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# **‘Europudding’ or European Coproduction? The Archaeology of Television Series *Eurocops* (1988-1994)**

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Keywords : television series, police drama, Eurocops, europudding, coproduction, media landscape

Abstract:

This chapter examines the case of *Eurocops*, a crime TV show produced by the European Coproduction Association - composed by six PSB and one private channels of seven European countries - from 1988 to 1994 (seventy-one episodes). Although it is one of the first European co-productions of its kind, *Eurocops* was a critical and commercial fiasco: what were its faults? Following Ib Bondebjerg’s methodology (2017), this article aims at exploring the failure of this ‘europudding’. The first section places *Eurocops* in the media landscape of the late 1980s and explains why this series can be considered as a ‘europudding’ trying to enforce Europe’s cultural sovereignty against the North American hegemony. The second section analyses how the decentralized PSB production of *Eurocops* implied the use of an inconsistent ‘collection’ narrative structure that partly explains the lukewarm critical reception of this television programme. The third section examines the cultural content of the forty-eight episodes we had access to (through the INA French archives): the lack of transnational ‘encounters’ or dialogues - compared to other more recent cop shows such as *The Team*, *The Killing* and *The Bridge* – is revealing of the absence of a strong European identity at the time.

Biography:

Alice Jacquelin is a Ph.D in French and Comparative Literature specializing in crime fiction and media studies. She currently holds a position as a postdoctoral fellow in the European H2020 DETECT program (Limoges team). Her academic work focuses on detective and crime novel (PULIM 2018, Academic Quarter 2021), on transmedia Country Noir in France and in the United-States (Belphégor 2021) and on the reception of crime fiction in Europe (Interrogations 2021). She was co-curator of the exhibition *L’Europe du polar* (BiLipo/Quais du polar, 2019-2021).

*Eurocops* was a televisual police series created in co-production between seven European countries from 1988 to 1994 and produced by a consortium (the European Coproduction Association, or ECA) made up of a private network (British network Channel 4) and six public broadcasters (Antenne 2 in France, ORF in Austria, RAI in Italy, SRG in Switzerland, Televisión Española in Spain and ZDF in Germany). Although this initiative emerged in the wake of the 1970s and 1980s

debate on the construction of a common European culture, French media sociologist Jérôme Bourdon observed: ‘The Association mainly produced a six-episode series, *Eurocops*, where each partner mostly projected its own stereotypes onto its partners (*Eurodience*, 1989: 16) – which is a recurring trait in symbolic intra-European enterprises of this type’ (Bourdon, 2007: 270)<sup>1</sup>. From a dynamic duo of inspectors at the Paris police headquarters on Quai des Orfèvres (France) to an eccentric suburban detective in Bisamberg (Austria), a detective in a countryside police station (UK) or a bewildered aging superintendent in modern Madrid (Spain), each nation taking part in the series is represented by its own iconic investigator. The stereotypical portrayal of these ‘eurocops’, as well as the locations where the episodes of the series are set, emphasize the very local character of atmospheres and places.

*Eurocops* is not a linear series: its flexible narrative structure allows each country in the consortium to create its own episodes with its recurring national investigator. This fiction was created in a context where EU institutions were trying to establish their cultural sovereignty and create a common media landscape, in reaction to the surge of US programmes on European screens. The first broadcast of *Eurocops* straddles two key dates in the construction of Europe – German reunification in 1989, and the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 – and the series was continually rerun on European public service channels, including Antenne 2 in France (and later France 2), until the 2010s. Although the episodes are independent, they are presented together under the same title and the same credits, which lends the series its visual identity and structural coherence. *Eurocops* is a hybrid and original product, that can provide the object for a comparative analysis of national identities at the dawn of contemporary Europe.

However, in the decades that followed its broadcast, this coproduction was disparagingly referred to as ‘europudding’ by media industry critics and professionals alike, including French journalist Olivier Guez (*Libération* 31/07/2000)<sup>2</sup>. According to Julia Hammett-Jamart, ‘the disturbing “Euro-pudding” phenomena [...] entailed the distortion of content in order to meet policy regulations and was prevalent in the early days of official co-production.’ (Hammett-Jamart *et al.* 2018: 21). ‘Europudding’ is defined as a unified cultural production, tailored to meet the requirements of European treaties in order to obtain the maximum amount of funds and compete with the global North American hegemony. However, the study of the phenomenon of ‘europudding’ gives rise to contradicting opinions, in particular in film studies. Some researchers accuse European interventionism of causing cultural homogenization according to the lowest common denominator. This is the case of Dimitris Eleftheriotis, who defines ‘europudding’ as ‘a co-production that is determined by the necessities of funding rather than by the filmmakers’ desire to work together’ (Eleftheriotis 2001: 12); or Sophie de Vinck who, in her evaluation of the European film co-production programme EURIMAGES, mentions the difficulties that ‘europuddings’ have in meeting their cultural and economic objectives (De Vinck 2009). On the contrary, other researchers such as Mariana Liz call for a re-evaluation of the transnational creative

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<sup>1</sup> All translations mine, unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> References to the primary corpus of press archives are listed *in extenso* in the reference list.

possibilities offered by European co-production grants, and for a departure from the pejorative image of ‘europudding’ (Liz 2015).

How can a series like *Eurocops* – an early European television co-production – be interpreted in light of this debate on ‘europudding’? What does this series, now largely forgotten, reveal about the structuring of the media market in the 1980s and 1990s? How can we explain, despite its lukewarm critical reception, the relative success of this transnational detective fiction at the time of its original broadcast, and its continual reruns for thirty years on European screens? As an audiovisual product of popular culture, what representations and cultural policy issues does it convey?

This article is based on two archive corpuses. The first corpus consists of international press archives on *Eurocops*: these US, Canadian, French and Spanish reviews allow us to retrace both a European view, but also a more distant American perspective on this production, whose structure and concept have intrigued journalists. This press archive also sheds valuable light on the historical context and the media landscape of the time. The second corpus consists of forty-eight episodes of the *Eurocops* series out of seventy-one, kept at the INA (French National Audiovisual Institute) archive. This second corpus, although incomplete, is an opportunity to view the programme directly to study its narrative structure and main themes, as well as the representations it conveys. The INA records also provide valuable information on the broadcasts of the series in France on Antenne 2/France 2 (schedules, reruns), which shed light on the relative transnational success of *Eurocops* and its imprint on collective imaginations.

The epistemological approach followed by this article is inspired by the methodology proposed by Ib Bondebjerg in *Transnational European Television Drama. Production, Genre and Audiences* (2017). Bondebjerg’s method invites us to consider the phenomenon of co-production globally, as a sequence of four stages. He first analyzes the context of national and transnational cultural policies, questioning the media landscape to understand the inclusion of a programme in its media ecosystem. Bondebjerg then focuses on co-production projects as institutional forms and products, studying their distribution and networks to consider an audiovisual content’s entire production chain. He then examines co-production projects on a narrative level, as ‘creative encounters across borders leading to different forms of transnational narratives.’ Finally, he observes the reception and impact of these transnational productions in the imaginations of different national audiences (Bondebjerg *et al.* 2017: 5). This study applies a similar method to the case of *Eurocops*, with a specific focus on France, because of the archival information available only for French broadcasting at the INA, as stated before.

The first section will review the historical media context of Europe in the late 1980s, as well as the media landscape at the time of the original production and distribution of *Eurocops* – between 1988 and 1994 –, to illustrate how this series actually fits with the definition of ‘europudding’ as institutional content designed to compete with US television products. The second section will demonstrate how the decentralized production model and fragmented narrative

structure of *Eurocops* distance it from ‘europudding’ understood as a unique and homogeneous product, which explains the series’ longer lifespan despite its lukewarm critical reception. Finally, the last section will explore the conflicting imaginaries conveyed by this European fiction. We will examine the gradual integration of police forces from various nations into the narrative as well as the evolution of representations of national identities over the episodes: these aspects raise questions as to the ambiguity of the series, which on the one hand reflects certain relations of power and highlights local identities while on the other hand promoting a more integrated European identity.

### **An Institutional Production in the Early Days of the Common Media Policy**

The production of *Eurocops* took place in the context of the late 1980s when Europe was developing legislation to encourage coordinated film and television coproductions. However, ‘coproduction’ is a polysemic term that can refer to a wide range of legal and economic realities. Julia Hammett-Jamart (Hammett-Jamart *et al.* 2018: 10) notes that while the most vague and global definition is simply synonymous with ‘international cooperation’, it actually encompasses three distinct configurations: first, official collaborations set out through coproduction treaties, second, private joint ventures, and third, national productions relocated to other European countries. The case of *Eurocops* actually falls under the first two types, as each episode is produced by one of the seven partner countries and shot locally on its national territory: this is in fact the specificity of this television series.

It should be noted that media cooperation in Europe – and film coproductions in particular – predate the 1980s. In fact, these activities began in the years following the end of the Second World War, with the first bilateral coproduction treaty signed between France and Italy in 1949. Anne Jäckel describes these treaties as ‘the beginning of the history of policy-driven co-productions in Europe’ (Jäckel, 2003). Later, in 1957, the Treaty of Rome had the stated objective of restoring Europe’s economic power, particularly by integrating the cultural industries into the process. In 1959, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) was set up to promote joint initiatives in the fields of entertainment (*Eurovision Song Contest*, *Intervilles*, *Jeux sans Frontières*) and news (with the Eurovision News Exchange). Petar Mitric also notes that in the late 1950s and 1960s, film coproductions from Western Europe were even exported to the other side of the Iron Curtain (Mitric 2018: 69-70). For example, Georg-Mickaël Luyken points out that in 1965, France, Italy, Germany and Spain coproduced no less than 362 films together (Luyken 1996: 116). The birth of public television in the 1960s and the influx of American capital in the 1970s rekindled the debate on European culture as a ‘defensive barrier’ (Bourdon 2007: 269) and drove the Council of Europe to actively promote initiatives in favour of cooperation in media production.

From the 1980s onwards, European treaties and negotiations promoted the creation of a more integrated media landscape, on both the production and the broadcasting side. The European

Coproduction Association (ECA) was created in the wake of a 1984 Green Paper<sup>3</sup> entitled ‘Television without Frontiers, on the establishment of the common market for broadcasting, especially by satellite and cable’<sup>4</sup>. The Association produced and broadcast its first joint television series, *Eurocops*, in 1988. The following year, in 1989, two important European media programmes were voted: the European fund for cinematographic co-production, EURIMAGES, and the European Television Without Frontier (TWF) directive, based on the 1984 Green Paper, to ‘support the liberalization and marketing of European television and eliminate public broadcasting monopolies’ (Pauwels and Donders 2011: 525). The common media market was in fact designed from the outset to become a competitive production and broadcasting market, based on an economically liberal perspective and endowed with the capacity to compete with US cultural products. In the early 1990s, the European MEDIA programme<sup>5</sup> (1991) and the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production (1994) increased European subsidies for the media sector and set up a legal framework and financial tools ‘to facilitate the practice of co-productions’ (Roberto Olla, Executive Director of EURIMAGES, in Hammett-Jamart *et al.* 2018: 243).

US scholar Susan Emanuel interprets these decades of European media policies actively promoting coproduction as a reaction against the threat of an influx of cheaply imported American shows on European public channels. According to Emanuel, this surge of US content created the feeling of an ‘erosion of national communications sovereignty’ (Emanuel 1995: 170), that appeared as if it could only be contained at the supranational European level. Susan Emanuel specifies that the creation of *Eurocops* responded exactly to this context of a struggle against the perceived threat of cultural hegemony:

This kind of thinking – that a common European patrimony requires support in the face of an alien Anglophone culture (England was sometimes seen as America’s Trojan horse) – lay behind a ‘fortress Europe’ mentality which pervaded 1980s thinking about the ‘guerre des images’. Counter-thrusts included the creation of the European Co-production Association (which sponsored the series *EUROCOPS (EUROFLICS)*, to which six countries contributed one hour police dramas), as well as the cooperative satellite venture, Europa, and the more recent European Broadcasting Union collaboration on EuroNews.

According to Emanuel, *Eurocops* was the result of a form of European protectionism that considered audiovisual products as a soft power weapon in the cultural war against the North American threat. Emanuel further explains how this fear

‘pushed European networks towards cost-sharing initiatives, from co-productions to co-venture agreements, particularly in the expensive case of drama. Co-production, however, posed the risk of falling into a kind of televisual Esperanto, a “Euro-pudding” less attractive to distinct national audiences than a domestically made drama would be.’ (Emanuel 1995: 171).

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<sup>3</sup> Green papers are analytical articles published by the European Commission on specific public policy topics. They mostly target the parties involved in the topic, including organizations and individuals, who are also invited to take part in the consultation and associated debates. In some cases, these papers can provide the impulse for future legislation.

<sup>4</sup> Commission of the European Communities, *Television Without Frontiers. Green Paper on the Establishment of the Common Market for Broadcasting, Especially by Satellite and Cable*, 14/06/1984. Available on: [https://aei.pitt.edu/green\\_papers.html](https://aei.pitt.edu/green_papers.html)

<sup>5</sup> MEDIA is the acronym for ‘Mesures pour Encourager le Développement de l’Industrie Audiovisuelle’ (measures to support the development of the audiovisual industry’).

*Eurocops*' production and distribution strategy seems to confirm Emanuel's analysis according to which cultural policies were designed in response to the balance of power and domination that prevailed in the 1980s<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, *Eurocops* does meet the definition of institutional and competitive 'europudding'. In terms of distribution, according to an article in Canadian newspaper *La Presse* (24/04/1989), at the time of the release of *Eurocops*, French public channel Antenne 2 signed a deal in Cannes with US broadcasting corporation CBS for the assignment of exclusive distribution rights for the series in all countries not covered by the public service networks of the ECA consortium. While this distribution strategy partly mitigates suspicions of anti-Americanism due to its reliance on the know-how of a US company, it can also be analyzed as a desire to extend and export the series to reach territories and local distribution networks that were not covered by ECA channels. This expansionism is a way, among other things, of replicating the supposed cultural hegemony of the US on its own ground. *Eurocops* is therefore a cooperation experiment associating European public service television networks at a supranational level, while also taking advantage of the United States' capital and experience in the field of global distribution.

Another US source indicates that in terms of programming, *Eurocops* was designed and considered as a direct competitor to US TV shows: journalists Revzin and Nelson write that 'despite enormous production problems, starting from scripts that had to be translated into five different languages, the somewhat formulaic show shocked its producers one evening last summer by beating its competition on a German network. The competitor: *Miami Vice*' (*Wall Street Journal* 03/10/1989). If *Eurocops* is, according to the journalists, 'hardly the finest flower of European culture', it is surprising to see a very economics-centred publication such as the *Wall Street Journal* point out the prowess of a European coproduction beating an American programme: the event must have been rare enough to be noticed. The comparison between *Eurocops* and *Miami Vice* (1984-1989, NBC), is not fortuitous: they are two prime-time crime series – *Eurocops* was to be broadcast in the early evening in Germany – whose theme music was created by cult electronica composer, Jan Hammer<sup>7</sup>. The creators of *Eurocops* wanted to be at the cutting edge of modernity by creating an opening sequence made of computer-generated images, and to compete with American content by borrowing the sound identity of *Miami Vice*, a slightly earlier and extremely popular American series. The fact that the journalists mention the challenges caused by language barriers and the programme's mediocre quality confirms the sense of trial and error in its production model: the series is seen as a form of transnational experimentation, rather than as a well-established and controlled media product.

### **An Original Yet Inconsistent Public Service Experiment**

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<sup>6</sup> In France for example, Jacques Mousseau, then Director of Planning at TF1, explains that the era of the 'monopolistic service' on television, which had lasted for thirty years, came to an end in the late 1980s when television became a mass media whose contents were dictated by advertising, competition and audience ratings (Mousseau 1989: 75).

<sup>7</sup> While *Eurocops* has faded from memories, LPs of Jan Hammer's score are still being sold by collectors and amateurs on Ebay and other specialist platforms. These *realia* reflect the lasting fascination for Jan Hammer's music and the existence of a community of fans whose focus is not the series but its most innovative attributes: the opening credits' electronic music and computer imagery, which were cutting-edge at the time.

While the stated aim of *Eurocops* was indeed to produce content that could compete with the United States, the strategy followed by the producers of the series does not quite fit with the stated definition of ‘europudding’, mainly because of its fragmented structure as shown in the credit openings. It is in fact not so much a placeless product aimed at achieving an idealized homogeneity, as a mosaic created autonomously by seven channels. Its objective was not to create a single television programme that would tick all the boxes of the grant applications. The choice of a decentralized production process in collaboration between several countries resulted in a deliberately fragmented narrative structure, as shown by the opening credits of *Eurocops*. Before each episode, the sequence successively shows the fictional identification cards of the seven recurring detectives, against a background of computer-generated maps of seven European cities. Street names and buildings are visible, all of them more or less recognizable for viewers in different countries. This sequence, which lends the series its unity and visual identity, has been adapted over the years but without ever really changing its format. Spanish detective Andres Crespo appeared in the credits at a later stage, as he was not present in the first episodes of the series. When Spain joined the ECA consortium and became a coproducer of the series, its flexible structure made it easy to integrate this additional character. Similarly, the two French detectives changed in 1990. Their photos and surnames were therefore replaced in the credits: Cortal and Laroche became Villars and Rousseau. This initial presentation of the series lent it a coherence and a visual identity, although there was no continuity between the episodes that followed and that they sometimes featured very disparate filmmaking styles.

Because of its production and narrative structure, *Eurocops* can be considered more of a ‘collection’ than a ‘series’. As each episode follows one European detective team, the cast changes every week. Initially, the principle was that every national detective(s) would return after six weeks. However, the production of the *Eurocops* episodes was not evenly split between the different producer countries: over the years, Germany produced fifteen episodes, Austria fourteen, Switzerland thirteen, Italy eleven, France eight, Spain five and the United Kingdom only three. The predominantly Austro-German production of the episodes necessarily implied that some countries had their national detectives return more often during the first years of the series’ original broadcast. *Eurocops* is therefore on the borderline between a ‘series’, which is defined by a composition of episodes revolving around a recurring character and a ‘collection’ or ‘anthology’<sup>8</sup> (Benassi 2017), as it does not rely on a unifying recurring character (as is the case in a series). Furthermore, the episodes follow not just several solitary detectives but several teams of investigators: the choral character of *Eurocops* adds to the profusion of characters.

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<sup>8</sup> The two notions of ‘collection’ or ‘anthology’ are almost equivalent in the context of televisual fiction. Their narrative nuances are examined by Stéphane Bénassi, “Sérialité(s)” in Sarah Sepulchre (ed), *Décoder les séries télévisées* (2017). François Jost (2001) associates the notion of ‘collections’ with classifications created by librarians who use this term to ‘refer to a set of programmes built on a similar model’. The notion can also refer to the DVD box-sets offering ‘complete collections’, that were available until the 2000s. The notion of ‘anthology’ is according to Anaïs Goudmand (2018: 44, n.4), ‘a term borrowed from English-language marketing, referring to TV or radio series in which the characters are not recurring from one episode or season to the next’.

Although the series' concept was created under the impulse of French channel Antenne 2, *Eurocops* is based on the decentralised German production system and the narrative model of the *Tatort* series (ARD/ORF, 1970-). A specific count shows the quantitative predominance of the German-language episodes (twenty-nine out of seventy-one). Concretely speaking, the production of the series relied on the efficiency of the Austro-German audiovisual industry, which was more developed than its European counterparts. *Eurocops* directly inherited its production model from the famous German series *Tatort* which was created years earlier. This enduring crime series was produced by nine different local channels of the German network ARD<sup>9</sup>, with the regional channels of the network in each 'Land' (each of the federal German states) producing their own episodes of *Tatort* in their own local setting. Comparing *Tatort* and *Eurocops*, Jean-Jacques Schleret observes that 'this structure allowed for the diversification of the locations of the action, a more frequent renewal of the recurring hero, and a more flexible adaptation of the series to the evolution of police methods and police fiction' (*Le Monde*, 14/08/1989). According to Schleret, thanks to its decentralized production method, *Tatort* created a positive emulation between actors, directors and screenwriters, thus ensuring the programme's longevity and quality. Schleret cites, among other things, the participation of renowned TV directors and actors, as well as the contribution of famous German crime writers (including Hans Jorg Martin and Friedrich Werremeier) to scriptwriting.

The journalistic source can be considered as an analytic insight – in Schleret's case for example –, but also as an historical source of information regarding the production system of *Eurocops* and as a reception indicator at the time of the show's original broadcast. The lukewarm reception is noticeable in the following critics by Spanish and French journalists. An anonymous Spanish critic (*El Ciervo*, June-July 1991) mentions a similar type of emulation as the one pointed by Schleret, in the production of the Spanish *Eurocops* episodes but with a more disappointing result:

Although in the first episode, Moleon pays a tribute to Almodovar (with whom he collaborated as first assistant) and creates a choral series full of 'monsters and marginals', Drove, who previously directed a beautiful adaptation of *El Tunel de Sabato*, gets bogged down in this crime series, too absorbed by moralistic considerations.

This journalistic comment shows two things: first that the production system set up for *Eurocops* in Spain had the same effect as it did for *Tatort* of bringing talent behind the camera and in the director's seat, but it also demonstrates that this emulation is not perceived by the critic as sufficient to create a good quality television product. French journalist Catherine Humbolt of *Le Monde* is similarly unimpressed after the screening of two episodes of *Eurocops* at the 'Teleconfronto' television fiction festival in Chiancino Terme, Italy in 1989:

*Nocte di Luna*, the Italian episode, is perhaps the worst film of the *Eurocops* series – which is in other respects a very interesting project (the episode produced by [private British network] Channel 4, *Hunting the Squirrel*, which has been shown outside of the competition, is excellent). [...] The fact that one episode is good and the other is not is actually quite reassuring. It proves to

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<sup>9</sup> The *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, or 'Working group of public sector radio broadcasters in the Federal Republic of Germany'. The ARD is a federal broadcasting body within which each *Bundesland* (federal German state) has its own radio and television broadcaster.

those who seek to make an argument about a system (production or otherwise) that this factor cannot count alone. (*Le Monde* 13/06/1989)

This reception comments demonstrates the lukewarm reception of the *Eurocops* series among the European journalists. It also shows that the TV series is less perceived as a whole by the French journalist than as a fragmented collection of episodes created by different production systems.

On the analytical side, Humbolt assesses that the formula based on a decentralized production system and a fragmentary narrative set up for *Eurocops* is not a miracle solution that can guarantee the quality of the series (as was said for *Tatort*, for example). However, Humbolt stresses the ingenuity of the set-up allowed by the ECA:

Born from the initiative of Antenne 2, this grouping, which can accommodate flexible arrangements, has given birth to a series that avoids the usual shortcomings of large European co-productions on European subjects with stereotypical characters. Only the money and the principle of the series have been pooled here.' (*Le Monde* 13/06/1989)

Humbolt thus praises the economic liberalization and legal flexibility made possible by the ECA. At the time of its first broadcast in festivals and on European screens, the reception of *Eurocops* was extremely lukewarm. As Alain Woodrow (*Le Monde* 27/02/1989) points out once again, 'The [ECA's] only output, *Eurocops*, does not shine by its cultural excellence'. Contrary to *Tatort*, received as a popular series epitomizing the 'Krimi' genre and famous for its longevity, *Eurocops* seems to have struggled to overcome its status as an televisual experiment aimed at breaking the deadlock of overly rigid cultural policies and public service broadcasting networks too focused on distribution in their respective country.

In spite of the bad press and very moderate ratings, the *Eurocops* episodes were rerun for nearly thirty years on France 2. As François Jost points out, a television programme cannot simply be circumscribed to its production context without taking into account the context of its broadcasting (and re-broadcasting):

The difficulty in studying this medium [television], lies in the need to articulate the programmes and their scheduling. One given programme (for example, Alfred Hitchcock Presents) does not have the same meaning or the same function depending on the time of day and the channel it is broadcast on. (Jost 2001).

Since the INA archives allowed us to have the broadcast and rerun schedules only for French television, we focus on the broadcast on French Antenne 2/France 2 PSB channel. A study of the scheduling of the *Eurocops* episodes in other European countries has yet to be carried out. This historical and archival limitation explains why we decided to focus on the French case in the article. The endless reruns of the *Eurocops* on French television are probably caused by the broadcast requirements and quotas applied in France since the Law of 1986 ('Léotard' Law)<sup>10</sup>. In France, the

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<sup>10</sup> This law 'on freedom of communication' voted on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1986 and amended many times in subsequent years, aimed to liberalize the media market while also imposing 40% quota on French films and 60% on European films on television. These French quotas are higher than the European directives, and seek to preserve the 'French cultural exception' by creating a more protectionist framework than that of the rest of Europe.

first episode, *Rapt à Paris*, was broadcast on Antenne 2 on 13 November 1988 at 4:37 p.m., as a daytime programme. When *Eurocops* came out, the episodes were then broadcast at more or less the same times on all the consortium's channels, but this scheduling then evolved in each of the countries. The last episode broadcast in France was the Italian episode *Nel cuore della notte*: it was then rerun on 24 April 2015 during the night. According to the INA count, the Italian episode *Nel cuore della notte* was rerun thirty-one times between 1988 and 2015.

### **A Mosaic of National Representations or a Unified European Identity?**

If *Eurocops* does not really correspond to the 'europudding' definition, its fragmented structure can be narratively analysed either in the sense of a homogenous or a disconnected universe. In contrast with the placeless counter-model of 'europudding' developed to meet European grant criteria in one single homogeneous product, *Eurocops*' originality lies in its decentralized production model, inspired by the German series *Tatort* with its loose narrative structure modelled on the collection. However, the universe of the series could be interpreted according to two opposite analyses. On the one hand, the presence of a common credits sequence that brings together all the recurring characters in the same edit could be interpreted as an indication of a common fictional universe declined across several geographical sites. This fictional formula can be found, for example, in contemporary series *Criminal* (Netflix, 2019-2020), which stages parallel plots in four different countries: France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany. The homogeneity of the series' universe is ensured, in this case, by the unity of place of the interrogation room, which is shared between all episodes. The universe is the same, but the parallel plots take place in different countries in a similar enclosed space (which is always filmed in the same Madrid studios). On the contrary, the different geographical locations featured in *Eurocops* as well as the structure of the collection suggest that we are looking at separate fictional universes with no connection to each other, as the characters in the various countries never meet in the storyline. Depending on the chosen interpretation – a common but parallel fictional universe, or a sum of disconnected fictional universes – the function of the *Eurocops* series can be understood in two opposing ways: either as an ideological tool converging towards the idea of a supranational European construction (unified universe), or as a mosaic of local representations that contradict the idea of a common European identity (divergent universes).

The first seven episodes of *Eurocops* offer a good panorama of the representations displayed in the series, as their key themes are linked to national rather than supranational identities. National identities are heavily emphasized in the backgrounds and geographical locations: the episodes stage of local customs, festivals or traditions that underscore each culture's most folkloristic aspects. For example, the first Swiss episode *Tote Reisen Nicht* (1988) is set in the heart of the picturesque Basel carnival. The two investigators are disguised to blend in with the crowd as they follow a suspect. In addition to this picturesque dimension, the plots themselves mostly focus on the national context: the first episodes of the series predominantly address domestic political issues in each country. The Italian episode, *Notte di Luna* (1988), deals with ostracized populations in Italian society: Yugoslav immigrants, and the Roma and Gypsy communities. The episode addresses issues such as migration

policies and structural racism in Italian society with a didactic and lecturing tone. Similarly, in the first French episode, *Rapt à Paris* (1988), the national context is questioned from the perspective of historical memory, as Parisian detectives Cortal and Laroche investigate the robbery of a charity whose culprits are found to be veterans of the Algeria War. The plot has a clear moralizing dimension – unscrupulous villains robbing a non-profit association – but this dimension is complemented by a genuine reflection on official history and the national trauma of the Algerian War. National identities do indeed provide the frame of reference for the first episodes of *Eurocops*, which appear to build a mosaic of identities more than a foundation for a supra-national European culture.

The main obstacle in this attempt at representing a supra-national identity could have been the language in which the series was produced and distributed. However, this issue was partly resolved by the media context of the time, which favoured the choice of dubbing for the distribution of foreign content over that of a subtitled original version (to this day, this remains the main technique used to broadcast programmes in languages other than the language of reception). The need for costly and awkward dubbing has often been mentioned to explain the difficulty of exporting European television series outside their national territories. According to Ib Bondebjerg (2017: 234-235), this difficulty was recently solved by the detective series *The Killing* (DR1, 2007-2012), which was the first series to be successful abroad in a subtitled version:

[...] Moreover, the UK launch of *The Killing* on BBC Four — several years after its original run in Denmark — is an example of how certain reviewers and niche audiences suddenly took an interest in subtitled content, and that has paved the way for other European crime dramas, such as the Flemish series *Salamander* (2012-).

The example chosen by Bondebjerg is particularly telling, as the British public – who are fond of American cultural products for which the language barrier is not an issue – is probably the audience the least receptive to subtitled programmes in Europe. However, as the author notes, original language programmes are still targeted at niche audiences and are still perceived as ‘subtitled oddities’ (Ward, 2013).

The language barrier and the linguistic Esperanto induced by the dubbing in *Eurocops* tends to support the disconnected universes analysis, but with some nuances. The dubbing operation is not without difficulty, as ‘broadcasting a foreign product implies re-shaping the original content, which implies adapting and dubbing as well as format mediations to fit into the national standards’ writes Laëticia Biscarrat (2020). In the case of *Eurocops*, this reworking had to be multiplied by seven different countries. If the series avoids the pitfall of televisual Esperanto by emphasizing the national setting, as we have seen, it does however initially grapple with a form of linguistic Esperanto. Looking at French broadcasts (the ones available to us), the first difficulty was to preserve the detectives’ national identities in the dubbed versions. This difficulty was poorly resolved by the use of expressions that act as cultural markers: for example, the Italian commissioner Corso, when dubbed in French, always greets the other characters with a clichéd ‘Ciao’. The second issue was the on-screen insertion of text written in the original language. In the English episode *Hunting the Squirrel*, a key element for the understanding of the plot is contained

in British newspaper headlines that roll across the screen: the producers had no other choice but to have the headlines recorded in voice-over for the French or Italian viewer. Such clumsy subterfuges are sometimes replaced by more intelligent solutions: in a later Swiss episode, *Die Ratte* (1992), inspectors Christian Merian and Miguel Bernauer find themselves face to face with Spanish immigrants, whom another character mistakes for Italians ('Those *spaghetti* are born liars!'). But the character is not aware of Miguel Bernauer's bilingualism (and probably bi-nationality): Bernauer speaks perfect Spanish, and can thus act as an intradiegetic translator.

The absence of an intradiegetic common language may also explain the almost total absence of collaboration between the seven European detective teams in the first episodes of the series. The universes at the beginning of *Eurocops* are truly compartmentalized, which supports the interpretation of the series as a mosaic of identities. However, in a late episode entitled *Jeu de construction* (1993), Austrian inspectors Brucker and Herzog receive a phone call from Italian commissioner Corso warning them that Italian terrorists are arriving on Austrian territory by train. But such a collaboration between detectives in different countries (and such a crossover from one fictional universe to another) remains very rare in a series where the main characters mostly remain confined in their respective closed and parallel universes.

As a comparison, more recent series deliver a much more accomplished reflection on the integration of different European police teams. The most iconic is Nordic Noir series *The Bridge* (SVT1/DR1, 2011-2018), in which a Swedish detective and a Danish investigator cooperate over a corpse found on a bridge linking their two countries, raising cross-border judicial issues. The Franco-British remake of *The Bridge*, *The Tunnel* (Sky Atlantic/Canal+, 2013-2018), follows the same pattern of bilateral police cooperation between France and the United Kingdom in the Channel Tunnel. Even more recently, the series *The Team* (ZDF/DR/vtm/ORF, 2015-) presents itself as 'a co-production between 11 media organizations from several EU Member States (involving six public service broadcasters) and was presented by the European Broadcasting Corporation as "the first genuine European series of its kind"', writes Novrup Redvall (2018: 139). This Belgian-German-Danish series, which features a Europol team investigating cross-border human trafficking, currently has two seasons broadcast in France on Franco-German channel Arte. In accord with real-life customs of professional communication, the different members of the European team converse in common English. From *Eurocops* to *The Team*, the 'eurocops' actually became a juridical and institutional identity. The days seem long gone when a Canadian newspaper could write: "Europol is a ghost. 'Eurocops' only exist in the eponymous television series and in the imagination of citizens" (Prantl, *La Presse*, 18 June 1994).

## Conclusion

While *Eurocops* has not stayed as a cult series, it remains an interesting cultural object that offers the opportunity to observe the functioning of one of the first European public service television coproductions. This detective fiction does fit with the institutional and historical definition of 'europudding', a televisual product designed to compete with American programmes.

However, its formula is less homogeneous than that of the traditional ‘europudding’, thanks to its decentralized production model and flexible narrative structure. The late 1980s and early 1990s remain a relatively understudied period in current media studies, often due to the lack of data and to difficulties in accessing certain archives. Our archival research on *Eurocops* was an opportunity to capture fragments of the media landscape as it developed on a European scale. The media archaeology of the recent past, along with the preservation of digital archives, continues to pose a major challenge for both cultural historians and media culture researchers.

Moreover, this crime collection provides insights not only into the progress of the integration of police forces at a European level, but more broadly into the evolution of representations of local, national and supranational identities. Between 1988 and 1994, the change was evident: the series evolves from a folkloric depiction of different European cultures and a moralistic illustration of domestic political issues in the early episodes, to more complex plots that integrate transcultural issues in the later episodes. This evolution over the course of the series – which equally affects language, settings and plots – reflects the gradual integration of institutions and countries within the EEC (which merged to form the EU in 1993). In today’s European coproductions, while national identities are still a key theme, they are addressed less through folklore than through the issue of cross-border migration, as shown by *The Killing*, *The Bridge*, *The Tunnel* or *Criminal*. It would seem, however, that the multiple coproduction structure is not the winning formula, as suggested by the mixed success of *Criminal*, of which only the British episodes have been reconducted into a second season. In contrast, the bilateral coproduction model of Nordic Noir series – built on a common generic core and similarly organized cultural industries, and benefiting from a higher status in terms of cultural legitimacy – is more successful both domestically and on the export market.

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