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“Pictures from Beyond the Eastern Border”: Socialist Television in Finland, 1963 to 1988. *Television & New Media* (online first, published August 11 2017, DOI: 10.1177/1527476417721749).

The Estonian 2009 documentary film *Disco and Atomic War* describes childhood memories of watching Finnish television in Soviet Estonia. The film portrays Finnish television as a source of exciting American entertainment, a window to the world of the unhappy millionaires of *Dallas* and the adventures of *Knight Rider*. *Disco and Atomic War* argues that Finnish television, with its visions of Western consumerism, was a key factor in the fall of communism in Estonia. From the point of view of post-socialist Estonia, Finnish Cold War era television appears as a dreamland of Western entertainment and consumer culture. Like all memories, this dreamland is based on a partial remembrance. While Finnish television featured commercials and American entertainment, it also maintained connections with socialist television cultures.

European media history of the Cold War era has recently started paying attention to connections across the East/West divide (e.g. Badenoch, Fickers and Henrich-Franke 2013). Scholars have analysed Eastern European audiences’ experiences of Western broadcasting (e.g. Hagen 2013; Lepp and Pantti 2013; Meyen and Nawratil 2004) and the ways in which socialist broadcasting organizations reacted to competition from Western media (e.g. Bren 2010; Dittmar 2004; Roth-Ey 2011). Little attention has so far been paid to how Eastern European television culture circulated outside the socialist bloc (Palonkorpi 2014). Accordingly, by looking at the flow of programmes and

influences from socialist countries one can question established interpretations of European media history.

Emerging research on socialist television history is revising earlier interpretations of Eastern European media history (e.g. Evans 2016; Gumbert 2014; Havens, Imre, and Lustyik 2013; Imre 2016; Roth-Ey 2011). Among others, Dana Mustata (2012, 131–32) has criticized research on socialist television for political reductionism, in which political factors alone appear to determine the role of television in socialist societies. Instead, Mustata argues that scholarship should acknowledge the way ideas and practices relating to television may cross ideological borders. Similarly, Sabina Mihelj (2013) has pointed out that a Cold War era framework, which posits a clear separation between the blocs, hinders us from identifying similarities between television cultures in the East and the West. Mihelj argues that the television ideals of public service television professionals in Western and Eastern Europe were based on similar values of information, education, entertainment, and anti-commercialism. Television professionals in both Eastern and Western Europe faced many of the same challenges and responded to them in similar ways (Mihelj 2013, 15, 20–21).

While scholarship on European television history has questioned the existence of a rigid East–West binary, it has paid little attention to countries such as Finland that fell outside the blocs. Finnish foreign policy sought to position Finland as a neutral country between the East and the West during the Cold War era. Accordingly, the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yleisradio, YLE) was the only broadcaster that was a member of both the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and its socialist equivalent, the Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision (OIRT). While media historians have explored American and British influences on Finnish television (Elfving 2008; Keinonen

2011; Kortti 2003), they haven't paid much attention to connections between Finnish and socialist television cultures, with the exception of some studies about how early Finnish television institutions managed relations with the Soviet Union (Keinonen 2012; Salokangas 1996). However, in-between countries like Finland provide television historians a chance to study how influences and content could travel beyond bloc boundaries.

This article offers a contribution towards a European television history that acknowledges a multiplicity of relations between socialist and non-socialist Europe. It does so by mapping the presence of socialist television in Finnish television culture between 1963 and 1988. By (state) socialist television, I refer to television institutions and programmes in socialist countries (cf. Mihelj 2013) rather than the actual ideological content of television programmes. I examine the cultural visibility of socialist television in Finland, rather than institutional history. While Western television imports were more common on Finnish television, I argue that socialist television culture also had a significant influence on the Finnish television environment.

This article is based on the analysis of television programme listings and articles about socialist television in the main Finnish TV magazine *Katso* in 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, and 1988. *Katso* published full programme listings for Finnish television and radio channels as well as reviews and articles on broadcasting and other topics. As such, it was a key forum for the discussion of television in Finland. In my reading of *Katso*, I have analysed, first, the magazine's discourse on socialist television in its reviews and other articles. Second, I have examined socialist television programmes that were available for Finnish viewers. This included programme listings for Soviet television channels as well as Eastern European programme imports on Finnish channels. The sample includes

volumes of *Katso* at five-year intervals, which enables me to trace developments in the visibility of socialist television over three decades. While the selected volumes of *Katso* do not provide a full picture of all programme imports from socialist countries, their contents, or the discourses about socialist television in Finland, my sample highlights the variety of ways that socialist television entered Finnish television culture.

The time period for the sample, 1963–1988, covers the “era of scarcity” (Ellis 2000) in Finnish television history. After the establishment of the first transmitting station in Northern Finland in 1962, most of the population could access television broadcasting in 1963. The era of scarcity gradually ended with the establishment of a new commercial channel and the availability of cable and satellite television in the late 1980s. The main television broadcasters at the time were the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) and the commercial television company Mainos-TV (MTV). MTV did not have a channel of its own but rented broadcasting time from YLE, thus helping to finance public service television.¹ As MTV shared YLE’s channels, it too was regulated by the same programming policy as YLE. Both companies were expected to provide public service in the form information, education and entertainment, although MTV had more responsibility for entertainment. Initially, MTV was not allowed to broadcast news or current affairs, but its schedules included many documentary and educational programmes. (Keinonen 2011, 104–5, 131.) MTV was not the only commercial television station in Finland. Tesvisio (TES), which had been the first Finnish company to start regular television broadcasts in 1956, operated until 1964, when financial difficulties forced it to sell its operations to YLE. Later on, YLE and MTV cooperated in establishing a new commercial channel Kolmostelevisio (TV3) in 1986. As TES and TV3 broadcast few programmes from socialist Europe, this article focuses on YLE and MTV.

Encounters with socialist television as a cultural form

Recent research has begun to describe socialist television as a distinctive cultural form that was shaped by wider European and global media trends, but also developed its own distinguishing characteristics. Anikó Imre (2016, 17, 258) stresses that television in both Western and Eastern Europe was built on the European public service broadcasting tradition, which predates the socialist era. Socialist television featured many of the same genres as television in Western Europe, although it developed distinctive programming trends, such as favouring the historical adventure serial (Imre 2016). Likewise, Sabina Mihelj and Simon Huxtable (2016) note that state socialist television resembled television elsewhere in Europe in many respects. In both contexts, television was closely associated with the private sphere of the home, and television schedules were designed to follow the patterns of work and leisure. Unlike Western European television though, socialist television was organized around “revolutionary time,” assuming a teleological progress towards Communism. Thus, socialist television constructed an annual calendar of festivities “designed to commemorate the revolutionary achievements of the past and anticipate the fulfilment of communist ideals in the future” (Mihelj and Huxtable 2016, 343). Christine E. Evans (2016, 13) argues that Soviet Central Television promoted a “festive understanding of the medium,” offering a calendar of holiday programming that sought to disrupt domestic routines. Other original features of Soviet television include its gendering as a masculine rather than feminine medium, as well as its genre hierarchy, which placed quiz shows in high regard (Evans 2016, 12–14). Accordingly, socialist television would have been recognisable to European viewers from outside the socialist bloc as a domestic medium filled with many familiar genres, while its annual calendar of festivities and types of popular programmes would have appeared as distinctive.

How then did socialist television as a cultural form appear in the Finnish television environment? As Finnish television broadcasts reached Northern Estonia, so Soviet broadcasts reached parts of Finland too. In fact, Estonian television started offering weekly programmes in Finnish already in 1956, before YLE and MTV had begun regular television broadcasting. For the Soviet Union, television seemed like a promising new propaganda medium to reach the Finnish audience (Keinonen 2012, 180–81). The attraction of Soviet television for Finnish viewers was not, however, necessarily ideological. In the early years of television, when programming was scarce, foreign broadcasts could be considered a welcome addition. *Katso's* article “Images from beyond the Eastern border” described how people in Eastern Finland managed to view programmes on Soviet television. The owner of a local television and radio store explained that many customers had inquired about ways of accessing Soviet broadcasts, as receiving the audio required installing an extra component on the television set. Interviewees reported watching programmes such as ballet and ice hockey on a Soviet channel (Anon. 1963). *Katso* evoked a sense that television owners were hungry for content, with Soviet programmes offering a fascinating novelty.

While *Katso* portrayed the visibility of Soviet television in Eastern Finland as something of a curiosity, the availability of Estonian television in parts of Southern Finland was a more familiar phenomenon. The magazine regularly published the programme listings for both Swedish television and television from Tallinn in the 1960s. In 1968 it added listings for a television station in Vyborg in Russia. The Tallinn television schedules included two weekly programs in Finnish. While audience ratings for these programmes do not exist, *Katso* justified publishing the programme listings by estimating that Tallinn television had a lot of viewers in Finland (Pirhonen and Mustonen 1963).

By publishing the programme listings for Tallinn and Vyborg television, *Katso* introduced aspects of Soviet television culture to readers even in parts of the country that Soviet broadcasts did not reach. Christine E. Evans (2016, 49, 72–73) has analysed how Soviet Central Television reorganised its schedules in the late 1960s, reserving prime time for news and entertainment and relegating propagandistic programmes to less conspicuous programming slots. Likewise, the prime-time schedules of Tallinn and Vyborg television consisted mostly of news, films, entertainment and music, making them unremarkable for *Katso*'s readers. While the programme listings featured recognisable Finnish television genres, serials and religious programmes were absent, as socialist television did not use the latter to mark Sundays or religious holidays (Mihelj and Huxtable 2016, 341–42). On the other hand, Tallinn television offered more varied morning and daytime programming than Finnish television, which only broadcast a small number of children's and school television programmes in the morning. In some respects, Soviet television could appear more advanced than Finnish television: both the Tallinn and Vyborg stations featured some colour programmes in 1968, whereas YLE only began test broadcasts in colour in 1969.

Distinctive features of Soviet television listings include programmes focusing on socialist culture, such as youth festivals, and the focus on Eastern Europe in programme imports and co-productions. Thus, the vision of the international community offered by Soviet television schedules was different from that of Finnish television, which imported many programmes from the USA and Western Europe. At the same time, the programme listings showed that Finland was part of the international circuit of Soviet television alongside socialist countries in Europe; for example, both Tallinn and Vyborg broadcast YLE's 1968 programme celebrating ten years of Finnish television entertainment.

Tallinn also featured a programme dedicated to the friendship between Finland and the Soviet Union (*Katso* 1968 [1; 14]). In this way, the programme listings highlighted connections between Finnish and Soviet television.

As television was rapidly becoming a mass medium in Finland in the early 1960s, *Katso* often reported on the development of television in different countries. Articles about broadcasting in Eastern Europe defined television as a medium for art and education. Writing about his visit to study in Prague, the Finnish television director Heikki Ritavuori argued that despite the relatively poor technical equipment of the Czechoslovakian television studios, the working conditions in Prague were superior to Finland. Ritavuori (1968) particularly admired Czechoslovakian television's commitment to developing television aesthetics and commissioning large numbers of new dramas. Another article debated the value of Polish television theatre, which had been criticized for elitism and avant-gardism. The article defended television's right to address a discerning audience, arguing that Polish television theatre had eventually managed to both maintain its artistic standards and to win over the television audience (Cedro 1963). An article about the educational television channel in the Soviet Union described its large scale operations, ranging from programmes for school children to university courses and scholarly conferences. The article referred to the "methodological, psychological, sociological and other research" the Soviets were undertaking to develop pedagogy that suited television as a visual medium (Shatov 1968). These articles described socialist television as a serious endeavour to develop televisual forms of expression in art and education.

As the previous examples show, *Katso* often viewed socialist television favourably compared to television outside the socialist bloc. Even an article about Estonian

television advertising argued that, unlike in the West, the aim of Soviet advertising was not to push competing products on viewers, but to inform them about new products (Uusitalo 1968). The only article that discussed television in an explicitly political Cold War context addressed the role of broadcasting in the liberalization of Czechoslovakia before the Soviet invasion. Referencing American research about Soviet media, the article also pondered the influence of international broadcasting on socialist television cultures (Friberg 1968). The article is an exception in *Katso's* discourse on television in Eastern Europe, which otherwise presented socialist television cultures from the point of view of locals or of Finnish visitors. It suggests that the shock of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia perhaps motivated a more critical look at socialist media cultures.

In the 1970s, *Katso* no longer published programme listings for Soviet television. However, YLE TV2 introduced Finnish television viewers to socialist television culture via television specials in which a whole evening's programming came from Yugoslavia (*Katso* 1973 [20]) and East Germany (*Katso* 1978 [6]). Both evenings followed a similar schedule, starting with programmes for children, continuing with documentaries, and ending with a film, though the Yugoslavian evening also featured a ballet. Even the in-vision continuity announcers who introduced programmes were Yugoslavian and East German. Given the importance of entertainment in socialist television (Evans 2016, 82–114, 183–215; Imre 2016, 83–107, 133–154), the tone of the evenings was surprisingly serious. The majority of the programmes were documentaries on sports, history, and the military. These evening specials played with the notion of television as a national medium, giving Finnish viewers a chance to experience what it was like to watch television in Yugoslavia or East Germany. Especially in the case of the East German evening, the programming focused on Eastern European views of the Cold-War conflict, including a film about lovers separated by the Berlin Wall (Anon. 1978). According to

Katso's television critic, however, the East German evening did not try to present the country in a purely idealized light, but also displayed a "healthy self-criticism" in a programme about environmental pollution (Mustonen 1978).

These mediated encounters painted a picture of socialist television that shared many familiar features with Finnish television (e.g. seeing television as a national medium, scheduling practises), but also some distinctive characteristics (e.g. a world view focusing on Eastern Europe). *Katso's* articles and YLE's Yugoslavian and East German evenings aligned socialist television with art and information, marginalizing entertainment. The situation looks somewhat different, when we look at Eastern European programme imports on Finnish television.

Programme imports from socialist Europe

The flow of television programmes between the West and the East was uneven, with socialist countries in Europe importing more television programmes from non-socialist countries than vice versa (Mihelj 2012, 15–17). The 1974 UNESCO report *Television Traffic – A One Way Street* concluded that Eastern European countries imported about ten percent of all their programming from the West, whereas Western Europe only imported about two percent of its programmes from the East. Entertainment, such as feature films and television series, were able to cross ideological borders. Yet, Western countries hesitated to buy documentaries, current affairs shows, or children's programmes from socialist countries. (Nordenstreng and Varis 1974, 18, 37, 40.) This was not quite true of Finnish television companies, which acquired various generic programmes from Eastern Europe. The main television genres that Finnish television

companies imported from Eastern Europe during the period were feature films, children's television, television drama and series, documentary programmes, arts, entertainment, and sports.²

1. Feature films

Feature films not made for television were the most common imports from socialist countries throughout Finnish television's era of scarcity. The Soviet Union was by far the most important source for feature films, followed by Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia. Many Eastern European films broadcast in Finland had been released in theatres within the past couple of years. *Katso* (1968 [36]) commented that Eastern European films were usually available for television sooner than Western films, which were rarely televised within five years of their theatrical release. Critically acclaimed films by directors such as Milos Forman and Andrzej Wajda were quickly available on television. Finnish television schedules also featured lighter Eastern European comedies and older Soviet films, including classics of silent cinema and 1930s musicals. In 1988, for example, Finnish television channels broadcast both critical contemporary films about life under socialism and vernacular comedies from different Soviet states.

In 1973, the parliamentary television programme committee, which was tasked with ensuring that television followed public service programming policy, controversially decided to add six Soviet films to YLE's spring schedule. The initiative came from a politician belonging to the right-wing National Coalition Party, who argued that YLE did not broadcast enough Soviet films and that Soviet historical cinema should be more well known in Finland, as "[a]ll great spectacles are by no means American" (Knuuti 1973). This intervention shows that a critical attitude towards the dominant position of

American media culture was present even on the political right in the early 1970s. The decision to add Soviet films to the television schedule was controversial, because the programme committee was deemed to have overstepped its mandate. In an interview with *Katso*, YLE employees agreed that television should broadcast more Soviet films, but criticized the way the programme committee intervened in programme planning by naming specific films for YLE to broadcast (Ibid.). While the question of broadcasting Soviet films was to an extent political, there were many other motives for broadcasting films from socialist Europe, such as their timely availability and internationally recognized quality.

2. Children's television

Children's programmes were among the most important Eastern European imports on Finnish television and, for viewers, probably the most memorable. YLE broadcast an occasional children's programme from Eastern Europe in the 1960s, but in the 1970s and 1980s Eastern European imports formed a significant proportion of Finnish children's television, with the number of individual programmes or series episodes broadcast rising from about 30 in 1973 to almost 100 in 1988. This is excluding the East German *Unser Sandmännchen/Our Sandman* puppet animations, which opened and closed YLE's weekday children's programme *Pikku Kakkonen/Little Two* between 1973 and 2002 (Suoninen 2007, 493, 496).³ As a result, YLE's children's programming was closely associated with Eastern European animation. In general, YLE broadcast more children's television than MTV, whose only socialist imports for children were a series of folk tales from different Eastern European countries in 1978.

YLE favoured children's television from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Soviet Union. Hungarian children's programmes, while less numerous, appeared in every year of my sample. YLE TV2 broadcast 43 episodes in 1983 alone of the most notable Polish import in the period, the puppet animation series *Nalle Luppakorva/The Bear with the Loopy Ear* (*Miś Uszatek*, 1975–1987). Soviet children's programmes mainly consisted of animated folk stories; for example, there were 28 fairy tales shown in 1978 in a series. While most children's programmes were cartoons and fairy tales, YLE also imported programmes depicting the lives of contemporary children, such as a Slovakian serial about children's lives in a new suburb (1983) and a Polish serial about a girl who stands up to bullies (1983).

Due to the limited amount of children's programming during television's era of scarcity and YLE's practise of rerunning children's series repeatedly, many characters from socialist children's television became very familiar to Finnish children in the 1970s and 1980s. Each of the 104 episodes of *Nalle Luppakorva*, for example, was rerun five to seven times between 1979 and 1996 (Yleisradio 2010). The Czechoslovakian cartoon serial *Rosvo Ruudolf/Rudolph the Robber* (*O loupežníku Rumcajsovi*, 1967, YLE TV1), aired both in 1978 and 1988. Thus, several generations of Finnish children grew up watching the same Eastern European cartoon characters.

Eastern European children's television was an export success in many other Western and neutral countries as well (Palonkorpi 2014, 151, 154). Several Eastern European animated cartoons such as the Czechoslovakian *Krtek/The Mole* cartoons and Soviet films based on folklore motifs received awards at International film festivals in the West (Kononenko 2011; Palonkorpi 2014). Socialist children's cartoons provided European public service broadcasters an alternative to American cartoons. In contrast to American

children's programmes, children's television in socialist Europe was produced outside market principles, with a mission to support the age-appropriate development of children (Lustyik 2012, 142–143). Moreover, unlike many American cartoons, socialist children's cartoons avoided violence (Kononenko 2011, 276). The amount of Eastern European imports on YLE's channels shows that these principles agreed with the values of European public service broadcasting even outside the state socialist context.

3. Fiction

Eastern European fiction imports fell into two categories: series and television drama, including programmes described by *Katso* as television theatre or made-for-TV movies. Finnish television did not broadcast Eastern European dramas in 1963 or 1968, but in 1973, YLE and MTV broadcast a total of eleven. East German television produced four of these, offering stories that dealt with everyday life in socialist society, such as the “problems faced by a married couple when the wife ... gets a higher position at the factory where her husband still works as a welder” (*Katso* 1973 [2]). The two-part television film *Agathe Schweigert in suuri matka/Agathe Schweigert's Great Journey (Die grosse Reise der Agathe Schweigert, 1972)* offered an “ideological analysis” (Nordberg 1973) of a woman whose worldview is turned upside down after she learns to understand the political views of her anti-fascist son who died in the Spanish Civil war. MTV broadcast two Soviet television films: one based on a novel by Anton Chekhov (*Katso* 1973 [29]), and the other (*Kotikatuni/My Home Street*) portraying the life of a working-class family in Moscow (*Katso* 1973 [1]). For television drama, as for most genres apart from children's television, the early 1970s were the high point of socialist television imports in my sample. In later years, Finnish television channels broadcast only a few Eastern European TV dramas annually, mainly from Poland.

After children's programmes, series – sometimes called *itäsarjat*, “east serials” (Laukkanen 2009) – were probably the most visible genre of socialist television in Finland. The first socialist television series in my sample appeared in 1973, when Finnish television channels broadcast series from five Eastern European countries. This was also the year with the largest number of Eastern European television serials. Poland was the most important source of socialist television series in Finland. MTV for example offered two Polish historical adventure series: *Janosik* (*Janosik*, 1973, MTV 1978), about a mythical, eighteenth-century anti-hero, and *Panssaripartio/The Tank Crew* (*Czterej pancerni i pies*, 1966, MTV 1973), about the exploits of a group of soldiers and their dog during the Second World War. MTV also broadcast a contemporary Polish serial, *Maantiellä* (*Droga*, 1973, MTV 1978), about the life of a Warsaw truck driver. Although in this article I focus only on the television schedules of selected years, socialist television series enjoyed heightened visibility in MTV's programming through the 1970s.⁴

Many socialist series that aired in Finland in the 1970s focused on historical drama or adventure.⁵ Imre (2016, 137) argues that historical fiction suited the ideals of socialist entertainment, as it could both reach a popular audience and fulfil the standards of “Eurocentric taste education.” Moreover, historical settings allowed the serials to appeal to nationalistic sentiments in socialist countries while avoiding competition with Western lifestyles (Ibid., 134–135). *Katso* likened Eastern European historical serials to fiction from outside the socialist bloc, describing *Janosik* as “Poland's Robin Hood” (*Katso* 1978 [1]) and comparing the humour of *Panssaripartio* to the popular Finnish World War II novel, *The Unknown Soldier* (Anon. 1973a). *Katso's* television critic noted that a Yugoslavian serial based on *Decamerone* was scheduled as an alternative to the

popular American melodrama *Peyton Place*, but lamented that with its “Hollywood-like” style *Decamerone* did not offer a proper alternative to *Peyton Place* (Wiik 1973). In this way, *Katso* made no great distinction between Western and Eastern European entertainment. In fact, socialist television series could disappoint by being too much like American TV fiction.

Not all Eastern European historical television dramas were quite so Hollywood-like, however. The Soviet serial *Varjot väistyvät/The Shadows Withdraw (Teni ischezaiut v polden, 1971, YLE TV1 1973)* described life in a Siberian village for five decades after the revolution. The title of the serial referred to the way the revolution swept away the “shadows” of the old way of life. (Anon. 1973b.) The series dramatization of revolutionary socialist history found a place in the Finnish prime time; it was broadcast on YLE’s main channel at 9:30 p.m. on Friday nights.

Socialist television series were most numerous in the 1970s. My sample for the 1980s included only three Eastern European television serials, two of them directed by famous film directors.⁶ Andrzej Wajda’s *Vuodet vierivät, vaihtuvat päivät/As the Years Go by (Z biegiem lat, z biegiem dni..., 1980, YLE TV1 1983)* followed life in Krakow in the decades leading up to the First World War. According to *Katso*’s television critic, the “Slavic pulse” and “artistic depiction” of Wajda’s series could test the patience of viewers used to the more fast-paced entertainment of the contemporary British series (Sarkama 1983). A serial adaptation of Emir Kusturica’s film *Isä on työmatkalla/When Father Was Away on Business (Otac na službenom putu, 1985, YLE TV1 1988)* presented a critical view of life in a socialist country by portraying the experiences of a child whose father is convicted to a labour camp. Thus, whereas the Eastern European series seen on Finnish

television in the 1970s were largely historical entertainment, the serials broadcast in the 1980s were framed rather as art and serious social commentary.

4. Documentaries

Finnish 1960s television schedules supported the conclusion in the study *Television Traffic – A One Way Street*: outside the socialist bloc, Eastern European documentaries were not in high demand. Finnish television broadcast only a few of them on topics such as tourist attractions and nature in 1963 and 1968. While the 1968 schedule listings featured several Finnish documentaries about contemporary socialist Europe, the only imported documentary on this topic was a Polish one about the reconstruction of Warsaw after the Second World War. Thus, although Eastern Europe was a topic of interest, Finnish television relied on its own productions rather than importing documentaries from socialist Europe.

Socialist documentaries on Finnish television increased in the 1970s, as did their subject matters. The Soviet Union was the main source for them. In 1973 MTV broadcast more Soviet documentaries than YLE, although it had fewer broadcasting hours and a more entertainment-oriented programming remit. Those covered a variety of topics from nature to the development of Soviet diplomacy in the 1920s, the science of emotions, and the history of Finnic peoples. This shows the breadth of commercial television programming in the 1970s; MTV provided by no means only entertainment. YLE broadcast Soviet nature and science documentaries too, as well as a film essay on children in the midst of the Vietnam War (*Vierasta kärsimystä ei ole/There Is No Foreign Suffering*, YLE TV2 1973). Soviet documentaries broadcast in 1978 focused on nature, science, and culture (Soviet peoples, Leo Tolstói). In addition to the Soviet Union, a few

documentaries per year were imported from other socialist countries in Europe. Many of them dealt with the arts, but some dealt with overtly political themes such as: an East German documentary about housing in Finland (*Katso* 1978 [8]) and a Yugoslavian documentary on Cambodia, promoted as the first foreign film reportage made after the Khmer Rouge takeover (*Katso* 1978 [31]).

The number of Soviet documentaries in the 1980s was comparable to the 1970s, while the number of documentaries imported from other socialist countries declined. Most Soviet imports were nature documentaries or biographies of scientists or athletes. YLE also broadcast two Soviet documentaries on current issues: an account of a Soviet television journalist's journey in Afghanistan (*Katso* 1983 [49]) and a documentary about the development of the communist party and ideology over the past 70 years. According to *Katso*, the programme was "very critical and [represented] the new Soviet critical thinking" (*Katso* 1988 [35]). Documentaries imported from other socialist countries dealt almost exclusively with art.

Thus, while there were few Eastern European documentaries on Finnish television, Soviet documentaries had a place in both public service and commercial television from the 1970s onwards. In addition, both YLE and MTV co-produced numerous documentary programmes with Soviet partners.⁷ The geopolitical position of Finland explains, at least in part, the prevalence of Soviet documentaries. After losing two wars against the Soviet Union from 1939 to 1944, Finnish foreign policy prioritized good relations with its powerful neighbour. YLE supported this policy by offering programming that familiarized audiences with the Soviet Union, such as the long-running radio show *Näin naapurissa/Thus at the Neighbour's* (1978–1985), produced in cooperation with Soviet radio and the Novosti Press Agency (Lindfors 2008). Screening

Soviet documentaries contributed to the political project of encouraging the Finnish public to understand the former enemy by offering viewers a chance to see the Soviet Union from an insider's perspective.

5. Arts, entertainment, and sports

Finnish television featured relatively few entertainment programmes from socialist countries. While entertainment programmes such as quiz shows and popular music shows were a key part of television schedules in socialist countries (Evans 2016, 82–114, 183–215; Imre 2016, 83–107, 133–154), these programmes were produced for each domestic television market, rather than exported internationally. Popular music programmes imported from Eastern Europe consisted mostly of broadcasts from international music festivals, such as Intervision's song contests in Karlovy Vary (1968) and Sopot (1978). Occasionally, YLE featured Eastern European entertainment programmes that had participated in the Rose d'Or competition in Montreaux (*Katso* 1963 [45]; 1978 [4]).⁸

Performing arts programmes formed a minor portion of socialist television exports to Finland. The only programmes in this category in 1963 were two Eurovision broadcasts from Yugoslavia showcasing a youth choir festival and folk dance. In the following years, YLE broadcast a few classical music programmes from Eastern Europe annually. The programmes typically showcased music of famous composers from each country. In addition, two programmes by Czechoslovakian television in 1968 documented YLE's chamber choir's visit to Czechoslovakia. Eastern European dance programmes appeared rarely, with a few ballet and folk dance performances broadcast in 1973 and 1983. Accordingly, performing arts formed a perhaps surprisingly small portion of Eastern

European programme imports, considering the high value given to performing arts in socialist countries and the relatively large proportion of cultural programming on socialist television (Eugster 1983, 173).

Finally, YLE broadcast various sports contests from Eastern Europe. These were mostly World or European Championship tournaments broadcast via either the EBU's Eurovision network or the OIRT's Intervision network. Sports events from the Soviet Union were always transmitted through Intervision, but sports events in Central Eastern European countries YLE received through either Intervision or Eurovision. YLE was a member of Intervision, but it is notable that it did not rely on the network for programming other than sports and song festivals. A regular feature of YLE's annual sports calendar was the Izvestia Trophy ice hockey tournament in Moscow in December. This was a tournament for national teams, usually attended by the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, and Finland and less regularly by Poland and Canada. YLE generally broadcast the matches of the Finnish team and the match between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, normally the strongest teams in the tournament. Thus the Izvestia Trophy tournament is an example of an event in the socialist Europe that became a regular feature of the annual television calendar in Finland.

Conclusion

The case study of Finnish television indicates that the influence of socialist television culture was not limited to state socialist countries. Socialist television contributed to Finnish television culture in various ways from the 1960s to the 1980s. Finnish media organizations made efforts to introduce audiences to socialist television, *Katso* by

publishing programme listings and appreciative articles about socialist television and YLE by scheduling evenings dedicated to television in Eastern European countries. YLE and MTV imported programmes from socialist Europe in all major television genres except religious programming. Programme imports were not limited to materials that might seem apolitical, such as entertainment, but also included documentaries that addressed explicitly political topics. Cooperation with the Soviet Union was important for Finnish television, with Soviet feature films, children's programmes and documentaries making their way onto Finnish screens. MTV favoured Poland as a source of television serials, while YLE looked to Poland and Czechoslovakia for children's television. Socialist television seems to have been most visible in the 1970s, but the amount of programme imports did not drop dramatically in the 1980s.

The history of Finnish television further illustrates that an East–West binary is not a fruitful framework for understanding European media history. Rather, scholarship needs to account for non-aligned in-between spaces and the flow of culture not only from the West to the East, but also from the East to the rest of Europe. What is special about the television culture of a small European country such as Finland is the way it has combined many different visions of television. Programmes following the European public service broadcasting tradition, programmes produced by the globally dominant US television industry, programmes from different European versions of commercial television, as well as programmes from socialist television cultures were placed side by side in the television schedules. As a result, Finnish television as a whole offered audiences competing visions of society, diverse ways of understanding information and entertainment, and various forms of addressing television audiences.

Previous research on Finnish television discourse from the 1960s to the 1980s has posited a clear binary between the values of public service and commercial television. Television historian Iiris Ruoho has influentially argued that Finnish television was structured by two distinct sets of values: the values of public service emphasising information, high culture and citizenship and the values of commercial television, prioritising entertainment, popular culture and consumerism (Ruoho 2001, 209–226). In relation to socialist television culture, however, YLE and MTV resembled each other more often than not. Although MTV is better known for importing American shows and influences (Elfving 2008, 115–165, 257–264), it also imported socialist entertainment, like historical adventure series, as well as Soviet documentaries and TV dramas. In other words, commercial television schedules could encompass a surprising variety of programming. Moreover, MTV co-produced numerous programmes with socialist television organizations. While in-depth discussion of how the political and regulatory context in Finland shaped YLE's and MTV's programming decisions is beyond the scope of this article, it appears that MTV considered cooperation with socialist broadcasters beneficial for itself. This aspect of Finnish commercial television history has been largely forgotten after the fall of state socialism in Europe.

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¹ The names of the TV channels have varied over time. For the sake of clarity, I use the abbreviations YLE TV1, YLE TV2, and MTV throughout the article.

² I have excluded one-time programmes in this analysis to focus on generic programming. It is worth noting that Finnish television broadcast some short films, school television programmes, and the occasional event, such as the May Day parade in Moscow in 1963. The following databases supplied the original titles and production years of television programmes: filmpolski.pl, csfd.cz, fernsehenderddr.de, imdb.com. Most English translations of programme titles are my own and based on the Finnish title rather than the original.

³ The *Unser Sandmännchen* cartoons are “frame films”, intended for introducing and closing a children’s programme on television. Thus they were not mentioned in the schedule listings and are not included in the table in the Appendix.

⁴ Socialist series broadcast by MTV in the 1970s include *Punaista viiniä/Red Wine* (*Červené vino*, Czechoslovakia 1972, MTV 1974), *Karino* (*Karino*, Poland 1974, MTV 1976), *Mustia pilviä/Black Clouds* (*Czarne chmury*, Poland 1973, MTV 1975–1976), *Rakkaat naapurit/Dear Neighbours* (*Die Lieben Mitmenschen*, East Germany 1972–1974, MTV 1976), *Eläköön Benovsky/Long Live Beňovský* (*Vivat Beňovský*, Czechoslovakia 1975, MTV 1976–1977). See MTV 1974; MTV 1975; MTV 1976; MTV 1977.

⁵ In addition to the aforementioned series, examples included: the Romanian adaptation of a romantic literary classic *Felix ja Ottilia/Felix and Ottilia* (*Felix și Otilia*, 1972, YLE TV1 1973), a Czechoslovakian coming-of-age drama about a young man during the national awakening of the 18th century (*Heräämisen aika/Time of awakening/F. L. Vek*, 1970, YLE TV1 1973), and a Polish serial about the life of a wealthy family from the 1863

uprising to the First World War (*Öitä ja päiviä/Nights and days/Noce i dnie*, 1975, YLE TV2 1978).

⁶ In addition, YLE broadcast the Polish serial *Seitsemän vuotta/Seven years (Punkt widzenia*, 1980, YLE TV2 1988).

⁷ Co-produced documentaries focused on Finnish-Soviet relations and Soviet culture and society. For example in 1978, YLE broadcast among many other co-productions a four-part series about Finnish-Soviet cultural relations co-produced with Soviet Central Television (*Timonja*) and in 1983, a four-part series about Soviet energy policy co-produced with Gosteleradio (*Neuvostoenergia/Soviet energy*).

⁸ Finnish television featured socialist entertainment in its own productions. For example, performances by the Red Army choir and orchestra (1968, 1973, and 1978) and the Moscow Circus (1968, 1973, and 1983) were televised by both YLE and MTV.