

NN - Constructing Europe

4 Constructing Europe

The purpose of the present chapter is to discuss the nature of 'Europe' as a tele-
visually mediated place. The centrepiece of the chapter is a discussion and
analysis of the semiotic and textual resources deployed by channels and
programmes which seek to address, and construct, their viewers as 'Europeans',
particularly EuroNews, a channel which derives much of its funding from the
European Union.

The emphasis upon textual form and meaning here gives this study a focus
which is complementary to that of scholars such as Schlesinger (1993, 1997).
What textual analysis can do is to draw attention to the rhetorical work which
goes into the construction of Europe in television, hence the emphasis we have
given below to forms of spatial deixis. Spatial deictic forms such as 'here' and so
forth are unremarkable when speaker and hearer have a shared location.
TV broadcasting by tradition locates broadcasters and audiences within the
same country, though at different points in that country. Something happens to
such forms when the locatedness of the programmes and their viewers is not
taken for granted but is an issue. But there is a wider context within which to
situate this analysis. To understand that context it is necessary to review some
of the current media-related research concerned with the 'new cultural geog-
raphy' (Morley and Robins 1995).

Satellite television and the new cultural geography

Researchers are keen to understand how communications technologies
contribute to the new cultural geography, and in doing so have come up with
the idea that satellite broadcasting and the Internet conspire with political and
economic change in late modernity to 'reconfigure space'. This reconfiguration,
however, is not only, or not so much, about the redrawing of spatial boundaries,
substituting one set of dividing lines for another, but about new ways of
constructing social relations in space. 'Space', here, has its most general sense,
the sense in which it is the complement of 'time'. Reflections upon this theme
lead to generalities such as the following:

Patterns of movement and flows of people, culture, goods and information mean that it is now not so much physical boundaries – the geographical distances, the seas or mountain ranges – that define a community or nation's 'natural limits'. Increasingly we must think in terms of communications and transport networks and of the symbolic boundaries of language and culture – the 'spaces of transmission' defined by satellite footprints or radio signals – as providing the crucial – and permeable – boundaries of our age.

(Morley and Robins 1995: 1)

There are some difficulties with this kind of perspective. The reference to the 'symbolic boundaries of language and culture' is significant here, for these were always the boundaries which mattered, even when it was the case that physical boundaries coincided with the symbolic ones. Furthermore, it is upon the political not the physical, or even the linguistic, map of the globe where boundaries appear most marked. The line between France and Spain disrespects the 'natural' boundary of the Pyrenees, running as it does right through the middle of that particular mountain range. Basque speakers are to be found on both sides. Boundaries, then, come into play in the political context when it becomes necessary to institutionalise and regulate the social groupings (see Cohen 1994 for an application of this idea to the 'frontiers of identity' which Britain finds it necessary to police – between the 'real' British and the immigrants, the English and the Celts, Europeans, etc.). 'Spaces' of course can be demarcated in different ways – politically, economically, culturally, linguistically, technologically – and the question of the 'fit' between the different demarcations is an important one to pursue, especially where there is reason to believe that new configurations at any one level have causal effects at other levels.

The European TV experience

Received wisdom on TV worldwide positions the Western European experience as both like and unlike the North American experience. The Western European experience is like that of North America in that, postwar, TV very quickly obtained complete penetration of the market so that every home possessed its TV set, or sets. The difference between the two continents resides in the differences between the commercial model adopted in the United States as against the public-service or mixed commercial/public-service traditions of Western Europe. The other significant difference is the greater range of channels available in North America, on both sides of the US/Canada border. Because of 'overspill' from US transmitters, Canada shares the multi-channel experience of its southern neighbour, even though it has attempted within its own jurisdiction to follow a more 'European' approach in matters of policy. See Filion (1996) for discussion of the Canadian broadcasting experience.

The era of deregulation on both sides of the Atlantic opened up broadcasting to new kinds of corporate participants – Rupert Murdoch, Silvio Berlusconi,

Ted Turner, Leo Kirch. In Western Europe, this deregulation developed at the same time as the technology of satellite and broad-band cable delivery systems. The result, of course, has been the advent of multi-channel broadcasting in Europe (and no longer just the West of the continent), variously paid for (licence fee, advertising, sponsorship, subscription).

The multi-channel experience has, naturally, been available to Europeans crossing the Atlantic to visit the USA. Such an experience was important for Williams in formulating his early and influential notions of TV 'flow' (Williams 1974; see Chapter 1 above). More recently, Caughie (1990) has talked as a European about the pleasures and perils of watching US television.

The multi-channel experience, previously the privilege of North American viewers, is now available to Europeans, too – in principle. In practice the picture is rather different. Cable delivery systems are far from being generally available. DBS technology (Direct Broadcasting by Satellite, where homes receive satellite signals directly via their own dish and set-top decoder, particular channels being 'scrambled' to the non-subscriber) is available, but the uptake has, again, been highly variable (see Table 2).

In different European countries the range of new channels may be found to be smaller or larger according to linguistic considerations. Research indicates that where a choice is available viewers prefer programmes in their own language and grounded in cultural experience which they can relate to – and this is the case not only in Europe but worldwide (Parker 1995; Noam 1991; Ferguson 1992; Schlesinger 1993, 1997; Collins 1994; Weymouth and Lamizet 1996):

Table 2 New technology in Western Europe circa 1995

Country	Population (millions)	TV homes (millions)	VCR homes (millions)	Cable connection (millions)	Cable penetration (%)	Dish total (thousands)
Belgium	10.1	4.1	2.1	3.7	91.6	15,000
Denmark	5.2	2.2	1.4	1.2	56.5	125,000
France	58.0	20.8	12.3	1.0	4.7	260,000
Germany	81.2	33.0	16.2	14.4	43.9	6,000,000
Greece	10.4	3.1	1.3	nil	nil	2,500
Ireland	3.6	1.0	0.61	0.44	41.6	60,000
Italy	57.2	20.3	9.1	nil	nil	110,000
Luxembourg	0.4	0.14	n/a	0.17	81.4	2,000
Netherlands	15.4	6.3	4.5	5.6	87.9	250,000
Portugal	9.9	3.1	1.9	nil	nil	110,000
Spain	39.2	11.6	6.3	1.2	10.3	180,000
UK	58.4	22.2	16.0	0.77	3.8	2,800,000

Source: Weymouth and Lamizet (1996: 25).

In principle, by beaming its signal down to individual home dish receivers, satellite-based television can bypass national governments and their restrictions, opening a cornucopia of programme alternatives to viewers. Yet to date the upsurge in viewership for international broadcasting – via satellite and cable – is, with few exceptions, at much lower levels than popularly imagined. Although satellites may make such broadcasts theoretically available on all continents, the number of homes equipped to receive such signals isn't yet half of one per cent.

Moreover, in countries with competitive broadcasting, viewers, to a greater extent than once imagined, prefer to watch television produced and presented in their native language by people who look and act like them and reflect values similar to their own.

(Parker 1995: 2)

Parker is particularly concerned to challenge utopian media futurology for its unwarranted technological determinism and lack of attention to the political and economic factors which have shaped and will continue to shape the structure of the media industries, the character of their output and the nature of the viewing experience.

In short, a more cautious and realistic view of the future of international as well as pan-European broadcasting has now been accepted, both by the corporate 'players' who need to understand their markets for very straightforward economic reasons, and by academic analysts seeking to assess the balance of forces, economic, political and cultural which characterise the media environment and lock it into the rest of the social world. Research on inter- and trans-national broadcasting has now taken on a more focused character and several distinct areas of concern are emerging.

The trans-national possibilities of modern broadcasting have implications for media research in respect of both its political, 'public knowledge' agenda and its interest in popular culture. At the political level, the principal questions concern the character of the modern 'public sphere' (Habermas 1989/1962), formerly construed in national terms. At the cultural level, the questions concern the deconstruction of national 'communities' and the establishment of alternative groupings which cut across lines of national demarcation.

The European public sphere

Within a political/legal framework, writers such as Venturrelli (1993) and Price (1995) have wrestled with the familiar problem of determining 'public interest' in the struggle between market principles and state regulation. For Price it is the countries of Eastern/Central Europe – the 'transition societies' – for whom this problem is currently the most acute. A global media system can help to 'open up' closed regimes (Titanmen Square is the oft-cited exemplar of this process at work), but it can also participate in the 'depoliticisation' of particular societies:

Deregulation, globalism and the lack of criticism of government may oddly coalesce: the emphasis on market forces can reduce the function of television and radio as the press, as a critic of the state. Heroic private networks and great public-service broadcasters have been praised (with a bit of golden-age romanticism) precisely because they can pose threats to a complacent status quo. Ironically, by subjecting these organisations to greater market forces, however, television programming develops a new form of neutrality; its managers become co-administrators of the global culture of consumption. Transformed, broadcasting no longer has the same politically subversive potential; if subversive, it is so in a new way, sapped of what was potentially its explicitly critical perspective. Globalisation becomes virtually synonymous with a tendency towards depoliticisation, part of an effort by the state to diminish the potency of the media to disturb the status quo.

(Price 1995: 17)

There is an obvious connection here between the political concern respecting 'depoliticisation' and the concern for cultural orders in the new 'global' society. The connection is consumerism/global media undermine politics not just because they undermine national coherence but because, in place of any distinctive public or national value system, they install a value system grounded in the desire to consume. Global TV means global entertainment, and distraction from politics except as spectacle.

It is not only within the realm of broadcasting that the displacement of politics by consumption has been a focus of cultural concern. If, traditionally, 'public space' has been the domain of the citizen, that tradition now seems to be at an end:

That much public space and interaction is dedicated to consumer practices and discourse becomes significant for the public sphere, since the role of citizen is displaced by that of the consumer; the cultural assumptions surrounding shopping malls, for example, do not make them prime settings for the public sphere.

(Dahlgren 1995: 20)

As far as communicative form is concerned, the literature here is concerned with specific genres of programming (news, current affairs, documentary) as well as with specific properties of meaning – rationality, truthfulness, partisanship (Dahlgren 1995).

European culture and identities

Although this point of intersection between political and cultural issues is clear enough, the cultural critique of globalisation in the mass media is a distinctive one and one with a more diffuse range of concerns than the political agenda.

The principal questions here have to do with the limits of national difference and differentiation.

The resurgence of academic interest in nationhood (see Hutchinson and Smith 1996) has activated more general questions concerning the nature of human 'community' and in particular the difference between communities maintained through face-to-face interaction and those, such as 'nations', where co-membership has become an abstracted property. In Benedict Anderson's famous phrase, nations are 'imagined communities' – not because they are fictional or unreal, but because their reality depends upon the ongoing capacity of members to imagine their existence and thus the bonds which unite their co-members:

An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity. (Anderson 1991: 31)

The social and semiotic arrangements which these members daily experience must facilitate this imagination, must make it possible to 'live' a national life. National mass media productions form an important component in the construction of national imaginations: a point which is important for Billig (1995) in his analysis of the character of 'banal' nationalism.

If nations are imagined communities – what kind of 'communities' are those which transcend national boundaries? Does trans-national broadcasting foster anything which is community-like in its functioning and self-awareness? Does it have the more limited power to undermine the kinds of communities which have prior claim upon the imaginations of viewers and listeners?

These are the kinds of questions which are now attracting attention and discussion. Media researchers (e.g. Ferguson 1992; Schlesinger 1993, 1997; Dahlgren 1995) have a particular interest in the role of the mass media as it affects the future of nationalism and nation-state formations, but the issues are more general and have become important in general social theory (Giddens 1990; Featherstone 1990, 1992; Tomlinson 1991; Hannerz 1992; Robertson 1995).

Within Western Europe the advent of the multi-channel environment with inherent trans-national capabilities has encouraged three distinct lines of speculation with respect to the current and future television experience of European viewers. One line of reflection attends to the dislocating and fragmenting effects of the new media world: another attends to specific pan-European developments, and a third focuses upon the construction of 'taste publics' which cut across national divisions (prototypically the youth audience for MTV¹): these 'transverse' formations of cultural consumption are both less and more than European in character. They are less than European in so far as it is only by virtue of a single shared interest that the group coheres at all – a fully volun-

tarist 'community' in its self-conception even if from a sociological perspective, common demographic factors exist and help to explain the taste choices. Such groups are also more than European inasmuch as their members are not confined to European countries. In this chapter we are principally concerned with the second of these concerns. Chapters 5 and 6 take up the other two lines of enquiry.

European culture and community: a case study

At the level of pan-European developments it is the initiatives of the EU which have attracted attention (see, for example, Venturelli 1993; Collins 1994; Weymouth and Lamizet 1996). To imagine Europe as a nation-like entity is to imagine it with control over social institutions parallel to but larger than those of the component member-states – including mass-media institutions. But the world is not a fractal structure wherein smaller components replicate the forms of larger ones. The major policy document of EU telecommunications policy is the Television Without Frontiers directive (see Commission of the European Communities 1984) – essentially a text of the 'deregulation' era, notwithstanding its concessions to national (and public) interests. Within this policy discourse, the trans-national European broadcasting space already exists. It is not commensurate with geographical Europe, since not all European countries belong to the EU, nor is it commensurate with the footprint of any specific geostationary satellite. The existence of this space is underwritten by the constitutional powers of the EU itself, and critics of 'Europeanisation' at this level have objected that the policy discourse replaces a political conception of the nature of broadcasting with a purely economic conception.

In a more 'culturalist' perspective the defence of 'Europe' can take the form of the defence of *national* (French, German, Spanish, etc.) traditions in the face of perceived encroachments of the despised lowbrow global culture, linguistically Anglophone and culturally American. In this perspective, the UK is America's Trojan Horse – within Europe but linguistically affiliated to its enemy. The attempt to appropriate 'highbrow' culture as the creation and property of Europe, for example via the Franco-German co-sponsored Arts channel ARTE has a plausible *prima facie* rationale, especially when it concentrates upon concert, opera and ballet productions, forms with a history of transcultural success independent of broadcasting, at least within the West. But the idea that 'high culture' so understood is European, as distinct from Western, is untenable – and there is evidence not only of the channel's economic weakness (worthy but 'unpopular') but also of considerable tension between the co-sponsors (see Emanuel 1992, 1993, 1995).

The question of cultural 'Europeanisation', in current writing on this subject, is not followed through in respect of communicative form to any great extent. Instead, the issue is treated as one of medium (the existence of designated or *de facto* European satellite channels) or, to a lesser extent, of content. Thus Weymouth and Lamizet (1996) identify desirable kinds of media Europeanisation

as: the extension of cultural knowledge; the creation of a common culture; and the coverage of issues of common concern. The extent to which these developments are likely to happen is admitted to be still a matter for speculation.

Thus, what is still missing in all of this is any attention to the forms of programming to be found on the new channels which are designated as 'European', and which attempt to be European in their mode of address and content. The analysis which follows is designed to open up discussion of 'European television' at that level.

How far can audiovisual media support or foster any kind of identity, national or transnational? Billig (1995) coins the term 'banal nationalism' to correlate the familiar and unobtrusive use of national symbols such as 'the unwaved flags on public buildings' with the equally unobtrusive everyday use of (relational)? linguistic deixis in the daily press, where the us and we, the here and now, the our space and this nation, act to reaffirm the listeners/readers in their national identity: 'nationalism is not confined to the florid language of blood-myth. Banal nationalism operates with prosaic, routine words, which take nations for granted, and which, in so doing, inhabit them' (Billig 1995: 93).

But what if the community that is appealed to is made up of the many nations, languages and cultures of the European Union or, wider still, of Europe itself?

Since the 1980s there have been various attempts to develop pan-European programming on the public-service model of terrestrial TV (see Schlesinger 1993). But the most deliberate, self-conscious and proactive attempt to create a European rather than a national identity through television can be seen in the forms and contents transmitted by EuroNews (EN), a channel launched in 1993 which is receivable by satellite dish or cable in 35 countries in Europe and its Mediterranean neighbours. EN's task to attract viewers is a difficult one. We have already mentioned that viewers' preferences lie firmly with their own national programmes in one of their national languages, notwithstanding the widespread distribution and consumption of dubbed or subtitled American entertainment programmes. How does EuroNews hope to counteract this tendency? Is there at least potentially an imagined community of Europeans to appeal to or to construct and, if so, how does EuroNews hope to foster this identity? And what is the nature of this construction, geographically, politically or culturally? In the first part of this chapter we reviewed some of the theoretical writing on the new cultural geography and the European public sphere; we will now investigate at the discursive level how one channel, in particular, imagines and constructs Europeanness.³

Overcoming the language barrier

To start with, EN takes note of the preference viewers have for programmes in their own language, by transmitting in the five big languages of the EU: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish. Cable users, at present, do have their linguistic selection imposed on them by their regional cable company.⁴ But

satellite-dish users are able to choose freely one or all of the languages by tuning into the different sound frequencies.⁵ The offer of linguistic choice signals the important fact that Europe is a multilingual community. Of course, only five languages are available, a restriction which runs counter to the EU's declared policy of supporting all national languages spoken in the Community, with special rights for its minority regional or ethnic languages such as Welsh or Catalan or Urdu. This restriction is presumably more to do with limited resources rather than any deliberate exclusion of the 'smaller' languages, but it does reinforce the sense of where the centre is as against the periphery, and thus the power differentials between large and small nations and linguistic communities. Still, being able to choose between at least five languages marks EN out against the other round-the-clock news channels such as CNN, Sky News, n.t.v. etc. which transmit trans-nationally, but only in their respective national languages.

The channel's multilingual policy influences the form and style of its programming in various ways. Since only the soundtrack can be tuned into different languages, the visuals, by definition, remain the same. This affects the relations between sound and image in the construction of the programmes, since the images have to be made to fit soundtracks in different languages, which in turn has consequences for the ways viewers are – or, should we say, are not – addressed.

Let us begin with the most obvious: EN has no anchor persons who introduce or lead through different sections of the programming. This would have created difficulties for the dubbing of the soundtrack, since decisions would have had to be made about which language to use for the speaker, with consequences for synchronising lip movements. Instead, we are shown a range of different screens/templates with a musical soundtrack and/or a voice-over. The particular genre or sub-genre of the programme, such as the weather forecast or the 'anniversary news' – sequences (with its template 'a year ago – vor einem Jahr – un anno fa', etc.) are either signalled in writing in all five languages or by a term specially coined in a form of 'Euro-Interlanguage' drawn from various Latin, Greek or Anglo-Germanic stems: for example *Economia* for business news, *Arrisimo* and *Odéon* for two types of art magazines, *Santé* for a health magazine, *Ecologia* for an environmental magazine, *Mediterraneo* for a programme about the countries of the Mediterranean region, *Sesamo* for a programme about European mobility for workers and/or tourists, etc. Instead of the familiar image of anchor persons addressing individual viewers in seemingly personal face-to-face interaction in their own language, EN's multilingual template sequences unfold in a curiously empty, impersonal and abstract space.

Other features, too, underline this multilingual policy. Overall, the amount of written language on display is much higher than on any parallel news channel, even affecting the commercials. Many advertisements show slogans in English and German running across the top and the bottom of the screen. If the sound frequency of the channel is tuned into either French, Italian or Spanish, viewers will be exposed to three languages simultaneously. In contrast to this

multilingual display on templates and ads, the names of countries and cities appear only in their native form and spelling – such as Firenze, Frankfurt, Praha, Wien, Italia, Deutschland, Österreich, España, etc. This is not a contradiction: EN clearly expects viewers to tolerate, perhaps even to celebrate, the exposure to other languages while accepting the inevitability of viewers' preferences for their own.

The press review items are a good example of both of these tendencies in parallel. Against a background of newspapers running off a printing press, the original title graphics of major European newspapers are superimposed on the upper half of the screen and the original headline of the day on the lower half. The soundtrack summarises the item in the chosen language with music in the background. For example, the title of the newspaper *Journal de Genève* on 12 November 1996 is shown with its French headline, 'La vache folle revient sur le devant de la scène' while the soundtrack explains this in one of the five languages – here chosen in English:

The *Journal de Genève* of Switzerland carries an article headed 'The mad cow returns to centre stage' and this coverage appears in numerous other newspapers. A study published in *Nature* confirms that the so-called mad cow disease can be transmitted to humans.

Overcoming the national perspectives

Deixis revisited

This headline from the *Journal de Genève* is the only trans-national headline that EN shows from the national broadsheets in Europe on that day. The others confirm the obvious point that, in the absence of a truly international story, national concerns override European ones in the national press, with all deictic references pointing to the respective national spaces, just as Billig shows. Further examples quoted in the same press review show this very clearly:

- The Italian *Corriere della Sera*: 'Governo e sindacati vicini alla rottura' (Government and trades unions close to break-up)
- The German *Frankfurter Allgemeine* 'Zehntausend Metallarbeiter protestieren gegen die Kürzung der Lohnfortzahlung' (Ten thousand metal workers protest against the cut of progressive wage increases)
- The German *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: 'DGB: Der heiße Herbst hat begonnen' (German Trade Union Council: the hot autumn has begun)
- The Spanish ABC: 'Los Recortes Presupuestarios sitúan a las Fuzeras Armadas al borde del colapso' (Budget cuts in defence spending are pushing the armed forces toward collapse)
- The French *Le Figaro*: 'Chirac célèbre l'islam moderne' (Chirac welcomes the ideal of modern Islam)

In addressing their intended readership, the respective newspapers treat as self-evident that the 'government', the 'metal workers', the 'budget cuts' in the headlines above refer to the respective Italian, German, Spanish entities, just as national television news relies on being read that way. Transferred to EuroNews, these headlines need to be translated and attributed to particular nations by the voice-over (e.g. The German Conservative daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine ...*), just as this would happen in any review of the international foreign press, where we look from the inside of our own nation to what the outside says. But the difference is that, for EN's interpellated audience, all these headlines from different national papers need to be constructed as internal ones – internal to the imagined space of Europe. In this way, the press review quoted above is not an international foreign press review at all.

There are, of course, other days when topics in large sections of the press do converge. On 2 May 1997, the day after Tony Blair became British Prime Minister, all the papers reviewed by EN led with the Labour Party's landslide victory in the British General Election. It is on such days where EN's own lead item is congruent with what is internationally considered a major event. But such occasions are less frequent than the divergence of reporting shown above. Convergence of topic in the national press or in the various national television news reporting does not in any way alter the deictic positioning of readers/viewers in their respective national spaces. Such convergence simply signals an assumed strong interest in an event of another state.

How, then, does EuroNews try to overcome this predisposition to view from a firmly grounded national point of view, and address its viewers instead as Europeans? The answer is – with difficulty. The press reviews quoted above are indicative here, since EN has to start from a not dissimilar national basis. Not possessing financial and journalistic resources to produce a great deal of its own reporting with its own news teams, EN's news reporting depends on lifting or adapting items from national public-service channels and overvoicing them with a different soundtrack. Most of EN's current affairs news, for example, consists of a collage of items which were originally produced for addressing a national audience, but which are now readdressed to an imagined European one. For example, an item lifted from the Italian channel Rai Uno may be followed by one from TVE (Spanish), followed by ARD (Germany), etc. The result is a succession of different national emphases in the context of an imaginary Europe where we would all share an interest in one another's concerns. Since the frame of reference of the various film reports usually originates from a national perspective, the soundtrack carries the burden of redirecting and resignifying them as European, while the selection of items overall needs to suggest a European rather than a national space. Programming content and style thus become indicative of an utopian appeal to a joint political, economic, artistic culture of Europe – a Europe that by definition lacks a deictic centre, since no single entity can be referred to in the unselfconscious identity-confirming style of relational deixis identified by Billig (1995). This throws into relief the very tensions it attempts to overcome.

Editing out

Redirecting national stories to an imagined European addressee not only requires that all implicit national references (the government, the Prime Minister, etc.) must be explicitly located by discursive means (the government of such and such a country, etc.). Equally affected is the selection of information which the voice-over soundtrack relays over the original. News items, as is commonly known – be it for television or the press – are structured to fit in with the world knowledge, the interests, values and assumptions of an assumed target audience, and will include colourful details which depend on this shared knowledge. Since EN broadens the target audience from the national to the European, decisions need to be made about the editing in of particular pieces of information to contextualise them for the viewer, or about editing out information which is not considered relevant for the wider audience or would take too long to contextualise. This is, of course, not normally transparent to the viewer, since the voice-over either replaces the original sound completely or is spoken over it to make the original incomprehensible. In the latter case, we occasionally get moments where the voice-over pauses and we return for a few seconds to the original. This allows us brief glimpses of such editorial manoeuvres. One typical example on 12 November 1996 comes from a report originating from Finnish TV on the first entry to the European Parliament of new MEP, Marjo Matikainen-Kallström. To a Finnish viewer, she is best known as a famous cross-country skier, but this is not a piece of information which EuroNews feels it needs to relay to its viewers and they don't. They therefore omit to dub that part of her interview where in one such pause in the voice-over she is heard to say (in Finnish): 'I hope that I will still find time to ski'.⁶ Though insignificant on its own, it is precisely the editing out of such local, mutually shared, often more personal detail which makes much of EN's reporting seem rather flat and colourless.

Flagging Europe

Instead of the subtle confirmation of national identity by the discursive means of relational deixis, EN needs to fervently wave its European flag. Unsurprisingly, the word 'Europe' itself becomes a high-frequency noun.

Below are examples from some of the previews for programme types on EN which hardly need further explication. We have highlighted the relevant phrases through italics:

- Preview for morning news bulletins
Monday to Friday from six to nine. The latest news on *EuroNews* Every 15 minutes. All you need to know on the *top European* and international stories of the news, business and finance or sport and a look at the weather throughout the continent. Every morning from six to nine, all the news in 15 minutes.

- Preview for news bulletins in general
If it matters, if it's *European*, if you need to know, it's on EuroNews, every day in every news bulletin. EuroNews.
- Preview for *EuroPa* magazine
Das vereinte *Europa* im Aufbau? Was tut sich in Brüssel oder Straßburg? Welche Konsequenzen hat das für den Bürger? *Europa* macht die *europäische* Union für Sie transparent.
(The construction of a united *Europe*? What's going on in Brussels or Strasbourg? What are the consequences for its citizens? *EuroPa* makes the EU transparent for you.)
- Preview for programme *Perspectives*
What's making people talk *across Europe*. The big story in Spain, the headlines in Belgium or Italy. Every week *Perspectives* takes a look around the continent with reports of national news from national TV channels. Get a new perspective on what's making headlines in *Europe*. Watch EuroNews every Wednesday and Thursday (final shot of logos of different European national channels).
- Preview for *Euro Zoom*
Every week *Euro Zoom* turns the television cameras of *Europe* on the world's hottest stories; the future for *Europe*, social conflict, war or terrorism; how does Italian TV see politics in Belgium; how does France cover strikes in Spain. Every week, for a *European* focus on an international news: *Euro Zoom*.
- Preview for *Economia*
On EuroNews *Economia* means business. For the events shaping *Europe's* economies, investment trends, the currency and stock markets, watch *Economia*. *Economia*, each weekday on EuroNews.
- Preview for *Style*
Slip into *Style* on EuroNews, street cred in London, haute couture à Paris. The look, the lines, the label. The latest in fashion and design from the creative capitals in the world. Get hip. Watch *Style* every week on EuroNews.

The references to Europe and its nations in these previews are not without paradox. The status of the word wavers ambivalently and fuzzily between a collective or a single-referent noun. On the one hand, there are, indeed, different perspectives and different foci – headlines in different countries, London or Paris, etc. Here Europe is a collective noun for different nations; but at the same time there is a unified European focus, there are people who talk across Europe, there are European news, and a European continent which includes the British Isles rather than referring to that part of Europe which is across the Channel – as is common in British usage. But, whereas the centre of Europe is European Union territory, there is also a periphery which EN takes note of by regularly transmitting magazines from the fringe. Again, the previews give an indication of how we are to construct the European space in relation to its neighbours.

- Preview for *Mediterraneo* (Sunday 8.15 p.m.)
Every week EuroNews builds a bridge across the Mediterranean sea. From Algeiras to Istanbul, from Tripoli to Trieste, politics, art, religion, history, different worlds with much in common. Every week the people of the *mare nostrum* meet on *Mediterraneo*.
- Preview for *90 Degrees East*
Watch *90 Degrees East* for a closer look at the changing face of Eastern Europe. Each week feature stories from Europe's new democracies on *90 Degrees East*: the faces as well as the facts.
- Preview for *Alpe Adria*
Explore the region from the Adriatic to the Alps via the Danube on *Alpe Adria*, a shared heritage from Slovenia to Austria, Hungary to Northern Italy – each week on EuroNews.

These previews are accompanied by visuals which are indicative of the type of items we are to expect. Interestingly a previous set of sequences for those three magazine programmes showed for *90 Degrees East* scenes of political struggle and violence and, for *Alpe Adria* and *Mediterraneo*, serene landscapes and beautiful buildings. The visuals for *Mediterraneo* and *90 Degrees East* have since been replaced by others which are less blatant in the stereotyping of the beautiful South versus the warring East. By the time of printing it is to be assumed that further changes will have been made.

Constructing culture out of cultures

Let us now turn to the programming of EN to see how EN hopes to succeed in its project of constructing a joint European political, economic and artistic culture. Most of the examples come from the reporting of one typical day, 12 November 1996, when we videotaped the whole day's programme, though the points made are valid for the channel's programming in general.

CONSTRUCTING A JOINT POLITICAL CULTURE

Unsurprisingly, given its close relationship to the European Union and the financial support it receives from it, EN places a great deal of emphasis on European institutions such as the European Parliament and the European Court. New Euro MPs may be interviewed on their experience of entering the Parliament for the first time; the working of sub-committees, parliamentary procedures and decisions are shown, spokespersons are interviewed, etc. Rulings in the European Court tend to get covered as long as they are treated as significant by one of the member countries, even if such an item is treated as entirely irrelevant by the other nations' media. For example, on 12 November 1996, the European Court rejected a British complaint against a piece of European health legislation (the 48-hour working week directive). This ruling was reported live and in great detail on BBC, ITV and Sky News. The German round-the-clock

news channel n.tv, on the other hand, did not even mention this event, nor did the French channel TV5. EN, by contrast, treated it as a lead item, showing the same footage as the BBC, including the response from the British Prime Minister of that time, John Major, to this ruling.

CONSTRUCTING A JOINT HISTORY

Items are shown which often stress a common past or a shared heritage. On 12 November, this included an arousing report from a reunion of Spanish Civil War veterans in Barcelona, accompanied by documentary footage from the 1930s. The voice-over celebrated their struggle as the victory of democracy – i.e. the modern, enlightened European values – against the dark European past of Fascism of Franco's Spain, Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. The documentary black-and-white footage from the fighting against general and future dictator Franco in this item made an intriguing contrast to the 1950s footage shown in another item on the same day, which was lifted from TVE for the *Media* magazine, of the 40th anniversary of its founding as the first Spanish television channel. Here, Franco the statesman is shown to receive foreign visitors, politicians and diplomats from Europe as well as US President Eisenhower, a poignant reminder of how Europe accommodated to Franco's long regime.

CONSTRUCTING A JOINT COMMUNICATION CULTURE

The magazine programme *Media* regularly reports on what happens in the different European media industries. Apart from the quoted report about TVE's anniversary, there were items on the founding of a new Gaelic channel. Occasionally there are reports about non-European issues provided through by one of the European television channels. On 12 November, this included a report about how mentally disturbed patients were allowed to make their own films in Brazil.

CONSTRUCTING THE EUROPEAN WORKPLACE

EN reports regularly such obvious business news as the values of shares, currencies, gold, etc. Whereas national channels give preference to showing the comparative values to their own national currencies, EN has three anchor points for its currency lists, the US dollar, the Deutschmark and, of course, the ECU. The ordering of the templates clearly separate 'first-, second- and third-division' leagues of currencies. The first template in each of the three comparative sequences shows the relations between the US dollar, the Deutschmark or the ECU in relation to the ECU, Deutschmark, dollar and Japanese yen. The second template in each series shows the currencies of the UK, France, Italy and Spain against the three anchor currencies, and the third template shows the rest: Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Finland, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Switzerland and Sweden. For the European

financial market, the deictic centres are thus as much global (inclusion of the US dollar and the yen) as they are European (Deutschmark and ECU).

More interesting than these currency figures are the many comparative statistics which are regularly shown, especially on the magazine programme *Label Europe*.

Below is an extract from 12 November 1996, which shows how EuroNews tries to construct the nation-states of Europe as regions of the larger unit of a continent or a Union:

And now for this week's summary of the employment situation in Europe compiled by EuroNews and Eurostat. The most recent statistics show over the summer an increase in unemployment amongst women in Finland and a fall in Denmark and Sweden. These findings also reflect the overall tendencies in each country. The more one heads towards the south of the continent the higher the unemployment rate is amongst women. But even in the North there are equally surprising contrasts. In the United Kingdom women are less affected by unemployment than men, whereas in Belgium it is very much the opposite. A further contrast can be seen in the south of the Union, where in Portugal women are more affected by unemployment, but only moderately as in Germany, while in Spain the inequality is quite blatant.

An item which combines both comparison of employment in European countries and the advantage of European mobility can be seen in the following item about a Spanish doctor working as a trainee surgeon in a Luton hospital (UK).

Dr Jon Mikel Echevarrieta
[dubbed into English]:

I had a friend who'd been in the UK for five years learning how to become a surgeon. So when I decided I wanted to become a surgeon, I called him and he told me what I had to do. Then I came here.

Voice-over: Jon's case shows that there is scope for exchanges between Europeans. Countries like Germany or Spain turn out more doctors than they need, while the UK doesn't have enough. So here's a portrait of a Spanish doctor who crossed the channel.

This film was originally made in Spanish, but included sequences of his speaking to patients and nurses in English. When played back on the English soundtrack, we hear bits of the Spanish soundtrack dubbed from the original English exchanges, but now voiced-over in English – an electronic version of a multiple vocal palimpsest.

But not only surgeons profit from European mobility. EN tracks down any number of situations where Europe can be celebrated for the advantages it bestows on its citizens. The (popular) art magazine *Oddéon* of that day shows a

sequence 'filming in progress' with the British pop duo the Pet Shop Boys, who give the interviewer all they could possibly have hoped for in Euro-celebration, though this celebration of Stansted Airport as an emblem of the new Britain in Europe sounds somewhat tongue-in-cheek.

Voice-over: Filming in Progress in London for the Pet Shop Boys' new album *Single Bilingual*. Still integrating the Latin influences they picked up from their South-American tour, the Boys are now looking to Europe.

(Videoclip/original sound)

Pet Shop Boys: Well, the song, which is called *Single Bilingual*, is sort of a funny song about the British Euro businessman travelling to Europe; he loves all the perks and is showing off and so we thought of Stansted Airport – you see, an airport is mentioned in the song; and it's got that kind of modern British look. I think it's rather a beautiful building, really, and it's just got the right kind of modern European feel for the song.

Well, we always try to write songs that are about what's happening around us, whether it's our personal lives or, you know, public life, life in general, and it's a big issue in Britain, isn't it, Europe, and we like actually the fact that Britain is part of Europe and that we're Europeans, and you know in my life, things have changed so much, and really you feel nowadays that we are part of Europe, and so I thought it would be nice to have a song where the lyrics kind of dealt with that in an amusing kind of way.

Voice-over: So there's an airport business dance sequence in the clip. Who said business can't be fun?

Other typical concerns of EN are comparative programmes about advertising regulations (here about the different European laws about advertising cigarettes and alcohol), about the labelling of household products, etc. These are items independently produced by EuroNews, often with the support of European Commissions such as the Directorate General for Consumer Policy of the European Commission.

CONSTRUCTING THE EUROPEAN CONSUMER

Apart from informative programmes directed at a European consumer with an interest in safety or wider ecological concerns, EN also has its own TV market with telesales of products to be ordered by phone or fax. These ads copy the styles of the Shopping Channel rather than that of the more glossy commercials known from other commercial television channels. The objects for sale are usually gadgets which get described and shown in action in great detail and for several minutes – such as machines for training stomach muscles or special

slimming stockings, ladders that fold in amazing directions, silver-cleaning equipment that works in seconds or a special stick for removing unwanted fibres from furniture or clothing. Often the origin of these ads is American rather than European, a fact which is more obvious to the listeners of the English soundtrack who get their version spoken with an American accent rather than voiced over in one of the other languages. We will have more to say about the language of such ads in our discussion of the Shopping Channel. Important for us here is the way that potential shoppers are invited to locate their 'tele-shop'. At the end of each commercial, national flags are displayed, sometimes with an additional name or abbreviation of the respective country. Buyers are asked to find their local – which here means national – phone/fax number by locating their respective national flag. This use of a national flag is quite different from the function which Billig ascribes to national flags in his book – namely that of subconsciously confirming national identity in everyday life (Billig 1995). Here their function is similar to an area code, a purely indexical guide to the nearest shop.

Constructing a joint artistic culture

Of all the programming on EN, those that deal with art seem least self-conscious in their insistence on Europeanness. When EN simply lists major exhibitions and events in Europe, as in *Agenda* and *Affiches*, this is easily accommodated as the kind of information travel agencies supply for the Eurotourist. When EN reports from major artistic events anywhere in Europe, as in *Artissimo* – the arts, especially music (popular or classical), opera, ballet and the visual arts travel easily and can be assured of their respective Europe-wide audience segments. When *Odéon* transmits the Spice Girls' newest song, the shared interest can be taken for granted, since they will have hit the top of the charts in most European countries anyway, though even here the self-conscious Euro-construction of EN is never far away, as was shown in the interview with the Pet Shop Boys. And items such as the report on *Artissimo* of a Poetry Festival in London's Covent Garden hardly received notice anywhere in the British media.

But where art is concerned – high art or popular culture – EN's Europe seems less of an artificial construct than in all the other features it carries. Here EN can draw on a shared interest among different taste publics which pre-exist the deliberate construction of Europe through EU regulations and policy making, though they are undoubtedly strengthened by the greater accessibility of artistic events through mass tourism and the media. This development will be touched upon in Chapter 5, concerned with 'narrowcasting' – local audiences and taste segments. The European arts channel ARTE will be considered more extensively in Part III, which is concerned with the 'quality' issue.

5 Narrowcasting

One speculation about the future of television is that the metaphor of 'broadcasting' will become an inappropriate one. There will be less programming constructed for the general, national audience. With more available channels, TV broadcasting will become more specialised and the need for programmes accessible and enjoyable across wide differences of social background will become less of a constraint. Social background here covers class, ethnicity, gender, taste, interest, educational level, intellectual level and geographical location. Viewed positively, this development would point towards a TV distribution system more like that of printed periodicals. Viewers won't have to waste time on things that don't interest them or which take them out of their depth. Viewed negatively, it points towards a culture where television's contribution to the social cohesion of the national community is reduced by comparison with the past.

So-called 'narrowcasting' has already arrived, in the sense that there now exist channels dedicated to particular types of programming – sports channels, arts channels, comedy channels, news channels – as well as channels designed to reach a local population rather than the country as a whole. To be sure, such programming still constitutes mass communication in the sense that it goes out to large and anonymous viewing audiences. And television as such is still diverse – the diversity previously seen as the responsibility of a single channel can now be spread across a range of channels. The mixed programming channels themselves show no sign of disappearing, notwithstanding current anxieties about 'dumbing down'.

A further aspect of this diversity is the specifically spatial aspect. Channels with geographically distinctive remits coexist in the multi-channel environment. That environment includes not only EuroNews, with its supra-national audience, and the traditional channels like BBC 1 and ARD with their national audiences, but also channels with a local, sub-national audience such as *mdr*, *Liverpool Live* and *Channel One*, as well as trans-national niche audiences like ARTE (see Chapter 8). To describe the range in these terms is to underline the extent to which the range confirms a highly stable cultural geography. The hierarchical structure is simple and easily understood: Europe – nations – localities. The middle level of the hierarchy remains the dominant level. On the face of