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Summary of the Master's thesis

Singing Europe

**Historical, political and sociological approach to the
Eurovision Song Contest
(1956-2022)**

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1. Introduction

It is a Saturday evening in May, like so many others. Yet when the first notes of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *Te Deum* resound, millions of people behind their screens or on the edge of the stage start to imagine what their evening will be like: it is the start of the Grand Final of the Eurovision Song Contest.

On the air for more than 60 years, the Eurovision Song Contest, or known by different linguistic variants such as “Concours Eurovision de la chanson” in French, or simply “Festival” in Italian, is an annual European singing competition. Each year, dozens of countries, 40 in 2022, send their representatives to try to win the competition. In 2022, Eurovision was won by Ukraine.

Its long history and the many people involved in the competition: artists, national delegations (responsible for representing their country, organising their representative's participation and supervising the people involved), audiences, fans and organisers from all walks of life, show that Eurovision has become a real institution that leaves no one indifferent, everyone has their own opinion, good or bad.

This Master's thesis presents Eurovision both as an object of study (facts, analyses, demonstrations, information and communications), based on bibliographical and scientific research, and as a personal experience (their feelings, their affect, their experience and their life), based on a set of results collected from passionate people.

These different points of view and analyses make it possible to take a historical, political and sociological approach to Eurovision and to highlight its evolution, its ability to adapt and reinvent itself. However, it is interesting to ask whether all these “updates” of the Contest still make sense today and whether its presence and reputation as a large-scale event are still justified. Thus, this research question is obvious: does the Eurovision Song Contest still have a reason to exist?

2. Presentation of Eurovision in literature

The Eurovision Song Contest, “ESC”, simply “Eurovision” or “Concours Eurovision de la chanson” in French is an annual singing competition organised by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and broadcast live and simultaneously throughout Europe. Since its creation in 1956 by Marcel Bezençon, European broadcasters (TV channel, media group), members of the EBU, select a representative and send him or her to compete for their country with the hope of winning (Vuletic, 2018).

Its 60 years of existence, marked by historical and political developments, its ability to reinvent and update itself, as well as technological and musical developments in Europe, have turned it into the “world’s biggest music and television event” followed today by several hundred million people, on TV, radio, live on stage or streaming (West, 2020).

2.1. What is its origin?

The term “Eurovision” originally referred to the “Eurovision network”, in charge of broadcasting live and simultaneous programmes. It was later used by George Campey, an English journalist, to describe, among others, the ESC (Richard & Clapison & Tanner, 2017).

The Contest has technical origins: it is a visual experiment to test live and transnational simulcasting (Vuletic, 2019; EBU, 2022). Despite this, these technical origins are obscured in favour of ideological origins of European unification and post-war European reconstruction which are, in the eyes of many viewers, real “founding myths” of Eurovision (Baker, 2019).

2.2. What is its history?

The ESC has a rich history, going back several decades. It can be divided into two notable periods: before 1989, the Cold War and participation in the Contest limited to Western countries; and after 1989, the political unification of Europe and the expansion of Eurovision participating countries to Eastern Europe (Vuletic, 2019). The 1990s marked a turning point in the meaning of the Contest, which became a tool of the “cultural diplomacy of East European states in order to express their aspirations for European integration” (Cordis, 2015).

2.3. What are its rules? What organisation do they create?

The Eurovision has many rules for everyone, artists or national broadcasters. These rules are updated, and in some cases changed, every year for the next edition, following the principle of adaptability of the Contest (West, 2020). However, the original philosophy of the singing competition has remained unchanged since 1956 (Haan & Dijkstra, 2005).

The number of participating broadcasters is also fixed in the rules. Any channel or media group which is a member of the EBU and is entitled to compete may send one participant to represent its country, up to a limit of one musical performance per country (EBU, 2022).

Many rules govern the performances and songs: maximum number of people on stage per performance, one original song sung live per country with a soundtrack, three minutes per song, choice of language by the performer.

The organisation of such a large-scale show must be particularly meticulous. The running order drawn at random, the days of broadcast, the duration of the events, the location of each edition

of the ESC, the selection of presenters and commentators and the gradual introduction of semi-finals, everything is carefully thought out.

The voting process, a key element of the Contest, changes to adapt, for example, to the technology or the number of countries (Richard & Clapisson & Tanner, 2017; EBU, 2022): live voting, selection in case of a tie, allocation of points, regulation of televoting (public voting) and national juries

According to the 2023 rules, the values of Eurovision are: “universality, diversity, equality and inclusivity and proud tradition of celebrating diversity through music” (EBU, 2022). This reminds of the European Union's motto “United in diversity”. This diversity of music, genre or language, or in terms of geography, can be found at Eurovision and transcends borders (Shutterstock, 2022; Raykoff, 2020). The last value displayed is that of a non-political Eurovision. Even if the EBU does not deviate from this position, the “political denial” (Jackson, 2017) is seen as evident and the Contest as a political platform that provides a form of European integration (Jackson, 2017; Yair & Ozeri, 2022).

2.4. Who are its participants?

The EBU is a non-political institution which is not dependent on European governance. This makes it possible to integrate countries that are both non-European and not politically aligned with European bodies. The inclusion of most of the participating countries is, however, rooted in European history.

The world's musical genres and their evolution are present in those played at Eurovision (Shutterstock, 2022). Today, the place of music in Eurovision and its cosmopolitan aspect, which echoes its audience, show that it is a major element of success in the Contest.

2.5. In what way is Eurovision a “cultural”¹ and social phenomenon?

As a cultural and social phenomenon, Eurovision creates a real buzz among its viewers:

- positive buzz, it provides elation and emotion during performances or votes (Pajala, 2013).
- in various forms: individual, collective (shared by a whole country, especially the northern countries), linked to a desire to emphasise its belonging to Europe (Zaroulia, 2013; Natali, 2022).

¹ - Term taken from Dubin Adam, Vuletic Dean, Obregón Antonio dir. (2022), *The Eurovision Song Contest as a Cultural Phenomenon, from Concert Halls to the Halls of Academia*, London, Routledge, 290 p. Based on the academic literature of the last twenty years, this collective work proposes an interdisciplinary and academic approach to Eurovision as a cultural phenomenon.

- fluctuating or even negative buzz, especially within Western countries, treated as “corny”, “kitsch” and strongly decried as an out-of-this-world event, covered in glitter, or even as ridiculous or predictable (Orcier, 2009).

As an international media event, this cultural and social phenomenon stands as an advocate for LGBT people. Some even refer to it as the “Gay Olympic”, due to the importance of the representation (Baker, 2017). The visibility of LGBT people, and even of European citizens who feel marginalised, has also invaded some of the performances that combine stage performance and social concern since the 2010s, and sometimes brings about a change of mentality within a population (Carniel, 2015; Lemish, 2004).

Its adaptability, perceptible in the technology of television and the media environment in which it evolves, is also a factor in the longevity of ESC (Pajala, 2022): colour television, wireless microphones, broadcasting on social networks (YouTube, Twitch and TikTok in 2022) and fan reaction on Instagram and Twitter (Then24, 2022), etc. The very heart of the phenomenon's longevity lies in its spectators and in particular in its fans, known as eurofans, for whom Eurovision is a cosmopolitan and diverse meeting place, enjoyed by all.

Eurovision's success as a cultural and social phenomenon is illustrated by its expansion, as a brand, into many other Eurovision competitions (Radio France, 2015) but also exported to the United States (“American Song Contest”).

2.6. Why is the Eurovision Song Contest a controversial phenomenon?

Organising a large-scale event requires making choices or compromises, which inevitably creates dissatisfaction, and the ESC is no exception.

One of the first criticisms made is that of the uniformity of the performances and in particular a loss of originality and diversity, as regards the “constructed” music (Güvenik, 2020), the musical genre, the songs turn around two single musical genres: ballads or pop songs (Shutterstock, 2022). The language of performance is also criticised. English is heavily used by the participants, which reflects a form of cultural impoverishment; this “linguistic domination” leads to a loss of linguistic and cultural diversity (Bruckert & Beaune, 2022), due to the rule of free choice of language that has placed English at the helm of the Competition (Rojo, 2020).

The politicisation of the Competition is also a highly controversial issue. Although the EBU claims that Eurovision is not political, politics still manages to infiltrate the Contest (Yair & Ozeri, 2022) through the use of national identity (Fontaine, 2022) as a staging tool to:

- present a good image of a country, and sometimes to “restore” its image if its reputation is bad internationally (Baker, 2008; Baker, 2019 ;Vuletic, 2018).

- legitimise a membership in Eurovision, and by extension in Europe, with which they share or claim to share common values (Press-Barnathan & Lutz, 2020; Shields, 2020).
- promote feelings of national pride and self-identification with one's country, and by extension to revive a form of nationalism (Andjelić, 2015).

Europe as presented at Eurovision is a Europe that does not exist. No, it is not a gathering of countries with a common past that have managed to overcome their conflicts through musical performances that tell the story of Europe's history, present and future (Venon, 2007; Wellings & Kalman, 2019). This positive and candid representation of Europe where all Europeans are linked by a shared national and European identity, by values such as respect and acceptance of other people's identities or respect for human rights, freedom of expression and democracy is wishful thinking (West, 2020; Alessandrini, 2015). The reality is quite different, and some participating countries are even very far from it: the EBU has moreover been strongly criticised and condemned by international organisations for having allowed Azerbaijan, known for its non-respect of these fundamental rights, to compete in Eurovision and to host the 2012 edition in its capital (Richard & Clapisson & Tanner, 2017). However, such controversies can help to bring issues such as human rights to the forefront of public attention as participation and membership in Eurovision can be a sign of dialogue with the authorities and a boost in the evolution of a society through the cultural dissemination of the Contest (Ismayilov, 2012; Güvenik, 2020), thanks to the soft power provided by the ESC (Bruckert & Beaune, 2022).

The voting system, imperfect and partial, is also strongly decried as “biased”, whether it be at the level of its actors, juries or public (Gustar, 2021), or of the “legendary” East/West divide which perpetuates the idea of political bias in the votes. But the origin of the bias can be quite different: social and cultural, when it results from the cultural and linguistic proximity of the singers and voters, particularly from the East (Ginsburgh & Noury, 2005; Ginsburgh & Noury, 2008); geographical and cultural, when it is based on connections (geographical or ethnic border) between groups of countries (Gustar, 2021); familiar (familiarity bias), when it is advantageous to certain singers who are highly publicised in the eyes of the audience (Verrier, 2012). However, the most discussed theory is that of geopolitics, “we vote for our neighbour” (Gustar, 2021) in which the number and organisation of association blocks between voting countries is studied.

2.7. As a conclusion: some figures!

The ESC does not leave anyone indifferent: it is a dizzying spectacle. In addition to having a record number of editions in the Guinness Book of Records, it has exceptional statistics for 2022 (although lower than 2021 due to the absence of Ukrainian and Russian audiences because

of the current situation between these two countries): 201 million viewers watched or participated in the contest on their television or YouTube or social networks.

More incredibly, the Contest has held 66 editions since 1956 and a special edition in 2020 (to replace the edition cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic), a total of 1,644 performances since its creation, in 60 languages, including Latin. Almost 52 countries have participated at least once. Finally, it should be noted that in 2022, 45 years have passed since the last French victory in 1977, with Marie Myriam and her song *L'Oiseau et l'enfant* (EBU, 2022).

3. Research methods

In order to complete the information found in the scientific literature on the Eurovision Song Contest, it was decided to conduct interviews. Through my knowledge and research, I identified different types of profiles that I wanted to interview. This process was carried out in different stages.

3.1. Identification of interviewees

First of all, the search for interviewees. In order to get as complete an overview as possible of the Eurovision Song Contest and its evolution since its creation, it was necessary to include both people with an overall view and people with a more specific experience and view. After several contacts by email or social networks (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) with people involved in Eurovision and some refusals and lack of response, I was lucky enough to have been able to interview two people with a different point of view, both internal and more external, who matched the profiles I was looking for: Marie Myriam, the last French winner of Eurovision in 1977, and Dean Vuletic, an academic expert on Eurovision.

In order to interview fans, whose views are very important for the study of Eurovision and its current form, I created an online questionnaire and sent it to three types of fans: the OGAE (abbreviation from French, “Organisations Générales des Amateurs de l’Eurovision” or “General Organisation of Eurovision Fans”), a group of Erasmus students and Eurovision news websites. This kind of tool makes it possible for interested people to respond according to their availability.

Once the participants in the different surveys had been identified, the different questionnaires had to be constructed. This stage was carried out in two steps.

- 1. determining the type and form of the interviews and questionnaire: the interviews with Marie Myriam and Dean Vuletic, carried out “face to face” remotely, were conducted in the form of a semi-directive interview as formulated by Gibson & Hua (2016).

Several types of questions were used in the online questionnaire, single choice, multiple choice, scale and open-ended questions.

- 2. constructing and organising the questions: For the face-to-face interviews, two grids were created in order to adapt the questions to the profile of the respondents (some questions were also constructed directly during the interviews): an opening question, two series of questions adapted to the profile of the interviewee (participation / victory and musical environment / perception of the Contest in France for Marie Myriam and construction / sustainability of Eurovision and advantages of participation for Dean Vuletic), a serie of questions common to both interviewees on the evolution of Eurovision in parallel with society and its relationship with the politics of European countries, a question on the future of the event and an open question.

Note that French was used for the interview with Marie Myriam and English for the interview with Dean Vuletic. Both interviews took place on 14 June 2022, at distance by phone or via Microsoft Teams

An online questionnaire, entitled “Europe, ready, steady, go!”, was created in English only. The questionnaire included a first page presenting the questionnaire with an anonymous consent for data dissemination (mandatory to access the rest of the questionnaire), a section about the respondents' profile, a section about the study of the fans' habits and tastes in their “consumption” of Eurovision, a section about their opinions on various aspects of the Contest such as politics, culture, organisation, and a free section to complete their answers and add possible elements. The questionnaire was created with the Google Forms tool and was online from 11th June to 10th July 2022. A total of 805 people responded.

3.2. Data analysis

All respondents were informed about the data processing (recording, transcription, storage of the Master's thesis, etc.) and all gave their consent to use the data.

The processing of the interview data was carried out in four phases:

- “field notes”, according to Gibson & Hua (2016), translated as “contexte” in French, to present the context of the interview and to make an initial content analysis directly after the interview: major themes, strong and weak points, possible research paths.
- a thematic analysis (in the form of a table divided into four columns for each interview: “time”, “subjects”, “themes” and “remarks/interpretations”) to deal effectively with the themes raised throughout the interviews, useful for analysing the results and comparing the various responses.
- a transcription phase carried out using the GAT2 system to study the interviewees' comments and integrate them into the results.

- finally, the presentation of the interviews in the form of written interviews to offer a fluid reading and translation (in English for Marie Myriam and in French for Dean Vuletic) of the interviewees' words and identical access to both contents, in both languages.

The online questionnaire was analysed question by question. The rich contents of the open-ended or “Other” questions required the use of keywords to index each of the responses, which were grouped and analysed thematically during the analysis.

4. Portrait of Eurovision in the results

The aim of this qualitative research is to paint a portrait of Eurovision from a personal, intimate and pragmatic point of view through the comments and opinions expressed in the interviews and the answers to the online questionnaire. The aim is to give an overview of the current situation of the Contest and the strengths and weaknesses that reflect its evolution.

4.1. Eurovision, an apolitical or non-political institution?

The EBU, which organises the ESC, is non-political, in the sense that it treats all member countries equally and deliberately acts in a non-political way. In theory, therefore, it would be obvious to assume that the Eurovision Song Contest follows this orientation. So why is the Contest so criticised for certain actions defined as political? There are two reasons for this interpretation: the votes and the case of certain countries.

Eurovision and politics are linked, many examples show an image of a “politicised contest”. This is an observation shared by all respondents and interviewees. The show is only a reflection of the political society, made up of the various opinions that make up the political streams in each country. The ESC is also political in its decisions taken mainly to defend its values, support the “good” policies and guarantee peace, even if it means excluding countries from the competition, such as Russia in 2022.

For many (87% of fans in the online questionnaire), voting is geopolitical and has been for a very long time. Many use the expression “vote for the neighbour” or talk about cheating (“the winners are known in advance”), unfairness or bias. The impression is accentuated by the introduction of televoting, which introduces the public vote, an “emotional vote”. The public votes with its feelings. Ukraine's victory in 2022 is an example of this. However, nothing in the organisation or processing of the votes suggests any political problem. The votes, as a system for electing a winner, are not a priori political: it is the choice of the juries or the public to vote for this or that country that makes the votes political, whatever the reasons.

A country's participation in Eurovision can have political objectives, such as promoting a good image of a country internationally. So, it may seem that Eurovision generates change in a country. But this is not always the case. The presence of some countries at Eurovision can be seen as a bad political decision: Azerbaijan, Israel, Russia and Australia are the most cited examples.

Fans, in particular, are annoyed by the presence of politics in Eurovision, which represents a real loss of the values of unity and peace, and the persistent predominance of political issues over music.

In fact, the Contest is non-political because it is organised by a non-political and non-governmental institution (the EBU) and political because it is politicised by all its components: the public, depending on what is happening in Europe or in the world; the singers and delegations, depending on the messages they wish to convey; and the organisers, without making it official, in order to defend the balance and the smooth running of the Contest.

4.2. Eurovision, belonging to a community

The ESC is a spectacle that includes many profiles, not only in terms of nationalities, but also in terms of communities. Some people have made Eurovision their own; others use the contest as a reflection of European society, which is also very diverse; others may find personal fulfilment in participating and belonging to a group. But what is the Eurovision community?

There are three communities that are particularly present and active in Eurovision:

- the LGBT community. The Contest is a useful event to meet other LGBT people as it offers a good representation of this community. Marie Myriam points out that they are a “loyal, benevolent and open-minded” community. However, some fans criticise the over-representation of this community.
- the fan community, or eurofans. They are all linked by their affection, even passion, for Eurovision, and some are even members of an exclusively Eurovision organisation: the OGAE. To sum up their response to the online survey, to be a eurofan is to be part of a group that shares the same interests, even the same values, to be a Eurovision freak. However, this community, too, is decried. Some fans, especially on social networks, are described as aggressive, haughty, hateful, toxic, even fanatical.
- the community of national audiences. Dean Vuletic explains the importance of this very diverse community, which has enabled Eurovision to go through its history without losing its overall popularity, despite ups and downs depending on the national context, thanks in particular to the great diversity of opinion among European audiences.

There are also criticisms within these communities, which form the basis of Eurovision's audience and popularity.

There are few events that truly bring Europeans together, which makes Eurovision unique. This raises the question of the existence of a European identity and community in a Eurovision that is a true European or even Europeanist symbol reflecting society. A total of 82% of fans feel European, some even adding that they watch Eurovision to feel part of the wider European community, and strongly agree that Eurovision is a symbol of the diversity of European society. Finally, in addition to offering the opportunity to be a member of a community and to share a sense of European belonging, Eurovision represents, for some, a means of personal fulfilment, of being at ease with himself or herself, of being free and of filling one's life with that particular, shared passion in a community for personal fulfilment.

It might seem that liking Eurovision is the only reason for joining this group, but Dean Vuletic's words are more nuanced: “people love to talk about Eurovision, whether they love it or hate it”. Thus, the simple condition of “liking Eurovision” is not enough to become a member of the Eurovision community, and in view of the data studied, one thing is clear: the Eurovision community is made up of people with a European sensibility, united simply around a cultural concept, human values, and a large-scale show, unique in its kind ... the Eurovision.

4.3. Eurovision, an exceptional show

The essence of Eurovision is that it is a television show. As such, it has its own rules, but it also incorporates more common aspects of show organisation; as a major European programme, it has been a source of inspiration for other entertainment. But how has this unique show evolved into its current form?

Public opinion and general opinion are that Eurovision was created to reunite a Europe scarred by two world wars. Dean Vuletic is very clear on this point: this is not the case! Eurovision was created for technical reasons, to test the first large-scale simultaneous television broadcasting technologies. The form of a singing contest was a way of attracting viewers. Technological development, and in particular the development of television technology, is an important theme of the competition, the most obvious example being the replacement of the orchestra by soundtracks in the late 1990s. Both interviewees and some fans are in favour of a return of the orchestra. Another example of technological development is the use of social media by fans. Many follow Eurovision in the media. So, if technology invented Eurovision, its developments have largely ensured its continued existence.

The show that is Eurovision enjoys a reputation that can be described as mixed. At the country level, Marie Myriam, as the last French winner, explains the unfavourable viewpoint of the French, who consider it to be corny in the majority of cases (which is far from being the opinion of the fans questioned): it is impossible to win, there is no point in watching the Contest! On

the other hand, she explains that the northern countries and Israel take Eurovision very seriously. Winning is a real objective that allows to gather and galvanize a whole population behind its representative. This popularity can be explained by the fact that music is part of the cultural diplomacy of countries and can contribute to their international influence within the framework of a European singing competition. It has been so successful that other shows have been inspired by its functioning, such as the American Song Contest, an American adaptation of the Eurovision Song Contest, which many people criticise. According to Dean Vuletic, the aim of Australia's participation is to export an experience of the European contest to help launch an Asian edition.

As in any competition, there are rules to ensure that the competition runs smoothly. At Eurovision, these rules mainly regulate the songs and the votes, in case of a tie for example, in order to guarantee equality between all the candidates: all have 3 minutes to shine on stage and the same number of points to distribute during the votes regardless of the size or weight of the country. Despite the fact that Eurovision is evolving and reinventing itself, some people still feel that the rules are unfair or unjust against the principle of equality advocated by the contest, BigFive being a particular target.

Eurovision is a series of events: Final, semi-finals, national selections, news to follow throughout the year, etc. Many fans are very assiduous, some following absolutely everything about Eurovision. However, the ESC remains a controversial subject. While almost all fans are satisfied with the organisation of the Contest, the show in general and the scenography, others criticise the poor broadcasting of the event outside the borders of Europe and the non-inclusion of certain countries that meet the Eurovision admission criteria. Marie Myriam made other criticisms about the omnipresence of the show, which takes a “predominant place over the music”: the number of participants on stage, who should all be musicians instead of dancers. Indeed, without giving any figures, she specifies that the budget for the image is paradoxically greater than that allocated to the music, which is also criticised by the fans. But for an event whose primary ambitions are technological, is this really shocking?

From a simple singing competition that wanted to support the technological evolution of television with rules and organisation specific to a few countries, the ESC has become a European event with the objectives of music and peace, a large-scale event adapted in its organisation and rules to a larger number of participants. This has allowed the creation of a “Eurovision” brand that can be exported outside Europe, where music and competition are the keywords for an entire evening.

4.4. Eurovision, the mistreated predominance of music and songs

Music seems to remain the unavoidable element of the show in its sixty years of existence. However, some people criticise the standardisation of this music and the songs and criticise performances that are otherwise considered successful. Yet, music still seems to be a promotional tool, provided it pushes a good song to victory. But, in fact, can we still say that music is at the heart of Eurovision?

Proof of this importance is that all respondents and interviewees gave their opinion on music at Eurovision. The return of the orchestra in particular was very popular. There have been many turning points in the history of Eurovision with *Volare* in 1958, the group ABBA in 1974, Conchita Wurst in 2015 or Måneskin in 2021. So, the musical genre can make a good song.

But many fans criticise and point out a standardisation of the melody of the songs “without souls”, but in particular by a use of the English language which harms national identity, linguistic diversity, our “European treasure” according to Dean Vuletic, and standardises the Contest by trivialising a so-called American music. Many, including our two interviewees, would like to see more use of national or local languages in the future. However, performing in English may be a choice made by an artist to launch or develop their career internationally.

Because when it comes to launching a career, Eurovision can be a springboard. Marie Myriam confirms this by taking her own career as an example: Eurovision gave her everything, a name, recognition, and this is still the case for artists, singers, musicians, composers... who have the ambition to launch their career. The ambition of a country or a national broadcaster can also come into play: they take advantage of Eurovision to spread a certain image of their national culture. However, on this question, the sample of fans analysed did not seem to be of the same opinion. Some said they did not identify with the song from their own country. Finally, it should be noted that the average score for the sense of national belonging is 5.97 out of 10 for the fans. In comparison, the average score for the sense of European belonging is 8.48 out of 10! These last elements of responses show that the presence of elements of a country's culture (language and cultural authenticity) are important in a Eurovision song, but are not enough to find the song that will win the hearts of the public and win Eurovision.

Finding THE good song remains the challenge and the main concern for artists who want to make a successful Eurovision entry. For Marie Myriam, a good song is first and foremost a good melody, but also the harmony between the singer, his or her voice, the text and the melody. Another factor in the composition of a good song is originality, and she cites her own song from 1977, the first eight bars of which are sung a cappella, but also the musical genre of her song, which was different from the other songs on offer. This double touch of originality brought her

victory. Emotion is also an important element of a good song. All these answers help to define the criteria of the songs preferred by Europeans at Eurovision: authenticity, originality, cultural elements including languages, message and diversity, but also voice, scenography and rhythm. Proof that music is at the centre of ESC: some fans said they follow Eurovision to be part of a community of music lovers and the Eurovision community united by music.

This research has made it possible, based on elements of feeling and experience, to draw a portrait of Eurovision around four themes: politics, communities, entertainment and music, as a whole, reflecting its reality and the emotion it can transmit. Of course, the ESC is undoubtedly political, and can be criticised on certain points, but it is also endowed with a powerful spirit of communities united around a large-scale European show that promotes, in a vast gathering, its values of diversity, union and peace, to the rhythm of its music and its songs.

5. Discussions

From the factual elements of the presentation of Eurovision in Part 2 to the personal reflections of the portrait of the Contest in Part 4, everything seems to describe the same reality. Researchers, journalists, commentators, fans and participants all have the same definition of Eurovision: a spectacular event that brings together millions of spectators in Europe, and even around the world, around music every year and that deserves its title of "the world's greatest musical event". They all agree that the value of diversity in all aspects of the Contest is evident, that politics takes up a lot of space, that the buzz, positive or negative, about Eurovision as a kitsch event is justified. All are aware of the same controversies: the votes, the uniformity of the performances in terms of language and music, the strongly criticised presence of certain countries.

However, differences of viewpoint are perceptible, especially regarding the LGBT community and its representation, national identity and its coexistence with European identity, the image of Europe in Eurovision and the votes.

5.1. The LGBT community

With regard to the LGBT community, the researchers in the Literature section are very interested in this community and emphasise that Eurovision provides a real framework for them to belong. The inclusion, diversity and unity promoted by Eurovision are key elements in explaining the participation of this community in the Contest. The results of the online questionnaire do not mention the positive presence of LGBT people and focus at most on the

'over-representation' of this community. This is not to say that it is not accepted, on the contrary, it is rather clear that its presence is a fact...

5.2. The National identity and its coexistence with European identity

National identity and its relationship with European identity remains another divergent element. For the interviewees and respondents to the online questionnaire, it is clear that national identity is important. However, the majority describe it as a proof of Europe's diversity. They therefore place this Europe and its principle of diversity above the different national identities. This is evidenced by the fact that the average given by respondents to the online questionnaire about their sense of belonging to Europe is 8.48/10, while the average given to nationalist feeling is 5.97/10. However, the answers are mostly valid for the time of the competition. Scientists and theorists of Eurovision have a different analysis of the place of national identity within Eurovision. Far from the feeling of belonging to Europe or the desire to be part of this great European community, three reasons can be formulated to explain a country's exposure to Eurovision: to make itself known and to take advantage of it, especially in the case of a small country, to develop its image internationally; to restore its image if its reputation needs to be repaired; to make propaganda for its own country and its own culture. To sum up this question of the national identity/European identity duo, it should be noted that the search for European identity, an individual search, is the act of fans who simply use their membership of a nation to enter Eurovision; whereas the position of the countries, a collective or institutional position, set out by researchers and scientists, is to be able to show, share and disseminate their national identity, according to various objectives, and to take advantage of the vast European audience offered by the Contest.

5.3. The Image of Europe in Eurovision

In order to echo this European identity present within the Contest, it is appropriate to look at the image of Europe in Eurovision. On the one hand, the reasoning of Eurovision scientists and researchers tends to show that the image of the Contest, where everyone is in harmony and respects each other, is pure fiction. On the other hand, the respondents to the interviews and the online questionnaire say that Eurovision enables them, for one evening at least, to experience a moment of peace and serenity through music and song; to discover Europe, its specificities, its cultures and its citizens. Two conceptions, therefore; one intimate, Eurovision presents a Europe desired by its spectators, the other analytical, the Contest only gives the illusion of a Europe of peace, guaranteeing security.

5.4. The votes

Votes are undoubtedly the most controversial and paradoxical subject of interpretation. For fans and interviewees reporting their feelings and experiences, the votes are unquestionably the most irritating and frustrating part of the competition. These geopolitical votes, between neighbours, would serve alliances. This climax of the competition is analysed differently by theorists of Eurovision who prefer to talk about blocks of countries that are not really geopolitical, but based on criteria of geographical, historical, cultural, linguistic or ethnic proximity, or even criteria of familiarity (proximity between an artist and his or her public).

5.5. The last word to the music.....

In this study, where the points of view of theory and experience oppose or complement each other, music remains the keyword. Whether we study it from a historical and scientific analysis point of view or feel it from a personal, emotional and passionate point of view, music has the same objective: to be listened to, quite simply.

6. Conclusion

The Eurovision Song Contest is undeniably the most important musical event in Europe, if not in the world. The analysis of the literature and the results of interviews and surveys prove this: origin, history, rules and organisation, participants, position as a social and cultural phenomenon, controversial; political showcase, gathering of communities, exceptional spectacle, predominance of music, Eurovision is all of these, whether the point of view is external, factual and analytical or internal, emotional and intimate.

Regarding the initial question of this work, it is possible to say that Eurovision is no longer of great interest. The criticisms of music, the discussed or even outdated hegemony, the strong presence of politics are perhaps signs of its slow decline towards deprogramming.

However, the Competition has advantages: longevity for more than six decades; heterogeneous artists, many diverse and successive audiences, eurofans. No matter the time, no matter the place, everyone has an interest in watching and participating in Eurovision: a person or community looking for an identity, a country with international aspirations looking for a place to perform, a European looking for federation, a viewer looking for THE perfect song, all ready to make their choice public in a perpetual flow. Originality is the true motto of Eurovision: originality of its performances, originality of its multicultural European context which tends to be global, originality of its audience and its buzz, originality of its values and its organisation, originality of its impact, originality of its own originality, finally.

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² - The literature on Eurovision is immense. In this bibliography, only those references cited at least once in the section entitled "2. Presentation of Eurovision in the literature" have been included. They are of various kinds: monographs, collective works, journal articles, official information articles on the Internet (newspapers, associations, institutions).

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