately to illustrate this point. According to Medhurst, in this film, the idea of Spanishness (by extension Latinity) and of Britishness (by extension Northerness) are contrasted through the exotic setting of Spain with its sun and sea and the cool British winter. By analogy with the setting, Harrington (the British male character) is associated with coldness

and the inside of the buildings while Jose is the personification of Spain, warmth and the great outdoors.

On a denotational level, however, all that is betraying Enrico's origin is his typically Italian name and accent, which are sufficient elements to stress 'diversity' on MTV. The function of the meta-language is to convey the image of 'unity'. MTV has to be different from Italian 'talkative' TV and therefore Enrico must also be able to be disassociated from his Italianness. On MTV, Enrico does not wear the latest Italian fashion. Neither Italian music nor events are privileged in his links - without his name and accent, Enrico could be from any country. Instead of the Italian stereotype, Enrico is the European archetype. Levinson rightly observes that:

> On air video jockeys (VJs) such as 22-year-old heartthrob Enrico Silvestrin, who sports a blond goatee and dreadlocks, have deliberately emptied their on-camera personalities of national character. They could come from any place on the continent (1995:47).

Similarly, Alex Spillius writes that:

> Enrico Silvestrin, 23, MTV presenter and Eurohunk does not have the sort of hairstyle you might expect from a man whose surname sounds like a mass market-shampoo. Greased back into a pony-tale and dyed deep red, it is a touch too grungy, though complemented appropriately by a nose-ring, ear-ring, goatee and indiscernible tattoo on the right bicep (1995:16).

To summarise, in its choice of VJs - Enrico, in this case - MTV relied on "an almost parodic exaggeration of stereotyped, generic 'Latin looks' and romantic qualities" (Mitchell, 1996:142) to convey the image of 'Latinity' on the channel and thus 'celebrate diversity'. However, on MTV, a reference to the continent's 'diversity' serves the purpose of conveying the image of 'unity'. This effect is achieved primarily by exploiting the 'flexible range' (see above) of national stereotypes. Under the overarching framework of MTV's European 'environment', cultural difference becomes blended into a convincing representation of Europeanness. Latin 'exotic-ness' has its resonance mainly in Northern Europe but it is likely to be diminished in Southern Europe. In Italy, Enrico may well be more 'exotic' because of his association with Anglo-culture - be it the 'touch of (American) grunge' in his look or the fact that he speaks English on screen.

4.2.4 (ii) *the serious side of MTV*

I noted in chapter 2 that the *playful* versus the *serious* is one instance of MTV's 'double image'. Andrew Goodwin argues (1993a; 1993b) that the playful side of MTV has been extensively theorised by post-modern theorists - for whom MTV was essentially a pastiche - at the expense of the serious side. Goodwin rightly observes that:

> In fact, there are two MTVs. One MTV discourse is the nihilistic, pastiching, essentially pointless playfulness that is invoked in postmodernist accounts of MTV. The other is responsible, socially conscious, satire and parody-based, vaguely liberal - and almost invisible in academic accounts of MTV (1993a:150).

The *playful* and the *serious* go together. As Kevin Fedarko remarks, MTV correctly assumed that

> young people will watch hours of music videos and cartoons, presented by hip young people, especially if viewers also believe that they are grappling with issues of world importance [...] No other channel presents innovative specials that articulate youngsters' views on the likes of music censorship, antismoking legislation, AIDS - and the issue whether Slash, the lead guitarists for Guns 'n' Roses, should have his tattoo removed (1993:61).

According to Eudes (1995), MTV has invented the concept of 'new news' which he used to describe MTV's alternative style of reporting issues which are also featured on traditional news programmes. Eudes observes that on MTV, between the latest Guns 'n' Roses tour updates and features on the love life of Courtney Love, trendy-looking VJs in trendy-looking settings inform viewers about racism, ecology, AIDS and other political issues. 'MTV News' presenter Steve Blame describes his experience of interviewing leading European politicians during the MTV 'Vote Europe' coverage as follows: "MTV proved as much of a challenge to the Euro-bigwigs as they were for us. Many had never faced an interviewer without a jacket, let alone one in a T-shirt, goatee and bovver boots" (1994:15). The purpose of this European campaign was to boost the European youth vote. The Euro-campaign was inspired by the impact of MTV US' coverage of the 1992 presidential election, following which an additional two and a half million of young Americans went to the polls (cf. Ross, 1994:2).

Consequently, vice-president Al Gore acknowledged MTV as a political force during the electoral campaign with the words: "Thank you, MTV! Thank you for winning this election. You did it" (quoted in Banks, 1996:130). Although the impact of MTV's Euro-Vote is less clear, the political potential of MTV - in whatever form it may be manifested - should not be underestimated.

Eudes claims that in its own way, MTV wants to be a *television citoyenne* (a citizenship television). This expression is particularly suggestive in the context of the construction of European identity on MTV because it points to the fact that citizenship is no longer a universal status but only one among other constitutive elements in MTV's representation of Europe. As Hall argues, nations are not only political entities but also forms which produce meaning: "People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the *idea* of the nation as represented in its national culture" (1992:292). By separating 'nationality' and 'citizenship' MTV actively challenged the tacit assumption of nationalism - whereby nations have come to be the 'preferred' objects of identification - and imagined its European supra-nation by privileging alternative but no less meaningful symbolisations of the self (cf. Gellner, 1983 in chapter 2). Consequently, while young Swedes, for example, were least likely to support the idea of United Europe imagined by Brussels (cf. see footnote 5), they were among the most loyal MTV Europe fans (cf. Sturmer, 1993).

If, as indicated in chapter 1, multinational producers of culture can engage in a battle with the state for the allegiance of its citizens, MTV may well be providing an insight into how this shift in allegiance might be occurring. What is involved, here, is what Clauss-Dieter Rath identified as the interrelationship of two types of mass formation - "that of the political mass, and that of the 'TV mass'. One is constituted by a sense of national unity (passports, taxes, military service...), the other in terms of intervention in the network of TV, ignoring national boundaries" (1985:202). Hereby emerges a new geographic entity with its own sovereignty and its own guarantors - the "space of transmission" - which cuts across "the geographies of power, of social life, and of knowledge, which define the space of nationality or culture" (ibid:203). Rath claims

that 'new synthetic orderings of reality', which emerge at the push of a button, create a new social reality.

It follows from this that, as Barrie Axford and Richard Huggins (1995) remark, the new media order contributes to the formation of a new form of publicness that is not reliant upon territoriality. Instead, the new media order devalues the political resources which have come to be organised around the nation-state and redefine the idea of Europeanness "as a space created and recreated by networks of interaction - cultural, commercial, and scientific - rather than a place to be governed and regulated in the conventional sense of these terms" (ibid.:1418). According to Axford and Huggins:

> What we may be seeing is the creation of a European media ecumene, consisting of increasingly widespread and diverse networks of businesses, exchange students, users of the Internet, subscribers to satellite pay-channels, or avid video-conferencers, in other words 'a' Europe of more or less specialist discourses or tastes, and in some cases a virtual Europe (ibid.: 1420).

MTV is one of the most convincing examples of 'virtual Europe' to date. The question that the relative success of MTV raises is whether there is such a thing that one might call 'virtual citizenship' and how it might be exercised. Could it be that Europeans brought together primarily by their shared taste in music might be socially responsible without necessarily supporting traditional channels of political action? Chapter 9 goes on to explore what is potentially a dimension of this new kind of citizenship by looking at a case where young people - disillusioned with the franchise - rejected the ballot in favour of voting with records.

4.2.4 (iii) *MTV's Most Wanted*

Most Wanted deserves a special mention in the context of this analysis because it is the only live pan-European programme to date. Between 1992 and 1995, *Most Wanted* was beamed simultaneously into approximately 37 countries every week-night. The show started in November 1991 as *Ray's Requests* and was repackaged as *Most Wanted* in April 1992, following its popularity. *Most Wanted*, hosted by Ray Cokes,

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combined all the elements that constituted the novelty of MTV - the complicity with the viewer and the spontaneous rock n' roll feel. It was one of the 'anything goes' type of programmes which became especially prominent in the UK after the 'crisis' in youth broadcasting, such as *The Word* and *The Big Breakfast*. Although in terms of frantic camera work, outlandish studio decor, live guests (even audiences) and performances, outrageous competitions and hosts "fooling around with the camera crew [and, more specifically in the case of Cokes] simulating the camaraderie between members of a rock band (cf. Toynbee, 1994), these programmes were similar. What made *Most Wanted* stand out was its pan-European scope.

It is especially during the *Most Wanted* hour that Europe felt like one big country. Between video clips, Cokes was reading letters and faxes or chatting to viewers over the phone. In the 'MTV goodies' competition, two random callers from anywhere within MTV's footprint were joining in the fun with Cokes, sharing the same jokes and language - English and, in this competition, noises barnyard animals make. As Toynbee (1994) observes:

> As in all kinds of phone-in programme, there is a real tension between public access and professional control of the medium. This is particularly problematic on an international station whose audience shares a diverse set of cultural traditions and variable mastery of the privileges language. Cokes' special skill is his ability to fuse this potentially fragmented group into a ragged yet ultimately convincing representation of a European rock community.

Most Wanted became the epitome of MTV and, indeed, its most popular programme across Europe. Consequently, it became the show on MTV with the greatest budget while the host, Cokes, became the first presenter to get extensive personal promotion on the channel. Equally, the fall of *Most Wanted* 's popularity among viewers became the most obvious indicator for the channel makers that Europeanness was going out of fashion, a point that will be taken up in chapter 6.

CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the relative failure of the EC and the relative success of MTV in creating an advertiser-funded pan-European channel. In an attempt to promote European culture, both initiatives revolved around the phrase 'unity in diversity' as a way of circumscribing a European identity compatible with the Continent's diversity. In both attempts at nurturing a Euro-culture, American culture played a significant role.

In the case of the EC, 'America' was demonised on the pretext of fears of cultural homogenisation under the impact of American programmes. However, this chapter suggested that these fears were exaggerated. Moreover, the political debates' focus on 'Coca-Cola satellites' also suppressed a form of homogenisation which comes from the national level and which acts to negate the cultural pluralism that constitutes Western European nation-states. Having extended this argument on a European level, I argued that 'unity in diversity' was a model for a European identity that bore all the marks of a dominant exclusivist ethos. Hence, it was characterised as 'nationalist-in-the-abstract'. The EC's audio-visual policy - which had little effect - was the result of the interaction of differing priorities.

In the case of MTV, American cultural forms were considered to be the shared culture among European MTV fans, given that the imagery and symbolism that was encoded as 'European' on MTV originates from the US. However, new global patterns of consumption should not be confused with the emergence of a homogenised culture. Rather, the creation of new forms of alliances which are formed across territorial boundaries should be considered in relation to existing identities. The creation of new identities is a generative process which discards the binary logic that seeks to understand culture via mutually exclusive terms, such as unity vs diversity or local vs global. Instead, global identities are created by 'operating through' the local. In this process, they exclude all 'others' that do not speak the *lingua franca* shared within members of a given global culture. Nevertheless, particularly in the case of MTV - through its stress on a commonality which has a genuine appeal among MTV's niche audience - the channel promoted a cosmopolitan vision of Europe.

CHAPTER 5

IN SEARCH OF A EUROPEAN LINGUA FRANCA IN MUSIC: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MTV'S MUSIC PLAYLIST (1987-1993)

INTRODUCTION

Following the same line of analysis as in chapter 4, this chapter examines the extent to which 'music' can be used as a signifier for a European identity. Underlying this analysis will be a critique of the cultural imperialism/globalisation framework that seeks to explain the interdependence of economics and music programming on MTV in an oversimplified manner, namely through a conspiracy between MTV and major record companies (the majors) to disseminate a global homogenous sound, usually synonymous with (Anglo)American adult-oriented rock (AOR).

The hypothesis in this chapter is that, in fact, the proliferation of music genres in MTV's playlist fractured the dominance of mainstream AOR. In order to support this statement, central to this analysis will be an examination of what I shall call the 'cross-over' potential of popular music genres featured on MTV. The term 'cross-over' denotes "a recording artist's shift from a sometimes ethnically defined niche market into a broader mainstream market" (Mitchell, 1996:9). I shall use the term 'cross-over' in the way that it is commonly used on MTV, that is, to denote the potential of a recording artist to appeal to the large and culturally diverse pan-European mainstream market. For this purpose, this chapter will concentrate on a specific aspect of the music video, relatively untheorised as yet[1], which is how the music video is used in MTV's playlist. As we shall see, MTV's music playlists are programmed like music radio playlists. Hence, the focus of this analysis will be

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[1] Broadly speaking, studies about music videos can be classified into four categories: analyses emerging from the disciplines of film studies, mass communications or literary theory which concentrate, above all, on the visual aspect of videos at the expense of the sound (Aufderheide 1986; Tetzlaff, 1986; Wollen, 1986); analyses grounded in the popular music field - based on a critique of the first category - which relate the visual and the aural aspect of the video and locate this phenomenon within the music industry (Goodwin, 1993a; Frith et al., 1993); analyses mainly grounded in political economy, which also look at the place of music videos in the music industry (Laing 1985b; Banks 1997); and, finally, interdisciplinary analyses which look into the cultural politics of music videos (Lewis, 1990; Garofalo, 1993; Walser, 1993a).

primarily on the sound in MTV's pan-European televisual context (i.e. 'environment').

This chapter will, above all, take issue with the assumption (common among critics of MTV) that MTV is 'American' and will argue from the premise that it is in actuality 'European'. However, such a premise will not imply that MTV does not play Anglo-American rock n' roll. On the contrary, rock was the foundation upon which MTV's Europe was built. This thesis argues that MTV's Europe is a new kind of 'imagined community', with its own boundaries, traditions and criteria for belonging. MTV's language speaks, above all, to the rock fan whose identity is moulded by a particular ideology (the rock ideology of authenticity), overlain by a particular sense of geography (whereby the US and the UK constitute one entity). MTV's identity as a European music channel will be defined in relation to other 'local' music stations. These are primarily national pop music radio stations, for lack of significant competition to MTV in terms of music television narrowcasters. Outlets such as NRJ in France, Radio 1 in the UK or Youth Radio in the former Yugoslavia play(ed) a predominantly Anglo-American repertoire but are not considered 'American'. MTV's European identity will also be defined in opposition to MTV US, i.e. MTV is 'European' because it plays different music from MTV US.

MTV's apparent commitment to promoting European music reflects MTV's loyalty to the market. As argued so far, MTV "needed to establish itself as a unique, new cultural service" (Goodwin, 1993a:133). The search for new 'local' sounds which had had little exposure on European mainstream radio suited MTV's ambition to be different from national radio. Playing some 'local' music fulfilled MTV's globalisation strategy, based on a form of cosmopolitanism whereby MTV is 'one of us yet not quite one of us'. At the same time, being 'unique' and 'new' for MTV was synonymous with being European. Hence, MTV's search for a sound that was not Anglo-American and yet had the same immediate cross-national appeal enabled it to promote itself as a European channel with a 'we feeling'. This sound 'from nowhere' that could be encoded with a 'Eurofeel' was the 'added value' of MTV: MTV Europe was not MTV US. They (the 'Americans') have their rock, we ('Europeans') have our

own musical identity. Here, as we shall see, MTV effectively invented this 'shared' tradition by finding a new musical *lingua franca* (Euro-dance). In this context, the changing ratio between sound and vision - since the reconciliation of rock and television (cf. chapter 2) - and the way this change effectively displaced this ideology of authenticity will be examined.

Finally, what is effectively MTV's pan-European musical experiment could not have been conducted, had it not been for the unique position that MTV occupied in the European market at the channel's inception. MTV was relatively free from competition as other pan-European music channels had failed, while significant local competition was not in sight. MTV was relatively free from other market constraints, given that major record-companies had not set out to promote a 'European' repertoire as yet, although since 1988, Europe was a bigger market for record-sales than the US.

Another factor that explains MTV's willingness to promote a range of popular music genres outside rigid marketing formats is that there was a discrepancy between the forms of 'allocative' and 'operational' control (see chapter 2). In the initial period of expansion, MTV was, to an extent, amateurish in its programming approach, compared to MTV in the US or to Western European mainstream media outlets. Whilst there was an established hierarchical stratification within the management structure of the company, some practices adopted by the editorial side evaded the professional corporate ethos. For example, the head of production would conduct an interview with a band just because he was a fan of theirs. Usually interviewing is the job of a VJ or producer, not that of the 'boss'. Alternatively, a VJ would be consulted in decision-making, when recruiting new VJs for the channel.

This chapter will thus concentrate on MTV's playlist policy during the channel's experimental phase. This phase ended around 1992 when MTV proved to be profitable and when major record companies' first pan-European promotional strategies began to take effect. However, the most significant change in MTV's music policy as well as in the channel's relationship with major record companies occurred in 1994. These changes will be examined in chapter 6. Chapter 5 begins by identifying

the weaknesses of the cultural imperialism thesis in relation to MTV. Subsequently, the analysis of MTV's search for sounds of 'cross-over' potential will be carried out.

5.1 THE PROBLEM WITH THE 'CULTURAL IMPERIALISM'/ GLOBALISATION THESIS AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR AN ANALYSIS OF MTV'S PLAYLIST

Typically, a critic of MTV would "trash [MTV] as crass, three-minute culture, another example of Yank cultural imperialism" (Clarke, 1992:35). This section will attempt to establish that such assumptions about MTV are as unhelpful in understanding the position of American music in European charts as they are in understanding the dominance of American fiction in the European televisual programme exchange (cf. chapter 4).

5.1.1 *CRITICISM OF THE CULTURAL IMPERIALISM THESIS BY POPULAR MUSIC THEORISTS*

As with fiction, the concept of 'cultural imperialism' has been employed in a casual manner in debates over popular music. To illustrate the kinds of problems which emerge as a result of this, I will be drawing from the influential works (in popular music studies) of Wallis and Malm (1984) and Laing (1986), as well as Garofalo (1992a), Laing (1992), Negus (1993; 1996), Shuker (1994) and Mitchell (1996). There are two main criticisms of the cultural imperialism thesis when articulated in relation to the production and consumption of popular music.

The first is that the cultural imperialism thesis tends to "conflate economic power and cultural effects" (Garofalo, 1992a:18, also quoted in Negus, 1996:164). To illustrate this confusion, let us consider the following example. In a television feature about MTV, a French journalist gives his opinion about MTV's credibility as a European channel: "I think, definitely, MTV is not a European channel. It's an American channel with some bits and pieces which are European in the middle. But it is, first of all, an American channel" (source: *The Late Show*, BBC2, June 1994). In this

instance, it is not clear what is meant by 'American'. Is MTV 'American' because of its programming content or because it is owned by the US conglomerate Viacom? The statement above also overlooks the fact that out of the total MTV employees based in the London office since 1987, only 3% were American nationals.[2]

I want to suggest that the claim that MTV is 'American' is, in fact, another example of the 'Coca-Cola satellites' position (cf. chapter 4), whereby some dubious quantitative criteria indicating the dominance of American repertoire on MTV are implicitly used as evidence about MTV's detrimental impact on indigenous music practices. In addition to the fact that such an argument frustratingly lacks empirical evidence, it also makes no attempt to understand the complexities involved in the process of musical exchange between the culturally and linguistically diverse European countries.

The second criticism of the cultural imperialism thesis, as advanced by Fred Fejes (1981), draws attention to this approach's one-sided emphasis on the role of transnationals (i.e. 'external factors') while underestimating the receiving nations' class structures and history (i.e. 'internal factors'). Consequently, the complex and dynamic relationships that exist among 'external' and 'internal' factors are obscured. By analogy, Dave Laing (1986) argues that, in popular music, the global dominance of Anglo-American rock is accounted for by emphasising the role of transnational record companies while neglecting the internal dynamics at work within a particular country - such as cultural, class or economic factors. As a result, the importance of the major record companies in the European music industry as a whole is overestimated (cf. Laing, 1986; Shuker, 1994); the economics of piracy are grossely underestimated (cf. Laing, 1986); and the malign influence of the oligopoly exercised by the majors is taken for granted (cf. Laing, 1992). At the same time, the active and creative dimension in the process of consumption and the variety of local appropriations of imported popular music styles is neglected (cf. Wallis and Malm, 1984; Laing, 1986, 1992; Garofalo, 1992a). In effect, such a theoretical model assumes a straightforward correspondence between the ambition of global corporations to maximise their profits

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[2] I am grateful to Caroline Garton, MTV Human Resources Advisor, for compiling this figure for me in February 1999.

from the 'most exportable' cultural products (in this case Anglo-American rock) and the role of the latter in homogenising cultural differences. Here, as a number of commentators observe, a strand of globalisation theorising began to effectively occupy the same theoretical explanatory ground as the cultural imperialism approach (see for example, Tomlison, 1991; Featherstone and Lash, 1995; Benson, 1995/1996). Hence, in the manner of the cultural imperialism thesis, this particular formulation of the globalisation process ignores the nuances and complexities of globalisation.

In order to illustrate the arguments above, let us use another example concerning MTV:

> MTV Europe, the most successful and far-reaching of MTV's international services, feature American artists in two of every three clips it plays, giving European acts as little as 15 per cent air-time. MTV only appears to play music clips by native artists if they parrot Western genres of rock, jettisoning indigenous musical styles [...] Moreover, MTV increases the clout cultural power of major transnational record companies by largely limiting its playlists to artists affiliated with these labels. Such a playlist undercuts regional and local record companies unable to promote their own acts on the channel (Banks, 1996:113-114).

Jack Banks' (1996) analysis represents an example of a 'globalisation' position which assumes that "patterns of ownership determine the cultural forms and preferences" (Garofalo, 1992a:5). The resulting problems are as follows: first, the use of unqualified concepts such as 'native artists', 'indigenous musical styles' as opposed to 'Western genres of rock' as well as a series of terms such as 'European', 'regional', 'local', without indicating in what way they differ from one another, which makes it difficult to engage with Banks' arguments about MTV Europe; second, the use of statistics out of context, thus offering only a partial understanding of the problem under investigation; third, the use of 'American artists' as a collective category, which implies that 'American' music is a homogenous sound; finally, the assumption that MTV collaborates with the majors to promote Anglo-American artists at the expense of local acts, thus "contributing to an erosion of indigenous culture, values and tradition" (1996:114), without any direct investigation of either the latter or MTV's playlist.

Nevertheless, the evidence that will counter Banks' arguments will not be used to dispute that fact that MTV can and does limit "the range of music choices that people hear on regular basis and thus channel the public's music preferences in certain directions" (cf. Banks, 1996:69). That "the international entertainment business may be motivated by imperialist practices is [therefore] not in question" (Garofalo, 1992a:7). Rather, it will be argued that in order to fully understand the reasons for the dominance of the Anglo-American repertoire in Europe prior to the launch of MTV and its position in MTV's playlist at the channel's inception, it is necessary to look at Europe as both an identifiable market and a distinctive cultural region (cf. Negus, 1993).

5.1.2 *REASONS FOR THE DOMINANCE OF ANGLO-AMERICAN REPERTOIRE IN EUROPE PRIOR TO THE LAUNCH OF MTV*

David Hesmondhalgh (1996a) rightly observes that the dominant paradigm behind a great deal of commentary on popular music is what we can call, for the sake of convenience, the ideology of rock and soul. The thinking behind rock and soul ideology can be summarised as a set of oppositions between the 'authentic' associated with rock and soul - the two dominant genres in global popular music - and the 'co-opted' associated with pop and other genres. A great deal of writing also exists on the problems and contradictions in this system of values[3]. Nevertheless:

> This schema is still a powerful means of organising the way people think about music around the world. [...] These provided audiences, musicians and record company workers with a set of conventions for understanding the production and consumption of records and performances (ibid.:196).

Thus, when assessing the reasons for the dominance of Anglo-American repertoire in Europe, there are three factors to take into account: the 'priority' policies within major record companies; the ideology of the 'superiority' of sounds coming from the USA and the UK; and how 'cultural metaphors' operate in relation to music.

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[3] See the commonly cited Frith (1983) for a critique of the rock ideology of authenticity; Frith (1986) for rock's relationship with technology; Frith and Horne (1987) for the college rock tradition; Frith (1988a&b) for rock and the advent of the music video; also see Hannon (1988); Wicke (1990).

5.1.2 (i) *the 'priorities' of major record companies*

Negus' research into the music recording industry indicates that

> the dominance of Anglo-American repertoire around the world, and the adoption of business practices and promotional techniques derived from models developed in the UK and the United States, has provided a series of opportunities for successful British and North American artists to generate additional income through retail sales, performance and copyright revenues. At the same time, it has severely restricted the opportunities for local artists (1993:302; also see Negus 1992; 1994).

Anglo-American recordings are euphemistically called 'international repertoire' by staff working within the recording industry. It consists of 'priority' acts whose promotional strategies are centrally co-ordinated from the Head Office in the US or the European nerve centre in London. International repertoire is, in effect, synonymous with conventional rock bands who are predominantly white and male, such as U2, Dire Straits, REM. Furthermore, "the majority of staff involved in acquiring artists for major labels are white, male and have entered the industry from what might loosely be called the college-rock tradition" (1992:57). It should be noted that, following an incident with Michael Jackson, a number of black 'soul' artists also joined the 'priorities' (see section 5.3.3).

Next in the order of major record company 'priorities' in Europe are acts who are thought capable of appealing to a language group contained within several countries, such as German artists in Austria and German-speaking Switzerland or Swedish artists in Scandinavia (cf. Laing, 1992). The third category are acts whose appeal "is considered to be solely within the boundaries of their own country" (Laing, 1992:131). While some national markets in Europe, such as France and Germany, are large enough to sustain the interest of major record companies in local repertoire, smaller European markets are at risk. For example, the work of Paul Rutten (1991; 1993) demonstrates how the principal activity of both major and independent Dutch recording firms is organised around distributing and marketing mainly Anglo-American repertoire.

However, Negus (1992; 1993) indicates that even in larger European markets, local staff are frustrated because of the way business practices favour Anglo-American repertoire at the expense of local talent. Their frustrations are rarely understood by their British and American colleagues, who remain unconvinced that artists from the Continent have much to offer. Two main reasons appear to be behind this belief:

> One of these is based on a critical and occasionally sneering, aesthetic judgement which perceives many countries to be 'behind' the 'trendsetting', 'superior' and more 'authentic' sounds coming out of the USA and UK. The other reason is simply an uncritical acceptance of established traditions and working practices as *the* way of doing things [...] and, despite the fact that continental acts have occasionally achieved success when promoted in Britain, staff in the UK tend to be more comfortable when dealing with genres and artistic conventions they are familiar with. [...] Anything that adds to [the] uncertainty [of predicting the success of an act] is best avoided (Negus, 1993:303).

The taken-for-grantedness of the 'superiority' of Anglo-American music among record industry staff - which is also pervasive among European rock fans and critics - is what makes it function as an ideological form. As such, this ideology is a factor in its own right when explaining the reasons for the position of Anglo-American music in Europe.

5.1.2 (ii) *the ideology of superiority of rock and soul*

Laing rightly observes that

> the existence and unassailability of this hegemony has been taken for granted, on the basis of unspoken assumptions about music/linguistic origins and cultural-economic power [...] The ideology of the superiority of the original is a pervasive and influential one. In essence, it posits that the national culture in which a musical style was first formulated will inevitably produce the best examples of the genre. Thus, the best rock music is American or British, the best blues by blacks and the best reggae by Afro-Caribbeans. Artists from other cultures will only create second-rate material in the genre, either because they are by definition copyists or, more sweepingly, because their own national culture does not contain the right cultural or sub-cultural soil in which rock or reggae can grow (1992:135).

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For example, Roger Wallis and Krister Malm (1984:65) demonstrate how, during the 1950s and 1960s, quite a few Swedes considered their music inferior. During that period, approximately 5000 Swedish groups were singing rock n' roll in English, although artists with the largest English repertoire could not speak a word of English. Similarly, in Austria, writing English lyrics is considered to be an expression of artistic quality. Several Austrian artists even express the intimate feelings of love in English because it feels more 'natural' to sing pop songs in English (cf. Larkey, 1992). In an article about the impact of American popular music in Europe, Michael Watts observes that "the vocal tradition integral to [rock] meant that with little exception [rock] has only been musically reproductive in English language countries. Continental [rock] has invariably been slavishly imitative and unremarkable" (1975:124). Compared to Elvis Presley, the 'local' versions - notably Johnny Halliday in France and Cliff Richard in the UK - were only pale shadows of the original (cf. Watts, 1975; Frith, 1991; Laing, 1992). Halliday and Richard enjoyed great success in their respective countries as 'local' Elvises but their international fame is minor compared to that of Presley.

These examples highlight another important factor in sustaining the ideology of superiority: that of the English language which is considered to be rock n' roll's language of origin (cf. Watts, 1975; Laing, 1992). This was a problem for non-native speakers who aspired to international rock n' roll fame (ibid.). It appears that neither rock critics nor audiences like 'phoneys'. In this context, Tony Mitchell quotes the writer Andrew Mueller who, when asked why he thought that the Belgian rock group dEUS was 'the first decent rock band in European history', replied: "A lot of it has got to do with having a good accent" (1996:21).

MTV's research into the issue of language preference has consistently shown that the use of English as the language of the channel and in song lyrics is part of the 'internationalism' that appeals to MTV's European audience. For example, the top 10 German requests on the daily video request show *Dial MTV* in 1992 included nine American and one British clip (cf. Sturmer, 1993). Like their German counterparts, Belgian viewers interviewed in a 'vox pop' in a night club said the following:

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I like it better in English. It's an easy language to understand for everyone, I think. So, I like it in English.

I don't like songs in my own language, that's no thanks!
(source: *The Late Show*, BBC 2, June 1994).

In fact, "a monthly Flemish-lingo show [on MTV] was dropped because viewers griped that it wasn't in English" (Clarke, 1992:36; also see Roe and Wallis, 1989).

Finally, simply translating lyrics from a European language into English does not guarantee international success. For example, attempts at promoting the German singer Herbert Gronemeyer and the French singer Vanessa Paradis pan-Europeanly were relatively unsuccessful. Both singers are very popular among audiences in their respective countries. From a record-company perspective, they are 'priority' acts within their 'local' markets. However, in spite of record company investment into their respective international promotion and also the considerable amount of exposure on MTV, their English material made little impact outside their home countries. In fact, Paradis's album in English sold less copies in France than her previous ones in French[4].

Could it be that there is another factor that hinders the cross-border exchange of popular music in Europe in addition to the ideology of 'superiority'? My suggestion is that there are, indeed, additional barriers in European pop music exchange, which are 'cultural metaphors'.

5.1.2 (iii) 'cultural metaphors'

The concept of a 'cultural metaphor' was introduced in chapter 4 to describe the cultural strands which unite different groups of a society into a similar cultural mindset. I argued that 'cultural metaphors' are the most spontaneously available references about a society - i.e. shared cultural meanings - which can facilitate or hinder cross-cultural communication. As indicated in chapter 4, 'cultural metaphors' rely on one particular phenomenon in a society to represent that society as a whole.

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[4] Source: Tony Wilson, Head of Factory Records, in private communication.

Here, I want to look at how 'cultural metaphors' operate in relation to pan-European pop musical exchange.

Laing has tentatively argued that "the 'feel' for a certain kind of musical creation is culture bound" (1992:136). In this context, he quoted a French journalist who claimed that 'French rock is like English cooking' (Viviant, 1991, quoted in Laing, 1992:136). A closer look at MTV in France in chapter 7 will reveal that this popular belief is widespread within the French music industry. It is sufficient to mention in this context that, in reality, 'bad' French rock is a reference to French mainstream music called *variété*. Unlike Anglo-American rock, *variété* is difficult to export outside francophone countries. And, even though French artists occasionally had international success, the popular belief that French rock is 'bad' remains a spontaneously available marker of difference in cross-cultural communication. For example, in a television show for British audiences called *Eurotrash* - which extensively exploits 'cultural metaphors' to convey humour - the French host introduced the French singer Patrick Hernadez by saying sarcastically that: "He's one of the French artists who actually succeeded in selling a record outside France" (Channel 4, 08/01/99). Hernadez 'actually' had a disco hit in 52 countries with 'Born to be Alive' (1979), but French *variété* continues to be the subject of ridicule among self-conscious hip audiences in France and abroad.

Similarly, there is a popular belief among European rock fans that German pop is 'naff' and 'tacky', in spite of the fact that much of the European electronic music tradition of the late 1970s and early 1980s was German. This tradition was a major influence on hip hop and house that went on to dominate the global music scene in the 1990s. The myth about German music is, in fact, based on the inability of one particular genre – *schlager*[5] - to find an audience beyond Germanophone markets, on the basis of which German pop is sneered at. The 1998 German *Eurovision* entry, Gildo Horn, even gained a spot on BBC 1 *News* (26/2/98). The issue was whether Horn, with his "over the top *schlager* image"[6] was an embarrassment for the German

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[5] See Galden, 1994
[6] Words of Ivor Lyttle, German editor of Eurosong News, featured on BBC1.

music industry or a way of making *schlager* more acceptable to European audiences through an extravagant performance.

There is, in fact, a parallel between the European cross-cultural exchange of popular music and fiction (cf. chapter 4), notwithstanding the exception of UK's dominance in European charts. As with fiction, Anglo-American rock and soul is the European common denominator. In contrast, local mainstream music styles are too nationally specific and do not easily cross cultural borders. If there is a musical exchange, it occurs among the countries which share the same (or a similar) language. As a result, year after year at the "'Euroboring' Song Contest, 'Latins' vote in one block, the Swedes for the Finns etc" (Tagg, quoted in Roe and Wallis, 1989:39). Similarly, Corinna Sturmer divided what she called 'MTV's imaginary Continent' in 'taste zones', according to musical preferences: "North European rock versus South European romantic ballad, or Britain versus the Continent" (1993:57). In the context of the success of music with Swedish lyrics beyond Sweden, Robert Burnett (1992) spoke of a taste-affiliation between Nordic countries while Alexandre Levy (1992) remarked that, considering the channel's preoccupation with the Northern European market, MTV lacked a certain 'Latin sensibility'. What we have, here, is 'cultural metaphors' at work. The strength of 'cultural metaphors' in the process of global communication will become evident when examining MTV's attempt at promoting 'local' repertoire pan-Europeanly and even more apparent in MTV's regionalisation strategy (see chapter 6).

Finally, the 'cultural metaphor' about the UK - summed up in the words: "if God had wanted to tie Britain with the rest of Europe, he would evidently not have dug the English Channel" (cited in Gannon, 1994:25) - is very active in relation to music. Hesmondhalgh's remark about achieving a musical reputation in Britain is pertinent, here:

> American success is the ultimate index of making it. European success, by comparison, is sneered at, even though the size of the European market for recorded music was, by 1988, greater than the US. The observation that a band is 'big in Germany' is often used as a put down of an act's limited appeal (1996b:130).

In a discussion of British pop sensibilities, Simon Frith similarly observes that the ideological distinction between pop and rock in the 1960s was overlain "with a new sense of geography: Britain as a European country versus Britain as, somehow, a musical American state" (1989:167).

Frith goes on to argue that there are reasons to suspect that Europe is becoming a new, decidedly non-American mythical space towards which the UK would begin to turn. There are, in fact, two conflated issues, here: that of the rock ideology of authenticity with the sense of geography. This analysis will reveal that the former has indeed been displaced, as synthetic music and the visual formation came to the fore (see section 5.4.2). However, the sense of musical geography which divides the UK from the Continent remains entrenched, in spite of the discontinuity in the one-way flow of pop music from the UK into the rest of Europe, which occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see section 5.4.3). Developments in the music television industry in Europe in the mid 1990s also reinforced these 'taste zone' divisions (see chapter 6).

To sum up so far, my argument is that the dominance of Anglo-American repertoire in Europe cannot be adequately understood within the theoretical framework of the 'cultural imperialism/globalisation' thesis. Instead, this section has attempted to establish that prior to the launch of MTV in Europe, the combination of record company policies, the ideology of superiority and popular mythologies in Europe contributed to this situation. The next section examines the implications of this for MTV's playlist.

5.2 IN SEARCH OF 'CROSS-OVER' POTENTIAL: THE FATE OF THE EUROPEAN AOR BALLAD

For the reasons outlined above, Anglo-American repertoire became the musical European *lingua franca* on MTV when the channel started. However, there was a conscious programming decision to equally give exposure to acts outside this realm. In the words of Hansen: "We were very concerned that we were not going to play stuff

just because it was popular in America" (interview, 22/12/98). The few studies of MTV from the channel's initial period of expansion (Bur:nett, 1990; Levy, 1992; Sturmer, 1993) all revealed that "a genuine effort appears to have been made to play a substantial amount of 'European music'" (Bur:nett, 1990:24) or that "MTV Europe's [music] programming is largely adapted to a European audience" (1992:61). MTV US overwhelmingly played rock, heavy metal and rap while MTV Europe's playlist was more diverse. In fact the rock genres that dominated MTV US' playlist were precisely the type of music that was gradually almost completely excluded from MTV Europe's main playlist, while heavy metal was only played in a specialist show (see section 5.3).

The way that MTV's main playlist was compiled is in itself a challenge to claims that MTV is 'American'. Acts on MTV were neither privileged because they were 'American' nor were they simply played because MTV and the majors' executives conspired to play them at the expense of 'local' acts. Instead, two video selection criteria were employed: 'what MTV wants to promote' and 'what people want to hear' (former MTV programmer Millet quoted in André, 1993:80). Approximately one quarter of the main playlist was dedicated to new talent because MTV's ambition was first and foremost to be a 'leader' in music. In order to establish 'what people want to hear', different national charts were weighed against the level of MTV's distribution in a given territory. The most influential national charts were those where MTV's distribution was the highest (Germany, the Benelux, Scandinavia). The British charts - where cable and satellite TV were relatively underdeveloped at the time - were also consulted because of the UK's strategic position in Europe's musical geography (see Negus, 1993). British sales charts were indicators of Anglo-American hits while the local European charts were consulted in relation to the velocity of MTV's playlist - i.e. the number of weeks a song spends in MTV's playlist.

MTV's main playlist, which changed weekly, consisted of approximately 80 music videos which were rotated as follows:

Playlist	Number of Plays per Week
A - heavy	25
B - active	17
C - prime breakout	7
Breakers/Breakout	14
Buzz Bin	17
Breakout Extra	18
Recurrent	10

As regards the national origin of repertoire played on MTV, statistics that '2 in 3 videos are American' (cf. Banks, 1996 in section 1) are inaccurate. A study of MTV's main playlist over a period of four weeks (1988/89) revealed that 52% of the music videos were British compared to 31% American (Burnett, 1990). According to MTV programmers, the problem that MTV encountered was that of being 'too British' (see Coopman and Laing, 1991; Sturmer, 1993). Burnett also remarks that "as many as 17% of the music videos on the playlist originate from other countries" (1990:25). His point of view contrasts with that of Banks, according to whom 'as little as 15%' of acts on MTV are European. I want to suggest that, put in the context of the European FM network at the time, Burnett's view makes more sense. Compared to, say, the 5% of domestic repertoire played on the French Skyrock (cf. Levy, 1992) or Sarajevo Youth Radio's decision to play only Anglo-American repertoire at its inception in order to build up a 'cool' audience, the percentage of European music on MTV is relatively high. By 1994, it came to occupy about one third of the main playlist (see next chapter).

In an attempt to reduce the amount of 'American' rock in favour of a more localised feed, MTV started to promote new European artists whose music was outside the Anglo-American canon[7]. Arguments concerning the AOR ballad will be presented with reference to French artists since in the late 1980s and early 1990s, French artists within this category of music received prominent exposure on MTV. MTV's interest in French acts stems from their position in the Belgian chart rather than the French one - the reason being that Belgium was heavily cabled as opposed to France's small

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[7] The rare internationally successful European AOR (U2, Roxette, the Scorpions, Europe) fitted into this canon.

cable/satellite network (see chapter 7). Levy (1992) indicates that MTV put a significant effort into the promotion of Patrick Bruel, Etienne Daho, Mano Negra, Les Negresses Vertes, Mylene Farmer, Gypsy Kings and rai artist Khaled. Other French artists who have been featured on MTV include Lio, Les Rita Mitsouko, Vanessa Paradis, one hit by designer Jean-Paul Gaultier, rapper MC Solaar and the more dance-oriented Sinclair and Alliance Ethnique. According to Levy, French video clips were sometimes played more frequently on MTV than the French music channels M6 and MCM. Sturmer made a similar remark concerning Mano Negra:

> Bern ard Batzen, the Managing and Booking Agent of the French Mano Negra, who scored the greatest French export hit in 1990, credits MTV with being 'more adventurous than European radio'[...] MTV started playing Mano Negra's first video, 'Mala Vida', in 1988 even before they were on a major label or had secured a European release with 'Puta's Fever'. Betzen argues that it was not radio exposure but the extensive airing of the 'King Kong Five' video which boosted them to number 4 in Holland (1993:54).

Another example is the group Niagara which owes its international success (almost) entirely to MTV. Their European tour sponsored by MTV was sold out in Scandinavia, Germany and Holland, where their records were not even available in record shops (cf. Levy, 1992; also see Sturmer, 1993).

However, despite the prominent exposure on MTV, French acts within the AOR ballad genre who achieved mainstream pan-European success in the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s remain few. Niagara, Mano Negra, Gypsy Kings and the odd hit by Khaled ('Didi') and Paradis ('Joe le Taxi') are the highlights. The fate of locally successful AOR ballad in the pan-European market is not confined to French music. Among Italian artists known to a pan-European audience, only three names spring to mind: Eros Ramazzotti, Zucchero and pop-rapper Jovanotti. Other non-British acts from this period include Mecano from Spain, Sinead O'Connor and Hot House Flowers from Ireland, Vaya Con Dios from Belgium, Falco from Austria, A-Ha from Norway. Acts such as the Swiss electronic Yellow or Swedish disco ABBA would find their way into *Greatest Hits*.

This lack of considerable pan-European success for the AOR ballad in spite of MTV's pan-European promotion can be explained as follows:

From the market's perspective, I want to highlight the common argument among staff in 'local' record companies that MTV 'does not play local artists' (for example, see Negus, 1993; Banks, 1996). The reason for the lack of local repertoire on MTV is not MTV's unwillingness to play 'local' acts. On the contrary, as indicated above, MTV was keen to promote European acts, albeit only those of 'cross-over' potential. However, the problem was the established system within record companies whereby key decisions about acquiring and marketing local acts had to be negotiated through the priorities and prejudices of executives in London and New York (see Negus in section 5.1.2 (i)). In this context, I want to cite the words of MTV's Hansen because what he has to say in relation to AOR ballad is very pertinent for an understanding of the prerequisites for international success of any music genre subsequently examined in this chapter.

Hansen, only too familiar with the complaints from record-companies, gives his view on this issue:

> What you have, here, is a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship. What you're seeing is the French, the German, the Italian record company people being pissed off with their A & R international divisions for prioritising Anglo-American artists. When local artists were released pan-Europeanly, we've been there. Eros, we've been there. Zucchero, we've been there. We'd love to that, we think creatively, that's a cool thing to do. We've gone around [the policy of prioritising international repertoire] by trying to build a relationship on the ground and by saying we gonna expose some people outside of that. Otherwise, all we would have played was Madonna and Michael Jackson. I think it's our job, where possible, to give them [Continental acts] exposure, but if they [record companies] are not prioritising their artists...[short pause] You know what they [record companies] gonna do? They gonna say 'You know, I'd like such as such to be there but frankly, David Bowie is our big signing and I'd better do that [i.e. concentrate resources on promoting Bowie]. So, it's pretty hard. What do you do? You don't play David Bowie? I am not absolving responsibility but I think, essentially, [the issue] is the [non]effectiveness of [local record company] divisions to actually have a say in the promotion of their product outside their own country (interview, 01/04/97).

The second problem concerns both Anglo-American and European AOR. The record-release patterns in Western Europe were not synchronised. In Eastern Europe, the music-market situation was little short of chaotic (see chapter 8). Consequently, MTV had to deal with a situation where, for example, internationally successful acts such as REM or Bon Jovi would be releasing, say, their fifth single in the UK, their first single in Germany and no single for months in Italy or France. In most European countries, MTV was ahead of local promotional strategies, which Hansen called the "the problem of blowing exposure - playing a Bon Jovi video in Italy where it wasn't possibly going to be released for a year because it's really a slow market" (interview, 01/04/97). In effect, MTV was setting a promotional pace to suit its pan-European ambition which was simply not compatible with the European market reality. It was, therefore, already evident that MTV's globalising ambition had limitations in this respect. However, because MTV enjoyed a quasi-monopolistic position in Europe, it could turn a blind eye to this problem.

From the cultural perspective, what hindered the pan-European success of AOR ballad were the 'taste-zones'. AOR ballad is a genre which is too nationally specific. The 'Southern' ballad draws upon the tradition the San Remo Festival and the French *chanson*. 'Northern' rock is a local appropriation of the Anglo-American sound. Each sound is popular within particular 'taste-zone' in Europe. However, it can prove difficult to cross-over from one taste-zone to another in order to achieve pan-European success. In spite of MTV's prominent exposure of 'A playlist' artists in one country (for example, French singer Patrick Bruel), in the rest of Europe (in Bruel's case, non-francophone Europe), this top artist would be playlisted as a 'B' artist, even a 'C' artist in the UK. Artists without 'cross-over' potential cannot do well internationally. According to Hansen: "We tried, but it doesn't work like that. With a handful of exceptions like Eros, they just don't translate" (interview, 01/04/97). On this larger scale, it is the Anglo-American AOR ballad artists who are the European *lingua franca*. Elton John, Chris Rea, Michael Bolton and even Tina Turner are "the practitioner[s] *par excellence* of this style" (Laing, 1992:139). In other words, they are 'priority' acts, their sound is 'superior' because they are from the USA or the UK and,

as a result, their music can travel across the taste-zones in Europe. Consequently, in the search for acts of 'cross-over' potential, MTV began to explore other genres outside the mainstream canon.

5.3 IN SEARCH OF 'CROSS-OVER' POTENTIAL: FROM MTV'S SPECIALIST SHOWS INTO THE MAIN PLAYLIST

So far, this chapter has demonstrated that, as a result of particular institutional practices and ideologies as well as popular mythologies, 'local' equivalents of AOR find it difficult to 'cross-over' and achieve pan-European success. Hence, 'local' AOR challenges to Anglo-American AOR remain few. Of much greater significance, in this context, are the 'cross-overs' from the specialist shows into the main playlist, which occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Specialist music programmes were dedicated to the music genres which had had little exposure on the mainstream media outlets: heavy metal, indie, rap and dance. For MTV, the specialist programmes appeared to be a testing ground for new genres of 'cross-over' potential. However, 'cross-over' potential was not a prerequisite for featuring on specialist shows. On the contrary, not being subject to the commercial exigencies of the European Top 40 charts, specialist shows regularly featured a wider range of non-Anglo-American music than could be found on MTV's main playlist. The production teams of these programmes operated within their own established networks with independent music labels as well as directly with musicians.

Extending the critique of the 'cultural imperialism' thesis claiming that it too easily portrays 'American' music as a homogenous sound, this section will demonstrate how the proliferation of music genres in MTV's playlist fractured the dominance of mainstream Anglo-American AOR. The creation of MTV's thematic programmes in the early 1990s is indicative of this process. Thematic shows are not to be confused with specialist shows. Thematic shows were marketing labels for specialist genres that 'crossed-over': *Rock Block*, *Post-Modern* (later *Alternative Nation*) and *The Soul of MTV*. The corresponding classifications in sales charts are 'hard rock', 'indie' and 'R

& B'. Equally, the fragmentation of each 'specialist' genre into numerous sub-genres (and, by extension, the proliferation of alternative music scenes) highlights an aspect of the globalisation process neglected by theorists of cultural imperialism: that of fragmentation. This section will draw attention to the important role of a 'giant' like MTV in connecting tiny alternative music networks, scattered across Europe and beyond.

Three findings linking each sub-division in this section will corroborate the underlying critique of the cultural imperialism thesis informing this analysis:

First, the argument proposed in relation to AOR that the support of a major record company is a prerequisite for international success will be further susbtantiated.

Second, the argument that 'American' music is not a homogenous sound will be supported by highlighting how the 'rock sound' came to be fractured. We shall see that the alternative music genres that drew upon the rock canon and came to be marketed as 'hard rock' and 'indie' fused traditional rock with heavy metal/hard rock and dance, respectively, while rap and dance were the antithesis of rock.

Last but not least, it will be argued that the fracturing of AOR was accompanied by the displacement of the rock ideology of authenticity. The role of MTV Europe, although significant in this respect, still remains undocumented. MTV's contribution in displacing this ideology is threefold. Firstly, in this connection, by examining the antagonism of the British independent music press towards MTV's *120 Minutes*, attention will be drawn to the 'crisis' of the rock ideology of authenticity. Second, it will be revealed that, with its initial investment in risk-taking, MTV itself took on an oppositional initiative in relation to the structures of racism in the rock-dominated music industry. MTV did so by launching the first TV show entirely dedicated to rap. The controversy surrounding black music on MTV will be this thesis' small contribution to the role of satellite TV in catering for the needs of 'minority' groups, a topic which requires more substantial research. Finally, as the "oppositional initiative in non-black music forms and institutions migrated into dance music culture"

(Hesmondhalgh, 1996b: 259), a separate section dedicated to dance will demonstrate how MTV both capitalised on this mood and challenged the status quo in the Anglo-American rock hegemony.

5.3.1 *HEAVY METAL*

In the USA, MTV's heavy metal show *Headbangers' Ball* (launched in 1986) became MTV's most popular show. Once heavy metal also achieved access to the airwaves, its popularity sharply increased and so did the record sales. The expansion of the metal scene during the 1980s was accompanied by the fragmentation of the genre into numerous sub-genres (see Walser, 1993b). In 1980s' Europe, heavy metal never became a mainstream music genre nor did it receive the amount of attention by the mainstream media that it did in the United States. In fact, heavy metal had little radio airplay in Europe (cf. Laing, 1992). However, it was (and continues to be) enormously popular all over Europe, particularly in Germany, Northern Europe and Eastern Europe.[8] The many language versions of the specialist magazine *Metal Hammer* also indicate this genre's international appeal within a niche market.

The significance of *Headbangers' Ball* has to be understood in the light of the marginality of heavy metal in the mainstream media. *Headbangers'* became the first pan-European television show dedicated to heavy metal. It was only two hours in duration but it became extremely popular among heavy metal fans all across Europe. MTV has been of tremendous importance for the development of the European heavy metal scene. *Headbangers'* drew audiences and played videos from all over Europe. According to the show's hostess, Vanessa Warwick:

> We show videos from all over - Israel, Poland, Portugal, Croatia. We got out to Russia, Spain, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland - we're even received by people with large satellite dishes in North Africa. Germany's our biggest territory, but in the UK, it's grown very rapidly [...] Because there are so few rock outlets on British TV or radio, a lot of people tape it and show it to their friends. It also gets played in rock clubs every week ('MTV's Headbanger', 1995:14).

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[8] I am grateful to Keith Harris from Goldsmiths' College for his help in this section.

Within the heavy metal scene, Vanessa became a star in her own right. Stories about outbursts of fan-adoration when Vanessa went on location with the show were often the topic of discussion among MTV staff over drinks.

However, in spite of loyal niche-audiences all across Europe, heavy metal proved not to be a genre with potential to 'cross-over' into MTV's main playlist, despite exceptions such as Bon Jovi, Guns n' Roses, Aerosmith, the Scorpions , Europe. The reason is that in the early 1990s, with the commercial success of grunge music, mainstream heavy metal died off. In the USA, grunge bands, most notably Nirvana, 'crossed-over' from the margin into the mainstream via MTV's *120 Minutes* (the alternative rock show) rather than *Headbangers'*. In Europe, Nirvana was featured on both shows. This is because grunge - an alternative rock genre - successfully merged heavy metal and hard rock and thus began to appeal to rock audiences who were traditionally hostile to metal. Following the mainstream success of the likes of Nirvana and Pearl Jam, a number of grungy bands (such as The Spin Doctors, Stone Temple Pilots, 4 Non-Blondes), loud and thrashy bands (such as Therapy?, Smashing Pumpkins, Red Hot Chilli Peppers), the occasional heavy metal band (Metallica) emerged. Together, these acts are referred to as the hip mainstream, which was marketed on MTV as 'hard rock - not metal'. This was one music fragment that displaced mainstream AOR in MTV Europe's main playlist.

Another effect of the diminishing of mainstream heavy metal was the increasing prominence of extreme metal subgenres (thrash, death and black metal) in the early 1990s. Promotional outlets for extreme metal were restricted. For this reason, *Headbangers'* - featuring all these subgenres - was an important part of the network of distribution for tiny extreme metal scenes across Europe.

5.3.2 *INDIE*

120 Minutes was MTV's indie (short for 'independent') show. In order to locate *120 Minutes* within the indie music landscape and also understand the show's place on

MTV, it is necessary to look at the institutional changes and aesthetic transformations that the independent music sector went through in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The discussion will be UK-biased because the vast majority of indie acts who 'crossed-over' from *120 Minutes* onto MTV's main playlist were based in the UK (although not all were British).

According to Hesmondhalgh (1996b), indie took its name from the mode of production of its recordings but it also refers to a set of sounds and looks. Musically, indie draws upon the rock cannon (such as the emphasis on 'jangly' guitars and lyrics). Visually, it sets itself against the concentration on 'image' in pop mainstream, by deliberately dressing down and resisting music videos as a form of promotion. In the late 1980s, indie in the UK went through a period of crisis. The independent production and distribution networks were badly hit by recession while the bastions of indie - the music newspaper *New Musical Express* (NME) and the John Peel show on Radio 1 - were drastically losing readership and listeners, respectively. The indie sound that revived the indie scene is associated with Manchester bands, most notably The Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses. They fused dance music with rock. Prior to that, dance rhythms were on the whole resisted, with the exception of the most popular bands in the independent sector, New Order and Depeche Mode. After the crisis, indie also went through important institutional changes. These were manifested in the growth of alliances between independents and majors. Such alliances were often met with condemnation in the world of alternative institutions. The jargon used to describe this institutional shift is 'selling out'.

MTV's *120 Minutes* became part of the indie scene in the post-crisis period, as it were. *120 Minutes* appears to be paradoxical. It was an indie show on a mainstream media outlet. Thus, from the outset, this show was a 'sell out'. And, there is, indeed, a parallel between the role of *120 Minutes* on MTV and the independent labels that operate as talent scouts for majors (see, for example Negus, 1993). As already indicated, 'specialist' shows on MTV were the testing ground for new genres of 'cross-over' potential. *120 Minutes* was a particularly fertile ground in this respect. Notwithstanding the function of *120 Minutes* in the overall programming objective of

MTV, I want to suggest that the 'selling out' accusation is not a helpful starting point for this analysis because such a viewpoint makes little attempt to understand how the trajectory from *120 Minutes* to MTV's main playlist occurs. Although this analysis concentrates on this trajectory, the continuous importance of this show for the acts that did not make it into the main playlist needs to be recognised. *120 Minutes* did not only provide a pan-European network of promotion for 'minor' acts signed on independent labels. It also boosted the credibility of bands who appeared on the show - those from Eastern Europe, in particular - within their own local environments. I shall end this section with the argument that the 'selling out' accusations specifically directed towards MTV's *120 Minutes* were, in fact, Anglocentric.

Hesmondhalgh (1996b) provides an understanding of the complex routes towards partnership with majors taken by independents. He argues that affiliation with a major label needn't necessarily be a 'sell out'. A partnership permits

> a space in the music industry for those uncomfortable with the slick world of the corporations and with the more entrepreneurial independents, by forming a protective shield, whereby corporate finance and corporate culture are kept at an 'arm's length' distance from musicians and staff who share tastes and political backgrounds [...] [This choice] is often based on a genuinely idealistic commitment to fostering talent, and to providing an alternative (1996b:122).

A partnership with a major can also be seen as "the logical culmination of [an independent] company's desire to develop a new generation of classic pop stars in an era of increasing internationalisation in the recording industry" (1996b:125). Without such a partnership, it was difficult to promote adequately indie bands across Europe (and potentially into the US) because "release dates could not coincide with promotional tours" (ibid.). As indicated in section 5.2, this difficulty was also encountered by local AOR ballad acts who did not get record-company backing for international promotion.

Extending Hesmondalgh's argument to *120 Minutes*, it can be said that this show was an alternative space on MTV. It was produced by a team who were genuinely committed to fostering talent. In the true indie spirit, *120 Minutes* was deliberately

dressed down. The VJ links were filmed in black and white and deliberately made to look cheap. A considerable amount of footage on the show was filmed on Super 8, Hi 8 and even VHS as opposed to the use of sophisticated computer graphics on the 'rest' of MTV. The effort to make the show look cheap could be tarnished by the remark that this was just one among many images that served to market a particular music genre on MTV. However, such a remark would overlook the realities of having to produce a show with a nominal budget compared to flagship shows. It would also discredit this show's endeavour to provide financial support for bands without sufficient means to cover the costs of filming a video.

Once an act was deemed to have a 'cross-over' potential, it was playlisted in the thematic show *Post-modern/Alternative Nation*. This show, rather than *120 Minutes*, was using the label 'indie' merely as a marketing term. Many acts on *Post-modern* were 'bogus' independents: they were either signed on 'independent' labels that were affiliated with majors from the outset (see Hesmondhalgh, 1996b: 132-133 on Suede) or independent companies set up with the aim of selling music in mainstream markets (see Negus, 1992:18 on Soup Dragons). For *120 Minutes,* the move into *Post-modern* meant loosing their 'star' acts and a further retreat into a market niche whereas for the act, an appearance on the thematic show potentially meant being classified into MTV's heavy rotation. There are far too many acts with an indie background that 'crossed-over' from *120 Minutes* (via *Post-modern*) into the main playlist to be listed separately. Instead, this section concentrates some of the most successful 'cross-overs' on the basis of which a conclusion about the 'cross-over' potential of acts within the realm of *120 Minutes* will be drawn.

The case of Oasis represents one of the most successful trajectories from the margin into the pan-European mainstream and subsequently global record-sales. Their route to success is documented by Hesmondhalgh (1996b) and this section will complement that analysis by providing an insight into how MTV can be of tremendous importance for massive-scale promotion, provided that the act in question has both 'cross-over' potential and the adequate record-company support to fulfil "the classic pop dream [which] involves going global" (Hesmondhalgh, 1996b:126; also see Gill, 1996).

Oasis started as an indie 'guitar' band initially only featured on *120 Minutes*. Oasis were signed to the independent label Creation which was taken over by the corporate Sony in 1992. The partnership with Sony was the prerequisite for international success as it guaranteed co-ordinated release patterns and adequate marketing support. Oasis was now also 'suitable' for MTV's main playlist, initially on 'buzz bin' rotation. Apart from Oasis, other bands affiliated with a similar indie sound were most notably Blur, Suede, Pulp and later the (reformed) Verve. The media generated the term 'Britpop' which was crucial in marketing this particular brand of indie. By 1995, 'Britpop' came to occupy a central place in the British music landscape. It was also heavily rotated on MTV's main playlist throughout 1995 and 1996. As we shall see at the end of this section, by this point the meaning of the indie aesthetic radically changed. It had lost much of its oppositional edge (Hesmondhalgh, 1996b).

The success of Oasis and the like affirms that, as David Hesmondhalgh concludes, "close deals with majors [were] the only way to achieve popularity" (1996b:126). The issue is, therefore, not that of MTV ignoring "independent record labels that cultivated and nurtured new, off-beat music styles", as Banks (1996:69) argues by reference to the cultural imperialism/globalisation thesis. Rather, in order for any act to benefit from MTV's exposure in terms of record sales, it needs the support of a major label. It follows from this that the relationship between major labels and MTV is, primarily, that of mutual dependence (but not necessarily 'friendly'), a point that will be elaborated upon in section 5.4.3 and extended in chapter 6.

That cultural imperialism portrays Anglo-American music as a homogenous sound is particularly pertinent in relation to the 'cross-over' potential of indie. Among the acts who crossed from *120 Minutes* into the mainstream, many were Anglo-American because indie significantly drew upon rock, which is an 'authentic' Anglo-American form. However, the rock featured on *120 Minutes* broke down the traditional rock canon. As indicated in the previous section, grunge - which was first promoted in the USA - fused hard rock and metal. In Europe - with the exception of the 'guitar' indie which was most loyal to rock and/or the rock model to fame (cf. Frith, 1988b) - since its revival, indie began to fuse dance and rock, as in the Manchester bands, Primal

Scream, House of Love, the Sugarcubes, the Shamen etc. All these acts crossed into the main playlist while the Bristol sound (Massive Attack, Portishead) - according to many critics, one of the most exciting music hybrid creations of the period - was featured in MTV's main playlist from the outset. Not only has this infiltration of dance into rock challenged the hegemony of Anglo-American AOR in MTV's playlist but dance music culture has also been a major factor in displacing the rock ideology of authenticity (see section 5.4.2). Acts such as the Shamen - who started as indie and progressively began to play more dance-oriented music - paved the way for acts who redefined the traditional notion of live rock gig by performing sampled sounds 'live' through public appearances, such as the Prodigy (see Thornton, 1995) and later Chemical Brothers, Orbital, Underworld, Faithless.

Finally, it is in the context of this fragmentation of the rock canon that I want to examine the 'sell out' accusations directed towards MTV's '120 Minutes' by, above all, the British alternative music press the NME and *Melody Maker* (MM).[9] Both newspapers have been vastly influential in breaking new acts in the UK and maintaining a counter music-establishment alternative (cf. Frith, 1983). However, as I have already indicated, in the late 1980s the alternative music press went through a crisis which was surmounted by turning to indie. In the same period, *120 Minutes* became a new player who was not only targeting the same niche audience as the alternative music press but it did so on a pan-European scale. Understandably, the potential of reaching an international audience was appealing to indie artists. As Roy Shuker observes, "rare is the performer who has not been concerned with the fullest possible return of their talent" (1994:36). I am not claiming that the indie press ceased to be influential. Rather, I want to suggest that the rock aesthetic nurtured by this particular breed of music journalism was difficult to reconcile with the market realities.

I indicated in chapter 4 that 'identity' only becomes an issue when it is in crisis and when something assumed to be stable is challenged. Here, I want to extend that hypothesis and suggest that the 'selling out' accusations are indicative of the process

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[9] See 'Spin doctors...' (1993); Moran (1994).

whereby the taken for grantedness of the naturalistic ideology of rock began to be challenged by the developments in the music industry against which it was rebelling (namely the use of technology in music-making, the image culture and MTV). Tony Mitchell observes that:

> One way in which British rock culture maintains its rather fragile hegemony is by asserting domination over the non-US anglophonic world and the rest of Europe, whose rock music, despite the growth of MTV Europe, is still almost unilaterally ignored in Britain and regarded as foreign, dated, derivative and subject to pernicious Europop influences (Mitchell, 1996:20).

In order to denigrate MTV's Europop and by extension *120 Minutes* - which was somewhat less authentic because it was on MTV - the alternative music press acclaimed the version of indie that was constructing a canon of white alternative rock references - i.e. what became 'Britpop'. This genre was best able to accommodate the rock aesthetic which tends to promote a very simplified and restrictive attitude, which regards non-rock (and by extension non-Anglo-American) forms of music as less authentic than rock (cf. Negus, 1993). However, in hailing 'Britpop', the alternative music press adopted what I have described as the 'sensible layman's view' of identity and culture in chapter 4. As a consequence, the British 'indie' press began to foster a "cosy provincialism and national musical self-referentiality" (cf. Mitchell, 1996:20), which is well documented in Martin Cloonan's study of nationalist tendencies in 'Britpop'(1998; also see Savage 1995). By the mid 1990s, "the whiteness of the genre became even more pronounced; there was scarcely a black musician to be seen in the pages of the music press, except where jungle and trip-hop made appearances" (Hesmondhalgh, 1996b:132). It is worth noting that when a vacancy for a presenter on *120 Minutes* was available in 1994, among the applicants who came to audition for the post were some of the journalists who had deplored this show because it was on MTV.

5.3.3 *RAP*

Underlying the theme of 'cross-over' potential in this section will be the issue of racism. A controversy surrounding MTV USA during its first seventeen months was

the channel's virtual exclusion of Afro-American artists. MTV's executives tried to justify their playlists decisions by claiming that the channel catered for a narrow audience segment who were into rock music. This strategy of exclusion ended following a dispute with the record company CBS, who threatened to withdraw all CBS clips from MTV unless it played clips from Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' (1982). MTV gave in. Following the phenomenal success of this album, other Afro-American artists (Prince, Lionel Richie, Tina Turner, Whitney Houston and later Mariah Carey) were catapulted into an upper-industry infra-structure owned by whites and marketed directly into the mainstream (cf. Garofalo, 1993b). However, it is the launch of *Yo! MTV Raps* that has "almost single-handedly dispelled the giant tastemaking network's reputation for not playing black artists" (Rose, 1994a:8).

This examination of the 'cross-over' potential of rap begins with a paradox, namely that a music programme dedicated to a music genre "working out of a tradition of style, attitude and form which has critical and primary roots in New York City in the 1970s" (Rose, 1994b:73) was launched in Europe. *Yo! MTV Raps* is the creation of Sophie Bramly who was part of the first generation of MTV Europe's VJs. Bramly is French but she lived in New York in the early 1980s. During this period, she got involved with the hip hop scene - breakdancers, graffiti artists and rap musicians- of New York's South Bronx, "which has been frequently dubbed the 'home of hip hop culture'" (Rose, 1994b:76). Upon return to France, Bramly worked as a journalist specialising in hip hop culture. MTV hired her for music expertise. *Yo!* was launched in Europe in October 1987. Initially, MTV USA refused to air this show following the logic that rap was incompatible with the narrowcasting principle of MTV USA's playlist. In fact, according to Bramly, it took much convincing before MTV US finally agreed to do just one pilot episode of *Yo!* (interview, 01/09/94). This show was inaugurated in the US in 1988 "to unprecedented network ratings" (Decker, 1994:102). From then on, *Yo!* became a regular show on MTV in the USA. Although it is MTV US' 'experimental' outlet in Europe that invented the concept of *Yo!,* attitudes towards the negotiation of race on MTV US significantly changed. According to Goodwin, this led "many musicians and executives to credit the channel

with playing a major role in the national success of that genre of black music" (1993a:211).

The story of *Yo!* brings up two underlying arguments in this chapter. Firstly, it provides further evidence for the argument that mainstream global success necessitates the support of a major record label. Thus, the subsequent global success of rap demanded buy-ins and distribution deals between independent rap labels and majors (cf. Garofalo, 1990). Secondly, the case of *Yo!* illustrates the argument that in order to establish itself as a new and 'unique' cultural service, MTV in Europe was more adventurous than more mainstream media outlets. This includes MTV USA which was firmly established in the mainstream music landscape of the US by the time MTV in Europe was launched. By consenting to take on *Yo!,* MTV US made a precedent in that it gave national exposure to a genre that was "heavily associated with poor black inner-city youths" (Rose, 1994a:206). As such, rap was considered 'too risky' by any advertiser-funded service (not just MTV) whose logic was that playing rap could potentially alienate audiences. Consequently, BET - MTV's competitor in the USA that plays predominantly black artists - did not have a specialist rap show until the MTV success story. Their pretext for this was that their preferred audience was the upwardly mobile black bourgeoisie (cf. Rose, 1994). For the same reason, "and most bewilderingly, black radio has shown a real reluctance to broadcast rap" (Garofalo, 1993b:247).

Thus, the significance of *Yo!* is in the way it opened up opportunities for rap. Whether the subsequent global sales of rap democratised the record industry is another issue beyond the scope of an analysis of MTV. A positive development is, nonetheless, worth noting. Traditionally, it was not until a white act began to dominate a music genre of black origin (rock, soul, disco) that the latter gained respectability. With rap, this practice changed, at least to the extent that it can hardly be said that there are white rap artists who did for rap "what Elvis Presley did for black rhythm and blues [...,or] the brother Gibb [...] for disco" (Kopkind quoted in Garofalo, 1993:242).

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The down-side of *Yo!* is that it ceased to feature European rap artists in 1990, when the American version of *Yo!* replaced the rap show on MTV Europe. However, this is not to underestimate the popularity of *Yo!* among European audiences. In 1991, *Yo!* was the second most frequently watched weekly show and the most popular Saturday viewing on the Continent (cf. Sturmer, 1993), while in the UK, it was one of the most circulated programmes via the piracy-tape network (source: Angus, interview, 11/08/94). It is in this context of audience appeal that I want to raise a final point in relation to the positive aspect of MTV's investment in risk-taking in the initial period of the channel's expansion in Europe. I suggested in chapter 1 that the dissatisfaction with the way terrestrial broadcasters in the UK represent the needs of 'minority' groups left a vacant cultural space for satellite TV to fill. By drawing a parallel between the attitudes of MTV US' executives and that of the commissioning executives of the British Channel 4 towards black[10] music, I shall draw attention to the latter's exclusionary policy towards black music. Correspondingly, I shall highlight how the lack of black music programmes on terrestrial TV in the UK boosted the popularity of MTV's programmes dedicated to black music.

Back in 1982, when Channel 4 was launched, the creators of the youth programme *The Tube,* which featured live music, came up with a proposal for a programme called *Jamming.* It was intended to be a "a black version of *The Tube*" but the proposal was turned down on the pretext that "the taste was too narrow" (cf. Gerrie (1998) in panel discussion; see Gerrie (1999) for transcript of speech). Similarly to MTV's executives in the US, the commissioning editors of Channel 4 assumed that *The Tube* - a show that plays predominantly white music forms - would appeal to larger audiences. In contrast, a black music show would be for a minority audience and, hence, off-peak, if at all. The explanation of such an exclusionary policy towards black music is, as Goodwin observes in relation to the attitude of MTV US's policy, "quite logical, however unfortunate" (1993a:133). MTV's exclusionary policy towards black artists in the US has to be seen within the broader context of the music industry which defines rock in essentially racist terms - as a music that excluded blacks (see for example, Shaw, 1986; Garofalo 1993b). Like MTV, Channel 4's commissioning

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[10] I am using this term in an anti anti-essentialist manner, as proposed by Gilroy (1993).

executives also followed the rules of the rock business. The difference is, however, that MTV's responsibility is to the advertiser while that of Channel 4 - which was brought into line with the multicultural ethos - is to the audience.

The problem is that, fifteen years on, the rock ideology appears to be resilient. According to Dominic Benjamin, the producer of *Flava* - a music programme that aims to represent the latest trends in black music - which is on a late night Friday slot on Channel 4:

> The same thing with the heads of record companies and the same thing with executives at TV companies: basically, they're brought up with a rock culture. They understand people with guitars, they understand people who've been brought up with the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. You give them any other form of music and they can't communicate with it. They don't understand that, with a kid sampling in his bedroom late at night and rapping over samples. They have no understanding of that (interview, 16/04/97).

> But the problem with my thing is that I have to go back to these people [TV executives] and say hold on! It's not just black people watching this show. It's Asians, it's whites, and we got to stop saying only black people listen to black music. We got to stop falling into that trap. Everybody listens to black music! [applause]
> (R&B debate, London music week, 30/04/97).

Similarly, Byran Bonaparte, the owner of the Electric Cinema company, expressed dissatisfaction about Channel 4's *Baadasss TV* (which is on the same slot as *Flava*):

> They're taking the piss. What do these programmes say about black culture? We have a massive cultural influence on society, but people do not realise this by what is shown on TV. Black programming is still loaded with tokenism. Now and again, the television bosses seem to feed us a morsel or two, but in general they put what they feel is correct on the TV, rather than what we want to watch ('BBC quiz...', 1995:7)

In contrast to Channel 4, MTV Europe has consistently played black music since its launch. However, MTV's commitment to black music has little to do with multiculturalism in the altruistic sense of the word. Rather, the amount of black music on MTV indicates that this genre has a 'cross-over' potential. By 1994, rap became "one of the most heavily traded popular commodities in the market" (Rose, 1994b:83). As rap came to occupy a central place in the mainstream in Europe, other

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genres derived from rap - under the umbrella of R&B - emerged. This music was featured on the daily show with week-ends editions - *The Soul of MTV* - launched in 1992. In that same year, *Yo! MTV Raps* was reduced from a daily show to a two-hour slot. From then on it occupied the same space as other specialist programmes because it featured less mainstream rap artists, above all from the USA.

The Soul of MTV was a thematic programme, aimed at a mainstream audience. However, at the same time, it featured music that was still relatively excluded from day-time radio and terrestrial TV. MTV's *Soul*, therefore, catered for an audience whose needs were not adequately satisfied by mainstream outlets, as the words of radio and TV presenter Trevor Nelson illustrate:

> Why is every bit of black TV on after midnight? [applause] Don't they realise that kids between 15-24 are cable crazy now? Because they left this massive hole for black music for satellite just to clean up. The Box [a 24-hour music channel on cable] is just having a great time. Every kid I know that comes to my club is Box-crazy. MTV, Lisa [pointing at Lisa I'Anson - former MTV VJ and TV and radio presenter in the UK - who was sitting in the audience] did *The Soul of MTV*, the show was God! (R&B debate, London Music Week, 30/04/97).

In 1995, the British Phonographic Industry included R&B as a separate sales chart, which acknowledged the place of this genre in the mainstream. In 1997, when the debate above took place, R&B was considered to be the 'common denominator' music on MTV in Europe. Yet, in spite of the mainstream appeal of this genre, the evidence presented above suggests that music programmes dedicated to this genre on British terrestrial TV tend to be treated as 'minority' programming by commissioning officers whose prejudices are still grounded in the rock ideology. An even greater paradox is that rap was a major contributor in the displacement of this very ideology, which is examined by analogy with dance, in the next section.

5.4 EURO-DANCE PROJECTS AS THE NEW EUROPEAN LINGUA FRANCA

I have coined the phrase 'Euro-dance project' for the sake of convenience to describe the fraction of dance music that became the new musical European *lingua franca* on MTV. It is a generic term for the type of dance music to which various authors have referred as 'Europop' (Frith, 1989), 'Euro-disco' (Goodwin, 1993a) or the 'kind of techno that was said to be a musical esperanto' (Thornton, 1995). However, at the same time, the word 'Euro' serves to acknowledge the significant local differences in the interpretation and production of house music (see Rietveld, 1998), of which Euro-dance is the most commercial exponent internationally. Thus, Euro-dance is a generic term for notably German techno, Belgian new beat, Italo-house, Swedish pop-rap, Dutch 'acid' - "a popular tag for anything that was related to house music" in Holland (cf. Rietveld, 1998:82) - and British acid house that was played in the holiday resorts of Ibiza before it became part of clublife in the UK (cf. Frith 1989; 1991; Burnett, 1990; Redhead, 1990; Redhead (ed.), 1993; Savage, 1993; Thornton, 1995; Mitchell, 1996; Rietveld, 1998). More importantly, the word 'Euro' is used to signal the fact that what makes the projects vaguely pan-European is not so much the actual origin of the projects but their reliance upon an aesthetic which does not emanate from the Anglo-American tradition of authenticity. The word 'dance' designates that this genre fits into the rubric of genres that share the institutional home of the discotheque or club (see Thornton, 1995:71; Hughes, 1994:148). The word 'project' indicates that Euro-dance is a product of collective authorship in contrast to the myth of the rock *auteur* that has sustained the belief in the rock ideology.

Some of the greatest pan-European Euro-dance hits (1989-1991) were produced by the Italian project Blackbox, the Belgian Technotronic, the German Snap, U96, Enigma as well as the British-based Beats International, KLF, Adamski, Nomad, C&C Music Factory to name but few. In the period (1992-1993) there was a proliferation of Euro-dance. Continental projects such as 2 Unlimited, Captain Hollywood, Capella , Maxx, Culture Beat, Haddaway and the like followed what was by now a safe and predictable commercial formula, which eventually led to a media overkill.

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This section is premised on the assumption that for a tune to have an immediate cross-national appeal, "musical simplicity [is] of an essence - a bouncy beat, just one chorus hook, elementary lyrics" (Frith, 1989:168). Prior to the launch of MTV in Europe, the *Eurovision Song Contest* was the annual music event which was associated with this type of music. However, in spite of *Eurovision*'s pan-European scope, MTV refused to be associated with it. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the *Eurovision* did not fit MTV's globalisation strategy. This contest was part of the network of co-ordination and exchange between the members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) - the co-ordinating body for public service television broadcasters in Western Europe (cf. Negrine and Panathanassopoulos, 1990). Effectively, it is a music equivalent of EBU's pan-European channel Eurikon, which was a television without the 'we feeling'. In contrast, MTV is a market-oriented channel 'from nowhere' which stresses European cultural diversity only in so far as this strategy promotes 'unity' (cf. chapter 4).

Second, over the years the *Eurovision* had acquired an unflattering reputation among self-conscious hip young record buyers (see O'Brien, 1989). With an ambition to represent "hip international culture" (Hansen, interview, 18/08/94), MTV stood clear of the *Eurovision* songs. However, given that this contest could function as a shared cultural reference among MTV's viewers, MTV transmitted a live mock *Eurovision*. It was given the deliberately pompous name *The Euro-Video Grand Prix* and was screened on MTV during the *Eurovision*'s live broadcast on terrestrial networks. Through a self-conscious strategy of distinction between itself as a 'hip' channel and the *Eurovision* as the 'naff' other, MTV used this experience to simultaneously convey the image of Europeanness and pander to self-conscious MTV viewers.

In order to examine the 'cross-over' potential of Euro-dance - whose musical essence is similar to that of a *Eurovision* tune - two sets of factors need to be taken into account: one that accounts for the material base of Euro-dance - what I shall call its 'rootlessness' - the other for its aesthetics - namely the acceptance of music videos as the "appropriate visual accompaniment to a music which is quintessentially recorded"

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(Thornton, 1995:125) . These two elements make Euro-dance clearly different from Anglo-American rock and soul whose authenticity is located in live performance, community and individual creativity.

5.4.1 *THE 'ROOTLESSNESS' OF EURO-DANCE*

The fact that Euro-dance projects were vaguely pan-European but without sense of roots and without language or cultural signifier to betray their origin made them particularly attractive to MTV. There is a consent among commentators that Euro-dance "relies to a considerable extent on erasing origins" (Mitchell, 1996:137). Thus, Frith remarks that the main characteristic of a project is that it "rests both on a confusion of musical categories and sense of rootless self-invention" (cf. Frith, 1989:172). Simon Reynolds claims that deracination and anonymity are endemic to house music: "It's difficult to imagine a genre more place-less or hostile to an infusion of ethnicity. Although it comes from a place (Chicago) it does not draw anything from its environment" (quoted in Mitchell, 1996:138). Similarly, Thornton argues that this genre "was not considered to be the sound of any particular city or any definite social group but rather a celebration of rootlessness" (1995:76).

To explain this 'rootlessness', the concept of 'transculturation' introduced by Wallis and Malm (1984) is pertinent. Transculturation describes the pattern of change which has occurred since the 1970s as a result of "the worldwide establishment of the trans-national corporations in the field of culture, the corresponding spread of technology and the development of worldwide marketing networks" (1984:300). These authors argue that the production of trans-national music is like the production of any other cultural commodity. It involves pilot tests, industrial processing and marketing through the mass media. According to Wallis and Malm:

> Trans-national music culture is the result of a combination of features from several kinds of music. This combination is the result of a socio-economic process whereby the lowest musical common denominator for the biggest possible market is identified (ibid.).

Wallis and Malm use disco music an example of transcultural music. They describe disco as a synthetically created music which appears not to have originated within any special ethnic group and which has been marketed in a massive world-wide campaign. Being a disco offspring, Euro-dance retains the three core components of disco: the dominance of the beat, the oft-noted vacuity of the lyrics and the obscuration of the authorial origin (cf. Hughes, 1994).

Disco foregrounds the beat while the lyrics of disco songs

> usually strive only to translate the rhetoric of the beat into simple imperatives [...] language is subjugated to the beat, and drained of its pretensions to meaning; almost all traces of syntax or structure are abandoned, reducing language to the simplest sequential repetition, a mere verbal echo of the beat (Hughes, 1994:149).

This reduction of language to the simplest sequential repetition was one of the most prominent features of Euro-dance projects. As Laing observes:

> Lyrics in this genre are generally minimalist and sloganist and have an incantory character that in some ways lifts them out of a specific national language (English) and makes them an element in a kind of disco-esperanto (1992:136).

However, it is important to stress that Euro-dance relied exclusively on vocal talents from the USA or good impersonators of the accent because this facilitated its export. A considerable number of projects were fronted by black male rappers or black female soul-singers. Because of the Afro-American traditions of preaching used in rap samples (see Rose, 1994a), a black rapper made the projects seem more authentic among European audiences. The use of a black female soul singer had a similar authentic effect, given the prominent place of Afro-American female vocalists in gospel singing (cf. Bradby, 1993). As a result, Euro-dance, like rock, could travel across all the taste-zones in Europe. The choice of English had an additional advantage. As Mitchell observes, it disguised the local origin of the project, which made it more appealing in its own country. Mitchell quotes a record company executive who claims that international success is a prerequisite for local success in Italy: "There's no local interest until a release is presented as an import. Then they fall on their knees to take it" (1996:140).

As for the element of collective authorship, Hughes remarks that disco mystifies its authorial origin to the extent that "critics point out the hopelessness of identifying the actual creator of a disco song: is it the composer, the lyricist, the singer, the producer, the arranger or the DJ?" (1994:149). This anonymity is also a feature of Euro-dance, at least the first generation. Projects such as Blackbox, Technotronic, Snap were faceless in that they did not have a lead singer. The common practice was to use a new face in the music video clip for every new single released. The voices used in recordings were, in fact, samples, which led to a number of legal suits (for such incidents see Laing, 1992; Bradby, 1993; Mitchell, 1996).

Sampling raises a number of issues regarding intellectual property beyond the scope of this analysis. What is relevant is that relatively cheap music-making technology made it possible for the voice to be divorced from the body, which led to a celebration of "the autonomy of music and the purity of engaging a single sense with sound" (Thornton, 1995:74). For some authors, this depersonalisation may be "evidence of a reaction (conscious of unconscious) against the record industry process of standardised image construction" (see for example, Langois, 1992:234-5; Rietveld, 1998: chapter 7). Others, however, have drawn attention to the concentration of both audiences and industry on label identity which serves the crucial function of branding - a process that can hardly be perceived as resistance to contemporary forms of capitalism (see, for example Thornton, 1995; Hesmondhalgh, 1996b). By supporting the latter view, I want to suggest that the pan-European success of Euro-dance was "largely due to a discovery of the importance of marketing in a musical genre that relied on its anonymous and indefinable form" (Mitchell, 1996:138). It is in this context that I want to explore the use of music videos in dance music and the subsequent displacement of the rock ideology of authenticity.

5.4.2 THE 'VISUALNESS' OF EURO-DANCE

In the context of the changing demographic patterns of consumption in music to which MTV responded (cf. chapter 2), Thornton's (1994;1995) ethnographic research of club cultures provides evidence. Thornton reveals that the credibility of dance

projects was to some extent measured by their author's invisibility. According to Thornton, one of the prevailing ideologies of underground discourses involves "issues of format and aesthetics in so far as music video and its stylistic practices are valued as means by which music culture can be televised but somehow preserve its rhetorical autonomy and authenticity" (1995:128). For self-conscious hip audiences, televisual music programmes which involved live performance were considered 'naff' while those with high video content, including MTV, were sufficiently narrowcast to avoid the negative symbolisation as the overground. Hence, MTV was able to build its hip kudos on the basis of the channel's high video content.

Euro-dance was excluded from European mainstream airwaves. As Frith (1989) remarks, it is precisely this exclusion from the mainstream airwaves that preserved the cult value of Euro-dance so that the most mundane and derivative form of European mass music became British (and more generally European) club cult. In addition, Euro-dance could also be "produced and consumed in both mainstream and underground contexts" (Verhave and ter Weijden, 1991, quoted in Rietveld, 1998:82). It was, indeed, the genre where

> the 'entrepreneurial mode' meets that 'art mode' in a collective-synthetic approach to popular music, a technique which characterised the production of some of the most imaginative and commercially successful dance music of the late 1980s and early 1990s recorded by acts such as De La Soul, PM Dawn and Deee-Lite (Negus, 1992:89).

These acts are, in fact, American, but their sound is 'European'.

The second factor that needs to be considered in relation to the role of visuals on MTV are the shifts in the music industry during the 1980s, which were the conditions for the development of music videos and MTV. In this context, Goodwin (1993a) identifies two main post-punk developments: the extensive exploiting of music-making technology and the shift in artists attitudes to music and commerce, as they began to develop self-conscious marketing hype. Goodwin describes these developments in relation to the New Pop movement from the early 1980s - the likes of Human League, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Duran Duran, Thomas Dolby. For these acts, the use of music videos was organised around a new understanding of music,

image and business. Goodwin's argument can also be extended to rap. In fact, for rap, the significance of music videos as a partner in the creation or reception of music is even greater because, as I already indicated, rap was frozen out of radio programming and had limited access to live venues. Thus, music videos have been a crucial outlet for rap artist audiences (cf. Rose, 1994). Such an attitude to music-making and performance was a departure from the essence of rock which is the live gig.

The mid-1980s' "second-wave of dance-oriented pop associated with house and hip hop bridged the gap between New Pop and rap and raised the stakes of the challenge to rock authenticity" (Goodwin, 1993a:36). Acts such as the Pet Shop Boys, ABC, Depeche Mode defied some discourses of authenticity while invoking others, such as the authorship of one's own image or the ability to master music technology on stage (cf. Goodwin, 1990). These new discourses were inauthentic compared to rock. However, they were true to a different tradition of authenticity, associated with European electronic music and disco. This tradition had its own attitude to live performance which was a "self-mocking misapplication and mistaken copying of Anglo-American styles" (Mitchell, 1996:21). The Pet Shop Boys, for example, used parody (i.e. not taking yourself seriously on stage) and disguise (i.e. covering the face with sun-glasses or the head with a hood) in live appearances. Here, there is a parallel between them and Kraftwerk's robot-like stage presence (see Toop, 1994) and ABBA's over-the-top campness (see, Burnett, 1992). Although the Pet Shop Boys were too mainstream to be considered hip by club cultures, parody and disguise were precisely the two basic strategies of maintaining an underground sensibility (cf. Thornton, 1995:126). Consequently, by the time the third generation of dance emerged (i.e. Euro-dance), this attitude was a sign of credibility.[11] It is to this mood that MTV responded and became hip itself.

To describe the possibilities of "rock becoming something else" (Grossberg, 1994:41), I shall be drawing upon the works of Lawrence Grossberg (1984-1994) provide a coherent interpretation of this shift. Grossberg (1993) argues that in order to

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[11] Music videos such as 'Groove Is in the Heart' by Deee-Lite, 'Crucified' by Army of Lovers, 'Justified and Ancient' by KLF are some examples.

understand what is involved in the changes in the rock formation, we must take into consideration the cultural formation that foregrounds the visual, what Grossberg calls the visual formations. According to Grossberg, these visual formations have become important sites at which youth responds, in new and ever more ironic ways, so that increasingly the visual formations speak in the place of rock and sometimes even against rock. The result is that visual images compete with sounds as markers which tie the music to the experience and desire of audiences (1994). The newly emergent cultural formations have displaced the desire for authenticity into something else, namely what he calls 'ironic inauthenticity'. Here, "the only possible claim to authenticity is derived from the knowledge and admission of your own inauthenticity [...] Authentic inauthenticity says that authenticity is itself a construction, an image, which is no better or no worse than any other" (1993:206).

While rock empowers its fans by placing them into a particular affective alliance (cf. Grossberg, 1984) which marks their difference (i.e rock fans are not pop fans, on the basis of which rock's elitism is built), television is indifferent to difference (cf. Grossberg, 1987) (i.e. everything is equally viable and potentially valuable as a televisual image, which renders difference not insignificant by ineffective). MTV powerfully redirects rock's structure of affect into a particular affective logic - what Grossberg (1988) calls an "ironic elitism" - which is manifested in the relationship to specific programmes as well as to the medium itself: "This relationship is not defined by specific programmes but, at the very least, by shifting a set of programmes which are united by being positioned within a specific structure of elitism built upon a particular form of irony" (1988:325). This 'unification' of the medium (i.e. TV) and the programmes within the medium (i.e. music videos and other features) is what was described in chapter 2 as MTV's 'environment' with its 'double image' - "a space in which many different discourses, both serious and playful, appear" (cf. Grossberg, 1987). And, as argued in chapter 2, this simultaneous use of two discourses made MTV 'cool' in spite of it being a mainstream channel.

Finally, this does not mean that fans, pop music critics, and even MTV when it suits it, do not still make judgements about authenticity, nor does it deny that there are still

factions that invest in rock and continue to articulate its differentiating power (cf. Grossberg, 1994). Rather, factions that invest in rock are no longer capable of totalizing themselves across the entire field given that relations between different scenes are becoming more fluid and temporary, and less exclusionary (ibid.).

5.4.3 IMPLICATIONS OF EURO-DANCE FOR THE EUROPEAN MUSIC LANDSCAPE

In terms of the percentage of videos played in MTV's main playlist, the amount of Euro-dance did not exceed the amount of Anglo-American repertoire. Rather, Euro-dance was on MTV's heavy rotation. This sound gave MTV Europe its identity just like New Pop became the sound upon which MTV in the US built its hip kudos, although there was more rock in the playlist even in this period (cf. Goodwin, 1993a&b). In addition to the way that the 'visual formation' displaced the rock ideology of authenticity, MTV's music playlist policy from the channel's initial period of expansion prompted some changes in the European music landscape. These changes further undermine arguments advanced by theorists of cultural imperialism/globalisation.

First, there was an interruption in the one-way flow of music from the UK into Europe, especially in the period (1989-1991). Hits from the Continent began to enter the UK chart in an unprecedented way and hit the number spot where they tended to remain more than one week. One of the most striking instances of chart-success in this context is the hit 'Saturday Night' by the Dutch Euro-dance project Wigfield. This song went straight to number one, by pushing down the hit 'Love is all Around'. The latter was the hit single (performed by Wet Wet Wet) from the soundtrack for the British box-office success *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994, dir. Mike Newell), which had been number one in the UK chart for 15 weeks (from 28/05 to 3/9/94). To stay number one for so long in the fast moving British sales chart is itself a record. For a completely unknown act in the UK - who received great exposure on MTV and in clubs but no significant radio airplay - to knock this hit down is unprecedented.

However, this Continental invasion of the British chart should not be taken as evidence of a changing musical geography. Instead, it is a discontinuity in the European flow of pop, which occurred at a time when there was "an absence of new ideas in the British market" (cf. Mitchell, 1996:137). As indicated in chapter 2, youth programming was in 'crisis'. The independent sector - traditionally the most innovative in terms of musical influences - was also in crisis. The main national pop music radio station, Radio 1, lost a number of listeners following the broadcasting deregulation (cf. Thornton, 1995; also see Gill, 1996). Furthermore, Radio 1's credibility streched only in so far as 'being banned' from its airwaves was a desirable prospect while the pirate (dance-oriented) radio Kiss FM was the most celebrated among hip audiences, at least until it became legalised (ibid.). By playing non-mainstream music and by being sufficiently narrowcast, MTV managed to capitalise on the music crisis in the UK. Hence, for a period, MTV's influence on the UK's chart was considerable, which was often dismissed by the British music industry (also see Dutta, 1994; Sinclair, 1994). The following commentary about MTV from the indie press illustrates this situation, albeit in a derogatory manner:

> You see, it was MTV's continuous support for those acts (Eurodisco oddities like Haddaway, Culture Beat, Ace of Base and Dr Alban) that made Radio 1 sit down and listen. Consequently, the British charts are more similar to the European hit parades than ever before (Paphides, 1993:34).

In fact, for a while Radio 1 had an explicit policy of not mentioning MTV on air.[12] On-air remarks by Radio 1 DJs such as Simon Mayo's 'MTV, that thing we can't mention' (20/10/97) confirm this.

Secondly, by giving exposure to dance, MTV began to create a demand for records outside the realm of major record company 'priorities'. This demand was accountable in terms of record sales, buzz about a certain artist and local airplay. In the UK, it is, above all, London's Capital Radio (and only later Radio 1) that were 'picking up' hits from MTV. According to members of MTV's staff, initially the British recording industry ignored this trend and often looked down upon what they considered to be

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[12] Information gathered during a private social occasion with a Radio 1 producer.

MTV's 'cheesy' playlist. However, the success of acts featured on MTV, Euro-dance projects in particular, made major record companies more attentive to MTV (cf. Coopman and Laing, 1991). In July 1991, Sony Music announced the formation of its Soho Music Square label, which was to operate as the "first pan-European repertoire source" (cf. Negus, 1993:305; also see Laing, 1992). Warner introduced a similar system when it acquired the Magnet label in 1991. Throughout 1992 and 1993, there was a consolidation of the record industry and MTV.

The establishment of pan-European divisions did not lead to a significant increase of pan-European repertoire on MTV, as any music genre outside the category of the widest possible 'cross-over' potential was left out. However, this cannot be explained with reference to the cultural imperialism/globalisation thesis, not least because sales of local repertoire in Europe have consistently been on the increase throughout the 1990s[13]. Rather, in order to make sense of the process of globalisation, it is necessary to distinguish economics from cultural effects. The economic imperative which prioritises acts of widest cross-national appeal has not changed. Given that MTV's scope was pan-European, the major record industry had to settle with the pace of the only music television that had any influence in Europe. However, the developments that soon occurred in the European music television landscape - most notably the investment of major labels into their own music television channel launched in Germany in December 1993 - put any simplistic formulation of 'globalisation' into further jeopardy.

CONCLUSION

Premised on a critique of the thesis of cultural imperialism/globalisation as used in discussions around popular music and by extension, MTV, this chapter has re-assessed the reasons for the dominance of Anglo-American AOR in Europe. It has established that for these same reasons, the Anglo-American repertoire became the musical *lingua franca* on MTV. However, given that MTV needed to establish itself

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[13] See 'World business..'(1995:1); IFPI's *The Recording Industry in Numbers* '97; 'Local repertoire grew...' (1997:1); White (1997); Clark-Meads (1998).

as a 'unique' pan-European service in the initial period of its expansion, the channel genuinely attempted to find a 'local' sound that could appeal equally well to European cultural sensibilities as could the Anglo-American sound. This 'local' sound could neither correspond to mainstream music in European charts nor to the style of *Eurovision*. Rather, it needed to be a sound from nowhere that could be encoded with a 'Euro-feel'.

What this analysis of 'cross-over' particularly achieves is to show how the dominant Anglo-American AOR – usually seen as synonymous with American imperialism - was differentiated in MTV Europe's playlist. However, advocates of the cultural imperialism thesis remain deaf to these considerable musical nuances. Furthermore, by examining the 'cross-over' potential of popular music genres featured on MTV - at a time when MTV was relatively exempt from the pressures of competition and internal corporate constraints at the programming level - this chapter has established that there are two prerequisites for international success: the support of a major record company and the ability to appeal across the taste-zones in Europe. This suggests that, notwithstanding the fact that international success is connected to systems of production and distribution within the record companies that make it possible for certain artists to be mega-successful on a global scale (cf. Negus, 1996:177-178), the continuing importance of local cultures in the consumption of music should not be underestimated. It is, indeed, conceivable that 'universally' appealing acts, such as Madonna and Michael Jackson, may well resonate with "the cultural sensibilities of a broad international audience" (Garofalo, 1992a:6). Such acts - rather than any Anglo-American act - were, in MTV's jargon, the 'common denominator'. By comparison, locally specific music has no immediate cross-national appeal. Furthermore, major record company decisions to promote artists - even when supported by MTV - can fail. In 1996, the global music industry had a sharp fall in its growth rate (cf. Herman and McChesney, 1997:42).

This chapter also revealed the limitations of MTV's globalisation strategy (and, by extension arguments about MTV's homogenising impact on Europe); namely that

a) the channel's pan-European scope prevented it from incorporating 'local' acts beyond those appealing to the largest audience,

b) MTV's playlist was incompatible with the local record-release patterns. Another limitation of the version 'globalisation' criticised in this chapter is the extent to which it ignores fragmentation. This chapter has drawn attention to fragmented niche audiences all across Europe within specialist music genres. The couple of hours on MTV dedicated to these genres were important for the development of an alternative music circuit in Europe. MTV was particularly beneficial for rap, the expansion of which began to challenge the long history of racist practices within the recording industry.

The last part of this chapter concentrated on Euro-dance. What made this sound vaguely pan-European were the significant aesthetic differences between Euro-dance and mainstream Anglo-American AOR. The foregrounding of beat over verbal messages in Euro-dance was particularly beneficial in overcoming the language barrier in Europe. The reduction of lyrics to slogans in English, either performed by (alternatively, sampled from) a rapper (to achieve the effect of an authentic street credibility) or a soul-diva (to convey an authentic emotion) was a way around the rock ideology. The slogans sounded authentic enough for both British and Continental audiences. Hence, dance stood as good an opportunity of achieving pan-European success as AOR. Given that the dance vogue throughout Europe coincided with MTV's initial phase of expansion, MTV began to promote dance music extensively. Euro-dance was ideal for MTV: it had no association with the Anglo-American tradition of authenticity and could, therefore, be encoded with a 'Euro-feel'; as such, it could 'cross-over' the taste-zones in Europe; furthermore, it relied on music video as a form of promotion and finally, it was still a genre outside mainstream radio, which made MTV credible among hip audiences.

Consequently, Euro-dance was extensively promoted on MTV. This, in turn, created a demand for records outside the realm of the majors' 'priorities', particularly in the UK, a market traditionally impermeable to hits from the Continent. Evidence in this chapter suggested that the relationship between the majors and MTV during MTV's

'experimental' phase was best described as one of mutual dependence, not 'conspiracy'. This relationship became strained in 1994, when the music channel Viva launched by the majors began to operate in Germany. By looking more closely at MTV in Germany, chapter 6 will draw further attention to the divergence between MTV and the majors and argue that this divergence of interests between them is more significant for an understanding of the complexities of globalisation.

CHAPTER 6

THE LAUNCH OF THE MUSIC TELEVISION VIVA IN GERMANY:
THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF MTV'S EUROPE

INTRODUCTION

The adjustments in MTV's programming and the main playlist, in particular, to suit the German market when the German music television Viva was launched, indicate that the advent of Viva was a major challenge to "MTV's vision of a Europe with one musical taste and one common language" (Levinson, 1995:48). This chapter will establish why the launch of Viva in Germany proved to be the most significant challenge that MTV had had to confront since its launch. The aim of this chapter is not so much to provide a case-study of MTV in Germany as it is to round off the discussion of 'globalisation' from the previous two chapters. By looking at Viva, this chapter will identify how the advent of local competition highlighted the issues that MTV had not had to deal with prior to its having effective competition. On the basis of these findings, a conclusion about the global and local dynamic in relation to the phenomenon of music television will be drawn. This chapter also serves as a bridge between the analysis so far and the case-studies in the chapters to follow. The impact of MTV in Germany will be examined by taking into account three main factors determining MTV's success (or failure): distribution and access to cable/satellite TV; programme options on terrestrial TV and the strength of national feeling. These same parameters will be used to assess the impact of MTV in any other territory subsequently analysed. The importance of any factor will vary according to local circumstances.

6.1 MTV IN GERMANY PRIOR TO THE LAUNCH OF VIVA

This first section demonstrates how, in Germany, all the three determinants of MTV's success outlined above were particularly favourable for the development of MTV.

6.1.1 *DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS TO CABLE AND SATELLITE TV*

In 1987, the year that MTV was launched in Europe, West Germany combined moderate access to cable television with high consumption of it, as 34.4% of households were passed by cable out of which 36.1% subscribed to it (cf. Collins, 1992:62). From these figures, it was already evident that West Germany was going to be one of Europe's leading markets for channels distributed via the new communication technologies. By 1994, the first year of Viva in Germany, 74.5% of homes in the former Western Germany were connected to cable and 26.3% in the former East Germany (cf. Hicketier, 1996:113). Estimates for 1995 indicate that over 60% of TV homes in Germany were connected to cable. Approximately half of these were actual subscribers. With over 50% of all EC's cable subscribers, Germany is (Western) Europe's biggest cable consumer market (cf. L'état du cable en France, 1995). Furthermore, apart from high distribution, cable services are relatively easy to access. According to Guild, the cost of subscription to cable TV in Germany is among the cheapest in Europe, given that cable is regarded more as a service operated by the German Telecom company than a commercial enterprise (interview, 26/07/94).

The situation is similar with satellite TV penetration, as Germany is among Europe's most developed satellite TV markets. In 1993, Germany together with the UK comprised 71% of all satellite homes in Europe (cf. Panorama de la récéption directe par satellite en Europe, 1994). MTV was widely available in Germany given that this service was not encrypted and that it was beamed from the Astra satellite which covered 90% of the German territory (cf. ibid.). However, in July 1995, when MTV scrambled its signal, according to the channel's own estimates, it lost between 5 and 6 million homes in Germany ('MTV communiqués, 1995; also see Snoddy, 1995b). Encryption was a prerequisite for digital transmission that would enable the channel to tackle piracy and generate some 30% of revenue from subscription instead of the usual 10% (cf. Wnek, 1995). Most interestingly in the context of the topic of this chapter, digital compression would enable the network to replace the pan-European service with regional schedules (cf. Clover, 1995). It is sufficient to mention in this

section that what is currently MTV's Central (read German) service - launched in September 1996 - was opened up on the Astra satellite in the clear in January 1999 in an attempt to regain some 15 million potential satellite TV households in Germany (source: Hansen, interview, 22/12/98).

6.1.2 *PROGRAMME OPTIONS ON TERRESTRIAL (AND MAJOR SATELLITE TV) CHANNELS*

Prior to the development of new commercial channels in the 1980s, there were two public service channels in Germany: the first channel ARD and the second ZDF. The third was regional. The main private channel operators are RTL+ launched in 1984 and SAT1 launched in 1985 (for introduction of new satellite services in Germany, see Humphreys, 1988; 1990). The channel PRO 7's share of the TV advertising market is also worthy of note: 13.8% in 1993 compared to 38% for RTL and 26.5% for SAT 1 (cf. Hicket ier, 1996:114). Among other smaller operators are TELE 5 and DSF. MTV is part of the foreign satellite TV offer.

Knut Hicketier (1996) argues that foreign channels - he speaks indiscriminately of CNN, Super Channel, TV 5, MTV and Eurosport - have a negligible impact in Germany considering that altogether, their share[1] of the market is less than 3%. According to Hicketier, the main reason for this negligible impact is the language barrier. I want to challenge this argument, firstly on a more general level by extracting the 'proper' narrowcasters from this collective entity of foreign channels: the news channel CNN, the sports channel Eurosport and the music channel MTV. I have indicated in chapter 4 that for these particular services - as a rule - (the use of English) language is not a barrier because each of these thematic channels are aimed at specific viewing targets who understand the channels' own *lingua franca*. I have subsequently applied this logic in relation to MTV by introducing the 'MTV English'. I have also indicated in chapter 5 that song lyrics in English are part of such a repertoire's international audience appeal. The language issue for MTV will be addressed later on in this chapter as well as in the chapters to follow.

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[1] As I understand it, the author means viewing share, but he does not state this explicitly.

As regards MTV in Germany, more particularly, evidence in this chapter will suggest that the impact of MTV on this country was far from negligible, both in terms of the effects of MTV as a cultural phenomenon (see next section) and in terms of the influence of MTV as a 'new kind of TV' on other youth-oriented programmes. As demonstrated in chapter 2, the 'novelty' of MTV is that it was designed to accommodate a particular TV viewing behaviour on the basis of which it constructed its audience. In this context, Hicketier does mention that the 'explosion of TV choice' has resulted in 'new styles of media usage', notably TV zapping, particularly among young people. However, he fails to relate this mode of TV viewing to MTV - initially the only channel (as a whole) in Germany which was specifically designed for such sporadic viewing - and therefore fails to recognise the connection between channel design and financial rewards. The central issues, here, are the possibilities for delivering the youth audience segment to advertisers. In this respect, Germany was a very lucrative market and indeed it was MTV's most important market throughout its pan-European phase. Unlike the previous initiative to develop a music television channel in Germany, which failed to find sufficient advertising revenue to survive (see Humphreys, 1988), MTV fully exploited the favourable conditions for the expansion of thematic channels in Germany: Germany was not only a 'market waiting to be opened' but it was also a country where youth programming on public service TV had considerably 'worn off' (cf. Wolton, 1990 in chapter 2).

Prior to the launch of commercial channels, the German advertising market was under-exploited. The stipulation under the ZDF state Treaty permitted advertising on public service channels between 6pm and 8pm only and insisted that programmes were not interrupted by advertisements. In contrast, commercial operators have made advertising slots available within programmes and feature films as well as prime viewing time, which has given them a distinct advantage over public service (cf. Hickethier, 1996). Hence, as Collins observes, "satellite television has provided a sorely-needed advertising medium, with consequent revenues to fund a diet of attractive programming" (1992:94). The growth of the commercial sector has led to a major crisis in public service broadcasting in the first half of the 1990s, evident both

in the considerable decrease of viewing figures and advertising revenue for public service (cf. Hickethier, 1996). Furthermore, sponsorship has only been allowed in Germany since 1992 and consequently revenues from this source have been small for German broadcasters (cf. Ford and Ford, 1993).

MTV was able to capitalise on the circumstances of the German TV advertising market in two ways. Firstly, the main commercial channels which were direct competitors to public service channels were, above all, interested in mass market revenue. In other words, they were generalist channels. In contrast, the narrowcaster MTV was delivering to advertisers the lucrative youth target which was out of these broadcasters' reach. Secondly, MTV exploited sponsorship as a mode of advertising. Although sponsorship was not available on German TV, advertisers could still reach the youth target via MTV by sponsoring a show. Considering that there were no other music channels in Germany and few youth music programmes on generalist channels, as Levy (1992) remarks, MTV became **the** music channel in Germany. Thus, on the basis of this advantageous position in the German market, MTV was able to generate considerable advertising and sponsorship revenue.

The impact of MTV on Germany united major record companies in a joint venture - i.e. Viva - to vie with MTV for the German market. As we shall see, Viva competed for a share of the same advertising revenue as MTV. The success of Viva, in turn "caused an increase rather than reduction in music programming at the terrestrial broadcasters. ARD and regional station WDR both scheduled music video shows, while ZDF plans to air a two hour video show" (Walker, 1994b:37). In addition, in 1995 both MTV and Viva launched music channels for an older target audience than that of MTV and Viva, VH-1 and Viva 2 (see Arnu, 1995; 'Neue Fernseprojekt', 1995). All these channels were still operating when this thesis was completed, which suggests that neither viewer interest for this type of programming nor that of advertisers have faded. This proliferation of music video programmes in Germany is an indicator of how much revenue MTV must have generated from Germany prior to competition - the channel does not disclose such figures - and, equally, how anxious the channel became with the advent of competition in this market.

The consumption of satellite TV in Germany was also structured by a desire for entertainment programming under-supplied by public service TV (cf. Collins, 1992). New commercial services were entertainment-oriented. The introduction of these new services led public service to adapt its programming to the new situation. Although part of this restructuring involved introducing more commercial-style entertainment, more importantly, it also involved producing high quality dramas, in depth news reporting and other ambitious projects that commercial rivals were unable to match (cf. Hickethier, 1996). As for MTV, following the line of argument in chapter 2, it can be said that it was a novelty format which attracted 16 to 34-year-olds. Compared to the 'boring' youth educational programmes on public service, with its mode of address and sophisticated design, MTV appeared to be a refreshing alternative. The editor in chief of the 'trendy' magazine *Max* sums up the influence of MTV in Germany in the period of late 1980s and early 1990s: "I have MTV switched on all day. It gives me the latest cultural definition of music. I look at the ads, the layouts, graphics, the trends. By comparison, German television looks pedestrian" (Fedarko, 1993:62). However, the appeal of MTV in Germany extended beyond its stylistic influence, as the next section reveals.

6.1.3 *THE STRENGTH OF NATIONAL FEELING*

Another situation conducive to MTV's expansion in Germany was the unforeseen event of the German reunification following the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. As we shall see in chapter 8, in the period of significant political change in Eastern Europe, television played an active role. In this context, MTV in East Germany was encoded with a symbolic value associated with the end of communist repression. MTV's cosmopolitan representation of Europe - which, as I argued in chapter 4, was a state of mind and a mode of managing meaning that implied openness towards other cultural experiences in contrast to uniformity - was a departure from the traditionally divided Eastern and Western German TV (cf. Hanke, 1990). At the same time, for young Western Germans, the appeal of cosmopolitanism as provided by MTV had a longer history than the events surrounding the fall of the

Wall. It can be traced back to the post-second world war period during which West Germany became open to American cultural influences, especially American (and also British) popular music. In the aftermath of the war, an involvement with American culture was a way of di. ssociating oneself from the guilt of German fascist crimes.

In the context of a discussion about the Americanisation of Germany, Duncan Webster remarks that rock n' roll had a particularly liberating effect because it had 'nothing to do with fascism' (1989:68). He quotes film director Wim Wenders who recalls that: "In the early fifties or even the Sixties, it was American culture. In other words, the need to forget 20 years created a hole, and people tried to cover this [...] by assimilating American culture" (1989:67). As will be revealed in chapter 8, the 'liberating effect' of rock n' roll was even more pronounced in East Germany under the communist regime. When the communist system collapsed, this correspondence between rock and freedom took on a literal meaning. Similarly to Wenders, a generation or so later, Sturmer begins her article about MTV with the words:

> I grew up in Coburg [...] In the 1970s it was trapped by the East German barbed-wire fence on three sides. For us young people who thought of ourselves as living in the armpit of Europe, escape from this isolation meant sipping a *café au lait,* listening to Siouxsie and the Banshees or PIL, smoking Spanish cigarettes, ordering an ice-cream in Italian - the flavours of distance, of holidays, of the exotic. Our silent rebellion. Had MTV Europe existed then, would it have fed our yearning for this imaginary Continent? (1993:50).

Implicit in this rhetorical question is that in the 1990s, MTV became the medium that not only satisfied this craving for the outside world on a daily basis but it also embraced the young Germans as part of its world. With MTV, the need to escape the feeling of guilt and 'life in the armpit of Europe' became a thing of the past. Hence, MTV seduced young Germans.

The standing of MTV VJs in (reunited) Germany is another indicator of the channel's popularity there. In the early 1990s, on a number of occasions, VJs would get invited to make a personal appearance in various night-clubs in Germany. For such an appearance in Germany, an MTV VJ could command a fee comparable to that of top-

reputed DJs in UK clubs (for UK figures, see for example Rietveld, 1998; Langois, 1992). Among the most popular VJs in Germany and across the Continent was the host of MTV's flagship show *Most Wanted*, Ray Cokes. At the peak of the show's popularity, a book of Ray's letters was published in Germany and a mock-rap single was also released to cash in on this mood. MTV's German VJ Kristiane Backer was particularly popular in Germany because she gained the status of a German international star. Her on-screen persona embodied MTV's cosmopolitan charisma which was described in chapter 4: she was 'one of us yet not quite one of us'. The same applies to other non-British VJs in their home countries - they were elevated to the status of international stardom. However, it should be noted that in the UK, neither Continental nor British VJs enjoyed the kind of high esteem that they had on the Continent because of the initial reluctance of the British music industry to accept MTV on the grounds of British musical 'superiority' (cf. chapter 5). It is only around 1992/1993, when MTV became part of the music establishment - and therefore approved by the seal of the British music industry - that British MTV VJs (Sonya Soul, Lisa I'Anson and Davina McCall) began to be offered work opportunities on other British media outlets as well as publicity at home.

Finally, Germany's traditional openness to American influences also meant that there were no cultural protectionist policies revolving around 'Americanisation' (cf. chapter 1) in West Germany. Hicket ier observes that:

> The sort of robust and comprehensive debate of the kind that is still going on in France [cf. 'Coca-Cola satellites' in chapters 4], for example, does not exist in Germany [...] Foreign programmes and, above all, those coming from the USA, were perceived favourably as providing support for the process of domestic, social and political modernisation because they opened German eyes to the American way of life and broke down traditional attitudes (1996:120).

This access to foreign programmes has acted as a language catalyst. Although foreign films are dubbed on German TV, the American and British Forces networks set up after the war brought Germans into direct contact with their cultures (cf. Hicket ier, 1996; Webster, 1989). According to Hicketier, "until 1994 the American Forces Network (AFN) and the British Forces Network (BFBS) introduced young listeners to

western music" (1996:110). Thus, through music radio, Germans were able to learn enough English to understand MTV. In terms of English language fluency required for an understanding of MTV, Germany is somewhere between the Northern European markets (where, in effect, for MTV there is no language barrier) and the less fluent Southern Europe. MTV's (now former) employee in charge of network development in France, François Deplanck, explains that:

> It is a common understanding that in Northern Europe, for instance in Scandinavia, there is a high level of acceptance of English language programmes, a little bit less in Germany, and even less [...] in Southern European countries. Why? Because in Sweden, for instance, 95% of the movies which are from the USA are not dubbed. They are subtitled, so people from the age of 1 or 2, as soon as they are able to sit in front of the TV, are used to listen to that language. And, maybe, the education system is done so that it is easier to understand English when you are a Swedish kid than when you are an Italian kid. In Germany, it's a little bit in between (interview, 31/08/94).

To sum up so far, at the turn of the decade, all the factors conducive to the expansion of MTV in any territory were particularly favourable for the growth of MTV in Germany. When MTV was launched, Germany was among Europe's most developed cable/satellite TV market; the youth-market potential was underexploited while, at the same time, youth programming on public service was unappealing; and finally, the traditional stance of openness towards other Western cultures and especially the USA among generations of young Germans was particularly accentuated when the Berlin Wall was dismantled and over the ensuing few years. In such circumstances, the arrival of MTV in Germany "fulfilled [the] old pop dictum of 'being in the right place at the right time'" (Watts, 1975:133).

6.2 MTV IN GERMANY SINCE THE LAUNCH OF VIVA

In previous chapters, it was established that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, MTV operated in Europe without significant competition, given that other attempts at developing a pan-European music channel failed. Moreover, in many European countries, MTV was a more attractive choice than public service youth programmes. Hence, MTV became the preferred youth channel - at least, until local versions of

MTV-style music programming were produced - in many Western European cable markets (Germany, the Benelux, Sweden) and Eastern European urban centres where satellite TV was available through pirating signals (see chapter 8). In less developed satellite/cable markets (such as the UK initially), MTV programmes, notably specialist music shows and cartoons, were circulated via a piracy tape network or screened in public places. MTV generated substantial advertising revenue and attained an average share in European viewing figures of approximately 1%, which was relatively high for a narrowcaster. The early 1990s was the period when MTV reached the peak of its popularity, which subsequently began to wane. This section will examine why the launch of the music channel Viva in Germany in December 1993 became a major challenge to MTV. However, before looking at how Viva affected MTV, it is necessary to take into account other changes which occurred in the European television landscape around the mid-1990s. These changes also contributed to the decline of MTV as a pan-European service. There is a set of reasons behind this decline, notwithstanding the plunge in MTV's distribution following encryption in 1995.

On the one hand, the 'novelty' factor of MTV had worn off. In fact, the 'MTV-style' was adopted as the norm in youth TV and more generally entertainment TV in Europe. On the other hand, the decline of MTV's Europe is due to the fact that MTV is subject to more competition than it has been historically. By the mid-1990s, there were considerably more channels competing for the 'off peak' viewing market-share, notably channels for children. In the words of Lewis: "Before, the little 4-year-old was happy to watch MTV with his big sister, now the cartoon network is on for more time instead" (interview, 22/05/97). As a result, not only did MTV's ratings fall but also the advertising revenue 'reserved' for narrowcasters could potentially be reduced. Most importantly, however, MTV spawned a number of local copies, be it in the guise of replicas such as Viva in Germany, ZTV in Sweden, the 'repackaged' MCM in France (see chapter 7) or local appropriations of the MTV-style, such as youth-oriented programmes on Eastern European terrestrial TV networks (see chapters 8&9). These local music televisions were direct competitors to MTV because they, like MTV, were narrowcasters targeting the 'youth' audience. The next section

examines why Viva was particularly threatening to MTV, by looking at how it affected MTV's 'environment' and MTV's main playlist.

6.2.1 *THE IMPACT OF VIVA ON MTV'S 'ENVIRONMENT'*

Unlike MCM - the initially relatively harmless competitor in France (see chapter 7) - Viva learned a lesson from MTV. From the outset, not only was Viva conceived with a distinct channel identity as a narrowcaster but it was also launched in MTV's most lucrative market. Moreover, Viva benefited from MTV's expertise in music television by hiring MTV's news editor and VJ Steve Blame as production director and presenter. Blame's abrupt departure was greeted with discontent at MTV and it took some years for this argument to end in reconciliation. The anxiety was that Blame might be a precedent for more widespread defection of MTV's staff to local competitors. Indeed, MTV's programmer Jean-Pierre Millet moved back to his native France when he was appointed head of programming by the French music channel, MCM.

What made the launch of new music channels in Europe and Viva, in particular, daunting for MTV was their local scope. As indicated in chapter 4, among MTV's staff, there was an awareness about the European audiences' preferences for local programming. Even with the clear advantage of music (as a thematic orientation) and the use of English in pan-European communication, MTV was able to globalise only by 'operating through' the local. Through its 'celebration of diversity' strategy, MTV achieved a cosmopolitan representation of Europe where even English as the common denominator language became a language from nowhere, a kind of Euro-esperanto. By incorporating an element of locality, MTV was able to subvert the issue of audience preference, at least temporarily. In other words, MTV was 'local' because it was a European television with the 'we feeling'.

However, when Viva was launched, by being more local than MTV, it jeopardised MTV's pan-European strategy. Whereas before, newspaper articles about the 'Eurokids' (Moran, 1992) dovetailed perfectly with MTV's ambition, now this whole

idea of a united Europe was at stake. The Europhoria that characterised the period when MTV was launched gave way to a more nationalistic mood (cf. Boehm, 1996b). The question of the viability of MTV's Europe in the face of local competition began to dominate the press (see Bejenke, 1994; Von Gamm and Bateman, 1995). MTV's makers were well aware of this problem. However, MTV was in no position to change its programming strategy for lack of digital compression technology, which would have enabled the channel to split the single pan-European feed into several regional versions. Speaking to me in 1997, Hansen admitted that: "Frankly, if I could have [compressed the signal] 3 years ago, I would have, but that's just the reality of what it is". Consequently, for another three years (1994-1996), MTV remained pan-European, although the main playlist was clearly German-biased (see next section).

The advent of Viva brought to the surface one of the main problems that MTV had successfully dealt with prior to competition - the issue of language. As indicated in previous chapters, the use of English as the language of the channel was an advantage in transnational communication, given that it is the most spoken second language in Europe and also the language of rock n' roll. Until MTV was faced with local competition, it steered clear of the language barrier that, for example, the French channel Canal Plus had to confront from the outset. Canal Plus was unable to overcome the problem of linguistic diversity as 'easily' as MTV when exporting their innovative format, partly because it was in French and partly because the programmes were more wordy and culturally specific. The exceptional success of Canal Plus - which started as Europe's first pay-TV channel in 1984 and within a decade became the most successful media conglomerate in France (see next chapter) - is due to the fact that Canal Plus immediately realised that although their concept was original, Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity would act as an obstacle in the international exchange. Consequently, according to Gallot, they "transformed a difficulty into an advantage [...] As we could not export our language, we exported our concept by adapting it to each country" (interview, 06/09/95). In other words, Canal Plus made local versions of their programmes. Unlike, say, the makers of the pan-European Sky, who presumed that English humour would translate well enough in markets with high fluency in English, Canal Plus made 'local' versions of its humorous features (where

the jokes are locally-specific) even in francophone markets such as Belgium, where audiences tend to be familiar with French TV programmes.

Louise McElvogue (1995) observes that local language has been the unique selling point of [MTV's] rivals, but it was nonetheless an important one. Michael Kreissl of Viva claims that: "It's cool to throw in 3 or 4 words of English. It's not cool to do it all in English. It is an illusion that everybody in Europe is speaking English" (quoted in Levinson, 1995:48). MTV counter-attacked by commissioning audience surveys[2] that "reaffirmed" that MTV is "ahead of VIVA in Germany" and that English language is part of MTV's appeal. What this conflict suggests is that there may well be an audience in Germany who is fluent in English but that does not imply that 'everybody speaks English'. Deplanck has a point when he observes that Germany has been traditionally open to other cultural influences and that:

> This is why some research says that the German youth like MTV the way it is because it is European, but many of them also like or would like either a [German] sort of MTV or they actually like Viva because it is in German and it is easier to understand and it is local, and it refers to local people and events (interview, 31/08/94).

A similar point can be made regarding the issue of 'local reference', which was another asset for Viva. According to some reports, Viva catered for an audience that MTV ignored ('Corporate Report', 1995:13; also see McElvogue, 1995; Levinson, 1995). It may well be true that "MTV does well with the affluent trend-setting university crowd. But since its start [...] Viva has grabbed the lead among high-school students and young adults who haven't gone to College" (Levinson, 1995:48). Nevertheless, this potential divergence between German trendy and less affluent crowds raises a new hypothesis concerning MTV's cultural effects. It is an indicator that MTV's cosmopolitanism is not 'universally' appealing and that, therefore, its 'globalising' impact is limited. Here, Martin Shaw's (1997) challenge to theories of

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[2] MTV commissioned the following research: a study by the NIKO Werbe Index "a total sample of 5049 individuals in Germany were interviewed. Fieldwork conducted in November/December 1994"; PETAR 8 "was conducted by Research Service Limited between October 31 and November 27 1994 in Germany, the Netherlands, Flanders, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. A total of 2312 individuals aged 4 and over were surveyed"; AWA "is a consumer study conducted by the Allensbach Werbe Anstalt in Germany. Over 20000 interviews are conducted on a rolling base. MTV was measured for the first time in Spring 1994 among 6000 respondents" - source MTV communiqué announced in London, 19 May, 1995 and London/Cologne, 11 August 1995.

cultural homogenisation under the impact of global media is relevant. According to Shaw:

> Global society clearly exhibits growing system integration, above all at the level of socio-economic relations, but also in the development of cultural and political institutions. What is a great deal more problematic is the development of social integration in the value sense. How far has the growing integration of global systems been accompanied by a genuine emergence of consensus or normative integration? In so far as such developments are occurring, are they confined largely to state, corporate and intellectual elites, or do they involve larger sections, or even all the members of global society? (1997:30).

By adding an ethnographic dimension to the textual analysis of MTV contextualised in political economy carried out so far, this thesis will reveal that MTV's influence tends to be confined within niche audiences: trendy media circles in Paris (see chapter 7), Eastern European elites (see chapter 8), rock n' roll fans in the former Yugoslavia (see chapter 9). As for MTV in Germany, I am unable to substantiate this argument for lack of sufficient empirical evidence. The kind of data into music TV audience preferences that is accessible from the press is precisely the kind of data that tells us nothing about the viewers, i.e. ratings. Even when available, ratings are inconsistent as some show that MTV has a greater share of the market while others point to Viva's advantage (see Feldmeier, 1995). Both channels are also dissatisfied with this kind of information because it makes no reference to the consumption of TV outside the domestic context (see Molner, 1995).

The most accurate research into music TV preferences in Germany is that conducted by the independent *Media Perspektiven* whose researchers found that

> most young viewers used both MTV and Viva as background entertainment, like radio. Almost two-thirds of those surveyed agreed with the statement: 'If there is nothing else on television, I switch to MTV or Viva'. Many young people watched for only a few minutes at the time and most watched MTV and Viva combined for less than an hour a day (quoted in 'Corporate Report', 1995:12).

However, as argued in chapter 3, research which provides an insight into TV viewing habits should not be confused with audience research. Who the viewers for music

television in Germany are and why they watch MTV or Viva remains to be investigated.

For lack of ethnographic evidence, MTV's aggressive local infiltration campaigns in Germany throughout 1994 can serve as an indicator of the importance of locality in the process of globalisation. Some of this involved sponsoring two major German music festivals, *Rock am Ring* and *Rock am Riem*, hosting the first MTV Europe Video Music Awards in Berlin (accompanied by mega-publicity), opening the first local advertising window on MTV in German and other similar ventures. However, in spite of MTV's efforts to keep its stronghold in Germany, MTV did not succeed in slowing down the growth of Viva. By the middle of 1995, Viva attained a break-even position (cf. 'Corporate Report', 1995:13). Another indicator of the importance of locality are the changes in MTV's main music playlist to suit the German market.

6.2.2 MTV'S PLAYLIST FOLLOWING THE ADVENT OF VIVA

This section is a continuation of the discussion in chapter 5. Firstly, it addresses more fully the argument that the cultural imperialist/globalisation perspective assumes a straight forward correspondence between MTV and major record companies. Secondly, it provides further support for the critique by popular music theorists that the cultural imperialism perspective portrays American sound as homogenous. Extending this argument to MTV's playlist, it assumes that MTV's playlist is static (i.e. MTV is always 'American') and therefore fails to acknowledge how changes in the market affect the playlist.

When MTV US first reported profits in 1984, record companies became anxious for MTV to start paying license fees (cf. Banks, 1996:64). Subsequently, there was a practice in the US whereby major record companies supplied music video clips to MTV on an 'exclusivity pact' instead of a pay-for-use basis. Under this, record companies supplied music videos to MTV free of charge but, in return for a fee, they would guarantee MTV the exclusive use of certain clips for periods of up to the 30 days

(cf. Laing, 1985b). In spite of limited official information regarding the kinds of exclusivities that MTV US gets - in actual practice, 'exclusivity' deals varied from one artist to another - Banks (1996) provides plenty of evidence from various sources to suggest that MTV's practices in the US are uncompetitive and that they raise disturbing concerns about MTV's degree of unrivalled control.

It is not my intention to dispute Banks' arguments in relation to MTV in the US. However, the kind of 'conspiracy' between MTV and major record company executives, that, according to Banks, is the practice in the US, has not been the practice in Europe (source: interview with Hansen, 01/04/97 and 22/12/98). MTV in Europe gets video premieres. The decision to give MTV a premiere is a matter of mutual agreement between MTV and the label, but the premiere does not exclude airplay on other promotional media outlets in the manner that 'exclusives' in the US do (cf. ibid.). If anything, in Europe there has been a tension between MTV and the majors concerning payments for the right to broadcast videos. At the channel's inception, fee levels for the right to broadcast videos were negotiated through a collective European body called Video Performance Limited (VPL)[3]. Under this agreement, MTV paid a blanket fee to record companies. However, once MTV was established in Europe, it began legal proceedings against the UK-based VPL, seeking damages for what MTV considered to be unfairly high payments (see Rawsthorn, 1995). The case was resolved in MTV's favour. MTV now negotiates payments with what were then the five big majors (Warner, Sony, Polygram, EMI, BMG) on an individual basis but considers the issue sensitive enough not to disclose any amounts. Small labels continue to negotiate through VPL. This situation whereby MTV has the upper hand implies that - notwithstanding the mutual dependence between MTV and the majors - the relationship between them is strained.

In fact, what is more significant for a discussion about 'globalisation' is the divergence of MTV's interests from those of major record companies. Apart from

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[3] The permission to exploit the video in synchronisation with the soundtrack is required in addition to the performing rights license to broadcast songs (negotiated with the Performing Right Society) and the phonograph performance license to broadcast recordings (negotiated with Phonographic Performance Limited). Thanks to Prof. Simon Frith and James Penny, MTV Corporate Business Affairs, for helping me on this issue. I also found Frith (1987) and Passman (1995) very helpful in this context.

rights-payments, as indicated in chapter 5, at times, MTV's playlist policy - especially in the initial period of MTV's expansion in Europe - was at odds with the majors: be it because MTV gave mainstream exposure to acts from independent labels and created a demand for such acts; or because MTV would create a demand for local acts in markets where their records were not distributed; or because MTV's choice of 'priority' acts was not compatible with the majors' promotional strategies; or because MTV was ahead of local promotional strategies and similar. However, the main indicator of how an apparently mutually beneficial relationship can turn sour is Viva, MTV's main rival backed up by majors[4]. Before rounding off this discussion of the global and local dynamic in relation to the phenomenon of music television in Europe, it is necessary to take into account how the prospect of this competitor in the German market affected MTV's playlist.

As indicated in chapter 5, distribution is a crucial point of reference when compiling MTV's main playlist. Given that Germany has been MTV's most important market, the German Top 40 has always been influential in relation to the velocity of MTV's playlist. With the advent of VIVA, MTV's main playlist became German-biased to the extent that the amount of German music on MTV was at odds with MTV's own pan-European music policy. Not only did MTV start to play German acts that were not played on MTV before because they had no 'cross-over' potential but, at times, it also promoted German artists in the same way as Anglo-American artists, in spite of the former's lack of 'cross-over' potential. A striking example, here, is MTV's recording of an acoustic session called *Unplugged* with Germany's top artist Gronemeyer, despite his limited appeal outside Germanophone markets. *Unplugged* is one of MTV's flagship programmes that is also sold to a number of European radio stations and even TV channels, such as the BBC. Usually, it is only the most famous international artists that get to record such a session for MTV and subsequently release an album (see Farley, 1995). Thus, to satisfy the German market, MTV put Gronemeyer on an equal footing with the most successful international artists.

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[4] Viva's shareholders are Polygram Holding, Warner Music Entertainment Germany, Sony, Thorn EMI and media entrepreneur Frank Otto, each owning 19.8%; 1% is owned by the head of Viva, Dieter Gorny ('Corporate Report', 1995:12).

While MTV continued to be branded as 'American' by some critics (cf. chapter 5), from 1994 it was as noticeably 'German' as it was 'American'. A closer examination of MTV's playlist in 1994[5] reveals that in some weeks, as many as 80% of non-British European artists featured on MTV were German repertoire. In effect, this means that occasionally, the number of German acts in the playlist could match that of British acts. For the purpose of illustration, in the week beginning 08/03/94, out of 58 videos in the A/B/C playlist, 21 were from the USA, 12 from the UK, 22 from (the rest of) Europe and 3 from other countries. Among the European videos, 11 were German. Bearing in mind that MTV's playlist changes weekly and that the shifts in numbers can be quite drastic - for example, the number of British clips can jump from 12 to 20 within a week - the week stated is representative of the trend in MTV's playlist since the launch of Viva. In some weeks MTV played as much German repertoire as British. According to one survey, paradoxically, in 1994 MTV played almost as much German music as its German competitor Viva: MTV played 22% of German acts compared to 32% on Viva (cf. 'Corporate Report', 1995). MTV's playlist policy from this period represents a serious challenge to the theoretical perspective whereby 'cultural imperialism' in the music sector is synonymous with the global dominance Anglo-American rock.

A glance at Viva's music playlist policy equally draws attention to the problem of the channel's local - i.e. German - orientation. Being a local music channel for Viva has a similar meaning to being a European channel for MTV. What is 'German' or 'European' is, in fact, the context in which the music videos are played - i.e. the constitutive elements of the channels' respective 'environments' - and not the amount of local (German/European) music videos. Viva's target for German music is 40%, which the channel reached in 1995 and maintained (cf. 'Corporate Report', 1995). Even German language appears to be a questionable indicator of Germanness: looking at Viva's playlist for the week beginning 14/07/97, among the 15 artists classified as German - out of 37 videos in the A and B playlist - only three actually sing in German. The rest sings in what can appropriately be described as the 'MTV English'.

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[5] Based on an examination of playlists for March, June and September 1994.

Furthermore, as already indicated, Viva is owned by major record companies who are part of global conglomerates. Thus, from the economic perspective, Viva is not German. Effectively, Viva is a localised replica of MTV and it is within this paradigm that I want to draw a conclusion about the 'global' and the 'local'.

6.3 TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL IN THE WORLD OF MUSIC TELEVISION BEYOND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The analysis of MTV in chapters 4 and 5 was premised on a critique of the cultural imperialist/globalisation framework. By looking at how the advent of a local competitor in MTV's most lucrative market affected MTV's pan-European 'globalisation' strategy, this chapter has drawn further attention to the limitations of such an understanding of 'globalisation'. The rise and fall of MTV in Germany, and more generally Europe, supports the argument proposed by Ferguson (1992). Ferguson rightly observes that 'globalisation' - i.e.

> the idea that the world is becoming one homogenous culture, largely fed by US culture industries; that big cultural industries, like those of the US, have an automatic advantage due to economies of scale and the polish of their products; and that differences of time, space and geography are eroded by technology (summed up by Straubhaar, 1997:285)

- is a myth. To speculate about the emergence of a unified European culture under the impact of pan-European media on the basis of the success of narrowcasters such as MTV among their respective target audiences is problematic. In effect, MTV represents "one form in terms of which the world becomes 'united'" (cf. Robertson, 1997:3). However, this is not to suggest that the process of globalisation is not occurring. Instead, this section is an attempt to establish a more appropriate framework for analysis of this process, at least when it concerns the study of the phenomenon of music television, a form of culture which has globalised quite drastically.

It is useful at this stage to reinterpret MTV's strategy of constructing a pan-European TV through the concept of 'glocalisation' as proposed by Roland Robertson (1995). 'Glocalisation' is a "global outlook adapted to local conditions" (1995:28) which is employed strategically by TV enterprises seeking global markets such as MTV and CNN . 'Glocalisation' is a useful analytic tool because, on the one hand it acknowledges that – despite the altruistic appeal of MTV's cosmopolitan Europe among its target audience - the channel's strategy of 'celebrating diversity' is, first and foremost, a means of achieving economic ends. On the other hand, 'glocalisation' suggests that globalisation involves the creation and incorporation of locality. In this context, locality is also an aspect of globalisation. Such a perspective is a welcome alternative to cultural imperialism thesis that takes locality for granted - be it the 'globalisation' perspective that assumes a straight forward correspondence between corporate activity and cultural homogenisation (cf. chapter 5) or the state-centric cultural protectionist position that takes identity as a stable given and ignores the homogenisation from 'within' (cf. chapter 4). In contrast, 'glocalisation' problematises the local. Thus, the local - as an aspect of globalisation - needn't necessarily correspond to locality as defined by geographical borders. Rather, the local is there to serve the global agenda. In this sense, Robertson rightly argues that globalisation also involves "the 'invention' of locality, in the same general sense as the idea of the invention of tradition (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), as well as its imagination (cf. Anderson, 1983)" (1995:35).

Chapter 4 examined how MTV 'invented' its own tradition in order to 'imagine' its own Europe. Consequently, MTV's pan-European community distinguished itself from the EC's vision of a united Europe by the 'style it was imagined' (cf. Anderson, 1983:16). By extension, I want to suggest that idea of Germanness on Viva is closer to MTV's form of communality than it is to the German public service TV's definition of a 'nation'. On Viva, like on MTV, viewers are addressed as 'dudes', 'groovers' or whatever the slang of the moment is, but because of the use of German language on Viva, less European viewers are likely to understand it. Hence Viva's scope appears to be confined within national borders in contrast to MTV's 'television without frontiers'. However, like MTV, Viva is a commercial enterprise backed by global

corporate companies and, therefore, the ambition behind such an enterprise is to expand by developing economies of scale. We mustn't forget that - technologically - Viva has a similar capacity of reaching audiences outside Germany. Viva's scope may be more limited than that of MTV Europe but it is not necessarily confined to the German territory. Viva's commitment to Germany is profit-motivated but unlike MTV's pan-national marketing ideology, Viva's selling pitch is more nation-centric because that is the one (albeit crucial) aspect that makes it different from MTV.

The challenge that this 'local' music television represents to the 'global' MTV draws attention to two factors that need to be taken into account simultaneously in order to make sense of the process of globalisation. The first factor is economic. Viva represented a challenge to MTV, first and foremost, because it understood MTV's *raison d'être*. Hence, it was conceived just like MTV, i.e. as a narrowcaster. Once the economic principle was mastered, Viva's German angle proved to be fatal for MTV's Europe. To put it bluntly, whether actually confined to the German territory or not, Viva is, in any case, more locally specific than MTV's pan-European ambition. Compared to Viva, even MTV's *Most Wanted* - the show that once unified the pan-European audience - was now 'foreign' to many young Germans. Consequently, MTV's Europe was at stake. However, the national or pan-national orientation of each channel respectively is a matter of loyalty to the market rather than a geographical region per se. Market loyalty occurs along different lines to those that are territorially confined. An exploration of this avenue will lead to suggesting a direction along which the process of globalisation might be occurring in the near future.

Following this logic of loyalty to the market, an obvious cause for concern about Viva is the question of preferential treatment for clips supplied by labels that own Viva, which was already raised by a number of commentators (cf. 'Corporate Report', 1995). The assumption here is that Viva is not there to play German artists but rather German artists signed to the majors that own the channel. An even gloomier scenario would arise if Viva decided to withdraw its acts from channels such as MTV to eliminate competition, which has not yet occurred but needs to be taken into account by legislators (see Banks, 1996). Another question that arises from a consideration of

Viva's music playlist is how one might define German music. The meaning of 'local' music in a 'global' age should, therefore, be problematised, which theorists of cultural imperialism fail to do.

Furthermore, if both the majors and MTV fiercely compete over the German music market - as opposed to, say, Belgium or Norway - it is also possible to presume that Germany may represent a growing centre of power when it comes to popular music. In 1990, Germany was already the world's third largest market for recorded music behind the USA and Japan (cf. Negus, 1993). IFPI's Recording industry figures for 1997 confirmed Germany's third position in the world. Another reason for the recording industry's loyalty to the German market is that Germany is a country with a small rate of piracy and the most powerful collecting agency for performing rights owners, GEMA (cf. Frith, 1987:57).

Traditionally, Germany has been a second market in the order of record company 'priorities'. As such, German pop like any other Europop was subdued to the Anglo-American sound (cf. chapter 5). A question to raise, then, is how is Germany's dominant position in Europe in terms of record sales affecting the British divisions of major record companies? As examined in chapter 5, Britain was a 'priority' market. The rock n' roll ideology - pervasive among record company staff - sustained this belief in the superiority of British music. Now that the economic power has shifted to Germany, one might ask whether there will be an accompanying shift in pop music ideologies? After all, Germany is the centre of the European tradition of synthetic music - from Kraftwerk to Boney M - whose impact on the genres that displaced the rock ideology of authenticity - i.e. rap and house - is considerable.

In spite of German popular music's limited international success compared to that of Anglo-American pop, Germany has been dominant over other German-speaking countries, notably Austria. In a study of Austropop, Larkey (1992) revealed that the music industry in Austria is set up in a way that successful Austrian artists have to be picked up and promoted by record companies in Germany before standing a chance for pan-European and global promotion. The concern that this trend may continue is

legitimate and indeed this problem was raised in the popular music studies field. For example, Harald Huber (1997) observes that through the European integration process Austrian music is getting increasingly absorbed by the German market.

This German dominance within the Germanophone market brings us to back to the issue of the continuing importance of cultural identity in the process of globalisation. In order to point to the form in which the process of globalisation will be occurring in the near future, I shall be drawing upon the work of Joseph Straubhaar (1997). Straubhaar's critique of the globalisation approach which posits that the world is becoming a standardised society is very pertinent for the current developments in the music television industry in Europe and even globally. Straubhaar focuses on the importance of regional and geo-linguistic cultures and television markets. He proposes that

> in terms of media and media flows, a more significant phenomenon than this idea of globalisation, per se, may well be the 'regionalisation' of television into multi-country markets linked by geography, language and culture. These might more accurately be called geo-cultural markets, since not all these linked populations, markets and cultures are geographically contiguous (1997:285).

In this context, one can speak of a Germanophone music market rather than a German market. This market can extend into other territories, notably central European countries (such as the Czech Republic or Hungary) and the former Yugoslav Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, which have had historical links with Germanophone cultures. By extension, there are other geo-cultural markets in Europe: the 'Latin' markets (Hispanic, Italian, Francophone), each potentially extending into territories outside Europe, the Scandinavian/Nordic market, the Balkans, the former Russian Republics and similar. Also within Western European countries, the minority immigrant populations who tend to watch services on satellite TV in their native tongues, create communities within and across these 'traditional' geo-cultural markets.

The analysis of MTV's Europe and MTV's music playlist within this pan-European environment has already revealed the importance of these geo-cultural links between

MTV viewers. Chapter 4 introduced the concept of 'cultural metaphors' in order to acknowledge and deal with the markers of culture which can facilitate cross-cultural communication. Chapter 5 drew attention at how such metaphors can hinder cross-cultural communication by highlighting the 'taste-zones' in music. By drawing upon the work of Smith (1990), an authority on nationalism, chapter 4 revealed how 'memoriless' global cultures nonetheless make use of 'bits and pieces of tradition'. Here, 'tradition' corresponds to the notion of the 'cultural metaphor'. Staubhaar, in effect, also talks about 'cultural metaphors' without using the concept as such, i.e. "shared identity, gestures and non-verbal communication; what is considered funny or serious or even sacred; clothing styles; living patterns; climate influences and other relationships with the environment (1997:291). Similarly, Gannon (1994) extends the idea of a 'cultural metaphor' to what he calls 'clusters of countries' that share these non-verbal communicators, while Smith (1990) suggests that the post-national era may be characterised by a new *lingua franca* along 'cultural areas'.

It is precisely along such geo-cultural lines that MTV began to regionalise its pan-European service, as soon as the channel was able to compress its digital signal. From September 1996, MTV was able to divide its European service into three separate feeds: MTV Central (Germany, German-speaking Switzerland, Slovak and Czech Republics, Austria, Slovenia and Lichtenstein), MTV South (Italy only) and MTV North (for the UK, the Benelux, Scandinavia and the remaining countries within MTV's satellite footprint) (see MTV News Releases, 1996/7; Rawsthorn, 1996). MTV Italy is a separate service because Italy proved to be receptive to MTV since the channel struck a deal with the Italian terrestrial channel Telepiu in June 1995 and opened a separate advertising window for Italy in that year (see Boehm, 1996a; 'Itali: Telepiu...', 1995). In June 1997, MTV UK and Ireland - also beamed into New Zealand for a while - was launched to cater for the Anglophone market. MTV's next ambition was to separate a Nordic from a Northern European feed.

The Central service continues to be the most important for MTV, which is visible from the kinds of investments into its German offices (cf. Clark, 1996). One might also presume that Viva is aiming at that same central European geo-cultural market.

Only a comparative analysis of MTV Central and Viva can shed a light on the similarities and differences between these two channels while, by way of ethnography, it will be possible to find out more about audiences for a global television 'from nowhere' as in the case of MTV and a global television 'from somewhere' as in the case of Viva. Such an analysis may involve scrutinising MTV's latest strategy to achieve its global ambition. In the words of Hansen: "[We are now able] to tap in globally from a local point of view rather than going locally from an international point of view [as during the pan-European phase]" (interview, 22/12/98).

The respective channels' music policies also need examining. It is difficult not be sceptical about the issue of music diversity on these channels - it appears that the expansion of music television in Germany was not accompanied by an equal diversification of the music charts. One positive trend should be noted, nonetheless, which is MTV's new digital channel called M2 (cf. Robins, 1996). Currently, this channel only plays popular music that does not make it into MTV's playlist. M2 has no presenters and no advertisements. Instead, the breaks are filled with idents and musician-interviews (where they tend to talk about the music that they like, rather than blatantly promote their latest single or album). However, few people have access to digital TV. If the ratings increase, the policy of no adverts may also change to suit the market.

Finally, in this process, which might be seen as either the regionalisation of MTV or the localisation of Viva some 'local points of view' are more heard than others. It appears that every geo-cultural market has a dominant member, such as Germany within the Germanophone area. The issue might not be just that of the position of Austria in relation to Germany or Belgium in relation to France. The fate of countries such as Holland or Finland or former Eastern European states such as Poland or Hungary in the global world is also an issue, as the centres of power within geo-cultural regions absorb the weaker. The question of minority populations within and across such centres also needs addressing. An analysis of 'globalisation' needs to acknowledge equally the global powers 'from nowhere' and the global powers arising 'from somewhere'.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was twofold: to round off the debates in chapters 4 and 5 by proposing a more appropriate framework for the study of music television; and to link the chapters so far, in which general arguments about MTV were made, with the case-studies that follow. In this context, chapter 6 represents a 'case-study' of MTV in Germany.

The case of MTV - as a form of global mass communication - suggests that 'globalisation' as a process whereby the 'world' is becoming a standardised and culturally homogenised place is not happening. Instead, MTV's ability to globalise is:

a) determined by the particularities of local (national) territories in which MTV operates. Here, there are three main factors determining MTV's success or failure, the weight of which varies according to local conditions: distribution and access to cable/satellite TV; programme options on terrestrial TV and the strength of national feeling;

b) largely confined to cosmopolitan sections of society; i.e. those which are open towards divergent cultural experiences and involved with at least one culture carried by a transnational network rather than by territory (cf. Hannerz, 1990).

So far, these arguments have been illustrated through a case-study of MTV in Germany, where all the factors conducive to MTV's success were favourable. Germany is among Europe's most developed cable/satellite TV markets. From the economic perspective, MTV delivered the 'youth' target to advertisers. It also took advantage of the 'wearing off' of public service TV. 'Culturally', MTV was encoded with a symbolic value associated with unprecedented political changes in Germany and Europe more generally. Consequently, Germany became MTV's most lucrative, and therefore, most important market. At the same time, the channel was genuinely popular among 'youthful' Germans.

However, the advent of Viva revealed the weaknesses of MTV. MTV's cosmopolitan vision of a Europe with one common denominator language was not as 'universally' appealing as the channel's meta-language would have us believe. Equally, the case of Viva raised questions for further research about the meaning of the 'local' in a 'global' age.

The chapters that follow continue to support the general arguments concerning the process of globalisation proposed in this chapter, by examining how particular local conditions determined MTV's position in a given territory. First, we shall look at MTV's impact on France, which represents a sharp contrast to Germany. France is also rare in Europe in that there was a local music television narrowcaster during the initial phase of MTV's expansion but, unlike Viva, it did not affect MTV's position. The study of the French TV landscape will provide further evidence about the crucial link between channel design and market imperative, i.e. narrowcasting. Questions about the 'global' and the 'local' will be raised thereafter.

This analysis of MTV will then move onto Eastern Europe, a terrain that will be in part defined politically, in relation to the Iron Curtain and its remnants. The symbolic value of MTV following the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, an issue touched on in this chapter, will be elaborated upon. By doing so, the cultural imperialism thesis that seeks to explain the significance of an institution like MTV by conflating economics and cultural effects will be criticised from an Eastern European perspective.

CHAPTER 7

MTV IN FRANCE: MINIMUM CABLE POTENTIAL, MAXIMUM DISTRIBUTION

INTRODUCTION

Unlike Germany, which is one of Europe's most developed cable markets today, France is among the least developed cable markets. Consequently, MTV's potential audience reach in France is limited. Influenced by the debates over the 'protection' of French culture (implicitly from an 'American invasion') that were going on in France in the 1980s and 1990s, I presumed that there was a connection between 'cultural protectionism' and MTV's distribution in France. However, preliminary research showed that 'cultural protectionism' was not the main issue when it comes to MTV's apparently poor performance in France. MTV 'did as well as can be', as it were, but the possibilities for its further expansion were inhibited by the collorary effects of the French government's mis-managed plans to develop cable.

Thus, MTV's position in the French cable TV landscape cannot be understood without reference to the governmental policy on new communications technologies, which will be examined first. Not unrelated to this policy is the considerable number of channels on terrestrial TV. Central to the discussion in this context will be the issues of narrowcasting and broadcasting. The main question will be whether the terrestrial channels left a vacant space for MTV in France. In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to give some background information about the developments of the French TV industry in the 1980s and 1990s. Particularly relevant for MTV's place in the French TV landscape will be the respective policies on advertising on the fourth channel Canal Plus and the French channels with a music orientation on terrestrial TV.

Another particularity of the French TV market is that there has been a French music television narrowcaster, MCM, since 1989. However, unlike Viva in Germany, this

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channel did not slow down the expansion of MTV. The case of MCM will further support this thesis' argument about narrowcasting as well as raise similar questions about the 'global' and the 'local' to those in chapter 6. Finally, this chapter will draw attention to the discrepancy between MTV's pan-European music policy (cf. chapter 5) and the particularities of the French music market.

7.1 DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS TO CABLE/SATELLITE TV IN FRANCE

The situation of cable and satellite television in France is caught up in a paradox: despite large-scale state investment in these new communication technologies in the 1980s, their impact in France remains marginal. MTV's position in the French cable lanscape will be examined in relation to failure of what is known as the cable plan.

7.1.1 THE CABLE PLAN

Under the presidency of François Miterrand, whose first presidential term began in 1981, both cable and satellite were elevated to the status of essential components in the communications revolution. The implications of the development of new communications technologies extended far beyond their capacity for extending viewers' programming choice. Of much greater significance than the programme 'offer' was the government's belief that the concentration of resources into the new information technologies would ensure a place for France in the vanguard of the communications revolution of the late twentieth century and therefore a strong position in the global market (cf. chapter 4). Without any consultation with programme makers, both the cable and satellite projects were led by technocrats within the state apparatus, whose interests were often conflicting. However, given the highly technical nature of the controversy, this conflict was kept out of the public domain. Raymond Kuhn rightly observes that: "The case of satellite (and cable) development in France serves as a reminder of the fallibility of technical expertise at the heart of the policy-making process and of the limitations of technocracy in controlling the policy environment" (1995:228; also see Kuhn 1988).

In order to assess the factors which impeded the development of new communication technologies in France, and by extension MTV, more attention will be paid to what is known as the *Plan cable* than to satellite television, simply because the number of satellite dishes capable of receiving MTV in France is negligible. France is among the Western European countries least equipped with satellite dishes. The penetration of satellite in France oscillates between 1% and 5% (cf. Panorama de la réception direct par satellite, 1994). MTV is transmitted from Astra 1A/1B and Eutelsat II F1, which carry no French services[1] and are therefore less in demand than the French satellites Telecom 2A and 2B and TDF1/2. For the purpose of illustration, in 1993, out of the 485 000 dishes in France, only 25% were used to capture programmes from Astra and Eutelsat (cf. ibid.).

The *Plan Cable* - for which the technocrats in the Post, Telegraphy and Telephony (PTT) ministry were leading lobbyists - was established in 1982 by the Socialist government. This plan was a state-funded project which was controlled by the General Directorate of Telecommunications. The industrial thrust behind this plan was paramount, as state-of-the-art fibre optic cable was to be installed. The choice of the most expensive cable technology pandered to the government's much heralded hi-tech ambitions. However, because of a mixture of financial, technical, bureaucratic and regulatory miscalculations the cable plan failed to deliver across a range of objectives (cf. Kuhn, 1995). When the Gaullist-Giscardian coalition returned to power in 1986[2], they put an end to the State monopoly and redefined cable's legal and legislative framework. Under the new legislation, local authorities were given the freedom to choose the cable operator for their area (cf. Panorama des chaînes du cable, 1995).

The three main cable operators in France are La Compagnie Générale de Videocommunications/Région cable (the cable subsidiary of the water company La Générale des eaux), France Télécom Cable/former 'Com-Dev' (the cable subsidiary of France Télécom) and Lyonnaise Communication (the cable subsidiary of the water

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[1] It is worth noting, however, that in November 1994, Canal Plus signed a contract with the Société Européenne des Satellites to lease four transponders on the Astra 1E and two transpoders on Astra 1F. Also, when the French music channel MCM moved into the digital broadcasting arena in 1996, its multiplex version became available on Hot Bird 1 - Eutelsat, which is the same satellite that carries MTV.

[2] The period between 1986 and 1988 when Mitterand, 'from the Left', held the presidency while the government was headed by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, 'from the Right', is known as *cohabitation*.

company La Lyonnaise des eaux*)*. Smaller cable operators are grouped in the association of cable operators called Association des Nouveaux Opérateurs Constructeurs de réseaux cablés (ANOC). The main cable operators whose plans were to have considerably expanded the cable network in France by 1989 - as part of the *Plan Cable* - failed in this aim. Some minor construction work was undertaken until 1992. From 1992 onwards, the plans to build new cable networks were abandoned in favour of completing the constructions under way (cf. L'état du cable en France, 1995). It is only then that cable operators devised more effective marketing strategies in order to recruit subscribers. It took, therefore, almost a decade before they even began to develop a proper commercial strategy in order to promote a cable service which is, above all, a commercial enterprise.

The lack of promotional strategies for cable TV is a direct consequence of a state strategy characterised by technological determinism. In effect, television - which is, above all, a cultural industry - was left in the hands of those whose business is to supply either water or telephone services. As Thouvenot observes:

> One of the difficulties of developing cable in France is that people in charge of developing cable, La Générale des eaux and La Lyonnaise des eaux, sold cable like they sold water, which wasn't market-oriented at all. They were coming to you at home saying we've got cable, subscribe to it, without really understanding it. They couldn't make people feel like subscribing (interview, 04/09/95).

The acquisition of a direct interest in France's three main cable operators by the successful media group Canal Plus marked the beginning of a coherent cable-commercialisation policy. Since 1990 - through its subsidiary company Ellipse Cable - Canal Plus operates the following French thematic channels in partnership with cable operators: Canal Jimmy, Planète, Ciné-Cinémas, Ciné-Cinéfil, Montecarlo TMC and Eurosport (the French-language version). In 1991, Canal Plus became a shareholder in two additional thematic channels, Canal J and Paris Première. In 1992, the French music television MCM was also included in the Canal Plus programming package.

Canal Plus' attempts at promoting cable and satellite TV began to have an impact around the mid-1990s. To begin with, the standing of cable channels in the public eye

improved somewhat owing to numerous promotional campaigns (cf. CSA Rapport d'activité pour 1994). To say that cable TV in France really took off would be an exaggeration, but the accelerated growth of the total number of subscribers in 1994 is nonetheless worth noting (cf. L'état du cable en France, 1995). In 1994, the thematic channels' turnover was encouraging, as profits increased by approximately 40%, although most channels still operated at a loss.

In France in 1995, there were 21.4 million homes with TV sets and 5.8 million passed with cable (cf. L'état du cable en France, 1995). Out of that number, 1 625 000 homes subscribed to cable TV, on the basis of which a report states that "henceforth, cable is facing the future with optimism" (cf. Panorama des chaînes du cable, 1995). Based on the tendencies observed in previous years, the regulatory body called the Higher Audiovisual Council (CSA)[3] predicts that 3.4 million homes will subscribe to cable TV by the year 2000 (source: L'état du cable en France, CSA, Septembre, 1995). A number of studies about cable TV were published also predicting a brighter future for cable (see Matichard, 1995; 'Le cable, une télévision différente', 1995).

The cable industry appears to have found adequate commercial backing. It also benefits from Canal Plus' know-how in programme making (see section 7.2). Since April 1995, a professional institution called Association Française des Cablo-Opérateurs (AFCO) was founded to monitor and promote cable TV. The CSA also confirmed its commitment to this industry. The future of cable as France prepared to enter the digital age was the topic of the major audiovisual conference *Médiaville* held in September 1995 (see 'Médiaville Montpellier', 1995; CSA lettre, 1995b). In the keynote address, the President of the CSA, Hervé Bourges, confirmed the CSA's determination to support the cable industry (cf. 'Médiaville Montpellier', 1995).

However, all these positive developments are undermined by the harsh market reality for cable in France, which is characterised by limited distribution, low penetration and high access cost. The rate of cable penetration in homes passed with cable is less than

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[3] In French, CSA stands for Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. For an introductory reading about how the CSA came into being and its function, see for example Kuhn, 1995; Perry, 1997; Le Conseil Supérieur de l'audiovisuel, CSA, July, 1995.

30%. Despite the fact that France had a 'grandiose' *Plan cable*, in fact, cable penetration remains on a level with Spain and Portugal, whose cable industries are at an embryonic stage, and Italy and Greece, whose cable industries are virtually non-existent. Moreover, the high cost of cable-installation acts as a deterrent to subscribers in France. Annual takings per subscriber in France are some 75% higher than the European average, which is supported by a number of studies that emphasise the extremely high price of the basic cable service in France (L' état du cable en France, 1995:9). Consequently, French cable subscription revenue represents 7% of the total European turn-over, although France represents only 4% of actual subscribers in Europe (cf. ibid.) .

7.1.2 MTV'S POSITION IN THE FRENCH CABLE TV LANDSCAPE

MTV's position in the French cable TV landscape has to be understood in relation to the market reality of cable TV in France. What prevents MTV, and likewise French channels on cable, from fully exploiting the French cable market potential is the high cost of subscription. As indicated above, over two thirds of homes passed with cable do not subscribe to cable TV. According to Guild, "pricing is a real problem and I would say the principal problem" (interview, 26/07/94). Otherwise, within France's under-developed cable network and expensive cable services, MTV achieved what they call 'maximum distribution'. In other words, MTV performed as well as can be expected, given that every French cable operator carries MTV as part of the basic cable offer.

MTV's attempts to break into the French market began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the channel's first objective was to get the cable operators to carry the service. The next stage in MTV's strategy was to convince cable operators to actually pay for this service. An agreement between MTV and the cable operators was reached in 1992 when cable operators began to pay a fee to MTV, although they only did this reluctantly because MTV continued to be available as an unscrambled service via satellite until July 1995. By 1993, MTV achieved 'maximum distribution' in France (Guild, interview, 26/07/94). However, when the number of French thematic channels

began to increase in the mid-1990s, the prospect of MTV being taken off the basic cable service was feared within the company. If that were to happen, a fee would be added on top of the basic cable subscription fee for the luxury of having what would then be considered an additional viewing choice. This would restrict the already limited market for MTV in France to a tiny fraction.

In order to ensure that MTV remained available on cable without additional cost to the subscriber, in 1995 MTV employed a new director for strategy and development and a marketing director in the Paris office. Their task was to raise cable awareness in order to convince cable operators that MTV was a service worth keeping on basic offer. As indicated in chapter 2, MTV commissions surveys for this purpose. The second MTV European Video Music Awards were held in Paris in November 1995 as part of this strategy. In the words of MTV's strategy and development director in Paris, Roy Lindemann:

> It's around this big event that we are trying to increase the awareness and the brand MTV in France. Why are we doing that? To say that MTV is a brand and it's not only a brand, it's got good quality programming behind it. So, we deserve to stay in the basic segment as a basic option (interview, 04/09/95).

During the period building up to the Awards, some 'cable awareness' work was literally done on the streets of Paris. For example, promotional stands were put up in markets. Various tactics were deployed to attract the curiosity of passers-by. Leaflets with information about MTV 'available on cable only' and its 'tempting' competitions were distributed. Throughout the period under investigation in this chapter, MTV remained part of the basic cable service in France.

7.2 PROGRAMME OPTIONS ON TERRESTRIAL TV

Sheila Perry observes that:

> A major turning-point in the development of French television came in 1982. For nearly forty years prior to that, the state exercised a monopoly of control over the broadcasting media (both radio and television). The relatively short period since 1982 has seen a somewhat frenzied attempt to reform the system, often for short-term political gain at the expense of

long-term strategic planning (1997:116; also see Kuhn, 1995; Lamizet, 1996).

These manoeuvres resulted in an incoherent government policy which simultaneously promoted the expansion of new terrestrial channels and satellite and cable channels. When the first thematic channel Canal J was created in 1986, two new terrestrial channels - TV6 (succeeded by M6 in 1987) and France Cinq (succeeded by La Cinq in 1987) - went on air (cf. Panorama des chaînes du cable, 1995). The decision to launch two terrestrial channels in addition to the existing two national public service channels - TF1 and A2 - and the regional FR3 was a rude awakening for the already struggling cable industry. An obvious question to be raised is why would people in France pay a high price for extra channels on cable if they could get supplementary channels on terrestrial TV without additional cost?

Notwithstanding the policy makers' neglect of this question which inhibited the prospects for cable/satellite TV, a growing number of TV viewers in France nevertheless began to subscribe to another new channel, visibly different from other terrestrial channels called Canal Plus. Canal Plus was launched in 1984 as Europe's first pay-terrestrial TV and went on to become the major success story of the liberal era of French television[4]. I want to suggest that in terms of choice on TV, Canal Plus began to supply in France what satellite/cable TV began to supply in other European countries - where there was no pay-terrestrial TV - when the new technologies became available. The argument proposed in this section is that despite the fact that the relatively high cost of subscription to Canal Plus puts cable/satellite TV operators in a disadvantaged position, the potential consumer of cable/satellite TV in France, and MTV in particular, is nonetheless hidden somewhere among the Canal Plus audience. In fact, there are more similarities between Canal Plus and MTV than between M6 - the terrestrial channel with a music-programming orientation - and MTV, although Canal Plus plays less music than M6. To substantiate this argument, it is necessary to

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[4] For an insight into the development of Canal Plus see, for example Luven and Vedel (1993); Kuhn (1995). It is also worth consulting the Canal Plus annual reports and press releases as well as Canal Plus' 'activity reports' released every year by the CSA, such as CSA lettre (1995a).

take into account the peculiar position that Canal Plus occupies in the French TV landscape.

To begin with, Canal Plus was allocated a vacant terrestrial transmission network. Hence, at its inception, it already had some 88% coverage of France. Direct broadcast by satellite available from 1988 enabled Canal Plus to have the total coverage of the French territory (cf. Canal Plus Rapport, 1993). The novel option of Canal Plus decided on by the government was "a pay television channel which could market itself on providing the viewer with a different programme schedule from the mixed diet of the three public service networks" (Khun, 1995:179). Compared to any subscription channel distributed via cable or satellite in Europe, Canal Plus was in a unique position. In terms of audience reach it was effectively a broadcaster, but in terms of programming output, it was conceived of as a complementary choice to terrestrial TV, like a narrowcaster. However, because the potential audience for Canal Plus was by far larger than that for any commercial service on cable/satellite in most European countries, Canal Plus could potentially generate more revenue from subscription than cable/satellite TV operators.

It is, nonetheless, worth noting that initially, viewers in France were reluctant to pay for the new type of television that Canal Plus was. This slow subscription take-up led the government to permit some advertising on Canal Plus, in an attempt to boost the channel's income (cf. Khun, 1995). However, advertising as a source of revenue remained mininal because the government originally envisaged that Canal Plus would make no demands on the commercial sector (and the already overloaded license fee system, for that matter) (cf. ibid.). To be more precise, 10% of Canal Plus' revenue is derived from advertising, 90% is generated from subscription. Not being dependent on advertising revenue proved to be beneficial for Canal Plus in the longer run. Here, political power games - rather than a well-thought-out audiovisual policy - created a favourable condition for Canal Plus to expand. A brief examination of the broadcasting bill piloted by the Right government during the period of *cohabition*, will help to clarify this point.

Most of the proposed reforms engendered "a new audiovisual environment in which the system had been rebalanced to favour the commercial sector and the market ethos" (Khun, 1995:189). Most controversial was the decision to privatise the first national public service channel, TF1. The consequences of the privatisation of TF1 are twofold. Firstly, it had cultural repercussions. The Left and the Right in France are at odds with each other on many issues, but the cultural danger that "new television channels might become mere distribution outlets for foreign, especially American, programming" (Kuhn, 1995:167) is a shared concern. While the Socialists' badly managed cable and satellite TV policies, in effect, acted as a shield against not only the 'attack' of 'Coca-Cola satellites' (cf. chapter 4), but also the development of French satellite TV services, the Right's decision to privatise TF1 achieved precisely what both these political opponents sought to avoid. TF1 became a major outlet for programmes that, as Mattelart et al. put it, carry "a national label stuck on what is essentially a transnational copy" (1984:18). Consequently: "Many of the negative aspects of commercialisation - low-cost production, repeats, game-shows, soaps and old films" (Weymouth, 1996:34) are already too apparent on TF1 as its standards of production have fallen.

Secondly, the privatisation of TF1 had a knock-on effect on the rest of the terrestrial TV sector. Once TF1 adapted to the new commercial environment, it became the most attractive choice for advertisers who wished to target a nationwide mass audience. TF1's audience share is 40%, on the basis of which it gets approximately 50% of the total advertising revenue (see figures in Kuhn, 1995:199; Lamizet, 1996:91). As a result, the remaining public service channels A2 and FR3 experienced all sorts of financial and institutional problems, as their audience ratings plummeted. Raymond Kuhn observes that:

> For Antenne 2, the head-to-head competition with the privatised TF1 had proved particularly damaging. Though supposedly a public service, Antenne 2 had tried to maximise its audience in a struggle for advertising revenue[5], which represented 66% of its total income. FR3, which was nominally a regional channel was, in reality, also involved in a nationwide competition for advertising revenue (ibid.).

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[5] Since 1968, the government had allowed commercials on state television. This decision killed two birds with one stone. It supplemented the income of ORTF (the government controlled audiovisual regulatory body) and it defused the pressure for the establishment of a commercial channel, which did not suit the Gaullist state's monopoly on TV (cf. Kuhn, 1995; Perry, 1997).

On the other hand, the newly created commercial channel La Cinq, which did not initially have full national coverage for technical reasons, simply could not compete with the newly privatised giant. In 1992, La Cinq collapsed and was replaced by Arte, the Franco-German public service channel with a cultural vocation[6]. In December 1994, a new channel - La Cinquième - was added to share the frequency with Arte. TV 6 , the other new channel launched by the Left government in 1986, was closed down in 1987 by the Right government upon their return to power. TV6 gave way to the channel M6. The case of TV6 and M6, respectively, is examined in section 3.

In such an unstable audiovisual environment, the fact that Canal Plus did not have to enter the ratings race in order to compete for a share of the advertising revenue became a favourable condition for the development of this channel in France. Instead of prioritising advertisers, Canal Plus needed to invent a new kind of television that would attract potential subscribers. There is a parallel, here, between MTV and Canal Plus, although Canal Plus did not depend on a partnership with advertisers as extensively as MTV did. This similarity has caught the eye of commentators such as Levy (1992), who claims that in terms of channel design and visual presentation, Canal Plus noticeably modelled itself on MTV (US).

However, I want to suggest that the similarity between Canal Plus and MTV extends beyond aesthetics. These channels' designs are related to their respective material *raison d'être*. Canal Plus, like MTV, needed to construct an audience for the kind of service it was pioneering. The only way to be new was to be clearly different from the already available viewing choices - i.e. public service channels. As we saw in the example of MTV, being different often required higher investment in risk-taking such as being more open to experimental programming. However, the degree of creativity involved in producing a channel like MTV is primarily related to the economic motivation behind this sophisticated visual product. Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated that MTV did not compete for high ratings with terrestrial broadcasters. Rather, it

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[6] Between 1990 and 1992, there was a cultural channel called La Sept which was temporarily allocated a frequency on FR3 every Saturday from 3pm to midnight. La Sept was effectively repackaged as Arte.

concentrated resources on creating a strong channel identity, on the basis of which it built a small but loyal viewership. That niche audience was then sold to advertisers.

Canal Plus was in a similar position. It needed an innovative programming output to recruit subscribers, whose renewed custom was imperative for the channel's survival. In other words, the channel Canal Plus needed to become the brand Canal Plus (cf. chapter 2). At the stage of 'recruiting' viewers, Canal Plus, like MTV, benefited from what was described in chapter 2 as the 'wearing off' of public service TV. Canal Plus came into existence "at a time when demand was appearing for a more diversified television service which had not yet been satisfied either by other television channels or by cable" (Kuhn, 1995:202). Like in the rest of Europe, in France there was a great dissatisfaction with public service TV. Opinion polls showed that its output was "stultifying and unimaginative" (Kuhn, 1995:167). One aspect of the 'novelty' of Canal Plus were the channel's two main programming pillars, films and major sporting events (cf. Canal Plus Rapport, 1993). In effect, Canal Plus was a 'two in one' branded channel, offering the most attractive complementary viewing choices. In this context, Canal Plus capitalised on particularly beneficial arrangements with the cinema industry as well as favourable legislation under which it was exempt from public service obligations (see Kuhn, 1995:180).

At the stage of actually 'keeping' the viewers who decided to subscribe, the similarity between Canal Plus and MTV is even more apparent. As already indicated in chapter 2, Canal Plus employed a similar strategy of developing a rapport with the viewer to that of MTV. Canal Plus created an 'environment' for viewers to be part of, just like MTV did. Luven and Vedel (1993) termed this the 'club effect' of Canal Plus. What Canal Plus achieved was to establish what they call a *culture d'image* - which literally means an 'image culture' - that viewers are willing to buy into. The process of establishing a rapport with the viewer takes time, as Gallot explains: "It's extremely long. It takes a long time to convince a public and say 'you're part of my family, watch me, I'm part of yours!'. It takes a long time for things to settle down" (interview, 06/09/95). It also takes substantial financial resources as this convivial relationship with subscribers has to be constantly nurtured. This is done through " a

host of communications tools (including a magazine, mail, telephone, videotext and voice mail) and special promotions of events such as the 'Day of Television'" (source: Canal Plus Rapport, 1993:30). However, once the work is done, viewers stay loyal.

The number of Canal Plus subscribers in France has constantly grown and consumer satisfaction with the service has been high. Hence, the subscription renewal rate is also high. For the purpose of illustration, in 1993, the monthly subscription fee was 169F for viewers with the French Secam standard and 137F for those using the D2-Mac mode of delivery. At the end of 1993, there were 3 708 375 subscribers. Among those, 405 882 were new and 266 542 cancelled their subscription. The total subscription revenue for that year amounted to 7.066 million francs compared to 439 million francs derived from advertising and sponsorship. Even at the end of 1994 - a year of decline of overall financial results which reflected an ambitious investment strategy (both at home and abroad) along with an increase of expenditure - Canal Plus still remained the most profitable channel in France. The number of subscribers grew, once again, and reached the number of 3 870 086 (source: Canal Plus Rapport, 1994).

The establishment in the marketplace of this kind of willingness to pay for a complementary television service is a bonus when it comes to recruiting subscribers for cable/satellite TV. According to Guild: "The most likely people to buy cable and get more channels are people who are already supplied [with more television] , i.e. subscribing to Canal Plus" (interview, 26/07/94). Research into cable/satellite viewing habits in France also reveals that the most common shared feature by the audience for cable TV is not their demographic profile but

> the great interest they have in television. In terms of TV equipment, they have more of everything: television sets, video-recorders, subscription to Canal Plus. The cable viewer wants to have all the audiovisual resources, he or she is passionate about image (*un passioné d'images*) [...] He or she consumes more television: on average 4 hours per day according to December viewing-figures for the adult cable viewer, compared to 3 hours 20 minutes for non -subscribers. Cable channels occupy 20% of that time (Chatras, 1995:2).

This leads one to conclude that MTV's 'youthful viewer' (cf. chapter 2) is somewhere among these 'passionate about image' who acquired their 'image culture' through years of loyalty to Canal Plus. The apparent contradiction whereby Canal Plus - the channel that represents the main obstacle for cable TV operators because it is the first complementary choice for which viewers in France are willing to pay - is also the channel that created the conditions for cable to develop can be explained as follows. With astute promotional campaigns, Canal Plus slowly but surely 'educated' the viewers in a self-serving manner: Canal Plus viewers were part of a privileged club of individuals to whom viewing television was a matter of personal choice, just like MTV viewers. Canal Plus' promotional campaigns are reminiscent of the popular phrase among MTV's advertising-sales personnel, that thematic-channel viewers can watch 'what they want, when they want'. Canal Plus might not be a prototypically thematic channel in that it does not offer 24-hours of the same theme. However, to maximise its film audience, Canal Plus introduced the system of 'multidiffusion' "whereby a film was shown three to six times over a two-week period at different times of the day" (Kuhn, 1995:180). It also regularly offered live coverage of major sporting events to attract sports fans. By doing so, it prepared the grounds for the development of additional thematic channels and, not surprisingly, took shares in cable and satellite TV as part of its media diversification strategy.

As regards music television more particularly, by considering music as the third thematic choice, Canal Plus left a small vacant place for a channel like MTV. According to music programmer Isabelle Odiana, Canal Plus' music policy is

> to cover big events, which is what subscribers like the most. And, of course, it is them we're trying to please. So, the policy around this is to do events, concerts that were successful - what we call *l'évènementiel* - what is famous and what people relate to, concerts like the Stones that people can't necessarily pay tickets for. So, that's one thing. Secondly, we broadcast music documentaries, which are covering slightly different people like Miles Davi s, Coltrane. Now, we're preparing a documentary on Billie Ho liday (interview, 06/09/95).

However, these 'events' are exceptional occasions. Gallot observes that such an occasion can be "Pavarotti in concert, but because we showed it doesn't mean that

we're going to introduce an opera slot or lyrical music feature every month" (06/09/95). Canal Plus' orientation towards 'events' leads one to conclude there is an audience in France who might wish to watch what MTV termed as 'rockumentaries' (and when more appropriate to the music genre: 'popumentaries', 'reggaementaries') or 'live' music on television. Here, MTV's *Unplugged* recordings enjoy a good reputation among a niche of music fans. According to Thouvenot, *Unplugged* became known in France mainly through word-of-mouth (interview, 04/09/95). Furthermore, Canal Plus plays international music at the expense of French *variété* (cf. chapter 5). Again, MTV offers the kind of international music that panders to audiences in France who think that 'French rock is like English cooking' (see section 7.4). Hence, there may well be a an audience segment for MTV that can be extracted from the audience for Canal Plus.

More importantly, however, Canal Plus did not rely on advertising revenue for survival in the market. The possibility for delivering audience segments to advertisers by filling the gaps in broadcasters' audience reach was left virtually unexploited. This is particularly true of the most desirable audience segment to advertisers, the youth. This is where MTV fits in. The next section will demonstrate how, in spite of the existence of music televisions in France, none of them represented serious competition to MTV, precisely because none of them were conceived of as proper narrowcasters.

Before that, to sum up so far, it can be said that despite different thematic orientations, Canal Plus took advantage in France of the same factors that MTV successfully exploited on a pan-European scale, albeit in different politico-economic circumstances. The same things that were favourable circumstances for the development of Canal Plus in France were, by the same token, a considerable set-back for the development of cable and subsequently satellite TV. However, once cable/satellite TV began to be properly marketed, research showed that cable viewers were heavy television consumers and subscribers to Canal Plus. This suggests that within the Canal Plus viewership there is a small potential audience for cable/satellite TV in France. As regards music television specifically, the experience of Canal Plus

has shown that music programming, which is part of the channel's 'events', is the third attraction after films and sports. This, in turn, suggests that there is a still an untapped potential audience for a 24 hour music television in France. It is then the task of the thematic channel to establish a channel identity on the basis of which this channel would attract advertisers. The other major task is to encourage marketing work to raise cable awareness in order to get new subscribers and thus exploit this source of revenue.

7.3 OPTIONS OF MUSIC TV CHANNELS IN FRANCE

As a preliminary to the discussion in this section, it is necessary to recapitulate some of the arguments made in previous chapters. A central argument in this thesis is that the impact of new communications technologies on Europe is exaggerated. In terms of TV viewing preferences, European audiences first and foremost watch domestic productions on terrestrial TV networks. New technologies are often used for better reception of such programmes. In these respects, French viewers are not an exception. Given that they get five channels in return for the TV licence fee, they are quite reluctant to acquire a satellite dish or to subscribe to cable TV even in areas passed with cable, unless TV reception is poor in their area. Canal Plus enjoys a peculiar position in France in that its viewers willingly pay for this service, but even so Canal Plus' productions still remain 'domestic' ones. It can therefore be said that the vast majority of French viewers watch terrestrial TV. Only a small fraction of the population has access to foreign programmes on cable/satellite TV in their homes.

Moreover, a 'local' thematic channel can also draw away audiences from its foreign competitor. Chapter 6 demonstrated how the advent of the 'local' music channel Viva in Germany seriously affected the position of MTV in the German television landscape. The advent of Viva entailed significant changes in MTV's programming strategy, the main music playlist in particular, to suit the German market. The fact that MTV was prepared to jeopardise its pan-European programming strategy in order to accommodate the audience demand for more indigenous programming in its most lucrative market also indicates the importance of locality. In contrast, in France

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neither the presence of a terrestrial music channel nor that of a French music television on cable/satellite appeared to have hindered the development of MTV. This section examines why.

7.3.1 *TV6/M6*

The first French music channel TV6 was launched in 1986, only to be closed down in 1987. Alexandre Levy comments that: "For the first time in the history of Western television, a channel ceased to exist solely because of the power of political will" (1992:128). The decision to abolish the sixth channel's franchise was the result of political and economic manoeuvres, which are endemic to French media policy. In brief, when the Right returned to power in 1986, it changed the broadcasting legislation to accommodate its own agenda. The Right's main objective was to reduce the level of state ownership of the French media in favour of the principle of private ownership. In spite of this, however, as Kuhn (1995) observes, the state continued to play a major regulatory role, most notably through controlling appointments to the newly founded regulatory body called the National Commission for Communication and Liberties (CNCL)[7]. According to Kuhn, "an early manifestation of this interventionist tendency concerned the franchise allocations for channels five and six" (1995:188). Under this new deal, the former general secretary of the Gaullist party turned chairman of La Lyonnaise des Eaux, led the consortium which was awarded the new franchise for the sixth channel.

The official reason behind the decision to cut short the newly launched TV6 was its financial non-viability. However, this claim left a number of commentators unconvinced. For example, Kuhn (1995:189) indicates that TV6 built up a 'very respectable' audience, especially among young viewers. Levy's (1992) more in depth analysis of TV6 further demonstrates that the channel fulfilled its demanding *cahier des charges* - which is a set of channel duties prescribed by the audiovisual regulatory body in power, in order to contribute to the French economy and encourage the much

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[7] The CNCL replaced the previous regulatory body called the High Authority. The CSA, which is the current regulatory body was established in 1989, after the re-election of Mitterand and the change of government in 1988.

talked about 'French culture' (*la culture française*) - remarkably well. According to Levy, during the short life-span of TV6, the production of French music video clips increased from 30 in 1985 to 40 produced by TV6 in just 8 months; new music talent was boosted, such as Etienne Daho, Niagara, Les Rita Mitsouko; and the sales of audiovisual hardware in France increased, given that every time a transpoder carrying TV6 and La Cinq was introduced in a French region, the number of TV sets sold in that region increased. In 8 months, TV6 generated 7 million francs in advertising revenue. When films, situational comedies and game-shows were added to the music content of the channel and a new grid was subsequently introduced, in just 15 days the audience figures increased by 40%. In 4 months, the channel generated an additional 9 million francs from advertising. The future of TV6 as a more generalist channel was, therefore, looking bright. When TV6 closed down, it had made 17 million francs out of the predicted 40 million (cf. Levy, 1992).

The discrepancy between public opinion (in favour of TV6) and political allegation of this channel's poor performance in terms of revenue, confirmed by statistical evidence, can be elucidated by stressing the difference between narrowcasting and broadcasting. The question is whether the projected profit of 40 million by those who regulate the audiovisual industry was a reasonable expectation. Even though TV6 was allocated a terrestrial transmitter, it was conceived of as a thematic channel (i.e. a narrowcaster). And, as demonstrated in chapter 3, narrowcasters cannot compete for the same ratings as generalist channels, on the basis of which advertising revenue is generated. Levy rightly argues that: "The experience of TV6 demonstrates that a thematic channel (in this case musical) transmitted on a terrestrial network in peak viewing times cannot rival the generalist channels - be it in terms of audience figures or advertising revenue" (1992:130).

Even record companies would rather advertise on the main generalist channels TF1 and A2 than M6 (the music channel that replaced TV 6) (cf. Levy, 1992). On the basis of figures which indicate the sum of advertising revenue on television in France derived from the recording industry, Guillaume Sainteny (1993) argues that the absolute value of this source of revenue is in inverse proportion to the degree of

thematisation of a channel. As the degree of thematisation increases - on a scale: La Cinq (with the lowest degree), to M6 and MCM (the French equivalent of MTV, see section 7.3.2) - the amount of revenue decreases. An additional problem confronted by TV6 was its inability to meet the cost of the terrestrial transmitter whose lease is charged for, while in the meantime, the potentially lucrative subscription revenue is neglected. The conclusion from this drawn by Sainteny is that the mode of transmission suitable for a thematic channel (aimed at a limited audience target), regardless of its theme, is not terrestrial - which is consumed by huge audience numbers on the basis of which profits are made - but cable. Levy similarly claims that "the natural place of a thematic channel is on cable" (1992:130).

When M6 replaced TV6 in 1987, no systematic attempt was made on behalf of the government to improve M6's chances of survival in the market. If, as governmental officials claimed, TV6 was not commercially viable, then it would have been logical to organise the new channel M6 in a way that would boost its advertising revenue. However, instead, M6 inherited the *cahiers des charges* from TV6. Hence, M6 became a music channel by default because its prescribed duties (*charges*) were at variance with its market requirements. The words of M6's president director general that M6 is "a generalist channel with a strong music dominance" (quoted in Levy, 1992:113) should be interpreted in relation to this discrepancy between the channel's commitment to music 'by duty' and the imperative to be a generalist channel in order to compete for advertising revenue.

This idea of a commitment to French music 'by duty' has to be understood within the overarching framework of the numerous governmental measures to protect French cultural identity (of which musical creativity is a part) from foreign (read Anglo-American) invasion. M6's duties (*charges*) were prescribed in a way that would supposedly encourage the production of French popular music and thus contribute towards the development and nurturing of the *culture française*. Hence, M6's *cahier des charges* is particularly heavily-charged with obligations ('quotas') to broadcast music programmes (*quotas de diffusion*) and also to produce French music video clips (*quotas de production*).

The proportion of broadcasting quotas is in line with the 1989 European Directive (cf. chapter 4). M6 is under the obligation to dedicate a minimum of 40% of its total programming output to music content. Out of this, 50% of music has to be what is called 'a work of original French expression' (*oeuvre d'expression originale française*) and francophone and 60% 'work of European origin' (*oeuvre d'origine européenne* (cf. Levy, 1992). In addition, M6 must produce a minimum of 100 music clips per annum and 100 clips dedicated to new talent (ibid.). These production 'quotas' go back to the 1985 Lang law (*loi Lang*) which equates an audiovisual work (i.e. the music video) with any other work of art (cf. Levy, 1992:94). Since "the French clips are considered to be French audiovisual works, they count toward the channel's quota of home-produced programming (cf. Kuhn, 1995:201). The extent to which 'quotas' actually help new French talent is dubious (an aspect of 'quotas' will be discussed in section 7.4). M6 (and other TV channels and radios for that matter) often schedule music programmes in the early hours of the morning, just to fill in 'quotas'. According to Perry, "much of the work of the CSA has been the sanctioning of television channels which have failed to respect the quota system" (1997:125).

That music programmes on M6 are 'at any time but peak time' (cf. Levy, 1992), is related to the issue of revenue. Based on an analysis of M6's grid, Levy (1992) argues that music is, in fact, not a priority on M6. Levy also analysed the whole music programming output on French terrestrial television in the period 1991/1992, which revealed that TF1 had no music policy, A2 had only two music shows while FR3 had one music programme after midnight and one chart show on Saturday afternoons. According to Levy, the popularity of the chart show among the 15 to 24 year-olds "proves that the lack of music video-clip programming on French TV pushes young people to watch shows almost indiscriminately as long as there are videos in them" (1992:103). On the basis of the evidence which shows a lack of music programming on French TV Levy concludes that

> a music channel is useful in France. It is therefore not the existence or necessity of a music channel that is at stake. [...] The question is rather what type of music channel this should be and especially what mode of trasmission [it shoud be allocated] and what consequences it [the music

channel] would have on the macro-economy of the French audiovisual landscape[8] (1992:127).

If a music channel is 'useful' in France, then we must ask to whom? This thesis argues that MTV as a thematic music channel does not directly compete with terrestrial TV. There is little doubt that M6 is the French music channel, as far as audiences are concerned, simply because its reach is far wider than that of a thematic channel on cable/satellite. To a large number of French viewers, a music television channel, therefore, does not appear to be a necessity. Whether the recording industry needs a music channel is also questionable. As already indicated, they prefer advertising their products on the main channels. They also promote their artists in programmes on the main channels, even though these channels have no specialised music programmes. If there is any interest in a music channel for the record companies, it would be in terms of generating revenue from video performance. As indicated in chapter 2, major record companies have increasingly become 'rights exploiters'. The *loi Lang* might treat a music video as a work of art. However, record companies in France (as anywhere else) are, above all, interested in profits rather than the 'moral right' to remunerate any party creatively involved in the production of a music video (as stipulated by the *loi Lang*) (also see the last paragraph in this section). Consequently, record companies began to demand higher payments from M6 for the right to play videos. In December 1990, this fee increased from 790F per video play to 1500F (figure stated in Levy, 1992:94).

The question of 'mode of transmission' for a thematic music channel is pertinent. It can be said that despite the fact that a number of programmes on M6 score well among the 16 to 34 year-olds, by vocation M6 is not a thematic music channel aiming at a youth market. M6 does not have the strong brand image necessary to attract a loyal niche audience like MTV does. M6 is a generalist channel which competes for a share of the same advertising revenue as other generalist channels. It has a better rating-performance among the 16 to 34 year-olds because it has more youth-oriented programming than other terrestrial channels, but its peak viewing slots are reserved

[8] I found a word-to-word identical statement in Sainteny (1993) without any credit to Levy (1992). I am therefore not sure where this quotation actually originates from.

for a mass market. In an attempt to compete against the main channels, M6 introduced a policy of 'counter-programming', which means, for example, broadcasting a situation comedy during the news time-slots on other channels. 'Counter-programming' affects MTV more than M6's music programming because it occupies that 'off-peak' TV viewing slot for which MTV competes. In France, it is likely that the potential MTV viewer would watch MTV only if 'there is nothing' on M6 and Canal Plus. However, both M6 and Canal Plus left a vacant space for a thematic music channel in the French audiovisual landscape because neither of them attempts to deliver the 'youth' niche audience to advertisers. In this context, warnings issued by the CSA to A2 for not having a sufficient amount of youth programming for three consecutive years (1992-1994) (source: CSA Rapport d'activités pour 1994) are quite useful for music televisions. They indicate that the 'youth' target is still outside the broadcasters' reach, which makes a channel like MTV an attractive advertising medium.

The case of MTV in France illustrates how a thematic channel can become prosperous by taking advantage of all the benefits of being a narrowcaster, rather than trying to compete with a broadcaster. First, MTV delivered the attractive youth audience target to advertisers. In doing so, MTV took advantage of satellite TV's ability to reach a pan-national audience at a stroke, while terrestrial TV remained confined to national borders. Secondly, MTV's production costs are considerably lower than those of terrestrial TV (cf. chapter 2). Thirdly, MTV does not pay any cost involved in acquiring a terrestrial transmitter. Finally, because MTV's Headquarters are in London, MTV pays less rights for videos than French broadcasters. Under the *loi Lang*, the author of the video (i.e. the director) has the moral right to be remunerated for any public display of his work (i.e. playing a video on TV), not just the publisher. Until recently, the UK did not have the concept of unalienable moral rights. Although the UK does have the concept of 'moral author', moral rights cannot be assigned but can be waived: "'waived' simply means that you can give them up by contract" (Passman, 1995:289). In the UK, the director is working to commission. He or she

uses resources provided by the commissioner but he or she has no contractual authorial rights, though they may get a royalty[9].

The next section will demonstrate how, in contrast to MTV, the French MCM missed out on all these opportunities. Not being conceived of as a proper narrowcaster considerably slowed down the development of MCM in France. Consequently, for a number of years, MCM did not represent a significant competitor to MTV in France, even though, potentially, MCM could have benefited from all the assets that a local music TV had, like Viva in Germany.

7.3.2 MCM

The French music television MCM[10] was launched in 1989. In contrast to MTV, MCM was a thematic channel without homogenous identity and therefore confusing for all relevant parties: cable-operators, advertisers and audiences. There were three main problems with MCM's (lack of) programming strategy.

Firstly, the channel did not settle for one mode of transmission but three: cable, satellite and terrestrial. In fact, in its initial phase of development, the channel was keen to get a terrestrial frequency, especially in the Paris region. This forfeited potential subscription revenue and also resulted in a dispute with Lyonnaise Communication. This cable operator refused to carry MCM on its Parisian network partly because MCM was on the fifth terrestrial channel for Paris and therefore affecting the cable-potential and partly because Lyonnaise Communication was a share-holder in M6 which was a competitor for the terrestrial MCM. As a terrestrial channel, MCM was also present on some local channels in the south of France while in most other parts of the country, it was on cable. Another illogical decision by MCM was not to privilege direct broadcasting by satellite, which would have enabled the channel to benefit from the high quality sound and image of the D2 Mac technology

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[9] see chapter 6, footnote 3.
[10] Its share-holders at the time were the Générale d'Images (subsidirary company of the *Générale des eaux*) (15%); Com Dev (subsidiary of the other water company) (15%); NRJ (12%), RMC (12%), a private bank (11%); Polygram (12%), Sony (10%) and other small independent investers.

(cf. Levy, 1992). This could have been a point of attraction for the potential subscriber who appears to be 'passionate about image' and the latest technological equipment (cf. section 7.2).

Secondly, MCM had no channel image. Without adequate visual imagery, MCM was no different from a terrestrial channel and could not promote itself as a 'different kind of TV'. Consequently, MCM was neither attractive for the youth - i.e. the target out of the traditional broadcasters' reach - nor potential advertisers who were precisely after this target's spare income. And, without the crucial partnership with advertisers, MCM could not prosper, even though it had a sympathetic *cahier des charges* (for example, it had no production 'quotas') and paid lower fees[11] to record companies than other channels.

Thirdly, what also inhibited MCM's expansion was the fact that it had three names: MCM (Ma Chaîne Musicale), MCM-Euromusique and MCM (Monte-Carlo Musique). The version Euromusique implied a pan-European orientation, Ma Chaîne Musicale appeared to be French-oriented while the name Monte-Carlo Musique sounded like a regionally-specific channel. Without brand-name and without adequate channel 'environment', MCM was in a disadvantaged position in the market, especially the Euromusique version.

As a pan-European channel, the prospect of MCM was gloomy considering that it was directly competing with MTV. With its sophisticated visual presentation and a well-known brand-name, MTV not only became synonymous with pan-European music television but most importantly, it was **the** music television in Europe's most lucrative markets for cable/satellite TV, notably Germany. A further disadvantage for MCM-Euromusique was the obligation in its *cahier des charges* to broadcast 55% of music of French origin. Chapter 5 demonstrated how even with a considerable amount of Anglo-American music and Eurodance - as common musical denominators - MTV had difficulty in keeping up a homogenous pan-European chart. The viability of a pan-European music television with predominantly French music was even more at stake.

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[11] Levy (1992:96) states 95F per video-play.

Another problem that MTV faced was the lack of synchronised record-releases in Europe. MTV - based in Europe's fastest market, the UK (cf. chapter 5) - was 'too ahead'. The problem for MCM-Euromusique was reversed because France is among Europe's slowest markets in terms of chart velocity. While MTV could at least self-consciously promote itself with idents such as 'MTV-you hear it first', that 'you hear it last' on MCM was hardly an asset. Finally, the amount of French music on MCM-Euromusique also raises further doubts about French cultural protectionists who prescribe 'quotas' as a shield against 'Coca-Cola satellites'. If the dominance of Anglo-American music on MTV is perceived by cultural protectionists as undermining local cultures, then by extension, the amount of French music on a pan-European music channel raises similar concerns about the erosion of indigenous cultures. This just goes on to further illustrate Mattelart et al.'s claim (1984 in chapter 4) that such protectionism is based on a (one-sided) localism that borders with illiteracy.

Consequently, despite a fairly large distribution in France (6.5 million of potential viewers in 1992, stated in Matichard, 1995) and some distribution abroad (some 15 million potential viewers in 1992), compared to MTV, MCM made no considerable impact in either France or Europe[12]. In France, no one seemed to pay attention to MCM. The French music industry was claiming that France needed a music channel at the time when MCM already existed (see Levy, 1992:131-132). Available audience ratings[13] in 1992 indicated that MTV (with its 4.4% audience share) was clearly ahead of MCM (which had 0.3%). In fact, MTV was performing remarkably well in France and almost matching the audience figures for M6 (which had a 6.2% audience share) (source Mediamétrie cited in Levy, 1992). Finally, the French government also ignored the existence of MCM. Following the collapse of La Cinq, the French minister of culture at the time, Jacques Toubon, publicly expressed his wish for a music channel on terrestrial TV for the Paris region. The Syndicat national des éditeurs phonographiques subsequently prepared a proposal for such a channel, which

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[12] With the exception of Greece, where it was available all day on a terrestrial channel and reached some 3 million homes in Athens.
[13] Ratings are to be taken with reservation but in the period until the end of 1993, different independent sources consistently showed a clear advantage for MTV.

in turn sparked-off the debate about the viability of a thematic channel of a terrestrial frequency, as described above (cf. André, 1993).

Positive changes for MCM which are attributed to the take-over by Canal Plus group in 1992 became visible around 1994[14]. MCM established a much-needed channel identity. It is now a cable/satellite TV thematic channel, not terrestrial. MCM also began to use visual identifications so as to create its own channel 'environment'. Although MCM continues to have ambitions for international expansion, its identity is more clearly that of a window for French music in the world, rather than that of an all-encompassing pan-European music TV. Without international distribution, the channel cannot economically survive (cf. Matichard, 1995). In fact, even in 1994 - the year when the channel was expected to break even - the CSA states that its financial results were "morose" (cf. CSA Rapport d'activité 1994).

As soon as MCM began to be clearly marketed as a narrowcaster, it became a 'local' competitor to MTV. Even though MCM is less visually sophisticated than MTV, the use of French language on the channel, the considerable amount of French music and the dominance of local content (VJs, reports, 'idents', advertisements etc) is a major point of attraction for French audiences and advertisers alike (see Matichard, 1994b). MCM is also keeping pace with the French music charts while MTV is ahead with international releases and not in tune enough with French music. Consequently, as Bramly observes: "as cheap looking as it is, MCM talks more to the kids" (interview, 01/09/94). The same audience measurement panel which revealed that MTV was ahead of MCM until the end of 1993 began to indicate a slight advantage for MCM in 1994 for the first time (cf. Latil, 1995).

The contested area remains Paris. According to MCM sources, no figures have been released for Paris, while MTV claims to be ahead in Paris. Independent sources are also inconsistent[15]. It is possible that the demand for MTV is higher in big cities,

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[14] Canal Plus took (19.11%); Générale d'Images (31.65%); 'Com Dev' (13.93%); Lyonnaise Communications (11.8%) NRJ (15.09%); Polygram (2.52%) and Sony (2.77%).
[15] For example, an independent source states that MCM has 1 105 855 cable subscribers in France while MTV has 1 134 000 (cf. Panorama des chaînes du cables, 1995).

where people have easier access to major and independent record shops and night clubs. However, as indicated in chapter 6, arguments about audience preferences for MTV or a local equivalent need to be supported by ethnographic evidence and not marketing surveys. It is even more likely that MTV is the favourite music channel among the trendy Parisian crowd, where the media-related industries are concentrated. My observational data suggest that MTV is an important source of information for people who work in the media sector and want to be kept up to date with the latest developments in music and popular culture. In contrast, MCM's reputation among this crowd is less flattering. An association with MTV also serves as a means of distinction for these media circles whose social space is self-consciously created and nurtured by a sense of elitism. The following anecdote gives an illustration of this:

> I know that my boyfriend had some old MTV T-shirts from when I used to work at MTV. He is a sound engineer and he does concerts. So, when he goes on tour, he wears them - these old T-shirts. And people are like: 'Oh, you wear an MTV T-shirt! How Great! Cool!'. And it's only his old T-shirt for work! (Laura Lynch, former assistant for MTV network development, particularly in France, interview, 11/09/95).

> my question: Do you think that an MCM T-shirt would have the same effect?

> No! [quick and firm answer, accompanied by laughter]

In conclusion, the case of MCM in France provides additional evidence to support the arguments about the continuing importance of locality in the process of globalisation in relation to music television presented in so far, especially in chapter 6.

7.4 STRENGTH OF NATIONAL FEELING

As Richard Kuisel observes: "Among Western European nations France has been known for its anti-Americanism" (1993:1; also see Lacorne, et al., 1990). In their response to America, the French[16] carry a sense of national identity they are keen to defend (Kuisel, 1993; also see Gannon, 1994: chapter 5). The controversy surrounding the introduction of new communications technologies (see above), the negotiations

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[16] Following Kuisel I use the category 'the French' "without nuance of class, religion, region, generation, gender or any other such qualifier, not as a handy rhetorical device" (1993:2) but because I accept their strong subjective sense of national identity.

surrounding the 1993 GATT talks during which France fiercely defended its cinematic industry (cf. Condron, 1997; also see issue of *Screen*, 1994), the influence France has had in drafting the 'quotas' under the 1989 European Directive *Television Without Frontiers* and recent French interventionism in language matters (cf. chapter 4) all serve to substantiate this claim.

As important as these issues are when examining the strength of national feeling in France, none of them bear any considerable weight with respect of MTV's impact on France. MTV falls within the 1989 European Directive's remit of 'European quotas where applicable', which effectively means that the channel can be broadcast in France in exactly the same format as it is produced in London[17]. Having satisfied the control system that the CSA undertook in 1993 to test whether channels complied with the 'quota' requirements under *Television Without Frontiers*, MTV signed what is called a *convention* with the CSA. This *convention* enables MTV's service to be carried by French cable operators. In contrast, the US channels TNT, Cartoon Network, Quantum TV and Sell A Vision did not conform to the *Television Without Frontiers* requirement and the CSA refused to issue a *convention*. Basically, they were taken off air. Thus, MTV as an American-owned channel did not experience any difficulty of a legal nature.

Rather, the difficulty MTV had in France was related to the particularities of the French music market. As examined in chapter 5, in the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, artists based in France received prominent exposure on MTV. The example of French artists served to make some general points about the 'cross-over' potential of European artists who were featured on MTV. Chapter 5 drew attention to the discrepancy between MTV's ambition to synchronise pan-European record releases and the inability of national markets to follow MTV's pace; 'cultural metaphors' which hindered pan-European musical exchange; and, the incompatibility between (some of) MTV's pan-European promotional strategies and those of record

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[17] see 'Les décrets ('quotas')' (1995); 'La loi 86-1067...' (1995); 'Le cable en fiche' (1995); 'Les textes applicables au satellite et au cable' (1995).

companies. This section looks at how these general points relate more specifically to France.

First, compared to many Western European countries, the French music-market is slow. While in Europe's fastest moving chart, the UK, records continuously go in and out, in France, they tend to seek asylum in the *Top 50*. It is not unusual for the same record to stay in the number one spot for ten weeks and longer. In contrast, in the UK, only a few hits had such a long top-of-the chart life-span. It took sixteen years before the record held by Queen - who stayed number one for nine weeks with the 'Bohemian Rapsody' in 1975 - was beaten. Bryan Adams - with the hit 'Everything I do, I do It for You'- was number one for ten weeks, in 1991.

The slow changes in the chart seriously affect France's position in the international market. In terms of record-releases, France is on average three to six months behind the rest of Europe. The UK, is on average four months ahead. This disparity creates a difficulty for MTV in France, as Guild comments:

> For instance, a song that gets released in the UK may not be released in France until ten weeks later, by which time we stop playing it on MTV because it's already left the Northern European chart. It's been in and out and then it goes onto France and it stays in the French chart a lot longer. The whole dynamic of the music business in France is different (interview, 26/07/94).

MCM's makers also experience a difficulty in this respect and try to find a compromise between their French audience requirement and their pan-European ambition, as the head of programming, Jean-Pierre Millet expresses:

> It's a big problem for us, as we want to be more and more European. It's a fact that French music is like three or four months behind other countries in Europe. What can we do? We're trying to do an in-between situation. We try not to be too ahead or too behind. We try our best, but first of all we try to please our French audience (interview, 12/09/95).

Second, as indicated in chapter 5, the music genre which dominated the French mainstream (*variété*), was too nationally specific and could not easily 'cross-over'. Moreover, *variété* had acquired an unflattering reputation among self-conscious hip

audiences in France and abroad, to whom MTV wanted to appeal. This attitude is summed up in the 'cultural metaphor' that 'French rock is like English cooking'. As a simple and concise means of portraying patterns of thought, emotion or behaviour (Gannon, 1994:16), 'cultural metaphors' convey an aspect of France's cultural make-up. In this case: "The most meaningful occasions in the French person's life often centre around food and drink" (Gannon, 1994:98). Music-related aspects of life tend to be subordinated to this 'primary' feature of French society which, as extracts from the following interviews suggest, become a taken-for-granted explanation for the poor performance of 'French pop' internationally, compared to 'English rock'.

> [France] is not a musical country. We're not known for producing hits and new trends in music (except, perhaps, a little bit with world music). Every country has its identity. The UK is famous world-wide for producing music. France is famous world-wide for producing food or fashion. Music was never a talent of French people. They're very visual. Anyone at MTV will tell you that France is very good for producing videos [that are] really good to look at. We have very creative directors, but no music to put on" (Bramly, interview, 01/09/94).

> France is slower because I think music not part of its culture. And it is true that in France, people perhaps hesitate to pay 200 or 300 francs for a concert. It's not part of their culture to spend money to listen to music (Odiana, interview, 05/09/95).

In contrast:

> English people have music in their blood. That's it. It's like as if you say English people should improve their cooking. You see? It's exactly the same. Or they should be dressed better. They're really good in music. We're really good in cooking (Millet, interview, 12/09/95).

Instead of *variété*, as indicated in chapter 5, MTV began to search for music of 'cross-over' potential which had little exposure on mainstream media outlets, in order to establish itself as 'a new kind of television'. However, many artists 'discovered' by MTV failed to get adequate backing for international promotion from their record companies. Not unrelated to this attitude of record companies are the French government's measures to protect French musical production from an Anglo-American 'invasion'.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were characterised by a slowing down of the velocity of music innovation in France, which was a product of the oligopoly in the French FM radio network, formed in the mid-1980s[18] (see Hare, 1992; Chapter 3 in Kuhn, 1995). What is commonly called *la dictature de l'audimat* (dictatorship of the audience ratings) began to govern the FM networks (cf. Perry, 1997:124). In fear of losing their audience-market share, youth-oriented commercial music radios preferred playing established artists at the expense of promoting new French talent, which could potentially alienate audiences. Alternatively, they played old French hits ('goldies'). The most influential pop/rock format radios played Anglo-American repertoire at the expense of French music: NRJ played 17% of French music, Fun 8% and Skyrock 5% (stated in Levy, 1992:82).

Alarmed by such figures, the government implemented 'quotas' to protect French musical production. However, 'quotas' did not contribute to the expansion of local repertoire in any substantial way because "the debate did not centre on the causes of the weakness of French music, but on the means of fighting against the foreign music invasion (read Anglo-American imperialism)" (Levy, 1992:89). Indeed, paranoid about the amount of Anglo-American music on mainstream pop music radios, the government failed to realise that there was a thriving independent network of musical production in France. French indie labels such as Bondage Records or New Rose produced dozens of bands whose musical influences ranged over a variety of genres, but were not played on mainstream radio. Artists who gained exposure on MTV (such as Mano Negra or Les Negresses Vertes) were from the indie sector. However, instead of encouraging such acts, new legislation further impeded independent musical production. In September 1991, a law stipulating that any song which is not sang in French is to be considered as foreign was passed (cf. Levy, 1992).

This law effectively penalised artists who do not sing in French. Yet, it was precisely artists who sang in other languages (as well as in) French that were the best

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[18] This slow rate of innovation is a different matter from the boost in record-sales in France which was linked to the following changes in French regulation: the decrease in VAT from 33,3% to 18,6% in 1987 that led to a 35% increase of record sales in 1988; the legislation permitting the advertising of records on TV in 1988 and the renewal of record collections with the widespread of the CD.

international exponents of French music on MTV (Mano Negra, Gypsy Kings, Les Rita Mitsouko, Khaled). This law also implied that when a French artist sang in English in order to pursue international fame, such as Vanessa Paradis, he or she was no longer part of the French repertoire. Moreover, an artist such as Dener Driouen who sings in Breton is not considered as French repertoire[19]. Finally, immigrant musicians based in France - mainly from North and West Africa - who sang in their native tongues were also affected. Yet, according to many commentators, their music was the greatest 'French' challenge to the Anglo-American sound to date (cf. Frith, 1989; Mitchell, 1996). The 1991 law therefore reduced the chances of French artists who were contemplating international success. Whereas in the late 1980s, some acts who prospered on MTV did get eventually signed by major labels, such as Mano Negra, after 1991 this became precarious. Indeed, "what [record company] would take the risk of signing Mano Negra or Gypsy Kings today, knowing that their songs in foreign languages would have little airplay?" (Levy, 1992:92).

Another 'quota', whereby all music radio stations in France had to play 40% of French repertoire, took effect in 1995. Once again, such quotas did not confront the problem where it mattered, which was at the level of production, but they centred on means of 'protection'. The president director general of Fun Radio, Benoit Sillard, expressed a concern shared by many in the industry:

> What bothers me is that the debate centres on protection rather than promotion. We [the French] are caught up within a self-defeating logic whereby we believe that by erecting barriers, we shall resolve problems [...] We [Fun Radio] are opposed to quotas because we think that they tackle the problem from the wrong end. The question of production needs to be addressed first, and the support of the broadcasters demanded thereafter (quoted in Suquet, 1995:26).

According to Sillard, the main reason for the lack of French music on Fun is that the French recording industry does not produce a sufficient volume of music to suit their format because record companies do not concentrate their resources on French dance music or rock. Instead, they privilege French *variété,* which is less appealing among youth niche audiences and also less suitable for export. Fun Radio owes its 30%

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[19] featured on MTV news, 18/02/94.

'quota' fulfilment to French rap artists, particularly 'big names' such as MC Solaar who gets played 'four times in three hours' (cf. Sage, 1996). The question of production was, therefore, still at the heart of the problem when the research for this chapter was completed at the end of 1995.

However, as I was writing up this chapter, a number of unexpected developments occurred (around 1997 onwards), which seem to almost contradict some of the evidence presented in this section. I find the following developments puzzling but I am in no position to give answers: first, the international success of the French DJs/dance projects (Daft Punk/Star Dust, Air, Dimitri from Paris, Cassius, Dr Oizo) even in 'difficult' markets such as the UK; second, the mushrooming of the rai scene in France, which put the artists Khaled, Taha and Faudel (who sing in Arabic and French) at the top of the French mainstream charts; finally, the complete change of music policy on Skyrock from 5% of French music to almost exclusively playing French rai and rap. What caused this change? Could it be that both the French government and the French music industry realised the potential for expansion within the francophone world, which effectively includes the French speaking African countries? Is the process of globalisation occurring along the francophone geo-cultural region and to what extent can a parallel be drawn with the arguments presented in chapter 6? These remain questions for further research.

CONCLUSION

MTV's position in the French televisual landscape was not affected by any cultural protectionist measures because under the 1989 European Directive's of 'quotas where applicable', MTV could be aired in France in the same format as it was produced in London. Instead, MTV's impact on France was restricted by the fallibity of the technocratic 'expertise' at the heart of French policy-making and its repercussions: underdeveloped cable network and even less significant number of satellite dishes capable of receiving MTV; low penetration of cable TV and high access cost of subscription to it. Another problem for MTV was related to the incompatibility of

MTV's pan-European music policy with the particularities of the French music market.

The interconnectedness of political manipulation and audiovisual policy in France resulted in a situation where consumer choices were favoured at the expense of public service concerns in order to secure long established elite attitudes and patterns of behaviour at highest levels of power. Indeed,

> by 1986 it was legitimate to wonder why the Socialist authorities had made so much fuss about the undesirability of 'Coca-Cola satellites' transmitting into France, when only a few months later they were giving the go-ahead to channels which used so much non-French product (Kuhn, 1995: 184).

The case of Canal Plus supports the view that "it is no longer a wholly true account to characterise the manner in which the private sector broadcasters are filling their schedules by accusing them of resorting to the use of cheap American imports or equally cheap low-quality quizzes and tele-reality shows" (Weymouth and Lamizet, 1996:215). Today, the group Canal Plus is one of the major investors in French audiovisual productions. The situation in France is even more paradoxical because the choice of programmes on cable/satellite TV - which are under the umbrella of Canal Plus - in France is exceptional in Europe in terms of the quality of its programming (cf. L'état du cable en France, 1995:39). Independent surveys also reveal that as high as 77.7% of subscribers are either 'very' or 'sufficiently' satisfied with programmes ('L'image du cable français, 1995). However, the cost of subscription to commercial TV services in France is the most expensive in Europe. It can, therefore, be said that in France, it is not so much the logic of mass production which has affected the democratic principle of equal access to a wide range of quality programmes and information but a series of misjudgements by those who had the power (and indeed the responsibility) to control private enterprise.

Finally, Canal Plus' entrepreneurial skills are inextricably connected with a know-how in programme-making. The institution of Canal Plus was governed by a different professional mentality to that of public service TV. Canal Plus invested a considerable

amount of time and financial resources in order to 're-educate' TV viewers: from a collective public to individual consumers. Canal Plus effectively re-directed the model of 'viewer-as-citizen' towards the model of 'viewers-as-consumers'. By doing so, it opened up opportunities for additional channels, notably MTV, to join in in this battle of allegiance for citizens. The importance of acknowledging this shift is neither to celebrate the freedom of consumer choices nor to exaggerate the impact of new communications technologies. (As indicated in chapters 2 and 3, they complement rather than replace terrestrial TV and France is a good example, here.) The purpose of this exercise is to stress that if Canal Plus, or MTV for that matter, became successful, it is not only because they constructed an audience for the kind of services they pioneered, but also because there was an audience out there who was dissatisfied with public service TV. However, the kinds of knowledge about audiences that these commercial channels have should not be confused with actual audience needs. For all the surveys into consumer satisfaction about satellite/cable TV, they tell nothing about who is actually watching and why.

Chapter 1 suggested that there may well be a vacant cultural space left by public service TV, particularly in relation to immigrant minorities' needs, which began to be filled by satellite TV, and called for further research into this. In France, this call for research is substantiated by one un-named article among all the documentation consulted for this research. It says that if the number of satellite dishes is constantly on the increase, it is because minority needs have been completely neglected by broadcasters and that no market study has been conducted as yet to find out about these needs (in 'Médiaville Montpellier', 1995). That satellite dishes stand out particularly in neighbourhoods 'with predominantly immigrant population'[20] is evident. The expression 'stand out' is used deliberately to draw attention to new kinds of conflicts sparked by debates about whether or not 'a dish is turned towards Mecca'[21]. In this context, the hybrid forms of music created by immigrants in France may well have a political role to play in the future, hopefully towards promoting multiculturalism.

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[20] Bourges, keynote address, Médiaville, 1995.
[21] *Un rêve de télé* (1999, dir Carr-Brown and Viviant) on TV 5, 13 April.

CHAPTER 8

MTV IN EASTERN EUROPE: 'ANTHROPOLOGISING' THE 'WEST'

INTRODUCTION

The distinctive cultural characteristics of each country from the former Eastern Bloc are not the concern of this analysis. Instead, this analysis focuses on the similarities between these countries, which emerged during the decades of life under the unifying experience of the communist system. In this chapter, the political system is taken to be a critical aspect of culture in that it was a major influence on the 'cultural mindset' - i.e. "basic ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that occur simply because of the fact that people are members of a particular society" (Gannon, 1994:5) - of the region as a whole.

According to Gabriel Bar-Haïm who conducted an ethnographic study of the meaning of Western commercial artefacts for Eastern European youth, which involved young people from Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, Poland and Czechoslovakia:

> There are, of course, differences among Eastern European countries regarding exposure to the West and freedom of individual choice as to personal appearance and lifestyle. However, the major socio-political and economic organisation of Eastern European countries is basically similar and the policy that established the relationship between the individual and the state is fundamentally the same. Thus I would argue that most conclusions of this study hold for all the Eastern European states (1987:223, footnote:3).

Drawing upon Bar-Haïm's observations, this study will concentrate on the meaning of MTV as a Western cultural artefact in Eastern Europe for what is known among Eastern Europeans as the "generation of the fall of communism" (cf. Wertenstein-Zulawski, 1994). During this period of major political change, throughout Eastern Europe, MTV became one of the first immediate channels of access to the 'West', a concept which represented the "embodiment of antithetic socio-political values" (Bar-Haïm, 1987:211). This analysis of the meaning of the 'West' for an Eastern European

will entail 'anthropologising'[1] Western assumptions about commercial artefacts such as MTV. As in the previous chapter, the impact of MTV on Eastern Europe is examined in relation to three factors: distribution and access to cable/satellite TV; options of programmes on terrestrial TV and the strength of national feeling.

8.1 DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS TO CABLE/SATELLITE TV

MTV became available in Hungary in March 1989 in 33 000 homes; in the former Yugoslavia in October 1989 in 50 000 homes and in Poland in January 1990 in 6 886 homes. In March 1991, MTV announced that it was going to be the first non-Soviet channel to be broadcast 24 hours-a-day in Russia on Leningrad's Cable TV Network. The decision to carry MTV there followed a trial period during 1990 when MTV made its debut throughout the greater Soviet Union in an abbreviated format with a one-hour weekly show taken from two programmes, *The European Top 20* and *Partyzone* (cf. Banks, 1996). The MTV hour was presented as part of a popular youth-oriented show (*Glance and Others*) seen in 88 million households each week (ibid.). In July 1993, MTV did an 'official' launch in the former Soviet Union, which consisted of a press conference attended by the chief executive officer, a VJ and the Pet Shop Boys , followed by a launch event. Afterwards, a syndication agreement supplied 43 hours of MTV programming per week to over 88 million homes.

With the exception of Russia, official figures point to a small distribution of MTV in Eastern Europe. However, most people in the former Eastern Bloc watched MTV through unauthorised means by directly pirating the unscrambled programme signal carried on the Astra satellite. For example, Banks (1996) states that in Poland alone, there were more than one million dishes that could pick up MTV. Another example of piracy is the practice of the local state channel Sa 3 within the remit of Sarajevo and its suburbs, which existed before the war in the former Yugoslavia. MTV was broadcast on Sa 3's frequency when the peak-viewing main evening news were on the two other state channels. Given that (with very few exceptions) the programming

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[1] That is, to "show how exotic its constitution of reality has been; emphasise those domains most taken as universal [...]; make them seem as socially peculiar as possible; show how their claims to truth are linked to social practices and have hence become effective forces in the social world" (Rabinow, 1986:241).

output on Sa 3 was transmitted live from a small studio, it was not cost-effective to air a half-hour show for low ratings compared to the channel's average figures. A cheaper solution was to pick up MTV. Another common practice on Sa 3 was to copy music video clips from MTV onto tapes. These tapes were then played in-between programmes whilst the studio was being rearranged, if the commercial break[2], which also fulfilled the function of intermission, was too short.

It follows from these examples that, because of piracy practices in Eastern Europe, the officially available MTV distribution figures for this region are unreliable while the problem of access to satellite television remained a non-issue until July 1995 when MTV's service was scrambled.

8.2 PROGRAMME OPTIONS ON TERRESTRIAL TV

Television in the former Eastern Bloc. was under the strict supervision of the Communist party. It was an ideological medium which served the interests of the communist authorities (see White, 1990; McNair, 1991; Downing, 1996). Claire Levy's (1992) comment that Bulgarian radio was more of a 'barrier to the world' than a 'window on the world', is also pertinent in the context of television. Under the Communist regime, there were few entertainment programmes on TV, and even fewer youth programmes, which generally served to educate young people according to communist principles. Any form of entertainment that was not in accordance with the communist goals threatened to undermine the commitment of youth "always ready to defend the Motherland" (Downing, 1996:90; also see Riordan, 1989; Pilkington, 1994). For example, in the former Soviet Union when communist hard-liner Konstantin Chernenko assumed control of the Communist party in 1984, the comrades decided that young people spent too much time listening to (Western capitalist) disco music, which had been officially promoted by Leonid Brezhnev's government between 1976 and 1982. The 1984 crackdown banned the playing of all Western

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[2] Commercial breaks were allowed at certain times of the day, only in between programmes, despite the country's non-market oriented system. In order to make what was essentially a practice on capitalist television palatable, officials coined the term *ekonomsko-propagandni program* (EPP) - translates as 'economic propaganda programming'. People ironically interpreted this polished vocabulary as *evo peglaju potrošaće* (EPP) - translates as 'here they are hassling consumers'.

groups. Instead, the authorities proposed introducing "disco evenings dedicated to such topics as 'the role of the production collective, traffic laws and perspectives for the development of truck production'" (Ryback, 1990:221).

In terms of choice on TV, the words of a media officer in Hungary appropriately describe the Eastern European television landscape following the collapse of communism: "Any form of TV that is an alternative to state TV is attractive to us" (Nadler, 1995). The appeal of Western TV programmes - as well as the consumer goods and lifestyles featured in them - must be understood against the backdrop of the "superimposed official youth imagery" where "young people are viewed as 'soldiers of vigilance'; mass media, youth programmes, textbooks, and the propaganda of Communist youth organisation emphasise sacrifice for the country and devotion to the Party and to the cause of socialism" (Bar-Haïm, 1987:209).

Section 8.2.1 looks at MTV as an 'alternative' to state TV before narrowing the scope to the case of former Yugoslavia in section 8.2.2. On the one hand, an examination of TV audiences in the former Yugoslavia will provide evidence for the underlying argument in this thesis about audience preferences for local programming. On the other, it will prepare the ground for the analysis in the next chapter.

8.2.1 *MTV AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO STATE TV*

As regards MTV specifically, not only was it an alternative to state television but the two were worlds apart. Even in Western Europe, where the choice of programming on TV was broader than in communist countries, MTV was stylishly distinctive from terrestrial TV, which is how MTV attracted the young viewers' attention in competitive media markets (cf. chapter 2). In Eastern Europe, there simply was no programming even remotely comparable to MTV. More important than the novelty that MTV represented in terms of format, MTV stood for everything that many young Eastern Europeans craved for and aspired to but were denied. Consequently, as this chapter will go on to examine, MTV became a symbol of freedom and was treated

with deference in post-communist countries. Such an eager response was not anticipated by the channel's makers. As Hansen remarks:

> In a lot of the former Eastern Block countries, as they take on MTV, there is a more hysterical kind of reaction because MTV represents everything they never had before. They wanna follow on, extract that bit of cable into their house as quickly as possible. And, they will chill out once they get used to MTV, as part of their landscape (interview, 18/08/94).

What one needs to bear in mind is that MTV became one of the first available sources of popular culture without communist censorship at a time when a "screen revolution" (Muratov, 1993:119) was taking place throughout Eastern Europe. According to Sergei Muratov, in the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the former Soviet Union: "Television not only showed the mechanism of a restructured society but itself became part of that mechanism. It changed from being a product of *glasnost* to providing the conditions for *glasnost*" (ibid.:118; also see Campeanu, 1993). Advocates of reforms - notably Sobchak, the Mayor of Leningrad (later Saint Petersburg) - became national heroes. When MTV made its debut on Leningrad's television screens, it was appropriated by the 'revolutionary' cause. The city leaders compared the launch of MTV to the days when Peter the Great opened Russia to Western influences (cf. Sturmer, 1993). The channel was praised as a way for Russians to learn about Western culture (cf. Banks, 1996).

As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, the impact of MTV was due less to its verbal content and much more to its insight - via the channel's high production value - into images of Western lifestyle (cf. by analogy with Downing, 1996:146, on impact of Western magazines in Russia). The use of English on the channel functioned "not to communicate its literal content [...], but as a kind of guarantee of 'non-Russo-Soviet' authenticity" (ibid.). Furthermore, 'Western' music has been a very powerful expression of dissent in Eastern Europe (see section 8.5). The association of Mayor Sobchak with MTV and also his role as the patron of the music festival 'White Nights of Saint Petersburg' in 1992 (to which reference will be made in this chapter) served to enhance his image as the 'hero of reforms'. At a time when hopes about a better future were high, MTV served as a tangible sign for the prospect of a democratic

society. However, while MTV was hailed as a major break-through by politicians, political observers were more cautious about the media reforms (see Skillen, 1993). In a country "fraught with economic and political uncertainty" (Skillen, 1993:136), despite it being almost a decade since the reforms began "Russian television remains in a limbo" (McNair, 1996:498). The situation is similar in Poland and Hungary (cf. Downing, 1996) and even more so in the former Yugoslav republics in the aftermath of war.

Nevertheless, leaving politico-economic concerns aside, what is of interest in this section is the issue of audience preferences for TV programmes. The argument proposed in this thesis is that the impact of new communication technologies in Western Europe is often exaggerated and that viewers first and foremost watch local programming. Whether or not this rule applies to post-communist countries cannot be substantiated for lack of sufficient evidence. Having done an extensive literature survey of the works available on the subject of the media in post-Sovietised societies, John Downing (1996) draws attention to the overwhelming concentration on news rather than entertainment media or everyday cultural processes and rightly calls for further research in this domain. What we know is that television in these countries is "saturated with Western European and American televisual dross" (Downing, 1996:156), mainly because of the inability to fund indigenous programming. However, as Downing rightly observes, it would be

> a considerable extra step to demonstrate that the flood in question was attractive to the majority of viewers to the point where [...] national culture[s] would be under threat of anything so alarming as extinction, as some theorists of media imperialism might suggest (ibid.:157).

Despite the fact that my own research in the former Eastern Block produces evidence of the fascination with MTV, my data cannot be used to support a 'cultural imperialism' argument because I make reference to events which had occurred in extraordinary circumstances, be it the experience of newly a found freedom (Poland and Russia) or that of war (former Yugoslavia). Even the trip to Hungary which is documented in Section 8.4.2 was conducted before the parliamentary agreement that allowed private investment in broadcast television was drafted in October 1995 (cf.

Downing, 1996). Moreover, without taking into account the provision of local entertainment on TV, it is impossible to assess audience preferences.

Another limitation of my own research in the context of TV audience preferences, which according to Downing (1996), is symptomatic of both reporting and academic media research generally, is that it is city-intensive. The intellectual and political elites in the cosmopolitan urban centres among which I conducted my research are: "all targets of both suspicion and derision in the provinces. Some of this reaction is indeed rural idiocy, but some represents an important assertion of regional power and identity, or at least worth" (Downing, 1996:123). Without an appreciation of the rural situation, it is impossible to give an accurate picture of audience preferences for certain types of programmes in any Eastern European country. Empirical evidence about TV viewing in both the city and the country is available for the former Yugoslavia. This evidence can serve as a first attempt to fill the current knowledge gap about viewing local and foreign TV programming, entertainment TV in particular, in post-communist countries.

8.2.2 *TV AUDIENCE PREFERENCES IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA*

In the former Yugoslavia, as in the rest of Western Europe, viewers preferred local programming. This preference for local TV has to be understood against the backdrop of disparity, even antagonism, between the culture of urbanites and that of peasants and 'peasant-urbanites'. The latter is a population of newcomers who did not entirely integrate into the culture of the city (cf. Simić, 1973). Eric Gordy observes that:

> The urbanites and peasant urbanites were publicly differentiated by taste, particularly musical taste. While the urban residents of Belgrade [and other former Yugoslav urban centres], particularly the young ones among them, looked to the European and American West, developing a strong domestic jazz and rock n' roll culture, the peasant urbanites developed a taste for neo-folk, a hybrid form marrying the conventions of traditional folk songs with contemporary themes, and increasingly also with contemporary instrumentation (1997:200-201).

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Neo-folk music is the most prominent feature of what was called the newly-composed (*novokomponovana*) culture, which was associated with anything tasteless (see Gordy, 1997). *Novokomponovana* music - and by extension lifestyle - was the most widely diffused genre given that it ranged "from the domestic provinces and workers' colonies in other countries to the peripheries of large cities in Yugoslavia" (Gordy, 1997: 201). It should be noted that these workers in other countries are the Yugoslav guest-workers in Western countries who would return back home for holidays flaunting their material possessions: clothes with labels, gold, cars. This material side was the only aspect of the West that attracted peasant-urbanites and peasants (cf. Dragičević-Šešić, 1994).

Ethnographic research conducted by Milena Dragičević-Šešić (1994) prior to the break-up of Yugoslavia reveals that the most popular TV programmes among the viewers who belong to the *novokomponovana* group residing in the former Yugoslav capital Belgrade are sports, films and TV serials, music programmes dedicated to *novokomponovana* music and entertainment programmes. All these programmes are predominantly domestic productions (ibid.:41). As regards topical magazine programmes, only *Beogradska Hronika* - a programme which featured events of immediate local concern mixed with music numbers - was often mentioned by the audience sample. The main news, current affairs or any other programmes which provide an insight into the rest of the world or the rest of the country are seldom watched (ibid:54).

The scope of interests of young rural people is even more limited. Young rural people show little curiosity for any developments in the rest of the country, let alone the rest of the world. Dragičević-Šešić stresses that these youngsters do not listen to international rock music at all, that they rarely read any foreign writers and that they travel abroad solely for the purpose of shopping or visiting relatives (1994:80). As regards their TV viewing habits, a study carried out by the 'Centre for the programme and auditorium research' within Radio Television Belgrade (which was the state TV for the republic of Serbia) in 1987 not surprisingly indicated that young rural people clearly preferred local programmes. The local soap opera *Bolji Život* (Better Life) was

their favourite TV programme while *Dallas* drew only one quarter of young viewers who watched *Bolji Život* (cited in ibid.:88).[3] Research by Gordy (1997) suggests that MTV was of no interest to the *novokomponovana* population. The only visible influence of MTV on the *novokomponovana* culture was in the way neo-folk borrowed MTV's style of presentation for its accompanying videos.

In contrast, for the urban population, young people in particular, MTV became the main source of popular culture. With the advent of commercial television, MTV changed the way entertainment TV was produced. For example, Joze Vogrinc's (1995) analysis of VJ (pop and rock) music shows on commercial Slovenian television reveals that MTV served as a model that was actively appropriated and inflected with local flavours. Vogrinc argues that the points where MTV - and *Most Wanted*, in particular - was copied were precisely what was innovative on Slovenian TV. The Slovenian shows may appear un-innovative compared to MTV, which may (mis)lead an uninformed critic to characterise the shows as 'aping' which, in turn, is seen as a marker of cultural imperialism. However, compared to what was available on state television prior to the break-up of Yugoslavia, the local VJ programming is quite challenging. The novelty is visible in the contrast between VJ shows and state programming. In the former Yugoslavia, Slovenian had the status of minority language and only what corresponded to the Slovenian 'received pronunciation' was used on television. No issues that were considered politically incorrect were discussed on television (cf. Vogrinc, 1995). With the exception of few programmes, the same can be said about television in the rest of Yugoslavia. In contrast, the MTV-style shows used colloquial speech and local dialects as well as self-oriented irony which enabled the presenter to speak freely about taboo issues.

Furthermore, the proliferation of VJ-type programmes on commercial TV has to be understood against the backdrop of the marginal place that rock music programmes had on former Yugoslav TV. Vogrinc (1995) describes how under the socialist system, the intellectuals "with urban youth culture background" had to resort to

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[3] It should be noted that *Dallas* was on the second channel, the reception of which was poor in some rural areas. *Bolji Život* was on the first channel, the reception of which clear throughout the region.

alternative media outlets for "continuous self-education". In Slovenia, the Ljubljana-based Radio Študent was a unique institution which was the focal point for all the fans of music unavailable on state radio and TV, be it international or local independent music. Radio Študent was also a counter-cultural outlet which provided an alternative to the state mass culture. It promoted all the creative artistic movements (as opposed to the socialist uniform culture) and various alternative groups, each associated with a strong local music scene. The contact between these former Yugoslav scenes has always been intensive. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, with the escalation of war, 'Yugo-rock' turned into a network of solidarity and anti-war movement (cf. Vogrinc, 1995; Gordy, 1997).

So far, this chapter argued that MTV was an attractive choice compared to state TV. However, the audience enthusiasm for MTV following the collapse of communism should not lead to premature conclusions about the power of global media to influence non-Western audiences. Rather, it is necessary to examine the local conditions of TV reception. Currently, research on entertainment TV in Eastern Europe is scarce. The case of the former Yugoslavia, where some research is available, suggests that the appeal of MTV is restricted to urban youth. It also indicates that the advent of MTV has spawned numerous local copies which - through the way they appropriate the MTV-style to challenge the political consensus - far from aping the original model are original themselves.

8.3 STRENGTH OF NATIONAL FEELING

As indicated in this chapter's introduction, the concern here is not so much the distinctive national features of the former communist countries. Rather, it is the shared experience of the political system that brought them together by suppressing difference in favour of uniformity. In this context, the identity of an Eastern European is primarily defined through not being a Western European. Before examining the meaning of the West for an Eastern European, cultural imperialist assumptions about the impact of global media, and MTV in particular, on consumer behaviour in Eastern Europe need to be challenged.

8.3.1 CRITIQUE *OF AVAILABLE WORK ON THE IMPACT OF MTV ON EASTERN EUROPE*

Available published research about MTV Europe and its impact on the East, in particular, is scarce, but what is published - Sturmer (1993) and Banks (1996) - is in need of revision. An analysis of MTV in Eastern Europe in the period of transition from communism to capitalism entails problematising the arguments proposed by these authors because they stem from a position that takes for granted MTV's malign influence on what are assumed to be stable 'indigenous' cultures.

Corina Sturmer argues that MTV "typifies and exists to serve the interests of advanced consumer capitalism" and that it represents "a serious danger of patronising those 'victims' of the globalising , dictating forces of the North European music and culture industry" (1993:61). Jack Banks similarly claims that the potential influence of MTV in Eastern Europe extends to the ideas about consumerism through its advertising: "The goal was to cultivate viewers' desire for these products and the lifestyle they represent, to increase possible future sales when these companies established their operations in the area" (1996:97).

My suggestion is that Sturmer (1993) and Banks (1996) were influenced by the political and ideological climate created by the debates on cultural imperialism. More particularly in Europe, it is the drive to develop new channels of audiovisual distribution by means of the implementation of new technologies that intensified the debate about 'US imperialism' (cf. chapter 4). The spectre of 'Americanisation' then became synonymous with a "global culture which shuffles together the everyday lives of different continents under the spell of instantaneous communication" (Mattelart et al., 1984:7). Such a prospect led some Western scholars to voice their concerns about the destruction of 'indigenous' cultures without any direct investigation of these local cultures under threat. Consequently, they underestimated the power of local cultures to resist and transform in creative ways these globalising trends, for reasons that remained uninvestigated.

In the case of Sturmer (1993), I would go so far as to argue that the mention in passing of MTV in Eastern Europe reads as a 'politically correct' analysis which attempts to take into account different perspectives. Consequently, despite the author's best intentions, because of the lack of depth in the analysis, the expressed concern about the "victims" of the "globalising force" comes across as being more "patronising" than the intentions of Western cultural industries. Banks' assertions appear more plausible, but as I have already observed, he tends to conflate economic power with cultural effects (cf. chapter 5). While the intention of global media marketing strategies is indeed to promote consumer products around the world, their ability to actually recruit new consumers is dictated by the conditions in a given 'local' market.

In Eastern Europe, the major impediments to global media penetration are: poverty, as an alarmingly high percentage of the population live below the mean income (see Downing, 1996: chapter 2); not unrelated to economic instability, the continuing authoritarian tendencies of the leadership which also lead to political uncertainty (cf. Herman and McChesney, 1997:65-66); the 'mafia-like' ways of doing business particularly among Russian broadcasters which are "not always evidence of corruption, of course, but could be interpreted as creative efforts to negotiate a system which made normal business arrangements and relationships extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pursue" (McNair, 1996:496); and finally, the resilient nationalism, especially among the rural population, which is examined in the example of the former Yugoslavia in the next chapter. In this context, as McNair observes, "resistance to any negative impacts which foreign media may be thought to have is heightened by the fact that much of it is English, a language not widely spoken outside the cosmopolitan centres of Russia" (ibid.:497-498). The same is true of Poland and Hungary (cf. Downing, 1996) and the former Yugoslavia (cf. next chapter).

However, in order to understand the meaning of MTV for Eastern European elites, as well as their children and less privileged urban youth, an alternative approach which takes into account a 'local' perspective is necessary. In an ethnographic study concerning the consumption of Western objects entitled 'Why do Indians wear

Adidas?', Eric Arnold and Richard Wilk (1984) rightly argue that the explanatory

propositions of cross-cultural consumer research conducted by a number of Western

scholars tend to be

> based upon premature assumptions about the universality of human
> behaviour, upon ethnocentric interpretations of non-western behaviour,
> and ignorance of gift economies (Gregory 1982). In their universality, they
> can account neither for particular adoptions or rejections of consumer
> goods, nor for the sometimes bizarre consequences of their acceptance
> (1984:748).

The reaction to MTV that will be described in the sections to follow may appear

'bizarre' from a Western point of view, simply because the impact of MTV on Eastern

Europe is not comparable to its impact on Western Europe. To avoid an ethnocentric

interpretation of the Eastern European behaviour, it is, therefore, necessary to analyse

it through an Eastern European lens. From such a perspective, the 'bizarre' behaviour

is, in fact, a common reaction in Eastern Europe. In order to understand the 'particular

adoption' of MTV in Eastern Europe, we need to consider Western artefacts beyond

their utilitarian value. The premise of this analysis is that

> as codified objects with a function surpassing their material value,
> [Western commercial artefacts] are endowed by young Eastern European
> with special meanings, connotations, and desires. These goods stand as a
> tangible symbol of a world with values and economic socio-political
> organisation different from their own. The inferences they make are
> simple: the abundance of commercial items symbolises a society that
> encourages material achievement and individual comfort and that makes
> consumer goods of great diversity broadly accessible (Bar-Haïm,
> 1987:108-109).

Section 8.3.2 examines the concept of the West as a symbolic construct.

8.3.2 THE 'WEST'

'The West' - which penetrated through consumer goods and images of pop stars - was

a perception that people behind the Iron Curtain had about life in Western countries.

Naturally, the West connoted abundance in countries where most goods for personal

use which were not strictly functional, such as cosmetics, jewellery or records, were

rarely available in shops. Instead, a limited range of personal goods could be found on

illegal markets, which sold goods acquired from relatives in the West, tourists, foreign students and diplomats (cf. Bar-Haïm, 1987). In the more liberal former Yugoslavia, people were allowed unlimited travel abroad so that illegal trade became the full time 'occupation' of the so-called *šverceri* whose most popular 'business-purpose' destinations were Turkey, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and, in years prior to the mid-1980s' high inflation, Italy.

However, the Eastern Block's perception of the West was not only based on material values. More importantly, the West was the antithesis of the East. A widespread feeling among Eastern Europeans was that of being robbed of their right to be part of Europe by the Soviet system, which was the cause of their marginalisation by the West. This issue is discussed by Milan Kundera in relation to Central Europe, whose arguments also resonate among non-conformist intellectuals and, to various degrees, sections of the urban population all across the former Eastern Bloc . In an article entitled 'A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out', Kundera claims that Central Europe cannot be defined in political terms, i.e. as belonging to the Eastern Block. Instead, Central Europe is determined by what he calls 'common situations' that "reassemble peoples, regroup them in ever new ways along the imaginary and ever-changing boundaries that mark realm inhabited by the same memories, the same problems and conflicts, the same common tradition" (1984:107). These are grounded in Western European civilisation and not the Soviet empire. To the question "what does Europe mean to a Hungarian, a Czech, a Pole?", Kundera answers that: "For them, the word 'Europe' does not represent a phenomenon of geography but a spiritual notion synonymous with the word 'West'" (1984:95).

Similarly, Gabriel Bar-Haïm argues that:

> The relationship of Eastern European young people to Western commercial artefacts is not that of a curious provincial attracted to the inventive temptations of the big city or that of a traditional people viewing with adulation the perplexing achievements of the white man. Many young people of Eastern Europe perceive themselves and the Western Europeans as part of the same continent, while the political regime of their country is viewed as an aberration in the aftermath of World War II. Remarks such as 'we Europeans', 'Europe is one big country', and 'Europeans think alike, love the same things' were often used by those interviewed (1987:219).

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According to Bar-Haïm, young people used Western items as a symbol of status, of personalised styles and of identification with the West. Possessors of Western goods or up-to-date knowledge about the West were admired by their peers because of their ability to show some kind of relationship with the West as the centre of progress, development, and modernity. In contrast, imported goods from other communist countries, even exotic places like China and Cuba, had no such effect. Western goods also allowed for the creation of a distinct appearance in contrast to the standardised and uniform local clothing items. Western trainers and T-shirts promoted personalised style while locally produced ones did not attract interest. Bar-Haïm notes that, during his fieldwork, he was frequently approached by people wanting foreign magazines - not to read them but for the coloured pictures to hang them on the walls. Bar-Haïm concluded that resorting to Western commercial artefacts was an indirect political statement. As he put it: "Western goods become charged with special feelings as symbols involving defiance and derision towards the political regime of their country, at the same time expressing an admiring attitude toward the West" (1987:222).

The feeling that 'Europe is one big country' and the ability to display up-to-date knowledge about the West are of paramount importance for the understanding of the impact of MTV in Eastern Europe (see section 8.4). Another relevant factor when explaining the meaning of Western artefacts, and MTV in particular, in Eastern Europe is that objects circulate in different regimes of value in space and time. In the words of Arjun Appadurai:

> As commodities travel greater distances (institutional, spatial, temporal), knowledge about them tend to become partial, contradictory, and differentiated. But such differentiation [through the mechanisms of value as determined by the receiving cultures] lead to the intensification of demand. [...] At every level where a smaller system interacts with a larger one, the interplay of knowledge and ignorance serves as a turnstile, facilitating the flow of some things and hindering the movement of others (1986:56).

The political system which hindered the movement of Western artefacts into Eastern Europe created a situation whereby banal products in the West assumed exclusive

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value in the East. For example, in his study of the 'global teenager', Will Baker (1989) described how young Russian men traded Russian T-shirts, flags and wooden dolls for heavy duty Gillette razors with foreign students. In Russia, a product as common as a razor has a great value. The same could be said of many other ordinary material goods.

Foreigners themselves had a special status as targets of request to sell personalised items (cf. Bar-Haïm, 1987). This practice was not customary in the former Yugoslavia but, in this context, it is, nevertheless, worth introducing a foreigner who had enjoyed a special status there. Alain Nouri is a Frenchman who was the only foreign actor who had a well-established career in the former Yugoslavia. Nouri's career is interesting partly because it illustrates how the interplay of knowledge and ignorance could function as an advantage to the 'foreigner', and partly because it stresses the importance of locality, even in places where any foreign 'product' is in great demand. To a certain extent, Nouri's success is due to the fact that established Yugoslav actors were reluctant to play Germans in the numerous domestic Second World War films. As a foreigner, Nouri did not need to fervently show his commitment to the cause of 'brotherhood and unity', so he began his career on the wrong side by playing the 'baddies'. However, he owes his fame to the character of the French businessman that he played in the very popular local soap-opera *Bolji Život*. This role made him the subject of the newspaper gossip columns. The word spread that he was 'really famous' in France, which aroused even more curiosity about his allegedly glamorous private life. In reality, Nouri was not a famous actor in France. He had some acquaintances in the film industry but little claim to fame for himself. However, the truth did not really matter to the public who effectively created their own 'international' star.

Finally, cultural commodities such as records had a special status among Eastern European youth. Bar-Haïm (1987) observes that at house parties, young people exchanged cassettes and records of foreign music and playfully imitated Western stars and fantasised about travelling to the West. Similarly, Alenka Barber-Kersovan (1994) recalls that during the time when there were no discotheques or rock concerts in the former Yugoslavia, music was consumed on picnics, class travels and home parties

where young people listened to records brought over by parents from business trips abroad. Even with respect to music, the Iron Curtain functioned as a knowledge-filter. As music genres travelled from West to East, knowledge about them became differentiated. For example, in an article about Bulgarian popular music, Rosemary Statelova (1994) explained that by the time the word 'blues' reached Bulgaria it had come to mean a ballad. Many Bulgarians did not have the slightest idea of what American blues sounded like. For them, it was their local star, Vasko Krupkata who sang the blues, although his music bore no resemblance to 'real' blues, in their American form.

When the communist system collapsed and Western artefacts began to circulate freely, their value simply could not be assessed by Western standards because such artefacts had already been encoded with symbolic meanings, regardless of what they represented in the West. In the aftermath of communism, Western artefacts were synonymous with the 'West' with all its connotations of abundance, freedom, comfort and efficiency. Before I go on to illustrate the response to MTV - which had a status that no other Western artefact appeared to match at the time - it is a useful at this stage to take into account the symbolic value of other famous Western brands in order to grasp the Eastern European perspective. The arrival of McDonald's in Eastern Europe serves appropriately to illustrates the 'bizarre consequences of adoption' of Western products. What is effectively the cheapest food chain restaurant in the West became a status symbol in the East. In Eastern Europe, McDonald's served as a paradigm of the wide-ranging process of 'Westernisation' in which everyone wanted to take part, or in this case have their burger. Soon after the first McDonald's opened in Moscow, it sold almost 30000 hamburgers in a day (cf. Ritzer, 1996:5).

The opening of the first McDonald's in Moscow was a major cultural event. A journalist spoke of it "as if it were the Cathedral in Chartres...a place to experience 'celestial joy'" (Ritzer, 1996:4). Images of people in Moscow queuing to get into McDonald's became well-known in Western Europe, be it through Western audiovisual and print media which portrayed the occurrence as a curiosity or student textbooks in which they serve as an illustration of the process of globalisation. While

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media students will be encouraged to think critically about cultural difference, the ethnocentric representation of life in Moscow through one snapshot is likely to have produced a weird image of Russians in the eye of the majority of Western beholders, who remained poorly informed as to why Muscovites queued. As Ritzer observes:

> Muscovites were and still are attracted to it in droves for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the fact that it is a symbol of the rationalisation of America and its coveted market economy. The rationalisation of McDonald's stands in contrast to the irrationalities of the remnants of communism (1996:xviii).

That the quality afforded to McDonald's transcends the ethos of conventional economic exchange can also be illustrated by an incident from the former Yugoslavia. The first and only McDonald's was opened in the capital, Belgrade. Not long before the collapse of Yugoslavia, I spotted a graffiti-sign on the motorway in the direction from Zagreb towards Belgrade that read: 'Next McDonald's: 400 km'. The sign implied that in order to be 'cultivated' and in tune with the West, one needed to get to Belgrade. This was a nationalistic statement in which contemporary images associated with emancipation in our society were used to stress the 'superiority' of the Serbs over the Croats.

Having examined the meaning of Western artefacts for Eastern Europeans prior to and immediately after the collapse of the communist system, we now turn attention to the case of MTV.

8.4 THE CULTURAL EFFECTS OF MTV IN EASTERN EUROPE

In the context of the advent of new communications technologies in Europe, Peter Golding argues that "an undue emphasis on symbolic and cultural barriers or on technological opportunities will divert attention from what remain crucial barriers of access to communications and information erected by structures of social and economic inequality" (1989:100). While such an argument is pertinent in the context of Western Europe, I have reservations about it in relation to the impact of MTV in Eastern Europe.

Firstly, it can hardly be said that access to new information technologies was restricted considering that the piracy network was thriving. Secondly, as David Morley observes in a similar context, while "the scenario of economic poverty retarding the ability to acquire cultural resources which then leads to further economic disadvantage, is an all too plausible one" (1991:11), Golding's formulation of the problem is perhaps of too overtly a materialist nature. On the one hand, as I already indicated, although foreign programming was 'free', its influence did not extend beyond the minority of English-speaking urban viewers. On the other hand, an insufficient emphasis on the symbolic fails to recognise the creative and expressive capabilities of non-western people "to take and *use* foreign goods for their own purposes" (cf. Wilk, 1994:100).

Lastly, in order to understand the impact of MTV in Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism, an emphasis on the symbolic is not undue because this was a highly emotionally charged period. In the midst of the euphoria of a newly found freedom, MTV became an active participant in the 'screen-revolution'. In fact, on the day when the East German Cabinet resigned, MTV did its first live feed to East Berlin. The Berlin Wall fell the next day. MTV became the first taste of freedom for East Germans as well as the first accessible medium that represented a united Germany within a Europe with no borders. The nearest parallel to the success of MTV in Germany is that of David Hasselhoff, the star from the American series *Baywatch*, as a pop singer in Germany. When asked what makes him so special in Germany - he has no hits anywhere else - he replied that he sang 'I Was Looking for Freedom' on the Wall, which immediately became a hit and kick-started his music career (source: *The Clive James Show*, ITV, 17/05/98). As Levy (1994) observes, whatever the repercussions of commercialism, young Bulgarians, and by extension young Eastern Europeans, simply had not been able to get enough of rock, rap and metal and that this hunger needed to be fed.

For all these reasons, it would seem that ignoring the symbolic dimension would be a major failure in an analysis of MTV in Eastern Europe. By concentrating on the symbolic dimension, this section argues that MTV had a special status among Western

artefacts in Eastern Europe (cf. section 8.4.1). At the same time, MTV also served as a means of nurturing a Western image by the Eastern elites who were eager to be associated with progress and reform (cf. section 8.4.2).

8.4.1 *THE ELEVATED STATUS OF MTV IN EASTERN EUROPE*

There are two reasons why MTV was attributed a special status in Eastern Europe. The first reason was, effectively, already examined. I argued that the passionate belief summed up in the words 'Europe is one big country' was widespread among urban sections of the Eastern European population. What better way for a Western TV channel to pander to those audiences than by claiming precisely that, which is what MTV did through its representation of a Europe that 'celebrated diversity' (cf. chapter 4). The fact that MTV was a music channel was an asset that other Western satellite channels did not have because music was the most widespread vehicle of resistance against communist repression, which gave MTV extra credibility at a time of political reforms (see section 8.5).

The second reason why MTV had a special status is that the channel, in effect, demystified the West. MTV did so by erasing the time lag between Western and Eastern Europe that was created by the communist system. In order to explain how MTV 'demystified' the West, Richard Wilk's (1994) distinction between 'colonial time' and 'television time' when examining the meaning of Western commercial goods in Belize is a useful model.

According to Wilk, one effect of the 'colonial time' is that it made the colony 'timeless' and therefore backward - rooted in the concept of tradition and isolated from progress:

> In Belize in the 1950s the fashions seen on the street - zoot suits, gold watch chains, high collars and bow ties - lagged up to 20 'years behind' those of New York and London. The irony of colonial time is that while it is premised on the promise of progress, there is really no catching up (1994:103).

What the advent of nine television channels and an equal number of cable channels achieved was to bring the Belizeans up-to-date as they now watched the 'real time' network television. In the words of Wilk:

> Why does direct broadcast transmission make such a difference? Because the programs, especially the sports and news broadcast, are so *immediate*. There is no lag. The Belizean family in their rickety house in a swamp on the edge of Belize City is not only watching the same programs as all of urban America, but far more importantly, they are watching them at the same *time*. Satellite television has removed an essential element from the equation of colonial time. Distance between the metropole and the colony can no longer be reckoned in terms of time. The immediacy of contact forces watchers to see that only distance and culture - not time - set Belize apart from the United States. Television time is now a single clock ticking away a single rhythm in every place it reaches, a continuous cycle of news, advertising, entertainment and special events (1994:104).

By analogy, one effect of communism is that it made Eastern Europe lag behind. Some trends in popular culture arrived late, others never. By the time fashion travelled from the West - past the Iron Curtain - to the East, even the few Western items available had generally lost their 'authentic' Western meanings in the East. With MTV, all of this changed. Being in tune with the latest trends was no longer the privilege of the elites who could travel abroad. Any young person could watch MTV and copy the fashion styles. In such a context, the words of Hansen quoted earlier that young Eastern European wanted to 'extract that bit of cable' into their lives take on a literal meaning. MTV appeared to have been a newly discovered craze that was the number one attraction for young people in Eastern Europe in the aftermath of communism. Although images of Western lifestyles and pop stars have long been attractive for Eastern Europeans, the 'immediate' contact with the West that MTV provided at this particular time in history appeared not to have been matched by any other Western product or personality. The status that MTV's VJ enjoyed in Poland illustrates this, as the example below shows.

Even for Western standards, the number of internationally successful Western musicians that the 1991 Sopot Music Festival gathered was quite impressive. Stars like Jimmy Somerville, Alison Moyet, Andrew Rochford, Danii Minogue, Technotronic, Erasure, Orchestral Manoeuvre in the Dark (OMD), Bros all came to

Sopot for the first time. However, none of them appeared to have generated the kind of spontaneous audience response that MTV's VJ received, which was beyond either the expectations of the organisers or the VJ.

For example, when the VJ arrived in a limousine - which was a sign of cachet in every Eastern European country - to the venue for rehearsal, and when the young people who were hanging around the venue actually realised who was in the car, a crowd of them surged towards it and barricaded it. The big car began to shake under the pressure of what, from an inside-the-car perspective, appeared to be have been at least a hundred of young screaming fans. This incident caused some anxiety among the organisers who were unprepared for this kind of emergency. It was anticipated that the teeny-bop duo Bros would get into such 'trouble' and, for this reason, they had body-guards.[4] However, it appeared that in Sopot, the security of the VJ was more under the 'threat' of potential fans than that of the Bros members. During rehearsal, when the VJ casually walked on the stage just to inspect it, there was a spontaneous applause from the curious observers sitting in the audience, which took the VJ by surprise. Participants went constantly on and off the stage, but it was the VJ's appearance that caught most of the public's attention. An exhibition opening by a famous Polish painter that was scheduled during the music festival also indicates how MTV was privileged. A Western star was expected to attend the opening as a special guest. The painter chose MTV's VJ to whom he generously offered any painting of the VJ's choice. The handing over of the painting with a signed dedication was filmed by a Polish television crew.

To sum up so far, not only was MTV a direct source of information about the West but it also reclaimed Eastern Europe's 'right' to being European, which afforded MTV a special status among Western artefacts in Eastern Europe. The next section illustrates how Eastern European elites 'used' MTV for their own purposes.

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[4] Baker (1989) describes an encounter with Bros fans in London at the peak of their fame, when the duo literally could not go out on the streets without protection.

8.4.2 *MTV AMONG HUNGARIAN ELITES: NOTES FROM FIELDWORK*

Far from being duped by the ideas and values that one might glean from MTV (cf. Banks, 1996), this section describes how the presence of MTV in Hungary - embodied in MTV's VJ - served the interests of those involved around the events attended by the VJ. The VJ was invited to make a personal appearance at a party that was thrown by the sponsor of the visit (an international chewing gum brand) to mark the occasion of their first 'birthday' in Hungary and to host a Hungarian alternative music concert also sponsored by this brand. However, this seemingly minor celebrity appearance turned into a major event. All the Hungarian media were reporting on the events in which MTV's VJ took part. First-hand information about the visit was featured on the main news programme(s). An underlying theme in the daily coverage of the events was the exclusive news that the VJ was moving from MTV onto the newly launched channel VH-1 in the UK. What was a non-event in the UK became headline news in Hungary.

The hype surrounding the visit of MTV's VJ is indeed bizarre from a Western perspective, but readers of this chapter who are now familiar with the attitudes of Eastern Europeans towards the West and MTV in particular, should not be astounded by such hype. For the Hungarians who were keen to be associated with the West, this occasion was an opportunity to distance themselves from the communist past by emulating in the best way possible the Western business efficiency. For those who had access to the VJ - such as the hotel staff, the chauffeur, the body-guards, the make-up artist, and hair-stylist but also the Hungarian organisers of the event - the will to prove that they were accustomed to receive important foreign guests bordered on obsession. Exaggerated apologies over trivial incidents - such as a burnt out light bulb in the VJ's hotel suite or a curtain which got ripped in unfortunate circumstances, that always ended in blaming an incompetent someone from the 'old guard' - betrayed how new and challenging the whole 'VIP business' was to them.

For the Hungarian elites, it was important to take part in the events surrounding the visit because of the amount of publicity they generated. Access to the parties was like a passport to the top rank of Hungarian society. This explains why a young graduate in

business studies from an American university consented to being at the disposal of myself, the VJ's travelling companion, should I have decided that I wanted to go sightseeing while the VJ was fulfilling busy interview schedules. This was not a career move in business but a move up the society ladder. At the top of this ladder were the main parties involved in MTV's VJ visit: the journalist who effectively played the pivotal role, G.A.; the minister of culture, F.G. and the sponsor of the event. They all used MTV in a calculated manner to further their careers, namely by demonstrating that they were part of the West and therefore 'progressive'.[5]

G.A. was the person in control: the intermediate between the VJ and the Hungarian sponsor. G.A. was also responsible for involving the minister of culture in the VJ's visit, whom she knew from school-days. G.A. was a journalist who had access to newspapers, radio and television. A career asset was her fluency in English, in contrast to most of her generation who studied Russian as a second language. She was the child of a diplomat and she had spent much of her childhood abroad, which is how she had learnt English. Thus, although she represents 'progress', and notwithstanding her journalistic talent, she is nonetheless a privileged child of a high-rank communist official. G.A. was a very skilful operator in front of the TV cameras. She always appeared to act spontaneously, yet she was always in control. She made sure that she was filmed in a way that conveyed an image of her as being at ease with the West. For example, she greeted the VJ and myself with a kiss as we stepped out of the plane, thus implying familiarity with the VJ although neither of us had ever met her before. She was also 'caught' on camera at crucial moments: in the presence of the minister of culture; stepping out from a limousine with the VJ onto the red carpet which led into the castle where the gala party was held; translating the speeches by the representative from the sponsor company who was English and the VJ into Hungarian, thus unobtrusively demonstrating her fluency in English; publicly announcing the exclusive news about the launch of VH-1 etc. G.A. also did an interview with the VJ herself. Obviously modelled on the MTV style, she chose to conduct it in a taxi, driving around Budapest, which she then carefully edited with material she had filmed

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[5] For the purpose of analysis, I am keeping a critical distance. However, I do want to acknowledge gratitude to my Hungarian hosts' kind hospitality.

at MTV in London during a previous visit (not connected with this event). Her report resembled an MTV feature as much as the resources permitted. In sum, G.A. cultivated an image of someone who was truly in tune with the West.

Minister F.G. took part in a press-conference with the VJ. It was held in a café/restaurant which was carefully selected as the appropriate venue because of its reputation as being the Western hang-out. The place was named 'Cyrano' after the 1990 multimillion box-office sales film *Cyrano de Bergerac* (see Condron, 1997:214) for which it had served as one of the locations. On the day of the press conference, next to the food, the names of the Minister and the VJ were written on the menu notice-board. F.G.'s path to top rank politics was not conventional. F.G. was younger than the average age of a politician in cabinet. In fact, he was the same generation as the VJ. F.G. used to be in a punk band during the communist era. The punk and new wave movements in Hungary were not political in the conventional sense of the word. Rather, they were a rebellious form of expression with an ability to thrive at the margins of pop by creating new hybrid musical forms and thus subverting traditional frontiers. It is precisely this marginality that gave the music movements their anti-establishment reputation (cf. Szemere, 1992). F. G., therefore, already had a connection with the West, gained through his involvement in the politics of marginality. Now in 'real' politics, F. G. was once again showing how he had not lost his youthful spirit and that he was determined to nurture a relationship with the West, symbolised by the hand-shake with MTV's VJ. This image made it to the front pages of the daily press and headline news.

Finally, the sponsor of the event benefited from being associated with the brand MTV. The sponsor claimed to be "the number one youth chewing-gum around the country" - in the words of the company representative speech at the birthday party - and that MTV's VJ 'represented' that chewing gum. However, no average young people were invited to this party. Instead, it was reserved for media celebrities, business executives and political figures, who indulged themselves in free food and drinks, as no expense was spared. The alternative music concert was an opportunity for young fans to see the VJ live. However, even on this occasion, the eagerness of the organiser to

demonstrate Western efficiency came before the fans. When the concert ended, the VJ was taken out of the venue in between bodyguards through some basement passages and an empty kitchen that led to a backstage exit, to avoid the crowds. Consequently, only a handful of fans, i.e. those with connections, succeeded in getting autographs and records signed by the VJ.

By way of conclusion to this section, I want to draw attention to a study of political attitudes conducted in 1994, the same year that the data above was collected. It found that as many as 83% of Hungarians agreed that capitalism was doing more harm than good in Hungary (Downing, 1996:60). A huge gap exists between the minority of those who study at foreign universities, attend gala parties and drive in limousines and the majority at the other end of the spectrum of Hungarian society, who have three jobs and work long hours to make ends meet (see ibid.). Social inequalities act as a major impediment to the penetration of Western commercial artefacts and for this reason, this analysis of Hungarian elites cannot be taken as evidence of a wide-raging globalisation process. Instead, it supports arguments such as Shaw's (1995 in chapter 6) that we need to look at extent of 'globalisation'.

8.5 THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN WESTERN AND EASTERN RECORDING INDUSTRIES

Against the rigid claim that commercialism has most successfully destroyed artistic values and cultural standards, Geoff Mulgan and Ken Worpole observe that:

> The commercial imperative can be harmful and shallow and ineluctably inclined to cultural dilution in the name of profit maximisation; but it has shown a dynamism with no equal in the purer, more insulated and state sponsored forms. After all, it is the USA, home of unbridled capitalism, that has been the birthplace of nearly all the important new forms of twentieth-century popular culture. The Soviet Union, by contrast, has produced none (1985:62).

In Eastern Europe, Anglo-American popular music has been the most widespread vehicle of youth rebellion and resistance against the repressive communist system. This aspect of Anglo-American music is well documented by popular music theorists,

notably Ryback (1990). A number of popular music theorists demonstrate how the influence of Anglo-American popular music that leapt over the Iron Curtain was beneficial for the 'local' music scene. Foreign music inspired rather than suppressed local creativity (cf. Levy, 1992, 1994; Barber-Kersovan, 1994; Statelova, 1994) and represented a means of resistance to the officially imposed Soviet culture (cf. Pekacz, 1992, 1994; Marchlewski, 1994; Statelova, 1994). Even when the message conveyed by musicians was not intentionally political, it was read as political (cf. Mitchell, 1994, 1996) because, regardless of artistic merit, Anglo-American popular music was officially demonised: "today he is playing jazz, tomorrow he will denounce his country" (Barber-Kersovan:1994:26). The contradictory relationships obtaining between the state and rock culture contributed to the dissolution of the communist regime (cf. Wicke, 1992; Wicke and Shepherd, 1993; Mitchell, 1994; 1996; Barber-Kersovan, 1994).

Notwithstanding the counter-cultural potential of rock in Eastern Europe, this section continues the line of arguments presented in chapters 5 and 6. To begin with, this section questions the assertion that MTV helps the transnational record companies by promoting their main acts and that "given MTV's inclination in its various services to emphasise US and UK artists, this may limits exposure and publicity for home-grown acts in Russia and other regional countries" (Banks, 1996:97). As in chapter 5, it is not the intentions of global media that are questioned but their cultural effects. Three major impediments to global penetration that Banks failed to take into account undermine his claim.

First, piracy is a major impediment for the development of the record industry in Eastern Europe, both international and local (cf. Laing, 1986; Frith, 1987). For example, following the collapse of communism in Poland the level of piracy was as high as 90% (cf. Pekacz, 1992). For this reason, a number of Western groups declined invitations to perform there (ibid.). The "grey market" was also thriving for local records that were not approved by the state, as in the case of the *lakodalmas* rock which was excluded from the media in Hungary (cf. Lange, 1994). Although the piracy-rate declined in some Eastern European countries by the mid-1990s, it still

remains a major problem in others. For example, in Serbia and Macedonia, the piracy rate is 99% (cf. 'Market Survey', 1997); the record industry loss estimates in Bulgaria are up to £200 million a year (cf. Wroe, 1996) while in Russia, music representatives simply appear to be indifferent to international copyright requirements (cf. 'Russia: Bootleg Heaven', 1997:35). In the countries where the piracy-rate considerably declined, such as the Czech Republic, legitimate records are un-affordable for many young people (cf. Mitchell, 1994).

Secondly, in a non-market-economy system, the Western market rules could not be applied straight-forwardly, to say the least. To begin with, there were no chart systems comparable to Western commercial Top 40s. In Eastern Europe, the central planning of state-controlled music budgets always occurred "in complete disassociation from the endemic market forces that did exist" (Wick and Shepherd, 1993:31; also see Szemere 1992). Furthermore, unless they were supported by the state, Western records were not legitimately available in shops (see, for example, Ryback, 1990), with the exception of the former Yugoslavia, where a limited Anglo-American repertoire was available, albeit with a time-lag. In addition, before the collapse of communism, Western groups were not touring in the East, except on the rare occasions when they were approved by politicians, the vast majority of whom did not have any understanding about the music (see, ibid.).

Consequently, when MTV became available in Eastern Europe, the scope of the channel's influence was limited by the conditions in the local market. These limitations were twofold. On the one hand, there was no record-release co-ordination between the Eastern and Western record-business counterparts, which resulted in a complete mess in terms of Western artists' promotional strategies. For example, in the spring of 1989 Niagara, who sold out their tour in a number of European countries (cf. chapter 5), played a concert in Sarajevo in front of an audience of less than 20 people. I was, then, working on the popular Youth Radio and Niagara came to the studio for a live interview in order to promote their concert. However, I was not aware that the group was in town until I met them at the 'Radio'. The artist and relation division of their record company appeared to have negotiated the tour with the assigned local

official. This was a futile exercise because he was appointed on a 'communist party line' precisely to prevent the 'infiltration of foreign elements' into programmes. The only way for Western music to get exposure was to deal directly with local counter-cultural outlets. However, these outlets tended to make the first move and establish contacts with 'Westerners' rather than the other way around. Consequently, unless the 'relevant word of mouth' (cf. chapter 2) spread among the Western industry, there was no other way for them to know who to contact locally, except the communist bureaucrats.

On the other hand, in Eastern Europe, following the collapse of communism, the distinction between new acts on MTV and those with back-catalogues made little sense. Prior to the introduction of MTV, either the time lag between Western releases and Eastern (underground) hits was considerable or they never made it to the East. As for alternative media outlets in the former Yugoslavia, they had their own equivalents of playlists which were based on the musical tastes of the music programmers and the show presenters. Examples from the Sopot and Saint Petersburg music festivals illustrate the discrepancy between Western charts and Eastern hits. In Sopot, the British duo Erasure played songs from their latest album, as is customary in the West when a band with a new album is on tour. When they were on stage, the audience remained seated and politely applauded. OMD, in contrast, decided to play their greatest hits. At the sound of the first tune, the auditorium erupted, as fans began to clap and even sing along. The atmosphere was ecstatic and the band were called for a few encores. This was a memorable concert for OMD who were not even aware of their Polish fan-base, given that Eastern Europe was uncharted on their promotional strategy map.[6] Similarly, Mitchell (1996:101-102) offers an account of how Lou Reed was almost moved to tears when he found out how many dedicated fans he had in former Czechoslovakia.

The Western music industry participants were even more astounded when the local Russian promoters requested Boney M - who had long ceased to exist in the West - and Zigue Zigue Sputnik - a 1980s' group who had a few international hits before they

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[6] Private communication with the lead-singer of the band.

died away - to headline the Festival. Russians might have appeared backward in their music tastes and oblivious to Western trends, but the choice of headliners was not a matter of coincidence. As I have already noted, the Kremlin approved of disco music for a while, which was confirmed by a Boney M concert in Moscow in 1978. More importantly than this element of 'locality' attached to Boney M, their music was also associated with resistance to the communist censorship. When the band was invited by the communist officials, they were asked to refrain from performing 'Rasputin' because of the song's lyrics: "The song recounted the sexual and political prowess of the tsar's notorious healer who seduced the women and manipulated the men of Nicholas II's court. 'Rah! Rah! Rasputin', the song proclaimed, 'Russia's greatest love machine!'" (Rybac, 1990:161). Despite this ban, the song was played in disco clubs and became the national rage throughout the country (cf. Ryback, 1990). Apparently, Zigue Zigue Sputnik were famous in the former USSR because they took the name of the Russian space shuttle.

The third and final point on which I want to challenge Banks (1996) concerns the issue of the promotion of Eastern European music on MTV. As with many other Continental music genres, music from Eastern Europe following the opening of the Iron Curtain was faced with the 'cross-over barrier' in Europe (cf. chapter 5). As Tony Mitchell observes, "judged by their Western peers, Soviet and Eastern European rock groups have not fared well" (1994:76). The somewhat harsh words of Pop Will Eat Itself, who were on tour in Russia in 1988, echo the dismissal of Eastern European pop music by Westerners: "They're all talking about exchanges but how can you tell them that their bands are shit? It's new for them to have us and Billy Bragg here but it wouldn't be interesting for British people to see something that was done 20 years ago" (quoted in Mitchell, 1994: 76). The problem might have well been the deprivation of adequate recording facilities and the lack of marketing strategies rather than talent, but that was neither the concern of the Western music press nor that of Western music audiences. For this reason, Eastern European bands were only featured in MTV's 'specialist' shows.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the impact of MTV on Eastern Europe from a perspective that challenged the cultural imperialism/globalisation thesis as articulated in relation to MTV. This chapter demonstrated that MTV's influence was determined by the particularities of Eastern Europe, as a terrain in part defined politically, in relation to the Iron Curtain and its remnants.

From an economic perspective, there are major impediments to global media penetration such as high levels of poverty, economic instability leading to political uncertainty, 'mafia-like' ways of doing business and, not unrelated, a thriving piracy network, be it of bootleg cassettes or means of pirating satellite TV signals.

From a cultural perspective, the impact of MTV on Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism cannot be understood simply by reference to material value. Instead, the meaning of MTV was explained by exoticising ethnocentric 'Western' interpretations of 'Eastern' behaviour. The alternative perspective adapted in this chapter revealed that the concept of the 'West' for an Eastern European was associated with 'Europe' as a common 'spiritual' home. This home was inhabited by people who shared the same tradition but were physically divided by a political regime which was viewed as an aberration in the aftermath of World War II. In such a context, Western commercial and cultural artefacts, popular music in particular, were used as symbols of defiance towards the political system, at the same time expressing an admiring attitude towards the 'West'. However, far from being duped by the ideas and values that one might glean from MTV, Eastern Europeans transformed in creative ways the globalising trends on MTV and even used local events involving the presence of MTV in a self-serving manner. This chapter suggested that there was a great divergence between dwellers of cosmopolitan urban centres and the population in the provinces, where urban elites are often targets of suspicion and derision. The next chapter looks more fully at this urban/rural antagonism in the context of discussion about the meaning of MTV in war circumstances.

CHAPTER 9

MTV IN WAR-TORN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: TOWARDS A NEW FORM OF PUBLICNESS NOT RELIANT UPON TERRITORIALITY

INTRODUCTION

> We still talk to people in Sarajevo, and they know we're out there. We try to bring it up as often as possible, without trying to score any kind of ethical points on our behalf, 'cause it's kind of powerless, but to a degree we are attached. We are reality to a lot of them, we're more reality than CNN. We're more reality than a news broadcast which comes from either a propaganda point of view or a nationalistic point of view, we're neither of those. So, to a degree, we're realism. I know that sounds really weird but that kind of fantasy concept of music seems to work (Hansen, interview, 18/08/94).

The concern of this chapter is to raise the following questions: how did MTV 'talk to people in Sarajevo'; to what degree was it 'attached' to the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH); how is it possible that to MTV fans in the war-zone, MTV was 'more reality than CNN' (taken to represent traditional news reporting); and, finally, what is the meaning of popular music in war circumstances, and to what extent does it have the power to move people towards some socially responsible action?

These questions are raised in order to address the issue of transnational communicative interaction by moving away from the 'cultural imperialism/globalisation' perspective towards an alternative one. This alternative perspective seeks to understand how these processes of globalisation, which operate across national boundaries, might connect communities in new time-space combinations (cf. McGrew, 1992 in chapter 4). In this context, one of the central themes in this thesis has been how the development of the international economy and the growth of importance of the cultural/information sector is undercutting the role of the nation-state (cf. Garnham, 1984 in chapter 1). This case-study of MTV in war-torn BiH aims to explore more fully an emerging form of publicness - not reliant upon territoriality - which devalues political resources organised around the nation-state.

In the manner of McKenzie Wark's *Virtual Geography*, this chapter looks at an exceptional moment in the emerging world of globalised media experience. This chapter is about a 'weird global media event':

> [Event] in the sense of singular [irruption] into the regular flow of media. 'Global' in that there is some linkage between the site at which [it] appear[s] to happen and the sites where we remote-sense [it]. Some kind of feedback across national and cultural spaces takes place. [It] is 'weird' in that something about [it] seems to break our conventional mappings of the relationship between political, economic, or cultural feeding across global spaces and between, radically different cultures, something odd is going on (1994:vii-viii).

There is a parallel between this analysis and what John Hartley calls the "politics of pictures". The "politics of pictures" works on the premise that "if the public can nowadays only be encountered in mediated form, it becomes necessary to look at these mediations to discover the state of the contemporary public domain" (1992:1). This, in turn, entails recognising that media images are quite real in their modes of industrial production, their social force, political effects and cultural power and that they can be observed and investigated empirically, which, as Hartley says "is more than you can say for the public [...] So it is not a question of contrasting a real public with the illusory media (almost vice versa); it is a matter of showing how pervasive the textualisation of public life has become, and how it works" (ibid.:2).

In effect, this chapter examines the Western media representation of the conflict in BiH by way of a comparative analysis of two 'textualisations' of the public. It builds primarily upon the analysis of the two competing interpretations of European identity in chapter 4. Chapter 4 argued that the EC's interpretation of European identity was an instance of 'banal nationalism'. European identity was based on an abstract concept of the 'West' - equated with 'Civilisation' - which came to think of itself in terms of its noblest achievements. The 'West' was defined against the non-Western 'Barbarian' Other. Chapter 4 also cautioned that 'banal' nationalism easily slips into a 'malign' kind and stressed the crucial role of the media in nurturing national mythology. In its most degenerate form, the media in general and television, in particular, can serve

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nationalist aspirations by nurturing the myth of the nation as if it were an essence, through celebrating the glories of its past. This was the case with the former Yugoslavia where, in the late 1980s, president Slobodan Milosević skilfully exploited the media's extensive coverage of Serbian medieval history to articulate his political ambition to create a 'greater Serbia' (cf. Simić, 1994).

In contrast, Europeanness on MTV was defined as a space created by networks of specialist discourses of taste. Here Europeanness becomes synonymous with a form of cosmopolitanism involving a willingness to engage with the Other, which can promote multicultural coalitions. In order to understand how MTV influenced the resources of social interaction upon which alternative conceptions of life in war-torn BiH came to be constructed, it is necessary to consider MTV from an Eastern European perspective. Chapter 8 argued that, for an urban Eastern European, MTV was a tangible symbol of the 'West', a concept which embodied Eastern European aspirations towards a more democratic society, freed from communist repression.

However, this chapter will attempt to show how, for people in war-torn BiH, the concept of 'Western' democracy lost its appeal. Caught between the 'malign' nationalism raging in their country and the 'banal nationalism' of the 'West', the population in BiH had to carve out their own spaces of resistance. They fought this battle with music. This chapter will demonstrate how musical taste became a signifier not only of distinction between the urban and rural cultures, but also of political orientation. In this context, MTV became an alternative communicative environment where the repressed voice of rock fans - whose urban space was invaded by reactionary political forms of neo-folk - could be freely heard. MTV thus functioned as a 'virtual space' that temporarily connected people through visual slogans and helped to foster an imaginative social solidarity, that acted as a precursor for actual physical mobilisation (cf. the Mohammadis, 1997: 223).

This analysis begins by proposing a theoretical framework for an understanding of how perceptual experiences which are not bound by rules of proximity contribute to the formation of communities of affect. Considering that such a theoretical framework

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is outlined for the purpose of the case-study of MTV in BiH, particular attention will be drawn to examples where popular music offered some scope for the formation of transnational affective alliances.

9.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A MEDIATED FORM OF PUBLICNESS BEYOND THE 'IMAGINED COMMUNITY'

Willis (1990) suggests that collectivity may increasingly work through shared cultural interests and aspirations - what he refers to as 'subjective factors' - rather than through factors such as the factory or the neighbourhood - which he refers to as 'objective' factors. He proposes the term 'proto-community' to describe this emergent and fissiparous type of community which is formed on the basis of affect. 'Proto-communities' are brought to life by different causes and they can be manifest either in smaller-scale campaigns or in one-off mass solidarity events such as 'Live Aid'. Willis' premise is that this informal kind of cultural production does not so much signal a fundamental change in orderings of power, class and economic interests but a shift in how these become lived and experienced. For the reason that 'proto-communities' form out of "unorganised precipitations and spontaneous patterns of shared symbolic work and creativity (Willis, 1990:141), they do not comfortably occupy the space confined within the realm of the 'official' culture, which is effectively that of the nation-state.

Instead, I want to suggest that they are at home in what Arjun Appadurai (1990) calls 'mediascapes'. 'Mediascapes' are one of the five elementary frameworks that Appadurai proposes for exploring the disjunctures between economy, culture and politics in the complex global economy. Each construct carries the suffix 'scape' to indicate that 'scapes' are deeply perspectival. They are inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different actors. These are the nation-states, the multinationals and diasporic communities as well as subnational groupings and movements (whether religious, political or economic) and intimate face-to-face groups such as villages, neighbourhoods and families. The individual is the last locus

of Appadurai's perspectival set of landscapes but she or he is also the agent who both experiences and constitutes larger formations in part by her or his sense of what these landscapes offer.

As regards 'mediascapes' specifically, they refer

> both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, film, production studios etc.), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world; and to the images of the world created by these media (Appadurai, 1990:298-299).

Whether produced by private or public interest, 'mediascapes' tend to be image-centred. They are narrative-based accounts of reality out of which scripts of imagined lives can be formed by those who experience them. However,

> these scripts can and do get disaggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live as they help to constitute narratives of the 'other' and proto-narratives of possible lives, fantasies which could become prolegomena to the desire of acquisition and movement (ibid.:299).

My suggestion is that these 'protonarratives of possible lives' become 'real' and are lived as 'proto-communities'- which will be illustrated through the example of MTV in Bosnia. Here, I concur with Paddy Scannell that circumstances of the absent viewing public create what appears to be a 'participation without involvement':

> It is not that the event is more real and meaningful for the live audience, less real and meaningful for listeners and viewers; rather there are different realities with different effects. The public life of broadcasting does not stand in a secondary and supplementary relationship to a prior and privileged public life based on presence. It has rather created new contexts, realities and meanings (1989:154; also see Dayan and Katz, 1992).

In order to put forward such an argument, it is necessary to accept that the strength of affinity between social actors who experience image-centred 'imagined worlds' is not necessarily weaker than the sense of fraternity between those who belong to the same 'imagined community'. In fact, there is a parallel between the two. Apparudai is effectively extending Anderson's (1983) concept of 'imagined community' into what he calls 'imagined worlds', by arguing that

an important fact of the world we live today is that many persons on the globe live in such imagined 'worlds' and not just in imagined communities, and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the 'imagined worlds' of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them (1990:297).

Let us look more closely at Anderson's argument to establish this connection.

Anderson chooses the term 'imagined' to describe the community of the nation because the members of even the smallest nation will never meet, "yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion" (1983:6). This image of communion has to be constantly built up through various symbols that connote unity. For example, singing the national anthem on national holidays can symbolise such national unity. In the words of Anderson: "No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody" (ibid.:145). Nothing connects most members of a nation but the unisonance of imagined sound and yet it echoes the "physical realisation of the imagined community" (ibid.).

However, no matter how powerful such a feeling is - indeed people are willing to die for such an imagining (cf. ibid.:7) - nations are constructs which have become 'preferred' objects of identification in the modern nationalist age (cf. Gellner, 1983 in chapter 2). As Anthony Weymouth put it: "One political consequence of the growth of the newspaper industry in the 19th century was the consolidation of the concept of the nation-state" (1996:2). Similarly, Anderson observes that it is no coincidence that the modern nation-state emerged in the same era as the institution of print capitalism. According to Anderson the press "made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (ibid.:35-36). Reading newspapers in the privacy of one's home may not be as solemn an occasion as singing the national anthem on a stadium during a televised event, but the confidence that millions of others will be performing the same ritual of reading also generates that feeling of belonging to the same 'imagined community'.

By analogy with 'imagined communities' I want to suggest that 'imagined worlds' generate new kinds of identities, no less powerful than 'nationality'. If the development of modern nations confined to the geographical boundaries within which societies exist is attributed to a particular stage in technological development, why not suppose that with the advent of electronic media, our sense of place has begun to be redefined and that this, in turn, will affect our identities? This is a hypothesis put forward by Joshua Meyrowitz (1985). What is relevant, here, is his proposition that electronic media, and television in particular, "have combined previously distinct social settings, moved the dividing line between private and public behaviour towards the private, and weakened the relationship between social situations and physical places" (ibid.:308). Electronic media enabled social performers to go to places without travelling and audiences to be present at distant events (cf. ibid.:118). As a result, viewers may feel that they 'met' a person they saw on television or 'visited' a place they saw on television (ibid.:122-123). For Meyrowitz, this indicates that "aspects of group identity, socialisation, and hierarchy that were once dependent on particular physical locations and the special experiences available in them have been altered by electronic media" (ibid.:125).

Drawing upon Meyrowitz's tentative theory of the changing 'situational geography' of social life, Wark (1994) draws attention to the terrain of everyday life created by communications networks, notably television, which is equally familiar to us, as say, the place where we work. Various telecommunications networks criss-crossing the globe produce the experience of perception at distance - what Wark (1994) calls "telesthesia" - and permeate "our experience of the space we experience first hand" (Wark, 1994:vii). This, to use Wark's words once again, is our 'virtual geography' which is no more or less 'real' than the experience of physical proximity. As Wark put it, "it is a different kind of perception, of things not bounded by rules of proximity, of 'being there'" (ibid.).

Drawing upon what has been said so far about 'imagined communities', and following Meyrowitz (1985) and Wark (1994), we can suppose that Appadurai's 'imagined

worlds' may supply a continuing scope for symbolic work and alternative identifications (but no less powerful for that) to those dependent on physical experience. After all, a 'proto-community' located in a 'mediascape' also consists of individuals who have similar cultural aspirations or concerns (although they have never met) just like members of 'imagined communities'. Why not also suppose, then, that words around the theme 'let's make the world a better place', when sung in a global experience of simultaneity such as the event of 'Live Aid' (broadcast on July 13, 1985 as a mondovision directly from Sydney (Australia); Wembley stadium in London (UK) and the JFK stadium in Philadelphia (USA)) may also create a strong emotional bond at least for the moment of its duration?

Hebdige (1990) argues that the desire to feel connected to a transitory mass of other people and to engage in transitory and superficial alliances may suggest a new kind of politics. Such politics exist primarily in and through the airwaves and are organised around issues of universal moral concern. According to Hebdige, popular music offers many examples of this kind of bonding. Televised events organised around 'Live Aid' and similar were one of the "simultaneously most spectacular and yet most participatory examples to date of the kind of bonding made possible across transnational communications systems [...]" (1990:91). For Hebdige, this suggests that "within the transfigured 'public realm', established by transnational communications networks, new forms, both of alliance and contestation, are possible" (1990:90). New transnational media systems have the power "to move people not just to buy the products of the culture industries but to buy *into* networks that offer forms of community and alliance which can transcend the confines of class, race, gender, regional and national culture" (1990:90-91).

This new kind of politics which exists through the airwaves is precisely what is explored by using the case of MTV in Bosnia while concepts such as 'proto-communities', 'mediascapes' and 'virtual geography' posit a "horizon of relevant terms within which to approach the political-spatial component of televisionisation" (Berland, 1988:146). This emergent lexicon, adapted for a politics of MTV's pictures, provides the relevant concepts for a recognition of the ever-increasing instances of

television's technological reconstruction of physical and cultural space (cf. ibid.). It can be said that this chapter examines a 'transfigured public realm' which is located within MTV's 'scape'. Here, viewers are not interpellated as citizens of nation-states. Rather, they are

> interpellated as members of discursive communities whose locations are multiple and even contradictory; simultaneously domesticated and internationalised, isolated and ubiquitously surrounded here and somewhere not-placed, voting with ballots in one country and record sales in another, fans of 'The World' we are and are not in (ibid.).

Finally, to paraphrase Hall, we need to be clear about what we mean about 'new politics' because as soon as one talks about the new "people instantly imagine that what is entailed is the *substitution* of one kind of politics for another" (1988:27). What is proposed in this chapter is not the replacement of traditional politics by a new politics. It is suggested, instead, that by way of a comparative analysis of two 'textualisations' of the Bosnian conflict, it is possible to glean some signs of new unities emerging from sharing access to the same symbols (as used by MTV) that might be competing against the various symbols used to connote the unity of a 'nation'. By doing so, transnational communicative networks located within 'media-scapes' effectively engage in battle for allegiance of 'citizens'.

9.2 WESTERN MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE CONFLICT IN BiH: WHERE HAVE THE COSMOPOLITANS GONE?

David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995: chapter 7) look at the effects of modern media in constructing a new experience of virtual space and place and virtual community. They question Western media representation of the wars in the Gulf and in Bosnia by way of an interdisciplinary approach which combines recent work on new geographies, mainly in the field of social psychology, and recent anthropological work that questions the Western self-attributed right to speak for non-western Others. Morley and Robins argue that Western media arrogate themselves the right to represent all non-western (non-white, non-European, non-Christian) Others in a way

that provides the West ('us') with the definition by which 'we' can distinguish ourselves from 'them'. Very pertinent in the discussion to follow is their remark that:

> If, in one sense, screening means that 'they' are made present to 'us' in representation, it is also the case that the image of 'them' is screened in the different sense of being filtered, **with only certain selected images getting through** (1995:134, my emphasis).

Thus, in the Western media coverage of the Gulf war, Saddam Hussein was consistently portrayed as the evil Other. Such a demonisation of the enemy was related to the desire to purify Western culture and civilisation, the uniqueness of which could only be defined against non-Europe (cf. ibid.:135-139; also see chapter 4). In sum "'our' civilisation was defined against 'their' barbarism" (ibid.:137). The Bosnian sequel to the horrific Gulf massacre was represented in much the same vein. However, this time, the war was in Europe itself. In an effort to create a distance between the West and the Balkans, the war was represented "as if it was happening to another kind of people. In Western Europe, the war is seen as an atavistic affair acted out by primitive and tribal populations [...] This is a mad place, we say, and these are mad people, unlike us" (ibid.:143). In the televisual encounter between 'us' and 'them', the TV screen served as a protective shield against 'their' madness - a diagnosis that was an excuse for the ineffectiveness of the international community in stopping the fighting.

While 'madness' might have well had its role to play in BiH (would a human being in a 'normal' state of mind shoot children playing on the streets with snipers?), the Western media concentration on barbarism was misleading. What was at stake was not Balkan savagery which led to a civil war between different ethnic groups, but a systematically planned genocide against innocent civilians. According to Rahel Bösch representing the war in Bosnia as a civil war between equally guilty and equally bellicose sides is an inadequate interpretation of the war as being a consequence of the collapse of Yugoslavia, which then resulted in the spread of nationalism. Such an interpretation ignores the reality, which is that of aggression and genocide. In the words of Bösch:

> Despite the extensive coverage of the war [...] there are still very few people who understand what is happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 'I

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don't understand why this is made to be so complicated', says a Swiss woman on her way back from Sarajevo, 'it is a matter of democracy against fascism, a fight for survival' (1996:208).

Indeed, concentration camps, rapes, massacres, pillages and terror were all taking place in a Europe that vouched some fifty years before that this kind of horror would never be tolerated again by the international community.

The case of BiH was not "a rich source of traditionalist revivals" (Waters, 1995:138) following the dismemberment of socialist states in Eastern Europe, although that is how the war was represented in the Western news. Rather, as Neil Ascherson rightly predicted, dissident politics in Eastern Europe began to give way to the force of traditional nationalism

> whose prejudices are rural and populist and whose ideology may turn out to have more to do with authority than with human rights. A revival of a certain past - that of the old peasant parties at its best, and of *Blut und Boden* nationalism at its worst - seemed to be possible (1989:26).

Sadly, this possibility became a reality in BiH.

In order to clarify the (mis)interpretation of the conflict in BiH as civil war, the founder and editor-in-chief of the civilian war gazette *Stela* and the Bosnian defenders' gazette *Bedem,* Husein Hujić, uses a play of words. He says that the war was *seoski rat* ('peasant war') not *gradanski rat* ('civil war'). The adjective *gradanski* - which means 'civil' - is derived from the noun *grad* which means 'city'. At the same time *gradanski* is also a possessive adjective from the noun *gradanin*, which means 'city dweller'. By referring to this second meaning, Hujić implies that the conflict was not a war of the people 'of the city' - i.e. civil war. Rather, it was a bigoted assault on cosmopolitanism, as the following accounts from the besieged city of Sarajevo illustrate:

> By saving Sarajevo, Bosnia is saved. The Bosnian idea is saved. This idea is the capacity for mutual existence of all four biggest monotheistic religions - Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox and Islamic - in a small space and the possibility of intertwining all four great civilisations, the spirit of which consists of the four named religions. If the life-span of these religions is measured in terms of *Bašcaršija* 's [old town, Sarajevo] square meters, *Bašcaršija*'s longevity and *Bašcaršija*'s spirit, then judging from

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Baščaršija's space and time, it can be deduced that man has prayed to his God for centuries, each in his place of worship. And these places - the Jewish Temple, the Cathedral, the old Orthodox Church and the Ferhadija Mosque - are all located within a space that is no bigger that an old *avlija* [Turkish archaism for courtyard]. If there is a God, he will do that the avlija of Baščaršija and its spirit of tolerance be spread through Bosnia. *Baščaršija*, by extension Sarajevo and the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina: here, in this land and under this sky, diversity has always aroused curiosity; it was a magnet that brought people closer and united them. This part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, currently under assault from the *Grudansko-Durmitor*,[1] non-*Baščaršijan* and non-cosmopolitan spirit, will neither be called Serbian, nor Croatian, nor Muslim but Bosnian Republic (1993:2).

Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims and Jews, we all lived together. Sarajevo was the model for the rest of Yugoslavia. We were like a dream come true. And all, regardless of religion, came to us [the Sarajevan Jewish Community]. We organised lectures, music evenings, debates. We were all excited about the coming of the Ramadan. On Christmas Eve, we went together to the Catholic Cathedral. The following week, we would celebrate Christmas again with the Orthodox friends. My little daughter used to stand in front the main Mosque in Sarajevo: 'This is where God lives', she told me (Stern, 1996a:91).

One of the greatest symbols of Sarajevo's resistance was the daily newspaper *Oslobodenje*, which continued to be published during the war from the basement, underneath the debris of the completely shattered skyscraper that used to be its home. In the words of the chief-editor of *Oslobodenje* between 1988 and 1994, Kemal Kurspahić:

I think they are attempting to destroy us with a special intensity because of what we stand for. We have a staff that reflects the national composition of our society almost exactly. And we write about Sarajevo and Bosnia in a way that reflects something the Serb forces deny - that Serbs and Muslims and Croats [and others] can work and live together in harmony (from an *Alliance to Defend Bosnia* flyer).

The cosmopolitanism of Sarajevo was used by Sarajevans as a metonym for BiH, while BiH, by further extension, was proudly referred to as "little Europe" (cf. Daidžić, 1996). When Sarajevo's buildings began to collapse in fire, the voice of

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[1] These mountains, from which the attack on civilians was taking place, are a metaphor for the parochial peasant-urbanite mentality which attacked cosmopolitan cities.

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Sarajevans ignored by the 'civilised' Europe cried that 'Europe was burning!'. Initially, as we shall see in section 9.3, the war caught Sarajevo's cosmopolitans by surprise. However, as weeks, months and then years under siege dragged on, Sarajevans were staggered that the 'World' turned a blind eye at the face of such a human tragedy. Those under siege increasingly began to point their finger accusingly at the Europe which had let them down (cf. Gunić, 1994). According to Johan Folmer, in Bosnia, the main principle of Western civilisation - democracy - was betrayed:

> Every day we listen to Western politicians and mediators: 'The international community shall not tolerate the mindless ethnic cleansing'. This Western maxim, nurtured by the European Community's peace envoy in at the Geneva Conference, Lord Owen, amounts to no more than a naked formula which makes negotiations even more difficult. De facto, the international community is tolerating crimes on a day-to-day basis - even after numerous reports about mass graves, concentration camps and persecution (1996:46).

This feeling of betrayal by 'Europe' among the population of BiH is central to an understanding of the relationship between the physical experience of life in war circumstances and the mediated encounters of that life. I have suggested earlier that Western news coverage focused on selected images of the war so that to an ordinary audience member, the war appeared to be the harsh reality of someone else, that does not involve any kind of responsibility. In this context, I want to return to Morley and Robins's argument about the role of the TV screen as a separation and protection. As they put it:

> The screen is a powerful metaphor for our times: it symbolises how we now exist in the world [...] Increasingly we confront moral issues through the screen, and the screen confronts us with increasing numbers of moral dilemmas. At the same time, however, it screens us from those dilemmas. It is through the screen that we disavow or deny our human implication in moral realities (1995:141).

In the case of BiH,

> we are invited, by the nature of the TV coverage to take up the position of the 'armchair anthropologist', gazing at the 'Other' on the screen, in the living room. We must recognise that, in so far as this war is 'viewed' as something (mythical) happening to 'Other' people, this can make its viewers insensitive to their own psychic investments in the material viewed (1995:145).

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By extension, I want to suggest that war reports that filtered images and 'otherised' the victims, can be interpreted as a tactic that pandered to Western officials in their attempts to justify their inability, unwillingness even, to react to the prospect of what was effectively renewed fascism in Europe. 'Otherising' the Bosnians in Western news was consistent. A comparative analysis of news-reporting in the UK, France, Germany and Sweden revealed that with the exception of Swedish news coverage of the Bosnian war, Bosnians were portrayed as 'not us' through selected images from the conflict (Robertson and Hellman, 1997). Consequently, such a coverage amounted to little more than a spectacle that Western audiences gradually got bored with. Indeed, the Bosnians are at war "and I'm waiting for the casserole to warm up [...] Meanwhile we flip channels from the tennis to the news and back, to keep track of the score" (Wark, 1994: 60, 42). Representing the war in a way that encouraged "morbid voyeurism" (Morley and Robins, 1995:141), in turn, served as a pretext for the international community's reluctant involvement with the conflict. After all, if these mad people want to go on killing each other, there is nothing 'we' (civilised Western population) can do.

In contrast, on Swedish news:

> We are treated to Bosnians you could invite to dinner (cosmopolitans who look and dress like others) and not just the very foreign-looking peasants with their belongings on a cart fleeing from the burning shell of their farm, and [we are] invited to share the tragedy [...] because, after all, it could have happened to us (Robertson and Hellman, 1997:27).

I shall argue on the example of MTV's representation of the Bosnian conflict that images of 'people like us' had the potential of amplifying the awareness about the suffering in BiH and appealing to the public's sensibility.

9.3 MTV's REPRESENTATION OF THE CONFLICT IN BiH:
THE COSMOPOLITANS ARE BACK

Before the war escalated in BiH in the spring of 1992 and took on horrific proportion, regions in the neighbouring republics of Slovenia and subsequently Croatia had been affected since the summer of 1991. As the war was raging in Croatian provinces, the inhabitants of the capital city Zagreb were exposed to the scenes via their TV screens, much like their Western European counterparts had been to the Gulf war on traditional news bulletins or non-stop on CNN. Zagrebans never thought that the same was going to happen to them in the centre (cf. Drakulić, 1993). Similarly, Sarajevans were convinced that the war could never happen in Sarajevo and, indeed, its population with cosmopolitan orientation was literally unprepared for what was installed:

> When the war started in Slovenia, my friends and I never dreamed it would spread, in a much worse form, to Bosnia-Herzegovina. We didn't think our city could fall victim to any kind of national conflict, because it was a place where young people of all nationalities lived together, where no one cared about nationality, religion or politics. [...] In April, when it was already obvious that the war had begun in Bosnia, we still thought it must be some kind of mistake and would soon be over (Lesić ed., 1995:48).

> I left my native Sarajevo in May 1992, a month after the war started. I was in my final year of high school, studying for the entrance exam to Sarajevo's Academy of Arts. No one believed what was happening. All my dreams were shattered, not only mine, but those of everyone who shared the same destiny. We felt confused, lost, insecure. It was the beginning of an obscene tragedy. The schools have finished two months earlier than usual. Masses of young people found themselves facing decisions they hoped they would never have to make. To stand up and fight, not for politics, but for their own homes, town, future. We had to make our choice, but whatever our decision, the loss was ours (ibid.:61-62).

> It all began on 3 May 1992. I was woken up by a mobile loudspeaker saying that all Muslims and Croats had to turn their weapons or else... Standing on the terrace I wondered who these Muslims and Croats were and why everyone had suddenly become a Serb, Muslim or Croat, when no one had ever paid attention to such things before. Who were these people in uniform marching in the street and what were they doing in my town? It

was like a circus, like a joke, but three hours later everything became inextricably real, with houses burning and those same soldiers shooting (ibid.:64).

When the city was besieged, the initial reaction of Sarajevans was to 'carry on as usual'. Going to work every day, in spite of the life threatening danger, was a sign of resistance. This will 'to carry on as usual' became even more pronounced as the war intensified:

> Sarajevo is a city where the university was reopened in wartime even though all its buildings had been severely damaged by shells fired from the hills. A city where hospitals, bakeries and the brewery have remained open in spite of daily shelling. A city where, despite constant sniper-fire, theatre performances are attended as though it were peacetime. A besieged city, where young people rehearse the musical 'Hair' by candlelight, while guns from the surrounding hills bombard playgrounds. Where one of the great human souls of contemporary Europe, Vedran Smailović, played his cello in a tuxedo and white tie on the spot where a shell had landed only twenty minutes before, while people stood around, listening in silence (ibid.:60).

> During the war, Sarajevo was the cultural centre of the world, especially in theatre, painting and poetry. The conditions for survival were few and far between because Sarajevans had no longer the basic requirements for life. But out of all that misery was born art of the highest quality. Plays were staged in destroyed theatre buildings, and instead of tickets people brought candles. Literary evenings and exhibitions were held by candlelight (ibid.:47-48).

In the period immediately after Sarajevo was besieged, the main objective of Sarajevans was to get one single message through: 'let the world know what's happening here'. This was more important than, say, getting any medical supplies, food or clothing because this was neither a famine zone nor a natural disaster zone. This tragedy was human-inflicted. This section examines how MTV responded to the call for help from Sarajevo. The argument is that, unlike Western news coverage, which precluded moral response and engagement, the Bosnian tragedy was represented on MTV in a way that made the European viewers obliged to respond.

9.3.1 *ADAPTING THE MTV STYLE FOR WAR REPORTING*

In Bosnia before the war, MTV represented a simple desire to be trendy. When the war started, the will of young urban Bosnians to be part of MTV turned into a desperate wish not to be left behind. Within a short period, MTV became what young people once had and had now so suddenly lost. Yet, to admit the loss would have been more devastating than the reality of their surrounding. As for MTV, it was confronted with the tension between its marketing imperative and a sense of moral responsibility. As argued in chapter 2, on the one hand, MTV invested heavily in making itself a forum for issues outside pop trivia. On the other, as argued in chapter 4, it constructed its Europe as a 'celebration of diversity'. Consequently, in order to live up to its image, it simply could not ignore the Bosnian 'local' issue. In the words of Hansen, the war "was the first thing that came up where we had a responsibility". However, the crisis went beyond the scope of any entertainment channel. The matter had to be subtly expressed:

> In a country torn by war [...] MTV represents other young people. It represents, kind of, people who should be mindful of what's going on in their situation. There's a conscience issue there, as well. And that has to be somehow said there, without going into some kind of emotional overkill [...] We're never going to stop the war, but we'll keep people mindful of that (interview, 18/08/94).

The importance of MTV's coverage[2] of the Bosnian crisis in subtle ways for as long as the conflict lasted was twofold: first, MTV became the channel through which the voice of young Bosnians could be heard; second, the channel's reference to the Bosnian crisis raised awareness.

Dedicated to 'keeping people mindful' and loyal to its 'cosmopolitan' representation of Europe (cf. chapter 4), MTV exposed what could be characterised as the issue of 'sameness' that was lost in traditional news reports. At least, with regard to young urban people, there is no difference between them and other MTV fans in the rest of Europe. Footages of hungry and exhausted people, marching with bags containing all

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[2] In numerous features on MTV news, specially made idents with messages to people in Sarajevo recorded by celebrities and 'ordinary' youth, weekends dedicated to young people in Bosnia, a 'Sarajevo Special' live from the war zone.

their belongings, is indeed one shocking side of the war. Having been forced to move, these people have lost their material possessions, but not their dignity. They are still individuals, although they are collectively referred to as refugees. This, for many, is hard to accept. When called a refugee in a camp by a Western reporter, a young man replied: 'fuck you, my name is Goran!'. Even if living conditions had changed, the majority of people had not. Girls were still beautiful. They wore make-up. They liked Jon Bon Jovi. But, somehow that seemed to have been forgotten. This was not the kind of reality we saw on the news, yet it existed.

In contrast to traditional news, in MTV's reports from BiH, the 'other' side of the war prevailed. Given that MTV was not a channel equipped to deal with war reporting, it had to adapt its usual style of reporting to the situation in BiH. In the context of Sarajevo, MTV's 'ambiguity strategy' - the tactic that the channel developed so as to generate simultaneously two sets of images (cf. chapter 2) - was challenged. In any situation other than war, MTV's *playful* as opposed to *serious* discourse appears to function. However, this was a more delicate matter than standard MTV news topics, such the dilemma of whether Slash should remove his tattoo or music censorship. In order to face its responsibility, MTV took on the role of war reporter, which was not the channel's standard practice. This entailed a change in the mode of address. In its Bosnians reports, MTV still respected its rules of ambiguity. However, its usual game of opposites was replaced by a concern to be 'mindful without emotional overkill'. This, in turn, was achieved by using two televisual techniques: real documentary was mixed with the MTV style (cf. chapter 2).

The documentary-type footage fulfilled the 'mindful' part. Considering that the footage was coming from Sarajevo, it was impossible to avoid horrifying war scenes. However, these were combined with scenes of everyday life in the extraordinary environment of Sarajevo. This is where the contribution of the MTV style is visible. Stereotypical war footage was edited into brief cut sequences, like any other feature on MTV. Sometimes music beats were added to it. Otherwise, images simply spoke for themselves, with no music or voice-over. Furthermore, in the choice of items to avoid 'emotional overkill', the Sarajevo mise-en-scene itself became the documentary

context. In the search for other than news-type footage, the situation on the ground led the camera. And here, it found life, or rather people trying to go on living some kind of life despite the constant threat of death. As the war appeared to be never-ending, keeping 'normal' equalled keeping sane. A Sarajevo friend told me: "You can't even imagine this. We've got no water, no electricity. They're shelling us from all the sides, killing us like rats. And, what do we do? A beauty contest!". U2's Bono who memorised this event in the song 'Miss Sarajevo' recorded with Luciano Pavarotti goes on to describe the contest and how the song was born:

> It's a simple song. It's about the beauty pageant that they had in Sarajevo. They are incredible people in Sarajevo. Great sense of humour. Black humour. And they have these Dada acts they put on to keep themselves sane. And one of them was this beauty contest. And the girls came out, you know [with their chests covered with] signs saying 'do you really want to kill us?' (unedited MTV footage).

As Bono rightly pointed out, humour was an essential survival kit in Sarajevo and indeed the already notorious black sense of humour Sarajevans had got even darker. Every time I was in contact with someone from Sarajevo during the war, I heard a new 'war' joke. That was part of telling those outside 'how things were in Sarajevo'. The first one that Bono heard when he went to Sarajevo on a private visit serves appropriately to convey the spirit of Sarajevo under siege: "What's the difference between Auschwitz and Sarajevo? At least there was gas in Auschwitz" (also quoted in Smith, 1997:41; Gunić, 1994:192). The members of the alternative movement *new primitivs* who stayed in Sarajevo continued filming new episodes of their comedy series under war circumstances. It is these comedians and Sarajevans like them who were featured on MTV.

On MTV, there were no more Barbarians. Rather, just people like us: children in a shabby car singing 'All that She Wants', a chart hit at the time; young people in a night club. The only difference between Sarajevans and other Europeans was the former's painful reality, conveyed subtly in MTV's reports. As the camera widened its scope from a close-up of the car to capture the surroundings in which the car was parked, viewers realised that buildings were destroyed. When a young ordinary-

looking clubber was interviewed, we found out that he was a part-time soldier and that three of his mates 'were blown off' at the front-line.

However, despite these shocking insinuations, the message that came across was 'there is still life in Sarajevo - the spirit of the city is not killed'. Framed and linked into MTV's own 'environment' (cf. chapter 2), the message was encoded with a privileged reading. The interpretation of the items was full of optimism. This was partly due to the channel's meta-language - it was indeed MTV's intention to show an upbeat report in order to reveal a painful truth about war. War is two-faced. Despite death - the immediate association which we take for granted when we watch the news - there is also life. And MTV's reports from Sarajevo and cities in BiH were a celebration of life under siege rather than footage of death. Instead of a news documentary, the Sarajevo reports were presented like a version of an MTV 'rockumentary'. They were filmed almost like a music video clip.

It is in such a context that we must interpret Brent Hansen's words quoted in the introduction - that to young Bosnians, MTV was 'more reality than CNN'. The kind of Bosnia represented on MTV was indeed the reality of its young urban population. They are people like 'you' and to them, images of Bosnians selected to be featured on CNN and traditional news outlets appeared alien. And, it was important that the voice of cosmopolitan Bosnians be heard. MTV became a forum for "an instantaneous global dialogue in a virtual narrative space, which organise[d] appearances on the surface of a strange virtual geography" (Wark, 1994: viii). Perhaps one of the most moving moments of this virtual global dialogue experience was when a young man from Belgrade succeeded in getting through live on MTV during MTV's 'Sarajevo Special'. He was feeling upset, even guilty, and said that he simply had no idea about what was going on in Sarajevo until he saw MTV's reports. He just called to say "sorry".

However, Sarajevans were well aware that the fragmented images of everyday life from their besieged city which fell from the satellite sky into another kind of reality had an exclusive news value. The ambiguous words of a Sarajevan that ended the

MTV satellite link with Sarajevo illustrate the mixture of gratefulness - for having the opportunity to express themselves as equal members of MTV's virtual Europe - and sarcasm - because, after all, we all knew that Sarajevans could not exercise their virtual citizenship rights, such as listening to records as they pleased. His words were: "I hope you're enjoying your party". On the one hand, the Sarajevan was being courteous as any interviewed person would be. In his own way, he thanked the audience for the time they took from their activity - i.e. party - to listen. On the other, his words are almost a reproach to Europeans for having fun and an accusation for being passive about the war while their fellow MTV viewers in Sarajevo were dying. Hansen rightly interpreted the situation:

> We had that amazing interview of those kids in Sarajevo. They went: 'I hope you're enjoying your party', you know, that kind of thing, as if to say, 'don't forget, while we're talking to you live, and in real time, our lifestyle is so different to [that of] someone off their face in a coffee bar in Amsterdam'. This is a different scene, here. This is a life and death issue! (interview, 18/08/94).

Having established the importance of MTV's alternative coverage of the conflict for the locals, I now want to examine the extent to which this had the power to mobilise people into an international community of affect.

9.3.2 *MASS CULTURAL MOBILISATION THROUGH THE RESOURCE OF ROCK N' ROLL MUSIC*

By drawing a parallel with David Edgar's (1985) commentary on 'Live Aid', I want to suggest that MTV's 'para-social' involvement with the war in Bosnia continues the legacy of 'Live Aid', in that it was a mass-cultural mobilisation through the immense resource of rock n' roll music - a culture that had a genuine mass appeal. In the manner of 'Live Aid', MTV's intervention through the resource of music was 'internationalist', but not in the traditional sense (such as the Spanish Civil War mobilisation and, more recently, support for the revolution in Vietnam). Rather, the international context of MTV's mobilisation "can only be understood through the technology and vocabulary of electronics - the global village not only of the jet aeroplane but also of the communications satellite" (Edgar, 1985:29). However,

before examining how MTV mobilised youth internationally through the resource of rock n' roll music, it is necessary to place rock music locally in the context of the former Yugoslav culture.

9.3.2 (i) *rock n' roll in (former) Yugoslavia before and during the war*

Chapter 8 drew attention to the taste-distinction between the urban and semi-urban and peasant cultures in the former Yugoslavia, which was particularly pronounced in music. Dragičević-Šešić's (1994) ethnographic study of *novokomponovana* audiences reveals that this culture is an exceedingly parochial culture (see chapter 8). Among the young rural population, resistance towards the influence of foreign urban commercial culture is very pronounced. The explicitly English code of rock culture is associated with the new, the unknown, the different and the alien. For this reason, rock culture provokes openly antagonistic reactions from young peasants (ibid.:131). A move to the city for the purpose of education can slightly change the attitude of young peasants towards rock music in that the longer they live in cities, the more accustomed they become to this genre. The length of time spent in an urban environment is an important factor in changing music sensibilities in favour of rock. Consequently, school children and students from the country are not necessarily hostile to rock, although they still listen predominantly to *novokomponovana* music. However, if they occasionally do listen to rock, they listen to local acts who draw mass audiences, not international acts. The only international artists mentioned by some of the students interviewed were either Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen or Madonna (ibid.:105-106).

In contrast, urban rock culture is cosmopolitan and linked by an intensive network of support between bands. Counter-cultural media outlets such as Radio Študent from Ljubljana, 101 from Zagreb, B92 from Belgrade and Youth Radio from Sarajevo played a pivotal role in nurturing cosmopolitanism. As Gordy's work demonstrates (1996; 1997), rock was an urban movement which defined itself against the neo-folk vulgarity. As the war escalated, musical taste became an important signifier not only of distinction between these two cultures, but of "orientation towards the regime, the war, and the environment created by the regime and the war" (Gordy, 1997:197).

During the war, the urban space was colonised by neo-folk. In Serbia, the commercial rock mainstream completely disappeared while *novokomponovana* music, in the guise of 'turbo-folk' became the state promoted music. According to Gordy: "The high moment of 'turbo-folk' came in the spectacular televised wedding of the queen of 'turbo-folk' Ceca Veličković to the king of the war profiteers Željko Raznatović-Arkan in February 1994?". As for rock fans in Serbia, they almost unanimously despised this music

> regarding it as an intentional creation of the Serbian regime, a product of war hysteria and fundamentalism, and a sign of the arrival to power of a new 'uncivilised' and 'primitive' semipeasant/semiurban class, generally considered to be made-up of criminals (Gordy, 1996).

In Belgrade, rockers acted as an antidote to the kind of nativism promoted by nationalists as well as to Serbia's isolation by international sanctions. Typical of the opinions of urban people is the remark of one of Gordy's respondents who said that 'neo-folk' was 'the symbol of all evil in society'. In such a society, "rock music became the music of student protest, anti-war movement and the defence of urban youth against provincial nationalism and the new wave of politically compliant folk" (ibid.).

In war circumstances, the meaning of rock music takes on a new dimension. In times of senseless human tragedy and suffering, spiritual pleasures assume the same importance as biological needs. Where human life has no more value, to live it as decently as possible becomes crucial. Listening to music is, therefore, as vital as eating because, in war-torn BiH, neither of those activities were fulfilled normally. There is no difference between keeping the physical body and the mind alive. This equation can be illustrated by the words of young man from Mostar: "Normal life is cinema. Normal life is rock concert. Normal life is bread" (MTV News report, 29 April 1995). In war circumstances, Lawrence Grossberg's description of music as "a 'territorialising machine' which articulates the mattering maps by which everyday life becomes navigable and hence, liveable" (1993:206) takes on a literal meaning. Music is a survival kit in war. For example, a young man from a war-affected region in Croatia described how in the midst of shelling he had the urge to go and bury his

Prince record collection. He claims that without his music, he would not have been able to survive (Report on MTV in the UK and Ireland, 15/10/97). A young Belgrader explained that he would not have been able to cope psychologically had it not been for a local TV station that pirated MTV's signal after hours (in Gordy, 1997:253). In Sarajevo, it was not unusual to place a Guns n' Roses T-shirt instead of a religious sign on a youngster's tomb.

Grossberg further argues that rock is contradictory and that it can also act as a 'deterritorialising' force. This force is articulated along what he calls (following Deleuze and Guatari) 'lines of flight'. According to Grossberg, these 'lines of flight' enable rock at various moments to define, galvanise and articulate a sense of anger, dissatisfaction and protest. As he put it: "Rock music is produced by and for a population already living in everyday life, but it is always about the possibility of transcending the specific configuration of everyday life within which it is active" (1993:204). Drawing upon Grossberg, I want to suggest that in circumstances where "everyday life is also a luxury [...] it is precisely in attempting to transcend particular forms of recurrence (everyday life) that music articulates its power" (ibid.).

9.3.2 (ii) *the formation of a rock n' roll alliance suggesting international solidarity*

In order to understand how a mass cultural mobilisation through the immense resource of rock music is possible, it is necessary to step outside the realm of a stable rock n' roll community - which is confined in geographically rooted forms - into that of what Will Straw (1991) calls 'scenes'. The relevance of the notion of a 'scene' in this context is its implication that a 'sense of community' can also be forged across different localities. According to Straw:

> The cosmopolitan character of certain kinds of musical activity - their attentiveness to change occurring elsewhere - may endow them with a unity of purpose and sense of participating in 'affective alliances' (Grossberg, 1984) just as powerful as those normally observed within practices which appear to be more organically grounded in local circumstances (1991:374).

While the notion of a 'scene' as a music community across different localities has been influential in popular music studies, the argument about the affective aspect of 'scenes' has been subject to scrutiny. For example, Hesmondhalgh (1996a) and Negus (1996), respectively, point out that it is not clear how musical preferences may lead to the formation of alliances suggesting any kind of international solidarity. I want to suggest that the new kind of publicness created by MTV provided a space (albeit virtual) to express at least one 'kind of international solidarity'. As I have already argued, on MTV - a pan-European channel with a 'we' feeling - the Bosnian 'local' issue was portrayed as an issue of international concern. In this transfigured public realm, "a quintessentially European tragedy was represented by and through the rock imaginary [...] so as to appeal to the audience in common European affiliation: 'something must be done here'" (Toynbee, 1994). Musical preferences were precisely the foundation for the formation of alliances suggesting solidarity, as these messages from youngsters from Beirut - another cosmopolitan city shattered by civil war - to those in BiH suggest:

> I'm a waiter at H.J.Beans. I never thought this would happen but I didn't give up hopes and dreams during the war in Lebanon. Guys in Bosnia, don't give up! Stick to your family and friends and talk a lot. Talk about your future, your hopes and your dreams and don't give up. Keep smiling. And for you, too, peace! Rock on!

> I can understand how hard it is for people in Bosnia to make it through this war because I lived through one, too. But never give up your hopes and dreams. In a week from now, we have a concert including artists like Jimmy Somerville and Haddaway. Years ago, we never dreamed of this but hope got us a long way. As long as the sun is still shining, hold hands together in love through the struggle of war to peace and never give up your hope. Keep listening to artists like Guns n' Roses, especially songs like 'Civil Wars'.

> There is one thing I would like to say to Bosnia: that despite the destruction, keep on building and I would like to hear the Cranberries on MTV. Thank you.

> A few years ago, the streets of Beirut were deserted. And, now, as you see, I am in the middle of a traffic jam. This is a sign of peace. I hope traffic jam in Bosnia. I would like to hear Fleetwood Mac on MTV (unedited MTV footage).

And, it is in the same universal language of rock n' roll that Bosnians sent their plea for help by recording the song 'Help Bosnia now' in the style of 'charity-rock'. The video for the song was filmed in the ruins of what was once the Olympic stadium of *Zetra*. In this MTV-style video, images of the stadium burning in hellish flames were combined with happy-memory images of the Olympic torch burning in that same stadium.

Rock music was clearly a bond between MTV fans - a shared culture and a basis for international solidarity. However, as I indicated above, this is not the kind of solidarity that leads to support entailing fighting. Rather, what was at stake was a moral issue. Through rock n' roll solidarity, MTV audiences were actively showing support for the victims of the conflict by siding with them in their cosmopolitan moral orientation. What remains to be investigated is the social action that was activated by the various actors involved in the rock solidarity.

9.4 ROCK AGITATION WHERE POLITICS FAILED:
THE INVOLVEMENT OF MADAME MITTERAND AND BONO IN THE BOSNIAN CAUSE

So far, this analysis has concentrated on urban Bosnians' struggle over the distribution of symbolic resources. Having failed to achieve their right to live in a multicultural state with ballots, Bosnian MTV fans resorted to a media-based mass culture in order to continue their battle for cosmopolitanism. This time, "interpellated as equals in their capacity as consumers" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:164), they voted with records (cf. Berland, 1988 above). This section will argue that the kind of action that resulted from this 'para-social' involvement in the conflict was, in fact, a reaction to the failure of traditional politics to stop the aggression towards cosmopolitanism. What we might be seeing here, is the emergence of a new kind of international politics, with explicit connections with social movements, not least because (satellite) television was a discursive condition for this kind of action (cf. Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Meyrowitz, 1985; Melucci, 1989).

Following Melucci's (1989) work on social movements, I want to suggest that the rock n' roll solidarity cause operated primarily as a 'sign'. By this Melucci means that participation in the cause is an end in itself. This cause was mainly concerned with information, both in the narrow sense of its demand - i.e. to publicise the cause and raise awareness about it - and in the broader sense of the struggles over symbolic resources - i.e. the cause was an appeal to stop the war. Once publicised, the cause displayed the seed of pan-European, even global, awareness.

The social action that resulted from raising awareness about the Bosnian conflict through channels of mass culture (MTV and U2's tour 'Zooropa') needs to be examined in relation to the failure of traditional news coverage to generate such a spontaneous public outcry. In fact, there is another parallel, here, between these channels of mass culture and 'Live Aid' (cf. Edgar, 1985), in that all appear to have succeeded where traditional politics failed. This time, it was not a matter of the UK's conservative government ignoring famine in Ethiopa, but that of the EC ignoring the carnage in Bosnia. Bono, who became a leading figure in the 'Bosnian cause', once made an implicit reference to 'Live Aid', which is pertinent in this context:

> In the late eighties, there was a lot of people who thought that it was 'uncool' to get involved. But, I don't think it's 'uncool'. In the beginning of the nineties, everybody was totally passive. The EC didn't do anything to stop the war. 'Zooropa', it seemed crazy, but it was raising awareness, that's how our involvement started. Media is important for that (ad-hoc press conference, Pavarotti Music Centre inauguration, Mostar, 21/12/97).

In order to substantiate the argument that channels of mass culture were effective where traditional politics failed, the involvement of Bono - taken to represent a rock n' roll figure - will be contrasted to that of Danielle Mitterand, the wife of the French president at the time - taken to represent a political figure. The purpose of this exercise is to show how channels of mass communications are not just vehicles for direct participation in the mediated communications process of groups whose voices are otherwise unheard. These channels can also function to support popular mobilisation (cf. Sreberny and Mohammadi, 1997). We shall see that *Madame* Mitterand, one of the many 'Western' figures who came to BiH in an official capacity, did little to alleviate civilian suffering. The same can be said about the numerous accredited

'serious' journalists who came to witness the tragegy on the ground. In contrast, Bono, whose involvement with the Bosnian cause was as part of an informal 'proto-community' rather than any official one, helped the Bosnians more, although he was never physically there during the war. There is a moral issue at stake here, which should not be underestimated.

9.4.1 *MADAME MITTERAND: PHYSICAL PRESENCE - PASSIVE INVOLVEMENT*

Danielle Mitterand came to Sarajevo in October 1993. She did not come as France's first lady but as the president of the humanitarian organisation *France-Liberté*. This role-distinction was important because, since François Mitterand's sensational blitz visit to Sarajevo in May 1992, the now late President was not a popular figure in Sarajevo. Sarajevans believed that he came to share his compassion for suffering civilians. However, since then "some sixteen months have gone by - no support has arrived from either France or the French President" (Hujić, 1996:18). *Madame* Mitterand expressed the wish to visit a neighbourhood in Sarajevo in order to have a first-hand experience of the suffering. Escorted with the French UNPROFOR Sarajevo-based officers, she visited a 'war' school, the community centre and one apartment. She appeared very moved by the hospitality which she received and even shed a few tears. For the Sarajevan hosts, her visit was a great honour. They took much pride in preparing it. They also hoped that her visit could have an impact on ending the conflict. Her francophile host and guide mentioned that Sarajevo was the quickest way to heaven. He asked *Madame* Mitterand to ask her husband to use his influence and authority to end this privilege. She promised that humanitarian help would arrive soon. The locals made lists of what was needed: note-books, pencils, warm clothing and footwear for children and similar.

However, no humanitarian relief was sent to Sarajevo by *Madame* Mitterand. What was particularly difficult for the host-community to come to terms with is the fact that they did not even receive a 'thank you' note for the trouble they took in making her feel welcome. Not long after *Madame* Mitterand's visit, a bomb was thrown on the 'war' school she had visited and hit the very class that greeted her. The community

was devastated by this atrocious incident. Shattered by the tragedy, *Madame* Mitterand's guide and host wrote in despair:

> Dear *Madame* Mitterand, Your class at *Alipašino Polje* is in mourning, since yesterday. Four children and their teacher will not be present at school today - they will not answer the register; today, they will be on the cemetery's register. They were killed by a bomb from *Nedarići*. [...] Now and forever, they are in Heaven. The way leads straight to Heaven from here, as you know. They died innocent: here, it is possible to buy - at the cheapest price in the world, at the cheapest price in History - a ticket to Heaven. [...] Dear Madam, please make that Sarajevo cease to be the door to Heaven! Tell your respected husband to make the bombs stop falling from the hands of the immature! Stop death! Stop homicide! Stop 'innocent-cide'! [...] France can do that [...] it must do that! [..] (H. Hujić quoted in M. Hujić, 1996:65-66).

This plea was ignored and no telegram of condolences was sent from the *Elysée*. Like the representation of the war on news that encourages viewers' 'morbid voyeurism', the visit of *Madame* Mitterand did nothing to relieve suffering, let alone end it. As *Madame* Mitterand's hostess, Mersija Hujić wrote the following morning of *Madame* Mitterand's visit:

> We [my husband and I] were having coffee. We presumed that at the *Elysée*, Danielle and François must have been doing the same. 'I went to see the Hujićs, they are coping well with the war', she would tell her husband. '*Ah, bon*!', he would reply. That's how it was (1996:53).

Madame Mitterand had broken her promise. This was one of the many broken promises that Sarajevans were all too familiar with. Anger among Sarajevans about Europe's neglect of BiH began to be directed towards news reporters. They were increasingly perceived by the local population as profiteers rather than journalists committed to the cause, as this account illustrates:

It is August 1994. Hunger, exhaustion and psychological effects resulting from constant exposure to extensive suffering and death scenes were taking their toll heavily on the population. The setting is that of distributing humanitarian aid in a block of apartments in Sarajevo. A Western news reporter came to cover this story. To be more precise, the journalist was German but, as far as Sarajevans were concerned, his nationality did not matter. He was part of that 'Europe' which let them

down. The journalist was greeted with hostility: "I spit on Europe! It's been two years since it all began. You know everything very well and now you've come to ask me how I live so that you can send a fresh article. Get the Hell out of here! Out!"

It is against the backdrop of broken promises and political ineffectiveness in ending the suffering of the civilian population that we must understand the involvement of the Western entertainment industry in the Bosnian cause.

9.4.2 *BONO: VIRTUAL PRESENCE-ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT*

The way Bono got involved in the war in BiH had all the characteristics of a 'proto-community' which was brought to life by a cause. This cause was raising awareness about the situation in BiH. The 'proto-community' itself was formed out of despair, following the realisation of the Sarajevans that those who surrounded the city were seriously contemplating the extermination of the city's population. The idea to ask Bono to get involved in raising awareness about the Bosnian conflict was that of three people: in Sarajevo, Senad Zaimović (formerly responsible for the marketing of the local channel Sa3, now turned editor of the war programme *Rat Art*); B.C., an American aid worker who met Zaimović in Sarajevo and myself in London who, for this particular cause, was in a position to get access to Bono and MTV, via close personal contacts.

It is important to note that regular telephone communication with Sarajevo was completely cut off and that the TV Centre was one of the few places which had a satellite link with the rest of the world. Travel in and out of Sarajevo was virtually impossible for ordinary civilians. Like many Sarajevan journalists, in a passionate commitment to keep the communication networks in the city alive, Zaimović lived in the TV Centre. Bono was contacted directly from Sarajevo by fax. He agreed to introduce live satellite link-ups with Sarajevo in his multi-television-and-video screen extravaganza tour 'Zooropa' (1992/1993). B.C. went on tour with U2. I stayed in London and Zaimović was stranded in Sarajevo. We were both literally on 'stand by' for B.C. who regularly contacted me with requests for assistance while Zaimović

ensured the local contacts for the satellite links. The same network of contacts was used for MTV's 'Sarajevo Special'.

Since the rise of mega-events such as 'Live Aid', the participation of Western music celebrities in charitable causes has been overwhelmingly judged in terms of their motivation to become involved (cf. Rijven and Straw, 1989; Garofalo, 1992b). While this issue is pertinent, I want to make two observations about it.

Firstly, the motivation of the artists appears to be of minor importance provided that the three other functions of mega-events: fundraising, consciousness raising and mobilisation (cf. Garofalo, 1992b) take place. Western musicians began to raise funding for 'War Child', a charity that was set up in 1992 to bring aid to children caught up in war. Projects such as the installation of mobile field bakeries (endorsed by War Child's celebrity patrons) or the provision of musical equipment used as aid in music therapy to alleviate war trauma (provided by MTV) were lifelines. This kind of help was invaluable to the victims of the war (Ermin Elezović, fieldwork director, War Child/Mostar, interview 20/12/97). It is also worth noting that 'War Child' continues its work in BiH by providing a wide range of cultural activities in the purpose-built Music Centre in Mostar, name after Pavarotti whose generous donations from charity concerts funded the building (inaugurated in December 1997).

Secondly, concentrating attention on the names that are recruited around a cause is most productive for the cause when this is done by journalists. By focusing on celebrities, print and audiovisual media do indeed publicise the cause that the artists are involved with for whatever personal reasons or gain. However, a more critical perspective has also to take into account the motivations of the 'non-celebrities' who are involved in charitable causes. In the case of B.C., for example, there was a tension between sincere compassion for Sarajevans and career opportunity. The latter quickly prevailed to the extent that Sarajevans who were, in effect, the cause of his concern felt offended by his behaviour. B.C. took all the credit for organising the 'Sarajevo links', and, like *Madame* Mitterand, he ceased to be interested in Sarajevans when the cameras were turned off. However, what makes it difficult to condemn B.C.'s self-

interest is the fact that he did indeed spend some time in Sarajevo when it was life-threatening. Without the assistance of someone like B.C., raising awareness about Bosnia through mass channels such as 'Zooropa' and MTV would not have been possible. The case of B.C. reveals that charitable work occurs in complex situations. The media event is only one dimension of what is a multifaceted phenomenon that operates between humanitarian work and 'proper' business, genuine sympathy and self-serving motives. The complexity involved in charitable causes cannot be grasped simply by focusing on the motivations of their celebrity patrons. After all, one of the most lucrative charitable funds today, The Princess Diana Trust, operates without its patroness. What is more alarming is the growing media trend whereby the worthiness of a cause is measured by the celebrity status of those supporting it.

A final remark in the context of artist involvement in BiH concerns the local artists' non-involvement. Sarajevans who stayed in Sarajevo during the war wondered why famous public figures from Sarajevo in exile kept silent, although their voice could have had an impact on the general public, especially in the former Yugoslav Republics. One of these silent figures, Goran Bregović - Sarajevo's best known musician in the former Yugoslavia and abroad - explains why he did not get involved:

> How come Bono goes to Sarajevo, does humanitarian concerts, take photographs on the ruins - and I don't'? In this context, I once said that I cannot do that because I am a Sarajevan, I am not Bono. There are things that link me to that city, all my life is linked to it. I can't use Sarajevo for show business because it is my city [...] That's a lovely packaged business. In the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, you see this and that person, a press conference, and then run back home. Newspapers come out with your pictures all over them while Sarajevo remains where it was. It can't do that ('Balkanska simfonija', 1997:43).

While many of Bregović's words ring true in relation to the question of 'celebrity motivation', they are somewhat irrelevant in relation to Bono. Today, Bono is one of the most popular figures not only in Sarajevo but, according to a Belgrade newspaper, he is "undoubtedly the most loved star all over the former Yugoslavia" (ibid.). The reason, as banal as it sounds when put this way, is that unlike *Madame* Mitterand and many public figures who 'campaigned' for Sarajevo, Bono kept his promise. He promised to help when he got involved with the Bosnian cause, which he did by

raising awareness and money. Bono also promised to do a concert in Sarajevo as soon as the circumstances would allow it.

Indeed, in September 1997, U2 played a sold-out concert at the ravaged *Zetra* stadium in Sarajevo. In a town of many broken promises, the locals were initially mistrustful about the event taking place and tickets were selling slowly. However, when the trucks with concert equipment arrived to town, 8000 tickets (at reduced prices compared to the average U2 ticket price) were sold in just one day (Smith, 1997:41). The reason that Bono is particularly dear to people of all generations in BiH is that the concert took place despite the band's financial deficit. Although U2 took sponsorship for the first time in order to cover the Sarajevo gig expenses, the show still operated at approximately £500 000 loss (ibid.). Sarajevans appreciated this gesture because for them, this was a sign of Bono's sincere commitment. Finally, in the rubric 'we are choosing the cultural event of the year' in one of BiH's daily newspapers, a theatre critic claimed that U2's concert in Sarajevo was "grandiose both in organisational and political terms" while the minister for sport and culture in the Sarajevo 'canton' said that the concert was an event that "brought us back to the world and brought the world back to us" ('Biramo...', 1997:12).

The words of NME journalist Mat Smith are appropriate to conclude this section:

> Regardless of what you think of U2, the fact that they came and played here means more than a gig, however big or small I've ever attended. For the people of Sarajevo, it's put their city back on the map. And for us, and maybe U2 themselves, it's gone some way assuaging guilt for a war that irreparably damaged the reputation of the UN, stained the name of virtually every European leader and, with it, the inhabitants of their nations. But, if you'd been here you'd have felt something different in the air, something triumphant, long after the words left Bono's mouth, blasted from the PA [...]: 'Viva Sarajevo! Viva Sarajevo! Fuck the past. Let's kiss the future' (1997:42).

CONCLUSION

Through a case-study of MTV in war-torn BiH, this chapter has explored the role of MTV in fostering a mediated alternative to Western news media. For war-affected areas of the former Yugoslavia, MTV provided resources upon which alternative conceptions of life were constructed. This imaginary social space, in turn, made the quotidian more liveable. Indeed, as Hall (1992 in chapter 2) remarked, in a world tyrannised by scarcity the need to express some sense of one's symbolic place in the world is even more pronounced. In war circumstances, spiritual pleasures assumed the same importance as biological needs: music was as vital to keeping sane as bread was to staying alive.

However, this chapter has also suggested that channels of mass communications such as MTV do not just foster an imaginative social solidarity. They can also function so as to mobilise people towards some kind of socially responsible action. The action that emerged around the 'Bosnian cause' had all the signs of a 'proto-community'. It was formed spontaneously on the basis of affect and manifested in smaller-scale campaigns and rock concerts. It lasted for as long as there was a cause. MTV's support in publicising the cause and raising awareness was vital. MTV's intervention did not stop the war but MTV's message to the public was clear: what was going on in BiH was wrong. Morally, this was of tremendous importance to the civilians trapped in war, who felt that they had been let down by the international community. The observations in this chapter "cautions us against conflating structural control over the means of communication with domination over the experiences that people derive from mediated communication" (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997:xxvi).

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

This chapter sums up this thesis' main arguments and proposes some directions for future research in this field.

10.1 SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS

This thesis examined MTV's attempt to design a programming strategy for a pan-European youth audience. It was an interdisciplinary study that offered a reading of music television texts in relation to the institutional context in which they were produced and the different cultural contexts in which they were received. Underlying this analysis was a critique of the cultural imperialism/globalisation theoretical framework which posits that the 'world' is becoming a standardised society. The phenomenon of MTV - one of the most prominent manifestations of 'globalisation' - revealed that the cultural imperialist view of the impact of satellite TV services (such as MTV) on receiving cultures was exaggerated. Instead, this thesis established that:

a) MTV, above all, complements rather than competes with existing terrestrial TV services;

b) MTV was able to globalise only by incorporating an element of locality into its pan-European programming strategy. This study thus stressed the continuing importance of locality in the process of globalisation. Here, the conceptual frameworks for thinking about globalisation proposed by scholars from a broad range of fields offered ways to "analyse and interpret the increasing connections between communications and the processes and experiences of globalisation" (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997:ix). At the same time, this study provided further evidence in support of reception studies' findings about European audiences' strong preferences for indigenous TV programmes and , by extension, popular music.

Broadly speaking, this thesis was located within the theoretical framework that addresses the 'public service versus the market' debate. Its primary frame of reference was organised around two main thematics.

The first was narrowcasting. This thesis argued that the primary motivation behind a project such as MTV was to find new forms of generating advertising revenue. MTV came to life on the basis that it would reach the youth target audience, traditionally outside the broadcasters' reach. In effect, MTV found a new way of imagining its audience by reconceptualising 'youth' as a market category which exhibited a specific kind of TV viewing behaviour. MTV accommodated its design to this type of viewing behaviour in order to fill in the gaps in broadcasters' reach. MTV thus became a 'new kind of TV' which was promoted as a 'unique brand'. Two factors made MTV particularly suitable for transnational expansion: the thematic choice of music - a cultural form easily comprehended across linguistically and culturally diverse territories - and the choice of 'youth' - the group most receptive to foreign programmes distributed via new communications technologies - as its target audience. However, the ascendancy of thematic channels such as MTV could not solely be explained through economics. This thesis also argued that there were audiences all across Europe who were dissatisfied with public service TV. To them, the consumer view of individual freedom promoted by new commercial channels had a resonance beyond the market, which brings us to the second thematic of this thesis.

This concerns the role of TV in fostering a sense of identity. In this context, MTV and the EC's respective attempts at creating a pan-European audiovisual space were examined. At the heart of the discrepancy between the two lay two competing interpretations of European identity. The 'European identity' debate was addressed by taking issue with critics of 'American' cultural imperialism who conflate economic power with cultural effects. This thesis challenged the state-centric cultural protectionist position that took identity as a stable given. Such a view, which ignored the homogenisation from 'within', was a form of 'banal nationalism' that could easily slip into the 'malign' kind. By extension, the EC's vision of Europe was based on an abstract concept of the 'West', which defined itself against its non-Western 'inferior'

Other. Such a model of Europe was not equipped to accommodate 'postnational citizenship' anchored in deterritorialised notions of personal rights. Hence, this state-centric model of a united Europe did little to "open up the media to greater participation by the citizens of Europe" (Sreberny-Mohammadi at al., 1997:xiv).

This thesis also identified the weaknesses in the arguments of theorists of cultural imperialism as articulated in relation to MTV, by drawing upon popular music theory. It engaged with the theory of a 'conspiracy' between MTV and the majors to disseminate a homogenous sound, usually synonymous with Anglo-American AOR. Instead, this thesis demonstrated how MTV Europe fractured the dominance of AOR in its main playlist. At the same time, it drew attention to the significant role of MTV in displacing the rock ideology of authenticity.

MTV's vision of Europe was attuned to the tastes of its audience who had in common their 'jeans, internationalism and rock n' roll'. MTV addressed its viewers as individuals to whom viewing television was a matter of personal choice. These individuals were part of a 'privileged club' whose members had similar affinities. MTV's internationalism corresponded to a cosmopolitan vision of Europe. Cosmopolitanism in a global age was a state of mind which involved a willingness to engage with the Other. Being cosmopolitan on MTV became synonymous with being European, at a time of unprecedented political change, which prompted a wave of Europhoria. Finally, rock culture - the foundation upon which MTV's Europe was built - had a genuine mass appeal, unlike the EC's European supra-state which had no accompanying pan-national symbolism.

The purpose of this comparative analysis was not to engage in an unqualified celebration of MTV's Europe or denigration of that of the EC. Rather, in the light of the relative failure of the latter and the relative success of the former, the question that arose was: to what extent does the intensification of 'trans-societal flows' which are pushing towards a 'borderless global economy' (Ohmae, 1987) undermine the capacity of nation-states to act? (cf. Featherstone et al., 1995:2). As the transition from the national to the global is superimposed on the change from 'industrial society' to

'informational world', what are the consequences for the construction of identity? This thesis followed Featherstone et al. (1995) contending that

> the seemingly empty and universalist signs circulating in the world informational system can be recast into different configurations of meaning. That these transformed social semantics can - in the context of traditional and self-reflexive practices - [inform] the (re)constitution and or/creation of individual and communal identities (ibid.:2-3).

That MTV's cosmopolitan representation of Europe could promote multicultural coalitions which acted as the precursor for actual physical mobilisation was illustrated through a case-study of MTV in war-torn BiH. This case-study demonstrated that 'readers' of the signs are, in fact, 'silent-producers' who inhabit the realm of 'media-scapes', as a new framework for social life beyond national institutions. Inhabitants of 'media-scapes' tend to form 'proto-communities', which are organised around causes. 'Proto-communities' are not political in the traditional sense, but are mobilised through the vocabulary of technology and electronics and they have explicit connections with social movements whose political dimension transcends national boundaries. Finally, given that these 'reader-producers' are brought together by 'lifestyle' rather than 'nationality', this thesis drew attention to two important aspects of 'lifestyling', which are often ignored at the expense of its commercial potential. 'Lifestyling' is an alternative sphere of identification which reveals that 'identity' is a constructed category - by applying 'lifestyling' in market research, marketeers cashed on it. Moreover, 'lifestyling' is not so much about who we are but who we would like to be, which is an important dimension of one's identity.

The case of MTV in BiH, as well as the deliberate division between 'Western' and 'Eastern' European case-studies, provided another basis for the argument that the economics of capital cannot in themselves explain the cultural significant of MTV. Instead, this thesis described the different appreciations of MTV across Europe by arguing that its success or failure depended on the context of distribution and access to cable/satellite TV, programme options on terrestrial TV and on the strength of national feeling in different areas. This thesis also established that MTV's appeal was largely confined to the cosmopolitan sections of the population. Finally, a more

appropriate framework of analysis of the process of globalisation, at least in relation to music television, was suggested, and recommendations for future research followed from there.

10.2 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Possible directions for future research into the simultaneous processes of globalisation/localisation were discussed in chapter 6. Relevant questions for further research were also raised in relation to the particularities of the territories analysed in 'case-studies'. It is unnecessary to repeat them, except to stress, once again the important place of ethnographic research in shedding light on audiences and their preferences for the regionalised MTV services or MTV's more localised replicas (Viva, MCM etc). Such research would give an insight into the complex relations between the local, national, regional and international in a global age. "More important", as Shaw indicates, "although less easily summarised, are the ways that through these processes, intermeshing with economic and political globalisation, people are coming to see their lives in terms of common expectations, values and goals" (1997:33). However, although the growth of common global cultures is evident, the resilience of national cultures is equally striking. In this respect, I want to close by returning to an opening argument in this thesis concerning the role of satellite TV in filling a vacant cultural space left by terrestrial broadcasters.

Brunsdon (1991 in chapter 1) indicated that satellite dishes in the UK functioned as non-verbal signifiers of taste, creating a clash between discourses of 'conservation' and 'innovation'. This conflict brought the issue of class difference between the more affluent 'anti-dishers' and working-class 'dishers' into the open. However, this thesis suggested that this battle of tastes (revolving around debates about 'Americanisation') suppressed a growing problem, as satellite dishes increasingly began to function as signifiers of 'ethnicity'. This created a new division between 'anti-dishers' and 'dishers' as two self-perpetuating groups whose respective membership is anchored in a territorial and deterritorialised sense of belonging. The conflict is between two types

of citizens: 'anti-dishers' who 'belong' to the 'nation' confined within geographical borders and 'dishers' who are not included in its social imagination.

Throughout Western Europe, and France in particular, satellite TV services are heavily patronised by immigrant populations (see Franchon and Vargaftig ed., 1995). The reason for their enthusiasm for satellite TV stems from their dissatisfaction with the provision of programmes on terrestrial TV. The paucity of ethnographic research into the consumption of satellite TV is compatible with the arguments suggested in this thesis: that positive feelings about channels such as MTV, CNN and Sky "are intimately related to [their viewers'] dismissal of established terrestrial programming as traditional, boring and old-fashioned" (Moores, 1996:40). Satellite/cable operators were quick to capitalise on this mood, offering a number of so-called 'ethnic' channels aimed at immigrant populations. Alternatively, entrepreneurs organise public screenings around big sporting events. For example, a football match between Jamaica and El Salvador transmitted via a satellite link from Kingston gathered 2000 people (at £10 a ticket) in a London venue (Channel 4 News, 10/11/97).

Minorities' enthusiasm for satellite TV serves to highlight a positive aspect of satellite programmes (ignored by 'Americanisation' debates). However, we cannot uncritically endorse this commercial model of TV. We do not know for certain whether satellite TV is satisfying the needs of 'minorities' simply because the commercial approach to audiences employed by these TV services should not be confused with actual audience research. In fact, there are suggestions that second generation immigrants do not necessarily share their parents' enthusiasm for 'ethnic' channels (cf. Franchon and Vargafit, 1995). Here, I concur with Ang that "ethnographic understanding of the social world of actual audiences may feed the imagination needed to come to [alternatives to the commercial model]" (1991:167). In this respect, the social aspect of TV (chapter 3) may provide a useful insight into contemporary identities. Audience research methods are required, therefore, that would not reproduce old divisions along stable identification categories but grasp the complexities of contemporary identity formation. It is hoped that this type of audience research would influence public service broadcasters to represent minority group

citizens in an unprejudiced manner, as 'ordinary' people. The scale of the "task facing those who would wish to see radio and TV fulfil its obligations in a diverse, pluralistic and democratic society" (Franchon and Vargafit, 1995:3) is great. However, in a world where TV is "increasingly the place where the nation invents itself" (Philips, 1995:14), fair representation is a significant move towards multiculturalism, a commitment to which provided the basis on which this thesis was written.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Aboud Simon, Vice president, European Communications, Mc Cann-Erickson/Magic Hat (15/05/97).

Angus Louise, vice-president of advertising sales, MTV Networks Europe (11/08/94).

Dominic Benjamin, (associate) producer, *Flava*/Channel 4 (16/06/97).

Bramly Sophie, (former) MTV VJ (01/09/94).

Elezović Ermin, fieldwork director, War Child/Mostar (20/12/97).

Deplanck François, network development, MTV/Paris office (31/08/94).

Hansen Brent, president/chief executive officer, MTV Networks Europe (18/08/94; 01/04/97; 22/12/98).

Gallot Laurence, vice-director of foreign relations, Canalsatellite/Canal Plus (06/09/95).

Guild Simon, senior vice-president strategy, planning and research, MTV Networks Europe (26/07/94).

Grant John, creative director, St Lukes (24/04/97).

Lewis Jonathan, creative strategy manager, MTV Networks Europe (22/05/97).

King Paul, (former) MTV VJ (19/01/95).

Lindemann Roy, network development director, MTV/Paris office (04/09/95).

Lynch Laura, (former) assistant network development, MTV Networks Europe (11/09/95).

Millet Jean-Pierre, head of programming, MCM (12/09/95).

Odiana Isabelle, music programmer, Canal Plus (05/09/95).

Rieter Thorsten, communication department, Viva (16/07/97).

Thouvenot Thierry, marketing director (France/Southern Europe), MTV/Paris office (04/09/95).

APPENDIX

This appendix provides dates when MTV became available in a given country and information about the channel's distribution (1990-1995) on the basis of four months per year.

	Territory	Month	Subscribers	Comments
1	Austria	31/1/90	74,265	
2	Belgium	31/7/88	235,000	
3	Bulgaria	31/3/90	500	
4	Croatia	30/6/94	68,000	
5	Czechoslovakia	31/1/90	5,638	
6	Denmark	31/12/87	136,000	
7	Egypt	30/11/93	2,000	
8	Estonia	31/12/92	4,400	
9	Finland	31/12/87	47,942	
10	France	31/12/87	4,840	
11	Germany East	31/12/89	950	Figures combined with West Germany in September 90
12	Germany West	31/12/87	293,394	
13	Greece	31/12/88	750,000	
14	Hungary	31/3/89	33,000	
15	Iceland	31/7/90	15,000	
16	Ireland	31/12/87	218,000	
17	Israel	31/3/90	5,861	
18	Italy	28/2/90	1,500	
19	Latvia	30/6/94	12,564	
20	Liechtenstein	31/5/92	7,500	
21	Lithuania	31/12/92	410	
22	Luxembourg	31/7/89	12,000	
23	Malta	30/11/93	11,000	
24	Monaco	30/4/91	572	
25	Montenegro	30/6/94	4,336	Lost Distribution at Encryption (1/7/95)
26	Netherlands	31/12/87	1,062,924	
27	Norway	31/10/88	22,000	
28	Poland	31/1/90	6,886	
29	Portugal	28/2/90	10,000	
30	Romania	30/6/90	2,000	
31	Russia	31/3/91	130,000	
32	Serbia	30/6/94	51,700	Lost Distribution at Encryption (1/7/95)
33	Slovak Republic	31/12/92	150,500	
34	Slovenia	30/6/94	302,431	
35	Spain	31/10/89	2,000	
36	Sweden	31/12/87	275,700	
37	Switzerland	31/12/87	69,400	
38	Turkey	31/8/93	3,500,000	Only cable homes currently reported in Network Figures
39	United Kingdom	31/12/87	81,003	
40	Yugoslavia	31/10/89	50,000	Separated into Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia in July 94

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
31 January 1990

1	Austria		74,265
2	Belgium		2,423,822
3	Czechoslovakia		5,638
4	Denmark		522,365
5	Finland		290,416
6	France		152,625
7	Germany	West	1,766,104
		East	950
8	Greece		910,361
9	Hungary		193,579
10	Ireland		261,987
11	Luxembourg		16,128
12	Netherlands		2,723,614
13	Norway		367,584
14	Poland		6,886
15	Spain		247,800
16	Sweden		1,143,097
17	Switzerland		505,472
18	United Kingdom		693,744
19	Yugoslavia		51,191

TOTAL   **12,357,628**

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
30 April 1990

1	Austria		85,245
2	Belgium		2,521,304
3	Bulgaria		500
4	Czechoslovakia		20,261
5	Denmark		563,396
6	Finland		402,823
7	France		198,860
8	Germany	West	1,973,212
		East	5,000
9	Greece		910,361
10	Hungary		208,239
11	Ireland		307,084
12	Israel		5,861
13	Italy		1,500
14	Luxembourg		16,128
15	Netherlands		2,947,506
16	Norway		418,922
17	Poland		5,224
18	Portugal		9,686
19	Spain		247,800
20	Sweden		1,208,807
21	Switzerland		508,352
22	United Kingdom		892,033
23	Yugoslavia		129,336
	European Hotel Rooms		6,223

TOTAL   **13,593,663**

MTV

MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
31 August 1990

1	Austria		110,517
2	Belgium		2,818,092
3	Bulgaria		500
4	Czechoslovakia		26,361
5	Denmark		577,600
6	Finland		438,963
7	France		252,894
8	Germany	West	2,414,483
		East	8,000
9	Greece		911,861
10	Hungary		258,176
11	Iceland		15,000
12	Ireland		307,084
13	Israel		10,500
14	Italy		1,500
15	Luxembourg		15,644
16	Netherlands		3,139,008
17	Norway		437,178
18	Poland		5,224
19	Portugal		9,686
20	Romania		2,000
21	Spain		297,000
22	Sweden		1,313,936
23	Switzerland		550,358
24	United Kingdom		1,101,734
25	Yugoslavia		129,036
	European Hotel Rooms		84,708

TOTAL   **15,237,043**

MTV MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
30 November 1990

1	Austria	168,181
2	Belgium	2,866,661
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Czechoslovakia	60,100
5	Denmark	646,971
6	Finland	440,030
7	France	321,150
8	Germany	4,516,729
9	Greece	961,861
10	Hungary	266,288
11	Iceland	15,000
12	Ireland	307,084
13	Israel	21,000
14	Italy	1,500
15	Luxembourg	16,644
16	Netherlands	3,316,615
17	Norway	437,877
18	Poland	20,000
19	Portugal	9,686
20	Romania	2,000
21	Spain	297,000
22	Sweden	1,374,468
23	Switzerland	604,900
24	United Kingdom	1,418,299
25	Yugoslavia	129,336
	European Hotel Rooms	102,178

TOTAL   **18,322,058**

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
31 January 1991

1	Austria	172,257
2	Belgium	2,901,161
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Czechoslovakia	60,100
5	Denmark	649,862
6	Finland	440,071
7	France	371,981
8	Germany	6,045,801
9	Greece	1,539,091
10	Hungary	263,714
11	Iceland	15,000
12	Ireland	307,084
13	Israel	21,000
14	Italy	1,500
15	Luxembourg	20,144
16	Netherlands	3,347,741
17	Norway	437,978
18	Poland	20,000
19	Portugal	9,686
20	Romania	2,000
21	Spain	297,000
22	Sweden	1,448,442
23	Switzerland	671,531
24	United Kingdom	1,515,452
25	Yugoslavia	169,336
	European Hotel Rooms	103,891

TOTAL **20,832,323**

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
30 April 1991

1	Austria	179,110
2	Belgium	2,933,033
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Czechoslovakia	66,100
5	Denmark	645,919
6	Finland	502,709
7	France	431,089
8	Germany	7,226,997
9	Greece	1,539,591
10	Hungary	284,555
11	Iceland	15,000
12	Ireland	322,084
13	Israel	60,000
14	Italy	10,000
15	Luxembourg	20,144
16	Monaco	572
17	Netherlands	3,516,318
18	Norway	477,204
19	Poland	75,000
20	Portugal	9,686
21	Romania	2,000
22	Spain	297,000
23	Sweden	1,502,343
24	Switzerland	748,938
25	United Kingdom	1,549,564
26	USSR	130,000
27	Yugoslavia	199,336
	European Hotel Rooms	107,657

TOTAL   **22.852.449**

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
31 August 1991

1	Austria	237,372
2	Belgium	2,926,386
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Czechoslovakia	119,600
5	Denmark	910,541
6	Finland	520,641
7	France	500,314
8	Germany	8,944,827
9	Greece	1,539,591
10	Hungary	293,919
11	Iceland	15,000
12	Ireland	322,084
13	Israel	110,000
14	Italy	3,525,000
15	Luxembourg	20,244
16	Monaco	834
17	Netherlands	3,685,640
18	Norway	479,561
19	Poland	75,000
20	Portugal	9,686
21	Romania	2,000
22	Spain	514,000
23	Sweden	1,656,673
24	Switzerland	1,114,580
25	United Kingdom	1,612,199
26	USSR	130,000
27	Yugoslavia	199,336
	European Hotel Rooms	121,747

TOTAL   29,587,275

Italy - 25,000 DTH 24 hour carriage, 3.5 million 6 hours per day
Mon - Sat 13.00 - 19.00 CET / Sunday - 7.30-13.30 CET

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HOMES CONNECTED
30 November 1991

	Country	Homes
1	Austria	241,028
2	Belgium	3,150,495
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Czechoslovakia	119,600
5	Denmark	931,141
6	Finland	521,334
7	France	551,668
8	Germany	9,792,437
9	Greece	1,539,591
10	Hungary	294,989
11	Iceland	15,000
12	Ireland	322,084
13	Israel	130,000
14	Italy	3,525,000
15	Luxembourg	72,040
16	Monaco	1,266
17	Netherlands	3,778,943
18	Norway	477,685
19	Poland	250,000
20	Portugal	9,686
21	Romania	2,000
22	Spain	514,000
23	Sweden	1,720,684
24	Switzerland	1,179,135
25	United Kingdom	2,078,529
26	USSR	130,000
27	Yugoslavia	199,336
	European Hotel Rooms	123,311

TOTAL   **31,671,482**

Italy - 25,000 DTH 24 hour carriage 3.5 million 6 hours per day

HOMES CONNECTED
31 January 1992

1	Austria	300,931
2	Belgium	3,150,495
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Czechoslovakia	119,600
5	Denmark	931,141
6	Finland	521,524
7	France	573,880
8	Germany	10,540,696
9	Greece	1,539,591
10	Hungary	297,271
11	Iceland	15,000
12	Ireland	322,084
13	Israel	205,000
14	Italy	3,525,000
15	Luxembourg	72,040
16	Monaco	1,506
17	Netherlands	3,953,440
18	Norway	477,685
19	Poland	250,000
20	Portugal	9,686
21	Romania	2,000
22	Spain	514,000
23	Sweden	1,722,733
24	Switzerland	1,239,804
25	United Kingdom	2,113,514
26	USSR	130,000
27	Yugoslavia	199,336
	European Hotel Rooms	123,311

TOTAL   **32,851,768**

Italy - 25,000 DTH 24 hour carriage. 3.5 million 6 hours per day

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
30 April 1992

1	Austria	371,001
2	Belgium	3,202,849
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	130,000
5	Czechoslovakia	184,600
6	Denmark	925,723
7	Finland	521,601
8	France	672,085
9	Germany	11,556,687
10	Greece	1,539,591
11	Hungary	346,624
12	Iceland	15,000
13	Ireland	332,084
14	Israel	215,000
15	Italy	4,620,652
16	Luxembourg	73,040
17	Monaco	1,506
18	Netherlands	4,153,575
19	Norway	486,957
20	Poland	530,000
21	Portugal	9,686
22	Romania	2,000
23	Spain	518,600
24	Sweden	1,735,772
25	Switzerland	1,256,544
26	United Kingdom	2,291,739
27	Yugoslavia	399,336
	European Hotel Rooms	136,772

TOTAL   36,229,524

Italy - 33,000 DTH 24 hour carriage 4.58 million 6 hours per day

HOMES CONNECTED
31 August 1992

1	Austria	484,785
2	Belgium	3,293,259
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	130,000
5	Czechoslovakia	194,600
6	Denmark	926,323
7	Finland	522,001
8	France	749,639
9	Germany	13,192,249
10	Greece	1,540,091
11	Hungary	447,624
12	Iceland	15,000
13	Ireland	332,084
14	Israel	245,000
15	Italy	4,623,652
16	Liechtenstein	10,310
17	Luxembourg	73,040
18	Monaco	1,832
19	Netherlands	4,278,323
20	Norway	487,857
21	Poland	620,800
22	Portugal	22,500
23	Romania	2,000
24	Spain	1,264,656
25	Sweden	1,738,372
26	Switzerland	1,401,562
27	United Kingdom	2,534,727
28	Yugoslavia	399,336
	European Hotel Rooms	144,081

TOTAL   39,676,203

Italy - 36,000 DTH 24 hour carriage 4.58 million 6 hours per day

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HOMES CONNECTED
30 November 1992

1	Austria	534,395
2	Belgium	3,403,537
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	134,810
5	Czechoslovakia	293,700
6	Denmark	1,088,768
7	Finland	539,391
8	France	780,225
9	Germany	14,339,818
10	Greece	1,540,466
11	Hungary	742,595
12	Iceland	15,000
13	Ireland	332,084
14	Israel	334,055
15	Italy	4,625,902
16	Liechtenstein	10,310
17	Luxembourg	81,840
18	Monaco	4,202
19	Netherlands	4,351,888
20	Norway	566,154
21	Poland	784,975
22	Portugal	28,250
23	Romania	4,500
24	Spain	1,264,656
25	Sweden	1,860,150
26	Switzerland	1,445,047
27	United Kingdom	2,628,322
28	Yugoslavia	299,336
	European Hotel Rooms	150,248

TOTAL   42,185,124

Italy - 38,250 DTH 24 hour carriage 4.58 million 6 hours per day

HOMES CONNECTED
31 January 1993

1	Austria	546,881
2	Belgium	3,528,660
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	132,051
5	Czechoslovakia	155,700
6	Denmark	1,163,992
7	Estonia	5,400
8	Finland	679,810
9	Former Yugoslavia	299,336
10	France	804,845
11	Germany	14,679,818
12	Greece	1,540,591
13	Hungary	795,345
14	Iceland	15,000
15	Ireland	332,084
16	Israel	358,681
17	Italy	4,707,652
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	610
20	Luxembourg	81,840
21	Monaco	4,202
22	Netherlands	4,504,958
23	Norway	575,404
24	Poland	866,055
25	Portugal	29,500
26	Romania	4,500
27	Slovak Republic	150,500
28	Spain	1,264,656
29	Sweden	1,932,768
30	Switzerland	1,480,733
31	United Kingdom	2,783,000
	European Hotel Rooms	152,225

TOTAL   43,587,607

Italy - 120,000 DTH 24 hour carriage, 4.58 million 6 hours per day
Mon - Sat 13.00 - 19.00 CET / Sunday - 7.30-13.30 CET

HOMES CONNECTED
30 April 1993

1	Austria	652,016
2	Belgium	3,541,846
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	132,568
5	Czechoslovakia	168,100
6	Denmark	1,177,585
7	Estonia	5,400
8	Finland	682,810
9	Former Yugoslavia	299,336
10	France	836,269
11	Germany	15,505,611
12	Greece	1,540,591
13	Hungary	901,045
14	Iceland	16,500
15	Ireland	332,084
16	Israel	522,005
17	Italy	4,707,652
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	610
20	Luxembourg	81,840
21	Monaco	4,202
22	Netherlands	4,743,247
23	Norway	598,501
24	Poland	980,914
25	Portugal	35,500
26	Romania	144,050
27	Slovak Republic	160,500
28	Spain	1,274,747
29	Sweden	2,014,290
30	Switzerland	1,581,215
31	United Kingdom	2,859,742
	European Hotel Rooms	164,131

TOTAL   **45,675,717**

Italy - 120,000 DTH 24 hour carriage, 4.58 million 6 hours per day
Mon - Sat 13.00 - 19.00 CET / Sunday - 7.30-13.30 CET

MTV MUSIC TELEVISION°

HOMES CONNECTED
31 August 1993

1	Austria	1,156,235
2	Belgium	3,551,759
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	132,940
5	Czechoslovakia	559,100
6	Denmark	1,187,283
7	Estonia	5,400
8	Finland	682,834
9	Former Yugoslavia	299,336
10	France	886,557
11	Germany	16,521,031
12	Greece	1,540,591
13	Hungary	1,074,045
14	Iceland	17,000
15	Ireland	83,869
16	Israel	600,000
17	Italy	4,712,652
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	610
20	Luxembourg	81,840
21	Monaco	4,202
22	Netherlands	5,017,133
23	Norway	603,501
24	Poland	1,331,416
25	Portugal	38,500
26	Romania	144,050
27	Slovak Republic	551,500
28	Spain	1,289,747
29	Sweden	2,088,927
30	Switzerland	1,722,146
31	Turkey	3,500,000
32	United Kingdom	3,108,000
	European Hotel Rooms	168,516

TOTAL 52,671,530

Italy - 125,000 DTH 24 hour carriage, 4.58 million 6 hours per day
Mon - Sat 13.00 - 19.00 CET / Sunday - 7.30-13.30 CET

HOMES CONNECTED
30 November 1993

1	Austria	1,198,174
2	Belgium	3,589,982
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	132,940
5	Czech Republic	564,100
6	Denmark	1,207,569
7	Estonia	5,400
8	Finland	682,834
9	Former Yugoslavia	299,336
10	France	912,133
11	Germany	18,067,033
12	Greece	1,540,591
13	Hungary	1,093,522
14	Iceland	17,000
15	Ireland	87,869
16	Israel	643,204
17	Italy*	6,421,073
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	610
20	Luxembourg	83,110
21	Malta	11,000
22	Monaco	4,202
23	Netherlands	5,237,975
24	Norway	608,501
25	Poland	1,358,072
26	Portugal	44,589
27	Romania	144,050
28	Slovak Republic	551,500
29	Spain	1,289,747
30	Sweden	2,100,431
31	Switzerland	1,745,061
32	Turkey	5,000,000
33	United Kingdom	3,239,778
	Hotel Rooms:	170,632

TOTAL   58,062,828

*Italy - 125,000 DTH Hhs 24hr Carriage/ 6.29 million
Terrestrial Hhs 6 hrs per day
Mon. to Sat. 13.00-19.00 CET/Sun 7.30 -13.30 CET
103.07 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage
in 7 countries

HOMES CONNECTED
31 January 1994

1	Austria	1,216,170
2	Belgium	3,595,545
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	133,135
5	Czech Republic	564,100
6	Denmark	1,209,543
7	Estonia	7,000
8	Finland	685,834
9	Former Yugoslavia	299,336
10	France	940,741
11	Germany	18,532,904
12	Greece	1,540,591
13	Hungary	1,093,522
14	Iceland	17,000
15	Ireland	87,869
16	Israel	681,707
17	Italy*	6,424,002
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	610
20	Luxembourg	84,110
21	Malta	11,000
22	Monaco	4,423
23	Netherlands	5,275,071
24	Norway	608,501
25	Poland	1,365,850
26	Portugal	46,384
27	Romania	147,434
28	Slovak Republic	551,500
29	Spain	1,289,747
30	Sweden	2,123,925
31	Switzerland	1,752,883
32	Turkey	5,000,000
33	United Kingdom	3,292,374
	European Hotel Rooms:	174,574

TOTAL 58,768,195

*Italy - 125,000 DTH Hhs 24hr Carriage/ 6.29 million
Terrestrial Hhs 6 hrs per day
Mon. to Sat. 13.00-19.00 CET/Sun 7.30 -13.30 CET
103.07 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage
in 7 countries

HOMES CONNECTED
30 April 1994

1	Austria	1,322,376
2	Belgium	3,605,791
3	Bulgaria	500
4	CIS	135,921
5	Czech Republic	564,100
6	Denmark	1,229,373
7	Estonia	7,360
8	Finland	689,834
9	Former Yugoslavia	336,886
10	France	992,064
11	Germany	18,986,359
12	Greece	1,540,591
13	Hungary	1,094,326
14	Iceland	17,000
15	Ireland	384,600
16	Israel	710,943
17	Italy*	6,424,002
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	2,115
20	Luxembourg	85,110
21	Malta	12,067
22	Monaco	4,423
23	Netherlands	5,365,732
24	Norway	690,137
25	Poland	1,415,115
26	Portugal	59,125
27	Romania	149,450
28	Slovak Republic	551,500
29	Spain	1,289,747
30	Sweden	2,147,361
31	Switzerland	1,769,308
32	Turkey	5,000,000
33	United Kingdom	3,371,634
	European Hotel Rooms:	174,616

TOTAL   60,139,776

Italy - 125,000 DTH Hhs 24hr Carriage/ 6.29 million Terrestrial Hhs 6 hrs per day Mon. to Sat. 13.00-19.00 CET/Sun 7.30 -13.30 CET

106.07 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage in 7 countries

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MTV MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
31 August 1994

1	Austria	1,417,493
2	Belgium	3,612,981
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Croatia	68,000
5	Czech Republic	604,991
6	Denmark	1,257,496
7	Estonia	8,820
8	Finland	691,869
9	France	1,061,227
10	Germany	19,720,211
11	Greece	1,540,591
12	Hungary	1,094,326
13	Iceland	17,000
14	Ireland	390,530
15	Israel	710,943
16	Italy*	6,424,002
17	Latvia	12,564
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	15,465
20	Luxembourg	85,110
21	Malta	14,208
22	Monaco	4,864
23	Montenegro	4,336
24	Netherlands	5,475,588
25	Norway	562,101
26	Poland	1,537,260
27	Portugal	102,528
28	Romania	278,450
29	Russia	133,357
30	Serbia	51,700
31	Slovak Republic	624,500
32	Slovenia	334,628
33	Spain	1,289,747
34	Sweden	2,182,721
35	Switzerland	1,789,659
36	Turkey	5,000,000
37	United Kingdom	3,480,033
	European Hotel Rooms:	176,070

TOTAL   61,786,179

*Italy - 125,000 DTH Hhs 24hr Carriage/ 6.29 million
Terrestrial Hhs 6 hrs per day
Mon. to Sat. 13.00-19.00 CET/Sun 7.30 -13.30 CET

109.3 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage in
7 countries

Lebanon - 24hr Carriage/ 1 million Terrestrial Hhs

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

HOMES CONNECTED
30 November 1994

#	Country	Homes
1	Austria	1,443,194
2	Belgium	3,625,257
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Croatia	70,000
5	Czech Republic	616,991
6	Denmark	1,258,285
7	Estonia	8,820
8	Finland	689,945
9	France	1,102,549
10	Germany	20,152,814
11	Greece	1,540,591
12	Hungary	1,098,521
13	Iceland	17,000
14	Ireland	392,530
15	Israel	733,064
16	Italy*	7,010,000
17	Latvia	12,564
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	17,310
20	Luxembourg	85,110
21	Malta	15,720
22	Monaco	4,981
23	Montenegro	4,336
24	Netherlands	5,507,479
25	Norway	565,118
26	Poland	1,624,510
27	Portugal	104,841
28	Romania	418,750
29	Russia	133,357
30	Serbia	51,700
31	Slovak Republic	624,500
32	Slovenia	345,228
33	Spain	1,289,747
34	Sweden	2,193,517
35	Switzerland	1,797,226
36	Turkey	233,200
37	United Kingdom	3,647,858
	European Hotel Rooms:	176,070

TOTAL 58,623,493

*Italy - 250,000 DTH Hhs 24hr Carriage/ 6.76 million
Terrestrial Hhs 6 hrs per day. Mon. to Sat. 13.00-19.00 CET/Sun
7.30 -13.30 CET
109.3 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage in7 countries.

HOMES CONNECTED
31 January 1995

1	Austria	1,458,368
2	Belgium	3,614,319
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Croatia	70,000
5	Czech Republic	616,991
6	Denmark	1,268,992
7	Estonia	8,831
8	Finland	689,945
9	France	1,133,106
10	Germany	20,512,857
11	Greece	1,540,591
12	Hungary	1,104,806
13	Iceland	17,000
14	Ireland	392,530
15	Israel	733,064
16	Italy*	7,110,000
17	Latvia	12,564
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	17,310
20	Luxembourg	85,110
21	Malta	17,104
22	Monaco	5,060
23	Montenegro	4,336
24	Netherlands	5,603,727
25	Norway	566,645
26	Poland	1,654,874
27	Portugal	107,201
28	Romania	420,227
29	Russia	133,357
30	Serbia	51,700
31	Slovak Republic	624,500
32	Slovenia	345,228
33	Spain	1,289,747
34	Sweden	2,230,658
35	Switzerland	1,802,641
36	Turkey	233,200
37	United Kingdom	3,857,674
	European Hotel Rooms:	176,070

TOTAL   59,521,143

*Italy - 350,000 DTH Hhs 24hr Carriage/ 6.76 million
Terrestrial Hhs 6 hrs per day. Mon. to Sat. 13.00-19.00 CET/Sun
7.30 -13.30 CET
107.8 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage in7 countries
Lebanon - 24hr Carriage/ 1 million Terrestrial Hhs

HOMES CONNECTED
30 April 1995

MUSIC TELEVISION®

1	Austria	1,491,302
2	Belgium	3,630,340
3	Bulgaria	500
4	Croatia	90,000
5	Czech Republic	631,991
6	Denmark	1,301,082
7	Estonia	28,765
8	Finland	691,945
9	France	1,167,346
10	Germany	20,904,360
11	Greece	1,540,591
12	Hungary	1,116,806
13	Iceland	17,000
14	Ireland	404,530
15	Israel	799,171
16	Italy*	7,110,000
17	Latvia	19,735
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	44,836
20	Luxembourg	89,110
21	Malta	18,476
22	Monaco	5,075
23	Montenegro	4,336
24	Netherlands	5,664,410
25	Norway	618,594
26	Poland	1,730,629
27	Portugal	111,250
28	Romania	421,271
29	Russia	137,290
30	Serbia	53,700
31	Slovak Republic	648,500
32	Slovenia	350,254
33	Spain	1,289,747
34	Sweden	2,256,522
35	Switzerland	1,831,908
36	Turkey	233,200
37	United Kingdom	4,013,497
	European Hotel Rooms:	176,070

TOTAL   60,654,449

*Italy - 350,000 DTH Hhs 24hr Carriage/ 6.76 million
Terrestrial Hhs 6 hrs per day. Mon. to Sat. 13.00-19.00 CET/Sun
7.30 -13.30 CET
40.5 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage in7 countries*

HOMES CONNECTED
31 August 1995

1	Austria	664,591
2	Belgium	3,603,429
3	Bulgaria	10,000
4	Croatia	384
5	Czech Republic	73,421
6	Denmark	885,860
7	Estonia	38,915
8	Finland	728,622
9	France	976,972
10	Germany	15,550,500
11	Greece	1,537,591
12	Hungary	358,402
13	Iceland	857
14	Ireland	348,044
15	Israel	850,305
16	Italy*	11,000,000
17	Latvia	11,880
18	Liechtenstein	10,310
19	Lithuania	53,144
20	Luxembourg	83,266
21	Malta	20,164
22	Monaco	5,367
23	Netherlands	4,670,354
24	Norway	349,202
25	Poland	384,474
26	Portugal	32,024
27	Romania	849,757
28	Russia	25,481
29	Slovak Republic	170,395
30	Slovenia	130,294
31	Spain	50,000
32	Sweden	1,809,800
33	Switzerland	300,000
34	Turkey	280,000
35	United Kingdom	3,982,575
	European Hotel Rooms:	176,070

TOTAL   50,022,450

Italy - 11 million Terrestrial   13hrs per day
13.00-19.00 CET/Sun 00.00 - 7.30 CET

40.5 million syndicated Hhs, partial carriage in7 countries

HOMES CONNECTED
30 November 1995

1	Austria	674,464
2	Belgium	3,616,320
3	Bulgaria	16,620
4	Croatia	667
5	Czech Republic	88,203
6	Denmark	900,660
7	Egypt	5,200
8	Estonia	40,461
9	Finland	758,583
10	France	990,288
11	Germany	15,551,092
12	Greece	1,537,591
13	Hungary	360,773
14	Iceland	969
15	Ireland	352,749
16	Israel	879,691
17	Italy*	11,000,000
18	Latvia	13,148
19	Liechtenstein	10,310
20	Lithuania	53,144
21	Luxembourg	83,266
22	Malta	23,970
23	Monaco	5,461
24	Netherlands	4,517,528
25	Norway	357,403
26	Poland	388,234
27	Portugal	43,452
28	Romania	849,757
29	Russia	25,481
30	Slovak Republic	185,193
31	Slovenia	136,393
32	Spain	50,000
33	Sweden	1,816,489
34	Switzerland	1,280,038
35	Turkey	280,000
36	United Kingdom	4,263,023
	European Hotel Rooms:	176,070

TOTAL   **51,332,691**

Italy - 11 million Terrestrial 13hrs per day
13.00-19.00 CET/Sun 00.00 - 7.30 CET
SWITZERLAND
Tele Zurich 550,000 H/hs 30 hours 45 minutes per week
Tele Bern 430,000 H/Hs 27 hours per week