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The Eurovision Song Contest: Nation Branding and Nation Building in Estonia and Ukraine.

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD.)

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Abstract

Studies focussing on Europeanisation and in particular on the return to Europe of post-communist states have come to the fore in political science research since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. The way in which many states of the former Eastern Bloc have engaged with European geopolitical power structures such as the European Union and Council of Europe has been well-documented. Europe is a contested construct and its boundaries are still subject to redefinition. This study examines issues of Europeanisation, national identity and nation branding through the lens of popular culture. In particular the role that events such as the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) play in illuminating the more salient issues of European identity politics has until recently been an area which has lacked scholarly attention. Although the volume of literature on the event is steadily increasing, there has to date, been no in-depth study conducted on a Former Soviet Republic. This study aims to fill this gap.

This thesis comprises a case study of the role of the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia and Ukraine. The empirical findings highlight the contested nature of the construction of national identities in the post-Soviet region and in particular, this study has drawn out some of the more salient aspects of identity politics. By exploring these issues through the prism of the Eurovision Song Contest, I argue that the event is significant in terms of nation branding and image building, particularly in the context of the return to Europe of post-communist countries. The Eurovision Song Contest is often an event which is dismissed as musically and culturally inferior. However, this study shows that different nation states attribute different meanings to the ESC and as such there is a need to go beyond the dominant (western) view of the contest in order to explore the diversity of issues that this event illuminates in wider socio-political debates in Europe today.

Key words: Europeanisation, nation building, nation branding, Eurovision Song Contest, national identity, Estonia, Ukraine

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
PREFACE	x
CHAPTER 1: Nation branding and image building: an introduction to the literature	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Nation-building in a post-Soviet context	3
1.2.1 Constructing the other	3
1.2.2 “The nation”	5
1.2.3 National identity and nationalism as a construct	6
1.2.4 Constructing national identity through symbolism	10
1.2.5 Return to Europe discourses	11
1.2.6 Nation-building in Estonia and Ukraine	12
1.3 Nation branding and image-building	15
1.3.1 Nation branding or nation building?	16
1.4 An overview of literature on the Eurovision Song Contest	19
1.4.1 Eurovision Song Contest: A reflection of Europe as a construct	20
1.4.2 Eurovision Song Contest as a marker of European culture	22
1.4.3 Eurovision Song Contest: A vehicle for nation branding?	23
1.5 Methodological approach	24
1.5.1 Research design	25
1.5.2 Research field: Tallinn and Kyiv	25
1.5.3 Ethnographic interviews: sampling and the interview process	26
1.5.4 Focus groups in the field	30
1.5.5 Visual methodologies, text-based data and contextual analysis	31
1.5.6 Participant observation and the research diary	32
1.5.7 Analysis of data	34
1.5.8 Ethical considerations	34

1.6	Reflections upon the process of fieldwork, data analysis, writing up and the limitations of this study	35
1.6.1	Transcriptions of data	36
1.6.2	Practicalities	37
 CHAPTER 2: The politics of Eurovision: An historical introduction		
2.1	Introduction	40
2.2	The European Broadcasting Union and Eurovision: A History	41
2.2.1	The ESC: Reflecting the changing map of Europe	42
2.2.2	Moving with the times	45
2.3	Eurovision Song Contest voting in focus	45
2.4	ESC: Reflecting the rhetoric of conflict	48
2.5	Narratives of the nation within the ESC	51
2.6	Contested identities	53
2.7	ESC: A platform for image-building	54
2.7.1	Ireland	56
2.7.2	Turkey	59
2.7.3	Russia	60
2.8	Concluding remarks	63
 CHAPTER 3: A critical analysis of Brand Estonia in the context of the return to Europe		
3.1	Introduction	65
3.2	A critical reflection of the return to Europe discourse in Estonia	66
3.2.1	Flagging Estonia's "European" credentials: A view from the top	66
3.2.2	Return to Europe: a return to "normality"	67
3.2.3	Nation building in the context of the return to Europe	69
3.2.4	Image building in the context of the return to Europe	73
3.3	Image building and nation branding: An overview of Brand Estonia	77
3.4	Welcome to Estonia	79
3.4.1	Welcome to Estonia: Project development	80
3.4.2	Welcome to Estonia: Analysis	83
3.4.3	Welcome to Estonia: Responses from the field	85
3.5	Concluding remarks	90

CHAPTER 4: A case study of the role of the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia as a reflection of the return to Europe

4.1	Introduction	92
4.2	ESC in the context of Estonia's return to Europe	93
4.3	ESC 2001: Estonia's contest	98
4.3.1	Estonian ESC victory: Flagging the nation	98
4.3.2	Constructing multiculturalism through Eurovision: Dave Benton	102
4.4	Analysis of media debates following ESC 2001: Deconstructing the perception of self in Estonia	107
4.5	Counting the cost: Financing the contest in Tallinn	111
4.6	Concluding remarks	114

CHAPTER 5: A critical reflection of the Eurovision Song Contest 2002 in Tallinn: Imagery, debates and analysis

5.1	Introduction	116
5.2	Countdown to Tallinn 2002: Debates within Estonian elites	117
5.2.1	Funding the event: Averting national shame	118
5.2.2	The technical infrastructure of Eurovision: A Nordic affair	119
5.2.3	Eurovision 2002: Promoting Estonia within an EU accession context	121
5.2.4	Expressing an interest V imposing a view: The role of the Estonian government in the preparations for Eurovision 2002	123
5.2.5	Quantifying the unquantifiable: Perceptions of cost effectiveness amongst Estonia's elite respondents	125
5.3	Estonia: The modern fairy tale	128
5.3.1	Eurovision 2002: Imagery analysis	130
5.3.2	Essentialising Nordic credentials V Othering Russia	135
5.3.3	Eurovision 2002 interval act: The rebirth of Estonia	137
5.4	Eurovision Song Contest 2002: public-level responses	138
5.4.1	Responses from ethnic Estonians	139
5.4.2	Responses from Russian speakers	142
5.5	Estonian media coverage of Eurovision 2002: An overview	144
5.5.1	Eurovision personalised: Analysis of anecdotal articles	145
5.5.2	Flagging the promotional opportunity	146
5.5.3	"The BBC showed Estonia"	150
5.5.4	Deconstructing Eurovision 2002: The reaction from the Estonian media	152
5.6	Concluding remarks	155

CHAPTER 6: A critical analysis of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest in Ukraine in the context of the Orange Revolution 2004-2005

6.1	Introduction	156
6.2	Defining Ukrainian national identity	157
6.3	The Orange Revolution: A brief overview	160
6.4	Ruslana's victory at the Eurovision Song Contest 2004 in context	162
6.4.1	Background to the participation of Ukraine at the ESC	162
6.4.2	A construction of Ukrainian identity: Ruslana	164
6.4.3	Ukraine wins the Eurovision Song Contest	166
6.5	Eurovision Song Contest 2005: Kyiv, Ukraine	168
6.5.1	Revolutionary delays	168
6.5.2	"There is more to Ukraine than sports stars and Chernobyl"	169
6.5.3	Kyiv 2005: Eurovision shows its political side	171
6.5.4	Eurovision 2005 in focus	174
6.5.5	Eurovision 2005: Analysis	176
6.5.6	Contradiction and confusion: public-level responses to Eurovision 2005	178
6.5.7	A brief overview of print media	181
6.6	Concluding remarks	183

CHAPTER 7: The case studies of Estonia and Ukraine: A retrospective

7.1	Introduction	185
7.2	Nation branding in Estonia: A new phase	187
7.2.1	Eesti 90: Building a state together	189
7.2.2	Welcome back to Estonia	191
7.3	Eurovision in Estonia post 2002: Changing perceptions of self	194
7.3.1	Eurovision 2004: Local identities on a global stage	194
7.3.2	Eurovision 2005-2008: Estonia becomes cynical?	195
7.3.3	Eurovision 2009: Estonia in Moscow	200
7.3.4	Eurovision 2010: Estonia comes full circle?	201
7.4	Ukraine: Post Eurovision, Post Revolution	202
7.4.1	Verka Serduchka: From Ukraine with controversy	202
7.4.2	Confusion: A view from the field	203
7.4.3	"Ukraine is a land of lost opportunities"	205
7.4.4	The eyes of Europe on Ukraine once more: Euro 2012	207
7.5	Concluding remarks	209

CHAPTER 8: Image building and nation branding through popular culture: A case study of the role of the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia and Ukraine	
8.1 Introduction	213
8.2 A review of the analytical framework	214
8.3 A review of the main findings	216
8.3.1 Welcome to Estonia: A reflection of the “Two Estonias” debate	216
8.3.2 Eurovision in Estonia: A symbol of Estonia’s return to Europe	218
8.3.3 Dave Benton: Constructing an Estonian brand of multiculturalism	220
8.3.4 Eurovision 2002: Nordic Estonia	221
8.3.5 Ukraine: A complex and contradictory relationship with Europe and Eurovision	223
8.4 Estonia and Ukraine: Concluding comments	224
8.5 Opportunities for future research	226
 APPENDIX A	 230
 APPENDIX B	 233
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 234

List of tables and figures

Figure 2.1: A table showing the first year of participation of countries in the ESC 1956-2008

Figure 3.1: The Brand Estonia logo

Figure(s) 3.2-3.4: A selection of billboard advertisements for Brand Estonia

Figure(s) 3.5-3.9: Still images taken from the Brand Estonia television commercials

Figure(s) 3.10-3.12: An example of one of the Brand Estonia television commercials

Figure 4.1: A picture taken from Estonian newspaper *Postimees*, 20 May 1996

Figure 4.2: Front cover of Estonian newspaper *Postimees*, 20 May 1996

Figure 4.3: Front cover of Estonian newspaper *Õhtuleht*, 14 May 2001

Figure(s) 5.1-5.11: Scenes from the opening sequence of ESC 2002 [ETV]

Figure 5.1: Opening shot of ESC 2002

Figure 5.2: Image depicting the opening of a book of fairy tales

Figure 5.3: Shot of Toompea with the Estonian flag

Figure 5.4: Mobile phone usage in Estonia

Figure 5.5: Modern office in Tallinn city centre

Figure 5.6: Meeting of the Estonian government

Figure 5.7: Signe Kivi speaking to politicians

Figure 5.8: Estonian coastline

Figure 5.9: Estonian nature

Figure 5.10: Central business district in Tallinn

Figure 5.11: The old town of Tallinn

Figure(s) 5.12-5.26: Scenes from the postcard images of ESC 2002 [ETV]

Figure 5.12: *Young Estonians flying high*

Figure 5.13: *Countless internet connections*

Figure 5.14: *Nation of champions*

Figure 5.15: *Everything at the press of a button*

Figure 5.16 *Tartu University – one of the oldest in Europe*

Figure 5.17: *Old Town... new experiences*

Figure 5.18: *Football...beer...castles*

Figure 5.19: *Forests – Estonian treasure*

Figure 5.20: *10 000 years of untouched nature*

Figure 5.21: *Sauna – extreme heat from Estonia*

Figure 5.22: *Sauna – extreme heat from Estonia*

Figure 5.23: *Freedom*

Figure 5.24: *Freedom*

Figure 5.25: *358 957 Snow Whites in Estonia*

Figure 5.26: *So many beautiful women*

Figure 6.1: Official logo for ESC 2005

Figure(s) 6.2-6.6: A selection of Ukrainian print media

Figure 6.2: *Today* Newspaper, 21 May 2005

Figure 6.3: *Express* Newspaper, 21 May 2005

Figure 6.4: *The Facts* Newspaper, 21 May 2005

Figure 6.5: *Welcome to Ukraine Magazine*, Spring 2005 Edition

Figure 6.6: *Eurovision 2005: The heat of the circus*. NTU (Ed.).

Figure 7.1: The logo of the Eesti 90 campaign

Figure 7.2: A 2008 version of the Brand Estonia logo

List of abbreviations and acronyms

BBC British Broadcasting Corporation

CIS Commonwealth of Independent States

EBU European Broadcasting Union

EEK Estonian Kroon

ESC Eurovision Song Contest

ETV Estonian Television

EU European Union

FIFA International Federation of Football Associations

GNI Gross National Income

IBA Israeli Broadcasting Authority

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NTU National Television Company of Ukraine

OSCE Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OIRT International Radio and Television Organisation

RTE Raidió Teilifís Éireann

UEFA Union of European Football Associations

USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Finally I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Aunt Marion who I think would have been very proud.

Preface

This research was inspired by my undergraduate degree in History with Central and East European Studies at the University of Glasgow (2001-2005). My studies raised interesting questions about the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union and their relationship to, and engagement with the European Union as well as the broader constructions of Europe and the geopolitical categories of East and West. My time as an undergraduate also coincided with the dramatic enlargement of the EU in 2004 in which three Baltic States, all Former Soviet Republics, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, joined as full and equal members. During my studies I developed a keen interest in the Baltic region, in particular in Estonia and was able to take this further, and as a result of the expertise within the Department of Central and East European Studies, I wrote an undergraduate dissertation on Estonia. I was interested in why the Baltic States, in particular Estonia, progressed so rapidly towards EU membership. Moreover this raised further questions as to why other EU aspirant countries appeared to lag behind, namely Ukraine. The political demonstrations which took place in Ukraine at the end of 2004, which became known internationally as the Orange Revolution, appeared to signal a turning point in relations between Ukraine and the EU as well as “Europeanisation” more generally, however was this really the case?

These issues raised interesting questions regarding identity construction in the context of the return to Europe. Moreover the way in which international image became important and was used by these countries during their integration to various European geopolitical power structures such as the EU and Council of Europe was of particular interest to me in terms of how this boosted their international image and visibility. Furthermore how were these elite level discourses received by the population as a whole in the context of alleged “plural society” states, home to ethnically diverse populations? My interest in these issues dovetailed with my own personal interest in events such as the Eurovision Song Contest, which I started attending in 2000. My personal engagement and experience of the event meant that I saw first-hand the scale of the production and the significance which the event has for a number of countries. I found the relative scholarly neglect of the event surprising given its potential to illuminate wider socio-political debates.

I used the Eurovision Song Contest as a prism for exploring issues of identity politics and image building as part of my undergraduate dissertation which was submitted in 2005. In that original study a history of the politics of the Eurovision Song Contest was presented. At the time of writing it in 2005, Ukraine was preparing to host the event, months after the Orange Revolution. In this context Eurovision took on serious political connotations and presented an opportunity for further research. I applied to the Economic and Social Research Council for a 1+3 grant and was successful. In 2005-2006 I completed an MRes with particular focus on social research methods as well as Russian language training before going onto study an intensive Estonian language course as part of preparation for my doctoral research.

The Eurovision Song Contest is an event which is often dismissed as musically and culturally inferior; however, the event has been receiving increasing scholarly attention in that it has the capacity to illuminate key socio-political identity debates in Europe. Recent victories by new-entrant participants such as Serbia and Russia have shown that it is an event which has significance in terms of international image building. Whilst there has been a certain amount written about the Eurovision Song Contest more generally and the engagement of Eastern European countries with the event, and the identity issues it raises, there has however, been no substantial in-depth study based on a Former Soviet Republic

to date. Nation branding itself is a relatively new and contested concept and few studies have engaged with the often contradictory relationship between nation branding and nation building. This study aims to fill this gap.

Aims of this thesis

The aim of this study is to carry out a comparative analysis of the key debates surrounding the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia and Ukraine in terms of nation branding and international image building. This research uses the Eurovision Song Contest as a lens through which key identity debates are explored. This thesis highlights the role that the event has played in terms of image building and nation branding within the context of the return to Europe. Moreover, the research findings have drawn out some of the more salient aspects of identity debates and integration issues in the region and as such makes a considerable contribution to understandings of the way national identities are constructed and contested. It is argued in this thesis that the Eurovision Song Contest presented an opportunity for both broadcasting authorities and the government alike in Estonia and Ukraine to present a certain narrative of the nation to a wider audience. Whilst both countries are different in terms of their geopolitical position, demographics and economics¹, a comparison of the two case studies reveals interesting insights into nation and state building in a post-Soviet context. Both Estonia and Ukraine can also be understood as “plural society states” in that they are home to diverse populations with differing political affiliations and understandings of their recent history. It is therefore interesting to observe how these countries have represented these differences in terms of projecting an external image of the country and its identity to a wider global audience through the Eurovision Song Contest.

Estonia was the first former Soviet republic to win the event in 2001 and Ukraine the third in 2005. In both cases hosting the event was afforded significance in terms of domestic politics and in promoting a positive international image. In Estonia the staging of the event coincided with EU accession negotiations and in Ukraine it followed on from the Orange Revolution of 2004/5. Estonia and Ukraine are the main focus of this thesis since they are both examples of former Eastern bloc countries which have used the Eurovision Song Contest for the purpose of image building within the context of the return to Europe. Moreover hosting Eurovision was also seen by political elites in both countries as an opportunity to promote a positive international image and move away from the Soviet past and in the Ukrainian case, the shadow of Chernobyl.

Key research questions

The thesis will investigate issues of nation branding and image building through the lens of Eurovision. Part of this research explores issues of nationhood from the “elite” perspective, or top-down, however, another aim of this study is to engage with the public in both countries, as these “public-level” or “ground level” respondents can help shed light on these wider socio-political identity issues². Elite level respondents include television professionals, politicians, journalists and academics. The ground level respondents for this thesis represent everyday members of the public, people who I was affiliated with during my time in the field and/or had contact with as a result of a gatekeeper for example. Using this multifaceted approach the questions which this study is concerned with include:

¹ Estonia has a population of around 1.4 million with an average GNI per capita of \$14,060. The population of Ukraine stands at around 45 million with an average GNI per capita of \$2,800 (World Bank 2009).

² See chapter one (1.5.1) for more on this approach and 1.5.3 for details on the sampling and interviewing process.

- What particular images of the nation state were propagated through participating in and hosting the Eurovision Song Contest in both Estonia and Ukraine?
- What debates did these representations elicit within the political elite as well as the general public in these countries?
- What comparisons can be made and conclusion drawn from examining these two countries?
- To what extent did the images and rhetoric propagated by elites through Eurovision resonate with the wider population?
- Was Eurovision a “civic event” where victory was celebrated by all living in Estonia or Ukraine or was it very much an ethnic “Estonian/Ukrainian affair”?
- How is national identity defined/constructed/contested in Estonia and Ukraine?
- What “official” representations of national identity have the countries concerned chosen to present through either hosting or participating?
- Who ultimately took the decisions on how each contest was staged in Estonia and Ukraine?
- How contested have these representations been?

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is composed of eight chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the study. An analytical framework is outlined along with an overview of the current literature from the field. This chapter draws attention to the research design and the methodological approach used to conduct research for this thesis.

Chapter two explores the history of the Eurovision Song Contest as well as specifically examining the role that politics has played in the event since its inception over fifty years ago. The chapter also outlines in greater detail some of the current academic literature on the event as well as providing an overview of the way in which the contest has previously been used as a platform for international image building by participating nations.

Chapter three focuses on nation building in Estonia and more specifically the controversies which have arisen as a result of the launch of the Brand Estonia campaign in 2002. The nation branding initiative provoked fierce debates in Estonia and this chapter highlights the nature of those discourses as well as presenting a detailed analysis of the campaign proper.

Chapter four presents an overview of the narratives of the nation which were elicited by both the political elite and the media after the Estonian victory in Eurovision in 2001 and examines how this rhetoric sits with the wider public. An exploration of Estonian national identity is presented and the media rhetoric concerning Eurovision winner for Estonia, Dave Benton, is analysed as well as focussing on how it was viewed through the eyes of the Estonian public.

In chapter five an analysis of Estonia's staging of the Eurovision Song Contest in 2002 is presented. The chapter examines the nature of the debates which took place in the country in the run-up to the event as well as an analysis of the images Estonian Television chose to use to portray Estonia to a global television audience.

In chapter 6 the discussion moves on to the Ukrainian case and focuses on the complexities in defining what Ukrainian national identity is. Furthermore it presents an overview of the political context in which the 2005 contest was staged. Moreover the chapter examines the contested nature of identity politics in Ukraine and how these narratives were reflected in the wider dialogue concerning Eurovision in 2004 and 2005.

Chapter seven serves as an overview of the developments in both Estonia and Ukraine since 2002 and 2005 respectively. Key identity-political debates in both countries have continued to provide a fertile ground for further exploration. Finally chapter eight draws conclusions which have arisen from this study and argues that research into events such as the Eurovision Song Contest as well as nation branding more generally is still in its infancy and as such aims to set the agenda for future research in these areas.

Chapter 1: Nation branding and image building: an introduction to the literature

1.1 Introduction

Rogers Brubaker in his celebrated 1996 work focussed on the construction of “the nation”, which is central to framing this study. Brubaker argues that the fundamental question is not “what is a nation?” but how is nationhood as a political and cultural form institutionalised within and among states? (Brubaker 1996, pg 16). Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, successor states were concerned with new state formation and nation-building. As part of the process of constructing new state institutions, the political elites in the region attempted to gain legitimacy for their own claims to power, by invoking a particular vision of what constitutes the nation. Russia being the dominant Soviet republic inherited the majority of state symbols and was the natural successor state to the USSR. What was less clear though was how the various republics would negotiate their newly found sovereignty and identities. The dissolution of the Soviet Union also forced nation-builders in these republics to confront the issue of Russian speaking minorities head-on and examine their demographic situation as they sought to renegotiate their geopolitical positions in a post-Soviet context. National and ethnic identities were re-forged and in the case of Estonia, integration into wider European institutions such as the European Union was sought. This return to Europe discourse was prevalent throughout the region, at least in Central and Eastern Europe and in the western parts of the former Soviet Union, and manifested itself across diverse spheres of society from the political level to the sphere of popular culture.

Furthermore the external dimension of state and nation building projects is crucial to this study; part of the process of constructing “the nation” involves establishing the state within the wider geopolitical context, asserting ones self on the world stage. One of the ways in which newly sovereign nation states have done this is to engage in nation branding and image building initiatives. To prove that a country is a “reliable partner” it needs to make itself known on the world stage. Nation branding is undertaken to stimulate inward investment, attract tourists and boost exports (Dinnie, 2008, pg 17). Moreover nation branding can also be viewed as an exercise in “othering”; to distance a country from the old economic and political order, in the context of this study, the legacy of Soviet rule. As new nations have emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, successor states have seized the opportunity to promote themselves internationally by

adopting a variety of strategies, fashioning themselves as part of a European community. In this context the role of large scale events such as the Olympic Games and the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) take on significance for newly sovereign states of the former Soviet Union as they seek to negotiate their position on the world stage.

Göran Bolin (2006, pg 191) argues that the Eurovision Song Contest has become a discursive tool in the definitions of “Europeanness” and political strategies of Europeanisation. As such the Eurovision Song Contest has relevance in many areas and is a prime example of an event worthy of greater investigation. The wider literature on Eurovision is discussed in detail in chapter two of this study. The Eurovision Song Contest, according to Bolin, is a medium which can be used to investigate the wider processes of nation and image building. A theoretical discussion of nation building, branding and national identity will precede a detailed discussion of current academic literature concerning the Eurovision Song Contest before exploring the key identity debates in both Estonia and Ukraine in subsequent chapters. This research seeks to analyse these key identity debates concerning the Eurovision Song Contest in order to illuminate this ongoing process of construction and contestation in the region more generally. A key preliminary goal is to uncover what were the actual decision-making processes around the contest and the key actors involved. As highlighted in the preface of this study, the key questions concerning this research are concerned with constructions of national identity in both Estonia and Ukraine through Eurovision. What “official” representations of national identity have the countries concerned chosen to present through either hosting or participating? Who ultimately took the decisions on how each contest was staged in Estonia and Ukraine? How contested have these representations been?

This thesis uses the case studies of Estonia and Ukraine and will investigate how the Eurovision Song Contest was used as a platform for promoting the nation state and what particular images of “the nation” were appropriated through it. Whilst there is an increasing amount of literature focussing on the ESC, to date, there has been no substantial study based on a former Soviet Republic. In the case of Estonia and Ukraine, both countries afforded huge significance to the victory and hosting of the ESC. For Estonia (2001/2002) it coincided with a decisive stage in European Union accession negotiations and for Ukraine the event followed from the monumental political events of 2004/2005 known as the Orange Revolution. Whilst initial comparisons between these two states are problematic, both states have broadly faced similar challenges since independence. Both can be considered to be home to ethnically diverse populations with differing

understandings and interpretations of history. Similarly both have had to renegotiate their geopolitical position in relation to the West (namely the European Union) and the East (Russia). By exploring the key identity debates concerning the Eurovision Song Contest through “elite” interviews, analysis of media discussion and interviews with the wider public, I will seek to ascertain what visions of the nation were appropriated through the ESC and to what extent they resonated with the wider population.

1.2 Nation-building in a post-Soviet context

After 1991 some 25 million Russian speakers found themselves residing outside the borders of the Russian Federation. For political elites in republics such as Estonia, which were arguably incorporated into the Soviet Union through force, Soviet rule and the presence of a sizeable Russian speaking population living within the boundaries of the newly-sovereign state(s) was viewed through the prism of post-colonialism. Such narratives had a profound effect on nation building practices in the region and essentially meant that issues of national identity and “belonging” became contested and politicised. This construction of “the other” in relation to the Russian speaking minority is a highly pertinent issue in the framing of this study; the nation-building process raises questions of who “belongs” both in legal (citizenship) and cultural (language) terms.

1.2.1 Constructing the other

Graham Smith (1998, p.13) asserts that nation-building practices in the post-Soviet republics can be categorised into the following: de-Sovietisation, the reinvention of boundaries and cultural standardisation. De-Sovietisation refers to the more practical and physical ways in which the political elites in each state have effectively removed symbols from the Soviet era, whether it is statues in town squares or symbols representing Soviet power. It also refers to the dissolution of Soviet-era political institutions and the replacement with new national symbols and political institutions. De-Sovietisation is therefore very much a process which was undertaken by, and for the particular titular nationality of the state. This process is closely linked to “the other”, the Russian minority. Essentially by saying who is part of the “nation” a barrier is constructed against those who are not. If history and memory of Soviet rule are a factor in nation-building, “the other” therefore comes to be seen through a post-colonialist lens and is therefore a threat to the security and sovereignty of the state (Carter 1993, p.8) This rhetoric arguably underpinned much of the policies implemented by successor governments in various Former

Soviet Republics, particularly in terms of (restrictive) citizenship and residency laws. According to Graham Smith, nation-builders constructed an “imagined community” which further set the political agenda and boundaries concerning who belongs.

Iver Neumann discusses the use of the other, in particular the eastern other, in terms of identity formation. In the case of the Baltic States, namely Estonia, othering of the East is used as a way of re-inscribing the Northern geopolitical position of the country and emphasising that eastern represented a period of “captivity” (Neumann 1999, p.162). Moreover Neumann suggests that Baltic membership applications to the Nordic Council can be seen as another manifestation of othering and increasing regionalism (Neumann 1999, p.136). A strong example of othering was presented by Estonian politician Tiit Maade to a Swedish newspaper in 1989 when he was quoted as saying that Russian people were “untamed and wild and tended to spread like a blob over every territory they can find” (Neumann 1999, p.107). According to Neumann this language invokes an image of the Baltic States as more “civilised” in comparison to “barbarian Russians”, a reflection of the wider processes going on at that time.

Pille Petersoo highlights that “the other” plays a crucial role in the construction and maintenance of national identity in Estonia. Moreover she argues that the other is not a straightforward or linear concept and that there are several others which are functional at the same time and not necessarily negative (Petersoo 2007, p.129). A clear example is the linguistic othering in Estonia where the differences between the Russian speaking minority and ethnic Estonians are emphasised through language whilst the similarities between Finns and Estonians are emphasised. Petersoo also highlights the otherness of the Baltic Germans and how they are no longer seen as a threat to Estonian identity where as post-WWII Russian speaking immigrants to Estonia are, and are often referred to as colonisers (Petersoo 2007, p.124). The role of the other therefore serves to flag both difference and similarity in a bid to affirm a sense of collective identity. Merje Kuus takes the issue of othering further to suggest that as the EU and NATO have opened up to include former Eastern Bloc members rather than diminishing boundaries and others, it has actually re-inscribed the fact (Kuus 2004, p.484). This rhetoric manifests strongly in discourses surrounding the expansion of the Eurovision Song Contest and will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

1.2.2 “The nation”

Initial discussions concerning national identity and statehood ultimately raise questions concerning what a “nation” actually is. Furthermore these discussions set the agenda for discussions concerning membership or exclusion from “the nation”. Jørn Holm-Hansen (cited in Kolstø 2002, p.106) proposes that titular citizens of ethnic states “hold membership” automatically through their ethnic affiliations where as citizens from non-titular groups more or less explicitly are “members” of the “second order”. Benedict Anderson (2006, p.6) goes further to examine the way in which the “nation” is constructed or as he writes “imagined”. Anderson defines a nation as “an imagined political community”. The imagined concept is crucial for our understandings of inclusivity and exclusivity. As Anderson writes:

It [the nation] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (2006, pg 6).

Grillo echoes the notion of the nation as an imagined construction. He argues that nation states are not “natural” entities; “they clothe and enclose an existing or developing political and economic framework” (Grillo 1980, p.8). John Keane (cited in Periwal 1995, p.182) sheds further light on this issue by arguing that historically the “nation” did not refer to the whole population of a region but only to those classes which had developed a sense of identity based upon language and history and had begun to act upon it. In the context of the post-Soviet successor states, language and history are arguably the most pertinent issues concerning inclusivity in the new order. The Russian speaking population in Estonia who have a different language and understanding of recent history compared to ethnic Estonians serve as an example of this assertion in action. In a state which seeks to legitimise and secure dominance of the titular nationality in the political sphere, language and history serve an important role. Therefore those who share the same language and understandings of the past would be included in the imagined community of the “Estonian nation”. Those who do not were therefore, to varying degrees excluded.

A nation state is a state in which the dominant nation’s language becomes the only official language and occasionally the only acceptable language for state business and education, the religion of the nation is privileged and the culture of the dominant nation is privileged in state symbols (such as the flag, national anthem and even eligibility for some types of military service) and in state-controlled means of socialisation. (Linz & Stepan cited in Lauristin 2002, p.47)

In the case of Estonia and to a lesser extent Ukraine, this issue of one dominant language as the key to “membership” of the nation is especially pertinent and will form the mainstay of discussion later in this chapter.

1.2.3 National identity and nationalism as a construct

If the nation is a constructed concept, national identity can also be seen in the same vein and is treated as such in this thesis. Anthony D Smith offers a definition of the nation and identity as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture and common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (A Smith 1999, p.12). John Keane (cited in Periwal 1995, p.186) goes further by saying that not only is national identity constructed, it is in fact a modern European construction.

National identity is a specifically modern European invention and its political importance is that it infuses citizens with a sense of purposefulness, confidence and dignity by encouraging them to “feel at home”. It enables them to decipher the signs of institutional and everyday life [...] whatever diversity exists within the nation is more or less accepted as one of its constitutive features. There is some acceptance of the fact that numbers of the same nation can legitimately disagree about the meaning and extent of their nationhood. This tolerance of difference is possible precisely because nationhood equips members of a nation with a sense of belonging and a security in themselves and in each other: they can say “we” and “you” without feeling that their “I”, their sense of self, is slipping from their possession (Keane cited in Periwal 1995, p.186).

Michael Billig states that having a national identity involves being situated physically, legally, socially as well as emotionally; typically it means being situated within a homeland (Billig 1995, p.8). For newly sovereign former Soviet republics such as Estonia and Ukraine, this assertion is somewhat troublesome. In the case of Estonia in particular, many Russian speakers found themselves quite literally living abroad overnight, the national borders had moved even if they physically had not. Billig’s reference to those that are “legally situated” has significance given that there were a sizeable proportion of non-citizens living in Estonia. In this context it suggests that those individuals who may also be socially and emotionally disassociated are peripheral to the core national identity of the titular nation.

Pål Kolstø concisely outlines the main critique of national identity in Europe arguing that in order to keep a state together in the modern world it is essential that its population have

a shared feeling of a common identity. The citizens must be bound together by loyalty toward the same institutions, symbols and values. This does not imply that all inhabitants of the state must partake in the same ethnic identity. National identity may, and in many cases, must be political rather than cultural (Kolstø 1999, p.1). According to Anthony Smith “no state has one ethnic group living there – they are plural to varying degrees and therefore technically cannot claim to be “nation-states” – they could be “national states” (A Smith 1999, p.232). Within this context it is important to understand the central issue of how and why national identity is constructed and by whom. The authors cited in this thesis claim that “official” national identity construction comes “from above”, namely the respective governments in the post-Soviet republics. The construction of national identity in a post-Soviet context is therefore an attempt to legitimise political power within the state and to build support for new and existing social institutions. Furthermore as far as national identities can be seen as constructed, they are also politically contested, with different forces vying to impose competing visions of the “nation” and its place in the world.

In a contrast to Smith and Kolstø’s definitions of nationhood and identity, Brubaker argues that nationhood in Central and Eastern Europe is something which is framed purely in ethnic terms since “almost all of the new states will be nationalising states to some degree and in some form” (Brubaker 1996, p.433). John Hall goes further to state that nationalism or a nationalising state as a concept is “the belief in the *primacy* of a particular nation, real or constructed” (Hall cited in Periwal 1995, p.8). It is this belief in the primacy of the titular nationalities in the Soviet successor republics which formed the baseline for nation building in the 1990s. This claim of virtue was used by political elites to legitimise power and in the case of national minorities in Estonia and Latvia, implement discursive practices that limit participation in politics, namely the Russian speaking minority. This issue will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.

Anthony D Smith defines nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential nation” (A Smith 2004, p.9). Furthermore Smith claims that there are three “goals” of nationalism; national identity, national unity and national autonomy. Four main concepts of nationalism are also outlined:

- 1) the whole process of growth of nations and national states
- 2) sentiments of attachment to and in pride in the nation
- 3) an ideology and language (discourse) extolling the nation
- 4) a movement with national aspirations and goals (A Smith 1999, p.101).

Anthony Smith's theoretical framework is applicable to the two case studies in this thesis – Estonia and Ukraine. Both are countries which have sought to maintain unity whilst engineering the dominance of the titular nationality in state institutions and structures. One example of such is that both countries have one official language despite having sizeable Russian speaking populations. Moreover in the Estonian context proficiency in the titular national language was a restriction placed on citizenship, and effectively paved the way for ethnic Estonian dominance in the political sphere, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Smith's definition can be seen as an extension of the argument put forward by Brubaker as discussed, given the discursive practices of nation-builders in both countries, they can be deemed to be “nationalising states”.

Michael Billig argues that nationalism is a concept which is drawn upon by political elites but also from the bottom up, it is an “ideology which both creates and maintains nation states” (Billig 1995, p.19). Billig focuses on salient, everyday nationalism which is often unspoken such as the flag flown outside a garage forecourt or on a public building, part of the routine of everyday life. According to Billig such symbols represent a reminder of the nation, albeit one which is to a large extent unnoticed. This “flagging” of the nation is something which is discussed in greater depth in chapters four and five. Billig does however draw a distinction between flags flying outside official buildings and flags waved during a wartime situation or even commemorative events such as the Eurovision Song Contest. Furthermore Billig also argues that “nationalism” as a construct, paves the way for further socio-political identification. It is a way for people to define themselves, helping to categorise people into “us and them”, “our patriotism, their nationalism” (Billig 1995, p.55). In the context of post-Soviet nation building this is extremely relevant and pertinent. To follow up on Brubaker's assertion that new states are all, to some extent *nationalising*, Billig's work has relevance. The subtext of his writing suggests that “nationalism” can be seen by some as a slur and that it is acceptable for “us” but not “them”. Moreover a newly sovereign state seeking to construct a common identity would ultimately need to confront this issue of who “belongs” to that particular nation. This issue is especially relevant in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, given the various nation building practices which have prevailed since the early 1990s. The region can be characterised as a region of “living nationalism”. Billig highlights that coverage of nationalism and nationalist issues has tended to focus on the most extreme cases. The narrative of the nation is rarely so straightforward and this study will attempt to exemplify the more salient discussions concerning nationhood and national identity in the post-Soviet region.

Similar to Billig's argument concerning extreme narratives of nationalism, George Schöpflin highlights the tendency to see Western European nations and nationalism as intrinsically "good" and Eastern as "nasty and brutish", terming it "Hans Kohnism" (Schöpflin 2000, p.4). He asserts that Eastern and Western Europe do not necessarily understand each other very well with the West viewing the East as "unreliable and obstinate" whilst the West are seen as patronising and insensitive (Schöpflin 2000, p.31). Richard Mole highlights the role of constructionism in helping shape our understandings of national identity as a continuously changing concept; what might be pertinent to identity at one time may not be the same at another point in time (Mole 2007, p.8). This view is supported by Daina Eglitis who writes that "every epoch produces its own notions and understandings of social change and the transformation of the East European and post-soviet space is no exception" (Eglitis 2002, p.8). Multiple identities play a role in discourses surrounding national identity, particularly in the territories of the Former Soviet Union as well as within narratives of nationalism more generally. Taras Kuzio (2001) and Stefan Auer (2004) highlight that different definitions of "nationalism" and levels of inclusion and exclusion are a phenomenon in all societies, both East and West. Daina Eglitis (2002) and David Smith (2001) have highlighted the role of European institutions such as the Council of Europe and European Union in "normalising" ethnic relations in newly restored states.

Kataryna Wolczuk (2000) highlights that as the Soviet Union disintegrated it forced changes in the political space and the identities within the new Soviet successor states. She links into Anthony Smith's view that "the rediscovery of the national self is a pressing practical issue, vexed, and contentious, which spells life or death for the nationalist project of creating a nation" (A Smith 1999, p.148). Wolczuk adds that this rediscovery of the "national self" marks a symbolic break from the past which in turn aids the development of the new independent state. "As in other Soviet successor states, after the passage to independence, the ruling elite in Ukraine embarked on a process of forging a national identity by (re)constructing the discursive boundaries of nationhood" (Wolczuk 2000). Whilst this work focuses on Ukraine specifically, the literature is relevant to Estonia and other post-Soviet states. This study seeks to shed new light on these broader debates concerning nationhood and identity in Central and Eastern Europe.

1.2.4 Constructing national identity through symbolism

The role that myths and symbols play in the construction of a national identity is pivotal since they are essentially part of the nation building process. Schöpflin (2000) argues that the symbolic sphere is one of the way in which national political elites attempt to consolidate the power of the titular nationality in a state. Schöpflin asserts that symbols are essential to safeguard the stability of the community and to establish the boundaries within which the politics of identities is played out (Schöpflin 2000, p.28). In the context of post-Soviet states the role of symbols and national myths plays an integral part of nation and state building in that they seek to bind society together. As Schöpflin states, “the use of symbols, flags, monuments is not a superfluous extravagance, a throw-back to a pre-rational age but a central component of identity creation and maintenance” (Schöpflin 2000, p.29). State symbols such as the national flag, particularly in the context of post-Soviet republics, were focal points for protest and national self-identification as the USSR collapsed. After independence the symbolic role of the flag changed to one of re-affirmation albeit one which raised further questions. The national flag of the titular nationality, the symbol of the state, can be seen to unite those who “belong”, “who we are”. However it also suggests that it also contributes to defining “the other” and further separating that other from the titular nationality.

Billig suggests that these daily “flaggings” of national symbols remind people of the nation and yet they are often unnoticed since they are so numerous. This is true of all states to a certain extent; the national flag is flown outside official state buildings and is often the focal point of public attention during times of national importance. Thus according to Firth, “the national flag symbolises the sacred character of the nation; it is revered by loyal citizens and ritually defiled by those who wish to make a protest” (cited in Billig 1995, p.39). However the flag is not the only symbol of the nation as Billig highlights, “flaggings” of the nation can also be found in bank notes and coins for example. Again images are often unnoticed by the wider public however they represent a salient and important part of the rituals connected to nation building. The monetary images used by the newly sovereign nations of Eastern Europe therefore represents a concerted attempt at including national symbols as part of the practical process of state and nation building. Furthermore whilst Billig argues that many of these symbols are often overlooked, Eglitis asserts that the power of symbols should not be underestimated, particularly in the context of newly independent nations. She makes reference to the “symbolic landscape” and “the power of space and place” such as recent changes in the street names in Riga, for example,

as a way of “reclaiming” the nation from the Soviet past and fostering a sense of identity and community in the present (Eglitis 2002, p.183).

Much of the current literature on nation building focuses on “internal symbols” in a particular nation state with little attention given to the role that symbols play in conveying messages to others – both internally and externally. This is one of the gaps that this study seeks to address. In this context events such as the Eurovision Song Contest can be considered to be a symbol of European popular culture in that it forms a traditional ritual in television broadcasting and to use Eric Hobsbawm’s famous term, an “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm 2002, p.142). The ESC represents a shared sense of viewership, a sense of “togetherness” as part of a viewing routine of ritual. This apparent sense of community therefore allows individuals to “imagine” a real connection with other members of different nation states. In chapter four we consider the symbolic role that the Eurovision Song Contest played in the Estonian case study. People living in the north of the country had the ability to watch the event on Finnish television. This “window on the west” offered a unique insight into life beyond the iron curtain. Furthermore Eurovision also afforded the country an opportunity to gain increasing visibility on the world stage and locating the nation within Europe after independence.

1.2.5 Return to Europe discourses

Following the collapse of state communism in Eastern Europe, discourses of “return to Europe” were widely propagated by political elites in the region. According to Alan Smith, for the majority of newly sovereign nations the concept of “return to Europe” essentially represented a break from the communist past and membership of long-standing European institutes and frameworks (Alan Smith 2000, p.2). It implied membership of European economic and political institutions and the re-direction of the trade flows away from the former Soviet Union towards Western Europe. In the context of this study, for Estonia EU membership was a main goal of the return to Europe. In Ukraine the direction was slower to emerge until the ratification of the constitution in 1996. “Returning to Europe” meant that such nations had to declare themselves as liberal democracies (Lauristin 2002, p.52). Ukraine occupies a unique place given its strategic geo-political situation between east and west. Larrabee argues that that it was a nation torn between the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Europe, namely the European Union (Larrabee 2007, p.57). Larrabee goes on to state that many EU member states have traditionally classified Ukraine as belonging to the “Soviet space” rather than Western. David Smith and Marko Lehti

assert that the return to Europe discourses represented the creation of a new boundary between a new Eastern “other”, namely Russia and the CIS (Lehti & Smith 2003, p.4). The challenge for Ukrainian leaders therefore has been to overcome these Western-imposed geopolitical categories and to gain acceptance as “European” whilst simultaneously remaining on good terms with Russia and the CIS countries. This dual vector approach formed the basis for foreign policy, pursued to differing degrees, by all Ukrainian governments since the mid-1990s. In seeking to return to Europe, states like Estonia distanced themselves from the CIS and the enlargement process as a whole and drew new, firm boundaries between an enlarged EU and “the rest”. As highlighted earlier, Ukrainian leaders have to a lesser extent been fighting to overcome this division. In 1990 Lennart Meri, who went on to become President of Estonia highlighted the importance of “Europe” to the country in one of many speeches he gave on the subject.

Europe is to the Estonians more than a geographical concept: Europe is our programme. Not because we regard ourselves as better Europeans but because we know what the price is of being absent from Europe (Meri cited in Lehti & Smith 2003, p.38).

It can therefore be said that there was a concerted effort at governmental level to follow the European route. Meri’s speeches exemplify this and served to further this cause by invoking images and rhetoric presenting Europe as Estonia’s appropriate geopolitical orientation. In the context of this research the rush of the former communist states to join the European Broadcasting Union and then enter the Eurovision Song Contest can be seen as a manifestation of the return to Europe within the sphere of popular culture.

1.2.6 Nation-building in Estonia and Ukraine

Nation building in the post-Soviet context essentially represented the competition for power in which the various national elites in the region sought to “naturalise” their own particular model of state institutions and gain legitimacy for their own claims to power. They did this by invoking a particular vision of what constitutes the national political community and by propagating this amongst the population through speeches, interviews and within the wider media. The aim was to create and impose, from above, a new “imagined community” (to use Benedict Anderson’s term) amongst the state’s population. Further to this the dimensions of state and nation building also involve deciding who “belongs”, essentially in terms of citizenship on the legal level. There is also a cultural dimension of nation building projects which draw upon various cultural “raw material”

such as language, ethnicity and religion. Language is a key part of the nation building process, a further way of distancing the republics from their Soviet past. In Estonia and Ukraine language has played a symbolic role in terms of nation building. The implementation of one official state language (Estonian/Ukrainian) is therefore a clear signal of the direction of nation building in both countries.

It can be argued that both Estonia and Ukraine have used the construction of “other” as an element of nation building paradigms. In Estonia the geo-political orientation towards the Nordic sphere and in Ukraine the propensity to see the country as more “European”, the last frontier against “Asiatic” Russia (G Smith 1998, p.37). In Estonia nation builders (political elite) worked from the legal continuity principle that Estonia had been illegally occupied after WWII. This was reinforced by the refusal of the western powers to recognise Soviet rule in the Baltic States. Furthermore this raised questions concerning the status of non-titular nationalities living in these countries, namely Russian speakers who settled in large numbers during the Soviet period. Technically it meant that the Russian speakers who moved to Estonia after 1939 were deemed to be illegal immigrants. The adoption of the Law on Aliens in 1993, where non citizens were effectively told to naturalise or leave, exemplifies this.

According to Andrew Wilson there are elements of such narratives within the Ukrainian context. Wilson argues that “Ukrainophiles” subscribe to a similar reading to Estonians of their Soviet past, one which is enmeshed with discourses of post-colonialism, oppression and forced “Russification”. He cites the 1932-1933 famine in Ukraine as a focal point for such rhetoric (Wilson cited in G Smith 1998, p.40). However Wilson argues that the discourses have not been as prevalent in Ukraine as they have been in Estonia. He points to the divisions in Ukrainian society which are not present amongst the titular nation in Estonia. Wilson identifies three key groups in Ukraine: Ukrainophone Ukrainians, Russophone Ukrainians and ethnic Russians. He points to this division as one explanation for why Ukraine did not impose a similar nationalising nation building agenda as Estonia (G Smith 1998, p.119). Wilson’s work highlights the complexities of encapsulating Ukrainian national identity. The rudimentary East/West divide therefore may not be sufficient in conceptualising discourses on national and linguistic identity in Ukraine which speak with more than one voice. This is returned to in chapter six.

If Estonia followed a more nationalising agenda when it came to nation building it could be argued that Ukraine pursued a path which was perhaps more “civic” in approach.

Estonia in the early 1990s might legitimately be termed a “nationalising state” in that it was seeking to exclude a large proportion of resident Russian speakers from the political process whereas Ukraine by contrast, followed a more “civic” path and had citizenship open to all. Yet debates were ongoing over issues such as what should be the official language(s) of the state, highlighting that all states to a more or less degree have ethno-cultural elements. Aleksei Semjonov asserts that:

The civic model of nation-building implies the establishment of political institutions that are impartial (at least in theory) and function adequately on the territory of the state, the provision of equal access to these institutions and the cultivation of a sense of community amongst the residents (Semjonov cited in Kolstø 2002, p.105).

The ethnic model is also highlighted by Semjonov which is “based on the idea of a nation-state where the term “nation” is a synonym for “ethnicity”. Therefore a state is viewed as primarily belonging to the dominant, usually majority ethnic group. This group seeks to legitimate the exercise of power by calling on conceptions of a historical, constituent or state-building nation (Kolstø 1999, p.105). Furthermore Stepan highlights that issues arising from nation building represent a dilemma between “ethno-nationalism” and “civic nationalism”, a competing of logic between nation state and democracy (Lauristin 2002, p.37).

As discussed previously (1.2.5) the return to Europe was a discourse which was prevalent in the post-Soviet region and constituted an integral part of nation building, particularly in the Estonian context. Estonia in its quest for EU membership set about on a course to prove its so-called “European credentials”. This is evidenced in various speeches by the then President Lennart Meri from the time. Estonian political elites cultivated an image of the country as a small Baltic state, historically part of the Nordic sphere of influence, “the little country that could” to use former Prime Minister Mart Laar’s slogan. EU accession essentially meant that the issue of the Russian minority in Estonia came to the foreground of the political debate. Essentially the return to Europe discourses forced the Estonian government to provide some concessions to the Russian speaking minority, in return for wider European integration. This can be seen in the fact that the original terms of the Law on Aliens were significantly relaxed, furthermore in 1999 it was ruled that children born in Estonia to non-citizens after 1991 were to be given automatic Estonian citizenship.

It can be argued that Estonian politicians essentially walked a tightrope between the more nationalising elements of ethno politics which argued that Russian speakers were illegal

immigrants and should be treated as such and EU integration on the other hand, which encouraged a more civic form of nation building, with emphasis on minority rights. It was at this point that discourses of “multiculturalism” became used in the Estonian context. Multiculturalism is a contested concept. Arguably it is one which comes into play with the Russian speaking minority in Estonia in an EU accession context. According to Berg-Schlosser (2001) Estonia and Ukraine are “plural society states”. However, in Estonia it is also one which remains enmeshed within an avowedly post-colonial network of identity political discourses encompassing the Estonian state, its Russian speaking population, the Russian Federation and the governments of the EU and other Euro-Atlantic organisations.

There is also an external or international dimension to the state and nation-building projects. Part of the process of discursively constructing “the nation” is to establish its coordinates in time and space and to situate it in relation to external entities (EU, Russia, USA, CIS) as well as larger geopolitical categories, essentially putting the country on the map. In today’s globalised world, one important part of guaranteeing sovereignty and stability, building up viable economic structures and ensuring state legitimacy is to expand international links and attract inward investment. To do this, the country first has to be known on the map and have the reputation of a reliable partner. In this context events such as the Eurovision Song Contest have significance attached to it, especially by the newly-sovereign nations as they seek to negotiate their position on the world stage. The Eurovision Song Contest thus provides the ideal platform/medium for investigating processes of nation building and international image building. In order to understand this more it is therefore necessary to focus on the theoretical dimensions of image building and nation branding in order to establish what they are and why they are undertaken.

1.3 Nation-branding and image building

Nation branding is a relatively new concept. Similar to the more traditional corporate branding of products, nation branding seeks to manage the image and reputation of a country and help “consumers”, namely the wider public, differentiate between and identify within countries. Nation branding as a concept also relies heavily on the international image of a country. Essentially having a strong nation brand implies having a strong, positive international image. Nation brands also draw from stereotypes and essentialised elements of national identity. In short, every nation is a brand and as such it can be strategically marketed in order to attract inward investment and improve the overall image of a country. Paul Temporal argues that in addition to the key goals of attracting tourists,

stimulating investment and boosting exports, nation branding can also have further reaching effects. He cites that the process can help restore international credibility, increase currency stability and therefore investor confidence as well as even consolidating nation building itself (Temporal cited in Dinnie 2008, p.17).

Leslie de Chernatony argues that in order for a nation brand to thrive it has to deliver in a manner which reflects the promised values, the dominant values that define the behavioural characteristics of a country (cited in Dinnie, 2008, p.16). The development of a nation brand therefore involves consultation with numerous stakeholders who all have an influence in shaping the brand essence. Michael Porter emphasises that states still sustain some form of national character despite the growing influences of globalisation. He argues that national differences lie at the heart of the competitive nation brand, in short, a country needs to emphasise how it is unique and why it is therefore of interest to a potential investor or visitor (Porter cited in Dinnie, 2008, p. 18). Simon Anholt goes as far to say that the demands of a globalised economy mean that nations *need* branding and that it is a process in which states have little choice in (Anholt 2005, p.140). Anholt cites culture as one of the methods for the communication of the nation brand. The case of Ireland exemplifies this; the role of Riverdance, Guinness, Baileys and other such brands have helped to position Ireland with a globalised economy and enabled it to “punch above its weight”, the result being that Ireland as a nation has been recognised in a positive light.

So much of the wealth of nations in the globalised economy derives from each country's ability to export branded goods, and because so much of the wealth to survive and prosper now comes from the “added value” of branded goods and services, the competitiveness of nations and the branding of countries is the only way forward; it has become an immutable law of global capitalism [...] whether we like it or not, the international promotion of each country's culture is essential for the renewal and regeneration of culture [...] demand must be created for culture as products (Anholt, 2005, p.140).

1.3.1 Nation branding or nation building?

Whilst nation branding is attracting increasing scholarly attention, little has been written about it from a critical perspective. Many of those involved in writing about nation branding, such as Dinnie and Anholt, are personally involved in the business itself. Arguably there is a tension between nation branding and nation building. To what extent is nation branding a tool or a practice? What images of the nation do branders seek to promote and who is this image for? When bound up with issues of national identity,

branding the nation can have unintended consequences for social solidarity or indeed nation building itself.

Sue Curry Jansen explores the tensions that nation branding practices engender. Jansen argues that “nation branding transforms national identity into intellectual property” (2008, p.121). Applied to a case study enmeshed with a discourse of post-colonialism, such as Estonia, this raises further questions since nation branding effectively transforms a civic image such as the flag, something which belongs to all, and revered by many, into something calculated and therefore contested.

Göran Bolin and Per Ståhlberg have argued that nation branding has become “a historically specific form of producing images of the nation” (Bolin and Ståhlberg 2010 p. 79). Similar to Anholt’s view, they argue that nation branding suggests that nation states are acting like corporations, in need of sustained and consistent marketing in order to remain competitive on the world stage. Bolin and Ståhlberg define nation branding as “the phenomenon by which governments engage in self-conscious activities aimed at producing a certain image of the nation state” (Bolin and Ståhlberg 2010 p. 82). Bolin and Ståhlberg take this further to problematize the relationship between nation branding and national identity. *What* is being branded and *by* whom and *for* whom? In the example of Estonia which they write about, it is the “positively transforming”, post-Soviet EU applicant which was branded *by* a British company, Interbrand, *for* the international community, namely existing EU member states. How does this then resonate with the people living in the country which has been branded? Bolin and Ståhlberg state that nations are not branded with its citizens in mind, the images produced are for external audiences. However a tension between nation building and nation branding remains.

If yesterday’s nation builders were able to focus on building social solidarity, this is hardly possible today when the nation also has to be branded for global attraction (or consumption). The two logics of nationalism and nation branding exist simultaneously. The question is to what extent these two logics compete or reinforce each other [...] what happens when the logics of nation branding and nationalism are blurred? (Bolin and Ståhlberg 2010 p. 97).

Melissa Aronczyk describes nation branding as a “profit-based marketing technique of private enterprise to create and communicate a particular version of national identity” (Aronczyk 2008, p. 42). This raises a pertinent question for this study, which *version* of national identity is promoted? In the Estonian case it is arguably the ethnic Estonian paradigm of nationhood but how does this then fit in with the discourses of

multiculturalism from Estonian politicians, which coincided with the launch of the Brand Estonia campaign? Aronczyk goes further to state that nation branding is merely an updated form of nationalism since “by employing the symbolic resources and resonance of nationalist discourse which perpetuate the nation state as a necessary frame of identity, allegiance, and affiliation, nation branding maintains and extends the nation as a legitimate entity in the context of globalised modernity” (2008, p. 43). In this context nation branding can be seen as a process which plays to paradigms of “us and them” or one which appeals to tourists whilst engendering a sense of pride in the citizens of that particular nation.

Peter van Ham (2002) argues that whilst there is an element of nationalism with nation branding practices, it is a market-based form of national identity and as such, is far less dangerous than the nationalistic identity formations which have fuelled wars and genocide (cited in Jansen 2008, p.133). Effectively nation branding can be seen as a form of “soft power” (discussed further in section 3.3) in that it is not characterised by military prowess, it is better suited to public diplomacy and can repair the damaged legacies of hard power (Aronczyk 2008, p. 44). It is both reactive and proactive, drawing attention away from a negative past and presenting opportunities that a country can offer the international community in the future.

Nation branding as a concept is not without criticism though, as Aldersey-Williams argues, branding a nation is controversial and highly politicised (Aldersey-Williams 1998, p.12). By defining a “nation” in such narrow terms it effectively constructs boundaries within the state. How can one brand reflect the diversity and plethora of identities and opinions of a society? Many cultural stereotypes concerning nations have evolved over time and they arguably cannot be eradicated through a focussed marketing campaign (Fan 2006, p.10). However O’Shaughnessy and Jackson (2000) assert that nation branding is possible but that a more fluid approach is needed. They argue that different parts of a nation’s identity come into focus on the international stage at different times, affected by current political events (O’Shaughnessy and Jackson 2000, p. 56-64). The political context is an important point for discussion within this study. Estonia formally began work on a branding campaign in 2001 at the time of on-going EU accession talks and launched it in 2002 in order to capitalise on the publicity garnered from staging the Eurovision Song Contest in Tallinn that year. In Ukraine the political developments in 2004/2005 which became known as the Orange Revolution led to an elevation in discussions concerning Ukraine’s international image particularly when the country was due to host the Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv in May 2005 (chapter six). Brand Estonia (which is the focal point for

discussion in chapter three) was developed with the slogan “Positively Transforming”. It is one of the aims of this study to shed light on the issues arising from nation branding and image building practices in Estonia and to a lesser extent, Ukraine. How was the brand essence developed in Estonia and with what aim? Furthermore how did this brand, which was initiated from the top down, resonate amongst the wider public?

1.4 An overview of literature on the Eurovision Song Contest

The Eurovision Song Contest is often an event which is dismissed as musically and culturally inferior and until recently it has lacked scholarly attention. However it deserves attention in view of its longevity, annual audience and significance for many countries. Celebrating its fiftieth year in 2005, the Eurovision Song Contest is one of the largest television and media events in the world. Dayan and Katz (1992) define media events as “high holidays of mass communication” (Dayan and Katz 1992, p. 1) and cite the Eurovision Song Contest as one example of such an event. They argue that media events can be defined on syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels. Syntactic because it is something which interrupts the routine of daily life, it monopolises the media coverage at the time that the event is taking place. It can be seen as a media event on a semantic level given that it represents an occasion or a “historic” ceremony with reverence. Finally Dayan and Katz argue that the Eurovision Song Contest is a media event on a pragmatic level in that it enthralls large scale audiences who view them in a festive style (Dayan and Katz 1992, p. 9-14).

There is a growing body of literature which examines fandom and how the Eurovision Song Contest is transformed from a three hour television show to a year-long interest. Peter Rehberg (2007) examines the relationship between sexual identity and national identity. “Eurovision provides a rare occasion for simultaneously celebrating *both* queerness *and* national identity” (Rehberg 2007, p. 60). Rehberg argues that the Eurovision Song Contest, an event which has a large gay fan base, is a rare event which affords gay men a sense of nationhood in a way in which many are not able to experience through sporting events such as football for example. Similarly Dafna Lemish (2007) examines the role that the Eurovision Song Contest plays in the lives of Israeli gay men and its contribution to their construction of a distinct cultural identity. Singleton, Fricker and Moreo (2007) examine the ways in which the Eurovision Song Contest has meaning for gay fans in Ireland and argue that their actions as fans, whether it be hosting parties or attending conventions during the so-called “off season”, keeps the Eurovision Song

Contest very much alive and very much part of their identity. Jackson (2007) also focuses on fandom, not from the perspective of sexual identity but on the way in which fans contribute to making the Eurovision Song Contest more than just a media event. It is identified by the fans as different from everyday television and as such generates proactive actions which mean that the event becomes part of their social calendar throughout the year.

There have been a limited number of academic studies that examine the Eurovision Song Contest from the perspective of national identity construction. Baker (2006) has examined the nationalist elements of Croatian entries, while Pajala (2005) uses the contest to discuss Finland's geopolitical position in Europe. Neither of these studies, however, has focused on issues of image-building per se. Estonia and Ukraine have demonstrated the tremendous significance attached to Eurovision by those post-Soviet states pursuing the goal of a return to Europe. In this context Eurovision has given these countries the opportunity to join a very European institution and become "part of the family". Many places [nations] look to promoting cultural and entertainment spectacles as an active strategy in image-building (Fleischer 2002, p.141). More importantly, there is to date no in-depth studies focussing on the states of the former Soviet Union and this study aims to fill this gap.

1.4.1 Eurovision Song Contest: A reflection of Europe as a construct

The concept of "Europe" is contested. As Ifversen (2002) highlights, it is not only a geographical issue but also that there has been "a shift from culture to identity" in the debates surrounding the concept. Furthermore if events such as the Eurovision Song Contest are used as a lens in which to examine the concept of Europe it can be seen as a construction. The inclusion of Israel and other states in the ESC highlights the difficulties of categorizing who is in Europe and which states are not. Moreover when "Europe" is mentioned it is also synonymous with the European Union. Ifversen highlights that culture has come to the foreground in Europe in recent years in the EU with cultural statements and scholarly articles on culture and identity surfacing. It has even been suggested that the concept of the Eurovision Song Contest as a whole should be used as a role-model for determining the overall composition of the European Union (Fenn *et al.* 2006). In this context Eurovision can exemplify more complex relationships in Europe. Since the end of communism Western Europe has been forced to look at what it is to be European, where Europe ends, who is European and who is not. There is near universal consensus that Central and Eastern regions of Europe are part of Europe but is Russia? (Schöpflin 2000, p.

48). Where does Ukraine find a role given the fact that it is situated in a position between East and West? It is interesting to note that the official promotional material distributed to delegates at the 2005 ESC in Kyiv stated that Ukraine was “at the heart of Europe”³. In terms of the geopolitical positioning of Ukraine, Stephen Larrabee asserts that Ukraine has previously been considered to be not “European enough” but at the same time is seen as belonging less to the Russian CIS sphere of influence (Larrabee 2007, p.57). Moreover Estonia is classed as “European” and yet many object to being called “Eastern European”, there is more of a focus on the “Nordic nature of the Estonian character” (Peil 2005, p.56). Discourses on national identity always seek to situate the nation in time and space as exemplified by the late Estonian President Lennart Meri in his speeches. The basic questions of identity politics are therefore “who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?” Competing discourses convey different constructions of “Europe” and the place of the nation within it. Here the claims that Estonia is “Nordic” rather than “Baltic” are an example of the othering of the Soviet past in the country. This research aims to shed light on the processes of “Europeanisation” in Estonia and Ukraine – where do the boundaries lie? Furthermore what is “European” and what is not?

According to Ifversen, language, religion, tradition and customs are some of the elements which mark out culture. Can there be such a thing as a “European culture”? In the constructivist approach, a shift from a concept of culture to a concept of identity may be witnessed. Whereas culture relates to forces that actually shape and have shaped Europe, identity points directly to the discursive level where peoples, consciously or unconsciously create Europes with which to identify (Ifversen 2002, p.14). Furthermore given the seismic shifts which have taken place since the collapse of the Soviet Union economically, politically and culturally, the issue becomes even more complicated and contradictory, even more so in the context of the return to Europe. Wolczuk defines this movement of returning as a signal of these nations aspiring to join European institutions such as the EU. In this context the Eurovision Song Contest is highly relevant to this area. The accession of many Central and Eastern European countries to the Eurovision Song Contest in the early 1990s can be seen as a manifestation of the return to Europe within the realm of popular culture. The changes which have taken place in Europe have been reflected in the ESC more generally. Many of the winners of the competition in the past decade have hailed from new entrant states (Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Serbia, and Russia) or from long-term participants which have traditionally been on the periphery of Europe such as Greece and

³ National Television Company Ukraine (Ed.). (2005). *The official programme of the 50th Eurovision Song Contest 2005*. Kyiv: NTU

Finland (Fricker 2009, p. 1-2). These developments have given rise to a number of competing discourses of power in Europe. The recent addition of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan has further infused new energy into the competing definitions of what “Europe” is, as well as new challenges and new controversies in the Eurovision Song Contest itself.

1.4.2 Eurovision as a marker of European culture

Baumann (1999) writes that culture “only exists in the act of being performed but it can never stand still or repeat itself without changing its meaning” (cited in Ifversen 2002, p.12). This is particularly useful for understanding the concept of the Eurovision Song Contest as part of a wider European “popular culture”. In many Western states, including the United Kingdom, the ESC is not seen as a serious cultural event and yet in many countries in the East it is accorded significance (Coleman 2008). However this has not always been the case in the West, the contest was held in high regard in the 1960s and 1970s. This shows that Baumann’s assertion that culture cannot repeat itself without the meaning changing rings true in this context although some might see this trend of the Eurovision Song Contest being seen as credible in the East as indicative of precisely that i.e. the “backward” Eastern states going through the same stages as the more “advanced” Western states. As Coleman further explains:

The source of the embarrassment is neither the songs nor the singers, but the national identities that are being disingenuously performed. It is the nation as a performative act that has become ridiculous, for it serves as a repeated reminder that, despite all the modernizing advances of globalism, we remain occupants of a world comprising nation states (Coleman 2008, p.130).

In terms of Eurovision being used as a tool for identifying cultural patterns and allegiances, Fenn, Suleman, Efstathiou and Johnson (2006) identified some trends. They examined voting patterns and found that some “clusters” did indeed exist. Interestingly Estonia belonged to a “Nordic cluster” since there was said to be a high correlation of votes between Estonia and Finland and Sweden. This links in with the assertion by some that Estonia is a “Nordic country”, which took on significance for the country in the context of independence, European integration and a return to Europe. This is a theme pertinent to this study which will be discussed later in chapter four.

1.4.3 The Eurovision Song Contest: A vehicle for nation branding?

If we subscribe to Bolin's view of the Eurovision Song Contest, as a modern equivalent of the Worlds Fairs of the early 20th century (sections 1.1 and 1.2.4), an event at which countries showcase elements of national culture and identity, it can also be seen as a vehicle for nation branding. According to Bolin (2006) the Eurovision Song Contest is a platform for the promotion of the nation. Bolin also likens the ESC to the World Fairs of the 19th century in that by staging the event it allows countries to market themselves to a wider audience on their own terms. However, whilst the World Fairs were delivered predominantly by the "strongest" nations, Eurovision has recently been seen to be dominated to a certain extent, by relatively "weak" (politically-speaking) nations.

The song contest is the post-industrial equivalent to the World's Fairs of high industrialism [...] the World's Fairs were promoting the then new nation-states in the same way as new nation states use the Eurovision Song Contest as a vehicle for constructing themselves. This is especially evident if one looks at the newly founded sovereign states recently freed from Soviet rule. And it is quite clear that these popular culture events have the power and the ability to reshape the geopolitical map of Europe and are also used in this way by the new member states of the European Union [...] new nations also need to prove to the rest of the world their ability to produce large-scale events (Bolin, 2006, 203).

Bolin states that the ESC shares many characteristics with other large-scale, international media events such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup, but also annual entertainment events that are broadcast internationally such as the Academy Awards or MTV awards. The Eurovision Song Contest is similar to sports events in the sense that it is a competition between nations rather than between actors as at the Academy Awards. It has also been linked to international charity events such as Live Aid given the scale of the broadcast. However Bolin notes that whilst these charity events are politicized to a certain degree, they are more humanitarian rather than nationalism-based which he argues, makes the Eurovision Song Contest unique in its genre (Bolin 2006, p.190).

Irrespective of whether the ESC contributes anything to the advancement of music per se, it does provide a remarkable and unique example of an annual exchange of "goods" and opinions between countries. It is arguably the only international forum in which a given country can express an opinion about another, free of any economic and governmental bias (Fenn *et al.* 2006, p.578).

1.5 Methodological approach

As highlighted in the preface of this study, the key questions concerning this research are concerned with constructions of national identity in both Estonia and Ukraine through the Eurovision Song Contest. What “official” representations of national identity have the countries concerned chosen to present through either hosting or participating? Who ultimately took the decisions on how each contest was staged in Estonia and Ukraine? How contested have these representations been? Research that aims to scrutinise any part of identity is an inexact process. Identities are dynamic and as such the methodology used in order to answer questions concerning issues such as national identity need to be appropriate and an awareness of the potential limitations of the research design is necessary. This section seeks to reflect upon the research design as well as the process of data gathering and analysis. An outline of the methods used in the research for this thesis is discussed here along with the justification for their usage. Moreover attention is paid to the ethical considerations which arose during the research along with a reflection of the overall process itself. In the final sections of this chapter attention will also be given to examining some of the limitations of this research.

The use of qualitative methodology in social research is a continuing subject of debate. Critiques have focussed upon the perceived weaknesses of this approach. It has been asserted that the data gathered using qualitative methodology is not distinguishable from journalism (Strauss 1998, p.28). However the value of the qualitative approach for this research is that it places emphasis on the way in which individuals interpret their social reality. The qualitative methods used for this study have been intended to capture and deconstruct the meanings attached to particular social phenomena by particular actors. Qualitative methodologies therefore provide an opportunity to explore the intangible in a way in which quantitative methods would be unable to do. This study does not use quantitative research methods since the primary focus of this thesis is to extrapolate opinions and meanings on issues related to national identity. Qualitative methods provide an opportunity to explore the discourse beneath and running through the rhetoric. Questions of identity are crucial to the research design which in turn means that qualitative methods are appropriate in the context of this study.

Qualitative research encompasses an interpretative approach since interpretivism informs how qualitative methods are utilised and is also concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena within their social worlds (Ritchie 2003, p.3).

The ways in which people being studied understand and interpret their social reality is therefore one of the central motifs of qualitative research (Bryman, 1998, p.8). The qualitative methods that were used in this research consisted of in-depth ethnographic interviews, content analysis of broadcast and print media and to a lesser extent, focus groups. These different methodological approaches fed into each other, I conducted interviews throughout the time in the field whilst also keeping a research diary (participant observation) alongside analysing printed media texts. The research diary also provided a reflexive element to my research which enabled me to begin my analysis early on. It was not a case of carrying out *only* interviews, then *only* participant observation. The research process was, like the research design, multifaceted. For the purposes of transparency I will now reflect upon each method used.

1.5.1 Research design

Part of this research analyses the perspectives from “above”, namely by using the viewpoints of political figures, opinion leaders and individuals involved with the respective productions of the Eurovision Song Contest in order to ascertain what visions of the national political community or nation state were propagated through the Eurovision Song Contest. However this is only one perspective. Much of the recent literature on issues of nationhood and nationalism in the post-Soviet region has stressed the need to examine issues at the “ordinary” level. Rogers Brubaker, in his work on Transylvania, argues that a perspective from “below” is needed if we are to truly understand the nature of identity processes in these countries (Brubaker 2006, p.9).

Ethnicity and nationalism could best be understood if studied from below as well as above, in microanalytic as well as macroanalytic perspective. From a distance it is all too easy to “see” bounded and homogenous ethnic and national groups, to whom common interests, perceptions, intentions and volition can be attributed. Up close, on the other hand, one risks losing sight of the larger contexts that shape experience and interaction. The study of large- and mid-scale structures and processes remains indispensable, but I came to believe that it must be complimented by research pitched at a level close to everyday experience if one is to avoid unwarranted assumptions of “groupness” and capture the way ethnicity actually “works” (Brubaker 2006, p.xiv).

1.5.2 Research field: Tallinn and Kyiv

The capital cities of Estonia and Ukraine were the chosen sites of fieldwork for this study. I had visited both previously and both were the obvious choice given the fact that they had hosted the Eurovision Song Contest in 2002 and 2005 respectively as well as Kyiv being

the main focal point of the Orange Revolution. My initial research took place in Estonia during October/November 2007 and Ukraine in November/December 2007. I then returned to the field in March and April 2008. After discussions with my supervisors, it was felt that it would be impractical to return to Kyiv mainly due to issues of access (this will be returned to later in the chapter). In Estonia, access to elite respondents and media output was far easier and the materials collected from these sources therefore more extensive than in the Ukrainian case. This is reflected in the finished thesis which places Estonia very much at the centre of the analysis. Even so, the original empirical material I collected in Ukraine, especially through focus groups, and a crucial interview with the PR consultants behind Eurovision makes for an illuminating comparison of two countries actively using the event by way of image building.

I decided that it was also pertinent to speak to the Executive Supervisor of the Eurovision Song Contest, Svante Stockselius, who whilst employed by the Swiss-based European Broadcasting Union (EBU), resides in Stockholm. Given the close proximity from Estonia, Sweden therefore became part of the field too. By way of fortune, several Estonians living in Sweden were also available for interviews as well as Nikolas Glover, a lecturer specialising in imagery and branding at Stockholm University who was also able to lend his views and support to the project. Other “minor fields” where research has taken place includes various countries where the Eurovision Song Contest was being staged. I was fortunate to travel to Finland in 2007 and Serbia in 2008 as well as Russia in 2009, where I was able to interview various people involved in the event. Indeed many Estonians celebrated when Finland won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006 as they felt “a shared sense of Nordic identity”⁴. However the interviews which took place at the contest specifically helped to form background chapter (chapter two) for the thesis rather than specific data for analysis.

1.5.3 Ethnographic interviews: sampling and the interview process

Interviews are a powerful tool in research due to “expressive power of language” which can help to describe, explain and evaluate (Ritchie 2003, p.138). This research was conducted mainly by using in-depth ethnographic interviews whilst relying heavily on snowballing as a method for reaching potential ground-level (public) respondents. In order to conduct my elite level interviews, I had a clearly defined plan of who to contact. The

⁴ Interview with Margit Randla, public-level respondent, Helsinki, 7 May 2007

obvious initial contacts were the people who were directly involved in the production of the Eurovision Song Contest in both Estonia and Ukraine; the Executive Producer and various members of the team. I also sought interviews with political figures such as a Minister of Culture in Estonia at the time as well as Mart Laar, the former Prime Minister of Estonia. Political elites in Ukraine were far more difficult to contact and this will be discussed in specific detail further on. A full list of respondents can be viewed in the appendices of this study.

The elite level in both countries was therefore clearly defined. In Estonia at the elite level I interviewed Juhan Paadam from Estonian Television (ETV) who was the Executive Producer of the show in Tallinn in 2002. All elite level respondents were happy to be named for this thesis. Where appropriate codes were used for some ground-level respondents or some names have been anonymised due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues discussed. This is expanded upon in a later discussion concerning ethics (1.5.7). Another respondent was Mart Laar, the former Prime Minister of Estonia who declared that Estonia were “singing their way into Europe” after winning the contest in 2001⁵. Signe Kivi, the former Minister for Culture and Evelin Ilves, the current First Lady and former Project Manager of the “Welcome to Estonia” campaign were also interviewed. In Ukraine similar figures from the National Television Company of Ukraine (NTU) were interviewed, and as was the case in Estonia, many of these respondents initiated further contact with others. Due to the political turmoil facing Ukraine at the time and the language barrier and accessibility, I was not able to interview any politicians whilst in Ukraine. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

On the other hand much of my grassroots or public-level or ground-level respondents were found through establishing contacts with others. This “snowballing” and use of “gatekeepers” was particularly effective in Estonia given the small nature of Estonian society and media. Many respondents put me directly in touch with others and this then continued. Whilst this research is not positivistic, there was an attempt to access respondents from a diverse range of backgrounds. Furthermore the views of some Russian speakers in Estonia were sought. Snowballing and the use of gatekeepers was the most effective way of finding willing respondents who were interested in sharing their respective views. Gatekeepers essentially control access to respondents and are of great importance to researchers in the field. It is therefore important to take a critical view of

⁵ Estonia Dreams of Eurovision, *Arena*, 2002 [TV], BBC2, 17 May 2002

their role in structuring the outcome of the data gather phase of this research. Consciously or not gatekeepers can have an impact on the nature of the data gathered and can therefore have a potential impact on the data gathered as a whole. One gatekeeper in particular put me in touch with several Estonians with rather extreme views. However given that I was aware that these views were perhaps not wholly representative of public opinion in Estonia per se, I felt that they still provided me with useful information and valuable insight into feelings of national identity in the country at that time and place.

Much of the emphasis of my research is on official representations of each country rather than being totally focussed on public opinion. The study therefore does not claim or aim to be completely representative. In Estonia many of the public respondents were identified as a result of personal kinships which had either previously been established or had begun whilst in the field. In Ukraine I became affiliated with the Kyiv-Moyhla Academy, after contact was made through an Estonian respondent who in turn put me in touch with an employee of the institution. I was therefore able to access a large network of students within a short space of time, many of who were keen to be interviewed for this research. I felt that the success of these ground-level interviews in Ukraine alongside the contacts made through the NTU, made this study more robust despite the lack of political respondents.

In the Estonian context I ensured that I was affiliated with as many social networks as possible; I attended events to which friends and acquaintances had invited me to, I joined a local gymnasium as well as advertised for respondents using public notice boards at the University of Tallinn. Access was certainly easier in Estonia than in Ukraine given my contacts and also the context of being more familiar with the country. It was noted anecdotally that people may not have been willing to talk to me and that Estonians in particular were “closed people”⁶. However during the course of my research I found that my status as an outsider worked to my advantage and this was especially so when they found out that I had knowledge of the Estonian language. In Estonia people were interested to know why I was studying their country and similarly in Ukraine respondents were enthusiastic to speak to a native English speaker.

Gillham (2005, p.107) provides a diverse insight into the different interview methods which have been tried and tested, one of which was the email interview. When I initially

⁶ Estonian friends had flagged this as a potential limitation of my research

attempted to contact respondents this way, I found that the response rate was slow at best. Instead email was used as the main avenue for initiating contact with prospective respondents which had previously been identified as of interest to me, and this was usually followed up with telephone calls or text messages in some cases. What was less clear however was the access to ground-level respondents, everyday people who have a view on the issues. Snowballing realistically was one of the only avenues open to me as a researcher due to the closed network of the societies involved in this study.

As previously stated, the majority of the data collected for this study was done by carrying out in-depth interviews both at an elite level and with the general public, the ground-level. The interviews were designed to allow the respondent to give as much of their opinions as possible to allow some flexibility and scope to bring in new ideas and angles. This has worked well for researchers such as Lupton, Beardsworth and Keil (1992) who wrote “interviewees themselves raised additional or complimentary issues, and these form an integral part of the study’s findings” (cited in Bryman 2004, p.321). However the key themes of identity and image needed to be explored so some guidance and structure was necessary in order to keep the interview on-track. One example, which will be discussed later, showed that open interviews can sometimes lead to tangents which are irrelevant with hindsight. It is a tricky area since qualitative researchers are particularly interested in points of view and perceptions. If the interviewer tries to control the situation too much then views may not be forthcoming from the respondent. It is important to remember that the interview is likely to change during the event itself. Further questions may be necessary after a certain response which may in turn alter the interview schedule.

My research also included some sensitive areas such as examining the views of ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians/Estonians. Unless the respondent had any specific objections, all interviews were recorded for the purposes of accuracy and analysis. This left me freer to concentrate on the interview itself and make some notes rather than writing down furiously and possibly missing valid information. Kvale (1996, p.22) defines qualitative research interviews as “attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences.” Given my research topic, this is particularly relevant and so inevitably interviews formed the majority of my research. Interviews were the main way for me to contextualise the meanings which people applied to various social phenomena and allowed me to gather a wealth of data in a relatively quick and easy manner. Issues of intrusion were also a factor which I kept in

mind; the interviewee only told me what they wanted to tell me. I was also able to control the interview to a certain extent with more leading questions when I saw fit.

In a minority of cases some respondents requested that their views were not recorded which was upheld. In these cases detailed notes were made and in particular the use of email contact became very important. Email was a quick and effective method for confirming quotes and clarifying points made in interviews which were not recorded. Email provided me with access to respondents who were abroad, meaning that face-to-face interviews were often impractical and phone calls not cost effective or convenient for many respondents. However it also highlighted the difficulties of conducting multi-sited research since I was only able to get responses from people with computers with internet access. Certainly in Ukraine this was more of an issue than Estonia which has an extremely well developed internet infrastructure. It could be argued that some people can articulate themselves better verbally than they can in an email since certain emphasis can be clearly understood when speaking to a respondent in person and even hand gestures during interviews can reveal a lot about the respondents views when duly noted, this would be lost in an email. Language was also an issue too both in interviews and with email. On one hand this may be an advantage since “some people are more articulate in writing than they ever are in speech” (Gillham 2005, p.109). Respondents can also re-edit their responses in emails in a way that they would not have been able to do in a face-to-face interview situation, again, this can be positive and help make the respondent feel more comfortable but it may also lead to certain information being lost or censored. Despite the potential limitations and benefits of email communication, it provided me with another method with which I could communicate, to a relatively small extent, with the respondents for this study.

1.5.4 Focus groups in the field

As highlighted earlier I conducted a limited amount of focus groups which were successful in terms of participation numbers and also generating a wealth of different points of views. I conducted four focus groups, two in each country. Whilst generally speaking in-depth ethnographic interviews formed the mainstay of my research, the focus groups which took place whilst in the field added richness to the data gathered. In Estonia these groups served as a lively foreground for debate concerning the contested Welcome to Estonia nation branding campaign (discussed in chapter 3) and in Ukraine the groups elicited discussions concerning the image of the country and the role that both the Orange Revolution and

Eurovision played in refining the image of the country. There were however some limitations of this approach, both practical and more language specific. Some pertinent points were not as forthcoming on the recording due to the sheer volume of debate and in the case of one those groups, the actual background noise of the venue. Some respondents also had a tendency to speak over each other or in the case of one of the groups in Ukraine, some spoke in Ukrainian to each other at various points, a language of which I have no working knowledge of. There were challenges in terms of the practicalities of assembling groups, finding willing volunteers and also a suitable venue for the meetings to take place. On reflection the strength of the data collection for this study lies with the ethnographic interviews conducted whilst in the field.

1.5.5 Visual methodologies, text-based data and contextual analysis

One further methodology explored was the use of visual prompts which I used at times during the in-depth ethno-graphic interviews and in one of the focus groups. Rose (2007, p.xv) outlines the use of such methods in terms of eliciting responses based on visual phenomena and the role that image have in terms of social impact and response. I explored this technique by showing a limited number of respondents certain images related to Eurovision, such as the postcard images screen before each national entry or the Welcome to Estonia logo and asked them what their thoughts were. In some interviews I used this as a prompt card and ask questions based on the image and other video clips. The results of this are discussed in subsequent chapters. Whilst it formed a relatively small part of my methodological approach, it did generate responses from individuals who could then talk from a knowledgebase rather than having to recall what certain images might have been which in turn adds to the strength of the overall research design for this study.

At the same time as conducting ethnographic interviews, the other main method of data collection for the study came from media content analysis of newspaper articles, official documents and the Eurovision broadcasts proper. Holsti (1969) states that “content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (cited in Bryman 2004, p.182). The idea behind the method is that information should be gathered objectively and systematically so that if the process is repeated by another researcher then the results should be the same. Latent content can also be analysed – the underlying messages which lie within the content which are not always immediately obvious to the casual viewer. With regards to Eurovision, latent contextual analysis or signs can be discerned from the actual broadcast

as discussed in chapters five and six. Contextual analysis is a valuable tool for further investigating issues of identity. Not only is the specific content useful but so too are issues of placement of newspaper articles for example. When Estonia and Ukraine won the contest the event made headline news across all the newspapers in the country. This shows the importance that the media in these countries attached to the victory, the significance of which can be extrapolated when the positioning of the article (front page) is taken into account. Over the course of my research, however, it soon became clear that a comprehensive treatment of newspapers would not be viable, particularly in Ukraine. This was partially because of the internal procedures which are carried out when requesting newspapers in archives but also because of language constraints. Translation of Estonian newspapers proved to be incredibly time-consuming and I later decided to pay a native Estonian speaker to translate a portion of articles. Overall the press data provided me with valuable background information which helped to inform the interview questions.

1.5.6 Participant observation and the research diary

Participant observation tends to be more suited to those studying social interaction and the actions of respondents however it has significance for this study too, of which my observations were of a more personal nature, in which I kept a diary during my time in the field. In terms of this study my observations were overt since they did not focus on any particular individual nor did I at any time conceal my identity. Covert observation can sometimes be more risky and is usually carried out when researching sensitive areas, for example Patrick's 1973 study about Glasgow gangs and Fielding's 1981 research about the National Front (see Bryman 2004, p.295). In May 2005 I visited Kyiv, Ukraine when the country was hosting the Eurovision Song Contest. This afforded me the opportunity to experience the event first-hand and to conduct preliminary research. Part of this involved some observations; I sat in the main square and simply watched what was going on around me and wrote notes based on my observations. I was not watching one specific individual but noting on the general setting and atmosphere in the run-up to the large international event. Upon reflection there are several anecdotes or observations which would have easily been overlooked had I not used this method. I think this experience was very important in terms of allowing me to become involved in the event in 2005, I was able to use my senses in order to get a "feel" for the research theme and as such I believe that the experience was invaluable to this thesis as a whole. Ultimately the diary helped to augment my writing and provided me with a unique first-hand perspective which informed my understanding of the event at that particular place, at that particular time. Some of these observations are

detailed in chapter six. Some information gathered is, with the benefit of hindsight, not so relevant however it does help to show how important the event was in Kyiv; the city literally had “Eurovision fever”. If I had not simply observed what was happening around me then I may have missed out on much of the underlying images and atmosphere which also helped to form part of my chapter on Ukraine and the Eurovision Song Contest. I was therefore able to write from a personal knowledgebase, having experienced the event in that particular time and place and within a particular political context.

Whilst in the field in 2007 and 2008 I also kept a day-to-day diary which was incredibly useful for recording my experiences both positive and even negative. Whilst not overtly based on participant observation per se, it did contain information about respondents and details of what interviews worked well, what practical constraints I was experiencing and how I felt the research process was progressing more generally. Also from a personal point of view this diary helped me to articulate my thoughts and experiences when sometimes it was not possible to confide in someone. Fieldwork can at times be a solitary process, especially so when taking place in other countries where essentially the researcher is an “outsider”. Whilst the diary did not have an immediate effect on the data gathered from the field, it had an impact upon my thought processes and general wellbeing which in turn, I believe has strengthened the study as a whole. Below are some excerpts from my field diary:

2nd November 2007

Interviewed Juhan Paadam - very interesting interview! He gave me contacts for Ukraine and also provided me with materials for research – DVDs and booklets. He spoke at length about the vision that they had – the postcards are something he was most proud of. They are still being bought today by Estonian businesses interested in using them for advertising purposes. He also mentioned that Viktor Yushchenko wanted to make a 40 minute speech during the contest from Kyiv! The EBU said no. The interview lasted over two hours and I think it will form the main basis of the PhD. Also spoke to Dave Benton who has agreed to meet at some point. Got chatting to a random woman in the pub who said she could help – she works for the EU. I will call her.

13th November 2007

Had a meeting with Ilmar Raag in Café Moskva. Very nice guy and chatted informally for a while – covering the usual topics of ways to promote Estonia, Eurovision, the EU, Bronze Soldier etc. Listening back to the recording, the noise is a real problem – something which I hadn’t anticipated. However it is still ok. Parts of the interview were disrupted with people coming up to him and speaking. On the whole it was a very productive interview. He actually thinks people now see Eurovision as a joke – which in a way might be a sign of Estonia “belonging to the West” now. (Similar to the discourses on Finnish ESC failure). He said that when they staged the event they didn’t really realise the attitudes towards the contest from UK, France etc. Later I interviewed the stage designer of ESC 2002 Iir Hermeliin.

She didn't have a lot of positive things to say about the contest but she did come up with a few gems. She was in Germany at the time of the 2001 victory and when people found out that she was from Estonia then they would talk about Eurovision. She said that in her experience the "older Eurovision countries" were less demanding than the smaller ones – again probably hinting at the fact that they take it more seriously as a way of self-promotion. She spoke about design a lot and much was slightly missing the point although the comments about people in Germany were very useful.

1.5.7 Analysis of data

The data collected for this research was analysed thematically according to the topic or subject area which was discussed. Interviews were divided into themes and further segregated depending on whether they were elite level interviews or not. In terms of the print media analysis, this was analysed chronologically. Chapter four discusses the initial newspaper coverage of Estonian victory in the Eurovision Song Contest and chapter five provides detail of the build-up to the hosting of the event in Tallinn in May 2002. The two Estonian national daily newspapers, *Postimees* and *Õhtuleht* were used. The newspapers were held in the archives at the National Library of Estonia in Tallinn and were photocopied (with permission) and then translated in English. Other printed material such as documents from Estonian Television were also analysed as part of this research. Similar to the in-depth interviews, print material was analysed according to theme. Issues pertaining to Brand Estonia were segregated for discussion in chapter three and similarly coverage of Dave Benton and aspects of national identity in Estonia for example, were reserved for chapter four.

1.5.8 Ethical considerations

Although researchers are committed to the advancement of knowledge, that goal does not, in itself, provide an entitlement to override the rights of others (Statement 11 of the Ethical Practice for the BSA, March 2002).

Ethical issues are important in social research and give the subject and researcher integrity while ensuring that harm (variously understood) is minimised for both the researcher and his/her participants. Ethics are the primary concern of which is to protect individual rights from any sort of transgressions caused by research (Bryman 2004, p.509). I applied for ethical approval for my research from the Departmental Ethical Committee and was granted this prior to undertaking fieldwork for this thesis. Whilst research based on popular culture events such as the Eurovision Song Contest may not be overtly controversial or

raise serious ethical questions per se, the issues relating to identity that were discussed needed extra care. More specifically, the research took place soon after the Bronze Soldier riots of April 2007 in Tallinn, and questions of identity and the “other” needed to be handled with sensitivity. Informed consent was another issue that needed to be addressed. Some researchers ask their respondents to sign consent forms when taking part in social research. This is ill-advised or perhaps simply not so straightforward when focussing on the former Soviet Union since signing of official documents and giving personal details is equated by many with the previous Soviet system and carries with it many negative connotations. Some people may have felt uncomfortable sharing such information and may then have refused to take part in the research. It is important to remember/take into account the context that the research is taking place in, as such for respondents in Ukraine and Estonia verbal consent was deemed to be the most appropriate option. Respondents were fully informed about how their data would be stored and were able to request a copy of the transcript as well as being made aware that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time in accordance with the University of Glasgow’s ethical guidelines.

Issues of anonymity were also important for some respondents who could be easily identified. Codes have been used where appropriate for some public level respondents rather than using the full name of the individual. Some respondents provided opinions on racism in Estonia and one in particular alleged that racism was an inherent problem within social institutions in the country. This is discussed in chapter four, and whilst the views cannot be quantified or dispelled, anonymity was required given the sensitivity of the situation. The individual may have been easily identified so I took the decision that the name of that individual was not to be disclosed for this research. On the whole most respondents were happy to be named in this research.

1.6 Reflections upon the process of fieldwork, data analysis, writing up and limitations of this study

The fieldwork conducted for this thesis was fruitful and detailed. However there are some limitations of this study. Namely in Ukraine access to political respondents was problematic. Issues of bureaucracy, language and time constraints meant that I was unable to access some of the politicians I wanted to speak to despite my best efforts. Moreover there were also issues with regarding obtaining copies of newspapers in Ukraine for analysis. However on reflection I feel that any shortcomings have been counterbalanced by

the strength of data collected in Estonia and in Ukraine at the ground-level. Moreover the political elite in Estonia were incredibly open and appeared to be genuinely interested in my research. Language certainly played an issue in opening doors for this research. I had two years of intensive Estonian language training before going into the field and whilst knowledge of Ukrainian would have certainly been beneficial, it was not possible or practical. Moreover despite having a working knowledge of Russian, doors to the Ukrainian political elite did not appear to open. At the time of fieldwork, in winter 2007, Ukraine was experiencing more political upheaval which further added to restrictions upon my research, it effectively meant that access to politicians in the country was stifled. By contrast, the different political climate in Estonia, as well as my working knowledge of Estonian, opened many doors for me and I was able to interview all elite level respondents who I contacted and my closer affiliation with the public-level respondents in Estonia along with my own university's strong links, meant that my research in Estonia was incredibly rich and diverse. As stated earlier in this chapter, this work does not seek to be completely representative of public opinion; it is an exploration of issues of national identity in a post-Soviet context through the lens of the Eurovision Song Contest, which I believe I have achieved as a result of my research.

1.6.1 Transcriptions of data

As highlighted earlier (1.5.5) the vast majority of the translation of Estonian print media was done by a native Estonian speaker. I felt this to be the most appropriate option given the time constraints of the study as well as the simple fact that no one is better placed to understand the nuances of language than a native speaker. Whilst Temple states that there is “no single correct translation of a text” (Temple 2005, p.2.1), the use of a native Estonian speaker provided me with a sound and detailed translation of print media which was discussed in detail with the translator both before and after the work was carried out. Moreover my own knowledge of Estonian meant that I was also able to double-check the final output⁷.

With the exception of a handful of interviews in Ukraine, the interviews conducted for this thesis were in English. This meant that in terms of transcribing, the practicalities of translation were not an issue. Furthermore detailed notes were also taken during recorded interviews which meant that issues or nuances in speech were flagged where appropriate as

⁷ Each time I did this I found the translation to be accurate

well as evident on the recording. The choice to transcribe the interviews myself added a greater dimension of reflexivity to my work, I was able to analyse my interviews during the transcription process. This also removed the ethical issue of having a third party transcribing potentially sensitive personal data.

In terms of organising and analysing the data I opted not to use computer based software. The interviews followed a logical framework in terms of questions and as such I felt that the use of computer software would not have significantly aided my in terms of analysis. As stated above, the fact that I transcribed the interviews myself allowed me to get a “feel” of the views of the various respondents. Given that the questions followed a similar order I could then analyse each response according to theme. For example when discussing the Brand Estonia campaign (chapter three) the former Prime Minister of Estonia, Mart Laar provided views on this alongside other respondents. These responses were then collated and used as a focal point for discussion in chapter three. Similarly elite level discussions around Eurovision for example were collectively analysed and used in the appropriate chapters. I feel that whilst computer aided software can help with larger data sets, my work is more nuanced and as such required a more personalised approach.

1.6.2 Practicalities

There were certain practical issues which arose from the fieldwork for this study. One such interview was with Mart Laar, the former Prime Minister who had a TV crew in his office for the entire duration of our conversation. Whilst I appreciated the fact that such a prominent figure had given up his time for me and that it did not directly impact upon my own actions, I did feel that his concentration was not always on the questions per se. Signe Kivi, the former Minister of Culture stated that she did not want to be recorded since she did not feel comfortable. In accordance with ethical guidelines her wishes were of course respected. However it did throw the beginning of the interview off course due to my personal embarrassment at the situation and that it was the first time this had happened to me. Given my experience now, I do not think it is something that would faze me in such a way. There were also some rather amusing incidents which took place along the way. One respondent agreed to meet with me and then phoned later on asking if I would do him a favour. Naturally if people are taking time out of the schedules to help with research then I am only happy to do so, like most researchers would given the tradition of reciprocity. However this particular individual, a musician, wanted me to attend a concert of his under the pretence that I was a member of the British Government. His aim was to create a media

hoax which would then provide publicity for his band. Given my responsibilities as a researcher, I felt that this would be unethical and declined the offer. As a result of this, he chose not to meet with me the following day for our interview.

In total 79 interviews were conducted for this thesis⁸. On average most interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. Some of the less fruitful interviews tended to be shorter with some respondents providing limited answers or even simple “yes, no” responses. The respondents who did agree to be interviewed were in the main incredibly helpful in providing me with valuable opinions, counter-opinions and judgements on the issues which I asked them about. I found interviewing to be a useful and effective method of data collection and feel that the detail provided by my elite level contacts in particular, and the diversity of the public-level respondents are of strength to this thesis as a whole.

In Ukraine, as previously highlighted, contacts were less developed. This had an impact on my research with the politicians in particular. I did find however that the elite level interviews in Ukraine were particularly fruitful, namely the interviews which were arranged with the public relations firm CFC Consulting Ukraine. They provided me with space to work along with interviews and a translator to interview several people who did not speak English. Certainly the language barrier was an issue in Ukraine along with the fact that it was a very different society to the one in which I had become accustomed to in Estonia. One incident which did have a huge impact on my personal security was being approached by police officers when I was on my way back to my accommodation. They demanded to see my passport, when I pointed out that it was in the apartment they then proceeded to demand money or said that I would face arrest. It was a particularly distressing situation to be in and also highlights the potential difficulties of conducting multi-sited research and reinforces the importance of being aware of the context of the field. The issue of police corruption was also one which had a lasting impact on my time in Ukraine since two further incidents with the police left me feeling particularly vulnerable. Whilst this did not stop my research as such, it did mean that I was particularly cautious and retreated somewhat from how forthright I was when it came to arranging interviews.

The second leg of fieldwork began in March 2008 and initially took place in Sweden where I had arranged interviews with several respondents including Svante Stockselius from the EBU. Several interviews took place before meeting with Stockselius. On the day

⁸ See Appendix A for a full list of interviews conducted for this study

in which I was meant to meet with him, I received a call from him saying that he was ill and could no longer meet me. I was booked to travel to Estonia the following day and so did not meet up with him. My research in Estonia continued as planned and I was able to expand on the idea of Estonian image building by meeting with the campaign team behind the current Tallinn European City of Culture award. Eventually a meeting in Sweden was re-scheduled and I was able to travel relatively easily back to Sweden. The interview was particularly fruitful and covered a variety of topics. Indeed after the recorder was switched off, Mr Stockselius gave his views on certain issues whilst at the same time asking not to be quoted. Obviously in accordance with ethical guidelines his wishes must be respected, even if they would have provided a particularly useful insight. Unfortunately a technical error meant that the recording of this interview was lost before it could be backed up. This was personally speaking, a huge blow, given the efforts it took to re-schedule the interview and given what he said in the interview. However fortunately I had made notes and contacted him again via email to confirm what was said and what could be used in the thesis.

As a prelude to presenting my empirical findings, the following chapter explores the history of the Eurovision Song Contest. In particular it focuses on the politics of the event and the way in which it has previously been used by nation states as a platform for image building and nation branding. This aims to contextualise the event before the main case studies of this research are presented. The chapter begins with a general history of the contest before going on to explore the key socio-political issues which have been played out within the event, in the gaze of a global audience.

Chapter 2: The Politics of Eurovision: An Historical Introduction

2.1 Introduction

Following on from some of the concepts discussed in chapter one, this chapter aims to provide an historical background to the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) and contextualises it as an event. This chapter and thesis generally treats the ESC as an example of event tourism in that each host nation aims to produce a televised show of a high standard which in turn seeks to raise the international profile or image of the country, as highlighted in chapter one (1.4.3). In this respect the contest may be regarded as an example of international event culture which otherwise is primarily the arena of international sports, such as the Olympic Games or World Cup. Like these sports events, the ESC fulfils the function of focussing on issues of national identity and prestige in an international setting (Björnberg cited in Raykoff 2007, p.14). It is therefore necessary to provide some background to the origins of the ESC and highlight the role that it has played from its inception as a platform for performance and branding of the nation. Rather than provide a generic history of the event this chapter will focus specifically on the concepts of “Europe”, both East and West and highlight the role that the ESC has played in both constructing and breaking down barriers. Marko Lehti and David Smith (2003) and others (Kuus 2004, p.473) & (Mälksoo 2009, p.656) argue that the imagined East/West divide still exists today within an EU accession context. This is exemplified by the rhetoric surrounding the Eurovision Song Contest which provides a useful mirror of these trends.

This chapter highlights the geopolitical context of this study through an exploration of the history and debates in the Eurovision Song Contest itself which provides a necessary prelude to the main empirical chapters which focus on Estonia and Ukraine. Manifestations and constructions of national identity through the contest will be explored using specific examples and case studies. The ESC is treated as a platform in this context and therefore one main theme of this chapter will highlight how the event has regularly been used as a battleground for nationalist protest despite the organisers, namely the European Broadcasting Union insisting that the ESC is not a political event. I will use specific examples to illuminate this, namely from Israel, Greece, Azerbaijan and Armenia. By examining the Eurovision Song Contest through this gaze, many current political debates and socio-political issues can be teased out such as the role of language as identity as well as the influence of the diaspora vote in Eurovision. Furthermore the use of the ESC as an event for image building will be discussed with specific focus on Ireland’s successive

staging of the event in the 1990s as well as the “Beijing Olympics of Eurovision” (Norton 2009), the Eurovision Song Contest 2009 in Moscow. Parallels can be drawn between these case studies and Estonia and Ukraine in terms of presenting a particular narrative of the nation in a European context.

2.2 The European Broadcasting Union and Eurovision: A History

The inaugural Eurovision Song Contest took place on May 24 1956 and was established by Marcel Baisson of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) who drew inspiration from the annual Italian San Remo music festival. Eurovision represents one of the major television spectacles in Europe given the scale of the production and annual viewing figures. The EBU was founded in 1950 and is a confederation of state broadcasting organisations with 74 active members. The EBU is not just confined to European networks, others members include national broadcasters in the Middle East and further afield⁹. The Eurovision Song Contest is the organisations highest profile event; however, the EBU network also transmits major international events such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup on the Eurovision Network. In 1993 the EBU merged with the International Television and Radio Organisation (OIRT), the Eastern European equivalent¹⁰. The founding of both the EBU and the ESC itself therefore takes on significance in terms of reflecting the political developments in Europe at that time. More so given that the OIRT founded the Intervision Song Contest in 1977 which ran until 1980. Staged in Sopot, Poland with a majority communist nation participant list, it was an attempt to emulate the very successful Eurovision Song Contest. It is interesting to note that Finland participated in this event as well as the Eurovision Song Contest, which can be seen as a reflection of Finland’s peripheral geopolitical position in Europe, a dual-vector approach towards both East and West.

Although officially the Eurovision Song Contest is a non-political event, its history can be seen as part of the Cold War process of fashioning Europe as a unified bloc (Fricker *et al.* 2007). In this context the “Europe” referred to here is the West; the ESC can be seen as an event uniting Western European countries in terms of popular culture and one which, with the exception of Yugoslavia, did not include any communist nations. With the establishment of Intervision, the divide between Western Europe and communist East

⁹ The contest is also broadcast in Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁰ Similar to the EBU in the West, the OIRT was an East European network of radio and television broadcasters with the primary purpose of establishing ties and securing an interchange of information between those various organisations responsible for broadcasting services.

became more apparent. The event also represents a mirror image of the development of the European Union in that both have continued to expand their memberships eastwards since the fall of communism. Thus the event can be considered an example of how culture is used to foster improved international relations. The original idea behind the contest and still its defining feature today, is that nations (whose television companies are active members of the EBU) submit original songs which are performed and televised live. This is followed by voting to determine the “best” European song of the year. The first contest only included seven participating countries each submitting two songs. Since then only one song has been entered by each competing nation. In 2008 a record 43 countries participated in the event. The contest is broadcast in Australia and Japan amongst other countries and it is estimated by the EBU that 100 million viewers watch every year, though it is popularly believed that the total is over 200 million or higher (Fricker *et al.* 2007).

Eligibility to participate is not determined by geographic inclusion within the continent of Europe, despite the inference in the title of the competition. Rather entry to the event is dependent upon the national broadcaster being a full and active member of the EBU. Several countries which are geographically out with the boundaries of Europe have competed; namely Israel and Azerbaijan since 1973 and 2008 respectively. Morocco in North Africa took part in 1980. In addition, Turkey and Russia, which are both transcontinental countries with most of their territory outside of Europe, have competed respectively since 1975 and 1994. Thus Europe as a socio-political construct (Lehti & Smith 2003, pp.183-184) is not only mirrored in the ESC but effectively reinforced.

2.2.1 The Eurovision Song Contest: Reflecting the changing map of Europe

The Eurovision Song Contest has highlighted the changing map of Europe in the wake of the collapse of communism in the East. The re-integration of Eastern European countries into the mainstream of Europe led to semi-finals being introduced in the contest in 2004. In 2008 as a result of continued eastward expansion of the contest, two semi finals were introduced. The contest has reflected wider political events; the 1990 contest, held in Zagreb after the collapse of the Berlin Wall is a strong example of this. The event featured songs which made reference to Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate (Norway), Ireland’s “Somewhere in Europe”, Austria pleaded for “No More Walls”, Germany’s effort was called “Frei Zu Leben” (“Free To Live”) whilst the winner from Italy called for a united Europe (Gambaccini 1998, p.114). Fifty one countries have participated at least once, a

table detailing the year in which each respective country made its Eurovision debut can be seen overleaf:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Country making its debut entry</u>
<u>1956</u>	Belgium, France, Germany ¹¹ , Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland
<u>1957</u>	Austria, Denmark, United Kingdom
<u>1958</u>	Sweden
<u>1959</u>	Monaco
<u>1960</u>	Norway
<u>1961</u>	Finland, Spain, Yugoslavia
<u>1964</u>	Portugal
<u>1965</u>	Ireland
<u>1971</u>	Malta
<u>1973</u>	Israel
<u>1974</u>	Greece
<u>1975</u>	Turkey
<u>1980</u>	Morocco
<u>1981</u>	Cyprus
<u>1986</u>	Iceland
<u>1993</u>	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia
<u>1994</u>	Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia
<u>1998</u>	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
<u>2000</u>	Latvia
<u>2003</u>	Ukraine
<u>2004</u>	Albania, Andorra, Belarus, Serbia and Montenegro ¹²
<u>2005</u>	Bulgaria, Moldova
<u>2006</u>	Armenia
<u>2007</u>	Czech Republic, Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia
<u>2008</u>	Azerbaijan, San Marino

Figure 2.1: A table showing the first year of participation in the ESC 1956-2008

Yugoslavia took part in the Eurovision Song Contest from 1961 until 1992 and was the only Eastern European and communist country to do so. The mere participation may be seen as a form of nationalist politics and protest as a result of Tito's refusal to submit

¹¹ Before German reunification in 1990 West Germany participated, representing the Federal Republic of Germany. East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) did not compete.

¹² Serbia and Montenegro participated for the first time in 2004 however after the union was dissolved in 2006 they both entered as separate entities in 2007.

Yugoslavia to Soviet political and cultural dominance (Vuletic cited in Raykoff 2007, p.83). Yugoslavia pursued its own path of cultural cooperation with the West and part of this therefore included participation in Eurovision. Yugoslavia participated in the Eurovision Song Contest for the final time in 1992 and the following year Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia all made their debuts after they were voted in the top three nations of the pre-selection qualifier organised by the EBU, “Kvalifikacija za Millstreet” (*Qualification for Millstreet*). Other countries which competed in the competition were Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Estonia.

1993 also saw a relegation system introduced in the competition as a response to the increasing demand to participate from the new members states from the post-communist bloc. The bottom scoring six nations in the 1993 event would therefore be relegated to allow for seven debuts the following year (O'Connor 2007, p.138). In 1994 Russia, Hungary, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania all made their respective debuts, the largest ever influx of new countries to the contest since the inaugural competition in 1956. In 1996, in response to pressure from Germany, which had been relegated as a result of its poor showing in the event in 1995, a pre-selection featuring 29 countries was organised (O'Connor 2007, p.138). The preliminary audio-only competition was voted on by all competing nations in which the top 22 songs would proceed to the live final. Of those relegated, Germany was one of them, 1996 would be the first and to date only time that Germany has not participated in a Eurovision Song Contest final.

The absence of Germany, one of the largest financial contributors and with one of the highest potential viewing audiences, presented an issue for the EBU. Following on from this a “Big Four” rule was introduced in 2000. Effectively this guaranteed that the largest financial contributors to the competition, Germany, France, Spain and the United Kingdom all had guaranteed places in the Eurovision finals every year. The Big Four rule effectively represents an appeasement on behalf of the EBU to its western broadcasters in the wake of further eastward enlargement. Meanwhile between 1997 and 2001 the remaining competing nations qualified to the live final based on the average number of points from the previous five years. In 2002 the previous relegation system was re-introduced before the current live semi final format was launched in 2004. The various qualification systems imposed by the EBU therefore represents a response to the eastward enlargement of the competition. However with these attempts to include new participating nations, long-standing entrants, namely Germany, sought guarantees from the EBU that their positions in

the contest would not be overlooked. The Big Four rule is therefore a reflection of this tension between eastward enlargement and the need for Western financial security.

2.2.2 Moving with the times

The Eurovision Song Contest has changed almost beyond recognition since the very first broadcast of 1956. As stated at the beginning this chapter, the competition was devised as a vehicle for uniting European countries and helping to foster a pan-European collective identity. However it was also understood by the EBU that such a platform would also pioneer new broadcasting techniques (BBC *Nul Points: TV Hell* [TV] 1992). Such developments are evidenced in the introduction of colour broadcasting in 1968. Further examples include the changes in stage design throughout the decades, namely 1987 which “gave the impression that the contest was trying to catch up with the modern world” (O'Connor 2007, p.108). Contact with the various international juries was made via telephone until 1994 when satellite links were introduced and the jury spokesperson could be seen for the first time. In 1996 virtual reality was included in the voting procedure and in 1998 the scoreboard included a 3-D map of Europe. The competition was broadcast on the internet for the first time in 2000.

Other significant changes in the Contest's history have concerned language rules. Between 1973 and 1977 countries were permitted to sing in the language of their choice. From that point until 1999 participants had to perform in their national language. This therefore reflects an effort on the part of the EBU to promote identity articulation at a national level as well as the international. Today each national entry can be performed in any language, including imaginary languages as evidenced by Belgium in both 2003 and 2008; a reflection of the ambiguity of Belgian linguistic identity. In 1999 the use of a live orchestra was abandoned and has never returned to the contest since. However one of the largest changes in the competition's history has been the alteration to the voting procedure which has attracted renewed interest in the contest, and renewed controversies.

2.3 Eurovision Song Contest voting in focus

Since its inception various systems have been used to determine the winner of the Eurovision Song Contest. During the 1950s and 1960s the winner was determined by ten juries from each participating country who in turn gave one vote to their favourite song. However this was not without problems and in 1969 four countries tied for first place

(Spain, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom). With no precedent in place all four nations were declared the winner. Between 1971 and 1973 two jurors from each country voted for the top five songs, this was done “in vision” with the respective jurors seen on-screen casting their votes. In 1975 a new system was introduced which is still the defining feature of the contest today; countries vote from one to eight then ten points and finally the maximum twelve points is awarded.

Until 1997 this traditional jury system consisting of 16 people of differing ages from the music industry and the general public had been used. As a result of the 1996 contest, which handed Ireland its fourth win in five years, there was much discussion about the relevance of the juries at the ESC. The British act, Gina G went on to global success despite coming eighth in the event whilst the winner from Ireland did not. At the 1997 ESC, in response to criticism of the result from the previous year, telephone voting or “televoting” was trialed in five competing nations (O'Connor 2007, p.148). By 1998 this had been extended to all states unless there was a specific reason why voting should not be used, such as a voting malfunction or weak telephone system, in which case a back-up jury was used. The change in the voting procedure was described as a departure from “a corrupt, narrowly-based voting system in favour of wider democracy” (*The Independent*, 13 May 1998). However since televoting has been introduced further controversy has arisen amidst claims that the voting is “political” or has been hi-jacked by national diasporas voting for their homeland entries. Such claims were exacerbated after 2004 when the contest was opened up further to incorporate many Former Soviet Republics.

Recent studies have found that voting patterns do exist; former Soviet, Scandinavian and Balkan countries all tend to vote for each other (Fenn *et al.* 2006). However, what is not proven is the assertion that voting is inherently “political”. Whilst this is not a focus of the thesis per se, an examination of the nature of the debates on this subject reveals more about the wider socio-political context that the Eurovision Song Contest illuminates. The 2006 study also reveals that Estonia is grouped in with the Nordic countries, something which will be discussed in later chapters, but is entirely in-keeping with the narratives from Estonian politicians in the 1990s. The accusation that the ESC is “political” is nothing new; since the 1980s Greece and Cyprus have regularly exchanged the top vote whilst awarding few, if any, to Turkey. However since the contest has expanded eastward it has infused new interest and with that new controversies in particular the inclusion of countries with large diaspora populations, some of the strongest examples include Turkey, Armenia and Russia.

Turkey, which first entered the competition in 1975, did not fare well until the late 1990s. With the introduction of the public vote Turkey's entries have been markedly more successful, going on to win the event in 2003. What is interesting to note is that Germany, with a large population of people of Turkish origin, tends to vote overwhelmingly for Turkey. Between 2003 and 2006 Germany awarded Turkey with 44 points out of a maximum of 48. In 2003 when Turkey won, it received most votes from Germany, Belgium, France and Netherlands, all of which have a sizeable Turkish diaspora. In recent years Turkey has also received the high scores from the UK vote and when the popular vote did not go to Turkey it went to Greece, both of which have long-established communities in the UK. Furthermore Armenia, which first entered the competition in 2006, has consistently placed in the top ten countries, receiving most votes from Russia, Netherlands, Belgium and Turkey. All of which have a large Armenia diaspora. Finally perhaps the strongest example of diaspora voting in the Eurovision Song Contest is the votes that Russia receives. Russia, which first participated in the event in 1994, has like Turkey, received more votes after the introduction of the public telephone vote. In recent years Russia has received the most votes from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Israel. All of which awarded Russia the maximum vote in 2008 when they won and all of which have significant Russian-speaking populations. Whilst again this is not evidence of "politics" per se, it does suggest that there does appear to be a direct link with the diaspora vote.

The reaction to this apparent diaspora voting in the wider western press has been overwhelmingly negative. *"UK may quit Eurovision amid fears tactical voting is turning competition into a farce"* (*Daily Mail* 29 May 2008). Indeed Terry Wogan quit in his role as BBC commentator after the UK finished last in 2008 whilst Russia went on to win. The failure of the Netherlands to reach the final in 2005 was held up in the Dutch media as an example of how power within the EU has shifted eastwards (Browne 2005). Every winner from 2001-2008 has been from a new-entrant country outside the contest's traditional Western European heartland, or from long-time participant countries which had not yet scored a victory. Greece and Finland, both of which are located on the physical edges of Western Europe, won for the first time in this period (Fricker 2009, p. 1-2). The debates surrounding the ESC and the increasing "politicisation" of the contest, namely by Eastern European participant states ignores the voting correlations which exist between the UK and Ireland for example and also serves as a further example of the "othering" of Eastern

Europe. In this context comments about so-called Eastern-bloc voting at the ESC can be seen as a reflection of the general rhetoric concerning European Union enlargement.

The 2007 Eurovision Song Contest semi final, where all ten qualifiers came from east of the Danube, inflamed the passions of critics and arguably paved the way for further changes to the organisation of the contest. In a bid to dispel the controversies of the previous year, the EBU separated countries on the basis of location and by those which had previously tended to vote for each other into various different “pots”. Countries which took part in one semi final were not eligible for vote for those in another, effectively splitting the vote. Furthermore a jury vote was also introduced in the semi finals meaning that in 2008 Sweden, which ranked twelfth in the popular vote qualified ahead of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Despite the changes to the voting system, the inherent perception of corruption persisted mainly amongst western competitors. In fact the Big Four nations were to pave the way for further changes the following year (O'Connor 2007, p.195). In 2009 the EBU re-introduced the use of the jury vote, combining it in an equal division with the public telephone vote for the final and this was expanded further to include both semi finals in 2010. Such a move can be seen as evidence of the EBU desire to continue to expand the competition whilst at the same time providing reassurance to long-standing (western) participants that their concerns were being addressed whilst at the same time ensuring that the funding for the competition continues to be secured.

2.4 The Eurovision Song Contest: Reflecting the rhetoric of conflict

As stated earlier in this chapter, throughout its fifty-four year history, the Eurovision Song Contest has reflected political changes in Europe. The contest has also routinely been used as a platform for political statements, reflecting the rhetoric of conflict. The Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 is one such example. Greece withdrew from the contest in 1975 when it was announced that Turkey would enter, and neither country took part in the same contest until 1978 (Gambaccini 1998, p.69). The Greek entry of 1976, “Panaghia Mou, Panaghia Mou” (*My Lady, My Lady*) was a direct protest against the Turkish invasion. The lyrics included references to napalm ruins and fields of refugees. It shows how symbolic the contest is in terms of nationalist politics as neither country was willing to share the same stage. Greece and Cyprus have become infamous for awarding each other the maximum twelve points every year whilst giving very few, if any, to Turkey. When Cyprus broke with tradition in 2003 and awarded eight points to Turkey, it did not go unnoticed when the spokesperson declared ‘Europe, peace to Cyprus, Turkey eight points’

(Melani Steliou, Eurovision Song Contest 2003). Thus the political relevance of the gesture was flagged, representing a change in the way the relationship between Cyprus and Turkey is imagined. It is noteworthy that this occurred at a time when both sides of the divided island were moving closer together as a result of the ongoing peace talks. Although following this, some Greek-Cypriots accused the state-run broadcasting authorities of rigging the vote (Soloman cited in Raykoff 2007, p.140). Similarly, points exchanged between Greece and Turkey have increased in recent years and this has been attributed to the so-called ‘earthquake diplomacy’ of 1999 (Polychronakis 2008).

At the time of the 1993 contest the war in the Balkans was raging on and this was given particular attention in the songs from Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia, who along with Slovenia were making their debut at the competition. At a press conference a member of the Bosnian delegation highlighted the significance of the event for the country.

We have many problems to come here [to Eurovision]. We go out from the surrendered city, running across the runway in the middle of the night, through grenades, through snipers. We risked our lives to be here to show the whole of the world that we are just normal, peaceful people in Bosnia Herzegovina and that we just want to live in peace and to do our jobs (*Why Not Millstreet?* [TV] RTE 1993).

The comments from the Bosnian delegation therefore highlight the significance of the ESC in terms of flagging ones “normal” or “European” credentials. This will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. In this context the delegation from Bosnia Herzegovina sought to portray their country as an “ordinary” European state despite news reports in the wider press suggesting otherwise. The entries from both Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina reflected the turmoil in each country. The Bosnia Herzegovina entry was entitled “Sva Bol Svijeta” (*Pain in the world*) The Croatian effort, “Don’t ever cry”, had similar undertones and told the story of a young man, Ivan who died in the war (Veletic in Raykoff, 2007, pg 97). Furthermore, Slovenia which had largely escaped the bloodshed of the war made no reference to the conflict in their Eurovision debut.

1994 saw the Bosnia-Herzegovinian Eurovision entry receive rapturous applause from the audience even before the song had been performed. When the Bosnian jury were called in to give their votes they were greeted with thunderous applause which continued for so long that the voting had to be paused and restarted when the audience had quietened. Again in 1995 there was a similar reception for the Bosnian spokesperson. The backdrop featured a curtain with “XXI” written in what appeared to be blood. The Bosnia Herzegovina entry of

that year was entitled “21st Century” and so the symbol which featured during the voting can be seen as a clear reminder to the rest of the world from Bosnia, that the war and bloodshed was continuing, Eurovision was an avenue for this form of “social reminder”, keeping the war in the European public consciousness. At the Eurovision Song Contest in 1996, special mention of the Bosnian situation was made in the programme booklet produced for that year.

When the head of the jury in Bosnia Herzegovina calls, we suddenly get the feeling that the Eurovision Song Contest is something more than the world’s oldest television programme. When he says “good evening Oslo” from his war-devastated capital and is met by spontaneous applause from the concert hall, then we really understand the whole idea behind the programme (1996 Eurovision Song Contest programme booklet, NRK, pg 4).

At the 2000 contest Israeli representatives, Ping-pong, waved Syrian flags during rehearsals. Israel and Syria were officially in a state of war at the time and Israel’s then Deputy Education Minister, Shlomo Yahalom called for the group’s participation to be banned claiming that they failed to represent national values (BBC News, 11 May 2000). The waving of the Syrian flag during rehearsals on Israel’s Independence Day May 10th, in particular, caused further upset to officials who publically boycotted the group leaving them to cover their own expenses. Despite threats from Israeli broadcasting officials to ban the group from performing altogether, they appeared at the 2000 ESC and waved the Syrian flag along with the Israeli flag in a call for peace.

In 2009 a series of disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan unfolded throughout the live broadcasts of the semi-finals and final. During the semi-finals, an introductory “postcard” leading into the Armenian performance depicted, amongst other monuments, a statue located in Stepanakert, capital city of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, which constitutes a part of Azerbaijan. The statue was built in Soviet times to celebrate the Armenian heritage of the area. The delegation from Azerbaijan complained to the EBU that the video clip was unacceptable based on the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan, and it was subsequently edited out for the broadcast of the final. In retaliation, the presenter of the Armenian votes held up a clipboard with the monument’s picture on it multiple times as she read off the votes, and in the background a screen in the capital’s main square could also be seen to display the disputed monument. In August 2009 the BBC reported that several people had been questioned in Azerbaijan after their votes for Armenia were traced by mobile phone service providers. According to the BBC “one man was accused of being unpatriotic and a “potential security threat” after he sent a text

backing Armenia's song [...] the Azerbaijani authorities said people had merely been invited to explain why they voted for Armenia" (BBC News, 18 August 2009). The issue was investigated by the EBU and whilst they found no evidence to pursue the affair, a clause preventing telecom communication providers from disclosing personal information was added to the rules of the contest. The examples cited here show that Eurovision is symbolic in terms of reflecting wider conflict within Europe; a vehicle for nationalist politics, displayed to a global audience.

2.5 Narratives of the nation within Eurovision

As early as 1958 issues of national identity and representation were present in the Eurovision Song Contest with Sweden's debut entry that year which can be seen as an example of promoting some form of national identity to a wider European audience. The performer, Alice Babs wore a very traditional style of Swedish folk dress whilst all the other performers that year opted for more formal attire. In 1966 the British entry was performed by a Scot, Kenneth McKellar who performed in a kilt and remains the only person to have done so in the contest. Again, this is a way of promoting a form of national costume to a wider European audience. Finland's entry in 1977 was called "Lapponia" and featured dress which resembled the Finnish flag. "Lapponia" was a song which romanticised the area of Lapland and featured yodelling. In the CD lining notes of the Finnish Eurovision compilation album, it is described as a "distinctly Finnish song". In 1980 Norway's Eurovision entry did not just feature folk costume, but was also performed in both Norwegian and Yoik, a Sami form of vocal music without words, therefore portraying a certain narrative of the nation. The song "Sámiid Aednan", (*Lapland*), was a protest song since it was a call for autonomy for the Sami people in northern Norway, the lyrics of which made reference to Sami hunger strikes (Bohlman 2004, p.232).

In 2003 when Ukraine made its debut in the ESC, it was the only country to feature the country name within the stage setting. It therefore represented Ukraine's arrival at Eurovision, a way of introducing the country to a wider European audience. The stage floor consisted of video screens and featured moving images. For Ukraine the theme was an Apollo rocket with "Ukraine" clearly visible on the side as well as the performer, Oleksandr Ponomaryov wearing a shirt with a small emblem of the Ukrainian flag, again representing the "flagging" of the nation. Ukraine's winning song from 2004 may also be considered to be featuring elements of national identity. Ruslana's "Wild Dances" was a modern take on the ancient Carpathian Hutsul culture which was widely suppressed during

the Soviet era. In 2004 Estonia entered a song which was performed in the Võru dialect, the same year that the country became a member of the EU. These two entries in particular are discussed in depth in chapters six and seven respectively.

Spain entered a distinctly ethnic song in 1983 by Flamenco artist Remedios Amaya and can be considered to reflect a certain narrative of a national culture, despite the risks of it not being understood by the wider audiences. At the 2007 contest the Irish entry was a very traditional folk song which featured a wealth of Irish instruments and the lead singer, Kathy Jordan wearing traditional Celtic symbols. Irish dancing formed a large part of the Irish entry in 2005 whilst the winner in 1996 for Ireland is undoubtedly their most “ethnic” entry to date; “The Voice” was a straightforward Celtic song in a neo-ethnic arrangement (Björnberg cited in Raykoff, 2007, pg 21).

Greece and Turkey have been consistent when it comes to sending songs to Eurovision reflecting forms of national culture. Turkey’s 2003 winner, “Every Way That I Can” was an ethnic song which featured belly dancing at various points, again a way of using national culture to promote the song and country. The winning song from Turkey in 2003 and Ukraine the following year might be considered to be “diluted” in terms of ethnic content because they have been modernised and therefore “de-ethnicised”, however they may still be considered “ethnic” to Western ears (Björnberg cited in Raykoff, 2007, pg 21). The very fact that Turkey opted to sing solely in English that year was met with criticism from linguists in Turkey. “Lyrics in English will lead to new alienation in our language and every area of our life” (Solomon cited in Raykoff, 2007, pg 137). Whilst singing in English may not fully promote national identity within the song per se, as previously stated the belly dancing as well as the instruments used and the overall style all contribute to an ethnically Turkish sound which seems not to have been intended for consumption in Turkey but for distribution, promotion and consumption outside Turkey, in Europe.

These traditional or modern takes on traditional styles represent various portrayals of ethnic cultures and national or even minority identities within in the Eurovision Song Contest. In this context, Eurovision can be considered a platform for the reproduction of certain narratives of the “nation” in the sense that singers are encouraged according to the rules, to reflect the national identity or the culture they represent (Gumpert cited in Raykoff, 2007, 148). However this is questionable given the fact that there are no set rules regarding the nationality of the performer or songwriter. It also raises further questions regarding who decides on each entry and what is deemed to be representative of a

particular nation and what is not. In this context Dave Benton, Estonia's winning entrant from 2001, an immigrant from Aruba provides an interesting focal point which is explored further in chapter four.

As highlighted above, Eurovision provides an arena for the discussion and analysis of pan-European identities. In this context Switzerland, the founding Eurovision nation, has a complex identity which has been manifested through the way it has presented itself on the Eurovision stage. Switzerland last won the contest in 1988, when Céline Dion, a French-Canadian, took the prize with a song written by Turkish songwriter, Atila Şereftuğ. In recent times they have opted for a girl band from Estonia, Vanilla Ninja in 2005 and an international group Six4One in 2006. The entry that year was written by German songwriters Ralph Siegel and Bernd Meinunger. The group, Six4One consisted of six performers from across Europe; Malta, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sweden, Switzerland, Israel and Portugal. Only Malta gave the song significant support awarding the entry with the maximum twelve points, which suggests more about the strength of national identity in Malta rather than identification with the Swiss song more generally. Switzerland as a united country representing its national identity in the Eurovision Song Contest is therefore a construct. The group Six4One can therefore be considered to be reflective of the complexities concerning Swiss identity.

2.6 Contested identities

As highlighted earlier, the Eurovision Song Contest has regularly touched on controversial issues. The case studies of Israel and Slovenia serve as further examples of contested identities being manifested through the platform of Eurovision. In 1998 the Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA) selected a trans-gendered artist, Dana International to represent Israel at Eurovision. This caused uproar in the country with ultra-Orthodox Jews, who considered Dana International to be peripheral to their ideal of national identity (Raykoff 2007, p.11). Others such as composer Svika Pikk highlighted the fact that it was a chance to promote Israel as a liberal and tolerant country, changing the way the Middle East is imagined. Politician Shlomo Ben-Izri claimed that the decision "symbolised the sickness of a secular Israel" (BBC News, 10 May 1998). Such discourses show how seriously some nations approach the Eurovision Song Contest; a Eurovision entry is seen as representative of the entire nation. The IBA defended their choice, "we should be seen as a liberal, free country that chooses songs on their merits not on the basis of the body of a man or woman" (Raykoff, 2007, pg 11).

Furthermore the 1999 Eurovision Song Contest in Jerusalem was dogged by controversy. The interval act featured Dana International singing below Jerusalem's historic city walls caused further outrage to ultra-Orthodox Jews, who were also incensed at religious lyrics being used in the performance. The rules of the Eurovision Song Contest state that a full dress rehearsal must take place on the Friday evening before the contest. This violated the traditions of the Jewish Sabbath where all activity is forbidden from sunset on Friday through to Saturday evening, again provoking angry reactions from conservatives regardless of the fact that Israel is officially a secular state. A compromise was reached, the IBA held the rehearsal in private. The Israeli entrants of 1999, four-piece boy band Eden, with the song, "Happy Birthday", was a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the state of Israel. The case of Israel has shown how the Eurovision Song Contest often touches on sensitive subjects such as gender identity, sexuality, religion and politics. Indeed in Israel and Jerusalem, these issues often intrude in even the most unlikely of situations. The reaction of some officials in Israel has shown how seriously they regard Israel's image. Such controversies therefore represent a struggle in Israel between secularism and religious freedom.

Gender and sexuality were issues which came to the foreground in Slovenia in 2002 when the transvestite act, Sestre, were chosen to represent the country. It was the choice of a jury who overruled the public vote and was seen by some as promoting an image of Slovenia which was peripheral to the traditions of the Catholic country and so street protests ensued. The debate reached the European Parliament with Louise van der Laan of the Public Liberties and Civic Rights Committee openly questioning Slovenia's commitment to human rights. Van der Laan was "very shocked to learn that in Slovenia there is again a debate relating to sexual minorities. That the issue of gay rights is coming up, confirms to us that, perhaps, Slovenia is not yet ready for EU membership" (BBC News, 5 March 2002). Sestre went on to perform in Eurovision in 2002. This episode further serves as evidence of the seriousness that some countries take their image, and for that matter, Eurovision itself.

2.7 Eurovision Song Contest: A platform for image building

In terms of tourism and infrastructure development, hosting the contest has been likened to hosting the Olympic Games and World Fairs of the 19th Century (Bolin 2006). Yet equally significant has been the role that the ESC plays in terms of promoting and refining a

country's international image (the case of Ireland's "Celtic Tiger" economic boom exemplifies this point). John Urry (2002, p.1-3) highlights the 'tourist gaze' concept, which is applicable to the Eurovision Song Contest. The 'tourist gaze' is a set of expectations and assumptions within which individuals regard destinations in particular and tourism in general. It is fundamentally "constructed through difference" (Urry 2002, p.1), understood by contrast to the routine of everyday life. The resources for constructing the tourist gaze are drawn from 'a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, television, literature, magazines records and videos' (Urry 2002, p. 1-3). It is this use of media which therefore makes this idea relevant to the Eurovision Song Contest. The reach of the mass media means that it may not be necessary to travel in order to see with the tourist gaze (Urry 2002, p.90). The strongest examples are the short film clips shown between each song during the Eurovision Song Contest. These "postcards" resemble tourist advertising campaigns, promoting scenery, cityscapes and other places of interest to the potential tourist, and are in essence representations of essentialised heritage.

The main analytical focus of this thesis concentrates on the debates concerning how the Eurovision Song Contest was used as a vehicle for image-building in Estonia and Ukraine. However there are many other examples of the contest being used for this purpose and the cases of Ireland, Turkey and Russia can be used to exemplify this. All are united by a desire to banish their peripheral status and aspire to greater centrality in Europe. Ireland has won seven Eurovision Song Contests in total, more times than any other nation. The continued success of Ireland at the contest brought much attention to the financial pressures that staging the contest successively placed on national broadcaster RTE. In this context the ESC took on greater significance for Ireland which by its continued and successful staging of the show, along with the launch of global dance phenomenon Riverdance as part of the interval act for the 1994 contest, Ireland was able to cultivate an image of modernity and economic success (Lin 2010, p.53). For Turkey, a nation with long-standing EU accession aspirations, the ESC provided the opportunity for the country to showcase itself as a "European" state rather than peripheral or Eurasian (Erkem 2009, p.500). Finally in 2009 Russia staged the largest contest ever in terms of scale and cost of the production, evidence of a desire to promote a resurgent Russia to a global audience. This is discussed later in this chapter.

2.7.1 Ireland

The Eurovision Song Contest is popular in Ireland, watched by an estimated two million people during the voting sequence (RTE *Why Not Millstreet?* [TV] 1993). The 1988 contest from Dublin can be seen as an example of Ireland presenting an alternative narrative of the nation to a global audience, effectively using the Eurovision Song Contest as a platform to promote a positive international image. RTE were responsible for the staging of the 1988 contest and according to Liam Miller, the director of Eurovision 1988, the creative team aimed to give Eurovision a “younger” image and present Ireland as a modern nation in Europe (RTE *And Finally France* [TV] 1988). The latest technology and design were used to create what was seen at the time as a groundbreaking production. The use of “video walls” and a computerised scoreboard are examples of this. Until the recent global economic crisis, Ireland was seen as a “Celtic Tiger” (Goodman 2000, p.157), and the narratives concerning Eurovision during the 1990s reflect this. It was seen as an opportunity to promote an alternative vision of Ireland, one of economic success and stability. When Ireland first won the ESC in 1970 the country was still seen very much as an economic “backwater” and there were even concerns that the country would not be able to host the event in 1971 (*Top Ten: Eurovision* [TV] 2000).

RTE were responsible for staging the event in 1993 after Ireland won in 1992. Instead of the expected choice, Dublin, RTE took the Eurovision Song Contest to a small village in County Cork, Millstreet with a population of 1500 people. The village boasted one of the largest equestrian auditoriums in the country, the Green Glens Arena. Joe Barry, Director-General of RTE stated that this was “an opportunity to make a very positive statement on behalf of RTE of its interests in the regions (RTE *Why Not Millstreet?* [TV] 1993). The 1993 contest was therefore an opportunity to promote an alternative image of Ireland, one of rural beauty, after the “urban” focus of the 1988 edition. The local infrastructure was given a complete overhaul prior to the contest and as such it is evidence of the event bringing long term investments. A clear sign of the importance that Ireland attached to the event was the appearance of Irish Premier, Albert Reynolds who visited the arena during renovations and stated:

You could not buy the space on television screens all around the world that you get from the Eurovision Song Contest. In the past we have found that RTE do a magnificent job in showing Ireland at its best and I have no doubt that down in Millstreet when you combine the talents of RTE and the people here in Millstreet, we

will have an excellent production on the night (RTE *Why Not Millstreet?* [TV] 1993).

In 1994 after Ireland won again, the contest returned to Dublin and it was again perceived to be an overall success. At this stage the Eurovision Song Contest was becoming more expensive to host since the number of entrants dramatically increased in the 1990s. There was also pressure to use the latest, often expensive, technology available. As a result, some critics began to question the usefulness of hosting the ESC. However according to Liam Miller, Head of Programmes at RTE, failure to produce the show would not only be damaging for Ireland's image but would also impact upon national pride. Miller stated that RTE took the event seriously as an opportunity to promote Ireland.

We always approached this [ESC] on the basis that you shouldn't get involved unless you are prepared for the consequences of winning. This is a matter of national pride (BBC *Counting The Cost* [TV] 1995).

Every year the host broadcaster puts on a performance after all entries have been performed whilst the various international juries deliberate the results, this has become known as the "interval act". In 1994 RTE commissioned an Irish dance act called Riverdance, created specifically for the Eurovision Song Contest, combining traditional Irish folk music and dance with modern adaptations. Riverdance became a global phenomenon, touring the world and breaking box office records everywhere it went, reshaping modern dance on the way. Riverdance is the biggest money-spinner ever created by Eurovision, with the single exception of ABBA (Gambaccini 1998, p.130). Riverdance created the prospect that managing the contest would do more than drain the budget of the broadcaster. The runaway success of Riverdance provided RTE with a handsome return on their initial Eurovision investment. It still remains popular today and succeeded in transforming the image of Irish traditional dancing into something modern, exciting and exportable (BBC *Counting The Cost* [TV] 1995).

Ireland won the contest again in 1994 meaning that RTE was therefore responsible for staging the event again the following year. The 1995 edition was like the previous year, held at the Point Theatre, Dublin. The year marked the fortieth anniversary of the Eurovision Song Contest and so the pressure was on for Ireland to stage a spectacular show. They rose to the challenge and managed to stay largely within budget. RTE had mastered the art of appearing lavish in production but actually being frugal in reality, re-using previous equipment and materials for the event the following year (BBC *Counting*

The Cost [TV] 1995). The contest also reflected political events in Ireland at the time with the presenter, Mary Kennedy introducing the show by making reference to the Northern Ireland peace process.

The Eurovision Song Contest is an event which celebrates a shared love of music by people of different cultures. This island of ours is shared by people of different cultures. We invite you to join with us tonight in our own celebration that neighbours north and south can now, together, share in the warm glow of peace. Long may it shine (Mary Kennedy, *Eurovision Song Contest* [TV] RTE 1995).

Thus RTE used the ESC as a platform for political commentary, despite the EBU insisting that the event is not a political one. Furthermore the comments contributed to a change in the way the relationship between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is imagined.

Ireland won the contest again in 1996 and so were due to host the event again in 1997. This victory made headline news, not only because of the feat of winning the event again but also because of the financial burden that the contest appeared to present to RTE. The narratives concerning the event in the media focussed on the cost and scale of production and questions were asked about Ireland's ability rather than willingness to stage the event again.

When it costs the winning nation up to £3 million to stage, it is not surprising that this year's celebrations are somewhat muted [...] The state broadcaster RTE are putting a brave face on it but admits that hosting the event is becoming a bit of a challenge (BBC News [TV] 20 May 1996).

However Irish Culture Minister, Michael D Higgins, was angered by suggestions that the Eurovision Song Contest was anything other than positive for Ireland and suggested that the victory represented "a combination of different excellences both musically and culturally" (BBC News [TV] 20 May 1996). Despite initial contact between the BBC and RTE regarding sharing the responsibility for staging the event, RTE decided that they would go ahead with the 1997 production alone and the contest returned to Dublin. Noel Curran, production team leader stated that he had two aims for the show, "a younger feel to the show and a departure from Celtic imagery" (RTE 1997). The 1997 contest, like 1988, highlights the importance of the event for reimagining the way Ireland presents itself to the world. Another point worth noting is that the presenters of all Irish-staged Eurovision Song Contests opened the show by speaking in Irish Gaelic. Then as customary French and English was used. RTE can therefore be seen as also promoting the indigenous language of Ireland through Eurovision.

2.7.2 Turkey

Turkey won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2003 for the first time after nearly three decades of entering. The result made headlines in Turkey and was seen by some as having possible political implications. Both the Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent their congratulations to the winning singer Sertab Erener, whilst MP Kursat Tuzmen said that he felt that the Eurovision success could aid Turkey's entry into the European Union.

This is a milestone in creating an atmosphere for entry in the EU like we deserve [...] it is a very important day [...] Turkey has earned a lot of sympathy from the European people (Kursat Tuzmen, BBC News, 25 May 2003).

Turkey received points from Cyprus for the first time in Eurovision Song Contest history in 2003, something which was flagged by the Cypriot spokesperson when delivering the points by making reference to the peace process on the island. As evidenced in the quote above, for many in Turkey the victory marked a symbolic arrival of the country in Europe; being accepted as a truly "European" state and its cultural contribution to Europe finally being valued, note the tone of the language used, "like we deserve". Turkey opted to stage the 49th contest in Istanbul in May 2004, the same year that Greece was due to host the Olympic Games in Athens. The theme for the contest was "Under the Same Sky" which highlighted the significance of Turkish integration into a united Europe. The Minister for Broadcasting underlined how seriously the Turkish government viewed the ESC:

I want to underline how important Eurovision is for the Turkish government, which regards the contest as a unique opportunity to promote Turkey in Europe. The event is [...] more important than any other political summit (Soloman cited in Raykoff, 2007, pg 148).

The contest featured the now customary postcard images of various beauty spots from around Turkey as well as historical sites. The cosmopolitan theme which underlay the postcards serves as evidence that this was a show produced with the European television viewer in mind. However the broadcast attracted strong criticism from Kurdish groups who claimed that the scenes portrayed non-Turkish regions as entirely indigenous. Thus the notion of national identity as a construction is reinforced.

The tourism commercial in the breaks between the songs showed the cultural heritage from the Kurdish, Armenian and Syrian parts of the country. But the unambiguous message was: this is only a Turkish landscape¹³.

2.7.3 Russia

Dima Bilan won the 2008 contest for Russia and in the words of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin it represented ‘not only Dima Bilan’s personal success, but one more triumph for all of Russia’ (*New York Times*, May 25 2008). Russian national broadcaster Channel One then went on to stage the event in Moscow in May 2009. The 2009 contest was like no other before; it was the most expensive in the contest’s 54 year history, costing over 30 million Euros (compared to the 13 million Euros spent in 2007). It was also the largest physically, the stage, according to the organisers held 30% of the worlds available LED lighting. The event was also one of the most controversial in recent years with various political and nationalist grievances being played out in front of an international audience. Given the unprecedented budget in the midst of a global financial crisis and the overall spectacle surrounding the 2009 affair, the ESC was therefore a chance to promote a positive international image of Russia *on its own terms* to the global media, given that much coverage of Russia in recent years has come from outside Russia and outside its control, as evidenced below:

We Russians have been through a lot, such events and victories are something to be proud of, not only are the celebrations fun but they are also positive. I guess in your media you don’t read many positive things about us (Student “A”, interview, Moscow, 11 May 2009).

In the media gaze of Western Europe, Russia has not fared well. The recent and public fallout from the death of Alexander Litvinenko, the recent killings of prominent critical journalists such as Anna Politkovskaya as well as the so-called “cyber attacks” on Estonia and the 2008 war with Georgia have left Russia open to criticism with consistent negative narratives appearing in the UK media (*Daily Mail* 27 August 2007, *Reuters*, 15 August 2008). The Eurovision Song Contest was therefore an opportunity to present a positive side of Russia to the world through the media. The Official Programme Booklet published by the national broadcaster, Channel One, emphasised the significance of the event in terms of boosting international images of the host country. It made specific reference to the 2008 competition which was hosted in Belgrade, Serbia; another country seeking to improve its

¹³ <http://hyeforum.com/index.php?showtopic=9591> Accessed on February 7th 2008

international image through cultural participation¹⁴. One respondent, a journalist present at the event in Moscow viewed the competition as:

A chance for Russia to show our country in the right way [...] *In the European mind* Russia and real Russia are different things. I care about what people think of my country. In the time of the Soviet Union we had a very bad relationship with other countries. Now we can talk about other countries and cultures [...] When we won Eurovision it was like a second victory day in Russia [...] Eurovision in Moscow is very very important for Russia [...] it is a chance for us to show what Russians think [...] The organisation of this event is brilliant, I am so proud of my country [...] I think Eurovision in Moscow is the best Eurovision (Journalist “A”, interview, Moscow, 10 May 2009).

The journalist in question stated that hosting the competition represented an important chance for Russia to present itself in a positive light and for those present at the event to be aware that the Western media may have been presenting an alternative view to the Russia that she identified with. Georgia, which only the year before were engaged in a war with Russia, after initially refusing to take part in the show after the war, confirmed their choice of entry in early 2009. However the song, “We Don’t Wanna Put In”, was largely seen as a swipe at Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and deemed to the “too political” by the EBU. The Georgian broadcasting authorities were asked to change the lyrics of the song or submit a different entry. Georgia refused, suggesting that that the song did indeed have political connotations.

In the run-up to the contest the Moscow authorities made headlines with alleged heavy handed tactics being employed in the efforts to clean up the city with up to 30,000 stray dogs removed from the city streets in a bid to present a positive image of the city to the international delegations (*Daily Mail*, 15 May 2009). The article also reported rumors that prostitutes and homeless people were to be taken out of the city centre as reportedly happened with the 1980 Olympic Games, thus reinforcing the notion of such spectator events being seen as a viable and serious platform for image building. In this context the label of the “Beijing Olympics of Eurovision”, by UK commentator Graham Norton, takes on deeper significance. The authorities in Beijing were criticised after reports emerged of heavy-handed tactics whilst the city was being prepared for the event and it was alleged that a recall of contaminated milk products was delayed so not to damage China’s international image during the games (*The Daily Telegraph* 15 September 2008). This

¹⁴ Recent successes in tennis, the Eurovision Song Contest and the staging of international concerts exemplify this.

alongside the cost and scale of the production provides an interesting counter narrative and Eurovision 2009 in Moscow can be viewed in a similar vein.

Confirmation of how seriously the authorities were taking the event came when Prime Minister Vladimir Putin appeared at one of the rehearsals to oversee the preparations for himself. Security was tight in Moscow in the run-up to the 2009 contest with a heavy police presence: up to 20,000 officers were brought in to preside over the event (*Daily Mail*, 15 May 2009). It was also announced that a gay pride march would take place on the same day as the main broadcast. The organisers hoped to draw attention to what they see as systematic discrimination against the gay community whilst at the same time hoping that the heavy media presence for the Eurovision Song Contest would decrease the chance of violence, which occurred in at Moscow Pride in both 2006 and 2007. The Mayor of Moscow previously described homosexuality as “satanic” and banned the proposed march. The protest did go ahead and over 20 people were forcibly removed and arrested by police. There was no repeat of the violent scenes however, such unrest and the removal of the protestors, did provide a striking counter narrative to the scenes broadcast during the Eurovision Song Contest itself. A journalist for *The Times* newspaper said that the sheer number of police, the overall cost and the size of the event were all:

Blatantly obvious examples of how seriously they [organisers] are taking this [...] Believe me they are worried this [march] will affect the positive image they have tried to present through this contest. (Philippe Naughton, interview, 15 May 2009).

From a technical perspective the 2009 contests staged in Moscow were flawless and widely seen by those present as a piece of a highly sophisticated television producing and therefore a triumph for Russia. To reinforce the notion of a successful Russia, small clips of recent cultural victories were showing during the telecast. Fricker (2009, p. 2) argues that whilst the show was a spectacle in itself, the self representation of Russia seemed somewhat uncertain. For example several times the presenters repeated that Russia “does not have bears walking in the streets” in an attempt to jokingly refute an image of Russia as being perceived by the rest of Europe as uncivilised, backward, and barbaric. This shows how the issue of Russia’s image is a sensitive one however the continuous verbal and visual repetition of these stereotypes, according to Fricker, actually reinscribes them (Fricker 2009, p.2-3). During the interval the choice of entertainment was also ambiguous. The Russian girl-duo Tatu performed backed by the Red Army Chorus whilst a pink inflatable tank and jet appeared on a stage. In an attempt to dispell the idea of Russia as militaristic and aggressive the producers inadvertently reinforced the image with such imagery and attempt to inject humour into the scenes, in the form of the pink tank, months

after the war with Georgia and when there was controversy ensuing regarding the hostility towards Gay Pride in Moscow.

Russia is the only country to explicitly make on-air references to stereotypes in order to attempt to dispel them, thus the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest became a public relations vehicle for the Russian government, who assisted with the financing of the project. The Eurovision Song Contest in Moscow in 2009, like the Beijing Olympics in 2008, were the most expensive ever and a testament to how seriously the authorities in both countries view such events as opportunities to promote positive international images to the global media. One respondent recalled:

Looking at it now, and at the amazing venue we were in, it was not hard to believe that the Russians had spend over €30 million on staging the event. It was all very big, very grandiose and very expensive. We were told anecdotally that the Russians simply kept throwing money at any problems that arose during the organisation of the contest until those problems went away (Journalist “B”, interview, 9 July 2009).

Such events afford the hosts the opportunity to change perceptions in the imaginations of the viewer. In Soviet times Russia used the Olympic Games as an opportunity to demonstrate sporting prowess and international credentials. I would argue that Russia has used the Eurovision Song Contest in the same way. It is an event linked with national prestige, both in terms of placing and hosting the event itself. In terms of voting, victory relies solely upon the approval of other nations in the form of telephone votes. Both Beijing and Moscow show that striking counter-narratives can influence the way this re-imagining takes place. The very stereotypes they sought to dispel may in fact have been compounded by the “spin” and scale of the production, and the anecdote quoted above seems to confirm this: Russia attempts to present certain narratives regardless of the cost, financial or otherwise.

2.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has provided a brief history of the Eurovision Song Contest. I have attempted to demonstrate not only the significance that some countries afford the Eurovision Song Contest but also how the competition has been used by nations and individuals and on different levels for various purposes and how it has provided the occasion for internal debates over the essence of national identity. The issues touched upon here will be explored in greater depth with particular relation to Estonia and Ukraine in subsequent chapters. For a prospective European Union applicant country that believes it is

misunderstood abroad, large scale events - whether the Eurovision Song Contest, a world's fair, the Olympics or a NATO summit can be seen as opportunities to prove that they are not "inferior" and this chapter has sought to demonstrate this. As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, Göran Bolin suggests that the Eurovision Song Contest is the modern day equivalent of the Worlds Fairs of the nineteenth century. Moreover he asserts that the 2002 contest in Tallinn was an attempt by Estonian Television which displayed the advantages of Estonia and promoted it as a nation (Bolin 2006).

The Eurovision Song Contest provides an opportunity for countries to present certain narratives of the nation and in the case of Israel for example, these narratives are often met with fierce opposition. The ESC has reflected socio-political issues of the day and the 2009 event is a striking and strong example of this. The 2009 event was the largest and most expensive Eurovision Song Contest to date and took place in a country which did not exist as an independent nation when the competition began in 1956. It is therefore a reflection of the changing nature of what constitutes "Europe". The continued growth of Eurovision, over fifty years after its creation is a feat which surely only existed in creator Marcel Baisson's imagination.

Chapter 3: A critical analysis of Brand Estonia in the context of the return to Europe.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present from fieldwork conducted in Estonia in 2007/8. Chapter five is concerned with the symbolic aspects of the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia in the context of the return to Europe. This chapter, on the other hand, is concerned with the Welcome to Estonia campaign which was formally launched by the Estonian government in 2002 to capitalise on the publicity garnered from staging the Eurovision Song Contest in Tallinn that year.

As discussed earlier (chapter 1), nation branding is a relatively new and contested field both in central and Eastern Europe and more generally. This chapter seeks to draw out the debates that nation branding practices in Estonia have engendered. As demonstrated by the empirical material in this chapter, the Welcome to Estonia brand campaign continues to be controversial. The views given by respondents exemplify this. Following on from the overview of nation branding presented in chapter one, this chapter aims to shed light on the background to the Estonian campaign. How was the brand essence developed in Estonia and with what aim? Furthermore how did the images of this brand resonate with the wider public in Estonia?

The chapter begins with a detailed overview of the return to Europe discourse in Estonia, expanding upon the previous discussion in chapter one (1.2.4). In the 1990s the political elites in Estonia sought to align the country with Nordic neighbours Finland and Sweden in an attempt to distance the country from its Soviet past. Brand Estonia, or the Welcome to Estonia campaign, with the slogan “Positively Transforming”, can be seen as an example of how this process was initiated and filtered through to wider society. A critical analysis of nation branding more generally as well as Brand Estonia forms the mainstay of this chapter. The final sections of the chapter use empirical evidence collected from respondents in the field, both members of the public and those who were directly involved in the branding process in Estonia. This chapter seeks to contextualise the return to Europe discourse in Estonia as well as focus on notions of image building and nation branding as a prelude to a detailed discussion on the Eurovision Song Contest proper.

3.2 A critical reflection of the return to Europe discourse in Estonia

The discourse of return to Europe was dominant in Estonia and other countries in the region throughout the period of transition from communist rule and in the years following independence. It was denoted a political and social process which was undertaken across the region. In Estonia it manifested itself strongly in the political rhetoric throughout the 1990s. The concept is two fold: in the Estonian case it reinforced the principle that the country was making a clean break from the past and that the Soviet occupation was illegal. The “return” implies that Estonia was *restoring* sovereignty rather than *becoming* independent thus Estonia was regaining its rightful place in Europe. In practical terms this also meant re-emerging onto the world stage, by becoming a fully fledged and active member of a variety of European institutions such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe, as well as having the long term goal of joining the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Ultimately it was perceived by ruling elites in Estonia at the time that this was the most stable way of guaranteeing security and sustainable development for the country (Ruutu 2003, p.197). In the case of Estonia the end goal of this “return to Europe” was accession to the European Union, the ultimate recognition of “belonging to a European family”. (Lauristin 2009).

3.2.1 Flagging Estonia’s “European” credentials: A view from the top

Estonia’s “European credentials” were continuously reinforced by political leaders during the 1990s. In his very first Presidential address to the people of Estonia in 1992 Lennart Meri highlighted the significance of Europe to Estonia and stated that the recent elections had brought an end to the Soviet past. “Estonia has chosen the free, European, democratic road [...] Estonia’s integration into Europe is of importance to us” (Meri 2009, p.17) It was this total rejection of the Soviet past in Estonia which informed the initial state-building process of the early 1990s. Estonia was promoted as a European nation which rightfully belonged and this was routinely evidenced in the political rhetoric from the time. In a speech delivered in Cyprus in 1998, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs for Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves emphasised Europe as the natural place for Estonian foreign policy to be orientated. In the lecture, entitled “Estonia’s Return to Europe”, Ilves highlighted the legal continuity principle of the first Estonian Republic of 1918 and emphasised that speed was important in the reforming transition process. In the speech the similarities between Cyprus and Estonia were also emphasised; coastal countries, both seeking European

integration. Such a link again emphasises Estonia as “European”.¹⁵ Moreover in 1992 in a speech in Tallinn, Dr Otto Von Habsburg described Estonians as “the best of Europeans” (Davies 1998, p.944). Through continuously emphasising Estonia’s European credentials, it meant that Estonia was distancing itself from the Soviet past, a practice that continues today. The description of Estonia as a “Former Soviet Republic” is something which continues to cause consternation amongst Estonians. Such sentiments were manifested strongly during the empirical research for this thesis and are considered in depth later in this chapter.

The rejection of the Soviet past is consistent with Estonian discourse that the Soviet period was illegal and represented an artificial separation of the country from its western European neighbours (A Smith 2000b, p.xi). The Finnish development model was consistently flagged as entirely comparable to Estonia. Finnish television which was watched in northern Estonia also played a role in highlighting the differences between the two countries (Laur 2002, p.304). It allowed Estonians to see the development gap which had emerged between the two countries during Soviet times and allowed Nordic culture to permeate the iron curtain in Estonia. The connection between the countries was described by Mart Laar who asserted that the two states were similar geographically, linguistically and culturally. Furthermore they can be considered close but also in terms of their recent history, given that they were both peripheral and both became independent after World War I. (Laar 2002, p.58) According to Mart Laar, both had similar levels of economic development before 1940. Therefore the situation Estonia faced in 1991 and the disparities with its more prosperous Finnish neighbour only served to further repudiate the Soviet past since it was considered that Estonia would have been on the same economic level as Finland had the country not experienced such a cruel fate. This further added impetus to the European integration project, which took on an even deeper significance in this context.

3.2.2 Return to Europe: a return to “normality”

Estonian independence was hard won and it soon became clear to the Estonian political elite that difficult decisions remained. Estonia was charged with the task of replacing a communist system of government with a democracy and a market economy whilst simultaneously integrating into the new world order. The Baltic States had the fortune of

¹⁵ Transcript taken from <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/3520>, accessed 11 November 2009.

hindsight and could therefore rely on their interwar experiences of independence, however given that the world had changed significantly in that time, rapid reforms had to be undertaken to modernise the Estonian state, the economy and society at large. Many predicted that the Baltic States would be drawn back into the Russian sphere of influence (Laar 2006, p.266). European Union or NATO integration was seen as nothing more than a pipedream at this stage. Estonia therefore had to prove itself and do so quickly. As Laar writes:

Estonia had to choose between two possible paths: to advance with slower, gradual reforms or to decisively tear itself away from the past and start on a road of radical reforms. (Laar 2006, p.270)

This western orientation as described in the previous section of this chapter (3.2.1) was viewed as the “normal” course for developments. The prevailing discourses expressed the belief that belonging to Europe was “normal” and as such political and cultural Europeanisation represented a “return to normalcy” after Soviet rule. This return to normality was evidenced in the various speeches of President Lennart Meri. In 1995 he stated that Estonia was not a “newborn state” but was welcomed “as the lost sons who are now returning to Europe from behind the iron curtain” (Meri 2009, p.58). In his farewell speech in 2001 he highlighted the symbolic importance of European integration to Estonian nation building:

We [Estonia] have been part of Europe, and now we are a European country again – a country that has been rediscovered after it had been practically forgotten (Meri 2009, p.189).

The concept of the return to Europe has become synonymous with that of the “normalcy”, normality in the Baltic context representing anything which was “not Soviet” or “not Communist” (Eglitis 2002, p.8). For Estonians the Soviet past can therefore be seen as “abnormal”. According to Eglitis the actual content of “normality” is somewhat more contested, to some it meant restoring the old social order which existed before the Soviet annexation whilst to others normality meant being part of Western Europe. Eglitis goes further to examine the concepts of spatial and temporal normality. The former represents the location of transformation, in the Baltic case, orientation towards Western Europe. Eglitis argues that notions of normality are intrinsically linked with security and prosperity and that this was said to have been found in “returning to Europe”. Eglitis cites the apparent “rush” to join European institutions and structures such as the EU and NATO which may offer the desired economic and security guarantees which were sought, as proof of this (Eglitis 2002, p.18). Eglitis’ concept of temporal normality on the other hand,

suggests more nationalistic undertones since it emphasises restoration of the infrastructure of the interwar republics. This narrative highlights the danger of integration of Russian speakers rather than the perils of non-integration. Whilst spatial normality depicts Russia as “the other” in the sense that NATO membership is a goal in order to attain security guarantees, it recognises possible dangers of non-integration of Russian speaking minorities (Eglitis 2002, p.17). David Smith (2001 p. xiii) highlights, the propagation of “normality” in the Estonian context failed to take account of the fact that the Europe of which Estonia was a part of before World War II had changed. This would later bring its own challenges for Estonia, which aspired to join the EU, which emphasised respect for minority rights, whilst at the same time attempting to come to terms with its Soviet past and large resident Russian minority.

This restoration of the old social order which had existed previously, temporal as opposed to spatial normality, was the discourse which was most prevalent in Estonia in the 1990s. For example, Toomas Hendrik Ilves in his “Return to Europe” speech in 1998 highlighted, as Laar and Meri did, that Estonia was on a similar level of economic development to Finland before 1940. Yet history has meant that their paths of economic and social development have been vastly different reinforcing the notion that Estonia is a “normal European country” which had suffered at the hands of fate. Eglitis supports this by stating that:

Not only was the [Soviet] regime illegal and illegitimate, but it was a fundamental deviation from what was perceived to be the normal course of national, state, social, and economic development (Eglitis 2002, p.12).

3.2.3 Nation building in the context of the return to Europe

Following the 1992 presidential and parliamentary elections, the Isamaa (Fatherland) party swept to power. Led by Mart Laar and with Lennart Meri as President, the government set about carrying out radical reforms. The government itself was a young one; Laar himself was 32. Along with colleagues such as Indrek Kannik, Minister of Defence, aged 28 and Minister for Foreign Affairs Jüri Luik, aged 27, he set about creating a youthful and dynamic image of Estonia, with leaders apparently untainted by the Soviet legacy. Driven by widespread expectations for change Laar began reforms, under the slogan “Just Do It”. The restoration of independence created the political and economic preconditions for the transition to a market economy. Therefore Laar’s Isamaa government pressed ahead with economic reforms and European integration, despite the costs, human and material.

Monetary reform was carried out in the summer of 1992 with the introduction of the Estonian kroon (EEK). Tied to the Deutschmark, the currency can be seen as another way in which Estonia moved away from the post-Soviet sphere of influence, or the “rouble zone”. The 1992 Agricultural Reform Act reversed Soviet collectivisation practices and in June of that year the constitution was formally approved. With the kroon stabilising, the government began an ambitious privatisation programme along with implementing structural reforms. By the end of May 1994 almost 50% of state-owned enterprises and businesses were privatised or privately controlled. One of the defining points in the reform programme was the tax reform introduced in 1994. The new Income Tax Law was passed in December 1993 and established a flat income tax rate of 26% regardless of earnings rather than the more traditional progressive system. Estonia was one of the first countries in the world to introduce such a tax system and as such attracted considerable attention from economists and governments alike. Also in 1994 Estonia signed the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union; the foundations for European integration were being laid. It was during this period that the Estonian economy began to grow, emerging from recession, with an annual GDP growth rate of 5% by 1995 (Erixon 2008). In August 1994 Russian troops were withdrawn from Estonian territory. From the perspective of the restoration of independent Estonian statehood, this act can be seen as an end point of Soviet rule in Estonia (Laur 2002, p.317) However, as highlighted earlier, Eglitis’ concept of spatial normality meant that the Estonian government had to confront the demographic situation in Estonia head-on.

During Soviet times the demographics of Estonia changed dramatically. In 1945 ethnic Estonians constituted 94% of the population. However as a result of increasing immigration into Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union due to industrialisation in the region, the share of ethnic Estonians had fallen to 61% by 1989 (D Smith 2001, p.xxiii). The demographic figures reveal that whilst the term “Russian speaking minority” is used in this context, it barely constitutes a minority in the Estonian case and in Latvia the comparison was even more pronounced. Since most settlers worked for all-union industries, Russian was the main language spoken and as such there was little incentive to learn or speak Estonian. Russian language education was provided and Russian was increasingly taught in Estonian language schools. As a result Russian became increasingly spoken across the republic with 80-90% of ethnic Estonians proficient in Russian whilst only 12% of non-Estonians were fluent in the titular language (Trapans 1991, p.77). Essentially this led to polarisation in Estonian society and growing resentment amongst

Estonians that the country was under “threat”. The legal continuity principle suggested that since Soviet rule was illegal, so too was the presence of Russian speakers who had immigrated to Estonia during the Soviet period.

Restorationist politics therefore affected the whole of society, manifesting itself in the citizenship laws of Estonia. Underlying the citizenship laws was a desire amongst ethnic Estonian leaders for there to be Estonian dominance in the political sphere. Whilst political leaders were pursuing restorationist policies, they had to take account of the fact that the Estonia they were living and working in was very different to the Estonia which was annexed by the Soviets. The drastically changed demographic make up of Estonia was something which caused much debate both internally and within the international community, namely European institutions such as the European Union. After 1991 Estonia refused to grant automatic citizenship to all residents, instead opting to give citizenship to ethnic Estonians and citizens of the interwar republic and their descendents. This meant that the large Russian speaking minority, the majority of whom had come to Estonia during Soviet times were excluded from the process. Soviet-era migrants were required to take an oath of loyalty to the Estonian state, be able to pass a language test and have been resident in the country for more than two years after 30 March 1990. The citizenship law, passed in 1992 was based on the previous regulations passed in 1938. The continuity of this principle can be seen as a further attempt by Estonian political leaders to discredit Soviet rule in Estonia. Given that Russian speakers constituted almost a third of Estonia’s population there was considerable anxiety amongst western European organisations keen to avoid any ethnic unrest in the region. The Estonian authorities at the time maintained that if Russian speakers were given automatic citizenship then they would also be given the right to vote, and therefore could potentially stall the return to Europe process by voting against further European integration (D Smith 2001, p.73). Whilst with hindsight such claims may appear to be exaggerated, in those early years of independence Estonia was erring on the side of caution. The recent history of interwar Estonian independence and subsequent Soviet annexation would suggest that this was wise at the time.

It can be argued that the Estonian government essentially walked a tightrope between national assertion (i.e. Estonian-led state building processes) on the one hand and the demands of European integration on the other. Politicians in Estonia sought to integrate with Europe by joining western European organisations such as The Council of Europe which emphasised respect and tolerance towards minorities whilst at the same time seeking to ensure ethnic Estonian dominance in the political sphere. It was no easy task and yet one

in which Estonia managed to strike a balance. Mart Laar claims that the citizenship laws drafted in Estonia were “the most liberal citizenship law in Europe” (Laar 2002, p.296). This is a somewhat dubious statement given the conditionality and language restrictions placed on obtaining Estonian citizenship. However given that the Estonian authorities were in a sense providing non-Estonians with a choice; to meet the requirements and obtain citizenship or go without, they may be considered to be “liberal”, especially when compared to other European Union countries. Laar asserts that the Estonian Citizenship Acts corresponds to the European standard and that the only difference between citizens and non-citizens is that citizens can vote in elections. Laar argues that:

It was especially important to make such people face the reality. It was essential for them to understand that the Soviet Union was gone forever and that they were living in an independent country (Laar 2002, p.296).

Controversy arose after the Law on Aliens was adopted in June 1993. The law stipulated that people residing in Estonia with Soviet or Russian passports had one year to apply for new residence and work permits. If they failed to do this then they would be deemed to be illegal immigrants and therefore subject to deportation. The law was also controversial because it did not distinguish between persons who had been resident in Estonia all their lives and those who had recently arrived. Such a law was potentially divisive and caused alarm both inside Estonia and within the various European political structures which Estonia aspired to be a part of. In effect it had the potential to stall Estonia’s so-called “return to Europe”, something the Isamaa government were keen to avoid. Evidence of this came in the form of liberalisation of the language requirements for citizenship. A basic working knowledge was stipulated rather than the previous ambiguous guidelines and the Law on Aliens was amended to extend residence permits to military pensioners as well as granting automatic citizenship to children born in Estonia to non-citizens (although this did not happen until 1998). In May 1993, despite protests from Russia over alleged human rights violations relating to the citizenship issue, Estonia was admitted to the Council of Europe (Raun 2001, p.252). This lends credence to Smith’s assertion that in the eyes of the Estonian government, social stability, foreign investment and membership of the Council of Europe counted for more than strict restorationism (D Smith 2001, p.86). In other words, the spatial discourse of normality took precedence over the temporal discourse of normality, to use Eglitis’ term.

3.2.4 Image building in the context of the return to Europe

Following on from the economic reforms discussed in the previous section, the government set about cultivating an image of Estonia as an economic trail-blazer, far exceeding expectations of even Estonians and defying critical predictions (Laar 2002, p.284). The Estonian transition from the planned central economy of the Soviet times to market economy was rapid and led to the country being seen as a “shining star from the Baltics” (Michalopoulos 1994, pp.115-132). To quote *Newsweek* magazine, Estonia had become “the little country that could” (D Smith 2001, p.113). In this context the rapid economic transformation and reforms undertaken by the Estonian government during this period can be seen as the economic variant of Estonia’s “return to Europe”. Indeed the international image of Estonia was incredibly important for the Isamaa government during the 1990s. Buoyed by the attention the country was receiving as a result of robust economic reforms, Laar began to actively court global attention in an attempt to bolster Estonia’s reputation in the world.

It was at this time that e-government came into being in Estonia. As early as 1996 the foundations were laid for electronic governance in Estonia with the passing of the Personal Data Protection Act which protected personal rights in terms of data processing as well as the “Tiger Leap” project aimed at increasing the use of information technology across Estonia. By 2001 ID cards were used online which paved the way for online voting or “e-voting” in the 2005 municipal elections, a world first. Estonia now had a new self-image, it was no longer a nation which was “miserable and helpless” but one which was capable of integration with the west; a country dependent on the East had become a country open to the West (Laar 2002, p.284). In order to attract foreign investment Estonia needed international attention and so undertook a campaign to promote itself internationally. Using money from a World Bank Loan the Estonian government bought a supplement in *Newsweek* magazine. The headline bore the slogan “Estonia: The Little Country That Could” which represented the challenges Estonia had faced and the progress, against the odds, it had made in economic transformation. The deal also included several follow-up articles on Estonia, further promoting the country as a place of stability and a place for foreign businesses to invest in. The campaign can therefore be seen as an early attempt by the Estonian government to manage the international image of the country as well as promote the reformist agenda; it was possible and plausible to implement an ambitious reform programme and yield positive economic results. Estonia was gaining a reputation in

the world as a result of its economic reforms and as a result direct foreign investments increased from 103 US Dollars per capita in 1996 to 401 in 1998 (Laar 2002, p.249).

Mart Laar considers the slogan, “The Little Country That Could” to be entirely appropriate to describing both Estonia’s position and impact on the world, punching above its weight in the global economy:

Every country needs promotion especially when you are so small, to live on the other side of the Iron Curtain, nobody knows you, you are lost and not heard. To get back on the world map you need attention [...] that first campaign was very quick, it worked very well. In Estonia it helped with investments and faster developments (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

Laar’s assertion that in order to get back on the map of the world you need to gain attention highlights the significance of image for Estonian politicians. Arguably Estonian politicians were so attuned to this given the close proximity to the Nordic countries as well as the experience of Finnish TV in the north of the country. Whilst Estonia was making its own name for itself with economic reforms and laying the foundations for e-governance, the political elites continuously sought closer ties with Europe namely by aligning Estonia with northern European countries and presenting itself as a Nordic country as opposed to a “post-Soviet republic”. Throughout his Presidency Lennart Meri emphasised both the importance of Europe for Estonia and also the importance of Estonia for Europe. Meri not only emphasised Estonia’s so-called “Nordic identity”, representing a clean break from the Soviet past, but also highlighted Estonia’s “rightful” place in Europe. In a speech delivered at the University of Washington in October 1995 Meri went as far as to say that Estonia was always in Europe and can therefore not be integrated further but that Estonia can integrate into western European institutions:

How can we possibly integrate into an entity where we have essentially established ourselves over these centuries? When one walks about the old town of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, one can feel Europeanness radiating from the architecture, from every medieval house and every church steeple [...] As for society, it is perpetuated and maintained through the legal system [...] Estonia has been part of the Roman/Germanic legal system for over seven hundred years [...] we cannot speak about integration into Europe. What we can speak about is integration into all European security and economic structures. That does not mean creating a new situation, but rather, restoring a normal Europe (Meri 1995).

In that same speech Meri then went onto emphasise Estonia as a Nordic nation, highlighting that the Estonian coat of arms is part of both the Danish and British coats of arms and flagging the Swedish minority in Estonia before World War II as a further

example proving Estonia's place within the Nordic sphere. "We have been a very active member of the Nordic community [...] there are a lot of emotional ties and legal ties which makes us much more of a Nordic country than it is usually believed". Part of his closing comments reflected on the relationship between Estonia and Sweden which he described as "very very close". A close relationship which was further consolidated, albeit tragically, by the sinking of the MS Estonia in 1994.

One of the main news stories to feature Estonia was the sinking of MS Estonia in the Baltic Sea in September 1994. The ship was the largest Estonian-owned vessel and was sailing from Tallinn to Stockholm at the time. Given its size and namesake, it was a symbol of Estonia's independence from the Soviet Union (Robinson 2006). The sinking claimed 852 lives and was one of the deadliest maritime disasters of the late twentieth century (Soomer 2001, p.259). Given Laar's assertion that Estonia was not being heard in the international community, the disaster was not only catastrophic in real terms but also in image; Estonia was being heard of but for all the wrong reasons. However, the interviews conducted for this study did not suggest that this is an issue which is deeply ingrained on the popular psyche of Estonians. The Estonia ferry disaster, unlike Chernobyl in Ukraine, which will be discussed in chapter six, was not something which was prevalent in narratives from respondents when discussing the international image of the country. The fact did remain however that Estonia remained relatively unknown in the world in the years following independence. Estonian political elites continued to press ahead and promote Estonia to the international community.

By the late 1990s Estonia was arguably well on the way to "returning to Europe". This can be seen in Estonia's integration with European power structures such as the Council of Europe, OSCE and as highlighted in the previous section, the European Union itself, of which Estonia submitted a formal application to join in November 1995. In 1997 Estonia was invited to join accession talks, ahead of neighbouring Latvia and Lithuania. In this context the use of the term "Nordic" was more useful and useable than "Baltic" given that Estonia had shown itself to be ahead in terms of development and European integration. The early invitation to join the EU can be seen as a success story for Estonian foreign policy and increased Estonia's standing in the international community. It arguably helped to promote Estonia as a place of stability; attractive to prospective foreign investors (Laar 2006, p.279). Returning to Eglitis' concept of "normalcy", the paradigm was reflected by Estonian political elites particularly in the run-up to EU accession. In 1999 the then foreign minister, Toomas Hendrik Ilves announced that he hoped Estonia would become "another

boring Nordic country” in the future (D Smith 2001, p.141). Here the Nordic credentials of Estonia are flagged again. However, a closer reading of this comment suggests that in order for a country to be classified as “another boring Nordic country” it needs to be known and internationally recognised. It was in this context that Enterprise Estonia launched the Welcome to Estonia campaign which amongst other things served to essentialise Estonia’s Nordic temperament which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Lauristin argues that other “softer” events can also symbolise a return to Europe. Symbols of a return can be seen in Estonian membership of the Council of Europe, pre-accession talks with the European Union or hosting international sporting events. Moreover Lauristin cites the Estonian victory in the 2001 Eurovision Song Contest as further evidence of a return to Europe (Lauristin 2009). In a sense such events are European rituals which are repeated, thus involvement in such events represents a “normalisation”, being in Europe whilst at the same time constructing a firm barrier with the “other”. In the case of Estonia this “other” is the Soviet past (Lehti & Smith 2003, p.4). For Estonians their future depended on transparent and resolute steps away from the past and a set of domestic and foreign policies aimed towards the West (Vihalemm 2002, p.27). With this in mind then the pursuit or “European membership” by Estonia and other former Soviet countries manifested itself across all areas including the sphere of popular culture. Davies argues that “people from the former Soviet Bloc are more likely to treasure the best aspects of European heritage than their more comfortable neighbours in the west” (Davies 2006, p.21). Whilst Davies’ statement may be somewhat flippant it does provide a useful context for understanding the euphoric reaction in Estonia when they won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2001, an issue which will form the mainstay of the next chapter.

In terms of name recognition, respondents inside and outside of Estonia highlighted popular culture as being one of the most effective ways in which Estonia has become known. In the UK sport was one of the major instinctive responses with Kristina Smigun cited as putting the country on the map in winter sports. Football was also mentioned frequently in anecdotal conversations. Given the ill-fated Scotland-Estonia World Cup qualifier held in Tallinn in 1996 which was highly publicised this is perhaps unsurprising and it was one of the most cited examples. Acting on representations by the Scottish team about quality and positioning of the floodlights at the Kadrioru Stadium, FIFA brought the kick-off for the match forward by nearly four hours. For the Estonian team, many of whose players were part-timers, this was unacceptable and they failed to turn up in protest. The Scottish team participated and expected to be declared victorious by default. Eventually it

was decided that the two sides were to replay the match at a later date. In addition to this instance Estonia's victory in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2001 was overwhelmingly quoted as significant in terms of raising the international profile of the country. The role that the Eurovision Song Contest played in promoting Estonia internationally is discussed in detail in chapters four and five.

3.3 Image Building and Nation Branding: An overview of Brand Estonia

Whilst Estonia had made great strides in terms of international relations, economic reform as well as integration into the various European power structures, the country still remained relatively unknown and poorly understood in Europe and the world at large. It was on this basis that Brand Estonia was born. The nation brands analyst Simon Anholt argues that image and branding can help emerging economies to become more competitive on the world stage. Moreover Wally Olins asserts that the creation of an identifiable image is conducive to nation building. According to him having a strong identity in the world means that a product is identifiable and that the same tools which are used to create product brands are the same tools used to build nations (Olins 1990, p.15). Like Anholt, he also links success of a brand, whether it is a company, product or nation, with the question of image.

Anholt argues that image is a pertinent issue when it comes to nation building particularly for emerging markets or in this case newly-sovereign or post-colonial states. He argues that the international image of a country is essentially value which is invisible but taking care of a country's international reputation is important since the image of a country determines the way in which a country is perceived by the international community (Anholt 2005, p.105). In the context of globalisation the challenge for newly sovereign states is to get recognised, to stand out. Moreover nation brand strategists such as Anholt argue that image and progress go hand in hand. Progress in economic terms for example can help improve a country's image but so too can image help progress. National brand strategy can therefore make a difference to a nation's long term prospects (Anholt 2005, p.11). Anholt cites several examples of nations which have turned around their international image. Japan is one such case where, he argues, the international image has gone from being known as a country of cheap goods in the 1950s and 1960s or even somewhat negative in terms of the quality of these exported goods to an image now of advanced technology and sophistication with world leading brands such as Mitsubishi and Sony. South Korea has undergone a similar transformation, with hi-tech brands such as Daewoo and Kia emerging

which have in turn presented the country as a place of technical innovation. Moreover the joint hosting of the FIFA World Cup by Japan and South Korea has, according to Anholt, served as a platform for presenting a positive international image to the global community (Anholt 2005, p.107). In the subsequent chapters of this thesis I will argue that the same can be said for the way in which the Eurovision Song Contest was used in both Estonia and Ukraine.

The political scientist Joseph Nye asserts that there are differential types of power, hard and soft. He states that military force or economic sanctions can represent this hard form of power. On the other hand soft power relates to attitudes and influence over others, cultural persuasion. As Nye says, “a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because the other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emanating its example, aspiring to its level of openness” (2003, p.552). Anholt take this further and suggests that nation branding is a form of soft power since it represents a desire by the countries concerned to make people want to pay attention to their particular nation state, their achievements and believe in its qualities (Anholt 2005, p.13). Furthermore he adds that lesser known emerging nations have no other option but to use soft power. Whilst events such as the World Cup can have benefits for a winning nation in terms of sporting prowess, the effect can be short-lived and a concerted effort is therefore needed, according to Anholt, in order to maintain the momentum of interest. It was in this context that Enterprise Estonia launched their Brand Estonia campaign to capitalise on the publicity that Estonia garnered from hosting the Eurovision Song Contest in 2002.

Nation branding as an exercise is not something without criticism, as highlighted in the first chapter (1.3). The very idea of nation branding continues to be a controversial one as nations are not products as such; critics argue that they cannot be treated the same way. Critics question the viability and desirability of branding something as complicated as national identity, which at the same time, can be used as a tool for airbrushing histories, memories and rituals which underpin and encapsulate the “nation”. However it still remains something which countries do buy into and for a country like Estonia, small and relatively unknown, it was seen at the time as a legitimate format to attract foreign investment whilst increasing awareness and interest in the country. Branding is an emotive subject where nation states are concerned. When the approach of traditional brand marketing is applied to countries controversy can arise and this case study of Estonia clearly highlights this.

One of the key criticisms of the nation branding process is that the results are often generic; the slogans attached to a country's brand can be applied to other countries and contexts, they are not particularly unique in this sense. As Doug Lansky states, "these are slogans that could, without exception, be used to describe every country, state, province, city, and town on the planet" (Lansky 2001, p.xxi). He highlights several examples which he considers to be failed nation branding initiatives; Poland's "The Natural Choice", Iceland's "Amazing" and Singapore's "So Easy to Enjoy". The Estonian campaign, Welcome to Estonia, with the slogan "Positively Transforming" can be seen as more specific and with more of a direct connection with the country. The country was in transition, heading towards EU membership which was undoubtedly seen by political elites as a positive thing. However the interviews given for this study demonstrate that does not necessarily mean that the campaign was any less controversial. In order to attract the attention of the world Estonia needed to have something interesting to say (Dinnie 2008, p.231). The Welcome to Estonia project was an attempt to do this, albeit one which did not sit well with the Estonian public at large.

3.4 Welcome to Estonia

In 2001 Enterprise Estonia commissioned the Brand Estonia project to promote Estonia abroad. It had the aims of achieving greater direct foreign investment to Estonia, expanding the tourist base to Estonia beyond Scandinavia and also broadening the scope for Estonia's export market (Dinnie 2008, p.230). The project was led by a British-based company, Interbrand who were previously responsible for the Cool Britannia project in the UK. From the outset the director of Interbrand's London office, Penny Harris, was keen to point out that the company were aware of their position as an outsider and aimed to be sensitive to the views of the Estonian public. "We are very sensitive to the fact that we are an outside company, but we hope we can provide objectivity and an international viewpoint that will help achieve the best solution" (Gunter 2001). The responses given for this thesis highlight that attempts at sensitivity on the part of Interbrand were not internalised amongst significant proportion of the Estonian population.

According to the project outline, Enterprise Estonia wrote "For years Estonia has been excited about the idea of having its own mark or symbol, design elements, slogan and promotional copy. At last, a project has been undertaken to identify "Brand Estonia" (Eesti Stiil p.37). From the outset the project worked on the presumption that for the majority of people the term "Estonia" was unfamiliar, it was therefore an opportunity to introduce

Estonia to the world and prove that despite its small size, it has something to say. In this context the project aimed to help Estonia to “punch above its weight in European and world affairs” (Dinnie 2008, p.231). Ireland was regularly cited as a success story of a small, lesser known nation which went on to be internationally recognised and respected. President Lennart Meri was also said to have stated that Estonia needed to find its own Nokia which would put the country on the map and enable it to compete more effectively on the world stage¹⁶. Arnold Ruutel, Meri’s successor went further to state that Estonia itself could be the Nokia that Meri was dreaming of (Gunter 2001). The Welcome to Estonia campaign therefore had the aim of putting Estonia on the world map and boosting the international image of the country in the run-up to EU accession.

Mart Laar, in his interview given for this thesis, stated that Estonia’s early invitation to European Union accession talks helped to boost its international image. This can be extended further to include NATO membership talks which fostered an image of Estonia as one of safety and security in the European context. Entry into the European Union also facilitated tourism in terms of visa free travel and improved infrastructure. This, along with the publicity garnered from entry into EU accession talks, and the massive boost Estonia received after winning the 2001 Eurovision Song Contest, provided a strong platform on the international arena on which to launch Brand Estonia. In terms of coverage in the media, the EU accession negotiations have been credited with keeping a steady stream of information running through the European media as well as the publicity Estonia secured by both winning and hosting the Eurovision Song Contest (Hall 2006, p.166). It was on the back of this publicity that the Welcome to Estonia campaign was finally launched in autumn 2001, timed to take advantage of the media coverage associated with Estonia hosting the competition in 2002.

3.4.1 Welcome to Estonia: Project development

In order to ascertain the strength of Estonia’s image abroad at that time and what Brand Estonia should be, a six month study was commissioned by Enterprise Estonia. The research project included interviews with more than 1400 tourists in the UK, Germany, Finland, Sweden and Russia. 250 telephone interviews were conducted in Estonia itself and 70 cultural commentators and opinion leaders from inside Estonia and abroad were also consulted. Focus groups and team participation in several public panels also formed

¹⁶ Telecommunications company Nokia has arguably put Finland and the town of Nokia firmly on the world map.

part of the research. Whilst the findings of this study are not the focus of this chapter, they do illustrate the strength of Estonia's image at that particular point in time. The research found that the perception of Estonia became weaker the further from the country; Germany and the UK were deemed to have the least understanding of Estonia compared to Finland for example. This could partly be explained by the percentage of tourists who have visited Estonia. Of those interviewed for the project, 9% from the UK had visited the country versus 88% from Finland (Eesti Stiil p.57).

Enterprise Estonia's study also found that many respondents considered the "Baltic" regional grouping for Estonia to be "limiting and potentially limiting" and that understanding Estonia as a Nordic country would be more fitting "temperamentally and geographically" (Eesti Stiil p.51). This can be seen as entirely in keeping with the remarks made by politicians such as Toomas Hendrik Ilves that Estonia is a Nordic rather than east European country, as discussed earlier (4.2.4). The report concluded that those who had encountered Estonia for the first time were "surprised" and that the notions of contrast, surprise and change "seem to be striking elements in what now characterises contemporary Estonia [...] these elements [...] illustrate real, positive benefits to those who will perceive Estonia from abroad" (Eesti Stiil p.59). It was therefore as a result of this research that the Welcome to Estonia project was born.

After the research was concluded a "brand essence" and brand model was developed. Estonia's brand essence was captured in two words "positively transforming"; highlighting the post-Soviet transition in Estonia which was described as "revolutionary, positive and welcome change against all odds" (Dinnie 2008, p.233). Again like the assertion that Estonia was more of a Nordic country, this notion of positive transformation was in line with the rhetoric from political elites such as Mart Laar, Lennart Meri and Toomas Hendrik Ilves at the time. "Positively transforming" therefore connected what was going on inside Estonia to the outside world, to those being targeted and encouraged to invest in Estonia. In the introductory chapter of the Brand Estonia report the notion of Estonia as a Nordic nation was reinforced further; "Nordic with a twist". The author, Enn Soosaar states that whilst Estonia is "not yet a Nordic country [...] we have the preconditions to gain the goal" (Eesti Stiil p.38). The campaign can therefore be seen as a project which reflected one of the elements of the return to Europe process; the distancing of Estonia from its Soviet past through presenting the country as "Nordic". Along side the slogan, a logo was also devised and featured the "Welcome to Estonia" brand name, in the shape of

the country itself. This logo proved to be the more controversial issue with respondents and is discussed later in this chapter.

The brand model of the project aimed to move away from the orientation of Estonia toward the Baltic region which again reflects political manoeuvrings at the time as Estonia orientated away from the Baltic region and assumed a quasi-Nordic identity after they were selected to enter EU accession negotiations ahead of Baltic counterparts Latvia and Lithuania. However, unlike the speeches delivered by Meri and Ilves on Nordic Estonia, the report also acknowledged that a strictly Nordic grouping for the country would “not seen to be entirely credible” (Eesti Stiil p.61). The project therefore worked from the principal position that Estonia was a European country; Estonian in Europe. It was stated clearly in the project outline that the campaign “is not an attempt at encapsulating Estonian national identity” (Eesti Stiil p.62). This notion of essentialising Estonia’s “Nordic” identity is something which came out of many interviews with respondents for this thesis. Discussions also centred on how the campaign failed to represent aspects of Estonian national identity as they understood it; the fact that this was never the aim of the project suggests a clear gulf between the project leaders and the public expectations which is discussed later in this chapter. The report drew direct parallels with Ireland and their separate identity and image from the UK. Despite geographical and historical links with the UK, the report argues that Ireland has a distinct identity in the world and particularly in the context of European affairs. Ireland was regularly held up as a country which had, like Estonia, transformed against the odds and flourished since independence and EU accession (Hannula 2006, p.323). Brand Estonia therefore followed that premise and the essence of the brand reflected this optimism and belief that Estonia was capable of the same.

A group of brand narratives was also included in the project outline in order to articulate the “positively transforming” essence to the world (Dinnie 2008, p.233). The first, “a fresh perspective”, highlighted Estonia’s versatility to the investor. Whilst being cautious not to distance Estonia from other European societies, it propagated the idea that Estonia is in a sense a “clean slate”, the rapid developments which have taken place since 1991 therefore had not resulted in Estonia having a “conformist burden” (Eesti Stiil p.64). The second narrative relating to the campaign was that Estonia had a “radical, reforming and transforming attitude”. Under this umbrella, the notion of Estonia as enterprising and entrepreneurial was reinforced. It highlighted the benefits of Estonia’s rapid post-Communist transition and in turn presented Estonia as a country ready to take risks in order to innovate and transform. The third such narrative promoted Estonia as having “a

Nordic temperament and environment”. Crucially this section boldly stated that Estonia “has always been part of the web of Northern Europe [...] an accident of history links us in the minds of most people with the East instead of the West” (Eesti Stiil p.65). Therefore this project narrative not only distances Estonia with the Soviet past but also Baltic regionalism, by focusing on the Nordic influence on Estonia it reinforces the idea of Estonia in Northern Europe without overstating the case to the extent that the Nordic temperament loses its credibility. The fourth and penultimate narrative defined Estonia as “a resourceful self-starter by nature”, and an attractive place for overseas businesses to invest. Again, it highlighted the rapid developments Estonia and Estonians have undergone, whilst at the same time promoting the work force in Estonia as self-driven, skilled and educated. The final narrative was entitled “A European society” and presented Estonia as a juxtaposed country between East and West with a “deep heritage rooted in European tradition”, therefore offering Estonia’s geo-political position as an advantage.

Each of these narratives was then translated into verbal and visual branding manifestations. Posters featuring the “Welcome to Estonia” logo and “Positively Transforming” slogan appeared on billboards abroad, at airports with the logo being added to the side of Estonian Air aircraft as well as t-shirts and other merchandising being made available. Kaja Tael, Estonian ambassador to the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2006 stated that Estonian embassies across the world were also issued with stationery featuring the logo and that staff were actively encouraged to use such items in correspondence to further promote Brand Estonia internationally (Kaja Tael, interview, Tallinn, 8 April 2008).

3.4.2 Welcome to Estonia: Analysis

As highlighted in the previous section, the logo for the Welcome to Estonia campaign used a typeface which also reflected the map of Estonia. The logo itself can be seen below alongside some examples of the advertisements which were launched internationally in 2002



Figure 3.1: The Brand Estonia logo



Figure 3.2-4: A selection of billboard advertisements as part of the campaign



Figure 3.5-9: Stills taken from one of the Brand Estonia television commercials



Figure 3.10-12: Another example of one of the Brand Estonia television commercials.

The Welcome to Estonia campaign therefore served to present Estonia as a young, modern, robust nation which was truly changing. The slogan “positively transforming” can be seen as a twofold statement. On one hand change was happening, transformation was really taking place. On the other this transformation is a positive thing, a movement towards the European Union and away from the past. Note the reference to the EU in figure 3.9. The sauna scene also serves to present Estonia as a Nordic country whilst the nightclub scenes present the country as vibrant and current. The billboard advertisements also reinforce this notion. In figure 3.2 the crisp design of the furniture can be seen as Nordic and in figure 3.4 the Hanseatic Old Town of Tallinn is featured, again reinforcing Estonia’s European credentials.

The screenshots in figures 3.10-3.12 are taken from a shorter thirty second advertisement. Again the notion of youth is manifested strongly with young women working in an office. They hold the lift door for a colleague who is shown to be pleased that he is sharing the lift with such women before the doors closed to present the campaign logo. This particular scene may well be seen as somewhat misogynistic. The images chosen to portray Estonia at this time were reflected in the imagery that was used in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2002 which is discussed in chapter five. Again issues of misogyny were alluded to by some respondents. However it is not so much the content which respondents for this study had grievances with, it is the actual logo and brand name of the campaign, Welcome to Estonia, which caused most consternation. Many respondents stated that the logo was reminiscent of a brand logo from the 1970s for example, presenting a backward, “retro” image of the country. This is therefore in contrast to the identification with which the vast majority of respondents had; Estonia as a forward-looking Nordic country as opposed to “Eastern European”. It appears to be that many respondents did not believe the campaign to be value for money which in turn has meant that it is widely seen as a failure in the eyes of the Estonian public.

3.4.3 Welcome to Estonia: Responses from the field

The Welcome to Estonia campaign was one of the first branding campaigns in the region. Latvia’s “Land That Sings” campaign was launched soon after. However the mere mention of the campaign provoked strong reactions from the overwhelming majority of respondents. The logo was deemed to be ill-fitting, the cost excessive (13 million Estonian

kroons, approximately £650 000)¹⁷ and the use of a British-based company, Interbrand, who were responsible meant that it did not sit well with a large proportion of the Estonian public. The typeface of the logo was commented upon by some respondents who said that it resembled something from the 1970s and was at odds with the message that Estonian officials wanted to communicate through the brand essence of the campaign. When respondents were asked about the project a clear division of opinions appeared between the ground-level respondents and those in the political elite such as Mart Laar, Signe Kivi, the then Minister of Culture and Evelin Ilves, Project Manager of Brand Estonia (and current First Lady of Estonia). Such figures viewed the project as necessary and worthwhile whilst members of the public who were interviewed overwhelmingly viewed it in negative terms:

It was a total waste of money. They [Interbrand] got a lot of money and they came up with a stupid logo (Margit Randla, interview, Tallinn, 17 November 2007).

What does it [the logo] actually mean? It doesn't make you think about anything. Words that you don't really associate with anything. It reminds me of adverts from years ago [...] embarrassing. (Riina Kindlam, interview, Tallinn, 8 April 2008).

Another respondent, Maimu, an Estonian-Canadian who immigrated to Tallinn in 1991 was equally as dogmatic in her response:

I thought it was garbage [...] the company in England saw them coming really. They just did a half-assed job of it and charged full prices. It was the tax payer who paid of course (Maimu Nõmmik, interview, Tallinn, 8 April 2008).

This sort of rhetoric was repeated by many respondents and a sense of confusion about the aims of the project along with frustrations at the perceived lack of value of money and finished product pervaded. However not all respondents were so dogmatic in their approach. Whilst many continued to express dissatisfaction with the finished product, they believed that the need to promote Estonia at the time was real and worthwhile.

Nobody can argue that Estonia didn't need a campaign. The question is whether the campaign was properly done, whether it was effective enough or appropriate for the task at hand (Meelis Kompus, interview, Tallinn, 8 April 2008).

¹⁷ Estonian Life 2002, page 21 <http://web-static.vm.ee/static/failid/273/Eesti%20elu.pdf> Accessed 21 March 2010

Another respondent, a native Russian speaker who was born in Tallinn believed that the idea of promoting Estonia was not necessarily a bad one although the project was ill-conceived.

I think the idea is good but [...] I did not like this brand trademark [...] too old-fashioned [...] I know that it helped with people in tourism [...] for me I do not like it very much (Dimitri Mironov, interview, Tallinn, 27 November 2007).

However the elite level respondents were not as critical of the project and highlighted that there was a need at the time to do something to promote the image of Estonia and to capitalise on the attention the country was getting as a result of winning the Eurovision Song Contest in 2001 and therefore hosting in 2002 as well as the on-going EU accession talks which was also generating media coverage on Estonia. Similar to Kaja Tael's use of the branded merchandise as described earlier (4.4.1), former Estonian Ambassador to Germany, Riina Kionka also stated that she used the materials and was more pragmatic in her views:

I was using these materials in Berlin in order to help sell the country. This was one of my major aims, to sell the country in Berlin. It was very effective, it helped a lot, all the stickers, t-shirts, all of this stuff was very effective. People would see it and they would identify. It was on Estonian Air, every place. They produced a lot of brochures and information sheets which we passed out at various meetings (Riina Kionka, interview, Tallinn, 11 August 2008).

There also appeared to be a strong level of confusion associated with the project. Many respondents had the impression that the campaign simply stopped without any follow-up after 2002. This further consolidated the view that the project had not worked and was a waste of resources in the eyes of the public. However Mart Laar, who sanctioned the campaign, blamed the successor government for the dissolution of Brand Estonia. "The government after me cancelled this promotion campaign. This was a bad mistake [...] it needed to continue" (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007). He concedes that people viewed it as a waste of money but did not offer evidence of any counter argument he might have launched against the critics at the time. He still views promotional campaigns as important but appears to resign himself to the fact that it will require more time, effort and money:

When you promote your country, the people can have very different opinions and it is always more complicated because people think other slogans are always better. It means the government must have the courage to do unpopular decisions even knowing the campaigns will not bring a lot of popularity at home [...] It always takes time for the results to land in the pockets of people. People looked outside the

country not understanding how to get the results [...] it was not popular and seen as a waste of money and when you are a politician you want to take popular decisions. Sometimes when you start to measure it with direct money you don't immediately see how to earn it back. It comes back but in different ways [...] There has not been a targeted campaign since then [...] the programme for promoting a country is a long lasting process [...] you must invest for years and years and decades and decades [...] this is never popular because the political demands are now and the future is so far away. When you deal too much with the future when you are in politics then you will be voted down (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

As previously stated, political elites such as Laar have been much more pragmatic in terms of how they view Brand Estonia. Evelin Ilves who headed the campaign when it was launched was heavily criticised by the media and the public for the cost of the project and the perception that it was a failure:

Lots of people didn't like it, they said it was strange and not something Estonian. I think the problem was the basic lack of knowledge. People just did not know what is marketing, branding, how do these things work? It was something which was quite new for ordinary people and politicians as well [...] when we introduced our project [...] it was so hard to explain what is branding, why we need it, how it works (Evelin Ilves, interview, Tallinn, 20 November 2007).

Signe Kivi who was the Minister of Culture at the time of Brand Estonia's launch also viewed it in positive terms and like Laar and Ilves, believes that the campaign was not given a chance to succeed:

It was widely criticised as the budget was large and many people saw it as a waste and this view was promoted in the media. However I think it was a very important campaign and I was pleased with it. Evelin Ilves was the head of it and worked hard on it. The background questionnaires are interesting as well as the visual graphics which are still used today. The logo can also still be seen on tourist products. It was important to start something professional to promote Estonia since we were so unknown in the world. This campaign was only one way of promoting Estonia – it is a long-term campaign which will take many years and a lot of money. In my view it was not a waste of money as it was based on solid research and I just don't think it was given a chance to succeed (Signe Kivi, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

The notion that the public did not understand the essence of the campaign is fitting and suggests a massive breakdown in communications. In this context the public saw a logo, paid for by the tax payer to an overseas firm, Interbrand and then no follow up. The public appear to misunderstand the fact that the project was never intended to encapsulate Estonian national identity. Pille-Triin Mannik, who is currently working as a Programme Coordinator for the Tallinn 2011 European Capital of Culture believes that the campaign was not effectively communicated to the public which in turn impacted upon the nature of the debates surrounding the price of the campaign:

Something went very wrong in the internal communications. I don't think it was such a big disaster but at the time, the result is the logo and the whole concept linked to it is not actually bad, it just got very bad publicity, probably a communication error at some stage and there was a whole discussion about the campaign, it got very much stuck on the price tag and this is what people remember. This was also a time when the quality of life was not very high so it was painful to see that sum being mentioned on the campaign or on a logo, there might have been some negative attention towards it because it was not designed in Estonia actually. This is a bit of a shame, we could have used it better, as a bit of material to build on, it's a bit naïve but things meant for a very wide audience sometimes have to be simple... it was so understandably not meant for Estonians in the country, it was very much orientated to the outside. It wasn't really communicated, that's not the goal, it doesn't have to serve that purpose" (Pille-Triin Mannik, interview, Tallinn, 13 August 2008).

There appears to be a clear correlation between those who viewed Brand Estonia through a positive lens and those who were critical. The former tended to be political figures that had a say in the project at the time, Laar and Kivi and also those actually involved with the enterprise, such as Evelin Ilves herself. They apportion "blame" for the "failure" of Brand Estonia with public failure to understand marketing, societal ignorance and in Laar's case, the successor government. The discontinuation of the exercise by Laar's successors thus only serves to reinforce the image in the minds of the public that the project was a failure and a waste of resources. Others such as Mannik and Kompus believe that the public were not told enough about the project and could therefore not support it from the outset. They acknowledge the necessity of increasing one's awareness in a global or European context but feel that the way in which the campaign was delivered led to serious questions being raised. This confusion and lack of transparency meant that the only response amongst the public was dismissal. This is in-keeping with the views of the majority of the public-level respondents who were overwhelmingly dogmatic in their responses and rejected all claims that the campaign was simply not given a chance. Many said that it failed to encapsulate Estonian identity. However, as stated earlier in the chapter, Brand Estonia never set out to do this. This therefore adds credence to the notion that the campaign was not communicated effectively to the public from the outset.

One possible reason for the hostility to the campaign may also lie in the fact that the project was not organic and in a sense was a label imposed on Estonia from outside by people with little or no connection to Estonia the country. Therefore it failed to connect to the public at large. Internationally the campaign was not viewed through the same gaze. Diplomats such as Kaja Tael and Riina Kionka revealed that the promotional materials with the "Welcome to Estonia: Positively Transforming" slogan emblazoned were useful in giving Estonia a sense of place in the mindset of people and helped to position Estonia

in the mainstream rather than peripheral radar. In the few nation branding textbooks in print, Estonia is focussed on although a critical reflection of Brand Estonia is missing. Dinnie (2008) fails to reflect on how the campaign was perceived in the country it was supposed to be promoting whilst Hall merely states that the branding campaign was “hotly debated internally amongst Estonians” (Hall 2006, p.161).

3.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed how the return to Europe discourse in Estonia manifested in several aspects of Estonian social life. It has highlighted the importance of image building for Estonian political elites in this context as well as demonstrating the internal dimensions of state and nation building. As part of the wider process of European integration Estonian politicians sought to present the country as a European or Nordic nation in an attempt to distance the country from the Soviet past. For Estonia and other newly sovereign, post-colonial nations, nation branding takes on significance. Anholt goes as far to say that the process of nation branding can be a unifying experience for a country (Anholt 2005, p.142). In the case of Estonia the distancing of the country from the Soviet past may not have sat well with many Russian speakers living in the country. However the notion of unity may ring true to some extent since the public respondents were generally united in their criticism of the campaign. Furthermore the debates concerning Welcome to Estonia highlight a division between the public and political elite. This can be seen as further evidence of the “two Estonias” debate manifesting itself in another area of social life. Moreover the debates also illuminate the “top-down” or official/elite and “bottom-up” public/ground-level perspectives on nationhood and nation-building (as discussed in chapter one). The campaign was quickly scaled down after the 2002 elections and collapse of Mart Laar’s government. There also appears to be very little done in the way of follow-up research gauging the success of the campaign in terms of value for money. For the Estonian political elite it appears that Brand Estonia in 2002 was better best forgotten.

By 2007 people in Estonia had begun wearing the “Welcome to Estonia” t-shirts (Dinnie 2008, p.235). Dinnie sees this as evidence of a successful branding campaign since the continuous visual reinforcement of the brand logo helps to portray a postcard image of the location and likens it to the black taxi-cabs in London. In a sense Dinnie may be correct given that the use of such products show that the campaign has entered into the culture. The campaign might be viewed through a more favourable public gaze years later although given the strength in opinion amongst respondents this seems unlikely. One respondent

mentioned that people wear the t-shirts “in an ironic kind of way” (Margit Randla, interview, Tallinn, 17 November 2007). Parallels may be drawn here in the UK with the use of retro symbols and slogans on t-shirts; respect is certainly not the main motivation for wearing such garments. Dinnie fails to note that the use of the Brand Estonia logo may be an ironic take on the project as a whole.

Whilst the logo has entered the public consciousness it is not something which is readily identified with. It does suggest however that the sense of identity in Estonia is strong; to be able to become a parody engenders a level of self-confidence. This chapter has attempted to present the various current debates surrounding Estonian identity and sense of place within a post-EU accession context and has aimed to shed some light on this identity conundrum. Moreover this chapter has set the scene for a critical reflection of the role that the Eurovision Song Contest played in Estonia in 2001 and 2002 in terms of image building and wider socio-political identity debates.

Chapter 4: A case study of the role of the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia as a reflection of the return to Europe.

4.1 Introduction:

The data presented in this chapter was collected in and around Estonia in 2007/2008. The analysis is concerned with the symbolic aspects of the Return to Europe discourse which prevailed in the 1990s in Estonia. As highlighted in the previous chapter (chapter three) Lauristin (2009) argues that there were several signposts of the Return to Europe and in this chapter I argue that the way in which the Eurovision Song Contest was used as a platform by Estonia is evidence of this. National identity and the Russian speaking minority in Estonia are key themes which are central to the discussion. In particular closer examination of the debates surrounding Dave Benton, (Estonian ESC winner) an immigrant from Aruba, provides a unique insight into Estonian national identity within a post-Soviet context. Further analysis of both societal and media debates surrounding the initial Eurovision Song Contest victory in Estonia and the subsequent staging of the event in Tallinn in 2002 offers an opportunity to invoke more detailed discussion around the return to Europe discourses and Estonian identity proper.

In the first section the Eurovision Song Contest is contextualised within the wider rhetoric of the Return to Europe. In this context it will elicit a necessary discussion on how Eurovision was seen as a “rite of passage” for prospective EU members keen to assert their “European” credentials in a global setting. Drawing upon evidence from key respondents and following on from the discussion in chapter two, the significance of the event for Estonia is highlighted. Closer examination of the media debates immediately after Estonia won the contest in May 2001 highlights how seriously it was seen through the gaze of the Estonia media and further content and contextual analysis sheds light on identity issues in Estonia within a European context.

The rhetoric surrounding Dave Benton, one half of the winning Eurovision Song Contest duo, provides fertile ground for the exploration of multiculturalism in Estonia. As evidenced in the elite level interviews for this thesis, on one hand Benton was held up as a symbol of Estonian multiculturalism at a time when the European Union and the Council of Europe were closely scrutinising Estonian policy towards minorities, namely the Russian speaking population living in Estonia. However on the other hand, many public-level respondents expressed concerns about racism and xenophobia and did not identify

with Estonia as “multicultural”. This further demonstrates evidence of the “Two Estonias” rhetoric highlighted in the previous chapter and this will be discussed in greater depth in this chapter.

In the final sector of this chapter I focus on the debates surrounding the financing of the 2002 contest. Media analysis along with in-depth interviews with those responsible for making the decisions reveal the primary concerns for elites within the media and political spheres. Initially there were concerns as to whether the government would provide enough funding to Estonian Television to stage the event. The nature of the debates changed in light of negative press attention from Western Europe, many of whom called Estonia’s ability to stage such a large event into question. The event for Estonia therefore took on a deeper significance; Estonia now had something to prove to the world.

4.2 The Eurovision Song Contest in the context of Estonia’s Return to Europe

The day after Estonia won the Eurovision Song Contest in May 2001, the victory was immediately seized upon by then Prime Minister Mart Laar who proclaimed to a jubilant crowd waiting to welcome the victorious team back to Tallinn “We demolished the Russian empire by singing; now we are not knocking on the door of Europe but will simply walk in singing” (Jakobson in *Õhtuleht* 14 May 2001). Thus the symbolic link between Estonia’s Return to Europe and Eurovision was made from the outset. With hindsight such a statement may be seen as somewhat whimsical. However, it does provide an insight into political developments at the time. Estonian officials were participating in EU accession talks and for Laar winning Eurovision came at the right time. Immediately after Estonia won Laar was reported to have said “now the name will be on everyone’s lips” (Guha in *The Observer*, 28 April 2002). Eurovision can be almost seen as a rite of passage for a country to demonstrate its “European credentials”, for Estonia it took on a deeper significance since it was through singing that Estonia is said to have mobilised popular resistance to the Soviet government. Estonian victory in the Eurovision Song Contest exemplifies the importance that is attached to singing within narratives on national identity in Estonia; it can be seen as an extension of the role that singing played during the independence movement as well as an affirmation of a small nation’s identity.

Beginning in Tartu in 1869, the Estonian Song Festival (*Laulupidu*) is held every five years and moved to Tallinn in 1896. The tradition continued during the interwar republic

and was permitted during Soviet times, albeit with songs which had been approved by the authorities (O'Connor 2006, p.181). Song festivals were one of the few, and therefore important representations of the national within Soviet Estonia¹⁸. This collective identity was especially important during the struggle for independence. It was during the 1980s that these song festivals took on a greater significance when they became the focal point for national assertion and a symbol of resistance to the Soviet regime. This became known as the “Singing Revolution”, a term which was coined by Estonian activist Heinz Valk in an article published in 1988 (Vogt 2005, p.26).

Close links with Estonian émigré communities abroad and access to Finnish television in Northern Estonia provoked widespread dissatisfaction with the ailing Soviet system. This was highlighted in the 2010 documentary “*Disko ja Tuumasõda*” which chronicled the role of Finnish Television in Estonia. Moreover the easing of restrictions on political protests meant that mass demonstrations took place, singing festivals therefore became one example of such popular resistance movements. From 1987 onwards these gatherings gained momentum with patriotic songs and national symbols re-emerging. In September 1988 over 300 000 people gathered in the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds and for the first time in public people began to call for outright Estonian independence. In this context song festivals represented an opportunity for Estonians to collectively express their dissatisfaction and even hostility towards what they saw as an illegitimate regime.

According to Vihalemm *et al.* the Singing Revolution marked the “mythological stage” of the Estonian independence movement:

Mass demonstrations united the participants with emotionally high voltage. Symbols, myths and rituals had a heyday, and the function of words during the mass rallies was magical. Speeches, songs and slogans represented a collective witchcraft, the symbolic fight of a small nation against the totalitarian machinery (Vihalemm *et al.* 1997, p.202).

Therefore the quote from Mart Laar takes on profound significance in this context. Song festivals are said to have played a fundamental role in affirming the national identity and resolve of Estonians. This collective identity can also be seen in the reaction to the Estonian Eurovision Song Contest victory in 2001. The notion that singing helped lead to great societal changes may be dubious but it does capture the wider EU accession discourses which were on-going and prevalent in Estonia at the time.

¹⁸ Despite the fact that the song festivals were “national in form, socialist in content”, the form was nevertheless very important according to O'Connor.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the return to Europe rhetoric essentially meant throwing off Soviet rule and re-emerging on the world stage, fully integrated with European and global geopolitical structures. Becoming a full member of the European Broadcasting Union in 1993, another example of the Return to Europe, meant that Estonia was eligible to take part in qualifying rounds for the Eurovision Song Contest that year, held in Ljubljana, Slovenia. For Estonia Eurovision provided a platform, not only showing that they were a “normal” independent country and an integral part of Europe but also able to compete on a level playing field with the major western powers. Marju Lauristin highlights the various “signposts” which identify a “return” to Europe and cites hosting Eurovision successfully as one of them (Lauristin 2009). In this context the ESC has become a cultural ritual. It is in a sense a rite of passage for European countries throughout the decades since the inaugural contest of 1956, where only seven nations competed.

Estonia had a history of following the Eurovision Song Contest, since during Soviet times it was followed in the north of the country via Finnish television as highlighted earlier. This “window on the west” was an opportunity to follow global events as well as following popular culture in Western Europe, the ESC being just one example. The event gained an underground following in Estonia with a fan club established by radio technician Karl Pihelgas during the 1960s. According to Pihelgas, Eurovision had a symbolic value, it was something that the west bought into and the Soviets did not, a symbol of a carefree capitalist west. In the context following it so closely can be considered to be a symbol of resistance to the regime. In an interview given to the media in 2002, Pihelgas recalled that he and twelve other friends watched the event in secret; he feared that he would lose his job if his clandestine meeting became public knowledge. Whilst it was not considered to be as subversive as The Sex Pistols for example, the Eurovision Song Contest was still frowned upon by the Soviet authorities (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn 2 November 2007). Soon after Estonia entered the contest, the membership of the club began to wane, many members had died or were too old and since the programme was legitimately broadcast on Estonian TV, there was no need to watch the event via Finnish television and so it was finally disbanded. However for Pihelgas the event was so much more than just a television show, “it was a chance to feel that the Iron Curtain could break down, and I and my family could, if just for a night, be part of Europe” (Rosenberg 2002).

Estonia’s participation in the competition got off to a shaky start after having failed to reach the finals for the 1993 Eurovision Song Contest, coming fifth out of seven. They

were therefore given automatic qualification to the competition the following year where they then went on to finish second last with only two points. According to Juhan Paadam of Estonian Television, whilst the results were initially disappointing, it was participation in the Eurovision Song Contest and other such popular culture events that was an important priority for newly independent Estonia (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn 2 November 2007). It was a way of “normalising” Estonia and part of the wider “return to Europe” which the government were appropriating. Ilmar Raag, former Chairman of the Board at Estonian Television expanded on Paadam’s view:

In the beginning of the 1990s Estonia used every possibility to go to the west; this was a policy across the board. Estonia tried to become members of almost every international organisation; the European Union, Council of Europe, European Broadcasting Union. In the European Broadcasting Union the biggest and most outstanding project is the Eurovision Song Contest. It was almost natural for Estonia to take part in order to show themselves as active members of this organisation and also to show to the rest of Europe and the world that Estonia is free (Ilmar Raag, interview, Tallinn, 13 November 2007).

However one respondent recalled that whilst it was important in those early days for Estonia to be seen on the world stage, poor results in Eurovision and other events such as football championships may have actually been detrimental to Estonia’s image:

There was a chance that we could have been seen as useless, a laughing stock. Our football team is rubbish. As a singing nation Eurovision was our way to make our mark (Margit Randla, interview, Tallinn, 17 November 2007).

After facing relegation from the competition in 1995, Estonia returned in 1996. During the broadcast a message expressing goodwill to the participant, recorded by a political leader or official from that country, was shown before each entry. The seniority of the figure who delivered the message varied wildly from country to country, ranging from Presidents and in Estonia’s case, the Prime Minister Tiit Vähi, to junior ministers or in the Spanish case, an ambassador. This message in essence symbolised how significantly some countries view such a contest in terms of raising a country’s international profile. Estonia reached fifth place in Eurovision in 1996, a feat which was front-page news and lauded as a breakthrough by the press at home. It is clear from the coverage at the time that this event symbolised so much more than just a song contest. Closer reading of the press coverage from the time shows that it was in fact a metaphor for Estonia’s “return to Europe”.



Figure 4.1

Postimees, May 20 1996



Figure 4.2

Postimees, May 20 1996

Alongside the main article on Eurovision (pictured above) there was a caricature of the singers sitting on a flying carpet featuring the EU flag. Waving them off was President Meri with a thought bubble reading “Mida ma näen? Eesti on jälle ühe jala Euroopa ukse vahele saanud” (“*Why do I smile? Another door to Europe opens for Estonia*”). Whilst the cartoon is tongue-in-cheek it does have a deeper significance. Estonia’s Return to Europe was very much on the political agenda at the time, ultimately membership of the European Union was seen as the end goal. Whilst unrelated, the media coverage of the Estonian breakthrough in Eurovision can be seen as an extension of this return within the realm of European popular culture.

Estonia continued to perform strongly in the proceeding years and successfully avoided relegation when other countries, namely Finland and Russia did not. Like the EU accession talks, to which Estonia was invited to before neighbouring Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia was seen as “ahead of the game” in the Baltic region, and in this context, ahead of their neighbouring countries in Eurovision. Perhaps more significantly when Estonia won the competition, they had succeeded where long-standing participants Finland had failed and indeed won seven years before Russia managed the same feat. In 1999 the European Broadcasting Union changed the rules to allow competing countries the right to perform in any language and Estonia, like most other countries opted for English. This was largely uncontroversial in Estonia and was largely seen as a chance for Estonia to succeed rather than a failure to promote national values. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that viewers in Estonia were largely familiar to Eurovision by this stage, as well as having the added benefit of viewing the contest years prior to participating via Finnish television in the north. Moreover they watched Finland continually fail to win votes when singing in Finnish. The vast majority of Estonian respondents were pragmatic in their approach; signing in Estonian would not be as widely understood and English was perceived as having more chance on success. Therefore it was achieving success in the competition which was the driving force behind the decision as opposed to promoting the Estonian

language to an international audience. The singer Evelin Samuel represented Estonia in 1999 and spoke of the significance that the event had not only on a personal level but also in terms of national pride. “Of course as a singer it was an amazing opportunity but it was also an honour to represent my country, we were like ambassadors for Estonia. I don’t think the language was so much of an issue” (Evelin Samuel, interview, Tallinn, 7 April 2008). Mart Laar was one of few respondents who actively called for Estonian to be reinstated as the main language of performance in the competition which given his political views is perhaps not surprising:

You can see the diversity of the language, even in pop music. People must feel that they want to sing in their own language, it must come from your own heart. I like the Estonian language promotion [through Eurovision] but I am not too optimistic. Of course I would like it if somebody would go to the international arena with a song in the Estonian language. I would like it very much (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

4.3 Eurovision Song Contest 2001: Estonia’s Contest

In May 2001 Estonia won the 46th Eurovision Song Contest. The winning duo, Tanel Paadar and Dave Benton performed the song “Everybody” and went onto win the popular vote. What followed in the Estonian media was an unprecedented explosion of euphoria. For weeks after the contest the event was still on the front pages of the newspapers, highlighting the significance of the event for Estonia. Further media analysis will follow in a later section.

What was the response in Estonia to winning Eurovision? Was it seen as important and if so, why? Respondents, both elite and public-level overwhelmingly emphasised that winning Eurovision was a significant breakthrough for Estonia in terms of national pride but also international recognition, for a small country with a troubled history, it was a chance to take its place in the media and cultural spotlight in Europe. This was something which was constantly reiterated by respondents and will form the focal point for discussion in the next section of this chapter.

4.3.1 Estonian Eurovision victory: Flagging the nation

The Estonian public engaged with the Eurovision Song Contest victory in 2001, and unlike the Welcome to Estonia campaign as discussed in chapter five, the embrace was not solely led top-down, it was spontaneous. Immediately after the results were announced people

took to the city centre with flags in scenes reminiscent of a national holiday. According to Sarah Squire, former UK Ambassador to Estonia:

It was an extraordinary moment and for Estonians, who are reserved and on the whole, quiet people, that eruption of celebration was something to witness. (*Arena: Estonia Dreams of Eurovision* [TV] 2002)

Winning Eurovision was seen as “the most important event since independence” (Guha in *The Observer*, 28 April 2002) and even a cursory glance at the media coverage from the time reflects this. The flag, a potent symbol of national identity was very much at the forefront of the celebrations. Juhan Paadam recalled that the celebrations which followed the Eurovision result were a reflection of how significant this victory was seen at the time in Estonia:

It was like a national holiday, it was a new explosion of our national identity [...] the delegation were met in town hall square the next day. In the first year only four people wanted to meet us. The town hall square was absolutely full (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Paadam’s assistant, Tiiu Siim recalled the events of that night as being completely unusual from anything she had previously experienced in Estonia:

I was here [in Estonia] and when I returned to town from the TV centre, the town was packed, everyone was drinking and singing and very happy. All the pubs were open, people were waving the flag. It was a really big thing. Cars were driving around with flags and horns (Tiiu Siim, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Why though was this victory in Estonia received in such a patriotic manner? According to Ilmar Raag, Chairman of the Board at ETV in 2002, this represented so much more than just winning Eurovision; it was a symbolic victory as much as it was a singing one:

While we Estonians have always been proud of our statesmen and celebrities, we don’t really believe in our own importance. After all, history has testified numerous times to the fact that the interests of small nations are seldom considered in the maelstrom of global politics. It might even be more accurate to say that they go unnoticed [...] The significance of the winning song [...] was much bigger than just any Eurovision victory. It instilled optimism and confidence in all Estonians [...] this is the only major chance [...] to prove that despite the small size of our nation, we have something to say to the world (Ilmar Raag cited in *Eesti Televisioon* (Ed.). (2002). *The official programme of the 47th Eurovision Song Contest 2002*. Tallinn: ETV, p.8).

Thus the victory was symbolic, it was more than success in a song contest, it represented Estonia being accepted by Europe, a celebration of the national. Estonia had taken

precedence in the international arena, receiving accolades (in the form of points) from her peers. It is, at the time of writing the largest international competition that Estonia has won. Paadam also flagged the symbolic element of this Eurovision victory for Estonia and the Estonians:

There is a historical and emotional story from our own past. Estonia is unique because during the Soviet occupation we had the ability to follow Eurovision on Finnish television [...] we are talking about the possibility to watch Finland. We knew exactly that the Eurovision Song Contest is and a lot of people thought in these days that maybe one day we will have the possibility to go [to Eurovision] Of course the Socialist world established their own version [Intervision] to compete with Eurovision but it was not so popular and was not popular here at all (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

As highlighted in section 6.2, access to Finnish television meant that there was a great attachment to the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia since they had previously followed the competition. It is also significant that the Socialist rival, the Intervision Song Contest was, according to Paadam, especially unpopular in Estonia. The ESC further served as a vehicle for the othering of the Soviet regime; the dismissal of the Intervision competition and the following of the ESC on Finnish TV is therefore a reflection of this.

Hobsbawm (2002, p.143) highlights the role that football matches have played in constructing an imagined community within the nation, he cites that this nation appears to be more real when seen as just a team of eleven people. Moreover the same approach could be applied to Dave Benton and Tanel Padar who went on to become national heroes after Estonia won the Eurovision Song Contest which led to the national celebrations described previously. Given the scenes of flags being waved in Tallinn that night, a comparison with national celebrations is not entirely out of place. Fox (2006) argues that national holidays and sporting events are comparable; both are key focal points for collective experience in which the imagined community which is the nation is articulated. In this context the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia can be considered in the same vein. However the Estonian case is paradoxical; on one hand the singer Dave Benton was held up by politicians such as Signe Kivi and Mart Laar as a national hero, a symbol of Estonian “multiculturalism”, whilst groups representing the interests of Russian speakers in Estonia complained that they were being discriminated against. The issue of the Russian speaking minority and multiculturalism discourses will be discussed in greater detail in the next section. Certainly the fact that Estonia was being recognised internationally was seen as a cause for celebration, however the spectacle also provided a platform for the commemoration of the nation, in this case it appears to be the ethnic Estonian nation. The

use of national symbols such as the flag invites members of the “nation” to share the atmosphere in a heightened sense of national belonging. What then did this waving of the flags signify? Was it a sign of inclusivity? Was it a display of unequivocal support for “the nation” in a civic sense, inviting all irrespective of nationality? Benedict Anderson (2006) suggests that feelings of national unity are produced by the knowledge that people across the country are participating in the same activities. Anderson cites readings newspapers as one such example. In this case we can take this further and suggest that this is what the Eurovision Song Contest offered for Estonia, a sense of not only national (Estonian) unity but also a true sense of belonging to “Europe”.

Raymond Firth (cited in Billig 1995, p.43) distinguishes between the signalling function of the flag and the symbolic role. In the Estonian case the role of the flag was symbolic, rather than a mindless symbol it was actively waved in a euphoric frenzy, a focus for national sentiment. Billig (1995, p.43) argues that most flags are ignored; flying silently from civic buildings, routinely ignored by citizens. However the Estonian flag, itself a symbol of opposition to the Soviet regime during the Singing Revolution, was anything but overlooked that night in Tallinn following Eurovision 2001, the waving of the Estonian flag was one of the defining images of the evening. The flag is a potent symbol of the nation as Billig expands:

The hoisting of the newly designed flag indicates that another nation has joined the club of nations: “we” have become like “you” (no longer “them”; “we” are all nations, with “our” flags and “our” anthems, “our” seats in the United Nations, and “our” participation, with appropriately designed vests, at Olympic Games and World Cups (Billig 1995, p.86).

In the international arena, flags are waved and they are waved for “all” who are part of the “Estonian nation”. Therefore the emergence of the national flag in Estonia that evening represented the reproduction of the nation, as well as a reminder of who “we” are, and therefore further sets the agenda for discussions on who is “Estonian” and who is not. The flag waving after Eurovision victory therefore represented the depth of Estonian identity, embedded into the routine of daily social life. National identity and issues surrounding nationalism do not speak with a straightforward voice; the linear narrative of the nation is complicated. The story of Dave Benton offers a unique insight and highlights the often paradoxical complexities surrounding integration issues in Estonia and will be discussed next.

4.3.2 Constructing multiculturalism through Eurovision: Dave Benton

Estonia has continued to face complicated inter-ethnic issues since the restoration of the independent state in 1991. The situation in the 1990s was multifaceted and therefore complicated and as highlighted in chapter five, Estonia was at an interesting juxtaposition. On one hand “restoration” of independence drew upon the legal continuity principle which gave legitimacy for successive governments to ensure (ethnic) Estonian dominance in the political and public spheres; ensuring that the Estonian language and culture had predominance. On the other the return to Europe discourses of the ruling elite paved the way for integration with western European organisations which implied signing up to norms, such as minority rights and emphasising “multiculturalism”, which were at times, at odds with the Estonian nationalist agenda. Whilst it is not the aim of this thesis to explore issues of minority integration in Estonia in depth, attention should be paid since it presents an interesting precursor to discussions surrounding Estonian international portrayals through the Eurovision Song Contest.

Given the demographic situation with a sizeable Russian speaking minority, Estonia can be considered to be “multicultural”. By 1998 as the Estonian government sought accession to the European Union. The previously dominant rhetoric of the ethno-state was substituted with a more pragmatic approach; one of integration and the creation of a multicultural, democratic Estonian society (Lauristin 2002, p.22) Such a paradigm shift meant that Estonian society had to come to terms with its Soviet past if the future was to include full European integration. It appears that the Russian minority did not feature at all in the considerations of the Estonian government in the early 1990s with no official policy or statement issues between 1992 and 1996 (Lauristin 2002, p.22) The Integration Programme of Estonian Society 2000-2007 was formally adopted in March 2000. The programme emphasised the need for societal integration to be based upon knowledge of the Estonian language as well as acquiring Estonian citizenship. However the recognition of minority cultural rights was also acknowledged. The coalition government which passed the integration programme in 1998 was the same government which introduced restrictive citizenship laws in the early half of the decade. Therefore the shift towards integration, community cohesion and the rhetoric of multiculturalism which prevailed in Estonia towards the end of that decade can be seen as a reflection of the Estonian government’s orientation towards western European institutions, namely the European Union. Multiculturalism in the Estonian context refers to the peaceful coexistence of Estonians

and Russian speakers. With this background closer examination of Dave Benton's story provides an insight into the complexities of minority issues in Estonia.

Dave Benton, a Dutch national originally from Aruba moved to Estonia in 1997 after he married an Estonian. He, along with Estonian rock singer Tanel Padar won the Estonian Eurovision Song Contest heats, *Eurolaul* in February 2001 and then went onto represent Estonia in the Eurovision final. Dave Benton is a point of interest not only because of his story as an immigrant to Estonia but also because he is to date the only black person to win the Eurovision Song Contest. It is also noteworthy that he represented Estonia, which like many countries in Eastern Europe, does not have an established black community. It is interesting to note that the Estonian Eurovision entry was selected by jury rather than public telephone votes, the public did not have a say until 2004. Benton and Padar also had backing singers and dancers, 2XL, two of whom were ethnic Russian speakers. The Estonian Eurovision entry in 2001 can therefore be seen as a construction of multiculturalism to a European audience; an English language song written by ethnic Estonian songwriters Ivar Must and Maian-Anna Kärmas, with inclusive lyrics (the song itself being "Everybody"), performed by an ethnic Estonian, a black immigrant and supported by ethnic Russian speakers on backing vocals. However to what extent did this resonate with the public and politicians alike and what were the experiences of the man himself?

Dave Benton, along with Tanel Padar was held up as a national hero by politicians such as Mart Laar and in the local Estonian press when they won Eurovision for Estonia. The explosion of media coverage was unprecedented and will be examined in depth later in this chapter. The issue of how Dave Benton was represented reveals interesting aspects of Estonian society at the time. The language used in the media coverage suggests that Dave Benton's ethnic origins were not as invisible as some politicians tried to portray during the research for this thesis. After Benton and Padar won *Eurolaul* he was referred to as a "dark-skinned man" (Leivak in *Ohtuleht* 5 February 2001) and after winning Eurovision itself a woman was quoted as saying "I really like that black guy" (Leivak in *Ohtuleht* 14 May 2001). Whilst this is not evidence of racism as such, which itself is not the focus of this thesis, it does highlight that the coverage in the media at the time was arguably chauvinistic and Benton's ethnicity was regularly flagged.

The experience of Dave Benton is interesting especially when contrasted with the views of the politicians interviewed for this study along with many public-level respondents. Benton

stated that he was fully accepted into Estonian society and did not face any issues regarding racism or discrimination:

I did not find any problems as a foreigner; I did not even find any problems of discrimination as a coloured person (Dave Benton, interview, Tallinn, 15 November 2007)

In the context of EU accession Dave Benton can be seen as a useable figure for Estonia's political elites at the time. Integration and multiculturalism were the buzzwords and it can be argued that Benton embodied all of these things. He was a foreign national who moved to Estonia, learned the language and was accepted into society. His status as being part of an ethnic minority could further be evidence of Estonia's multicultural credentials, useful at a time when the Estonian government were coming under increasing pressure to extend citizenship to its stateless persons. Benton stated that he tried to learn Estonian as soon as he arrived in the country; he therefore reflects the view from the Estonian political elite that language is the key to integration in the country and that those who do not speak Estonian do so out of choice:

I had to integrate here. I moved here to stay, to live [...] you have to speak Estonian [...] I speak it with my children [...] I started to speak in my second week of being here, I noticed that people liked it. One lady told me that there are Russians here for ten years who still don't speak it, they still don't know it (Dave Benton, interview, Tallinn, 15 November 2007).

Benton's recollection of the comments regarding Russian speakers shows that he buys into the notion appropriated by Estonian politicians such as Mart Laar that many Russian speakers simply do not make the effort to learn Estonian. Benton highlighted that he started ordering food in the shops in Estonian despite the fact that it might have been easier to speak English.

As stated earlier in this section, Benton was held up as a national hero in Estonia after he won the Eurovision Song Contest. This was something which was not lost on the politicians who were interviewed for this thesis. Many commented that Benton representing Estonia was entirely appropriate for a modern multicultural democracy. Signe Kivi who was the Minister of Culture from 1999 until 2002 stated that she was proud that Benton was representing Estonia at that there were no issues regarding public attitudes towards him:

I was proud when we won – it is a huge event for anyone to win. I liked the fact that we had a white Estonian and a black Estonian resident. It supported the opinion of

Estonia being liberal and friendly. It was a good image to show Estonia's multiculturalism. We are multicultural; we have many groups living here with Russians being the largest minority. This image of Estonia was a big step forward, for us and for the European community. There was no issue with Dave's colour (Signe Kivi, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

For Kivi Eurovision and Dave Benton were therefore platforms for promoting a certain narrative of the Estonian nation to the European community. Other elite level respondents echoed Kivi's assertion that Dave Benton's ethnicity was rarely commented upon in public discourse. Sarah Squire, UK Ambassador to Estonia until 2003 commented that Dave Benton was seen favourably in the eyes of the Estonian public but perhaps because he is a celebrity. Another respondent, Ilmar Raag commented that Estonians are increasingly used to ethnic diversity and pointed to black American basketball players living and working in Estonia but that the "truth" is difficult to gauge since they are celebrities and therefore immediately have different experiences because of their occupation rather than ethnicity. Sarah Squire's response suggests that whilst she did not recall people having overtly prejudiced views about Benton, perhaps there was a level of intolerance bubbling under the surface of Estonian society:

The fact that he married an Estonian girl had sort of been digested as a one-off. It's so often the way isn't it certain celebrity figures can do things which you actually might deplore if it was your next door neighbour doing it. I think they were quite proud that a young, blonde Estonian hero singer is partnered with this nice, and he was very nice natured [...] very warm man [...] Estonians like him as a slightly exotic part of their cultural scene (Sarah Squire, interview, Cambridge, 15 January 2008)

Also conspicuously absent from the media debate and comments in general is the fact that there were Russian speakers performing as part of 2XL. This failed to elicit comment from the vast majority of respondents. The lack of discussion in the popular press might suggest that they preferred to highlight Dave Benton as a symbol of multicultural Estonia rather than Russian speakers who might somehow take the glory from what they saw as an Estonian triumph. A pattern emerged amongst the respondents – rather than commenting on Dave Benton they all appeared to have an issue with two Swedish singers representing Estonia in the contest in short succession:

I don't remember people saying negative things about Dave Benton because he is black. As for the backing singers, we had one Russian guy which could have more attention. With Ines [ESC 2000], one of her backing singers, she is Russian too. There were no negative comments. I think the black and white thing, people talk about it and asked about it in press conferences in Copenhagen but in Estonia it was not an issue. At least I can't remember (Meelis Kompus, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008).

Nothing [negative] about Dave Benton, I don't remember hearing anything about that. After this Eurovision win the government gave him permanent residency [...] everybody likes that he was the only black man in Estonia, there wasn't any problems [...] about Swedish girls later because there were many Swedish girls [...] especially in 2006 [...] Sandra didn't even know the colours of our flag (Marko Reikop, interview, Tallinn, 19 November 2007).

Back then I think they were very happy, even though artistically or musically Dave Benton wasn't very good, he's just a nice guy, I like him. I don't think, or I don't remember any analysing in the media. Later on this dispute arose because one year we had a Swedish girl who got nothing, then the media asked why this girl, we have lots of talented singers, then they were pissed off (Andri Maimets, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

The discourse concerning the two Swedish singers who represented Estonia in the competition in 2002 and 2006 respectively will be discussed in the next chapter. It is notable that all elite level respondents did not recall any negative comments concerning Dave Benton representing Estonia. However the ground-level responses told a different story. Whilst they do not state that Benton himself experienced racism per se, they did allude to underlying racist attitudes in Estonia which was not engaged with in the media or by politicians at the time. One respondent recalled that the Dutch Ambassador, Hans Glaubitz resigned in 2006 because he and his Cuban partner "could no longer cope with gay hatred and racism on the Estonian streets" (NIS News 7 June 2006).

We are openly aggressive against black people. That comes out from our media. I remember when the Dutch Ambassador went back to Holland because of our hostility towards his boyfriend who was black and gay. [...] Dave Benton is popular because he is a normal person who tries to make a living, he is married to an Estonian, he has kids here, he has settled down, has a great voice, he wants to do something. I think he is quite into the charities, he wants to give back to people, I think those types of people are always respected [...] He was as respected as our Estonian boy, it didn't matter who he was because after that we had all those Swedish girls" (Margit Randla, interview, Tallinn, 17 November 2007)

It was a chance for us to show solidarity with a black man which is a joke actually. It was a cover-up. Estonia is a very nationalistic country. It was a huge spin. You never see black people here. There are no Indian students in Tallinn University, not that there aren't any applications. I think that speaks volumes [...] I don't think Estonians are aggressive towards him [Benton] [...] after all Estonians still respect him for winning this contest (Anonymised respondent, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007)

There therefore appears to be a gulf between the elite level responses and public-level respondents. The elite level respondents consistently highlighted how proud they were that a black singer was representing Estonia and that it highlighted that Estonia was in fact "multicultural". However on the other hand, public respondents commented that the issue

is more complicated. They highlighted examples of racism in Estonia which have been overlooked by those keen to portray Estonia as a multicultural democracy by using Dave Benton to exemplify this. Benton therefore represents the desires of the political elite keen to portray Estonia as a liberal, multicultural country in the run up to EU accession. During research for this thesis I encountered negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities, whilst this is a feature of every country, it struck me as somewhat contradictory that people claim that Benton was not seen in this light. Closer reading of Benton's interview shows that he himself went to great lengths to integrate into Estonian society, as highlighted earlier, language being the key issue. He also buys into the ethnic Estonian narrative of the nation; that to be accepted in Estonian society you need to speak Estonian and that many Russians are simply unwilling to learn Estonian.

Eurovision gave me a boost in the eyes of the Estonian people [...] you start using more and more the norms of the country. You can't ask them to change their norms of culture to suit yours, you have to change yours to suit theirs [...] my opinion is that you have all the rights, it's your own country (Dave Benton, interview, Tallinn, 15 November 2007).

Such rhetoric would undoubtedly have stirred strong feelings amongst Russian speaking people in Estonia however it has undoubtedly meant that the Estonian people have taken Dave Benton to their hearts. He is seen as one of them; he lives in Estonia, speaks Estonian and buys into the notion of knowledge of the Estonian language as key to integration. As such Dave Benton's ethnicity is not an issue, despite the strong views from some respondents stating that he is a one-off. Perhaps this is the case, however for those who advocate language as the key to integration then the Dave Benton story highlights the success of it. Likewise, those advocating that Benton is a symbol of multiculturalism can claim this is still the case; he is fully integrated and accepted in Estonian society albeit on ethnic Estonian terms.

4.4 Analysis of media debates following the Eurovision Song Contest in 2001: Deconstructing the perception of self in Estonia

After Estonia won the ESC the main tabloid, *Õhtuleht*, simply had the bold headline "Uksumatu" ("Unbelievable") emblazoned on the front page along with photos of the jubilant performers Tanel Padar and Dave Benton (see overleaf).



Figure 4.3: *Õhtuleht* 14th May 2001

The articles which followed were entirely in-keeping with the headline; the victory was seen as “unbelievable”. Closer examination of the content reveals interesting narratives relating to Estonian identity as highlights the significance of this event for Estonia and Estonians at the time. The edition featured 16 pages which were dedicated to Eurovision; extensive coverage of the celebrations both in Copenhagen after the event as well as the reactions in Estonia and analysis of the event itself. All the articles relating to Eurovision were emotionally charged and reflected a lack of self-confidence in Estonia at the time; lack of self confidence in the fact that Estonians could not believe that they had won and also in the fears that Estonia would be incapable of successfully hosting the competition in 2002.

One article entitled “Flowers and tears at the airport” (Jakobson in *Õhtuleht* 14 May 2001) focussed on crowds waiting for the winning duo to arrive at the airport in Tallinn. Signe Kivi, the Minister of Culture at the time was there to welcome the team back home. Upon arrival she was immediately asked about whether Estonia could host the event to which she replied “Europe has chosen Estonia’s entry as the best, should we really bring shame upon ourselves?” Such a response is telling and in keeping with the rhetoric from other respondents who suggested that this event was directly linked with Estonia’s international image. Kivi and others in the article are quoted as saying that the victory was “unexpected” and even a “shock”. The article also reported that Estonian singer Jaak Joala, who was active during the Singing Revolution, was in tears alongside much of the crowd. The narrative of the articles suggests that winning Eurovision symbolised so much more than a singing competition.

Another article focussed on the celebrations the previous evening after the Estonian entry was declared the winner. “Estonia celebrated until morning” (Kaupmees in *Õhtuleht* 14 May 2001) described the scene in Tallinn with masses of people filling the city centre with flags and car horns. Again the narrative focuses on the disbelief amongst Estonians. One respondent is quoted as saying that the event was “unbelievable... I would never have thought that Estonia would win” with the narrative highlighting the person in question was a man, with tears in his eyes, thus reinforcing the significance of the Eurovision victory for the country. Another was quoted as saying that the unity of the evening felt stronger than at Estonia’s Independence Day. Hindsight suggests that this is somewhat overplayed however given the spontaneous eruption of national celebration it is perhaps not entirely unrepresentative of a particular moment in time in Estonia. In the same edition another article entitled “Thank you boys” again highlighted the emotional significance attached to the achievement. The crowd who had gathered in Tallinn’s Town Hall Square to greet the team the following afternoon were described as being “drunk with happiness”. One so-called “old lady” was said to have cried whilst exclaiming that it was unbelievable. The duo were introduced to the crowd by conductor Tarmo Leinatamm who remarked “Thank you boys, yesterday Estonia became world famous, Tallinn next year”. Prime Minister Mart Laar then spoke to the crowd

Long live Estonia! If we crumbled the Russian Empire by singing then that is how we will enter Europe, not knocking on the door but by singing (Jakobson in *Õhtuleht* 14 May 2001).

Signe Kivi took to the stage and claimed that Estonia would be capable of hosting the event and highlighted that Estonians had been organising song festivals for 135 years. With such rhetoric the issue of Tallinn hosting the event in 2002 was then put firmly on the agenda. Kivi and Laar appeared to be determined that the event would go ahead in Tallinn in 2002 when there were significant doubts. As early as 14 May 2001 Laar was said to have committed 50 million EEK (£2.5 million) to the event (*Õhtuleht*, 14 May 2001). Therefore there appears to be a huge gulf between the public uncertainty over hosting the event and the politicians so keen to utilise the event to present a narrative of the Estonian nation to a global audience.

The rhetoric and quotes from the media coverage highlight several issues. First, the Eurovision win for a significant event for Estonia in terms of placing them on the world map. Secondly the newspaper coverage was overwhelmingly masculine, the tone of the articles resembled football coverage or other such popular events; it was not seen as

“camp” or “kitsch” and there were no negative connotations attached to winning this contest in the gaze of the media. Thirdly the nature of the coverage reveals how Estonians saw themselves at the time. The constant references to the win being “unbelievable” or a “shock” suggests low levels of self confidence in Estonians. This was something which was regularly discussed by respondents. Winning Eurovision was a morale boost for the Estonian public and came at a time when they had been preparing for European Union membership and as such had been feeling the effects of economic cut backs to ensure smooth accession to the union in 2004. It was arguably a big shot in the arm for politicians who had invested everything in the EU integration project but, as Lauristin and others suggest, a gulf between elite and public was beginning to emerge during this time. Why then was Eurovision victory afforded such significance in Estonia and what does this reaction reveal about Estonian society at the time?

Eurovision represented so much more than just a competition for Estonians according to Ilmar Raag. “It instilled optimism and self-confidence in all Estonians [...] the only opportunity of it’s kind for Estonia [...] the only major chance in their life to prove that despite the small size of our nation, we have something to say to the world”. Eesti Televisioon (Ed.). (2002). *The official programme of the 47th Eurovision Song Contest 2002*. Tallinn: ETV, p.8). Raag went further to explain that the reaction to winning Eurovision was so big and so public partly because of Estonia’s recent history, it’s size but also because of the promotional opportunities hosting the event in 2002 would bring.

At the time it was seen as a unique opportunity to show Estonia to almost 300 million viewers or more. This was a pretty powerful argument [...] in Estonia at the time Eurovision was front page news[...]for Estonia in any competition, if our sportsmen get into the top ten it is already a newsworthy item (Ilmar Raag, interview, Tallinn, 13 November 2007).

This sentiment was echoed time and again by both public and elite level respondents. Many highlighted the simple fact that something Estonian had been noticed was significant, the notion that people across the continent had picked up the telephone and spent money voting for Estonia was not lost on most.

I think anything where Estonia gets noticed internationally [...] Estonia doing well and but also being noticed somewhere I guess [...] is good for our ego (Maimu Nommik, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008).

Ivo Rull, a marketing expert recalled that winning such a huge event was a massive boost for Estonia at the time. Winning was also seen as a “means to an end”, hosting the event

successfully was deemed to be the end goal and massively important in terms of promoting a positive international image of Estonia.

Many years earlier in the 1990s and still now, almost every family watch. It was a very big deal for Estonia [...] it gave us the opportunity to organise an all-European television show in Tallinn. Estonia was the first former Soviet country to do this, some didn't think we could do it (Ivo Rull, interview, Tallinn, 9 November 2007).

4.5 Counting the cost: Financing the contest in Tallinn

Ivo Rull's comment above concerning the uncertainty of Estonia being able to stage the contest was a key issue which transpired following analysis of the media debates. The budget for the event at that time was estimated to be in the region of 100 million EEK (£5 million). The enormity of the project becomes clear when the annual budget of Estonian Television is taken into account; 160 million EEK (£8 million) in 2001. (Pino in *Õhtuleht* 15 May 2001). The EBU provide almost half of the funding however the remaining balance needs to be paid for by the national broadcaster itself. The challenge then for Estonian Television was to come up with the necessary funding to secure the event in Tallinn and then to put together the necessary infrastructure, both technical and physical in order for the show to be staged successfully in 2002. With less than a year to prepare the event it was a tough challenge for the Estonians to rise to.

"We will do the concert for sure" was the title of a further article (Viivik in *Õhtuleht* 14 May 2001) and was a paraphrased quote from the Director General of Estonian Television, Aare Urm. Estonian Television was given four weeks to confirm to the European Broadcasting Union whether or not they would stage the event in 2002. On 23 May 2001 the BBC reported that Estonian Television were facing financial crisis and would not be able to stage the event in Tallinn unless the government stepped in. The nature of the debates surrounding the financing of the contest exemplifies wider debates surrounding cuts to government subsidies in an EU accession context as well as an illustration of the politics of Europeanisation around that time. Some commentators in Estonia saw the contest as a tool for forcing the government's hand into providing more funding to ETV to help clear its debts, after a series of cutbacks in state subsidies in the run-up to EU entry. The Estonian government had initially offered ETV a loan to stage the contest however at £1.4 million it fell short of the amount requested. Aare Urm stated

We are doing our best to stage the contest but the government's anti-public service broadcasting policy makes this impossible [...] Should the government stick to its

ruling, it is likely there will not be a public service broadcaster in Estonia by next year. (BBC News 23 May 2001)

Other commentators viewed the contest differently; they saw it as a way of ensuring that the government stepped in to stage the event and also assisted in the financing of ETV more generally:

ETV and entrepreneurial head director Urm are of course very cunning. They use the situation and try to resolve two problems in one take. Get money for the singing contest and also fix the bad economic state of the institution in the shadow of the competition [...] getting one fly with two hits (Maide in *Õhtuleht*, 25 May 2001).

Whilst this may have been an issue for the government to consider, closer reading of this article suggests that political wrangling within the coalition government itself rather than concerns about ETV may explain the delays providing concrete guarantees on assisting with the financing of the project.

The Toompea boys in have messed up [...] If the Laar-Kallas government should ruin the Eurovision contest in the fight of rivalry between them, it will bring severe consequences for both of them. (Maide in *Õhtuleht*, 25 May 2001)

Maide therefore reveals that whilst public financing of such an event may be seen as controversial, it was too good a public relations vehicle for Estonia in the international arena to turn down. Failure to stage the contest successfully would be damaging to Estonia's prestige. Pressure began to grow in the Estonian media too. One article entitled "Money to the altar of the Eurovision" (Pino in *Õhtuleht*, 15 May 2001) called for the government to fund the competition.

Because the expenditures are direct and the profits are only indirect we might feel that the money is just being thrown into a black hole. If we leave aside the multiplied profits that the capital's hotels, pubs and bars and other amusement establishments will gain, we win most of all from the worldwide presentation of Estonia's image. For Estonia, who before had to buy advertising space for itself in foreign newspapers, this is a chance that has fallen into its lap, to promote itself through a modern television medium (Pino in *Õhtuleht* 15 May 2001).

Mart Laar recalled that there were initial discrepancies with the allocation of funds however he maintains that hosting the event was cost effective in terms of the airspace and media coverage dedicated to Estonia as a result as well as the cost of failing to capitalise on the opportunity being far more costly in the long run. Indeed the lack of a bigger debate suggest that there appears to be an almost-unanimous elite-level consensus around the

necessity of staging the ESC in 2002 which can be seen as reflective of an elite-level consensus around Europeanisation and for that matter arguably EU membership.

There were [people who questioned the value of funding the event] but they knew not to argue with me. Maybe when they had opinions they kept them [...] we had some meetings with the Irish Prime Minister who was absolutely terrified when they won the Eurovision three times in a row, it is some economical burden. We were the first country, a new democracy, it is huge work [...] we demonstrated that new democracies can host such a large international event in the same quality as so-called developed countries. When you get this amount of people looking at you it really was a great opportunity to use (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

Signe Kivi also highlighted the importance of the event for the Estonian image. When questioned about the funding of the event she stated that the debate centred on the appropriate use of public money and like Juri Pino's article, she highlighted the investment that bringing the event to Estonia would have in terms of the Estonian broadcasting industry:

From a very early stage the Estonian Government had to confirm that they would support the event. We had conversations in the government about it since it was public money which was being put forward to pay for the event. We viewed it not only as a great way to boost Estonia's image but also good training for all involved, TV technicians, and designers. An event of that scale was the biggest chance and the biggest challenge for both Estonia and Tallinn [...] we [the Estonian government] had regular contact with Estonian TV and they reported the progress and problems which needed to be resolved. 15 ministers were involved in this team [...] It was an opportunity which had to be caught. We were initially concerned about putting on a good show – if we failed it would have been extremely negative for Estonia. It was a huge responsibility. We decided to go for it and it was given a priority by all involved (Signe Kivi, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

The fact that the Laar government held a meeting with the Irish Prime Minister is telling; it reveals how seriously the Estonian government or indeed Laar himself took this opportunity as well as highlighting that the debates in Estonia echoed those in Ireland after they were faced with hosting the event three years in succession. Ireland capitalised on the publicity garnered from this and was able to promote a positive international image. Failure to do so could have confirmed stereotypes about Ireland being less developed than other EU members. In 1997 the then Culture Minister, Michael D Higgins stepped in to ensure that Ireland staged the event for the fourth time in five years. Higgins was angered by suggestions that the Eurovision Song Contest was anything other than positive for Ireland (BBC News [TV] 20 May 1996).

In the wider (western) European press the negative narrative continued with articles appearing concerning Estonia's apparent inability to stage the contest the following year. The Daily Telegraph newspaper suggested that the opportunity to host the event in Estonia was likely to be turned down since Estonia was "too poor to host Eurovision" (*The Telegraph*, 27 May 2001). The article stated that Estonia was "woefully ill-equipped to host an event such as Eurovision. It has no stadium big or modern enough for the contest and there are not enough tourist hotels". On 28 May 2001 Estonian newspaper *Õhtuleht* reprinted a copy of this article and stated that the Estonian government and ETV had struck a deal and that the event was set to go ahead in Tallinn as planned. Thus the government assisting in the project not only represented a u-turn in terms of the funding allocation but hosting Eurovision successfully in Estonia took on a deeper significance; not only was it an opportunity to promote Estonia, it was now a chance to prove that the country can stage such a competition given that the European press were doubting that it was indeed possible. By June 2001 Estonian Television had received financial backing from the government and confirmed to the European Broadcasting Union that they would stage the event in Tallinn in May 2002.

4.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the symbolic attachment to the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia through participation in the 1990s and winning in 2001. The ways in which language, history and the idea of the nation and the practices associated with this have been explored alongside issues surrounding those who may be considered peripheral to be peripheral in Estonian society.

The issue of the return to Europe has been discussed in the context of popular culture; the Eurovision Song Contest afforded Estonia a platform to re-emerge on the European/global stage on its own terms. The narratives of the nation described by Estonia through participating in this annual event also provided an opportunity for Estonia to cultivate an image of a robust, multicultural democracy. Furthermore multiculturalism has been discussed in the context of European Union accession alongside issues relating to the Estonian international image. It is clear from the discourse on multiculturalism that respondents had differing understandings of what constitutes a multicultural society and this has been reflected through the samples chosen for this chapter. The multi-layered discourse which emerges strongly suggests that the notion of multiculturalism was one which the elite level respondents bought into more than the public respondents.

Further, media analysis surrounding the debates on Eurovision in 2001 reveal that Estonians were lacking self-confidence; victory was regularly referred to as “unbelievable” thus suggesting that the Estonian nation were somehow “unworthy”. The rhetoric concerning the financing of the event reveals that the Laar government saw value in hosting the competition particularly in the shadow of negative press attention from Western Europe, namely dispelling negative stereotypes of “backward” Eastern European Estonia. This is precisely what Estonian politicians have been trying to dispel since independence as discussed in the previous chapter. With the finances settled, the Estonian government in cooperation with Estonian Television then set about planning the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest to be held in Tallinn. The imagery, discourses and rhetoric concerning this event in Estonia in 2002 will therefore form the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: A critical reflection of the Eurovision Song Contest 2002 in Tallinn: Imagery, Debates and Analysis.

5.1 Introduction:

The data presented in this chapter was as in the previous chapter, collected in Estonia in 2007/2008. The analysis is concerned with the key decisions taken by those involved in the organisation of the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest in Tallinn. In this chapter I argue that the Eurovision Song Contest offered a platform for Estonia to promote its 'Nordic' credentials and the content analysis and level of media debates exemplifies this. The portrayals of ethnic Estonian national identity and the narratives of the Estonian nation promoted through the Eurovision broadcast are key themes which are central to the discussion in this chapter. Ultimately I ask who took the key decisions on how the event was staged in Estonia, to what extent was the event given prominence by the relevant authorities and what is the general view of the results of these decisions in the eyes of the Estonian public? Did the images they saw on-screen in 2002 reflect an Estonia with which they could readily identify?

In the previous chapter the debates surrounding the financing of the event were highlighted. After initial concerns about the lack of funding from the government, Estonian Television officials received the financial support necessary in order to host the event in Tallinn in 2002. As the then Minister of Culture, Signe Kivi explained failure to stage the event successfully would have brought shame upon the country. Therefore the Eurovision Song Contest became a platform for Estonian political elites such as Kivi and the then Prime Minister Mart Laar, keen to present a positive international image of Estonia to global audience. The content of this chapter draws upon interviews with key decision makers of the event in 2002, both politicians and television professionals. The interviews help shed some light on the nature of the debates surrounding Estonia in Europe and the Estonian international image more generally. Closer examination of the media debates from the time also reveals how significant the event was seen in terms of raising the international profile of the country. Media coverage from this period also highlights how the image of the country was pertinent at this time with much media coverage dedicated to a somewhat controversial BBC documentary which was screened in the weeks before the competition in 2002.

A content analysis of the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest from Tallinn was undertaken for this chapter in order to exemplify how the show offered a platform to essential Estonia's "Nordic" credentials. When used alongside interview material and anecdotes from figures such as the Executive Producer of the show, Juhan Paadam, this content analysis helps to build up a clearer picture of the narratives of the nation which the Estonian authorities sought to articulate to the wider world through Eurovision in 2002. In addition to this, unlike the rhetoric surrounding the Welcome To Estonia campaign as discussed in chapter three, the public-level responses in this chapter reveal that the chosen images and portrayals of Estonian national identity through Eurovision in 2002 were very much "in tune" with the general public. It is also revealing that any mention of the sizeable Russian speaking minority in Estonia was completely absent from any part of the broadcast or the debates in general and this will be discussed in depth in the final sections of this chapter.

5.2 Countdown to Tallinn 2002: Debates within the Estonian elites

This section of the chapter will focus on several of the debates which ensued during 2001 and 2002 in Estonia. In the immediate aftermath of the 2001 Eurovision Song Contest there were serious doubts as to whether Estonian Television would be able to stage the competition the following year due to lack of funding. Continuing from the previous chapter the debates surrounding the funding of the event will be revisited. The competition, whilst costly, was seen through the gaze of the media and political elite as cost-effective. In terms of paying for international primetime television airtime, the event presented Estonian Television with the opportunity to promote a positive image of Estonia. As stated in chapter two, the Irish Prime Minister stated that Ireland could not afford to pay for such primetime viewing on international television (2.7.1). Eurovision was therefore a cost-effective way to promote the country. However the cost of the production was not the only issue which faced the organisers in Estonia. Infrastructure, technical facilities and the relatively limited large-scale broadcasting experience of those at Estonian Television all posed serious challenges at the time. These issues will form the mainstay of discussion in this section of the chapter. Moreover the potential influence that the government may have had in the organisation of the production will be discussed alongside a focus on the debates surrounding the chosen theme for the show in 2002; the modern fairy tale.

5.2.1 Funding the event: Averting national shame

As highlighted in the previous chapter, Estonian officials had to confirm in June 2001 whether they would be staging the event in Tallinn in 2002. Given that the wider (western) European press had already reported that Estonia was “too poor to host Eurovision” (*The Telegraph* 27 May 2001), there was pressure on Estonian Television on to ensure that the event was successfully staged in Tallinn. Failure to host the event would have undoubtedly been damaging to Estonia’s international image. It would have confirmed the assertion that Estonia was ill-equipped to compete on the same level as other EU members for example, cultivating an image of Estonia as a “poor Former Soviet republic” rather than prospective EU member, or as Göran Bolin suggests, “a poor Eastern relative of the EBU” (Bolin 2006, p.196). In addition to this, given the potential audience figures for Eurovision, it was a huge chance for showcasing the country to a global audience, an opportunity which Estonia had not had previously. According to Signe Kivi, the Minister of Culture at the time, if Estonia had been unable to host the competition due to lack of financing and infrastructure then it would have brought “shame” upon the country:

If we won the very first year we attended, Estonia hosting next year’s Eurovision would have been questionable. However now that Europe has chosen Estonia’s entry as the best should we really bring shame upon ourselves? (Jakobson in *Õhtuleht* 14 May 2001).

It is with this background that the preparations for the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest began. Estonia not only had to prove that they were capable of producing a slick international television show but also had to do this against a backdrop of uncertainty in terms of technical expertise and infrastructure and in front of the gaze of the international media. Tiiu Simm, assistant to Juhan Paadam, Executive Producer of Eurovision 2002, recalled that she was sent a newspaper article from Germany which cast grave doubts on Estonia’s ability to host the competition:

Winning Eurovision helped to present a positive image of Estonia at the time. When we won our German colleagues sent us a small article from a newspaper where it was written that the event would be held in the forest where the Russian bears live [...] Even the Germans, with who our culture is tied with did not know much about Estonia. Our tiny European country really needed promotion (Tiiu Simm, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

There was the practical and emotional issues of why I wanted to do it [host Eurovision in Estonia] [...] Eurovision was the greatest opportunity we had to promote our country [...] you must understand that this had a historical story from

our own past. Estonia is unique because during the Soviet occupation we had the ability to follow Eurovision on Finnish television [...] we simply wanted to get Estonia on the map (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Therefore not only was the emotional significance attached to the event in terms of Estonia's international image flagged but also potential ramifications for Estonia's standing amongst its EU member neighbours if the country failed to host successfully. Eurovision was regularly in the headlines in the Estonian press throughout 2001 and this in itself can be seen as a reflection of the significance of the event at the time for Estonia. Media interest in Eurovision in Estonia also continued throughout Europe in the run up to the competition. Ehtel Halliste, the Estonian Foreign Ministry press spokesperson highlighted the importance of foreign media in the promotion of Estonia and spoke with particular reference to the Welcome to Estonia campaign and the Eurovision Song Contest:

What we have tried to get through [via Eurovision and the Welcome To Estonia campaign] is that we are transforming positively. We are a small economic tiger. We have tried to make people understand that we are credible as a state as well as a people [...] after we won [Eurovision] people started to show more interest. I can't remember any big newspaper or magazine not visiting Estonia that fall (Gardner & Standaert 2003).

5.2.2 The Technical Infrastructure of Eurovision: A Nordic Affair

In his interview Juhan Paadam highlighted the technical issues that Estonian Television faced when organising the event. ETV is a small broadcasting corporation and lacked the necessary technical equipment and experience needed for such a large-scale international broadcast. Svante Stockselius, the Executive Supervisor of the Eurovision Song Contest recalled that in the late 1990s when he worked for the Swedish national broadcaster, SVT, Estonia started to succeed in Eurovision they began to consider whether or not they would be capable of staging the event. Stockselius stated that Juhan Paadam had approached him and asked if Sweden would be able to assist in the production of the event¹⁹. After Estonia won the competition in 2001 Paadam was true to his word and contacted Stockselius requesting technical assistance with planning the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest. Given the scale of the broadcast and the size of Estonian Television it was a mammoth broadcast.

Eurovision is a pure television format which has existed for over fifty years. It is a live broadcast with international co-production [...] Twenty five countries were part of this contest, three minutes of their song was organised, designed and staged by Estonian Television [...] Estonia were the first country to have an international co-

¹⁹ Svante Stockselius, interview, Stockholm, 3 April 2008

production team, it was my idea and it was the only solution to the problem [...] It is an ambitious project [...] every television professional understands what it means. Of course, there is, we said that, with my colleagues, it is the purest propaganda for the country which hosts the broadcast [...] it was a huge chance for Estonian writers, composers, designers, TV professionals [...] to show what Estonia is. We are a very old and very natural part of European culture, but also very modern and very new at creating. It was our purpose to tell Europe of our modern fairytale (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Again the notion of Estonia being “first” is flagged, not the fact that ETV were unable to host the event without outside help, but that Estonia was able to set up a system which was then repeated in consecutive years by other broadcasters. The following year both Swedish and Estonian officials assisted Latvian Television with preparing for Eurovision in 2003 and Swedish broadcaster continued to provide technical assistance until 2010. Eurovision host countries have often received advice from the previous nation, Ireland and the UK in 1998 for example, but never before has such substantial technical help had to be bought in from outside. Light riggings, cameras, cranes, these were the vital equipment that Estonian Television lacked and without them would never have been able to host the competition in 2002.

We did not buy in people to do it instead of us, we needed help with knowledge and facilities [...] We worked together, seven or eight different countries, special rigging guys from Netherlands, in this moment it was the hugest production [...] It was a huge experience for Estonian cameramen to work with Swedish cameramen [...] However the ideas were absolutely Estonian, it was our show (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

The latter statement from Paadam was something which he was keen to stress; the ideas for the content of the production were Estonian. Whilst the Estonians needed technical assistance, and the concept of the broadcast came from an all-Estonian team. According to journalist Andri Maimets the Estonian public were pragmatic about this because it was a simple fact that ETV were too small to stand alone and therefore the technical assistance from abroad merely helped Estonia to promote itself.

It was quite positively said because we had to face up to the fact that we haven't done anything like that. For some people in Estonian Television it was also the start of their career, after hosting, doing the show, they worked for the EBU, for the career it was a very good start and some people, one is now the head of EBU entertainment. I think for the television company the organising was much more important to show that we can do the show. For the people generally the fact we won was important. The fact that Sweden was involved was not controversial (Andri Maimets, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

Given the historical links between Sweden and Estonia, Maimet's assertion may explain the relative lack of debate on this issue amongst the public at large. In a sense it may have been seen as entirely fitting that a "Nordic brother" was assisting Estonia with its Eurovision production. Furthermore the EU/Nordic link with Estonia was further flagged when a Swedish singer was selected to represent the country on home ground. The level of debates will be expanded in a later section of this chapter but it does show how the Nordic orientation of Estonia was reflected through the medium of television entertainment. The 2002 Eurovision Song Contest can therefore be seen as a mirror of the wider debates concerning the wider geopolitical position of Estonia, a reflection of the political rhetoric presented by Estonian politicians in the 1990s.

5.2.3 Eurovision 2002: Promoting Estonia within an EU accession context

As highlighted above, the ESC was seen as more than just a television competition, it afforded Estonia the opportunity to showcase itself on a scale which had never been done before. Signe Kivi expressed fear that the Estonian international image would be damaged if they could not host the event or failed to stage it as successfully as their EU predecessors. Juhan Paadam highlighted the significance of the event within an EU accession context. Paadam stated that the event date was changed in order to align it closer to the time when Estonia were concluding their accession talks with the EU in order to capitalise on publicity garnered in the global media and ultimately launch Estonia as a modern, "Nordic" prospective European Union member.

Eurovision really was the greatest possibility we had to promote our country. I am quite sure there was an influence in the negotiations between Estonia and the EU [...] I asked the European Broadcasting Union to move the Eurovision to two weeks later [...] closer to the time of the final negotiations between Estonia and the European Union (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Whilst EU accession was obviously unrelated to the Eurovision Song Contest, Paadam's response does show that the Estonian image was very much on the agenda at this time; the event was a springboard from the promotion of the country in a post-Soviet, EU accession context. The mere fact that the date of the event was moved to coincide with the conclusive EU accession talks is hugely significant. The former UK Ambassador to Estonia, Sarah Squire went further to state that she believed on some level that winning Eurovision in 2001 and staging the event in 2002 had an impact on the outcome of the EU accession referendum.

At the time of Eurovision the EU was absolutely looming over the horizon and Eurovision had this remarkable effect [...] Estonians committed to having a referendum, yes or no to Europe that summer and there was a very strong fear that the sceptical Estonians would vote no [...] winning Eurovision, you know, winning I think came absolutely at the right time because it suddenly made Estonians think, not only “we are part of Europe but we are potentially winning part of Europe” [...] the build up and the timing was absolutely critical so that by the time of August 2002 when the referendum took place [...] It’s very difficult to extricate of course but my observation from being there was that the national self-confidence and the sense of being European and having something to show Europe and be proud of and put themselves on the map, not just be sort of steam-rolled by another big cultural bloc as they always were steam-rolled in the past [...] politically I think you have to look at where they were on the road to EU membership [...] the Estonian national character is to be quite cautious, not you know, be prepared to be dazzled by promises of a bright future or anything, they have got every reason from history to be quite sceptical [...] seeing their country on the TV [Eurovision 2002] really did change peoples attitudes (Sarah Squire, interview, Cambridge, 15 January 2008).

Paadam elaborated on this issue of the EU:

I heard was that there was an interest in Brussels concerning Eurovision in Tallinn. You must understand that there are not many people interested in Eurovision in the power corridors of Brussels but the interest was there. It was interesting because we were the first post-communist country to host the event and in the process of EU negotiations and the second being that we are a tiny country with a very small television corporation. How we survived with this huge and unique production was of interest to them (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

This view articulates that Eurovision was not a substandard competition; it was a platform for the Estonian state to present itself to the world, namely the EU, as a transforming nation, able to produce high quality events as other countries in Western Europe. In this sense staging Eurovision was another symbol of the return to Europe, as highlighted by Lauristin (2009) in the previous chapter. This was also the view shared by Mart Laar, who stated that Estonia was well on the road to EU membership at the time but that Eurovision also helped to portray Estonia as a “normal” country.

When I talked about Europe at the time it was clear that we would arrive on the inside of the European Union but it was absolutely unclear about NATO. [...] It [Eurovision] helped to put us back on the map [...] Estonia is now more known, we are a normal partner in Europe (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

Therefore Eurovision came at the right time for building upon Estonia’s international image. Whilst Laar was keen to stress that it was the reforms undertaken during the 1990s that paved the way for EU accession, the publicity and the platform afforded to Estonia through Eurovision was a welcome boost to promoting the country at that time. However with the government interest in the project, both financial and in terms of aesthetics, it

raises questions about who ultimately took the decisions and how much impact the government had on the process.

5.2.4 Expressing an interest V imposing a view: The role of the Estonian government in the preparations for Eurovision 2002.

As highlighted earlier in this chapter and following on from the monetary debates discussed in chapter four (4.5), there was initial speculation surrounding whether or not the Estonian government would step in and guarantee the necessary funding for the event. The ESC in 2002 was essentially a government-sponsored event and as such it therefore raises questions concerning the potential influence that the authorities had over the actual direction and content of the show. According to Juhan Paadam and Tiiu Siim there did appear to be initial confusion during the initial planning phase regarding who was responsible for the contest. This perhaps suggests that old Soviet attitudes of a heavy state presence remained in certain sectors in the Estonian government, something which the administrations in the 1990s would be keen to distance themselves from in the context of the return to Europe. Paadam went further to explain that the television company needed to have the financial backing of the state but needed to remain free to make their own creative decisions. The responses from both Tiiu Siim and Juhan Paadam suggest that this was not initially clear to some in the Estonian government.

In the very early stages someone from the culture department phoned and asked us if we had already put down the political aims of our work. I do not remember the name but I explained that we are not a political organisation (Tiiu Siim, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

From when we started there was not a clear understanding of what the song contest is and lots of powers wanted to take it over [...] there was a real misunderstanding because we needed the state's support and the money so at first the debates were related to who was paying. It was a long process to explain and negotiate. ETV was on the edge of bankruptcies [...] it was not easy to explain about the costs. The part of the government was 30 million EEK [...] it was cost effective, it was a huge opportunity to say something to different categories of different people from different countries [...] We had long talks [with the government] and I spoke with ministers. In the spring Mart Laar's government collapsed [...] when he was Prime Minister he was very interested in the success of the project and a couple of times he gathered with us in his office and was asking how things were going. After they understood more about the show they did not try to control the content (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

When asked to reveal who these voices in the government were who wanted to take over the contest both Paadam and Siim were unable or unwilling to say. On the other hand

Paadam did go on to specifically credit Culture Minister Signe Kivi stating that she personally took risks during the negotiations and preparations for the contest:

I am very grateful to her because she took some risks. We had a lunch every second week together. People questioned her about the costs, why the stage costs this and that and she had to answer why. She gathered a board, the meeting was awful for us and she got control. She trusted us at ETV that she would be repaid the following May in a positive sense because it was successful (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Such testimonies reveal that initially there was not only a debate as to who was responsible for leading the project, the broadcaster or the state, but also how much control the government would have over the content. Both Signe Kivi and Mart Laar when questioned about the government exerting control over the content completely refuted this. However they did acknowledge that there was an effort to ensure that the team working on Eurovision had contact with those at Enterprise Estonia, which was launching the Welcome to Estonia project. Therefore technically whilst the content was not influenced by government pressure per se, by linking Eurovision to the launch of Brand Estonia it inadvertently ensured that the programme became a focal point for the launch of the Estonian nation branding campaign.

There was no government control [over content]. We just pushed the TV team and promotion campaign together. We were sure they would find the exact style and the exact way to promote Estonia (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

Signe Kivi reflected Mart Laar's view that the government were interested in the content in terms of using Eurovision as a way of promoting a positive image of Estonia but did not attempt to involve themselves in exerting actual control.

It was not the goal. There was no involvement or political pressure. That was not our aim. We just wanted Estonian Television to produce a good show as we gave them the tools to do this [...] If we failed it would have been extremely negative for Estonia. It was a huge responsibility and we decided to go for it. It was given a priority by all involved (Signe Kivi, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

Technically if public money was being invested in the event then the Estonian government had a duty to closely monitor where the money was going and this was acknowledged by Juhan Paadam: "It is their job [as politicians] to ask these questions". Here there does seem to be a disparity in opinion since Laar and Kivi state that there was never direct pressure from the government however Paadam and Siim state that in the early days of the organisation there was "confusion" on this issue. This also represented the view expressed

by Ilmar Raag, Chairman of the Board of ETV in 2002 who said that there was “soft” government involvement in the project:

We were lucky enough not to have too much involvement [from the government] the question was what was to be promoted more – Estonia or Tallinn? [...] We managed to sell the idea that the best way to promote Estonia was simply to produce a good show [...] we agreed that the clips should reflect Estonian e-development (Ilmar Raag, interview, Tallinn, 13 November 2007).

Whilst the respondents did not expand greatly on the issue of government involvement in the project, it is clear that there was an active interest in promotion Estonia in positive terms rather than overtly influencing content for political means. Thus the event was a format for promoting Estonia to a global audience and not a vocal point for the government in the end. This is in stark contrast to the organisation of the 2005 event by Ukraine which will be discussed in chapter six. In short it could be argued that such heavy-handed government involvement might be seen as a “throw back” to the Soviet regime, something which Estonian political elites have strived to distance the country from, and have done successfully, whilst Ukrainian politicians have arguably been less adept at doing so.

5.2.5 Quantifying the unquantifiable: Perceptions of cost effectiveness amongst Estonia’s elite respondents

In terms of investment and value for money, the repayment of hosting large scale events such as Eurovision is difficult to quantify, as highlighted in chapters one and two. Attempts to analyse events like the Olympic Games and Eurovision are in a sense quantifying the unquantifiable since much revenue is derived from immediate tourism and the publicity garnered from hosting such events. However the perception of this in the eyes of the public and political elites can be measured, the issue of *perceived cost-effectiveness* amongst the Estonian public at large is something that will be returned to in a later section of this chapter when the public-level responses are discussed. In terms of the elite level responses the event was overwhelmingly seen as cost-effective given the potential viewing figures for the show. Whilst the Estonian government did provide substantial funding, Eurovision was not seen as a waste of resources in the main. According to ETV the final cost of the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest was 7.9 million Euros. The scale of the competition can be seen when the entire annual budget for Estonian television is considered, 10.9 million Euros (ETV 2002, p.27). The EBU provided 3 million Euros with government funding (2.2 million Euros) and sponsorship and ticket sales providing the

remaining 2.7 million Euros (ETV 2002, p.27). Perhaps inevitably those close to the organisation of the event stated that it was money well spent:

It was difficult to explain to people about the costs. Approximately thirty two cents was spent per viewer in Estonia [...] that is nothing. You cannot even buy ice cream for that. You cannot buy anything [...] actually people were very supportive. It was a huge patriotic rise of feelings, the first opportunity we had to show ourselves to the world (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Quite often people questioned where the money was going [...] there were doubts whether the money would be used properly. This show represented huge amounts of money for Estonia [...] For television promotion the Eurovision Song Contest was the only way for Estonia [...] It was seen as a unique opportunity to show Estonia to almost 300 million people. This was a pretty powerful argument (Ilmar Raag, interview, Tallinn, 13 November 2007).

We had a good opportunity [...] it was not wasted money. It was an investment in the Estonian image. The value of this publicity was in fact priceless [...] in that time we were heading towards EU membership. We were a positively transforming country (Ivo Rull, interview, Tallinn, 9 November 2007).

Nobody can say that this event was not important to us. Everyone wanted to make a good impression about Estonia. Nobody said it was a waste of money really (Anu Välba, interview, Tallinn, 19 November 2007).

Other respondents such as Mart Laar and Marko Reikop hinted that there were voices who questioned the funding of the event on a superficial level. The depth of concern or criticism regarding the amount of money being spent on the production was therefore never substantial enough to de-rail the project or gather significant publicity or controversy. This is exemplified in that fact that no respondent could name a single individual who categorically stated that hosting the Eurovision Song Contest was a waste of resources. The significance of the event in terms of introducing Estonia to the world was also not lost on the Estonian media with articles appearing citing the importance of event for Estonia's image. Alari Kasemaa, the Marketing Manager of the 2002 event highlighted the impact that the event would have on Estonia's international standing in Europe in an editorial section of the daily tabloid *Õhtuleht* in the run up to the show:

The image we created before Eurovision was already very high. The responsibility of raising it or at least keeping it on the same level rests on our shoulders. If at least twenty three countries are watching Estonia at the same time, if the Eurovision is successful it is the best marketing technique for the country, you cannot buy it for any amount of money. This opportunity should be used to the maximum. I think that after the Eurovision the impression will be uniform, one of surprise. Many have prejudices about the place the event will be held in. I can imagine the surprise will be the more positive for it. I think that maybe it is the best Eurovision ever made [...]

our pride and self esteem has been rising especially when you see the in-between clips (Kasemaa in *Õhtuleht* 8 May 2002).

Unlike the Welcome to Estonia campaign, the importance of this event in terms of international image building was communicated effectively to the public through the media. Whilst a large amount of money was being spent, Eurovision was seen by elites in Estonia as cost effective given the potential audience the show would attract and the possible future impact that a successful staging would have upon Estonia in terms of investments, prestige and more importantly international image. There were however small low-level media debates concerning the presence of the government in the auditorium at the event itself. One article, “Parliamentarians abandon the Euro stars” (*Õhtuleht* 7 May 2002), focussed on the number of politicians and VIPs who had turned down their invitations to attend the competition in Tallinn. The article highlighted that over one hundred free VIP passes had been given to politicians and only a third of those invitations had been accepted. The tone of the article appears to be relatively neutral in that those declining the invitations were not highlighted as wasting resources nor was Eurovision seen in any way as second rate. However there were questions raised about the morality of giving government ministers free tickets when the public have to pay. The Minister of Agriculture, Jaanus Marrandi was quoted as saying “I would not have thought that the members of the government would get any sort of free tickets [...] they can afford to buy their own” (Michelson in *Õhtuleht* 7 May 2002). Regional Minister Toivo Asmer stated that he believed that he personally did not think it was right that the government would be able to attend for free. However he still accepted the invitation, flagging the significance of the event. “The Eurovision Song Contest is as big historical event, Estonia may never get to organise it again” (Michelson in *Õhtuleht* 7 May 2002). This therefore suggests that the contest was seen very much as an event for the Estonian public and not for the government. It was something which they engaged with in a way in which they did not when it came to the Welcome to Estonia campaign.

Other political figures such as Signe Kivi however, felt that it was their duty to attend the event in a show of solidarity with the organisers of the event. “I have been there from the start, and I have continually kept my eyes on the development of the organisation, therefore I am excited to see the final result” (Michelson in *Õhtuleht* 7 May 2002). Marju Lauristin who served as a member of the Rigikogu during this time also attended along with the UK ambassador to Estonia, Sarah Squire.

There was a very excited atmosphere, the build up to it. All the ambassadors were invited to the event, so I attended the Eurovision Song Contest, sitting in a rather sedate part of the auditorium [...] I do not remember any grouching in the columns in newspapers or editorials [...] we were just astonished by the effervescence of the crowd. We had never seen an Estonian crowd behave this way. It was out of the norm (Sarah Squire, interview, Cambridge, 15 January 2008).

This was an event of prestige at the time in Estonia, an opportunity for the host country to show itself at its best. As discussed in chapter two, the way in which countries stage the event reflects how significantly it is seen by the respective hosts. The short congratulatory messages shown before each performance in 1996 are a representation of this; Estonia had its prime minister, Bosnia Herzegovina its president versus Spain who had an ambassador and the UK a junior minister. The mere fact that the various European ambassadors were invited to the event therefore speaks volumes about the esteem in which the project was held in Estonia in 2002.

5.3 Estonia: The Modern Fairy Tale

The theme chosen by Estonian Television for the 2002 ESC was one of Estonia as the modern fairy tale. The fairy tale can be considered to be a European phenomenon given the prominence the genre has in European literary and folklore history and can also be used for identity claim (Quentel 2006, p. 97). Fairy tales usually have happy endings and this was not lost on Juhan Paadam who stated that the fairy tale theme is actually a true reflection of Estonia's developments over the previous decade since independence (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007). In the official programme booklet for the 2002 contest the link between Estonian history and the concept was reinforced further:

If Estonia were a fairy tale, it could perhaps be likened to Sleeping Beauty. Having awoken from the ice cold slumbers of Soviet Rule, Estonia today is a bold, young country, vibrant with creative energy and eager to take its place in Europe (Rene Vilbre cited in Eesti Televisioon (Ed.). (2002). *The official programme of the 47th Eurovision Song Contest 2002*. Tallinn: ETV, p.12).

Therefore not only was the concept a way of framing Estonia as a modern, European society but it also served as a further avenue for the othering of the Soviet past. The continuous flagging of this “happy ending” was therefore a way of distancing Estonia from its Soviet past whilst simultaneously promoting a strong and positive international image. The fairy tale analogy links in with the more traditional discourse of nationalists who portray nations as primordial, where historical actors have “awoken” from a period of

repression (Soviet rule in the Estonian case) to realise their destiny of freedom. This view has seemingly been absorbed quite uncritically in the Estonian case. Moreover it is interesting that the more traditional narrative of nationhood was wedded to a more future-oriented discourse of economic dynamism in Estonia through both Eurovision and Brand Estonia.

Paadam stated that a number of options were considered, including themes which focussed more on Estonian history and others which concentrated on the targeted tourist images which were a feature of previous Eurovision themes, namely in Ireland in the 1990s (see chapter two). According to Paadam it was important for the programme to be future-orientated, to present Estonia as a modern, forward-looking European country. He cites the concept of the modern fairy tale as the perfect way in which to do this:

The main idea was to look forward and not back [...] we skipped many ideas. Definitely we did not want a history lesson. We needed to show Estonia as future-orientated. We skipped the traditional tourist approach too [...] All the elements of the show were under the same concept, the modern fairy tale [...] It was our purpose to tell Europe of our modern fairy tale (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Mart Laar was vehement that the content of the show should focus on Estonia's future and that the fairy tale was the best theme for this. He emphasised that it was important to articulate that Estonia was moving forward, positively transforming.

It was a very clear decision by the team. I am a historian myself but I do not believe promotion campaigns should deal with the past. You must deal with the past but there are different ways and campaigns. When you want to do a good promotion then you should look to the future. This was a very clear decision, Estonia is positively transforming and the idea behind the theme was this (Mart Laar, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

Journalist Andri Maimets recalled that the issue of how to deal with Estonia's past was considered but that Eurovision was not the appropriate format. Estonian politicians strived to distance the country from the Soviet past in the 1990s and the modern fairytale theme is therefore entirely reflective of this.

There was a debate about how we talk about 50 years of Soviet rule. It is a game though [...] Estonian national identity, nobody will be interested [...] At the time it was quite clear what we wanted to say to Europe, what we wanted to show [...] The slogan was positively transforming. It was a good place to start (Andri Maimets, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

The concept of the modern fairy tale was launched at a press conference in May 2002 by Signe Kivi. The Creative Director for the 2002 production was Rene Vilbre, who along with his design team, developed the modern fairy tale concept. Each postcard image depicted a modern take on a traditional European fairy tale, set in Estonia.

5.3.1 Eurovision Song Contest 2002: Imagery Analysis

As previously discussed, the theme for the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest was the modern fairy tale. The show itself was conceived with this in mind and the small video clips shown before each national performance reflected this. As highlighted in chapter two, other countries had previously screened images which resembled tourist television adverts, Estonia opted for a different approach. These clips will now be considered along with commentary by those involved in the production in order to exemplify how the 2002 Eurovision broadcast serves as a platform for promoting Estonia's place within Europe and the Nordic space.

The broadcast in 2002 opened with scenes set inside a castle and featured commentary introducing Estonia through typical fairy tale language. *"Once upon a time, in a land far, far away"* (Eurovision Song Contest 2002, [TV], ETV). A girl was then shown to open a book of fairy tales and inside the book a shot of the Toompea area of Tallinn was shown with the Estonian flag. The scenes then developed showing modern day Estonia and various images from the Estonian countryside. This not only set the scene for the theme of the show but also served to portray Estonia as somehow exotic and undiscovered.

Figures 5.1-5.3: Images from the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest [ETV]



Figure 5.1 Opening shot of ESC 2002

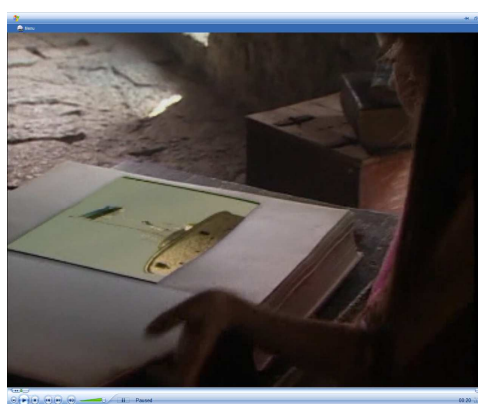


Figure 5.2 The opening a book of fairy tales

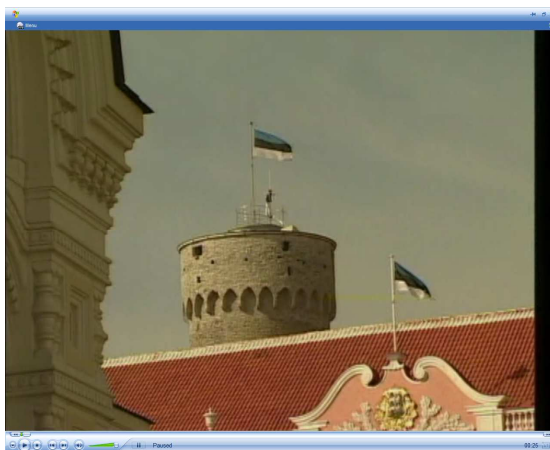


Figure 5.3 Shot of Toompea with the Estonian flag

Immediately the flag is featured and when considered within the context of the fairy tale theme, it represents a direct and explicit link to Estonian independence since the flag above Toompea was a previous focal point of the independence movement. During introductory scenes the UK commentator, Terry Wogan explained the significance of the event for Estonians:

Welcome to the 47th Eurovision Song Contest from Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. A small, proud Baltic state, independent of mother Russia since 1991 when they shrugged off the USSR, pulled down Lenin's statue and decided to go it alone. Some may scoff and even snigger at the old Eurosong but winning it last year was regarded as a major breakthrough by the Estonians, an opportunity to show themselves off, make their mark in Europe. Seven thousands people here tonight in the Saku Suurhall, hundreds of millions around the world watching from Reykjavik to Sydney (Terry Wogan, Eurovision Song Contest 2002, [TV] BBC1).

As stated above the opening scenes were an opportunity to introduce Estonia to the world. The scenes chosen therefore portrayed various aspects of the country, Tallinn being the main focus but also Estonian nature and sought to portray Estonia as a modern country with an ancient past.

Figures 5.4-5.11: Scenes from the opening sequence of Eurovision 2002 [ETV]



Figure 5.4 Mobile phone use in Estonia

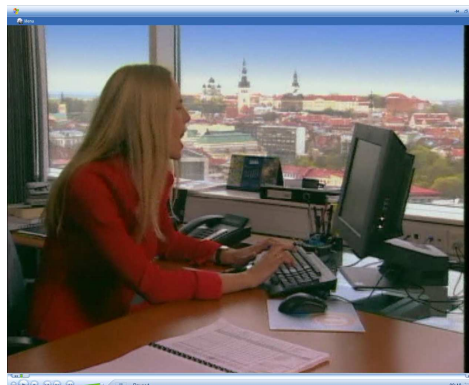


Figure 5.5 Modern office in Tallinn city centre



Figure 5.6 Meeting of the Estonian government



Figure 5.7 Signe Kivi speaking to politicians



Figure 5.8 Estonian coastline



Figure 5.9 Estonian nature



Figure 5.10 Modern business district of Tallinn



Figure 5.11 The old town of Tallinn

The choice of images included in the opening sequence therefore reflected this enmeshment of ancient and modern. Images of technology; the mobile phone, computers and the idea of e-government were alluded to (note the flat-screen computer monitors in figure 5.7), all of which present Estonia as “ahead of the game”. The images depicted in figures 5.6 and 5.7 are those of the Estonian government, all sitting behind modern computers. It is worth noting that in 2002 such equipment was not widespread thus Estonia as a technologically advanced country with a modern government is therefore reinforced. Following on from this the Estonian countryside was focussed on promoting the idea that

Estonia is unspoilt before then returning to Tallinn where the modern structures of the business district were countered by a closing shot of the Old Town. Again the notion of Estonia as both ancient and modern is re-inscribed.

The broadcast then came live from the Saku Suurhall and opened with Tanel Padar and Dave Benton performing their winning song before hosts Annely Peebo and Marko Martvere took to the stage to address the global audience. Martvere highlighted the scale of the event, “As you all know it is not just a song contest, it is the biggest entertainment event of the year in Europe”. Annely Peebo then went onto to make a link between Estonia and Europe. “Europe itself is the only continent which starts with “e” because all the others start with “a”. Marko Martvere then went further to state that there were not many countries which start with the letter e in Europe and Estonia was one of them. Thus Estonia’s uniqueness is promoted as well as its place in Europe. A specific reference to the fairy tale concept was made by Martvere, “Estonian history is like a fairy tale too with happy ending”. The link was therefore made between Estonia’s past and present; it served to further distance the country from it, suggesting that this was a broadcast which was told on ethnic Estonian terms.

The national songs were then introduced via small video clips or postcards depicting various well known fairytales. Each clip told the story of a fairy tale but with a modern Estonian twist. For example in the clip entitled Snow White instead of a mirror, an interactive computer was shown. The clips were a way of showing positive aspects of life in Estonia through a variety of stories. At the end of each clip a slogan was shown on-screen which related to the theme of the postcard.

Figures 5.12-5.15: A selection of images shown before each national performance



Figure 5.12 Young Estonians flying high



Figure 5.13 Countless internet connections

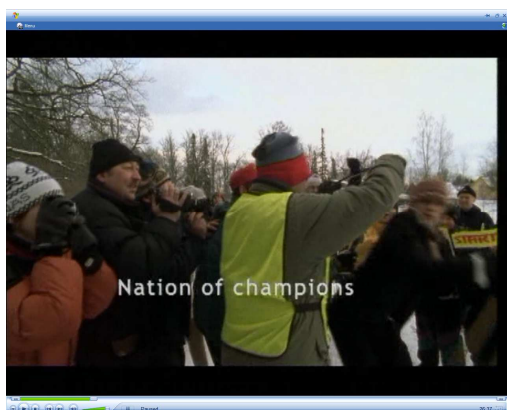


Figure 5.14 Nation of champions

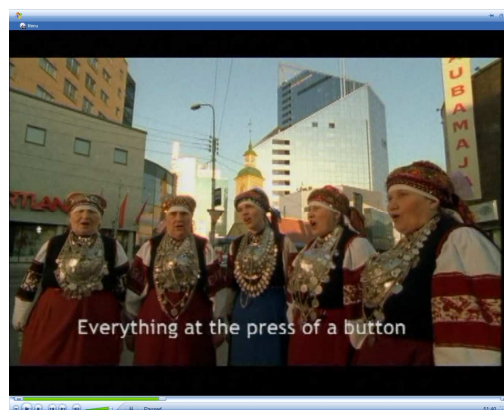


Figure 5.15 Everything at the press of a button

Like the opening sequence, these images served to promote Estonia as a modern European country. The notion of Estonia and technology was regularly flagged with references to Estonian internet connections and “everything at the touch of a button”. The clip 5.15 features traditional Estonian folk costumes and Estonian choir singing whilst in the background the modern buildings of Tallinn are prominently displayed. The clips also served as a vehicle for the celebration of national achievements as can be seen in the slogans “nation of champions” and “young Estonians flying high”, again youth and future orientation being connected. The Estonian countryside was also regularly highlighted along with science and education in the postcard depicting Tartu University (figure 5.16).

Figures 5.16-5.20: Further examples of images shown before each national entry



Figure 5.16 Tartu University – one of the oldest in Europe



Figure 5.17 Old Town... new experiences



Figure 5.18 Football...beer...castles



Figure 5.19 Forests – Estonian treasure



Figure 5.20 10 000 years of untouched nature

Again these images depicted Estonia as an ancient part of Europe with Tartu University as well as the Old Town of Tallinn, reinforcing the assertion that Estonia is both ancient and modern. Slide 5.18 is a modern take on the fairy tale of Bluebeard. The room is unlocked and inside Bluebeard's wife discovers national flags and football memorabilia. This along with the slogan "Football...beer...castles" serves to promote Estonia as a "normal European country" in a sense that in Germany, France, and the UK for example could claim the same slogan. The countryside and nature scenes promote the view of Estonia as unspoilt and awaiting discovery; they serve to exoticise Estonia by alluding to its "untouched nature" (5.19 & 5.20).

5.3.2 Essentialising Nordic Credentials V Othering Russia

The clips included in the Eurovision 2002 broadcast also promoted Estonia as a "Nordic country" in line with the rhetoric from Estonian politicians keen to align Estonia with countries such as Finland and Sweden. There is also a clear subtext to the clips used before the Russian and Estonian entries.

Figures 5.21-5.24: Clips screened before the Finnish and Russian entries

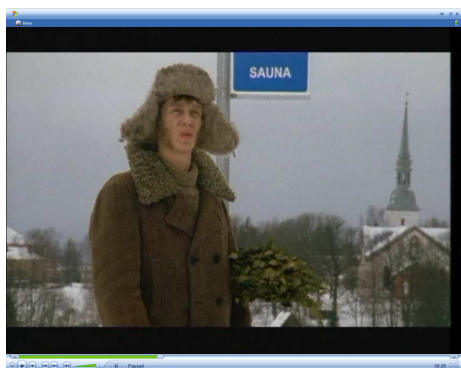


Figure 5.21 Sauna – extreme heat from Estonia



Figure 5.22 Sauna – extreme heat from Estonia

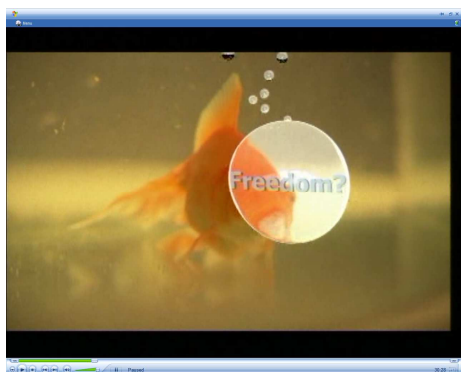


Figure 5.23 Freedom

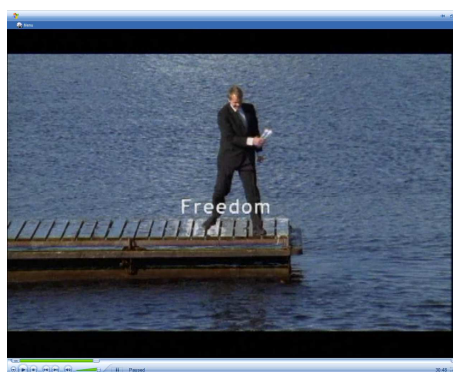


Figure 5.24 Freedom

In the first slides (5.21 and 5.22), the Estonian sauna is featured directly before the Finnish entry. The slogan itself appears to be a deliberate reference to the sauna being Estonian rather than Finnish. Naturally debates rage around issues of origin, however, the clip served to promote Estonia as the home of the sauna whilst at the same time aligning the country closely to Finland and the Nordic sphere. Moreover the clip which was screened directly before the Estonian entry told the story of *Sleeping Beauty*. Given the previous references to Estonian history being like a fairy tale in both the programme booklet and at the start of the broadcast itself, this video clip can be seen as a metaphor for how Estonians saw their country and their recent history. According to the ethnic Estonian narrative of the nation the country was therefore stifled under Soviet Occupation but now that it was independent it was somehow “awake”.

Perhaps controversially the video screened before the Russian entry served to prove a point (5.23 and 5.24). This particular clip told the story of a goldfish in captivity, a modern take on Alexander Pushkin’s fairy tale. The man in the clip feels compelled to release the fish as the slogan “Freedom” appeared immediately before that of the Russian flag. When questioned about this, Juhan Paadam stated that it was a deliberate decision to screen that particular image at that particular time. It therefore serves as a political point.

There was a postcard called Freedom and we put it before the Russian entry. The American ambassador mentioned to me about the coincidence that it was put there. I said that we exactly put it there [...] we were not insulting anyone, it was a light story with no politics in a hard way (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Sarah Squire, the former UK ambassador to Estonia stated that she believed it was a deliberate attempt to make a point but that it was soft enough, as Paadam said, to avoid causing serious insult.

I would think they [Estonian Television] would be making a point. I wouldn't say boldly that they were needling the Russians but it would be interesting to see if Estonian viewers picked that up (Sarah Squire, interview, Cambridge, 15 January 2008).

Again this reinforces the notion that the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest was told on purely ethnic Estonian terms. Certainly this subtle, or as Paadam believes, light hearted reference to the Soviet past would have been lost on many local Russian speakers. There was absolutely no reference in any of the clips to the idea of multiculturalism, following on from the discussions surrounding Dave Benton this again appears to be a point in hand. Mention of multiculturalism would undoubtedly have needed to address the Russian speaking minority. Furthermore the clips which were chosen featured the Estonian countryside, Tallinn's Old Town, Tartu and yet Narva, the third largest city in Estonia, with a majority Russian speaking population, was conspicuously absent from the broadcast.

5.3.3 Eurovision 2002 Interval Act: The Rebirth of Estonia

As is now commonplace at the Eurovision Song Contest, the interval act organised by the host country when the voting is taking place across Europe usually portrays some aspect of national identity. For example in 1994 Ireland had Riverdance, a modern take on traditional Irish dancing which went on to become a global phenomenon. Whilst in 1998 the BBC opted for a varied performance featuring bagpipes and Bhangra amongst other things, arguably a reflection of the diversity of the United Kingdom. The interval act in Estonia was a modern dance piece which served to encapsulate what the essence of Estonia is. The act was entitled Rebirth and was described in the official programme booklet as "a day in the life of a small fairy nation enacted on stage" (Eesti Televisioon (Ed.). (2002). *The official programme of the 47th Eurovision Song Contest 2002*. Tallinn: ETV, p.78).

Like the postcard images, there was a fusion of old and new, reflecting the Estonian story. In one section of the performance the sauna is shown through the medium of dance whilst later dance sections portray the external influences which have shaped Estonian culture over the centuries. However again there was no reference to the Soviet past or to Estonia's sizeable Russian speaking minority. This is also evident in the tone of the article about the interval act in the official programme booklet for 2002:

A maritime country, Estonia is inclined to be open to foreign influences, to take some and spit some out [...] We preserve our own – our minds are open to the new, but caution and sobriety always pulse on the edge of our brains [...] All of this has helped us to be preserved as a nation and delivered us to the present day (Eesti Televisioon (Ed.). (2002). *The official programme of the 47th Eurovision Song Contest 2002*. Tallinn: ETV, p.78).

The historical influences of the Russian Empire are completely absent from the narrative, although arguably a subtle reference is made to Soviet rule, "spit some out". The article highlighted the many Nordic influences in Estonia and the strength of the Estonian character and language but did not once mention the Russian influences in the country's past. Whilst arguably Soviet rule was never going to be articulated through Eurovision, the diversity of Estonian society may be been, however this was something which was not evident or explicit during the broadcast of Eurovision in 2002 and offers a striking counter-narrative to the rhetoric of diversity which Dave Benton elicited from the political elite in Estonia.

5.4 Eurovision 2002: Public-level Responses

During the course of fieldwork the method I employed most often in Estonia was that of snowballing as discussed in chapter one. This involved accessing people I had previously met or they themselves acting as gatekeepers and providing me with respondents who they felt would be open to being interviewed for research purposes. Unlike the responses the Welcome to Estonia campaign elicited (see chapter three), the vast majority of the public-level respondents spoke of their connection to the images that Estonian Television broadcast during Eurovision 2002. The project was seen as not only a success in that the production itself was impressive, but also that it promoted an image of Estonia which they could readily identify with. This then raises the issue of how Russian speakers in Estonia viewed the content of the broadcast. Could they identify with the Estonia that they knew through a programme which emphasised Estonia's Nordic credentials, sought to distance

the country from its Soviet past and reinforced notions of “good” versus “bad” through the modern fairytale theme? As highlighted in chapter one, the aim of this research was not to examine to views of Russian speakers however given the sizeable population in Estonia and the impact of snowballing during the fieldwork, I was able to interview some Russian speakers, all of who were citizens of Estonia and living in Tallinn, one of which was originally from Narva. Their observations provide a necessary balance to the views of ethnic Estonian respondents and when other elite level responses are brought in it illuminates further notions of belonging and identity within modern Estonia. As discussed in chapter one, some of the names of respondents have not been fully disclosed and pseudonyms have been used where appropriate.

5.4.1 Responses from ethnic Estonians

As stated above, there was overwhelming praise for Estonian Television’s presentation of Eurovision in 2002 amongst public-level respondents. In terms of content the postcard images shown between songs were something that ethnic Estonians could readily identify with. Many spoke of the clips as being “very Estonian” in terms of humour whilst others believed that they chosen images portrayed a positive image of their country to an international audience.

It presented a very Estonian side in the sense of the humour, throughout the whole show I was wondering if anyone else would get it [...]it was our chance [...] Eurovision was a big, positive, “we are going to do it together” event (Pille-Triin Mannik, interview, Tallinn, 13 August 2008).

I think the introductory clips they showed between the songs were great, they were really clever and funny. I remember thinking that a lot of people in Europe were watching this and maybe even the class of people who might not be interested and would actually learn something from this kind of stuff. For sure it had to be a positive thing [...] I think hosting the show was a good thing, it was an amazing chance (Riina, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008).

It was really good. I think it was very witty and clever. It was a very good job done. If you compare it to Ukraine for example [host of Eurovision in 2005] I didn’t understand what they were trying to show. Do you remember what Terry Wogan said about it? He said “average people look ugly everywhere” because they were showing pictures of faces from the streets and from the young people, it was terrible. They had no point, it was absolutely pointless really [...] at that time it was very important to show the world that we are as good, that we are not using the wooden spoons and not driving carriages and that we can do a production which is as good as the BBC and that’s the part that we took *really* seriously (Margit Randla, interview, Tallinn, 17 November 2007).

As can clearly be seen from the selection of interview transcripts Eurovision in 2002 was an event which the Estonian people bought into. Many highlighted the Estonian sense of humour which permeated through the short postcard images. The respondent Margit readily identified with the clips, of which some were definitively jovial and others were perhaps more tourist targeted. All were promoting the same notion; Estonia as being an example of a modern fairytale. Again the importance of the Estonian image is reinforced, the respondent highlighted that organising Eurovision allowed Estonia the opportunity to prove that Estonia can produce large-scale international events to an equal standard as other western European countries, namely the UK, given her reference to the BBC. Thus the criticism of the Ukrainian production reveals that in her view they had failed to do this where Estonia had succeeded, reaffirming the notion of Estonia as part of the West rather than “post-Soviet” or as she said “with wooden spoons and carriages”. This veiled reference to the East is something which is alluded to in the responses below and can be seen as a further example of “othering”, as discussed in chapter one.

Eurovision helped introduce Estonia and made people aware of Estonia [...] I think it raised awareness that there is such as the country. The clips showed the quiriness and beautiful landscape of the country [...] At that point people thought that Eurovision was this big and important thing (Maimu, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008).

Estonia is a small country. How many of us have actually succeeded? There are only 1.5 million of us living in Estonia [...] This was a time when not too many people knew about Estonia anywhere so for one moment I think they were looking on the map and when it was held here. I think it has been a good thing, reaching out to Europe [...] The printed press in the west, they do print positive things about the new countries as well [...] I think there is a stereotype about us being in Eastern Europe [...] Eurovision gave us the chance to have a voice for once, to say something for ourselves about ourselves, for me that was really powerful (Margit Randla, interview, Tallinn, 17 November 2007).

The issue of introducing Estonia to the world was something which manifested itself strongly in the interviews with public-level respondents. Many were quick to point out that in their view, people in the world did not know anything about their country and that the format of Eurovision allowed the country to be introduced to the masses but on Estonian terms. It is interesting to note that the term “Eastern Europe” is seen as pejorative to many of the Estonians interviewed. Riina, a respondent quoted earlier is a Canadian-Estonian who moved to Estonia in 1991 and explained further the disconnection that Estonians appear to have to the term:

I think most Estonians who have come from abroad, they feel that they do love Estonia but there are certain things, certain oddities like principles or morals. I started thinking about the whole idea of Nordic versus Eastern European thing and it is interesting to think whether your average Estonian is offended by that, I don't think it is an offensive thing if we lump people together as one of the other. I understand that there is nothing to be ashamed of, if all those countries have had the same sort of Soviet lifestyle then there are certain things which are bound to be the same. I guess it's more to do with being somehow connected to Russia or the Soviet past (Riina, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008).

As discussed above (5.3.2) the ESC in 2002 was an opportunity for Estonia to distance itself from the Soviet past and launch itself as a part of Europe, ancient in history, modern in character. Given the nature of the responses above it is therefore unsurprising that many Estonian respondents went onto discuss the importance of Eurovision in helping to achieve this as detailed below.

There was a lot of support, generally of all the Estonians did see it as an opportunity to do a big event. They know they will never host an Olympic games, nothing on that scale but Eurovision was a chance and I think everyone was more or less behind it in that sense. I think it was a success, of all the big things, if you measure it up against other marketing efforts that have been done over the years, I think the Eurovision as an entire event was pretty effective (Michael Haagensen, interview, Tallinn, 11 April 2008).

We were very proud of our country [...] we don't have many things to make ourselves important this was one of the things (Edith, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

When asked about voices questioning the cost effectiveness of the event, public-level respondents, as with the elite level as discussed, were distinctly vague. Some stated that there may have been concerns raised about the expense of the event however, none were able to name anyone directly. When in the field myself I struggled to pinpoint individuals who would categorically state that it was a waste of resources. Many expressed the view that as a musical event Eurovision is substandard but none offered any arguments against it as a platform for promoting Estonia. When contrasted with the views offered on the Welcome to Estonia campaign the disparity is somewhat striking.

Returning to the issue of the content of the postcard clips specifically, some respondents did highlight that with hindsight there were some images that they felt were somewhat dated or unrepresentative, namely the clip entitled Snow White. This particular video, whilst arguably aiming to be amusing, provoked a reaction from two respondents in particular who viewed it as having undertones of misogyny. The clip itself features the wicked stepmother asking a digital computer screen the well-known question of who is the

fairest of them all. Several images of Estonian women are then shown and the tagline “So many beautiful women”. The queen is then seen organising crates of apples to be sent to Estonia.



Figure 5.25: 358 957 Snow Whites in Estonia



Figure 5.26: So many beautiful women

Whilst I thought the clips were great, they absolutely reflected the Estonia that I identify with, I did have an issue with them saying that there are so many beautiful women here. It was a bit sexist really and I don't think they would get away with doing that now, Estonia has moved on since then (Kati, interview, Tallinn, 9 April 2008).

This was the only noticeable point of criticism from ethnic Estonian respondents. All other interviewees expressed positive views that the clips promoted a positive image of Estonia as well as one in which they could easily identify with. Many highlighted the sense of humour and irony as being typically Estonian and viewed it as successful promotion for the country.

5.4.2 Responses from Russian speakers

As highlighted at the beginning of this section, the aim of this thesis is not to examine the views of Russian speaking people in Estonia. However given the elite and public-level divide over the Welcome to Estonia campaign, and the almost universal concurrence that Eurovision was a positive event for the country amongst ethnic Estonian respondents, a small reflection on the views of Russian speakers provides an interesting insight into the politics of identity in Estonia. In order to understand this issue further more research needs to be done, however these interviews do go some way to shedding light on the way in which Russian speakers had a sense of belonging to Estonia and to what extent they identified with the narratives of the Estonian nation told through Eurovision. It is interesting to note that none of the Russian speakers interviewed had strong feelings on the modern fairytale theme which suggests that this was something ethnic Estonians bought

into and readily identified it; the happy ending of the Estonian nation. The apparent indifference of this theme amongst the small sample suggests that the modern fairytale was something the Russian speakers were somehow either excluded from or indifferent to.

For me it is better to say that I think I am Estonian-Russian. It means that I am a Russian speaker who lives in Estonia [...] I can say that if we win something it's my victory too. A good example was the year 2006 when we won some gold medals in the Winter Olympic Games. I heard our Prime Minister on the radio say that he is proud about Estonians and all Estonians can celebrate. He did not use the phrase "Estonian people" so when I heard this I understood that I am not welcome to understand it actually in his point of view [...] I remember how it [Eurovision] was presented, our country they really did not mention national minorities but I am not sure if it was a good place to do that [...] I was very proud about my country [...] People always know that I am Russian because I look like a Russian person, I have dark hair and my skin is a little bit different from Estonians. When I use Estonian language I speak with an accent which always gives some information about my origin. I cannot say that I was discriminated because of this (Dima, interview, Tallinn, 27 November 2007).

The respondent, Dima, speaks fluent Estonian and is an Estonian citizen, on the surface he can therefore be considered to be integrated officially into Estonian society. However his narrative reveals that somehow there appears to be a division which remains despite the fact that he does consider Estonia to be his homeland, note the use of "my country". Whilst he stresses that he is not discriminated against per se, his ethnic origins are routinely flagged by others when he speaks Estonian and he was able to cite an example of elitist attitudes concerning who was invited to celebrate Estonian victories and was sensitive to the semantic difference of "Estonians" versus "Estonian people". Again similar to the views of ethnic Estonian respondents, he stated that he was "very proud" of the Eurovision broadcast and felt that it was an appropriate reflection of life in Estonia. He viewed focussing on national minorities to be inappropriate in the context of an entertainment show. The two other respondents were not so pragmatic though and felt that the broadcast neglected a sizeable part of Estonian society.

I thought the show was impressive, Estonia looked good but I am very curious why they did not show anything of Narva in those clips. We are the third city. They showed Tallinn, ok I understand and Tartu too but why not us? It's a border town, an interesting place for people to see I think. They showed nature and forests but not my hometown (Dmitry, interview, Tallinn, 23 November 2007).

I remember thinking that it was great to have such a big event here in Estonia. I speak Estonian fluently, I consider this to be my home but I also understand why Russians look to Russia too. Eurovision is one example, we vote for Russia. In 2002 I remember thinking that it was strange, there was a Swedish singer for Estonia. Imagine if there had been a Russian singer, that would be a big challenge for Estonians (Andri, interview, Tallinn, 12 November 2007).

Such testimonies reveal that whilst Eurovision again was seen as a useful tool for promoting Estonia, in their view the event could have been different. Given that Narva is indeed the third largest city in Estonia and it completely absent from the entire broadcast despite other more obscure images being screened, namely the goldfish “freedom” clip before the Russian entry. The narrative from Andri also reveals that in his view the use of a Swedish singer was somewhat perplexing. He appears to suggest that ethnic Estonians would object to a Russian speaker representing Estonia internationally. Whilst this matter is sensitive and could be a possible line of further enquiry, it shows that the issue of Russian speaking integration in Estonia is multifaceted; it is not just a sole language issue. Examination of the debates surrounding Eurovision therefore serves as a mirror of the wider identity debates ensuing in Estonia. Those that do not speak fluent Estonian were the source of great anxiety for many ethnic Estonians interviewed for this thesis. Those who do speak fluent Estonian are yet still somehow singled out as highlighted in the response from Dima, Estonians pinpoint that his accent is that of a Russian as well as his appearance thus suggesting that integration issues are more complicated than suggested in the conventional literature and as such will remain for the foreseeable future in Estonia.

5.5 Estonian media coverage of the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest:

An overview

Following on from the media coverage examined in chapter four (4.4) concerning the financing of the contest and the effectiveness of the event in terms of investment into the image of Estonia, it is necessary to examine a sample of the Estonian media coverage from the time in order to further attain a stronger sense of how the staging of Eurovision was perceived in Estonia in 2002. In particular this section will concentrate on the discourse surrounding image as well as examining the rhetoric concerning Eurovision in the immediate aftermath of Estonia’s staging of the event. As evidenced in the previous chapter, the media coverage concerning Eurovision was extensive in Estonia immediately following the country’s victory at the event in May 2001. Many respondents anecdotally stated that Eurovision was rarely out of the media for an entire year and this is apparent certainly in the run-up to the preparations for the event in spring 2002.

5.5.1 Eurovision Personalised: Analysis of anecdotal articles

In the run up to the contest a number of small editorial articles were published in both *Postimees* and *Õhtuleht* newspapers, written by those who were involved in the organisation of the event. What is striking is the sheer number of personal narratives which were published, each author personalised their story by highlighting how much they had sacrificed for the event in terms of time and effort. Closer reading of these short pieces suggests that they served a twofold purpose; to highlight the scale of the production and the significance of it in terms of investment into Estonia's international image. This was reflected in an article written by Tiiu Siim, the Event Manager of Eurovision 2002, headlined "I think that all the organisers have given up many things for Eurovision" (*Postimees*, 13 May 2002). Siim highlighted the volume of work involved which had taken over her private life. In another article by the Production Manager, Kalle Kingsepp, both the professional and personal sacrifices were emphasised along with the importance of the event for both her as a media professional and for Estonia itself.

Can you really talk about a private life when your job starts early in the morning [...] and ends when it is past midnight? [...] my loved ones are very understanding and have freed me from all my family responsibilities, my friends have told me that they will communicate with me again in June (Tiiu Siim, *Postimees* 13 May 2002).

When I joined the Eurovision team I had to give up directing a few concerts [...] but I believe that taking part in the Eurovision project has made it worth it and more than that, I do not have any regrets [...] for me, Eurovision is bigger and more important than any other project I have ever done (Kalle Kingsepp, *Postimees*, 14 May 2002).

Alari Kasemaa, the Marketing Manager of Eurovision 2002 went further to specifically talk about the promotional opportunity that Eurovision afforded Estonia and highlighted the importance of presenting a positive image of the country and alludes to the strides made by Estonia during the return to Europe of the 1990s.

The image we created before Eurovision was already very high. The responsibility [...] rests on our shoulders. If at least 23 countries are watching Estonia at the same time, if Eurovision is successful it is the best marketing technique for the country – you could not buy it for any amount of money. This opportunity should be used to the maximum. I think after the Eurovision the impression will be uniform – surprised [...] Looking back at the year of work we have done, our self-pride and self-esteem has been rising: especially when you see the in-between clips, hear the directors talking and feel the scale of work done on technology [...] We had to live up to the strong European standard of all those before us after all (Alari Kasemaa, *Postimees* 8 May 2002).

Here the reference to the previous “strong European standard” is notable; in essence Estonia was proving their so-called “European credentials” by hosting an event which had previously been hosted to a standard set by western European countries, the majority of which were EU members²⁰. The rhetoric concerning national self-esteem is also worthy of comment. As detailed in the previous chapter, winning Eurovision instilled a sense of pride in Estonians that previously had not been as forthcoming. Kasemaa’s emphasis on the promotion of Estonia’s image is not entirely surprising given that she was in charge of the marketing of the event. However her narrative did emphasise the unprecedented opportunity that Estonia had through hosting the event; the eyes of Europe were literally going to be on Estonia.

The sense of personal sacrifice emanating from these articles is noteworthy. They served the purpose of bringing a human face to the Estonian public, instilling a sense of national purpose and self-esteem. Such articles served to drive support from the Estonian public but emphasising the importance of hosting the event successfully and the fact that this was continuously communicated through the media appears to confirm this. As detailed earlier (5.4.1), Eurovision was therefore, according to one respondent, a “we are going to do it together” event for the Estonian people²¹.

5.5.2 Flagging the promotional opportunity

A cursory glance of the media coverage in Estonia in the weeks preceding Eurovision reveals that the issue of Estonia’s image was never far from the foreground. Many journalists speculated about the success of the show and how it would be perceived by the international viewers. What is clear from such articles is the latent anxiety concerning this subject, Estonia was going to be a centre of attention and with this came pressure and this is evidenced in media articles from the time. *Postimees* reported that foreign TV channels were especially interested in the production; “Foreign TV channels are interested in TV image” (*Postimees* 25 May 2002). The article went on to cite the Executive Producer of ETV’s new programme, Andres Kuusk who stated that TV channels from abroad had been particularly interested in how the competition is seen by political leaders in Estonia:

²⁰ Up until that time, since Estonia first entered the contest, the production had been organised by EU members apart from 1996 (Norway) and 1999 (Israel).

²¹ Maimu, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008.

They usually ask how important Eurovision is for Estonia and whether the Prime Minister has said anything about it [...] The important thing is that many people in the wider world will hear about this (*Postimees* 25 May 2002).

Mart Laar, who was by that time, out of political office, emphasised in an article that the real issue of the contest was that the attention of the world would be on Estonia and was therefore consistent in his view that this was an unprecedented opportunity to market Estonia to a wider audience.

Although there may be differing opinions, it is important to us that more than 100 million people will watch Eurovision through us. It means that 120-160 million people will acknowledge the bearings, the place where Eurovision takes place. It is a very important event for Estonia. I believe that we will succeed in showing Estonia in a good light to the world (*Postimees* 25 May 2002).

In an editorial piece entitled “Unknown Comparison” Andri Maimets (interviewed for this thesis) flagged the opportunity that the event brought for the country but also highlighted that Estonia should be seen as a “normal country” and in order for this to happen people should not expect a heavy emphasis on Estonia’s past.

To Estonia winning the Eurovision and being able to organise this year’s event means a lot. It is a chance to show a three hour long live show from Tallinn, and wedge in little fragments about Estonia (which are, by the way, made very professionally), to present different Estonian landscapes, introduce our musicians and choreographers; to paint a good image of us, to create a certain reputation [...] We are a normal nation in a normal state, not some sort of cage monkeys begging for bananas who have to hang down the wall by their toes and show everything they can do [...] We should try not to go out of our way to hope for an echo of our independent country’s ten year history (Maimets in *Postimees*, 23 May 2002).

The opportunity to present Estonia as a modern and highly computer literate country was also flagged by the media as one of the benefits of hosting Eurovision. ETV had opted to stream the live broadcast on the internet, like had occurred in previous years. However the Estonian media were quick to point out that in previous years the server, unable to cope with demand, had crashed. *Postimees* focussed on the preparations in Estonia, the narrative of the article revealing increasing self confidence and that Estonia would not face the same technical problems. By doing so the article essentially presented the country as equal if not superior to Sweden and Denmark as well as reinforcing the notion of Estonia as a so-called “e-country”.

Estonians will be able to demonstrate that they are better at dealing with the internet than the Swedes did two years ago or the Danes last year. Both had advertised the online broadcasting of the show, but because of the over popularity of the show, the

lines eventually ran into difficulties and the online broadcast was aborted (Maimets in *Postimees*, 20 May 2002).

Despite the outward appearance of self-confidence emanating from the Estonian media, there was considerable interest in what the foreign press were reporting about the country in the run-up to Eurovision. This is evidenced in the article “What the foreign press thinks about Estonia” (*Postimees*, 23 May 2002). The article detailed the various articles published in the international press as Estonia prepared to host Eurovision. This is evidence of not only how important the event was seen through the gaze of the media as increasing Estonia’s international profile but also in terms of how seriously the event was linked to Estonia’s image and a testament to how much emphasis was placed on what the world thought of Estonia at this time. *Newsweek* was reported as stating that Tallinn was a “treasure by the Baltic” and that “May 25th [the day of Eurovision 2002] may be the day “new” Tallinn is discovered (*Newsweek*, 13 May 2002). Thus the ESC represented a break from the past, a new way of launching Tallinn and Estonia on the international stage. The UK-based *The Independent* went further to emphasise the historical significance of song festivals and presented Estonia as part of a European elite.

A miniscule Baltic republic is about to register in the popular imagination of Europe for the first time [...] This month Tallinn is set to become the latest member of yet one more exclusive European club (*The Independent*, 5 May 2002 cited in *Postimees*, 23 May 2002).

The Observer expanded on this with their article, “Tallinn’s Euro Vision” (28 April 2002), which emphasised the importance of the event given the recent political and historical context. The article presented an alternative view of Eurovision, it sought to contrast the cynicism of many UK viewers with what they reported as the Estonian perspective. Given the views of the public-level respondents as discussed earlier, many of the points raised may have indeed rang true with many. However the comment by Andri Maimets discussed earlier, “we are not monkeys in a zoo”, is also worthy of consideration. The article appears to present Estonia as a nation which desperately pinned its foreign policy agenda on hosting Eurovision which is not only untrue but somehow chauvinistic. The article received little comment in the Estonian press though, it seems in this case, any publicity is good publicity for a country carving out its niche on the world stage.

For most viewers in Britain it will be a three hour sneerathon, a showcase for everything risible in Euroland. Not so in Estonia [...] Estonians argue that Eurovision will put them on the map [...] there had been some grumbling that Estonia cannot afford this extravaganza and the money would be diverted from a planned increase in

pensions, but the carping is forgotten now. The project is daunting – the three hour show will cost as much as the entire annual budget of the national television corporation [...] The recent past has not been buried. The talk in Tallinn these days may be of joining the European Union and NATO but it is accompanied by a nervous glance over the shoulder at the Russian bear. In this context Eurovision has taken on an almost surreal significance (Guha in *The Observer* 28 April 2002).

The importance of Eurovision was again re-inscribed by another article which was cited this time from Finnish newspaper *Kauppalehti* (22 May 2002) which, like the previous articles had emphasised the historical importance of having the eyes of the world focussing on Estonia and also made reference to the significance of Eurovision in the context of recent Estonian history, alluding to the influence of Finnish television in Estonia.

All other news apart from the Eurovision has ceased to be printed since the start of May. At last the long held hope of the Estonians has become true. Even in Soviet times Estonians wanted to participate in the show, when Yugoslavia entered the competition [...] Estonia's marketing enterprise has staked the most, coming up with the slogan "Welcome to Estonia", which cost the government almost one million Euros (*Kauppalehti* 22 May 2002, cited in *Postimees*, 23 May 2002).

However the narratives were not always positive concerning Estonia. One article which was cited came from *The Times* newspaper, on one hand the article exoticised Estonia but on the other presented narratives which, upon first reading, would have undoubtedly brought about much consternation amongst the Estonian public and political elites. The article not only made a link to this past, but went as far to suggest that Estonia was still living in a Soviet epoch. This would undoubtedly have sat at ill ease with the vast majority, if not all, respondents who were keen to emphasise that Estonia had made a clean break with the past. However, closer reading of this article suggests that if there is "blame" to be apportioned for societal ills in Estonia, then they lie with the Russian speaking population. The article makes a link between Russian speakers and the recent past, labelling them as "the occupying nation" and makes explicit links with "mafia-type organisations". Given the narratives of the nation presented in the previous chapter this may go some way to explaining the lack of response to such an article in Estonia, it was therefore another useful platform for the othering of Russian speakers in Estonia.

The experience of freedom has not been completely pain-free for Estonia. Crimes committed by mafia-type organisations are prevalent, and the fact that a third of the population is Russian – of the occupying nation – mean that the social fabric of the country is far from perfect. The divide between the rich and the poor is very clear on the streets. Old ladies in worn out farming attire are hauling bags past the Mercedes-Benz cars parked in two lanes on the streets [...] All this can't cloud the charm of Tallinn. It is one of the most beautiful medieval towns in Europe [...] a little bit

unnerving, like an eerie magical forest in a fairytale (The Times 18 May 2002 cited in *Postimees*, 23 May 2002).

On the day of the competition itself the tone of the Estonian media was celebratory; the groundwork had been done to ensure that the Estonian image would benefit from a positive production. The coverage again took on an international approach, this time to exemplify what the various embassies across the world were doing to introduce Estonia to the world through Eurovision. *Postimees* (25 May 2002) published an extensive article which detailed the various events which were due to take place in order to coincide with Estonia hosting Eurovision.

The London embassy is organising an entertaining seminar where they will discuss issues regarding Estonia and watch the Eurovision show live. They have invited British colleagues, public servants, business partners and colleagues from other embassies as well as local Estonians – altogether more than 100 people (*Postimees* 25 May 2002).

Such articles reveal the extent to which the Estonian media embraced the Eurovision Song Contest as a publicity tool for the country, a platform for presenting a positive international image on Estonian terms. The event appears to have been viewed in the media through a distinctly ethnic Estonian gaze and this is evidenced in the lack of controversy surrounding the article published in *The Times* as discussed. The simple fact that newspaper articles concerned with the way in which Estonia was being reported on internationally, were being published is further evidence of the promotional opportunity that Eurovision offered.

5.5.3 “The BBC showed Estonia”.

A week before Eurovision came to Tallinn the BBC screened a documentary based on Estonia’s preparations for Eurovision. The programme, *Estonia Dreams of Eurovision*, contextualised Eurovision in terms of Estonia’s tradition of song festivals and its recent strides towards EU membership. However many Estonian respondents anecdotally stated that the importance of Eurovision was wildly exaggerated; EU accession negotiations would have happened with or without Estonia winning Eurovision. Whilst the Estonian image was undoubtedly given a massive boost, it was not this alone which paved the way for European Union integration as suggested in this documentary. Initially the Estonian media appeared to be buoyed by the fact that the BBC showed a programme dedicated to

Estonia. However after the documentary was broadcast, it was deconstructed and the content internalised, the tone of the articles became more arbitrary.

In itself it was a very well made programme about a country from *the former Soviet Union* down to every last cliché – the one-time fear of the KGB, then songs that stopped the tanks and a sly remark about the number of suicides [...] Our lives do not seem quite as amateur as the BBC makes them out to be (Erilaid in *Postimees* 28 May 2002).

The BBC documentary of Estonians and their recent history will probably make a large proportion of viewers think that Estonians drink, live in a dark and cold place, are poor, miss the regime of the Soviet Union and try to swindle and defraud other people's money [...] Such a film is enough a reason why Estonians should think about marketing at home as well as abroad. This documentary [...] will have a very depressing effect on future investors and tourists [...] In the light of the BBC's depressing vision of Estonia, the country should take decisive actions to market itself and help improve its image abroad, although the millions needed for it may seem too big (*Õhtuleht*, 29 May 2002).

The reviews of the documentary in the Estonian press therefore serve as a reminder that the issue of the image of Estonia was a pressing one; the BBC documentary presented a narrative of the nation which was alien to many and served as evidence that Estonia needed further promotion. The public opposition to the Welcome to Estonia campaign is therefore all the more perplexing in this context. The flagging of the "Former Soviet Union" reference made in the documentary is important, for a country which for a decade had been trying to "return to Europe" this re-inscribing of the Soviet past, by a foreign voice, would understandably have prompted comment. A further analytical article was similarly unrelenting in criticising the programme, "the shocking English documentary about the Estonian Eurovision" (Vainkulla in *Õhtuleht* 29 May 2002). Attempts were made by Mart Sander, one of the contributors of the show, to state that it was never the intention of the BBC to make a mockery of Estonia. This appeared to fall on deaf ears with the narrative suggesting that those involved had somehow been fooled into appearing. Gerli Padar, another contributor, was quoted as saying "I like the film. I like the fact that it is honest, that we are showing what we are actually like". However immediately after this quote it was referenced that Gerli Padar lives in Finland, the subtext being that she therefore is not best placed to say what is a true reflection of Estonia and what is fabrication. Ironically it could be argued that if it was not for Eurovision then the documentary may never have been made in the first place. However the final point in the article cited above is pertinent, strategic marketing and image management costs money, which given the size of Estonia and the scale of the campaign needed, serves further to highlight that Eurovision offered a cost-effective marketing platform.

5.5.4 Deconstructing the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest: The reaction from the Estonian media.

As with the responses from public-level respondents, the overwhelming reaction to Estonia's hosting of the ESC in 2002 was positive in terms of how the event presented a positive image of Estonia to a global audience. However closer scrutiny reveals that the overall consensus is less certain. Media reports suggested that having a Swedish singer representing Estonia was problematic for some (Tael in *Õhtuleht*, 11 May 2002). Moreover another report focused on Russian-Estonian antagonism in the Town Hall Square in Tallinn as well as controversy concerning the decision to screen a commercial break during the transmission, at a time when the presenters Marko Martvere and Annely Peebo were performing a song composed by Raimond Valgre (Michelson in *Õhtuleht* 27 May 2002). In terms of judging the success of the broadcast the Estonian media appeared to take a more internationalist approach, looking towards the wider European media for comments concerning the success of the event, as they had done during the week of rehearsals. "What the press said about the Eurovision Song Contest on Sunday" (*Õhtuleht*, 27 May 2002) included a summary of the coverage that Estonia from around Europe and the wider world, including America. Coverage also focussed on what UK commentator Terry Wogan said about the production after his scathing views on the previous hosts, Denmark. The comments from Wogan were positive and this was reported back in the Estonian media, "The BBC's commentator Terry Wogan praised the polished final show of the Estonians" (Tael in *Õhtuleht*, 27 May 2002). The approach taken by the Estonian media to concentrate on how the event was received outside Estonia reveals again, like the previous articles discussed in the precluding as well as this current chapter, that the Estonian image was pertinent at this time. Estonians were interested in what the world was saying about them and the media therefore reflected this and in doing so, reflected their insecurities as well.

Estonia who was organising the song contest for the first time did a very magnificent job and impressive job. It was clear that the Estonians had given the project their full attention and been on the job with their whole heart. They had built a new sports stadium for the song contest and directed a show which was elegant, beautiful and professional (BBC News cited in *Õhtuleht*, 27 May 2002).

The deconstruction of the event continued in the media with interviews with high profile Estonians expressing their views on how successful the event was. The fact that such an article was given prominence again highlights the wider context; at this time Estonians

were conscious about their international image which suggests a lack of self-confidence amongst the general public at large. “I liked the in-between clips a lot. It was humour, enjoyable and well made” (Urmas Lattikas, *Õhtuleht*, 27 May 2002) is a comment representative of most of the sound bites concerning the way Eurovision was perceived in 2002 in Estonia. The sheer volume of respondents quoted in the article (26 in total including celebrities and politicians alike) is further evidence of the way in which the event flagged other wider issues, namely image and self-confidence.

However the coverage was not all positive, there was some controversy concerning the fact that a Swedish singer represented Estonia in Eurovision 2002, as discussed in the previous chapter, the “controversy” is somewhat striking given the relative lack of public rebuttal concerning the choice of Dave Benton as a representative of Estonia. The debates centred mainly on the issue of Estonia being sidelined by the Swedes. In early May *Postimees* reported that two Estonian backing singers had been replaced in favour of Swedish singers since the original artists did not fit the right image of the song (Maimets in *Postimees* 9 May 2002). Furthermore *Õhtuleht* published an article which quoted from the UK based Independent, further asking if it is right that Swede can represent Estonia in Eurovision. “Is a singer from Sweden fit to represent Estonia? [...] Is it a sign of the smallness of Estonia? At least Dave Benton is married to an Estonian” (Tael in *Õhtuleht*, 11 May 2002). During the performance of the Estonian entry at the 2002 ESC there was a technical error when the backing singer’s vocals were louder than the actual singer. This received attention in the press, the headline revealing the tone of the argument; “The Swedes ruined Estonia’s Euro song” (Viljak in *Õhtuleht*, 28 May 2002). The article went onto dissect the performance of the Estonian entry and alleged that sound levels had been deliberately tampered with by Swedish technicians. Whilst inevitably tabloids publish speculative and sensational articles, such comments represent Estonia “othering” the errors made during the show, thus the sound problems were not Estonian, they were Swedish and therefore fodder for criticism.

A Swedish director was dealing with the sound at the event. It is strange that during the rehearsals everything was fine [...] the ruining of the sound of the song happened on purpose. Don’t forget that we were strong competitors of the Swedes (Viljak in *Õhtuleht*, 28 May 2002).

Another article highlighted how Eurovision polarised many who watched the event live in the Town Hall Square in Tallinn. “Russians and Estonians were shouting over each other” (Michelson in *Õhtuleht*, 27 May 2002). The article claimed that ethnic Russians and

Estonians were at odds during the screening of the event in the main square. The article therefore serves as a reminder that Estonia is, to some extent, a divided society and that the loyalties of Estonia's Russian speaking minority do not necessarily lie with Estonia itself.

On Saturday night on Raekoja Square [Town Hall Square], at the "People's Eurovision" event, thousands of people were screaming over each other. "Eesti! Eesti!" and "Ross-i-ja! Ross-i-ja!". In the end a Russian youngster broke the flagpole of the blue-black-white flag [...] During the Russian song it feels like we are not in Estonia at all. "Ross-i-ja! Ross-i-ja!" people are punching the air. The noise is so loud that people in the back can't hear the song at all. But Estonia's song brings back the belief that we are in Estonia after all and that not everyone is Russian (Michelson in *Õhtuleht*, 27 May 2002).

Such an article is a snapshot of some of the responses from ground-level ethnic Estonian respondents when discussing the Russian speaking minority in Estonia. Eurovision therefore offered another platform for the rhetoric that on some level Russian speakers are seen as disloyal to the Estonian state. Latvia winning the event also attracted comment in the media, with some speculating that they would not be able to stage the competition. It appears as if the successful staging of Eurovision provided Estonians with a confidence boost; they were able to cast doubts over their neighbours when only twelve months before other countries were doing exactly the same concerning Estonia.

The decision by ETV to screen a commercial break also did not go without comment. During the broadcast the respective national broadcasters were offered an opportunity to screen a commercial break after half the songs had been performed. For those countries that did not opt out a duet, "A Fairytale in Music", was performed by the presenters. The Estonian media vehemently attacked ETV for continuing to screen commercials, seemingly putting profit ahead of public interest.

One drop of tar can sour a pot of honey – this was exemplified when instead of the widely advertised Raimond Valgre due by Peebo and Martvere the Estonian National Television chose to air adverts instead [...] That the home audience is not worthy of the whole show – unlike foreign countries – shows and emphasises the old fact that we are ready to do anything to please and win the approval of foreign countries, but that we don't care about our own people at all. It is enough if we remember the ex-Prime Minister Mart Laar's direct orientation to foreign countries (*Õhtuleht*, 28 May 2002).

Such comments are interesting because they seem to suggest that attitudes in Estonia were at a crossroads, where previously Estonians had been keen to look towards the wider world, or certainly did in the political sphere and in the media, this article suggests that

now Estonians had had enough of this. The coverage of Eurovision highlights that the Estonian image remained massively important at this time but that Estonia had by this time proved their worth to a global audience. This issue of Estonian self-confidence will be discussed further in chapter seven.

5.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the importance of the Eurovision Song Contest as a platform for presenting Estonia to the world on its own terms. The debates which were central to the planning of the event highlight that not only was the international image of Estonia important in the context of the return to Europe, but also in terms of the everyday flagging of the nation. Estonia was presented as an example of a modern day fairytale, a country with a happy ending. The content of the broadcast neglected to make reference to anything related to the Soviet past or Estonia's Russian speaking minority, the absence of Narva from the postcard images can be seen as evidence of this. Public-level ethnic Estonian respondents identified with the event in a way in which they failed to with the Welcome to Estonia campaign. Estonians were overwhelmingly satisfied with the content of the show, citing that it reflected an Estonia which they readily identified with. On the other hand, the Russian speakers interviewed for this thesis, were less certain. As such these people represent a form of hybridity; not quite Estonian and not quite Russian.

The sheer volume of coverage dedicated to Eurovision in the Estonian media is further evidence of how significant the event was in terms of raising Estonia's international profile. The personalised tone of many of the articles appears to have had an impact on many Estonians since the event was seen as a personal affair, something that the country needed to support in order for it to be a success. It seems that Estonians were fully behind the event and felt a connection to it. Again, this is the polar opposite reading to the Welcome to Estonia campaign. After 2002 Estonia continually failed to succeed in the competition, whilst many countries from the former Eastern Bloc went onto win. With these developments new debates concerning Estonia's image and Eurovision in Estonia more generally emerged. These debates will form the mainstay of chapter seven.

Chapter 6: A critical analysis of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest in Ukraine in the context of the Orange Revolution 2004-2005.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Ukraine and the significant role that the Eurovision Song Contest played in 2004 and 2005 in promoting and refining a positive international image of Ukraine in a post-Soviet context. Unlike in Estonia, the return to Europe in Ukraine has been somewhat protracted and confused. Ukrainian political leaders essentially walked a tightrope between emphasising EU integration whilst balancing the demands of the Russian government (Krushelnycky 2006, p.78). Furthermore the legacy of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster has continued to have an impact on the international image of Ukraine in a post-Soviet context. When Ukraine won the 2004 Eurovision Song Contest the event was afforded significance in terms of image building given that it provided Ukraine with the opportunity to host a major cultural event for the first time since independence. It therefore presented an opportunity for the country to promote a positive international image to a Europe-wide audience. The winning performer, Ruslana declared at a press conference immediately after the event that “all of us are making a positive image of Ukraine. I want my country to open up before you with friendship and hospitality [...] I would like you to forget about Chernobyl” (*Moscow Times* 17 May 2004). Thus from the outset the victory was linked to the international image of Ukraine and as such it was seen as an opportunity to present a different view of Ukraine to the rest of the world.

The hosting of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv took on even greater significance following the political protests which took place across the country at the end of 2004 which became known internationally as the Orange Revolution. The slogan for the competition in 2005 was “Awakening” and this along with the selection of the band Greenjolly, who had been active in the political protests, as the Ukrainian Eurovision entry that year meant that the contest was highly politicised and as such highly contested. A study of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest offers a potentially rich set of insights into the nature of the “Orange Revolution” and its accompanying debates on Ukrainian nation-building and Ukraine’s place in Europe more generally. The political turmoil caused by the Orange Revolution also meant that the preparations for the 2005 contest were seriously hampered. The delays were so significant that in March 2005 the European Broadcasting

Union threatened to move the event from Ukraine unless immediate action was taken²². Given the involvement of the newly-elected President Yushchenko, who actively intervened in the preparations for the competition, the importance of hosting the competition in order to enhance Ukraine's international standing is plain to see.

This chapter will provide an overview of the complexities concerning Ukrainian national identity and the debates surrounding the Orange Revolution. Furthermore an analysis of the debates on Eurovision in Ukraine in the period 2004-2005 will help to illuminate the wider identity political issues. This chapter will examine the politics behind Eurovision 2005 in an attempt to establish why Eurovision was seen as so important to the Ukrainian government in 2005. What elements of national identity can be discerned from analysing Ukraine's winning Eurovision entry? Who decided how Ukraine should be depicted in both participating and hosting? What debates and responses did the competition elicit in the "official" public sphere and how was it perceived amongst the population as a whole?

6.2 Defining Ukrainian national identity

Succinctly capturing the essence of Ukrainian national identity is no easy task. Kataryna Wolczuk describes Ukraine an "amalgam of regions" with different ethno-linguistic, economic, cultural and political profiles (Wolczuk 2002, p.65). Wolczuk's work highlights the complexity of Ukrainian national identity. Potentially therefore this means that these regions have different understandings of what constitutes national identity and furthermore what the return to Europe means. For western Ukrainians it implies breaking with Russia and for others in the East less so. Taras Kuzio asserts that Ukraine from the outset of independence has been beset with problems in terms of being seen as a viable or visible independent state given the "junior partner" role that Ukraine played in governing the USSR. He argues that Ukraine constituted a "quasi state" and with that came a legacy which has affected national identity in the post-Soviet era (Kuzio 1998, p.xii). Moreover Motyl argues that both post-Soviet presidents Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma both promoted a sense of nationhood which was not based on ethnic criteria (Kuzio 1998, p.1). This is in sharp contrast to constructions of national identity in Estonia as discussed in chapters one and three. Motyl argues that the Ukrainian political elite took a "middle of the road" approach to nation building in that change was slow and piecemeal. One example is the national language, Ukrainian. Both Kravchuk and Kuchma accepted the use of Russian

²² Svante Stockselius, EBU Executive Supervisor of the ESC stated this in an interview for this study.

by those who wanted. Nation building in Ukraine was therefore complicated and arguably constrained by the complexities of encapsulating what Ukrainian national identity is.

Judy Batt argues that Ukraine cannot be considered to be a “nation state” in the conventional sense of the word given the sizeable Russian speaking population who have deep historical roots to the territory and also the fact that Ukrainians themselves are far from homogeneous in terms of how they perceive their own identity. Batt therefore asserts that there are three major groups in Ukraine: Ukrainian speaking Ukrainians, Russian speaking Ukrainians and Russians (cited in Kuzio 1998, p.57). Batt goes on to state that language is not necessarily the marker of identity in the Ukrainian context. An example of this is given by Stephen Velychenko who highlights that Miss Ukraine 2005 did not speak Ukrainian yet still identified very much as a Ukrainian rather than Russian (Velychenko 2007, p.10), therefore supporting Batt’s view. Moreover Batt points to the fact that many in Ukraine are also bi-lingual and there is an element of fluidity in terms of language which in turn makes the boundaries blurred and subject to change. This can be seen as in stark contrast to ethnic Estonian understandings of national identity in which knowledge of the Estonian language is seen as a key marker of national identity and belonging to the national community.

Taras Kuzio states that whilst Ukraine might be seen in the same vein as other bi-national states such as Belgium or Canada, the boundaries in Ukraine are far more blurred. Furthermore he argues that rigid distinctions between a Russian speaking east and Ukrainian speaking west Ukraine do not necessarily tell the full story regarding Ukrainian identity. He asserts that this ambiguity or complexity of Ukrainian identity is exemplified strongly in Kyiv where Ukrainians “commute” between identities (Kuzio 1998, p.154). Moreover he suggests that because Ukraine did not inherit a more uniform understanding of national identity this has affected nation and state building processes in the country. However there are some broad generalisations which can be made: the west which tends to be Ukrainian speaking view the Soviet past and identity differently to the east. In 2005, only 6% of Ukrainians in the west saw themselves as “Soviet” compared with 18% in the east (Velychenko 2007, p.2). In June 1996 Ukraine adopted a new constitution and was the last former Soviet republic to do so. In September a new national currency was introduced, the Hryvnia. Sharon Wolchik and Vladimir Zviglyanich suggest that these fluid understandings of nationhood have been reflected at the political and international level. They go as far to state that Ukraine itself is a “study in ambiguity” (Wolchik and Zviglyanich 2000, p.6). This dual vector approach to state building can be seen in the fact

that under Kuchma the country's relationship with Russia improved, the two countries being seen as strategic partners whilst at the same time Ukraine drew closer to Europe. Kataryna Wolczuk questions the extent to which the rhetoric of a return to Europe influenced Ukrainian policy. Wolczuk deems the policies of the 1990s to be "declarative Europeanisation" in that lip service was paid to the idea of Ukrainian integration with European structures such as the European Union but little else in reality (D'Anieri 2007, p.217). Kuchma highlighted the EU as an aspiration, but did little in practice to move Ukraine towards that goal, nor did the EU embrace Ukraine as a prospective member.

Ukrainian integration with the west has also been hampered to some extent by the legacy of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Ukraine's prospects for "return to Europe" were hampered not only by internal regional divisions and other political factors, but arguably also by Ukraine's status in the eyes of the West as a backward, "post-soviet" country (unlike the more "western" Baltic States). It therefore had far more work to do in terms of shaking off a negative image in contrast to Estonia's so-called "clean state" as discussed in chapter three (3.4.1). Chernobyl was part of this image problem and this is an issue which was constantly flagged by respondents for this study. When questioned about what Ukraine is known for in the world the vast majority of those interviewed mentioned Chernobyl in the first instance. As such the disaster is something which has not only left an imprint on Ukraine's international image more broadly but also on the public psyche. This can be evidenced in the immediate aftermath of Ruslana's 2004 Eurovision Song Contest victory when she mentioned that she wanted the world to "forget about Chernobyl". The Eurovision Song Contest therefore represented an opportunity for Ukraine to be associated with a positive news story. The Orange Revolution also represented a change in the way Ukraine was reported in the global media. The staging of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest can therefore be seen as an attempt by Ukraine to manage its own image on its own terms, the significance of which was heightened after the political events of 2004. As Vasyl Myroshnychenko from CFC Consulting explains:

If you analyse the history of Ukraine most of the information about Ukraine in the media was negative [...] Chernobyl or corruption [...] of course a splash of positive information was the Orange Revolution but I would still put on winning Eurovision in 2004 and then hosting in 2005 up there as the most important events to help our image in recent times (Vasyl Myroshnychenko, interview, Kyiv, 5 December 2007).

6.3 The Orange Revolution: A brief overview

The Orange Revolution is the name given to a series of protests which broke out in Ukraine in 2004 during the presidential election. By 2004 Ukraine was said to have slipped into an increasingly authoritarian state with widespread corruption which went largely unchallenged by the Kuchma government (D'Anieri 2010, p.1). The first vote was held on 31 October 2004 and since neither candidate, pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko or pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich surpassed 50% of the vote the election passed to a second round (39.9% and 39.3% respectively). On 21 November the second round of voting took place which appeared to show that Yanukovich was the victor. In the immediate aftermath widespread protests took place against the apparent falsification of the election results. Reports emerged of corruption, voter intimidation and electoral fraud. When it emerged that the opposition candidate Victor Yushchenko had been poisoned with dioxin it served as a rallying call to people, effectively the presidential election came to be seen as being “stolen” (D'Anieri 2010, p.81&99). People took to the streets of Kyiv with orange flags, banners, symbols representing their opposition to the government. Later counter-protests from pro-Yanukovich supporters, with blue as their emblem emerged. In crude terms the Orange Revolution can be seen as a clash between east and west. However as Velychenko points out, not all western regions were 100% pro-Yushchenko nor pro-Yanukovich in the east (Velychenko 2007, p.85). There was widespread disillusionment with a corrupt and unresponsive political elite and a strong desire for change. Furthermore rather than crude “pro” and “anti” Europe rhetoric, the debates concerning the Orange Revolution were manifold. This was no ordinary revolution; in the years since those events several different interpretations of these manifestations have emerged. Whilst it is not the aim of this chapter to examine these debates or discuss conspiracies surrounding possible western involvement in the protests for example, it is important to remember that the roots of the revolution, like Ukrainian national identity are multifaceted and often contradictory.

The events which took place in Kyiv in winter 2004 attracted the attention of the world. The elections and protests potentially represented a change in geopolitics given that victory of the opposition could potentially take Ukraine closer to EU and NATO membership, and further from Russia. It is therefore not surprising that both east and west followed the dramatic events in Ukraine very closely. After the votes of the previous run-offs were nullified by Ukraine's Supreme Court another election was announced for 26 December. This time the ballot was closely scrutinised by international observers and deemed to be fair and free. The result showed a clear victory for the orange opposition led by

Yushchenko who won 51.9% of the vote compared to 44.2% who voted for Yanukovych (D'Anieri 2010, p.23). Consequentially Yushchenko was sworn in as President of Ukraine on 23 January 2005. The significance of the events of the Orange Revolution was not lost on the new president who made reference to the impact that the protests had on Ukraine's geopolitical position in Europe. "We are no longer on the edge of Europe [...] we are situated at the centre" (D'Anieri 2010, p.25). Therefore the Orange Revolution also became a useful and useable platform for image building in Ukraine. Whilst there are obvious misgivings with drawing distinctions between nation branding initiatives and political protests, the latter perhaps having a negative implication that the political system was inherently corrupt, the events of 2004 put Ukraine on the map in a positive light. This can be seen as a departure from previous news coverage which focussed on the aftermath of Chernobyl, corruption and the murder of journalist Georgiy Gongadze in 2000. Therefore the Orange Revolution and Yushchenko succeeded where Ukraine had been lacking, providing recognition and positive affirmation in the international community. As Krushelnysky concludes, the events were "spectacularly successful at winning Ukraine international goodwill" (Krushelnysky 2006, p.359).

The impact of the Orange Revolution on Ukraine's international image was an issue which was frequently mentioned by respondents for this study, many of whom made particularly reference to the legacy of Chernobyl and the significance that the events played in presenting a positive image of the country to the world.

Chernobyl of course is a very strong image but very negative. It's like a little bit dangerous to go to Ukraine because of Chernobyl [...] After the Orange Revolution the image was stronger [...] We hoped that there would be a clean break from the past and we were disappointed in the 1990s but the Orange Revolution gave us an impulse. (Yulia and Olga, focus group, Kyiv, 17 December 2007)

I call it the Chernobyl factor because they [people from outside Ukraine] ask me the question "can you eat there?" because they have heard about Chernobyl and think everything is contaminated [...] it [Orange Revolution] wasn't meant to promote Ukraine, it was a by-product [...] if you ask people abroad how or when they started really hearing about Ukraine they would say 2004. So that was an important starting point for changing the image of the country. (Alexander, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007)

Mostly negative... they [non-Ukrainians] have this image of political instability, misunderstanding and corruption, Chernobyl, misuse of natural resources and wasted opportunities (Orysia Letsevych, interview, Kyiv 20 December 2007).

The Orange Revolution also became a platform for other expressions of protest namely through music. Ukrainian bands performed for the hundreds of thousands of people who were gathered in Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square). One such band, Greenjolly, was a group from the Ivano-Frankivsk region in Western Ukraine. Their song "*Razom nas bahato, nas ne podolaty*" (Together we are many, we cannot be defeated) became an unofficial anthem of the Orange Revolution. In 2005 it was controversially chosen to represent Ukraine at the Eurovision Song Contest, an issue which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. The reigning Eurovision champion Ruslana also became heavily involved in the Orange Revolution. The singer went on hunger strike in protest against what she saw as a stolen election and later went on to become a politician herself as a member of parliament for Yushchenko's ruling Nasha Ukrayina (Our Ukraine) party (Krushelnycky 2006, p.294). The links between the Eurovision Song Contest and politics were made from the outset of the Orange Revolution. The possible political connotations of Ruslana's Eurovision win in 2004 were discussed in the media in Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the event, the discussion of which will form the mainstay of the next section in this chapter.

6.4 Ruslana's victory at the Eurovision Song Contest 2004 in context

6.4.1 Background to the participation of Ukraine at the ESC

Ukraine made its debut in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2003 when Oleksandr Ponomaryov represented the country with the song "Hasta La Vista" reaching 14th place. Ukraine entered the competition a decade later than other former Soviet republics such as Estonia, Russia and Lithuania. Ukraine's participation in Eurovision was the idea of Gennadiy Kurochka from the public relations firm CFC Consulting. CFC Consulting is a private marketing and public relations organisation based in Kyiv who approached the government of Ukraine in 2002 and offered assistance to the National Television Company of Ukraine (NTU) with regards to managing the country's entry to Eurovision. The corporation is funded by corporate and private sponsors however in 2005 they signed a contract with the Ukrainian government as official public relations partner for the 2005 event and in 2007 the organisation signed an agreement with the government of Georgia and oversaw its Eurovision debut that year. Gennadiy Kurochka stated in an interview given for this thesis that it was the aim of CFC Consulting and NTU to enter Eurovision specifically to promote a positive international image of Ukraine. Vasyl Myroshnychenko, a partner in the firm expanded:

When we started with the idea of having Ukraine in the Eurovision [...] what we had in mind was how to use it to work on improving the image of Ukraine internationally [...] I remember when we had to present the entire project of Eurovision to the vice Prime Minister of Ukraine [...] we had to draft all the positive benefits Ukraine would get should we actually win the contest. So it was on the back of our minds from the very beginning, how to use this television musical project for the benefit of Ukraine's image [...] the idea that we had to be there [in Eurovision], it was a good opportunity to showcase Ukraine [...] so we teamed up with the National TV Company of Ukraine, we have helped them [...] to secure Ukraine's participation [...] firstly it was the broadcasting rights in 2002 and in 2003 we had the first singer from Ukraine (Vasyl Myroshnychenko, interview, Kyiv, 5 December 2007).

The late participation of Ukraine can be seen as a two-fold issue. On one hand many new entrant states, both East and West, such as Belarus, Albania, and Andorra were effectively prevented from participation due to logistical reasons, the contest had a finite broadcast time and further expansion of the event beyond 26 participations was deemed to be inoperable²³. However the late arrival of Ukraine was also due to on-going negotiations between NTU and the EBU as Kurochka alluded to later in the interview:

Ukraine tried to join the Eurovision for three years but it was foiled. It was some sort of big debt of National Television Company to the EBU and some other reasons (Gennadi Kurochka, interview, Kyiv, 5 December 2007).

There were some issues between the National Television Company and the European Broadcasting Union which prevented Ukraine from joining the Eurovision. It had to be sorted out (Vasyl Myroshnychenko, interview, Kyiv, 5th December 2007).

In this context Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest reflects the country's arguably slow approaches to economic reforms in the 1990s as well as other state building exercises, namely European integration. Given the political context of nation building in Ukraine (6.2), this suggests that Kataryna Wolczuk's assertion that Ukraine's policies towards Europe was one of "declarative Europeanisation" is highly relevant to Ukraine's involvement in events such as Eurovision. Ukraine's leadership lacked a proactive stance on the EU for example, and treated European integration as a vague aspiration rather than something needing concrete steps to be taken. This is in stark contrast to the situation in Estonia as discussed in chapter three where participation in Eurovision and other such events was sought immediately following independence as a marker of "Europeanness".

²³ Svante Stockselius, the EBU supervisor of the Eurovision Song Contest confirmed this in an interview in Stockholm, 3 April 2008.

6.4.2 A construction of Ukrainian identity: Ruslana

In 2004 CFC Consulting were involved with the competition again and together with the national broadcaster, NTU, approached Ruslana Lyzhychko, who went on to represent the country in Istanbul that year with the song “Wild Dances”. Ruslana, from western Ukraine, presented narratives of ethno-cultural heritage within her performance, namely elements of Hutsul culture. Therefore the performance and participation can be seen as an attempt at identity-shaping, an ethnic Ukrainian narrative of national identity. It is therefore interesting how a small “elite” circle decided and disseminated understandings of what constitutes “national culture”, given the discussions in section 6.2 and 6.3 of this chapter; it also underlines the constructed nature of identity and the power relations behind it. Comparisons may be made between the Welcome to Estonia campaign as discussed in chapter three.

We didn't have any national selections here so it was pretty much the decision of CFC and the National TV Company of Ukraine which were our partners so we have sat down with a couple of options and we came up to Ruslana [...] Her act and her performance was very ethnic but it was very particular to special rituals in Western parts of Ukraine, from the mountains. There were a lot of ethnic things which she has tried to portray to convey, to show, it was just the whole thing, it was very Ukrainian in a way. It was an act itself which did a great deal for promoting Ukraine the country (Vasyl Myroshnychenko, interview, Kyiv, 5th December 2007).

Furthermore analysis of the song itself reveals interesting insights into the nature of this construction of identity. The song was performed in both English and Ukrainian and not Russian. The absence of this effectively shows that the performance of Ruslana was an ethnic Ukrainian narrative of national identity. The repetition of various incantations, according to Pavlyshyn carries associations with Hutsul culture and the Carpathian region of Ukraine (Pavlyshyn 2006, p.475). In terms of how respondents read Ruslana's performance, most highlighted the crude divisions between east and west Ukraine. One interviewee, Anne, mentioned that Ruslana displayed a side of Ukrainian culture from a western point of view; “there is a division between eastern western Ukraine [...] It's like a struggle [...] therefore Ruslana can't be seen as representing all Ukraine” (Anne, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007). This is a notion which another respondent touched upon. Professor Valentin Yakushik from the Kyiv-Moyhla Academy emphasised that Ruslana “does not represent the whole of Ukraine, in the east she is foreign to them with the Carpathian culture” (Valentin Yakushik, interview, Kyiv, 19 December 2007). However one commentator, Mykola Kniazhyts'kyi argues that regardless of language or

narratives of identity, figures such as Ruslana present an opportunity for Ukrainians to build a common identity and can act as an antidote to what he calls the “national inferiority complex” in Ukraine (Pavlyshyn 2006, p.482). Ukrainians who saw the performance in ethnicised terms drew a strong distinction between East and West, Ukrainian and Russian²⁴. Despite the connotations some attached to the song, it was not necessarily perceived in adversely ethnic terms by Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Time and resources did not allow for a systematic media analysis, however Alexander Feldman, in an article taken from a Russian language newspaper in Ukraine, *Den* (Day) highlights the issue of language and “Ukrainianness” and appears to be representative of the general trend:

The new nation has acquired new symbols that embody its success on the international arena: the footballer Andriy Shevchenko, Ruslana Lyzhychko and boxing champions the Klitchko brothers. No matter what language they speak, no matter where they were born and where you work at this time, it is important that they feel themselves to be Ukrainian (*Den*, 21 September 2004).

Furthermore it is interesting to note that some Western Ukrainian “purists” objected to the alleged corruption of traditional Carpathian musical styles, thereby further highlighting the complexities of identity. The debates surrounding Ruslana’s narrative of national identity and traditional Carpathian music reached the UK with the BBC reporting that Ruslana’s Eurovision victory had triggered a folk revival in Ukraine. However there was comment from one Carpathian musician that the authenticity of Carpathian music was in danger of being lost as a result of the increased commercialisation of the tradition. “I think it would be better for the world to see the real authentic music, in its natural surroundings” (Alexandra cited in Fawkes, BBC News, 1 September 2004). Again this demonstrates the contested nature of identity in Ukraine since the “offence” did not come from the east of the country but rather the west from where Ruslana drew artistic and cultural inspiration.

It is also interesting to note that Ruslana’s selection as Ukrainian representative at Eurovision took place when Leonid Kuchma’s allegedly “pro-Russian” regime was still in power. Ruslana’s performance drew upon various “ethnic Ukrainian” motifs and victory in Eurovision arguably boosted self esteem and the image of the country. Whilst this Western-orientated culture propagated by Ruslana is not necessarily closely identified with in the east of the country, given the ambiguous nature of what constitutes Ukrainian national identity (6.2), there is no reason to suggest that offense was caused. Those living

²⁴ It is important to remember that many of the respondents came from the Kyiv Mohyla Academy, which embodies a “nationalising” tendency within Ukraine in the sense of upholding use of Ukrainian language over Russian and promoting a clean break with the Soviet past.

in the east even if they are native Russian speakers, still identify with Ukraine as their homeland. Again this is another example of ambiguity and contradiction in identity politics in Ukraine.

Ruslana therefore highlights the contested nature of encapsulating Ukrainian national identity and it is interesting to note that the narratives of identity which can be discerned from her Eurovision performance are questioned in the west of Ukraine amongst the people who can arguably understand it the most. Ruslana presented a narrative of Ukraine which was exotic and sexualised; a wild country in need of exploration. Arguably Ruslana's performance was a highly competent piece of PR and one which was directly orientated towards a wider European market. Such is the case of any attempt to succinctly capture "Ukrainianness", portrayals are problematic and contested in the same way that they are consumed and celebrated. The case of Verka Serdutchka, Ukrainian representative in Eurovision in 2007 further highlights this and will be discussed further in chapter seven.

6.4.3 Ukraine wins the Eurovision Song Contest

In the immediate aftermath following Ruslana and Ukraine's victory in the 2004 Eurovision Song Contest explicit references were made to the connotations that the event would have for Ukraine's image and standing in the world, both in the Ukrainian media and by Ruslana herself. As highlighted earlier in the chapter Ruslana herself made reference to the legacy of Chernobyl on Ukraine's international image and her hopes that Eurovision would go some way to changing the way the country is seen on the world stage. "I would like you to forget about Chernobyl" (*Moscow Times* 17 May 2004) the singer said at the press conference immediately following the event. Moreover back in Ukraine the media also flagged the victory as a breakthrough in terms of image and also in terms of Ukraine's standing within Europe. TV station One-Plus-One saw the victory as having possible political connotations for the country especially since European Union Commission President Romano Prodi had recently expressed scepticism about Ukraine's chances of joining the EU. One-Plus-One's analytical TV programme, *Epicentre*, countered Prodi's comments:

[t]he gloom of Romano Prodi that Europe has no room for Ukraine was smashed last night [...] Ruslana and her "Wild Dances" have proven to us and to the whole world that we can get what we deserve in Europe - if only in singing, for now (BBC News 17 May 2004)

According to this rhetoric, Eurovision therefore marked a turning point in terms of European relations. Moreover the opportunity to host the event provided a platform for Ukraine to be heard on its own terms. To say that winning Eurovision has smashed the notion that there is “no room for Ukraine” in the EU is questionable however it does show the level of significance this victory was afforded, even if with hindsight such statements owe more to opportunism. The BBC news website highlighted the significance of the event for Ukrainians with several people writing that “most of the western [European] people only know Ukraine for Chernobyl” (BBC News 16 May 2004).

Out of all the respondents interviewed for this thesis, all highlighted that Ruslana’s victory was significant at the time because it was a good news story which was associated with Ukraine. There was no division between elite level respondents and the public-level. However the reaction in wider Ukraine itself is harder to gauge; many Kyiv-based respondents recalled taking to the streets in celebration however it is unclear whether the same actions were seen in other regions in the east for example. Here is a selection of responses from those interviewed:

I think it was maybe at the moment [Eurovision victory] we thought that anything could be possible [...] we are very proud of those little achievements which we have. Ruslana winning was one of them (Natalia Panchenko, interview, Kyiv, 19 December 2007).

It was the first non-political news event which attracted a lot of attention from abroad. It was really important at the time. (Olga, interview, Kyiv, 10 December 2007)

The only associations with Ukraine were Chernobyl and that we are Russian. It was not a very favourable picture internationally. In this context Ruslana’s victory was extremely important in promoting a positive image of Ukraine. (Yuriy Melnik, interview, Kyiv, 13 December 2007)

Winning the contest was symbolic; it was participation in the European community activities. Doing something with European countries, it was a kind of symbolic entrance. As an equal partner, participation in reality (Olga, interview, Kyiv, 17 December 2007)

Therefore winning the Eurovision Song Contest was seen as a significant breakthrough for Ukraine which had previously been associated with more negative news items. Moreover the symbolism of the contest was important for respondents, whilst many commented that they did not appreciate the music of the contest per se, they highlighted the fact that Ukraine had captured the imaginations of Europeans enough to prompt them to vote for the country, to present a “seal of approval” to the country. It was this “acceptance” from

Europe which had arguably been lacking since Ukraine became independent. As highlighted earlier the Orange Revolution further promoted an image of Ukraine which set the country apart from its Soviet past. Ukraine was responsible for hosting the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv and as the next section of this chapter will demonstrate, it was a tough task which was complicated further due to the aftermath of the Orange Revolution.

6.5 Eurovision Song Contest 2005: Kyiv, Ukraine

Similar to the initial difficulties that Estonia faced when charged with the task of organising the Eurovision Song Contest following their victory, as discussed in chapter five, doubts were also raised concerning Ukraine's ability to host the competition in Kyiv in 2005. In May 2004 it was reported by the BBC that Ukraine would struggle to host the competition the following year and cited the lack of an appropriate venue as being a key reason. Tabloid newspaper, *Segodnya* highlighted the significance of hosting the event successfully. There are echoes from the rhetoric in the Estonian case study; failure to host the event would appear to confirm a stereotype of the country as a "poor former Soviet republic" rather than modern European state. "It is up to Ukraine to prove that it is a true European country". (*Segodnya*, 17 May 2004) Like in the Estonian case study, the event was seen as an opportunity in the context of European integration and thus took on significance. "Ukraine's leaders have a new headache - how not to miss this chance to gain a foothold in Europe". (BBC, 17 May 2004) In September 2004 it was confirmed that the venue for the 2005 contest would be the Kyiv Sports Palace. However the arena was to undergo extensive renovations in order to bring it up to the standards required by the EBU.

6.5.1 Revolutionary delays

As highlighted earlier in the chapter, the events which became known as the Orange Revolution seriously derailed the Ukraine's preparations for the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest. When the EBU's Executive Supervisor of the Eurovision Song Contest, Svante Stockselius visited Kyiv for a routine meeting in February 2005 he found that the preparations were seriously behind schedule, so much so that an agreement had not been signed between NTU and the management of the Kyiv Sports Palace. Stockselius warned the Executive Producers of the show, Pavlo Grystak that he would have to move the event to another country unless significant progress was made. What took place next highlights without doubt the seriousness with which Ukraine and Yushchenko's government

approached the hosting of the Eurovision Song Contest. Stockselius was taken to a meeting with Yushchenko himself.

Whilst I did not speak Ukrainian or Russian, I understood what he was doing; he assigned each member of his cabinet a specific responsibility for Eurovision. It was extraordinary (Svante Stockselius, interview, Stockholm, 3 April 2008).

Stockselius gave Grystak and NTU two weeks to fulfil a list of demands and when he returned to Kyiv he found that all the conditions had been met. Quite how close the EBU came to moving the event from Ukraine has never been publicly disclosed however Stockselius' response highlights the significance of the event for newly-inaugurated Yushchenko. Whilst the initial demands were met NTU and Ukraine still faced a significant challenge in preparing the city for such a large-scale international event in a matter of weeks. In an interview with the BBC, the presenter of the 2005 contest that year, Pavlo Shylko admitted that the event was proving to be a real challenge. However he also drew parallels between the staging of the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004 and the contest in Kyiv and was confident that Kyiv would be successful in hosting the event.

We understand what we have to do, otherwise the prestige of the country which is starting to be built in Europe might go down... That's why we're working every day, 24 hours a day [...] before the Olympic Games in Athens people said that nothing was ready [...] when I went there [to Athens], everything was ready and everything went well (Fawkes in BBC News, 18 April 2005).

6.5.2 "There is more to Ukraine than sports stars and Chernobyl"

The Eurovision Song Contest represented a unique opportunity for Ukraine to control the image of the country for the first time since independence. A journalist, Julie Wright was interviewed prior to travelling to Ukraine to report on the 50th Eurovision Song Contest and saw it as a major opportunity for the nation. Moreover she also stated that she had received an email from a member of the Ukrainian Eurovision delegation shortly after Ukraine won the competition in 2004 who told her how seriously Eurovision was seen in Ukraine and that hosting the contest was an opportunity for the rest of Europe to realise that "there is more to Ukraine than sports stars and Chernobyl".

It [hosting Eurovision] is an opportunity for ordinary people to realise that a country called Ukraine does exist and it's not only famous for a nuclear reactor blowing up there in 1986. The Ukrainians will want to show Europe that people can eat the food safely and drink the water [...] they only have to look to Estonia and Latvia to see

the good that hosting this contest can do for your country. (Julie Wright, interview, Cambridge, 14 August 2004)

Again this also shows how the issue of Chernobyl has entered the international psyche and is still very much on the agenda as far as Ukraine's international image is concerned as discussed previously. The issue of stereotypes is something which was also touched on by CFC Consulting partner Vasyl Myroshnychenko.

There were a lot of stereotypes about Ukraine [...] stray dogs running downtown in Kyiv, people they are wearing paper suits [...] then when they came here [for Eurovision] they saw that it was very beautiful, it was May, all the trees were blooming and the weather, European capital, the general impression of what Kyiv made on those journalists has generated a great deal of positive coverage and this is I think where Ukraine benefited a great deal [...] it was seen as a big deal in Ukraine [...] it was a big honour, people were very proud that it was in Ukraine [...] because of the Orange Revolution there was a big mess in the government for a while. It all started a little bit later, they started organising it, still they managed it and they managed to do it and it was seen as a very serious matter. No scepticism, nobody was laughing [...] all understood that it was important for the country (Vasyl Myroshnychenko, interview, Kyiv, 5 December 2007).

The issue of sport as highlighted above is arguably another avenue in which countries are able to place themselves on the map. Given the shadow that Chernobyl has had on the international image of Ukraine (Katchanovki 2009), these sports stars are integral to projecting a positive external image of Ukraine in terms of the global media. As Barry Smart writes:

Sports are universal signifiers, they "travel across borders", rise above differences of politics, culture and religion, and promote a positive feeling of shared experience and a sense of common meaning [...] iconic globally popular sporting figures increasingly accord a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country [...] as modern sport has become global in scope it has largely lost its playful character and its professional practice has become both a global and media spectacle and a serious and financially significant business (cited in Giulianotti 2008, p.24).

Ukraine has several internationally recognised sports stars, namely Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko, world heavyweight boxing champions. The Klitschko Brothers as they are jointly known have become involved in Ukrainian politics with Vitali running for Mayor of Kyiv in 2005 as well as becoming leader of the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform in April 2010. Wladimir has alongside his brother worked for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization bringing sport to children in disadvantaged positions around the world. The Klitschko Brothers, alongside Eurovision

Song Contest winner Ruslana, became heavily involved in the Orange Revolution in 2004 and all three were also involved in the ESC when it was broadcast from Kyiv in 2005. Similarly the footballer Andriy Shevchenko can be seen in the same vein, arguable more so after he was signed for UK football club Chelsea and declared to the media that he would like his children to speak Ukrainian²⁵. In a detailed content analysis of western media, Ivan Katchanovski highlights the on-going shadow that Chernobyl has cast over the image of Ukraine and the importance that sports stars such as Shevchenko and the Klitschkos have upon presenting a “good news” story in the global media:

Ukraine is mostly associated in the Western mass media with the Orange Revolution, political instability, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and contentious relations with Russia [...] television companies devoted a significant proportion of their coverage to the negative effects of Chernobyl [...] positive coverage of Ukraine was mostly confined to news reports about Ukrainian sportsmen, in particular the Klitschko Brothers (Katchanovski 2009, pg 8).

The staging of the Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv in 2005 therefore represented a further opportunity not only to present an international image of Ukraine which was positive but one which delved deeper than merely name recognition or “good news” as sports stars had done previously. Eurovision represented an opportunity to educate the world about Ukraine and on its own terms.

6.5.3 Kyiv 2005: Eurovision shows its political side

Given that the Eurovision Song Contest was taking place in a country which only months before had been the focal point of the world's attention as a result of political protests, it is perhaps unsurprising that the contest that year was tinged with political rhetoric. The theme and slogan for the 2005 competition was “Awakening”. Whilst not overtly political per se, it did allude to the fact that the country was going through changes at the time. Moreover the insight of Svante Stockselius, the EBU Executive Supervisor and Juhan Paadam, the Executive Producer of Eurovision 2002 in Tallinn and member of the EBU Reference group in 2005 are crucial in understanding the way in which Eurovision was used as a political platform for Yushchenko's government. According to Paadam, Yushchenko initially intended to make a lengthy political speech at the contest itself.

President Yushchenko wanted to come to the show and have a speech for forty minutes. I think the EBU had a strong word and explained that it was a TV show.

²⁵ <http://www.unian.net/eng/news/news-335055.html> 8th September 2009, accessed 10th May 2011.

The president agreed to come and give the award [trophy to the winner] which is ok as it was a revolution situation, democracy won and so on. But they could have used any celebrity for the final, the Klitschkos were there. They had their president. (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

Furthermore Svante Stockselius asserts that the Yushchenko government “tried to influence it [Eurovision] more than they were supposed to” (Svante Stockselius, email, 3 October 2008). Yushchenko’s appearance at Eurovision was a brief affair however the fact that he, along with Yulia Tymoshenko, went to the event in the first place is significant. The fact that the president awarded the event trophy to the winner of the contest highlights just how seriously this event was at the time in Ukraine. In the history of the Eurovision Song Contest such a move was unprecedented.

One issue which was highly politicised in 2005 was the selection of the Ukrainian candidate. In autumn 2004 NTU announced that they were to host a national selection for the first time. The Ukrainian national final comprised of 15 rounds where each week five songs were presented to the audience and the winner put through to the grand final which was to be held in February 2005. Ani Lorak, one of Ukraine’s most popular singers, and a vocal supporter of Viktor Yanukovych, was one of such acts who had competed in the qualifying rounds. However controversy arose when four “wildcards” were entered into the national selection programme at the request of Deputy Prime Minister Mykola Tomenko. One of which was a pro-Yushchenko political anthem by the band Greenjolly. The group therefore bypassed the heats. The group’s entry, “*Razom nas bahato, nas ne podolaty*” (Together we are many, we cannot be defeated) went on to win the competition and were to represent Ukraine in the Kyiv final. Largely seen as a political coup the actions were highly controversial with both competing artists and the public alike.

It was a political decision. It was a really hard period in Ukraine because of the revolution. This team, they sang a song about the party, the President, it’s a little bit political even, the situation. It was so political and yet the contest is officially not about politics (Ani Lorak, interview, Belgrade, 16 May 2008)

Given the attempts by the Ukrainian government to influence the organisers of the Eurovision Song Contest, as highlighted by Svante Stockselius, it is therefore not inappropriate to assert that political manoeuvres were being made in the Ukrainian selection for Eurovision in 2005. However it should also be pointed out that the song by Greenjolly was popular in Ukraine at the time and did win the public telephone vote. However other respondents do not trust the validity of such polls.

I thought the decision was political. They [Greenjolly] did nothing before and nothing after. It was purely political [...] I really don't think the people voted for it, I seriously doubt it [...] I was at the first national channel listening and reporting [...] I don't know. They tried to link Ukraine and the revolution with Eurovision but I don't think it was the right decision (Olena, interview, Kyiv, 13 December 2007)

It was a sort of controversy because it was a song of the revolution. They were introduced at a later stage, but it was televoting and they won according to the votes. I don't think that one song of Greenjolly can represent the whole country. It was not the best so in my opinion another person should have been. It is just a matter of choice. It is pop music and they were popular at that time (Natalia, interview, Kyiv, 19 December 2007)

The decision to insert a band from the Orange Revolution into the national selection at a late stage was one which was not seen as appropriate by the majority of respondents. Such actions on behalf of politicians and management at NTU were seen as a throwback to the pre-revolutionary corruption which was supposed to have been suppressed as a result of Yushchenko's rise to power. It is also interesting to note one of the points made by the respondent above; that Greenjolly cannot be seen as representative of the whole of Ukraine. Moreover it suggests that Ukraine as a divided country appears to have been represented in the international arena by specific, elite-driven narratives of identity, Greenjolly and Ruslana can be seen as evidence of this. Whilst conspiracy theories abound concerning the affair, it is somewhat ironic that a song which captured the very essence of the revolution and called for an end to manipulation and falsification, went onto enter Ukraine as a direct result of rules being adapted or even flouted.

Further controversy ensued when the EBU rejected Greenjolly's song as it contravened the rules of the Eurovision Song Contest which state that political messages are banned. The original lyrics of the song "*Razom nas bahato, nas ne podolaty*" include direct references to Yushchenko and the political situation at the time of the Orange Revolution; "No to falsifications... No to lies. Yushchenko - yes! Yushchenko - yes! This is our president - yes, yes!" The mention of Yushchenko as President in the chorus of the song was dropped and more generic phrases were introduced in English: "We won't stand this (no), revolution is on, 'cause lies be the weapon of mass destruction... All together we're one, all together we're strong, God be my witness, we waited too long". The entry then was allowed to proceed to the Eurovision finals since it therefore became a non-specific call for greater democracy.

6.5.4 Eurovision Song Contest 2005 in focus

As highlighted in chapter one, a fieldwork diary was kept whilst the research for this study was on-going. However at the time of Eurovision in 2005 a further log was kept based upon observations from the event itself. This provides further context to this chapter and highlights how significant the event was in post-Orange Revolution Ukraine and as some of the small interviews show, how contested the event proved to be for some. Below are some excerpts from the log as well as a short overview of some informal conversations with people at the time:

18 May 2005

There are Eurovision posters everywhere in the city and logos for the event on soft drink labels and banners across the city with the “Awakening” logo. There is very heavy security around the venue as well as a strong police and military presence in the city. There are lots of volunteers for the event this year which has not been seen before. Perhaps this is a sign of the rushed nature of the preparations? According to colleagues who attended the opening ceremony for the event there were several speeches made where the importance of hosting Eurovision for Ukraine was mentioned. Many people here see this as an opportunity for the European integration of Ukraine.

19 May 2005

The entire area surrounding the venue has been renovated and flowers are being planted. People are walking around with t-shirts emblazoned with “Victory is only the beginning”. I was speaking to a Ukrainian lady last night who said that it was a shame that most Ukrainians cannot afford a ticket to Eurovision even though it is in their home city. She stated that Ukraine is developing but remains a poor country yet the government are presenting a different vision of Ukraine to the Eurovision delegates. The lady in question, Natalya, believes that the organisers of the event are portraying a certain narrative of the nation with Ruslana and Greenjolly and not one which she readily identifies with. The weather is unusually warm, one volunteer joked that she thinks the government have been “cloud-washing” in order to keep the rain away. There is a lack of official sightseeing tours here – again perhaps a reflection of the rushed organisation of the event this year.

20 May 2005

People seem very keen to talk to me. I was on my own in a café and three separate people came up and started to speak to me. Overall I get the impression that Ukrainians are keen to make a positive image of their country. Earlier it was announced that President Yushchenko would be in the audience on the night of the final alongside Yulia Tymoshenko. Yanukovych has also visited the venue for the event. Prince Michael of Kent was also given a tour of the venue yesterday.

21 May 2005

Contest day and independence square has turned into a massive carnival and market place. Several tents have been erected where people can “experience the spirit of the Orange Revolution”. There is a definite link between the contest this year and the political developments of the previous months. The underground and the streets have

all been cleaned up according to a British couple who live here. They say that Eurovision has been given a lot of attention and that the government seem to see it as some sort of “test”.

Despite the initial doubts concerning Kyiv’s readiness for hosting the Eurovision Song Contest it was staged successfully in May 2005. At that time in 2005 the Eurovision Song Contest was the largest international event ever staged in Ukraine. A direct and public link to Ukraine’s position in the EU was made by Deputy Prime Minister Mykola Tomenko at welcome reception for participants and delegates present at the competition who said the contest is a serious step for Ukraine towards the EU membership. Hosting Eurovision also meant that there were significant changes to legislation in Ukraine for visitors to Ukraine from the EU. The visa restrictions were lifted for EU nationals from 1 May 2005 and this is still in place today. This change was brought about specifically as a result of Kyiv hosting the Eurovision Song Contest. Vasyl Myroshnychenko from CFC Consulting said that this was the idea of their organisation.

We submitted a proposal to the President of Ukraine to waive visas, it was one of the biggest accomplishments and as I can see it, that idea had been circulating but because of Eurovision, so many people wanted to come and the visa issue could have deterred those people from coming here so they decided to lift visas on a trial period of three months and then they extended it indefinitely. It was a very very positive move because as a result the number of tourists and the number of people coming to Ukraine has increased by many times because of this one little thing. Of course the trigger for this was the Eurovision and it had a major impact on the inflow of tourists and people coming over (Vasyl Myroshnychenko, interview, Kyiv, 5 December 2007).

As stated earlier in this chapter, the theme for the contest in Kyiv was “Awakening”. When questioned about this, Executive Producer Pavlo Grystak was quick to point out that this was not an explicit reference to the Orange Revolution per se but more of a statement on behalf of Ukraine in general. There were other options such as “Beautiful Ukraine” and “Beautiful World of Ukraine” however according to Grystak these were deemed “more romantic, more lyrical”. He added that the Awakening theme “was not about politics or politicians [...] it was just about society [...] Ukraine has been awakening and it has been doing it for decades” (Pavlo Grystak, interview, Kyiv, 12 December 2007). He does however concede that the theme itself was perhaps only appropriate at that particular time and place. “It was appropriate at that time [...] all eyes from Europe were on Ukraine [...] I am not sure if that would be ok two years before or two years after”.

Moreover when questioned about government interference in the contest Grystak maintains that the government played a supportive role and that there was “no big interference into all this creative part”. He also said that the head of the Eurovision committee was the Vice Prime Minister Mykola Tomenko and that from the outside it may have looked like the government had been pushing an agenda particularly in the light of Orange Revolution protest group, Greenjolly being selected as the Ukrainian entry for the contest. CFC Consulting representative Vasyl Myroshnychenko also said that the government was not heavy handed in terms of dictating content. This is in sharp contrast to testimonies of both Juhan Paadam Svante Stockselius who as previously highlighted, asserted that Yushchenko was planning a political speech during the broadcast in 2005. In order to gauge the extent to which political messages were present in the 2005 contest, a short content analysis of the programme was carried out and the results will be the mainstay of the next section of this chapter.

6.5.5 Eurovision Song Contest 2005: Analysis

The 2005 Eurovision Song Contest opened with the traditional EBU logo and “Te Deum” anthem. The logo for the event that year appeared immediately on-screen with the slogan “Awakening” (the logo can be seen below, figure 6.1). Furthermore it is interesting to note that the spelling of the host city was “Kyiv”, the Ukrainian version rather than “Kiev”. Moreover Ruslana then appeared on stage performing another Hutsul-inspired song, “Heart of Fire”. The hosts Pavlo Shylko and Maria Efrosinina then made their appearance on stage and welcomed the audience in the now customary English and French. They also spoke in Ukrainian rather than Russian. This can be seen as a manifestation of an ethnic Ukrainian narrative of national identity.



Figure 6.1: Official logo for the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest

The postcard images shown between each national performance presented various aspects of life in Ukraine. However even a cursory glance of the scenes depicted in the final suggests that this was an event in which the eastern urban regions of Ukraine were not the point of focus. Many of the images depicted non-descript rural regions whilst others focussed on Kyiv and in particular western Carpathian traditions. The significance of Eurovision itself was routinely flagged; the preparations of the host city were shown regularly along with scenes of the semi final which had been held two days prior to the event. Two postcards in particular appear to depict elements of eastern Ukraine, namely mining and steelworks. However the ratio of these two segments compared to images of Kyiv or of the Ukrainian countryside is huge and appears to serve a point in hand. Moreover the scenes were disjointed and seemingly incoherent; shots of ballet were intermingled with fishing, weddings and shipping. The ambiguity of the scenes depicted may in essence be seen as a metaphor for Ukrainian national identity itself; difficult to encapsulate in a limited narrative.

The clips shown directly before the Ukrainian entry were scenes from the Orange Revolution, featuring protesters, tents and banners bearing Yushchenko's name as well as shots of the president's inauguration. It was undoubtedly a political message depicted through Eurovision. Moreover the actual performance of the Greenjolly song "*Razom nas bahato, nas ne podolaty*" included direct and explicit references to the Orange Revolution. The song, like the entry from Ruslana the preceding year, featured lyrics in both English and Ukrainian. At the start of the performance the two backing dancers wore handcuffs, symbolising the stifling of democracy which was such a driving force for protestors in Ukraine. As the performance culminated the handcuffs were broken, again this can be seen as a metaphor for Ukraine, as a result of the protests described in the song; the country is now free. Perhaps unsurprisingly the performance received the largest reaction in the hall on the night. Another reference to the Orange Revolution was made by the Norwegian group Wigwam who waved an orange banner during their performance.

The voting procedure was opened by the Klitchko brothers, of who the presenters declared that "the whole of Ukraine is proud of". A short video clip was shown towards the end of the voting and it can be seen as a reference to the agenda of the Ukrainian government. The video opened with shots of Kyiv and the Ukrainian flag before covering various scenes from the official welcome reception held the previous week. Towards the end a billboard was shown with various goodwill messages written. The heading read "Leave your wishes

for the Ukrainian people here”. A highly symbolic shot of the Ukrainian flag next to the flag of the EU was then shown. Immediately after this a shot from inside the arena was shown; Yushchenko and Tymoshenko sitting in the audience.

At the end of the voting procedure Yushchenko appeared on stage alongside the 2005 winner, Greece’s Elena Paparizou. The president was given a standing ovation by the audience whilst he gave “a special prize symbolising friendship and unity between European countries”, according to the presenter Pavlo Shylko. The closing shots of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest were therefore of the Klitchko brothers, Ruslana and Yushchenko himself, very similar to the scene from the Orange Revolution months before.

6.5.6 Contradictions and confusion: public-level responses to ESC 2005

Many of the respondents interviewed for this thesis were shown small clips from the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest. They then commented on the imagery used to promote Ukraine between national entries. In general most people were enthusiastic about this and felt that it promoted a positive image of Ukraine. Although surprisingly not many respondents spoke about President Yushchenko’s appearance on the Eurovision stage in Kyiv. This is a symbolic moment in Eurovision history given that the head of state has never presented the winning trophy before. According to one respondent, Alexander, “Eurovision was extremely official [...] it’s very common here [...] pop culture can have a life of its own and politics should have a life of its own but here they converge at some point” (Alexander, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007). One respondent, Anne, said that she felt the content of the broadcast captured the energy of the country and that the image of Kyiv was positive, promoting it as a green city. She regarded Yushchenko’s appearance as a PR stunt, “he was only there promoting himself, he is like this I think” (Anne, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007). This suggests that there is a disparity between official representation of the nation and the public level. Yushchenko’s involvement in the show therefore represents Ukraine playing to its European audience rather than domestic. The comment from Natalya (section 6.5.4) concerning the exclusion of Ukrainians from the arena audience due to high ticket prices further lends credence to this. In the same context, Executive Producer Pavlo Grystak pointed out that accredited journalists from outside Ukraine had better access to the working area in the press zone. Again this suggests that the impression given to Europe was central to the project rather than taking the domestic into account.

There were different levels of accreditation [...] they [foreign press] had a level of accreditation which was better, even if they are from the smaller mass media from abroad. Some journalists from local radio stations in Europe had better conditions for work than some journalist from the main channels of Ukraine [...] They [Ukrainian press] felt a bit like they were not accepted [...] the event was for the whole of Europe not only for Ukraine so that's why we tried to make the good conditions for people who came here to make their report (Pavlo Grystak, interview, Kyiv, 12 December 2007)

This was an issue which was touched upon by BBC News correspondent Helen Fawkes who was based in Kyiv from 2003 until 2008 and covered Eurovision for the BBC in 2005. Fawkes stated that Eurovision was incredibly important for the newly-elected government in Ukraine and whilst the general public were enthusiastic in her opinion, it was the officials who were pushing the Eurovision agenda.

Eurovision was a massive deal for Ukraine. It was their chance to take the spotlight on the world stage. It was important that the country was being recognised for something other than Chernobyl. The 2005 show was the biggest event held in the country and as such it was something which they needed to get right and so the government became involved in the organisation of the event. There was also political intervention in the Ukrainian entry that year with Greenjolly which annoyed many. On the whole though the public saw the point in Eurovision and they saw their city undergo major renovations in preparation for the event, people understood that it was important for the potential international reputation of the country (Helen Fawkes, telephone interview, 11 November 2010).

In terms of the actual images of Ukraine which were broadcast, one respondent, Orysia Letsevyich recalled that she felt the content was balanced, she did not feel that Kyiv dominated the imagery and she liked the idea of focussing on the faces of the public at the end of the clip. Although unlike in the Estonian case study as discussed in chapter six, the responses from respondents did not seem to elicit an immediate recognition of elements of national identity or culture with which they could easily identify with which in itself can be seen as a reflection of the fragmented nature of Ukrainian national identity.

From what I remember it was a little confusing to see what these images are. They were like; I could not recognise some of this, what it is. I think it was quite, I remember some images from Lyiv, Odessa and industrial ones from the east. I think it was well-balanced; I didn't have a feeling that it was just Kyiv. They had just people, images of young people which are often missing when you create photo albums about Ukraine. I don't remember having a negative reaction at all (Orysia Letsevyich, interview, Kyiv, 20 December 2007).

Others went further to state that they think the competition might have gone some way to dispelling the stereotypes that people in western Europe may have held concerning Ukraine's abilities to host an event of such magnitude.

For the first time Ukraine did something right [...] the picture on TV looked good, the stage was bright [...] it looked pretty modern so people who watched it even though they could have expected something out of a barn or Chernobyl in the forest, actually saw a modern concert (Alexander, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007)

Again the above testimony reveals that the shadow of Chernobyl lingers on in terms of Ukraine's international image. Other respondents were not so certain about the imagery broadcast during the show. One respondent, Volodymyr, compared the postcard images to those broadcast the previous year in Istanbul.

I was impressed by the PR of Turkey [...] Ukrainian clips was [were] on the faces of people [...] you could show Carpathians, Crimea, so many places they didn't [...] it was a lost opportunity" (Volodymyr, interview, Kyiv, 10 December 2007).

Another respondent stated that it would not be realistic to expect a television show with limited time to fully encapsulate the essence of Ukraine. Whilst she highlighted that as an event it boost Ukraine's standing in the world, it was not one which was necessarily internalised by all in Ukraine

I don't think they could show everything about Ukraine in such a short time. They were more like tourist clips. I have a very great other friend who was in Ukraine and helped with the production and she said that it was a great way for her promote her country. I think that some people don't consider themselves Ukrainian and identify more with Russia so I don't think they would have been so supportive of this contest here in Kyiv especially after the revolution (Julie, interview, Kyiv, 11 December 2007)

6.5.7 A brief overview of print media²⁶



Figure 6.2



Figure 6.3



Figure 6.4

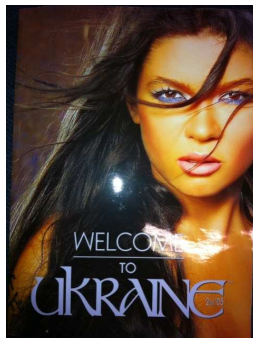


Figure 6.5



Figure 6.6

As highlighted earlier in this chapter and in chapter one, access to print media in Kyiv was particularly difficult and has been flagged as a potential area for further research in future. However whilst at the event in 2005 a number of articles were collected of which even a cursory examination reveals how serious an event Eurovision was for Ukraine in 2005. Whilst the tabloid newspapers (figures 6.2-6.4) focused on the competitive nature of the event, politics also came into the spotlight. In particular the failure of Belarus to qualify for the grand final despite the involvement of Russian music star Phillip Kirkorov was of particular interest with the coverage focusing on the political difficulties of Belarus. This was placed in stark contrast to Ukraine who had succeeded in winning the entire event, the coverage therefore served as a platform for the “othering” of Ukraine’s neighbour.

The special edition magazines (figures 6.5 and 6.6) which were handed out to arriving delegates at Eurovision in 2005 cover the event in detail. In particular the Welcome to

²⁶ Figure 6.2: *Today* Newspaper, Ukraine, 21st May 2005

Figure 6.3: *Express* Newspaper, Ukraine, 21st May 2005

Figure 6.4: *The Facts* Newspaper, Ukraine, 21st May 2005

Figure 6.5: *Welcome to Ukraine Magazine*, Spring 2005 Edition (Published Quarterly)

Figure 6.6: National Television Company Ukraine (Ed.). (2005). *Eurovision 2005: The heat of the circus*.

Ukraine magazine provides a detailed overview of Ukrainian history as well emphasising Ukraine's place as an integral European country rather than a peripheral state. Moreover other articles in the magazine were devoted to the reforms taking place in the country as a result of the Orange Revolution. Further articles expressed the view that Eurovision was an opportunity for the world to learn about Ukraine: "It is high time Europe discovered the Ukrainian soul" (Kyrylo Stetsenko, *Welcome to Ukraine Magazine* 2005, pg 104). One of the most striking articles was a welcome note from President Yushchenko in which the political relevance of hosting Eurovision was reinforced:

[...]Today Ukrainians feel themselves to be an integral part of the European family of democratic nations [...] in the twelve months which have passed since the last contest, Ukraine has travelled a long way which other countries take decades to traverse [...] the victory at the Eurovision Song Contest in 2004 actually started the Year of Ukraine in Europe, which ended in the triumph of the Orange Revolution [...] this song festival is older than the European Union and it is very symbolic. United Europe is a common cultural space [...] Ukraine will always be a harmonious constituent part of this space. (Victor Yushchenko, *Welcome to Ukraine Magazine*, 2005 pg 14).

Similarly the magazine, *Eurovision 2005: The heat of the circus* presented a narrative overview of the preparations for the 2005 event as well as a detailed history of the competition itself. Like the *Welcome to Ukraine* magazine the publication also featured editorials from prominent figures involved in the organisation of the event. The EBU Executive Supervisor Svante Stockselius alluded to the logistical difficulties that the organisers in Ukraine had faced in the run-up to the contest:

After a winter of highly interesting developments in the country, it is now ready to host the Eurovision Song Contest 2005 [...]for weeks it was understandably difficult for the Ukrainians to focus on the preparation of an entertainment show (Svante Stockselius, *Eurovision 2005: The heat of the circus*, 2005, pg 8).

In a further editorial section the Executive Producer of the 2005 event, Pavlo Grystak, highlighted the importance of the event for Ukraine in the wake of the Orange Revolution: "I want to thank you for your support and your trust in us". This was followed by Ruslana herself who wrote that Ukraine is "a modern European country with an ancient past". Such articles have highlighted the political relevance of hosting Eurovision but they also reveal interesting insights into the way Ukraine was being promoted at the time. Neither magazine presented any information regarding eastern Ukraine. The Hutsul and Carpathian regions were focussed on but the east of the country was not. These articles were written in the immediate aftermath of the Orange Revolution and so reflect the

mainstream political discourse at the time, that of the othering of eastern influences. Similarly the coverage of the Belarusian entry also reflects this. As highlighted earlier, this is an area in which more research needs to be done however it does again, like much of the detail in this chapter, highlight how contentious and contradictory narratives of national identity and symbolism are in Ukraine.

6.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter has highlighted the complexities and difficulties of defining the essence of Ukrainian identity. Ukraine is essentially a country divided by history, language, and economics, as such coming to concrete conclusions regarding identity politics is no easy task. This chapter has demonstrated the tremendous significance that events such as the Orange Revolution and Eurovision Song Contest have been afforded in terms of image building in a specific geo-political context. The apparent lack of consensus amongst respondents regarding Ruslana and the images depicted during the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest itself can be seen as a reflection of the ethnic identity complexities in Ukrainian society. The rhetoric from individuals such as Svante Stockselius and Juhan Paadam have highlighted that Eurovision was a platform for the newly-elected Yushchenko government and show how at times the Ukrainian government were at odds with the organisers of the contest since the event is supposed to be “non political”, an attempt by Yushchenko to make a speech at the event highlights that it was anything but for the Ukrainian government.

With hindsight the Eurovision Song Contest is still seen as a significant event for Ukraine in terms of raising the international profile of the country as well as being used as a tool to promote a more positive image globally. This will be examined more fully in the next chapter. One respondent, an assistant of popular singer Ani Lorak, who after failing to represent Ukraine in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2005 went on to do so in Belgrade in 2008, said that it was important for the country at the time.

In Eastern Europe people have been on the outskirts of mainstream Europe for a while, so every time [the] international media spotlight is shining on our country it sort of gives us a pride boost, self-esteem [...] we are a country which can host a huge show, we can invite guests and can put them up [...] for the country's profile and the people's feelings of belonging to Europe, it's [Eurovision] a great thing (Ukrainian delegate at Eurovision 2008, name unknown, Belgrade, 16 May 2008).

One respondent went as far to say that Eurovision was a metaphor for Ukraine itself:

In 2004 Ukraine was really wild, she was fed up with everything but she was very positive and energetic so she produced Ruslana and she produced the revolution. In 2005 she was so optimistic about the future but not really professional so she produced Greenjolly, Orange Government. In 2007 she is so cynical about everything so she produced this chaotic democracy [...] Verka Serduchka (Volodymyr Yermolenko, interview, Kyiv, 10 December 2007).

Every year in the ESC issues of national identity are flagged, especially so in the Ukrainian context, the debates which have ensued since 2005 will be examined in the next chapter. Issues of political and national identity are ones which are not static but continue to change and develop. Essentially the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest was a chaotic event, widespread delays and political upheaval meant that the organisers were faced with a race against the clock. However NTU and the Ukrainian government succeeded in hosting a professional show against the odds. The very fact that President Yushchenko took control of the event when faced with losing the right to host highlights that Eurovision was a serious platform for Ukraine and one which the authorities in the country were not willing to let go easily. Moreover the fact that the visa entry requirements were changed in Ukraine specifically to ease the hosting of Eurovision is highly significant and at the time of writing, is still in place today. The empirical evidence in this chapter has flagged the importance of the event and also the contested nature of identity politics in a Ukrainian context more generally.

Chapter 7: The case studies of Estonia and Ukraine: A retrospective.

7.1 Introduction

Following on from the issues presented in the case studies in the precluding chapters, this chapter will offer a further analysis of developments which have taken place in both Estonia and Ukraine since 2001/2002 and 2004/2005 respectively. This chapter will offer an insight into the Eesti 90 campaign, launched by the Estonian government in late 2007 to mark the 90th anniversary of the Estonian republic. The campaign took on a profound significance after the Bronze Soldier Riots which took place in Tallinn in April 2007. Following on from this the Welcome to Estonia campaign was given a re-launch in 2008, albeit on a smaller scale. These developments appear to signal that lessons had been learned by Estonian officials in terms of communicating the campaigns effectively to the public. This can be evidenced in some of the responses from public-level respondents and will be discussed in depth in this chapter.

Focussing on the developments in the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia there have been many developments since Estonia staged the competition. From 2003 until 2008 Estonia did not fare well in the contest; after a poor score in 2003 they were relegated and consistently failed to pass through the qualifying rounds every year until 2009. When the majority of the fieldwork was conducted for this thesis, in 2007, Estonians were reassessing their attitudes towards Eurovision more generally and a level of cynicism was apparent from the responses elicited. The views of many offer an interesting counter narrative to the euphoria and the significance afforded to the competition in 2001 and 2002. In 2004, the same year that Estonia joined the European Union, the public were given the vote for the first time, and despite an array of English language songs on offer, the public opted for a song sung in the Võru dialect, a minority language spoken in South Eastern Estonia.

In 2006 after a disappointing set of results in Eurovision, the jury vote was reintroduced in the domestic selection competition, Eurolaul. Sandra Oxenryd, a Swede represented Estonia in Eurovision. This was controversial given her relatively low profile in Estonia and the fact that she beat the singer Ines, arguably Estonia's most popular female artist. Following on from this the rules of Eurolaul changed and all performers and lyricists had to be Estonian residents, effectively preventing any foreign involvement in the competition. In 2008 a comedy act was selected to represent Estonia; arguably a reflection

of the growing cynicism amongst the public towards the competition. It can therefore be argued that Estonia is thereby falling into line with longer-established ESC participants.

As a result of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, Estonia announced that they were to withdraw from the 2009 event, due to be held in Moscow, as a mark of solidarity with Georgia. However after Georgia announced its intention to take part, Estonia too joined the list. The 2009 event is particularly striking given the scale of spectacle, as discussed in chapter two, but also given the presence of Estonia in Moscow. The Estonian entry was performed in Estonian and not only became the first entry from Estonia to reach the finals, it also finished 6th in the competition itself, the highest placing entry in the Estonian language since 1996. The responses to the 2009 event from Estonians present at the Moscow event in particular provide an interesting focal point for discussion in this chapter.

In 2010, ETV, like many national broadcasters in Europe faced widespread financial issues in the wake of the global economic crisis, decided to withdraw from the contest altogether. However financial backing was received from Enterprise Estonia and Estonia were once again on the Eurovision stage. Such a move highlights that the event still remains one of the few avenues for promoting Estonia internationally and as such remains an important ritual of spectacle.

Tallinn, along with Turku, Finland, have been designated the European Capital of Culture in 2011. This distinction has previously been credited with raising both the international image of cities such as Athens and Glasgow along with attracting inward investment into the local economy. Those involved in the celebrations in Tallinn see this event as a further opportunity for promoting Estonia and Tallinn to a global audience. Anecdotal evidence from some respondents²⁷ suggests that the issue of Estonia's international image still remains a pertinent one, albeit in a different context to the perceived urgency which prevailed in the country in the 1990s.

In the Ukrainian context the picture looks very different post 2005. Ukraine has continued to be an active and successful participant in the Eurovision Song Contest finishing second in both 2007 and 2008. In 2007 Ukraine hit the headlines after a comedy drag act, Verka Serduchka, was chosen to represent the country. Political figures such as Taras Chornovil, and respondents such as Anne, expressed outrage that such an act, a “degenerate”, as she

²⁷ Responses from individuals such as Pille-Triin Mannik, Riina, Maimu and Evelin Ilves exemplify this.

stated, was representing Ukraine on a world platform. The debate highlighted once again that image remains important for countries which do not necessarily have the strongest international recognition. Again as in the Estonian case, cynicism does appear to be present amongst the Ukrainians interviewed during the course of fieldwork, however again the role of Eurovision as a platform for Ukraine at that time was still flagged.

In terms of the Orange Revolution, it is all but over with the demise of the political union between Victor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko and the election of bitter rival Victor Yanukovych in 2010. Already at the time of fieldwork in late 2007 many respondents expressed anxiety that the Orange Revolution had not brought the reforms that they expected, that the revolution promised more than it delivered. These feelings along with the global economic crisis have arguably contributed to the collapse of the Yushchenko-led Orange government and the election of Yanukovych as president. The legacy of those political developments in 2004 and 2005 will be examined in the wake of these latest on-going developments.

In 2012 Ukraine, along with Poland will host the UEFA European Football Championship and this, like Eurovision, has been flagged as a huge promotional opportunity for the country. At the time of writing infrastructure and stadia are being developed and built in readiness for the event. Whilst many respondents stated that this event is Ukraine's biggest chance yet to promote itself to a global audience, there were fears amongst many that the country would not be ready. Furthermore many expressed concern that those travelling to the event would immediately make comparisons between Ukraine and Poland, the arguably more affluent EU member. Such concerns would have undoubtedly been exacerbated when UEFA president Michel Platini went on record to warn organisers of the importance of avoiding "critical slippages" in the preparations for the event. (Reuters 30 January 2008) The final section of this chapter will offer an insight into the on-going debates in Ukraine concerning this event and the possible impact that it may have on the international image of Ukraine more generally.

7.2 Nation Branding in Estonia: A new phase

In April 2007 riots broke out in Tallinn over the decision by the Estonian government to move the Bronze Soldier statue, a Soviet World War II memorial from the city centre of Tallinn to the Cemetery of the Estonian Defence Forces on the outskirts of the city centre. Following on from this two campaigns were launched in Estonia, Eesti 90,

commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Estonian Republic, and a re-launch of the Welcome to Estonia campaign, this time with a domestic focus. The events of April 2007 highlighted the issue of integration in Estonia remains unclear. Whilst on the surface Russian speakers in Estonia are said to be integrating, many holding Estonian passports and speaking Estonian, the events flagged the differing understandings that the two communities have of their shared past. To many Estonians the statue represented a symbol of Soviet occupation and oppression whilst to Russian speakers the monument symbolises Soviet victory over Nazi Germany (Washington Post, 28 April 2007).

As a result of the riots which took place between 26 and 28 April 2007, Estonia, along with Russia was in the headlines around the world. However the deaths of critics of the Kremlin Anna Politkovskaya and Alexander Litvenenko as well as the on-going unrest in Chechnya, have meant that Putin's Russia has not fared well in the wider on-going narratives in the global press. This was compounded further amid allegations that Estonian websites, including those of the government, became victim to cyberattacks, the responsibility for which was blamed on Russia. At the time of writing investigations are still on-going. However given this background, amid allegations of Russia overplaying its hand in the affair, Estonia appeared to weather the storm in terms of international image. This was something which many respondents commented upon, ironically an event which could have been disastrous for the Estonian image conformed to the European press standard at the time; the othering of Russia. Respondents anecdotally made reference to the alarming events of that evening. Whilst many said that it concerned them that civil unrest spilled onto the streets for the first time since independence, the image of Estonia was perversely given a boot in terms of wider press coverage and with the cyberattacks which ensued.

Of course it was devastating to see the capital like that, riots and chaos. It was a real shock for us. Particularly because those going berserk were mainly teenagers, too young to even remember the Soviet times. However Russia definitely overplayed its hand in the whole affair. The cyberattacks were also shocking. For those days we were crippled by these internet attacks, actually they showed the world how e-literate we really are and of course what a threat Russia continues to pose to us. (Maimu, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008)

Support for Estonia followed from many EU member states keen to show solidarity. Thus the image of Estonia, a sovereign EU member state under attack from "the other", was rightly or wrongly, consolidated. Whilst the events of April 2007 are not a focal point for discussions in this chapter they do provide a necessary prelude to discussions concerning

the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia which was marked on 28 November 2007 with the launch of the Eesti 90 campaign.

7.2.1 Eesti 90: Building a state together.

In November 2007 the Eesti 90 campaign was launched, commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Estonian Republic. The launch took on a greater significance, coming only months after the riots in Tallinn which elicited extensive media coverage across the world. Re-inscribing the 90th anniversary of the Estonian Republic can be considered to serve a two-fold purpose; to marginalise Soviet rule through lack of acknowledgment of it and also to reinforce the legal continuity principle that the Estonian Republic declared in 1918 never ceased to exist. However the overall campaign itself is somewhat more civic in its approach. Following on from discussions in chapter three, the Eesti 90 campaign can be seen as a reflection of Eglitis' spatial normality in that Russia or the Soviet past are still depicted as "the other", but that it recognises possible dangers of non-integration of Russian speaking minorities (Eglitis 2002, p.17). As part of the Eesti 90 campaign, the activities organised each month had a theme. These events and their narratives told the story of the Estonian nation. Closer reading of the Eesti 90 campaign provides an interesting insight into more recent integration issues in Estonia.

The Eesti 90 campaign could have potentially become a battleground of nationalism; antagonistic to ethnic Estonians and Russian speakers alike. However the campaign also flagged the notion of multiculturalism in Estonia, given the events of 2007 this was perhaps seen as a very necessary inclusion in the project. October 2008 was therefore the "Month of the Nationalities in Estonia" which sought to highlight that Estonia has over 121 different ethnic groups living in the country. The slogan for the campaign itself appears to flag the importance of inclusivity in Estonia, "*Ühiselt ehitatud riik*" (Building a state together). It can also be argued that such a slogan was symptomatic of a perceived need to bridge the gap between "elite" and "public" and to engage the whole population more fully in the political process and in the development of society, following the "two Estonias" discourse. The emphasis on cosmopolitanism was also an opportunity to present Estonia as an innovative nation; the narratives on the website for that particular month make reference to the Law on Cultural Autonomy which was passed during the first Estonian Republic. The law itself was one of the first of its kind, Estonia was in essence "innovative", and the campaign made sure that this was acknowledged. The language on the website of the campaign again reflects this inclusivity; several times references are made to the "Estonian

people” rather than “Estonians”. This semantic difference therefore marks a departure from the political rhetoric in the 1990s.



Figure 7.1: The logo of the Eesti 90 campaign

The logo itself can also be considered to be symbolic; the “90” being represented by two leaves, flagging the idea that the Estonian nation is still growing, nurtured by all its peoples, together. Furthermore the events organised which were connected to the campaign reflected a sense of self-confidence in Estonia. One such example is the campaign “Let’s do it” which was a voluntary cleaning campaign which many Estonians took direct action and participated in cleaning up litter from the Estonian countryside. What was in essence a litter campaign took on a patriotic significance; Estonian people taking charge of their country and contributing to society, together.

The response amongst the respondents questioned about the Eesti 90 campaign was one of uniform positivity. The campaign resonated with people in a way in which the Welcome to Estonia campaign did not. Arguably the campaign was more of an issue which many felt a profound connection to. Given the very recent history in Estonia this response is perhaps not surprising. Many public-level respondents went further than this though, and highlighted that the inclusive nature of the project was important. The campaign was something which respondents understood and connected with:

I think that the Eesti 90 campaign from this year with the slogan “Building a state together” – that slogan, that is what they [Enterprise Estonia] should have done [instead of Welcome to Estonia]. This is a great slogan, but at the same time the growing leaf can be built on. It is a country which is developing. (Maimu, interview, Tallinn, 10 April 2008)

The campaign therefore served as a way of promoting the ethnic Estonian narrative of the nation albeit in pragmatic terms. The project encouraged “all Estonian people to rejoice in their country and carry it forward” (Soobik 2008). It served as a vehicle for inclusiveness

at a time when integration in Estonia had been in the headlines around the world. The Eesti 90 campaign was accompanied by pro-active initiatives which were led by people for the country. It can therefore be seen as a manifestation of self confidence in Estonia. Respondents appeared to understand and connect with the logo of the event and were in agreement with the inclusive message that it promoted. The message of the entire project appeared to resonate with the public in a way which the Welcome to Estonia campaign did not when it was launched in 2002.

7.2.2 Welcome back to Estonia

As discussed in chapter three the Welcome to Estonia campaign launched by Enterprise Estonia in 2002 was a controversial undertaking. The involvement of a British firm, Interbrand, the apparent lack of transparency of the project in the eyes of the Estonian public as well as the relative dissatisfaction with the logo meant that it was not well received at home. Whilst many elite level respondents defended the campaign, believing that it was not given time to work and widely misunderstood, the vast majority of the public viewed the project as a waste of resources and relatively ineffective in terms of promoting Estonia internationally. Against this background Enterprise Estonia launched the Brand Estonia project again in 2008, albeit with some notable differences.

One of the major criticisms of the Welcome to Estonia project was that it did not engage effectively with Estonians themselves, the logo especially did not resonate with the people. When the concept was re-launched in 2008 Enterprise Estonia appeared to have taken on board some of these criticisms and a domestic campaign was also launched alongside it. Using the same logo typeface as in 2002, the domestic version was called “Ma armastan Eestimaad” (*I love Estonia*). In the introductory literature the link to the domestic was explicit, it appears that Enterprise Estonia attempted to directly engage with the Estonian public and reach out to them in a way which had not been apparent during the launch of the original project.

Branding a country is a two-way street. First and foremost, it is about projecting an image to the rest of the world, but it is also about how we perceive ourselves. What does it mean to be an Estonian? I Love Estonia is the other side of the Welcome to Estonia medal. While Welcome to Estonia is an invitation directed to foreign countries, I Love Estonia shows our affiliation and dedication to our home. In a way it proves that the invitation on the other side of the medal is reliable (Enterprise Estonia 2009).

This domestic project, like the Eesti 90 campaign, came at a time when the aftermath of the Tallinn riots was arguably still raw and the global economic crisis was continuing to worsen. The I Love Estonia campaign was therefore an attempt to reach out to the public through a shared patriotism of what it is to be Estonian. This campaign was distinctly different from the predecessor; the public were included and it was acknowledged that whilst foreign markets were an important focus for the Estonian brand, so too were the people in the country.



Figure 7.2: The 2008 version of Brand Estonia

The Welcome to Estonia campaign was also revised and updated. The re-launched initiative built upon the research conducted for the previous project which, according to both the former Project Manager of the original campaign, Evelin Ilves and former Prime Minister, Mart Laar, the uniform response of foreign people visiting the country was one of “surprise”²⁸. The 2008 campaign took this theme forward, dropping the “positively transforming” slogan and replacing it with “positively surprising”. Inevitably if Enterprise Estonia had simply repeated both the logo and slogan from years before then the backlash would have been immense; the responses from the public-level respondents are a testament to the feelings many have towards the project even today. This movement away from the original suggests that the Brand Estonia project had learned the lessons from the past and were seeking to launch both a different fresher image of Estonia and the entire project itself. The movement away the notion of Estonia as a transforming country may also be seen as a sign of confidence; Estonia has in a sense “transformed”, one example being that as of 2004 Estonia is a full and equal member of both the EU and NATO. The re-inscribing

²⁸ Interviews with both Evelin Ilves and Mart Laar exemplify this.

of Estonia as “transforming” or “developing” may therefore not be the image that brand makers in the country would have been keen to focus on.

The Welcome to Estonia logo was still part of the re-launch and in 2009 an international advertising campaign was launched. However the campaign continued to be met with negativity in the gaze of the Estonian press. The memories concerning the project are still raw for many who continue to see the logo and slogan as somewhat ill-fitting and a waste of resources. Whilst the articles concerning the undertaking were not entirely scathing, many highlighted the fact that Estonia still needed to have a strong campaign, that there is a need to market Estonia and present a positive and unique international image. Again the notion that Estonia still needed to make its mark in the world was flagged, “Estonia needs a footballer in the world elite, a top golf course, a 100 metre runner” (Vaher in *Õhtuleht* 9 June 2008). However the use of the same campaign specifically was labelled as a waste of money, particularly since it was perceived to be so unsuccessful the first time around. “Welcome to Estonia: Wasting Again?” (Andla in *Õhtuleht* 30 October 2009). Whilst inevitably the re-launch of the project will have invited questions concerning the appropriate use of funds, the article was balanced given its acknowledgement that Estonia needed marketing. Furthermore Enterprise Estonia could have successfully argued that the use of the same logo actually offered long-term value for money, the original money spent was therefore an *investment* rather than a cost. The reaction in the mainstream media is a departure from the dogmatic narratives which appeared in the press in 2002 and continued to be presented by most public-level respondents.

If they had launched a new logo there would be critics, it would have been seen as a waste [of money]. They worked with the old one. I guess it is a case of damned if you do and damned if you don't. The Estonian image is undoubtedly in need of promotion, sadly I think we missed our chance – the world knows about Skype but what they don't know is where it came from (Triin, interview, Tallinn, 11 August 2008).

There appears to be some credence to the assertion from many elite level respondents (chapter three), at the time of the original launch of Welcome to Estonia the Estonian public did not fully understand the aims of the project or the point of nation branding. Over six years later, the more pragmatic response from the Estonian media suggests that there is a greater understanding of the need to promote and market Estonia. Whilst many members of the public interviewed for this thesis continue to feel apathy towards Welcome to Estonia, the intention behind the campaign seems to have been understood and perhaps to some extent even accepted.

7.3 Eurovision in Estonia post 2002: Changing perceptions of self

As stated in the introduction, an exploration of Eurovision after 2002 provides an insight into identity-political debates in Estonia, in particular since the accession of the country to the European Union in May 2004. What is clear from many of the respondents is a growing sense of irony towards Eurovision as a competition. Eurovision is no longer seen as some gateway to “Europe”, since in essence Estonia had “made it”. However what is also clear is the positioning of Estonia; for many respondents the country is part of the “old” Eurovision countries. With such views comes the notion of “othering”, Estonia’s consistent failures to reach the semi finals was not due to a failure on Estonia’s part as might have been discussed in the 1990s, but more to do with the apparent “tribal” eastern bloc voting. Such narratives reveal a changing perception of self in Estonia and examination of debates concerning Eurovision exemplifies this further.

7.3.1 Eurovision 2004: Local identities on a global stage.

In 2004 Estonian Television changed the rules of the national Eurovision selection programme, *Eurolaul*. Previously the winning song was chosen by an international jury and had provided the country with incredible success – 6th in 1999, 4th place in 2000, 1st in 2001 and a credible 3rd place in 2002. However in 2003 the system faltered and Estonia finished 21st in the competition. This prompted ETV to make changes to the format and for the first time the public was able to choose the Estonian Eurovision entry directly. 2004 marks a departure from the previous Estonian Eurovision standard; the public not only opted for a song which was not in English but chose a song which was performed in a minority language, the Võru dialect. The song, “Tee” (*“The Way”*), performed by the group Neiokõsõ therefore went forward to the 2004 Eurovision Song Contest held in Istanbul. The choice also marked a move away from the trend in Eurovision more generally; in the final of the 2004 contest only four out of 24 competing countries did not perform in English. Due to a poor showing in the 2003 contest Estonia therefore had to take part in a qualifying round before they could reach the finals of the Eurovision Song Contest in 2004, a change to the Eurovision system outlined in chapter two. The top ten countries in the qualification round therefore won the right to participate in the grand final where they would join the top ten scoring nations from the previous final and the so-called “Big Four” nations (UK, Germany, Spain, France) and the host nation. Estonia finished

11th in the qualification round therefore narrowly missing the opportunity to proceed to the Eurovision finals.

Unlike in previous years where success or failure in the ESC generated column-inches in the printed press, this period in Estonia appears mark a shift in paradigm; when it came to Eurovision, Estonia had perhaps “been there and done that”. The coverage after the poor showing in 2003 is a reflection of this; “The night the music died” (Erilaid in *Õhtuleht*, 26 May 2003), the article went on to state that “Estonia has grown out of Eurovision”. After the failure of Estonia to qualify to the finals in 2004 articles appeared which denounced any notion of failure. “We cannot say that we have failed this” (Leivak in *Õhtuleht*, 14 May 2004). The article then went on to discuss the use of the public vote in the selection process as well as flagging the promotional opportunity that the event provided for Estonian folk music. The narratives concerning Estonia in Eurovision in 2004 suggest that Estonia had entered a new phase in the way Eurovision is perceived; the coverage of the 2004 event reflected a narrative of confidence which had previously been absent. The selection of the Võru song in the first place is striking; an apparent public backlash against English language entries. Furthermore this may also be seen as a sign of confidence, the same year that Estonia joined the European Union. This promotion of a lesser known Estonian culture is symbolic, a way of expressing local identities and an alternative narrative of the nation within a broader post-EU accession context.

7.3.2 Eurovision 2005-2008: Estonia becomes cynical?

The period from 2005 until 2008 marks a time when Estonia consistently failed to qualify to the Eurovision finals. This coincided with a time when the boundaries of Eurovision continued to push eastwards. New entries from the former Soviet Union; Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the success of a resurgent Russia meant that in the gaze of the western media the contest was seen as partisan and inherently unfair. The Estonian narratives concerning Eurovision in this period are similar; in this context lack of success in Eurovision is a symbol of belonging to “old” Eurovision countries and a further example of the “othering” of so-called “new Europe”.

In 2005 Estonia finished 20th in the semi final of the Eurovision Song Contest. Similar to the coverage in the media the previous year, the result was not seen as a serious blow for the Estonian image or for the group, Suntribe. Reference was made in particular to the Estonian group Vanilla Ninja who were representing Switzerland in the finals. The

narratives concerning this third successive failure of Estonia to succeed in the ESC suggest that apathy towards Eurovision was creeping in. This is especially apparent when previous media coverage of Eurovision is considered; the difference between the narrative in 2000 and 2005 is striking.

2006 brought changes to the Estonian national final, Eurolaul. The public telephone vote was withdrawn and the juries returned. This time they selected an English language song performed by an unknown Swedish singer Sandra Oxenryd. The move was controversial considering that Ines, who represented Estonia in Eurovision in 2000, was by far the most popular singer in that selection in 2006. The media were quick to criticise the decision to choose the second the Swedish singer in four years to represent Estonia at Eurovision, largely viewing it as a stunt to gain more votes. “We are begging Sweden for 12 points again, at the same time criticising Balkan nepotism” (*Õhtuleht* 6th February 2002). Online comments submitted to the forum of *Õhtuleht* reflected the Estonian disenchantment with the result. “I personally prefer the choice remains with Estonians in Estonia rather than foreigners choosing a foreigner for Estonia in Eurovision”²⁹. Another author simply proclaimed in the comments section of a newspaper “We do not want any Swede” (“Shalala” in *Õhtuleht* 6th February 2006). However one comment particularly exemplifies the changing attitudes in Estonia to Eurovision:

Eurovision has long since ceased to be a symbol of excellence in the musical business. Rather, it has commercially degenerated into some kind of event where quality has been replaced by quantity. At one time Eurovision was organised according to places of birth, that each country presents its music in their native language. But now...? All those who are barely coping with it, babble in English (*Õhtuleht* 6 February 2006)

The rhetoric above is interesting from a perspective of self-identification; it suggests that there is an element of “othering” going on. “All those who are barely coping with it babble in English” hints at the inclusion of newly applicant countries that are lesser developed compared to Estonia, an EU member and longstanding ESC participant. As highlighted in chapter five (5.3.2), having two Swedish singers in close succession was not a popular move in Estonia, many respondents made reference to having “all those Swedish girls”, a strong counter narrative to the overt support for Dave Benton who they had accepted as “one of their own”. Where as in 2002 there were debates about having a Swede performing on home ground, as discussed in chapter five, some felt that it was somewhat fitting to

²⁹ <http://www.ohhtuleht.ee/index.aspx?id=191238&q=eurovision> Accessed 19 September 2010.

have a fellow European flying the flag for Estonia as they moved towards the wider European community³⁰. In 2006 such voices were certainly in the minority if the media coverage is anything to go by:

Sandra didn't even know the colours of our flag. One week after she won the Estonian contest we heard this [...] It was quite arrogant (Anu Vålba, interview, Tallinn, 19 November 2007).

Juhan Paadam, who was responsible for organising the selection process during those years, recalled that they closed the competition to foreign nationals after the fallout from 2006:

We closed the contest, we call it now Estonia for the Estonians. The song writing and performing is now for Estonian residents who pay taxes here. They must live here. Dave Benton actually lived here, he wasn't from abroad. The Swedish girls were imported from outside but it was the idea of the composer (Juhan Paadam, interview, Tallinn, 2 November 2007).

The reaction and the movement to restrict entry to the competition to those who are Estonian residents represents a movement towards the national in Estonia. Undoubtedly the fallout from 2006 as well as the placing of Estonia (18th out of 23) in Eurovision that year contributed to the change in the format. What is apparent from the narratives concerning Eurovision in 2006 is that the developments were very much organic, the people made it clear that they were not happy with the system and ETV appeared to listen. In 2007 juries were abandoned, the public vote returned and Estonian residents only were eligible to bid to represent the country at Eurovision.

By 2008, at the time of conducting research for this thesis, Estonians in their responses during interviews appeared to be increasingly cynical towards Eurovision. It was also during this time that Serbia and Russia had secured victories in the contest. Russia went on to win the competition in 2008, a culmination of the eastward energies which had characterised the competition during the first ten years of the millennium. Indeed since 2001 all the winners of the competition had come from new entrant states from the former Eastern bloc or long time participating nations such as Greece, Finland and Turkey. All of which are located on the peripheral edges of Western Europe. In 2007 Estonia did not proceed to the finals of Eurovision again, finishing in 22nd place in the qualifying round.

³⁰ One respondent, Meelis Kompus made reference to the lyrics of the Estonian entry in 2002 "Runaway to the stars" and suggested it was a metaphor Estonia joining the EU.

Many respondents expressed the view that Eurovision had become a joke, that the voting is somewhat “tribal” and that the lack of success of Estonia in the competition was evidence of this:

We are part of the EU, we share the same values or the same values towards pop music, we are part of the northern region, we like to produce pop music as the Swedish or Norwegian or Danish people would do. We would like to say that we are not Eastern European or Slavic. Next year Eurovision is Slavic, maybe that is why there is a huge gap now between the old countries and the new countries. I think we could say that Estonia is part of the old countries [...] now it has changed, life is better; we are much more ironic (Andri Maimets, interview, Tallinn, 26 November 2007).

Furthermore several respondents spoke of “eastern bloc” voting, totally refuting the notion that Estonia could be considered to be part of such a grouping. “Of course, there are too many countries, too many weird countries [...] maybe it is better when we are not together with these ex-Yugoslavian countries” (Marko Reikop, interview, Tallinn 19 November 2007). Respondents were also quick to apportion responsibility for Estonia’s continuing pattern of voting for Russia with Russian speakers living in Estonia:

The Russians in Estonia vote for Russia so usually Russia gets twelve points [...] it shows that they are more connected with Russia [...] they do not listen to the songs and vote for Russia anyway. It doesn’t matter what song they had (Dima, interview, Tallinn, 27 November 2007).

The respondent quoted above was a Russian speaker, albeit fully integrated into Estonian society. His reading of Estonian voting patterns in Eurovision is fully consistent with the rhetoric from ethnic Estonian respondents. Such debates highlight not only that Estonians do not consider themselves to be “Eastern European” but the narratives also shed light on that way the east is perceived; an obscure and perhaps damaging label which they do not identify with. Furthermore the responses concerning the votes from Estonia to Russia in the competition, rather than highlighting Estonia’s part in this so called “eastern bloc vote” were actually used by respondents to show how *un-Estonian* this was. Thus Russian speakers in Estonia commandeered the telephone vote, serving to other both Russia and the east itself.

A clear manifestation of the cynicism Estonians felt towards Eurovision can be seen in their 2008 Eurovision Song Contest entry. The song, “Leto Svet”, performed by comedy group Kreisiraadio was performed in Serbian, German and Finnish. Closer reading of this act shows that it was a cynical and ironic take on Eurovision. The use of Serbian language

in particular gained attention from the host nation, Serbia. The nonsensical lyrics of the song reinforce the notion that Eurovision songs themselves are typically nonsensical and the use of Serbian implies that the contest is now one in which Balkan countries rein supreme. Given the previous failures of Estonia to qualify to the Eurovision finals, the message is therefore “if you can’t beat them, join them”. The deliberate parody of the song, however, suggests that Estonia is still a “cut above” and perhaps “not Eastern enough” for Eurovision. The reaction amongst many Estonian Eurovision fans present at the competition that year, when Estonia failed to qualify to the final again, (coming 18th out of 19), whilst Russia won, appears to confirm this. Juhan Paadam, the Head of the Estonian delegation in 2008 was seemingly unaffected by the result. “Nobody died” (Juhan Paadam, interview, Belgrade, 21 May 2008). This was a far cry from the frenzy of activity that Eurovision attracted in the previous ten years. The entire episode can therefore be seen as Estonia once again exemplifying their Nordic credentials by performing a parody based on something which they do not see themselves as; Eastern European.

We are closer to the Nordic countries, the Scandinavians, the Germans, the architecture. This place looks like little Germany and not something east of erm I won’t say where just in case [...] I don’t want to be too spiteful but when Russia wins that tends to sour people. When Russia won maybe people thought it wasn’t something to get excited about anymore (Riina Kionka, interview, Tallinn, 11 August 2008).

Such narratives were re-inscribed by respondents over the length of the fieldwork for this project. Whilst all stated that Eurovision in 2001 and 2002 was a serious event for promoting Estonia on the world stage, many believed that with hindsight the event is no longer seen through the same gaze, a change in perception which is a reflection of Estonia’s movement away from insecurity and a manifestation of confidence and an affirmation of its “western credentials”.

I think that today we have the same attitude towards the contest as Western Europe. It is a big, silly contest but at the time it was seen as a unique opportunity to show Estonia to almost 300 million viewers or even more. Later on when obscure countries won the contest then the reaction in each country was the same, it was the possibility to show the country to the rest of Europe. The problem is that we Estonians did not realise at the time in the bigger countries like France or the UK, the song contest didn’t have the same kind of press coverage as in Estonia. In Estonia at that time Eurovision was front page news [...] in a way it [the cynicism towards ESC] shows that Estonia is part of the west, a shared view of Eurovision as a joke. The attitude was not invented by us so in a way it shows we are now moving on (Ilmar Raag, interview, Tallinn, 13 November 2007).

Cynicism is now more or less the usual daily cynicism [...] on the whole I would say that Estonians are now more self-confident since joining the EU and seeing their representatives go and work in Brussels, Luxembourg, Frankfurt and so on in various institutions and come back with positive stories and the war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq [...] positive feedback coming from both places about Estonians being good soldiers and the landlords of those places like Brussels usually welcome Estonians because they know they won't trash the place. Things like this come back and the Estonians feel like they are ok and that the French and Germans and so on think that they are ok too (Michael, interview, Tallinn, 11 August 2008).

7.3.3 Eurovision Song Contest 2009: Estonia in Moscow

In 2009 Estonian Television changed the selection format for the Estonian Eurovision entry, Eurolaul became Eesti Laul. A song for Estonia rather than for Europe. The public telephone vote remained and so too did the embargo on foreign participants. In the aftermath of the Russia-Georgian war of 2008 there were debates about Estonia boycotting the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest in a show of solidarity with Georgia. However in a poll conducted by Estonian Television, 66% of voters supported the decision to send an entry to Moscow in 2009. (Albers in *Õhtuleht*, 17 September 2008). In a move different from previous years, five out of ten songs in the national selection were in Estonian. The winner, "Rändajad" ("*Travellers*"), performed by the group Urban Symphony went on to represent Estonia on the Eurovision stage in Moscow.

As discussed in chapter two, Eurovision in Moscow was a lavish event, the most expensive ever staged and not without controversy. Georgia who like Estonia had considered boycotting the Moscow event, were eventually asked by the European Broadcasting Union to withdraw after the group refused to change the lyrics of the entry, "*We don't wanna put in*". Largely believed to be a swipe at Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin it was deemed by the EBU to be "too political". In 2009 Estonia qualified to the Eurovision finals for the first time since they were introduced in 2004. The reaction in the tabloid press was typically euphoric. However it was the reaction amongst Estonian Eurovision fans which was particularly striking. Many were visibly moved, not because Estonia had succeeded in Eurovision but because Estonia had succeeded in Moscow:

We almost didn't come here [to Moscow]. I can understand why but I think it is important to show ourselves to the world, particularly this year. To have a song performed in the Estonian language in this big Russian circus is something (Margit, interview, Moscow, 15 May 2009)

Estonia went on to finish 6th in the Eurovision Song Contest final, the best showing since 2002. The quote from one fan above is representative of other responses by Estonians present at the Moscow event. For many the Estonian language issue was important but also the success of Estonia in Russia, particularly given the diplomatic difficulties which had ensued in the wake of the Tallinn riots of April 2007. Similar to the rhetoric concerning Eurovision in Estonia in the 1990s, the promotion of the state is the key issue which was exemplified by respondents present at the event.

7.3.4 Eurovision 2010: Estonia comes full circle?

Like many national broadcasters around Europe, Estonian Television faced serious financial issues in the wake of the global economic crisis. Many countries such as Andorra and San Marino announced that they would not be competing in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2010 for financial reasons. Estonia would have been amongst them if it had not been for Enterprise Estonia stepping in to fund Estonian participation in Eurovision in 2010. Whilst the perception of Eurovision has changed in Estonia, as evidenced by the narratives from many public-level respondents for this study, the event is seen through a different gaze by bodies such as Enterprise Estonia who view it as an important platform for the promotion of Estonia given the large viewing figures the event attracts.

Eurovision Song Contest is certainly a very good opportunity for Estonia to introduce a lot of people [...] the contest has over 150 million viewers [...] We ourselves know that Estonia is a singing land [...] participating in the Eurovision will show it again throughout Europe (Maria Alajõe, Enterprise Estonia³¹, 6 November 2009).

Eurovision therefore now represents an event of symbolic value in terms of continuing to promote Estonia on the world stage. The media coverage concerning the possible withdrawal of Estonia from the competition is evidence of this. Whilst the musical credibility of the event is routinely called into question in many countries, the participation list has continued to increase. Therefore absence from the event speaks volumes. In essence Eurovision participation represents “normalisation”, a process which Estonia has undertaken for the past two decades. The quote from Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves below is perhaps a fair assessment of where Eurovision is positioned in Estonian society today. Whilst undoubtedly tongue-in-cheek it does highlight how Eurovision may be considered to be an example of “normalcy”.

³¹ <http://www.elu24.ee/?id=184715> Accessed 15th October 2010

If Estonia wants to behave as a country, it must do three things: participate in Eurovision, occupy Iraq and Afghanistan and switch over to the energy-saving light bulb (Hendrik Ilves cited in Kramp 2009).

7.4 Ukraine: Post Eurovision, Post Revolution

As highlighted in chapter six, the Eurovision Song Contest was staged successfully in Ukraine despite the initial concerns and delays. In 2006 it was therefore “business as usual” in Ukraine when they launched their search for a singer to represent the country at the competition in Athens. The National Television Company of Ukraine (NTU) continued to follow the format of a national selection and launched a talent search resulting in Tina Karol who has gone on to establish and sustain popularity in Ukraine since the contest. Ukraine has continued to participate in every Eurovision final since their debut in 2003. However the debates surrounding the Ukrainian act in 2007, Verka Serdutchka, reveal that identity and image in the post-Soviet space are still sensitive and still very much played out on the ESC stage. Furthermore the initial euphoria in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution gave way to widespread disillusionment and this was evidenced in interviews during the time of fieldwork in winter 2007/8. This section will focus on the debates concerning Eurovision which has ensued in Ukraine since the country hosted the event in 2005 as well as reflecting on perceptions of Ukraine in a post-Orange Revolution context.

7.4.1 Verka Serdutchka: From Ukraine with controversy

In 2007 debates surrounding Eurovision and the international image of Ukraine flared up once again when a well known drag artist, Verka Serdutchka was chosen to represent the country at the contest. This angered many people including politicians who feared that such a “vulgar and grotesque” act would be damaging to Ukraine’s international image (Fawkes, BBC News 2 April 2007). Ukrainian Member of Parliament Taras Chornovil called on Ukrainians to boycott the event stating that the selection of Serdutchka would not be perceived by other European countries as “normal” and that it would bring shame upon the Ukrainian international image (*Korrespondent* 14 March 2007).

I guess some of our esteemed experts saw those “hot Finnish guys” dressed as monsters but didn’t quite understand that there is subculture and there is pseudo culture. Those monsters are part of their subculture, which has the right to exist. But all these hermaphrodites have never been accepted anywhere. Therefore I think that this will be a serious embarrassment factor and the world will see us as complete idiots. (Taras Chornovil, *Fraza*, 13 March 2007)

The entry was called “Dancing Lasha Tumbai” and was performed in English, German, Russian and Ukrainian. Further controversy erupted when the lyrical content of the song was analysed; “Dancing Lasha Tumbai” bore a phonetic resemblance to “Russia goodbye”, a further ode to the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005. Furthermore the lyrics make reference to Maidan Square where the political demonstrations took place. Serdutchka’s claim that “lasha tumbai” was Mongolian for “whipped cream” was dismissed by the Mongolian embassy in Moscow suggesting that the ambiguity had deliberate political connotations.

The character of Verka Serdutchka is played by comedy actor Andrii Danylko. The act drew criticism from both sides, as highlighted above many Russians took umbrage at the Eurovision entry in 2007 which was perceived as a slight on their country. In Ukraine nationalists rejected Serdutchka as a parody of the Ukrainian nation. The character is said to be based on Soviet era train conductors as well a caricature of middle aged women. For many it was a step too far for such an act to represent Ukraine in the international arena. However further reading of the act, who mixes languages frequently, often interchanging between Russian and Ukrainian, suggests that the character of Serdutchka may be entirely representative of Ukraine, a country with often ambiguous national and linguistic identities. In the finals of Eurovision 2007 Ukraine finished in second place and the song went onto become a hit in many countries in Europe, including number twenty three in the UK charts.

The Serdutchka case flags several issues. For Ukraine’s political elites the image of the country is paramount and Eurovision therefore is a platform which promotes a certain narrative of the nation. In the case of Serdutchka, this was peripheral to the identity of many politicians and public who feared that such as representative was somehow “shameful”; Verka Serdutchka therefore “shows the post-imperial inferiority complex that some Ukrainians still suffer” (Donchenko 2007). The rhetoric concerning Serdutchka reflects wider debates in Ukrainian society with regard to minority rights and the way the relationship with neighbouring Russia is imagined.

7.4.2 Confusion: a view from the field

The responses from those interviewed in Ukraine concerning Serdutchka followed a similar tone to the comments above. Many expressed a disconnection between the image that the act portrayed and the Ukraine they felt should be showcased. They did not see the act as

having an overtly negative image of Ukraine per se, viewing the event in slightly more pragmatic terms; anything which gets Ukraine noticed is not necessarily a negative thing. One thing which manifests itself strongly in the interviews is that the image of Ukraine is important; they care about what the world thinks about their country, even when viewed through the gaze of Eurovision. This is in stark contrast to the rhetoric which came from many Estonian respondents in 2007/8.

When questioned about their views on Verka Serduchka representing Ukraine in 2007 many respondents immediately returned the question. This unease suggests that there appears to be a lack of confidence when it comes the international image of Ukraine; “What do you think? Wasn’t it awful?” (Olga, interview, Kyiv, 10 December 2007). “What is your opinion on this man?” (Valentin, interview, Kyiv, 19 December 2007). Whilst few respondents were overtly negative towards the act per se, one in particular stands out:

I think the image is not very positive, Eurovision maybe promotes Ukraine but most of the people don’t like this singer Verka. He is a man or a woman, we don’t understand. Ukraine is not Verka Serduchka and I don’t want to associate Ukraine with this, it’s a shame for Ukraine to have such a representative (Anne, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007).

Many other respondents flagged the fact that the artist himself, Andriy Danylko is heterosexual and that the act is one of parody rather than commodity camp. The repeated re-inscription that Serduchka’s creator is heterosexual, as well as the general tone of the responses reveals more about social attitudes in Ukraine; further suggesting that Ukrainian attitudes towards sexual minorities remain conservative as exemplified by the use of the term “hermaphrodite” by Chornovil.

In contrast most respondents did not express overtly negative views towards Serduchka representing Ukraine on the world stage. Some went as far to highlight that those who were concerned about the image were missing the point; that to present an image in the first place a country needs to get attention. In general Serduchka’s performance was seen as having accomplished this goal. “Of course it is [good publicity for Ukraine] and even if in not a good way, black PR is also PR” (Ivan, interview, Kyiv, 30 November 2007).

I think they [critics of Serduchka] were taking the competition too seriously, they thought that if Verka goes to the competition then everyone would think Ukraine is a strange country, full of transsexuals who dress up like women. This is too conservative. These are people who take it too seriously. Eurovision is a fun competition, in 2006 those monsters won. It’s a song competition but it’s also about

the show, costumes and the entire show. She did well so why not? I think most people saw that (Volodymyr, interview, Kyiv, 16 December 2007).

Ruslana was like an ambassador for us. Although you look at other years though and maybe not. Verka Serdutchka, there was a huge debate because so many people were against him going to the contest as it might be a negative image for Ukraine. Although look at Finland with those freaks, they won with something special and unique. Ukraine came second so yes it helped promote us [...] people are concerned about what people will think actually. Shevchenko is our football player he is promoting a certain image, the boxers, the Klitschko brothers are very good sportsmen promoting an image. Actually Yulia Tymoshenko, she is a politician, she is considered by many people to be a good leader with a strong personality (Julie, interview, Kyiv, 11 December 2007).

I think they were scared that Europeans would not take Serdutchka or understand the humour. Ukrainian humour is a bit different from European and English, it's not as liberal or straightforward and people were afraid that there would be shame for the country (Olena, interview, Kyiv, 13 December 2007).

Closer reading of these responses suggests that there is a subtle rift between the public and political elites in Ukraine regarding image, further evidence of the public disconnect with the Orange Revolution government at the time, which will be discussed in the next section. Whilst the public were concerned about Ukraine's image they did not view Serdutchka as overtly harming Ukraine's standing in the world and perceived Serdutchka in a more pragmatic way than political figures such as Taras Chornovil.

7.4.3 "Ukraine is a land of lost opportunities"

The Orange Revolution was of notable interest to western observers for several reasons. Firstly given Ukraine's strategic positioning, essentially a border between Russia and the European Union. At one point the geopolitical shift appeared to be so monumental that Ukrainian membership of the European Union began to be discussed in the context of continuing enlargement. It was also complex given that it was happening in Ukraine, a country which is deeply divided in terms of language, history, nationality and politics as discussed in chapter six. Moreover the Orange Revolution in Ukraine brought unprecedented publicity for the country and many respondents recalled that they felt the events of 2004 and 2005 presented a positive image of Ukraine; a country which made the transition to democracy through peaceful means. However the results of the 2010 presidential election appear to confirm that the revolution is all but over. Yulia Tymoshenko and incumbent president Viktor Yushchenko, the political faces of the Orange Revolution, both stood for election. The latter dropped out of the race after the first round of voting which left Tymoshenko and opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich, who

lost the elections in 2004 in the running for the presidency. In the final result Yanukovych was declared the winner with a margin of just 3.48% (BBC 10 February 2010). It appears that the momentum of the Orange Revolution did not last. As early as 2007 respondents, many of whom took part in the protests of the Orange Revolution, expressed widespread dissatisfaction with developments in Ukraine. One respondent in particular going as far to say that it was an opportunity wasted. “Ukraine is the land of lost opportunities [...] the revolution was a chance to be great [...] they [the government] spoil every chance they have” (Lecya, interview, Kyiv, 30 November 2007).

In a recent poll the majority of people interviewed stated that they felt they had lost out since the Orange Revolution, 37% in 2008 compared to just 12% in 2005 (White 2009, p.24) The interviews conducted for this thesis yielded similar responses, respondents in 2007 were widely disillusioned with the developments that had taken place in their country since 2005 with many saying that they were no better off under the current administration. The contrast between these views and some of the responses gathered in May 2005, as discussed in chapter six is stark. Many Ukrainians now view the Orange Revolution as a “western coup” rather than a “conscious struggle of citizens” (White 2009, p.24) Responses such as the quote from Lecya, were representative of opinion of those who were interviewed during fieldwork. However others, whilst disillusioned with developments in Ukraine since the revolution, offered explanations for why the revolution was perceived as a failure even as early as 2007.

What was supposed to happen and it didn’t happen, in the first new government we got, they had a minister for European integration. We had a minister and yet nothing changed. I mean what did they do? They didn’t do the elementary things. I am talking about simple signs if you can’t read Cyrillic [...] the government never took time or effort (Alexander, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007).

I think the expectations were so high, unrealistically high. It was this kind of romantic expectation of everlasting love. Can you say this is a missed opportunity? [...] Ukraine is divided politically and it was very difficult to unify the government and move forward with reforms. You cannot make reforms only having half of the country behind you. Obviously the time was spent on trying to consolidate. It didn’t give immediate results in terms of improving the life, gas prices, what people feel. They wanted things to move fast and feel the result. I think there could have been better success but I think people should not expect such attention to Ukraine all the time in the western media (Orysia, interview, Kyiv, 20 December 2007).

Whatever was gained [in terms of a positive international image] as a result of the Orange Revolution has been lost mostly [...] I remember I was in Kyiv in the days of the Orange Revolution and then I came back to London and I immediately sensed the change in attitudes of many Brits towards myself and my country because at last we

have done something that has put Ukraine on the map. Three years after we see that the gains of the Orange Revolution have been forfeited mostly and those people who were inspired or interested abroad about our developments, in a year or so have lost interest completely because we have gradually come back to internal squabbles, fights for power and all this kind of stuff (Andriy, interview, Kyiv, 12 December 2007).

In terms of social life and economic status in Ukraine it didn't change much. There were some people who thought that it would make them wealthy overnight. Those people who thought like that, their delusions or hopes didn't happen (Volodymyr, interview, Kyiv, 16 December 2007).

Whilst many responses may be seen as somewhat dogmatic, they represent the opinion of the vast majority of people interviewed for this thesis. For others such as Volodymyr, the apparent "failure" of the revolution was blamed on the public themselves and their unrealistic "delusions". Undoubtedly progress was slow and certainly this is the case when it came to European integration, as the respondent Orysia points out, Ukraine being a divided country and Yushchenko's victory being far from a landslide, meant that contentious issues could not be dealt with in a direct manner. However similar questions can be raised too concerning the level of engagement that the EU and other such institutions had with Ukraine and how open they were to engaging in closer discussions. It should also be pointed out that the spirit of the Orange Revolution remained, despite the startling electoral u-turn of Yanukovych; the elections were declared fair and free (BBC, 10 February 2010). It could therefore be argued that this is a continuing legacy of the Orange Revolution.

What I think happened is that we showed that we are the ones who give the government the power to run the country. Why don't they follow our orders and our choices? It was a change in the minds in our government understanding the entire process of elections and the entire idea of what a government is. Usually what happened is they got elected and they ran their office the way they wanted, lobbying the interests of the oligarchs, and if they had time they would pass a couple of laws. What the Orange Revolution showed was that it's not that they have to take care of us for a few years, they have to take care of us for the entire time. People in Ukraine give them the opportunity to take care of the people in Ukraine (Volodymyr, interview, Kyiv, 16 December 2007).

7.4.4 The eyes of Europe of Ukraine once more: Euro 2012

Following on from discussions concerning the opportunity that Eurovision presented for managing the international image of Ukraine, many respondents spoke about the UEFA European Football Championships of 2012 which are due to be staged in both Poland and Ukraine. Many expressed the view that hosting such a large scale international event

presents Ukraine with a further chance to present a positive international image through the gaze of tourists who will inevitably travel to the events as well as the wider European media. However with this also come challenges and many fear that if the country were to fail then the negative impact upon Ukraine's international image would be profound and lasting.

Similar to the concerns regarding Ukraine's readiness to host the Eurovision Song Contest in 2005, as discussed in chapter six, the rhetoric regarding the 2012 football championships has been markedly similar. In January 2008 UEFA President Michael Platini warned the Ukrainian team of "critical slippages" in their preparations for the event (Reuters, 30 January 2008). This was further compounded by reports that both the major stadium in Kyiv and the infrastructure in Ukraine generally require significant upgrades (Reuters, 13 May 2009). Following on from this, Ukrainian officials were reported to have been given a three month deadline to make significant gains in their preparations (BBC, 13 May 2009). In August 2010 it was announced that the games would go ahead as planned in Ukraine; the necessary preparation work had been done but that significant work still remained (Reuters, 12 August 2010).

It is with this background that the issue of Ukraine's international image comes to the foreground again. Failure to stage the event successfully may have a lasting impact upon Ukraine's credibility as a country capable of hosting large scale events. As the country prepares to co-cost this competition with Poland, many are looking back to the preparations which were completed in order for Kyiv to host Eurovision back in 2005.

It is very good we are making the football in 2012, when we heard this I really couldn't believe it. Nobody voted for the other countries. It was a shock for me. We were sitting in the school, we had the TVs, the teachers didn't want us to turn it on but we had the radio on the mobile phones. When we heard it we were full of happiness, our teacher didn't understand and then we told her. I couldn't believe it. It is an important chance to make a good impression. If we don't prepare in the proper way then foreigners will just think it was like for Eurovision when we didn't prepare enough for the Eurovision when it was held in Kyiv. There were a lot of problems because of this (Anne, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007)

This is much bigger than Eurovision obviously because it will last for a month and for a month you have to accept all these people from Europe [...] I would say there is a great fear [of failure] I think even if we fail, by that time there will be so many things much more advanced than they are now, infrastructure, roads, hotels, airports [...] we need to advance in order to be able to host these people [...] trains, busses, hotels, stuff like that [...] we will use the benefits of this process of preparation for years to come (Volodymyr Yermolenko, interview, Kyiv, 10 December 2007).

Furthermore the respondents interviewed for this thesis expressed the view that the international image of Ukraine is of concern to them. Many expressed anxiety that immediate comparisons between Poland and Ukraine will be made by those travelling to the events. Poland, an EU member since 2004, has had significant investment in its infrastructure, compared to Ukraine, which remains an EU outsider.

It should be seen as a big chance but I think both [countries] will mess it up. They are not ready [...] the state pays, this is an investment, probably the biggest investment in our histories. The thing is not to screw it up, obviously they say the Greece did not screw the Olympic Games up but it is possible. It is a serious chance for both (Marta, interview, Kyiv, 9 December 2007).

They [the media] go to Poland, show what the Poles are doing. They are talking about it. Erm there is always a fear that a huge event is going to fall through, that it's not going to take place [...] we do have some time and I hope they will do the job. It's a matter of pride really (Alexander, interview, Kyiv, 18 December 2007).

There is a huge problem with our major stadium here in Kyiv and it is a source of constant debate in the media. Many people are concerned. The recent remarks by UEFA were widely reported. Of course one of the things that our politicians and organisers try to play on is that we are hosting this together with Poland which is one of our national allies (Andriy, interview, Kyiv, 12 December 2007).

The event will be a challenge for both countries and one in which the international image of both countries will be at the forefront of the minds of many of the organisers.

It's a big opportunity, some consider it as a big challenge. I'm absolutely sure that will be very positive, that it will have a really positive influence on the image of Ukraine. I am absolutely sure of that (Pavlo Grystak, interview, Kyiv, 12 December 2007).

7.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented a retrospective view on events in Estonia and Ukraine since they have hosted the Eurovision Song Contest. In terms of branding campaigns the Estonian people have been targeted in a way which had not happened previously; the original Welcome to Estonia campaign was for an international audience rather than a domestic. The Eesti 90 campaign and the re-launched Welcome to Estonia campaigns appear to have been designed very much with the Estonian public in mind, the former being envisaged specifically for domestic consumption.

Concerning Eurovision itself, rhetoric from Estonian respondents suggests that they are far more confident as a people than they were during the time of hosting Eurovision in 2002. Whilst many expressed the view that Eurovision was significant at the time in terms of raising the international profile of Estonia, others suggested that people are more cynical towards the event now. Perhaps this can be seen as an example of this new confidence, a departure from the previous intense interest in Estonia's standing in the world. An example of this is the newspaper coverage from 1996, after Estonia finished in fifth place in Eurovision, much of the coverage was dedicated to analysing who voted for Estonia. Further examples of this confidence include the "othering" of states who have recently joined Eurovision by respondents. EU and NATO accession in 2004 arguably marked the culmination of the "Return to Europe" in Estonia. However, authors such as Merje Kuus, as discussed in chapter one, have argued that "orientalist" narratives, depicting new member countries from Central and Eastern Europe as "not yet fully European" have persisted beyond 2004. Eurovision is therefore a mirror of these broader debates and issues, the recent furore about the contest being dominated by Eastern European "tribal" voting exemplifies this. In this context Estonians see themselves as "Western European" or as part of "old Europe" when it comes to events such as Eurovision; a mirror image of how they tend to perceive themselves generally. In this sense, can one assume that Eurovision has ceased to have any utility in the eyes of the Estonian political elite and the narratives expressed by respondents in this chapter suggest that it might actually be potentially detrimental to the country's international image and standing in the sense that Estonian politicians have tried to move away from its Soviet past. The respondents interviewed for this study displayed an aversion to being discursively lumped together with "Eastern", namely non-EU member countries such as Russia, Belarus and the Balkan states for example.

However on the other hand, the recent participation of Estonia in Eurovision in both 2009 and 2010 highlights that the event remains important in terms of ritual, a stable part of European popular culture. Absence from this event would therefore say more than taking part as a cynical, "normal" country. The very fact that Enterprise Estonia paid for Estonian participation in the event highlights that it still have a symbolic role in terms of boosting Estonia's international profile despite any cynicism which the public may have towards the competition. For Estonia the European City of Culture is the next focus for the authorities in 2011. This chapter has highlighted that Eurovision provided a baseline for Estonian image makers and the next move is to build upon this. Those involved in the organisation

of the year long events have looked back to hosting Eurovision in 2002 which in itself highlights the legacy that this event has left in Estonia.

In Ukraine, a country whose involvement with Eurovision is starkly different to that of Estonia, the story is still unfolding. The majority of respondents recalled that Eurovision in Kyiv provided the Ukrainian international image with a boost, which was given prominence given the shadow that Chernobyl continues to cast as discussed in chapter seven. The participation of Verka Serduchka in Eurovision in 2007 is a clear example of how seriously some political figures see the image of Ukraine. Furthermore the language used and the continuous re-inscription that the artist is actually a heterosexual man suggests that Ukraine remains a conservative country when it comes to minorities.

The Eurovision Song Contest has continued to reflect nationalist antagonisms in Ukraine; when the country finished second to Russia in 2008 it was suggested by the delegation that the vote had been rigged³². In 2009, Anastasia Prikhodko was disqualified from the Ukrainian national selection for contravening the rules that songs must not have been performed prior to the national selection. She then caused further controversy when she entered the Russian national selection and won. Furthermore part of the song, “Mamo” was in Ukrainian. The singer was therefore seen as a traitor in Ukraine whilst at the same time viewed as an imposter in Russia. Such events highlight the sensitivities of national identity in both Russia and Ukraine in a post-Soviet context. It could be argued that these nationalist antagonisms presented through Eurovision reflect wider discourses in the Ukrainian political scene.

At the time of research for this thesis many respondents in Ukraine expressed a deep dissatisfaction with the political developments in the country since 2005. Others were more pragmatic and suggested that the initial hopes were too much and that people needed to be more realistic. Whilst to some the election of Viktor Yanukovich may be seen as a final nail in the coffin of the Orange Revolution, the very fact that the elections were deemed to be fair and free by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (BBC, 18th January 2010) is a testament to the true spirit of the Orange Revolution and a lasting legacy of the political changes it ushered in. For Ukraine attention is now focusing on hosting the 2012 European Football Championships successfully. The widespread reporting of the delays in Ukraine has already meant that in terms of image building the

³² <http://newsru.com/cinema/29may2008/eurovision.html> Accessed 12 November 2010.

country is already on somewhat of a back-foot. However as Ukraine proved when they successfully hosted Eurovision in 2005 against the odds, a lot can happen before summer 2012. It is only after then that the true legacy of this event can be assessed.

Chapter 8: Image building and nation branding through popular culture: A case study of the role of the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia and Ukraine.

8.1 Introduction

This research is a comparative investigation of nation-building, image building and the rhetoric and debates surrounding the aspects of Europeanisation in Estonia and Ukraine. Both countries have used the ESC as a platform for image building in a post-Soviet context. Estonia and Ukraine are different, the former being a fully fledged EU member whilst Ukraine remains at a geopolitical juxtaposition between East and West. By investigating issues of national identity and nationalist politics through the medium of popular culture, with particular reference to the Eurovision Song Contest and the role that the event has played in terms of image building and nation branding, the more salient aspects of identity debates have been presented. It has been argued in this thesis that Eurovision presented an opportunity for both broadcasting authorities and the government alike in both Estonia and Ukraine to present a certain narrative of the nation to a wider audience. In particular some of the key questions that this thesis has been concerned with focus on the particular images each nation has portrayed through both participation and hosting the Eurovision Song Contest. How was national identity defined, constructed and contested in Estonia and Ukraine? Who ultimately took the decisions on how each contest was staged in the country? How did these images resonate with the wider public? Moreover what comparisons can be drawn from examining these two countries?

I have argued that the time of hosting the Eurovision Song Contest was viewed differently in Estonia and Ukraine compared to other countries in Western Europe such as the UK. Furthermore the nature of the debates concerning the way in which Estonia and Ukraine presented themselves through both hosting and participating has been discussed. This thesis has also provided an overview of the nation branding initiatives undertaken in Estonia, namely the Welcome to Estonia campaign launched to capitalise on Tallinn hosting the Eurovision Song Contest in 2002. In Ukraine an analysis of the discourses on national identity has been presented as well as discussion concerning the Orange Revolution and the image of Ukraine more generally. In this concluding chapter I will first briefly review the theoretical framework that has been used in the framing of this study. Elements of chapters 1-3 will be drawn upon to justify the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in this thesis. I will then go onto review the main findings of this

thesis before discussing the contribution that this study has made to the field as well as identifying opportunities for further research.

8.2 A review of the analytical framework

The research design of this study drew inspiration partly from Rogers Brubaker's 2006 study *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*. In his book Brubaker asserts that concentrating solely on elite level discussions on national identity only tells some of the story and that in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues concerning identity politics the ground-level or public discourses need to be taken into account, as discussed in chapter one. By examining nationhood from below as well as above, this study has sought to draw out the more salient issues of nationalism and identity politics and to explore the more nuanced manifestations of national identity in a post-Soviet context. This study has also been influenced by the work of Michael Billig's *Banal Nationalism*. Billig asserts that national identity is socially constructed and shaped by time and place. Moreover he argues that many symbols of the nation, such as a national flag, are often salient but routinely embedded into the fabric of social life. This study has viewed these issues through the lens of the Eurovision Song Contest, an event which has the capacity to illuminate and shed further light on the politics of identity.

In particular the work of Göran Bolin, Sue Curry Jansen and Melissa Aronczyk has been particularly influential in terms of framing this study. All three authors discuss the often contradictory relationship between nation branding and nation building. The empirical findings of this study further exemplify the tensions between these two concepts. To what extent can nation branding initiatives such as Brand Estonia and the way in which the Eurovision Song Contest was staged in 2002 be representative of the people living in Estonia, the state which has been branded? There are unintended consequences of both nation branding and building. The reception to the Welcome to Estonia campaign amongst the public in Estonia was one of dismissal and rejection. In a sense it could be argued that it united Russian speakers and ethnic Estonians in their rejection of the campaign albeit for different reasons. The ethnic Estonians interviewed for this study claim that the campaign did not promote a country with which they identified with. On the other hand Russian speakers viewed the campaign with suspicion since it sought to distance the country from the Soviet past.

Nation branding can essentially be seen as forward-looking in the sense that project a developed with a view to attracting inward economic investment, presenting positive images of the country. Nation building on the contrary can be seen as something which is retrospective in that it relies on elements from the past in order to build a form of social solidarity or community cohesion. As Aronczyk states, because nation branding is future-orientated, it does not mean that nationalism, a concept which nation builders draw upon, is dead. Aronczyk argues that nation branding is little more than an updated form of nationalism for the 21st century.

Bolin argues that events such as Eurovision are modern day equivalents of the World Fairs of the 19th century and this study has taken this idea further. If we apply Billig's framework to Bolin's then Eurovision itself can be seen as an event which is routinely embedded in the life of the nation, a European ritual which is annually, collectively consumed. By examining the images both Estonia and Ukraine opted to use to portray their respective countries to an international audience, the more salient narratives of the nation can be considered at a specific moment in time. Bolin's work has also centred on issues connected with nation branding. A relatively new concept, nation branding has been gaining increasingly scholarly attention. As chapter one highlights, branding something as complex as the nation is problematic yet it is a practice in which a number of countries continue to engage in. Simon Anholt's assertion that nation branding allows countries to "punch above their weight" on the world stage has been particularly influential in framing this study. In the Estonian case the term "Baltic Tiger" was particularly important in projecting an external image of Estonia as a positively transforming country. The Welcome to Estonia campaign aimed to take this further and in this sense Eurovision afforded the country a platform to present a particular vision of the country to the world. The Ukrainian case study is more complicated in that there was no nation brand as such and yet the Orange Revolution arguably worked in the same way in terms of international image. The political demonstrations of 2004 and the hosting of the Eurovision Song Contest in 2005 afforded Ukraine an opportunity to present a more positive international image.

Like Brubaker's work, this study set out to explore the lesser examined elements of the nation and of nationhood and as such I believe the findings have built upon works such as Michael Billig's in that an analysis of routine, almost mundane events or rituals such as Eurovision or nation branding campaigns, can further shed light on key identity discourses and debates which may not have come to the foreground previously. Moreover the study has focussed on the role that events such as the Eurovision Song Contest play in

highlighting key identity issues and the symbolic role that the event played particularly for Estonia in the 1990s as manifestation of the wider return to Europe discourses which were appropriated by the political elite and also the ways in which these were received and subverted by the wider public at the time. To date there has been no in-depth study on a former Soviet republic and the role that the ESC has played in terms of refining the international images of the countries concerned. As such the research and data collected for this study is a unique contribution and provides further opportunities for future research on identity politics more generally.

The methodology for this study allowed key respondents to present their views on a variety of issues and as such, the empirical data collected is diverse. The information gathered for this study covers a vast array of subjects and highlights the benefits of using a focussed approach; by examining debates surrounding a specific event, the wider, and more salient aspects of everyday nationhood can be discerned. One of the key findings of this research suggests that there is a level of disparity between elite level respondents and the public at large in terms of how they view nation branding and national identity more generally. As such the methodological approach used by Brubaker, from which this study drew inspiration, has helped to build up a more grounded picture of complex identity debates and sheds further light on the nuanced narratives of the nation more generally.

8.3 A review of the main findings

8.3.1 Welcome to Estonia: A reflection of the “Two Estonias” debate

The Eurovision Song Contest has been used as a platform for image building in an international context by government authorities in the ‘New Europe’, namely Estonia and Ukraine. Findings suggest that image and identity are intrinsically linked and that the national image of the country was and still is, important to the public at large. Furthermore this thesis has uncovered societal divisions between the so-called “elite level” respondents and the public more generally. Chapter three focused on the return to Europe discourses in Estonia which prevailed amongst the political elite during the 1990s. Following on from this necessary prelude, the rhetoric concerning the Welcome to Estonia campaign was considered, it is here that the societal divisions in Estonia become apparent. The return to Europe discourse essentially represented a movement by the Estonian political elites to align the country with Western Europe and to emphasise Estonia’s so-called “Nordic” credentials. Furthermore the rhetoric served to distance Estonia from the Soviet past,

Estonia's "other". Chapter three demonstrates that the Estonian respondents interviewed for this thesis were in the main supportive of this; the constant flagging of Estonia as a "Nordic" country and the consistent re-inscription that Estonia is "not an Eastern European country" (3.2.4). However the Welcome to Estonia campaign told a different story. The branding initiative was launched in 2002 by Enterprise Estonia to coincide with the publicity generated from Tallinn's hosting of the Eurovision Song Contest. At the time of writing, nearly eight years after the fact, public-level respondents were vocal when asked about their views on this campaign. The Brand Estonia initiative was overwhelmingly viewed as a waste of resources in the eyes of the ground-level respondents interviewed for this study. Whilst many acknowledged that Estonia needed to market itself, they were opposed the way in which it was done. The Brand Estonia campaign slogan, Welcome to Estonia, and logo itself were seen as ill-fitting with an Estonia with which the respondents identified with.

The elite level respondents interviewed for this study, political figures such as former Prime Minister Mart Laar, and the Project Manager Evelin Ilves, shared an alternative view of Brand Estonia. They suggested that the campaign was never given a chance to develop and that the project was important for marketing Estonia as a place to conduct business in the run up to EU enlargement. The nature of the debates therefore suggests that a definite public-elite gulf is evident in Estonia as highlighted by the ethnographic interviews conducted with the public in Estonia which showed that there was an almost vehement disconnection with the project (3.4.3). On the other hand political elites and those involved with the project continuously emphasised that it was a necessary undertaking at the time. Furthermore a perceived lack of public understanding concerning the project is suggested by elite level respondents. Evelin Ilves highlighted the fact that the project was never intended for public consumption, it was essentially an undertaking which was aimed at external markets and not developed with the domestic audience in mind. The fact that the public were seemingly unaware of this as evidenced in the interviews for this thesis, in turns raises further questions regarding this public-elite gulf. I suggest that if the Estonian public had been actively targeted and consulted on the necessity of the franchise then the opposition may not have been so strong and the failure on behalf of the Estonian elites to do this ultimately impacted upon the way in which the entire project was read. As such for most of the public-level responses the lens in which they view the initiative is one of failure and dismissal. One of the further issues which those involved in the project faced was the apparent lack of return on the investment. As Mart Laar stated in an interview given for this study, it was difficult to explain to people if they do not "see it in their

pockets immediately”. The gulf in opinions on the Welcome to Estonia initiative is plain to see. The elite level respondents supported the undertaking whilst the public viewed the project as a waste of resources. Some did state that Estonia needed promotion but they felt that such a slogan and logo were ill-fitting for the country in which they lived and identified with. The disparity in opinion can therefore be seen as a further manifestation of Marju Lauristin’s “Two Estonias” debate³³.

8.3.2 Eurovision in Estonia: A symbol of Estonia’s return to Europe

Chapters four and five focus on the symbolism concerning Estonian victory at the Eurovision Song Contest in 2001 and 2002 as well as further exploring issues of identity at the local and national level. The role of the Eurovision Song Contest is contextualised within the wider rhetoric of the return to Europe discourse. The fact that Juhan Paadam stated that the date of the 2002 broadcast was moved in order to coincide with EU accession talks is significant. So too is the fact that Sarah Squire, the former UK Ambassador to Estonia, went on-record for this thesis to state that she believes that on some level staging Eurovision persuaded wavering voters in the EU referendum to vote for accession. Moreover the symbolism attached to the Eurovision victory by the press and Estonian respondents can be seen as further evidence of the Nordic alignment of Estonian national identity. Closer analysis of the wider media coverage following on from Estonia’s Eurovision victory suggests that Estonians were concerned with how they were perceived in the world at the time. Constant references were made to the win being “unbelievable” (4.4) which suggests a lack of self-confidence; looking to outside the country for reassurance, celebrating evidence of “approval”, in this context the approval came in the form of the Eurovision Song Contest victory.

Moreover the issue of the international self-image of the country more generally can be seen when the rhetoric concerning the financing of the event is considered. The nature of the debates reveals that the staging of the event became a priority for the Laar government who saw value in hosting the competition particularly in the shadow of negative press attention from Western Europe; “Estonia too poor to host Eurovision” (*The Telegraph*, 27 May 2001). As Göran Bolin highlights, if Estonia failed to stage the event after the 2001 victory, the country would be considered to be the “poor Eastern relative” within the EBU

³³ Whilst Lauristin’s “Two Estonias” was concerned with “winners” and “losers” of economic transition, it effectively showed that disparities were emerging between the political elite and the public at large. The Welcome to Estonia debates presented in this study further exemplify this.

network (Bolin 2006, p.196). Furthermore the very nature of the media debates in Western Europe concerning Estonia's prospects of hosting the contest reveal negative stereotypes of a "backward" Eastern Europe. These are precisely what Estonian representatives have been trying to dispel for the last two decades. Eurovision therefore presented an opportunity for Estonia to distance itself from the Soviet past and align the country with its Nordic neighbours, something that nearly all respondents for this thesis could identify with. In terms of name recognition Eurovision was seen by most respondents as a way of putting Estonia on the map in the short term. However as responses from Signe Kivi and Iir Hermeliin show, the legacy of Eurovision in Estonia lives on even today³⁴.

The concept of othering is also important for understanding the interrelated processes of nation branding and nation building. Othering is a facet of nation building; by saying who we are not, we are confirming who we are. "We are not Russian, we are Estonian" was something which was regularly reiterated by ethnic Estonian respondents whilst in the field. On the other hand it could be argued that nation branding is about promoting sameness, Brand Estonia sought to align Estonia with its Nordic neighbours. However I would argue that there is still a process of othering which is going on. By promoting sameness through Brand Estonia there is also a rejection of Estonia's Soviet past. Brand Estonia also promoted the country as (western) European, again firmly constructing a boundary between the other. Aronczyk also highlights the way in which nation branding is employed as a tool "greasing the wheels of accession to the European Union, United Nations or other multilateral organisations" (Aronczyk 2007, p. 44). By promoting ones so-called "European credentials", a barrier is effectively constructed against those who fail to meet these ideals. The case of Turkey is a strong example, an EU outsider and one which used the Eurovision Song Contest as a platform for demonstrating their "European sameness" as discussed in chapter two. Othering of the Eurovision Song Contest itself is something which has been prevalent in the rhetoric from respondents for this study. Ilmar Raag, the Chairman of Estonian Television in 2002 summed up the attitude towards the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia in recent years:

I think that today we have the same attitude towards the contest as Western Europe. It is a big, silly contest but at the time it was seen as a unique opportunity to show Estonia to almost 300 million viewers or even more [...] in a way it [the cynicism towards ESC] shows that Estonia is part of the west, a shared view of Eurovision as a

³⁴ These respondents highlighted that they were on holiday (Kivi in Portugal and Hermeliin in Germany) and people immediately mentioned Eurovision when they said that they were from Estonia. Anecdotally people have also mentioned Eurovision in the UK when I mentioned Estonia.

joke. The attitude was not invented by us so in a way it shows we are now moving on (Ilmar Raag, interview, Tallinn, 13 November 2007).

Success in the competition or viewing it as a serious event is perhaps something which “the others”, namely the East would do. Essentially by othering the Eurovision Song Contest, Estonians are claiming sameness with the rest of Western Europe. Could this mean that “Europeanisation” has taken place in Estonia?

8.3.3 Dave Benton: Constructing an Estonian brand of multiculturalism

The rhetoric concerning Dave Benton within both the media and from the respondents proper provides fertile ground for a more detailed discussion concerning concepts of multiculturalism and further raises questions of who is perceived as an insider and consequently, an outsider. Again like the debates concerning Brand Estonia, there appears to be a gulf between the elite-level perceptions and the general public concerning the extent to which Dave Benton is accepted as a part of Estonian society. The majority of respondents highlighted that the singer is seen as a part of Estonian culture and has not faced any racial discrimination per se, Benton himself highlights this too. As discussed in chapter one (1.2.6), Estonian political elites essentially walked a tightrope between national self-assertion whilst integrating with European geopolitical structures such as the EU, which emphasised multiculturalism and respect for minority rights. In this context Dave Benton can be seen as a useful and usable figure for the Estonian government at the time; they flag him as a success story of Estonian integration policy more generally and also counter the accusations from Russia that Estonia was discriminating against its minorities in the run-up to EU accession.

However this research has uncovered more striking counter-narratives which suggest that the Benton case does not reflect the complexity of ethnic integration in Estonia. One respondent in particular, Margit, highlighted the resignation of the Dutch Ambassador to Estonia in 2006 as evidence that discrimination does take place and that racial issues have largely been ignored by the political elite in Estonia. Dave Benton’s interview reveals that he himself subscribes to the nationalist Estonian rhetoric espoused by Mart Laar that in order to integrate into Estonia you simply need to learn the language. Benton therefore buys into the ethnic Estonian narrative of the nation and further serves to other those Russian speakers in particular who do not have knowledge of the Estonian language. However responses from Russian speakers serve to complicate the issue, despite speaking

fluent Estonian, their difference whether it is in terms of accent or appearance is often flagged in conversations with ethnic Estonians. Racism exists in every society and in many forms, Estonia is no different and as such it would be unfair to suggest so. It was never the aim of this study to focus on racism per se and Dave Benton himself states that he does not feel that he has faced racial prejudice in Estonia. However what is interesting is that an examination of the rhetoric concerning Benton highlights the complexities of ethnic integration in the region. Dave Benton's story and the anecdotal evidence presented by Russian speakers for this study, suggests that integration issues are more complicated in Estonia than the previous literature on linguistic integration in the Baltic region suggests, and are therefore, far from resolved. In turn I believe this makes Benton's story all the more fascinating and all the more contradictory.

8.3.4 Eurovision Song Contest 2002: Nordic Estonia

The analysis presented in chapter five is concerned with the key decisions taken by those involved in the organisation of the 2002 Eurovision Song Contest in Tallinn. I argue that the Eurovision Song Contest offered a platform for Estonia to promote its "Nordic" credentials and the content analysis and level of media debates is evidence of this. The 2002 Eurovision Song Contest therefore offered an opportunity to Estonia to manage its own image on its own terms as well as allowing for portrayals of ethnic Estonian national identity and narratives of the Estonian nation. The nature of the media debates suggest that Eurovision was significant in terms of raising the international profile of Estonia but also in terms of managing its image. It can be argued therefore that Eurovision provided a useful project in which the Estonian government could present the country, on its own terms to a wider European audience, within an EU accession context.

Furthermore in chapter five I also presented an analysis of the imagery that Estonian Television chose to use during the broadcast of Eurovision 2002. Estonian Television succeeded in producing a slick, sophisticated piece of television despite being one of the smaller national broadcasters in the EBU. I argue that it served as a platform for promoting Estonia's so-called "Nordic" credentials. The scenes chosen to portray the Estonian national character can be seen as evidence of this (5.3.1). Furthermore the complete absence of any reference to "multiculturalism" is striking given the rhetoric concerning Dave Benton previously. This suggests that references to multiculturalism in the Estonian context would have inevitably meant addressing the issue of Russian speakers in Estonia. Furthermore the complete absence of Narva in particular may be seen as a manifestation of

this; the ESC in 2002 was a platform for the representation of the ethnic Estonian nation. This is evidenced further when two clips in particular are taken into consideration. The option screened directly before the Estonian entry depicted the fairytale *Sleeping Beauty*, arguably a metaphor for how Estonians see their nation. The clip screened before the Russian entry depicted references to freedom. Juhan Paadam, the Executive Producer of Eurovision 2002 alluded to the fact that this was a deliberate decision on the part of the creative team. Eurovision in 2002 therefore served to essentialise Estonia as a Nordic country, reflecting the ethnic Estonian narrative of the nation and further serving to repudiate Soviet rule.

Overall the public-level ethnic Estonian respondents identified with the staging and content of this event in a way in which they failed to with the Welcome to Estonia campaign. Estonians were overwhelmingly satisfied with the content of the show, citing that it reflected an Estonia which they readily identified with. However Russian speakers interviewed for this thesis were less certain; some cited the lack of coverage of Narva in particular as peculiar given that smaller locales were represented. Others maintained that they were pleased with the show more generally and that it presented the country in which they live in a positive light. As such these Russian speakers represent a form of hybridity; not quite Estonian and not quite Russian. The sheer volume of coverage dedicated to Eurovision in the Estonian media in 2001 and 2002 is further evidence of how significant the event was seen in terms of raising Estonia's international profile. The personalised tone of many of the articles appears to have had an impact on many Estonians; the event was seen as a personal affair, something that the country needed to support in order for it to be a success. Unlike the Welcome to Estonia campaign, the responses from respondents concerning ETV's production of Eurovision 2002 did not suggest that there was a public-elite division. It appears that any form of disparity of opinion concerning that way Estonia was presented in the 2002 broadcast is split along ethnic lines. Again this suggests that any issues of integration in Estonia are not solely concerned with language but also different cultural attachments and understandings of history. This study has sought to highlight some of these "everyday" narratives of the nation told through events such as Eurovision, which have previously evaded scholarly attention.

8.3.5 Ukraine: A complex and contradictory relationship with Europe and Eurovision

Chapter six focuses on the role of the Eurovision Song Contest in Ukraine in the wake of the Orange Revolution. In terms of the portrayals of Ukrainian identity, Ruslana, the winner from 2004 was perceived as representing a narrative from Western Ukraine. This was something which was flagged by respondents and can therefore be seen as evidence of identity divisions which continue to exist in Ukraine. When seen in context, Eurovision was extremely significant for the government; it was effectively a mouthpiece for the newly elected Yushchenko-Timoshenko administration. This is evidenced in both the slogan for the event that year, “Awakening” and also the fact that President Yushchenko appeared on the stage at the show finale. Furthermore the appearance of Viktor Yushchenko was not without controversy; initially he had intended to make a forty minute speech at the event. Further evidence of the significance that the event was afforded in Ukraine can be seen in the way in which the delays to the organisation of the event were handled. As highlighted in chapter six, when the EBU threatened to award the hosting of the event to an alternative country, Yushchenko personally took charge and the government became actively involved in the preparations. Arguably failure to stage the event successfully would have been damaging to the international standing of the country.

In terms of the perception of how Ukrainian respondents viewed the contest there appears to be a diversity of opinion. This ambiguity may be seen as a reflection of Ukrainian national identity itself; diverse and at times contradictory. Respondents were divided over the appropriateness of the theme for the contest and the links made with the Orange Revolution. Others suggested that the imagery used to portray Ukraine was something of a “lost opportunity”. Many felt that more could have been done to portray Ukraine in a more positive light. This followed on from discussions concerning Ukraine’s international image. Respondents were overwhelming in their view that Chernobyl continues to have had a negative impact on Ukraine’s image in the world. Chernobyl was routinely flagged as something which has affected Ukraine and in this context Eurovision offered an opportunity to change this. Moreover the rhetoric of disillusionment is reflected in wider debates concerning the Orange Revolution itself. At the time of fieldwork there was a growing sense of frustration and disillusionment with the government. Such a disconnection was also evidenced in responses concerning Ukraine’s choice of Eurovision entry for 2005, Greenjolly. The group were inserted as a “wildcard” at a late stage in the selection proceedings. The role of Eurovision in Ukraine was, unlike in Estonia, not

something that the public readily bought into, it was effectively a mouthpiece for the government to present its own narrative of the nation to Europe.

8.4 Estonia and Ukraine: Concluding comments

In chapter seven I offer a retrospective look at events in both Estonia and Ukraine since they both hosted the Eurovision Song Contest. In Estonia I also concentrate on the re-launch of the Welcome to Estonia campaign as well as provide an insight into the perceptions of the Eesti 90 campaign launched in 2008 to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Estonian republic. It appears that lessons from the perceived failure of the Welcome to Estonia campaign have been learned. The launch of a domestic campaign, “Ma armastan Eestimaad” (“I love Estonia”) which ran alongside the relaunched campaign, can be seen as evidence of this. It can effectively be seen as a way in which the brand was used to reach out to the public in Estonia and to engender a level of support for the campaign which had previously been missing.

The rhetoric from the respondents in Estonia concerning Eurovision today highlights a change in the perception of self in the country. Of those interviewed many highlighted that Eurovision was significant for raising the international profile of Estonia at the time but that the contest was regarded with some degree of cynicism today. It is interesting to note that Estonia joined the EU in 2004 and since then many respondents have stated that they think Estonians are less concerned with their position in the world more generally. Furthermore some suggested that Estonia’s failure to succeed in the competition since 2002 is further evidence of Estonia “belonging” to Western Europe and therefore that success in the contest now is evidence of ones “easterness”, recent successes by Serbia and Russia in addition to the Estonian entry of 2008, a parody featuring Serbian language, exemplify this. Negative portrayals about “tribal” voting and alleged Eastern domination of the contest suggest that Eurovision might be viewed through a cynical lens in Estonia; it appears that the public have become more ironic in their view of the contest, mirroring the predominant attitude in other EU countries. In this context Eurovision remains a useful indicator for analysing the self-image of Estonia. Respondents overwhelmingly rejected any notion that Estonia was an “East European” country. As such there is an aversion to being discursively lumped together with “eastern” non-EU member countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Serbia and Azerbaijan, all of which have won Eurovision since 2001. Moreover the Estonian Eurovision entries in 2004, in the Võru dialect, and the rhetoric concerning a Swedish singer representing the country in 2006 suggest a desire amongst

Estonians for greater control over their own affairs and a sign of growing self-confidence. Moreover, as discussed in chapter three, the fact that people have begun to wear t-shirts with the Welcome to Estonia logo on, “in an ironic kind of way”. The response from one public-level respondent, Margit, exemplifies this sense of confidence which Estonians now appear to have.

In 2010 Estonian participation for entry to Eurovision was paid for by Enterprise Estonia after ETV announced that they were withdrawing in the light of the global economic crisis. This in itself is evidence that Eurovision continues to be an event in which the authorities buy into and see as a legitimate platform for promoting the nation in a European context. It also highlights that the image of the country remains important; moreover if the country withdraws due to financial reasons, this again could conform to negative stereotypes concerning Estonia being the “poor relation” in the EBU. Tallinn was the chosen city as the European City of Culture for 2011 and again the issue of the image of the country is one which continues to elicit debate. Estonia is a fully integrated European country in almost every sense of the word and in 2011 the country joined the Euro zone. Again this represents Estonia as being “ahead of the game”, like they were the first former socialist country who were invited to join EU accession talks, the first new applicant country to win Eurovision and now are the first former Soviet EU member to join the Euro. As evidenced in Mart Laar’s interview, investment in the international image of a country takes time and effort. Estonia still has a long way to go in this respect however the country has made major strides in little over twenty years since independence and achieved what other countries have arguably taken several decades to do. Even events which could have been potentially detrimental to the image of Estonia, such as the Bronze Soldier riots of April 2007, have arguably helped to promote the country as nation leading the way in cyber defence. Awards such as the European Capital of Culture can further put the country on the map. Estonia now has a stronger international image than ten years ago and one which is arguably positive. In the coming years it will be interesting to see where Estonian image makers go from here and what the nature of the debates will be in future.

In Ukraine the story continues to unfold. Eurovision was afforded even greater significance than in Estonia by the government in the wake of the Orange Revolution and in the light of the continued shadow that Chernobyl casts over the Ukrainian image. The image of Ukraine remains a sensitive one and a rather contested issue as evidenced in the controversy surrounding the selection of drag artist Verka Serdutchka as the Ukrainian Eurovision entry for 2007. The nature of the debates show not only that Ukrainian identity

is a contested one but also how seriously political figures consider representations of Ukraine in an international setting. As such the nature of the debates reflects a post-Soviet sensitivity which is not evidenced to such an extent in Estonia. Ukraine, unlike Estonia, does not have a formal nation branding project and at the time of writing it appears that there are no plans to launch one. This can be seen as a mirror of the complexities surrounding identity issues in Ukraine. How can a country which is so complex be branded and marketed? The Estonian example highlights the contentious nature of such undertakings. Moreover the fact that Ukraine has not launched an official campaign whilst its neighbouring countries have³⁵ can be seen as a mirror of the slow and piecemeal economic reforms and for that matter, European integration. However one of the lasting legacies of Eurovision is the visa-free regime for EU citizens which was implemented by Yushchenko's Orange government specifically for Eurovision in 2005 and remains in place today. The cynicism towards the Orange Revolution government, as evidenced in interviews with respondents in 2007, has meant that the events of 2004 and 2005 may be perceived as a failure. Again the notion of Ukraine as the "land of lost opportunities" may be appropriate. However it is noteworthy that Yanukovich won the Ukrainian presidency in 2010 in an election which was deemed to be fair and free by international observers. It is perhaps this which is the true legacy of the Orange Revolution and for that matter I would suggest that it is not perhaps such a wasted opportunity as the said respondent suggested. The authorities in Ukraine are now concentrating on the preparations for the UEFA European Football Championships in 2012. For many respondents this event offers a fresh opportunity to raise the international profile of Ukraine and a positive international image of the country to a wider audience. However with this come certain concerns that when compared with co-host Poland, Ukraine will not come out favourably or simply that Ukraine may not be ready in time.

8.5 Opportunities for future research

In Estonia the responses from ethnic Russian speakers suggest that there is more work to be done on identity and integration issues. On the face of it, these respondents are fully integrated; they speak fluent Estonian and hold Estonian citizenship. However as evidenced in their responses in chapter five, many expressed the view that somehow their difference is flagged, whether consciously or not. As such these respondents represent a form of hybridity and further research is needed into their identity and the extent to which

³⁵ Poland and Romania both have official nation branding initiatives.

they identify as “Estonian”. Moreover how they engage with campaigns such as Welcome to Estonia and Eesti 90 is a possible way in which these more salient and nuanced issues of national identity can be extrapolated. Furthermore this study was multi-sited by design and as such there is considerable potential to address other issues which arose during the fieldwork. The limited timeframe has meant that it was not possible to explore the issues discussed in the Estonian case study whilst in Ukraine. Issues such as language as well as access to political figures have meant that the focus of the Ukrainian chapter changed away from the political elite and more towards those involved in the organisation of Eurovision itself as well as extensive interviews with a variety of public-level respondents. Figures such as those from the National Television Company of Ukraine and CFC Consulting still represent an “elite”, however, they do not represent a mouthpiece for the government. On the other hand, Estonia provided an ideal site for conducted research and I was given access to a vast network of politicians and opinion leaders. As such I believe the empirical evidence collected in Estonia to be of great value to this thesis as a whole.

My observations from the field were sufficiently diverse to persuade me that there is considerable research still to do in Ukraine, on the role that Chernobyl has played in shaping and forming the perception of self in Ukraine as well as a further analysis of the differing narratives of the nation, both East and West. Some of the findings in this thesis suggest that those individuals living in the same country and even city can see things through differing gazes, the way Verka Serdutchka was received in Ukraine or Dave Benton in Estonia are examples. As such this thesis has gone some way to exploring these identity issues however further in-depth research is needed in order to gain a greater understanding of the social processes which are continuing to evolve over time.

In this thesis I have sought to draw upon existing theory concerning nationalism and national identity and apply it to two unique case studies in two starkly differing contexts. As such the empirical research has shown how sensitive the issue of image is and also how seriously those in the respective countries see such matters and have used the Eurovision Song Contest as an avenue to mediate image and identity. This study has also drawn out the complexities and tensions between nation building and nation branding. This study has also attempted to provide a fresh insight into events such as the Eurovision Song Contest which have until recently been neglected in a scholarly context. The Eurovision Song Contest is a platform for performing nationhood in a way that nation branding initiatives do not do in the same way. This thesis has however, sought to highlight that the Eurovision Song Contest is used as a vehicle for nation branding and image building, particularly in

the “New Europe”. For countries which are keen to be seen on the world stage Eurovision is an opportunity which is invaluable, as this thesis has highlighted. One quote from Riina Kionka, the former Estonian Ambassador to Germany, offers a fitting closing remark to this study. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, whilst there appears to be a level of irony towards Eurovision in Estonia, as such it is sometimes easy to forget that at the time, winning and staging Eurovision was a serious and important breakthrough in terms of putting the country on the map:

Estonia was the first new country to win and host it [Eurovision], it was a sharp contrast. We measured at one point, our year end analysis of the press and questions that year and a good, at least third of the press attention during that entire year was press for Eurovision [...] They [international media] started writing about us right at the win all the way up to hosting. It was huge. Up to that point coverage had always been on the minority or difficulties in the relationship with Russia [...] it was not necessarily good news stories and Eurovision really turned that around [...] Everybody understood that it was important and the foreign ministry understood it to be important [hosting ESC] It is easy to forget now but these were real decisions at the time (Riina Kionka, interview, Tallinn, 11 August 2008).

2009 saw the founding of the Eurovision Research Network which is “an association of academics, broadcasters, journalists, and other individuals and organisations with an interest in sharing ideas, dialogue, and resources around the Eurovision Song Contest”³⁶. At the time of writing, Azerbaijan had just won the Eurovision Song Contest and is therefore preparing to stage the event in Baku in 2012. Immediately after the victory, Azeri President Ilham Aliyev set up an organising committee for the 2012 contest, of which his wife, First Lady, Mehriban Aliyeva is chair. This highlights the seriousness with which the Azeri authorities are viewing this event. With Azerbaijan hosting the contest come serious political questions concerning human rights and the freedom of the press in the country as well as the ongoing territorial disputes with Armenia. Just weeks after Azerbaijan’s Eurovision victory, President Aliyev pardoned journalist Eynulla Fatullayev and 89 other prisoners (Abbasov 2011). Fatullayev was imprisoned in 2007 for articles he wrote concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as alleged possession of illegal drugs. Amnesty International described the charges as “fabricated” and state that his imprisonment is related to his critical stance of government policies (Amnesty International 2011). In August 2011 it was announced that a brand new venue, the Crystal Hall, would be constructed in Baku in order to host the Eurovision Song Contest in May 2012. In this context Azerbaijan hosting the 2012 event takes on

³⁶ Taken from the homepage of the Eurovision Research Network; www.eurovisionresearch.net (Accessed 20 May 2011).

significance for the authorities who are likely to face increased scrutiny from the international community in the run-up to the event. Moreover developments in the country will be closely followed by the international media. The 2012 event will provide rich ground for future research into the ESC. As the contest continues to expand and be staged in new territories it offers further potential for research in the future. As such this thesis does not represent a culmination of research into the Eurovision Song Contest but merely a beginning.

Appendix A

Table 1:
List of elite level respondents in alphabetical order according to first name.

Respondent name	Occupation/Profession	Interview location	Interview date
Alexander Kliemenov	Television Producer	Kyiv, Ukraine	18/12/07
Andri Maimets	Journalist	Tallinn, Estonia	26/11/07
Andriy Kulykov	Journalist	Kyiv, Ukraine	12/12/07
Ani Lorak	Singer	Belgrade, Serbia	16/05/08
Anu Välba	Broadcaster	Tallinn, Estonia	19/11/07
Dave Benton	Singer	Tallinn, Estonia	15/11/07
Evelin Samuel	Singer	Tallinn, Estonia	07/04/08
Evelin Ilves	Project Manager of Brand Estonia	Tallinn, Estonia	20/11/07
Gennadiy Kurochka	PR Consultant	Kyiv, Ukraine	05/12/07
Hans Lepp	Diplomat	Stockholm, Sweden	19/03/08
Helen Fawkes	Journalist	Telephone interview	11/11/10
Iir Hermeliin	Designer	Tallinn, Estonia	13/11/07
Ilmar Raag	Film and Television Producer	Tallinn, Estonia	13/11/07
Ivo Rull	PR Manager	Tallinn, Estonia	14/11/07
Journalist A	Journalist	Moscow, Russia	10/05/09
Journalist B	Journalist	London, UK	09/09/09
Juhan Paadam	Television Producer	Tallinn, Estonia	02/11/07
Kaja Tael	Diplomat	Tallinn, Estonia	08/04/08
Kati Varblane	EBU Event Manager	Tallinn, Estonia	09/04/08
Marek Tamm	Lecturer	Tallinn, Estonia	15/11/07
Marju Lauristin	Academic & Politician	Glasgow, UK	22/10/07
Marko Reikop	Broadcaster	Tallinn, Estonia	19/11/07
Mart Laar	Politician	Tallinn, Estonia	12/11/07
Mati Sepping	Producer	Tallinn, Estonia	14/11/07
Meelis Kompus	Broadcaster	Tallinn, Estonia	08/04/11
Michael Haagensen	Journalist and Academic	Tallinn, Estonia	11/08/08
Natalia Panchenko	Broadcaster	Kyiv, Ukraine	19/12/07
Nikolas Glover	Academic	Stockholm, Sweden	19/03/08
Olari Koppel	Political Advisor	Tallinn, Estonia	06/11/07
Olena Litvenko	Journalist	Kyiv, Ukraine	13/12/07
Orysia Letsevyeh	NGO Director	Kyiv, Ukraine	20/12/07
Pavlo Grystak	Television Producer	Kyiv, Ukraine	12/12/07
Philippe Naughton	Journalist	Moscow, Russia	15/05/09
Pille-Triin Mannik	Project Manager of “Tallinn 2011”.	Tallinn, Estonia	13/08/08

Respondent name	Occupation/Profession	Interview location	Interview date
Roman Kalyn	Singer	Kyiv, Ukraine	13/12/07
Riina Kionka	Diplomat	Tallinn, Estonia	11/08/08
Sarah Squire	Diplomat	Cambridge, UK	15/01/08
Sietse Baker	EBU Project Manager	Tallinn, Estonia	26/11/07
Signe Kivi	Politician & Academic	Tallinn, Estonia	26/11/07
Svante Stockselius	ESC Executive Supervisor	Stockholm, Sweden	03/04/08
Svitlana Bazhanova	Production Assistant	Kyiv, Ukraine	11/12/07
Tiia Raudma	Political Advisor	Tallinn, Estonia	09/04/08
Tiiu Simm	PR Manager	Tallinn, Estonia	02/11/07
Ülar Mark	Architect & Designer	Tallinn, Estonia	25/11/07
Unknown	PR Manager	Belgrade, Serbia	16/05/08
Valentin Yakushik	Academic Professor	Kyiv, Ukraine	19/12/07
Vasyl Myroshnychenko	PR Consultant	Kyiv, Ukraine	05/12/07
Yuriy Melnik	PR Manager	Kyiv, Ukraine	13/12/07

Table 2:
List of public level respondents³⁷

Respondent name	Occupation/Profession	Interview location	Interview date
Anna	Unknown	Kyiv, Ukraine	30/12/07
Anne	Student	Kyiv, Ukraine	18/12/07
Anne	Student	Kyiv, Ukraine	18/12/07
Andrew Cartmell	Freelance TV Producer	London, UK	30/06/09
Andri	Student	Tallinn, Estonia	12/11/07
Anonymous	Unknown	Tallinn, Estonia	12/11/07
“Student A”	Student	Moscow, Russia	11/05/09
Dima	Researcher	Tallinn, Estonia	27/11/07
Dmitry	Research Assistant	Tallinn, Estonia	23/11/07
Edith Sepp	Film Advisor	Tallinn, Estonia	12/11/07
Ivan	Teacher	Kyiv, Ukraine	30/11/07
Julie Wright	Journalist	Cambridge, UK	14/08/04
Julie	Student	Kyiv, Ukraine	11/12/07
Kristo Koppel	Artist	Tallinn, Estonia	14/07/07
Kelly Limonova	Graphic Designer	Tallinn, Estonia	31/10/07
Liina Sarapik	Student	Tallinn, Estonia	08/04/08
Lecya Ganja	Business Director	Kyiv, Ukraine	30/11/07
Margit Randla	Travel Agent	Tallinn, Estonia	17/11/07
Marta	Trainee Solicitor	Kyiv, Ukraine	09/12/07
Maimu Nõmmik	Unknown	Tallinn, Estonia	08/04/08
Natalia	Student	Kyiv, Ukraine	30/11/07
Olga	Student	Kyiv, Ukraine	17/12/07
Olga Fedotokina	Research Assistant	Kyiv, Ukraine	19/17/07
Olga Maksimenko	PhD Student	Kyiv, Ukraine	10/12/07
Peeter	Unknown	Kyiv, Ukraine	09/12/07
Riina Kindlam	Housewife	Tallinn, Estonia	08/04/08
Vitaly	Student	Kyiv, Ukraine	17/12/07
Volodymyr Solohub	Solicitor	Kyiv, Ukraine	16/12/07
Volodymyr Yermolenko	Communications Officer	Kyiv, Ukraine	10/12/07
Yulia	Unknown	Kyiv, Ukraine	17/12/07

³⁷ Some names have been anonymised due to ethical considerations as highlighted in chapter one. Some surnames are unknown as are some occupations.

Appendix B

Interview schedule for in-depth interviews

The following list shows a sample of the range of questions asked across interviews according to the main topic areas. Not every question under each topic heading was asking in every interview as some questions were more suited to some respondents more than others³⁸.

Preliminary Questions: ensuring informed consent

- Are the aims and intended uses of this research clear to you?
- Do you consent to the interview being recorded? (Guarantee of anonymity and ownership of the interview)

General Questions

- What is life like here in Estonia/Ukraine?
- Do you think that your country has a strong international image and if so what do you think that image is?
- What do you consider to be the most important issues in Estonia/Ukraine today?

Questions about Welcome to Estonia

- In your opinion, what do you think about the Welcome to Estonia campaign?
- What was the nature of the debates from that time?
- Do you think that the project was a waste of resources? Why?
- How would you market Estonia internationally?

Questions about Eurovision

- Was Eurovision important in 2001/2/4/5? If so, why?
- Were you happy with the images your country used when the contest was staged here?
- Did the government try to influence the content at any point?
- Were there any voices who said that the event was a waste of resources?

Questions about the Orange Revolution

- What are your memories from that time?
- Were you involved in the protests?
- Was there are feeling that Ukraine could join the EU after Yushchenko became President?
- What do you think of the band Greenjolly?
- Do you think the revolution helped to promote a positive image of Ukraine internationally?

³⁸ Some questions were designed for elite level respondents and others for public-level respondents.

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