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The Persistent Structure of Hegemony in the Eurovision Song Contest

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The Eurovision Song Contest is an international contest of artistic prowess. The organization of the voting process in the contest aims to create a 'veil of ignorance' that promotes unbiased evaluations by providing an equal opportunity for all contestants. This study scrutinizes the departure of the Eurovision Song Contest's outcomes from its ideal organizational conception and points to systematic preferences among European blocs. By analyzing the patterns of relations between four empirically derived European blocs, this study shows that hegemony results from the unique structural position that the Western bloc occupies. This bloc enjoys a persistent position of a *tertius gaudens* that results from the fact that (a) nations in this bloc favor each other and export few points to other blocs; (b) the Northern and Mediterranean blocs avoid each other, and therefore allocate their surplus votes to the Western bloc. The Western bloc longitudinally sustains its hegemonic position through the persistence of between- and within-bloc exchange relations. The assumed veil of ignorance legitimizes this structural advantage. We propose that the fairness of the 'veil or ignorance' both secures hegemony and – when analyzed appropriately – helps to uncover it.

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. . . the advantage accruing to the tertius derives from the fact that he has an equal, equally independent, and for this very reason decisive, relation to two others. The advantage, however, does not exclusively depend on the hostility of the two. A certain general differentiation, mutual strangeness, or qualitative dualism may be sufficient. This, in fact, is the basic formula of the type, and the hostility of the elements is merely a specific case of it, even if it is the most common. (Simmel 1950:159)

1. Introduction

Studies of international relational structures have primarily focused on trade, industrial, military and diplomatic relations (Breiger 1981; Knoke

1990; Snyder & Kick 1979; Su & Clawson 1994; Wallace & Singer 1989; Williamson 1989). Lacking in these network studies is the analysis of the role of culture. Social network scholars downplay culture and neglect institutionalized norms as factors affecting hegemony and prominence (Emirbayer & Goodwin 1994). Moreover, structural scholars pay little attention to cultural networks in explaining hegemony in international relations.

This study attempts partly to compensate for this deficiency by addressing the persistent structure of international hegemonic relations that can be seen in the Eurovision Song Contest, a European competitive context that is based on the principle of equal opportunity. The empirical analyses show that despite the fair organization of this competition, a persistent, cross-year structure exists, thereby revealing how deep and hidden hegemonic relations determine the prominence of certain nations in this cultural festival.

The study draws upon a social network analysis (Burt 1992) which posits that hegemony results from an actor's extensive relations with others while the latter have no independent relations among them. We postulate that in certain contexts hegemony and prestige may result from the exchange patterns that reflect a *tertius gaudens* position (Simmel 1950). This social position refers to situations where three or more aggregate actors are present. In this setting hegemony can result from the existence of relations that independently center on one – thus powerful or hegemonic – actor. Since peripheral actors tend not to reciprocate among themselves, it is their independent valuation of a third party that makes him the prominent actor in the system. We show that the structural position of hegemony provides the necessary competitive advantage that underlies cultural hegemony.

2. The structuralist explanation of hegemony

Social network scholars define hegemony as a pattern of unequal exchange between actors in social systems (e.g. individuals, organizations, nation-states, etc.; see Burt 1992; Knoke 1990; Scott 1991; Wellman 1988). Conceptualized in terms of power or prominence, hegemony is an exchange pattern where most actors direct their relations to a few prominent actors. Actors are thus stratified in terms of the number of relations they have with others and their quality (Knoke & Burt 1983). This structural version views hegemony as a series of extensive relations with others, without those others having relations among themselves. According to this formulation, a competitive advantage is conferred on actors in a situation where their competitors are not connected between themselves.

A hegemonic position contributes to the actors' prominence in the social network, to their visibility (Knoke & Burt 1983), to their influence over others (Friedkin 1993), and to their chances for mobility and promotion (Burt 1995; Gabay & Zuckerman 1995). Indeed, the hegemonic position of actors is correlated with greater control over flows of commodities, credit, and information (Burt 1992) and with centrality in advice and friendship networks (Friedkin 1993). Hegemony, in these terms, results from a strategic structural position in social networks; it is a feature of the relational pattern of positions in social systems.



Following the structural emphasis on concrete exchange patterns, this study analyzes international patterns of support and preferences in the context of a cultural competition. It then scrutinizes the departure of the Eurovision Song Contest's outcomes from its ideal organizational conception and points to systematic preferences among European nations and blocs. Even under the specific conditions of equal opportunity, the cultural hegemonic relations in Europe come to the fore. We propose that the fairness of the 'veil of ignorance' both secures hegemony and – when analyzed appropriately – helps to uncover it.

3. The veil of ignorance, inequality and hegemony

The 'veil of ignorance' is often posited as a decision-making mechanism that transforms individuals' self-interests into universal principles of resource allocation. At the same time, this mechanism ensures that people or corporate actors (Coleman 1990) will rationally adopt the least harmful rules vis-à-vis the most inferior members of society (Rawls 1971). The conception of the mechanism is based on an ideal situation: actors meet in a group to formulate the general rules of resource distribution in society. In this imaginary setting the actors are ignorant of their future social position: they do not know whether they will be men or women; young or old; black or white; whether they will live in past or future society; whether they will work or be unemployed; rich or poor, and so on. In this context – and assuming that actors are rational and self-interested – the group will adopt rules according to the min-max principle: minimizing the maximum possible losses of each individual (Coleman 1990; Rawls 1971).

This ideal-typical context of the veil of ignorance is held to comprise the basic condition for fairness, morality and universalism. It essentially organizes resource redistribution in society according to the principle of 'equality of opportunity'. One major feature of the veil of ignorance is the lack of ideological hegemony; it precludes the possibility that the group would rationally accede to a situation where the interests of one group will outweigh those of others. The rules that rational, self-interested actors would adopt in this setting are universal in nature; they would be class independent.

It should be stressed that the veil of ignorance is not meant to produce an equality of outcome (Coleman 1976). Inequality is legitimate and may even constitute a public good to the extent that it promotes the life chances and material and social status of the least advantaged members of society (Rawls 1971). What the principle safeguards, however, is that inequality is not biased towards specific, socially prescribed members of society. In other words, the veil of ignorance is meant to produce rules that are unbiased to the advantage of specific actors in society, even if ultimately certain actors have an advantage over others.

Real people or collective actors (Coleman 1990) in concrete settings, however, are never wholly ignorant of their social status, unique attributes, or social networks. Immediate self-interests always affect decisions, even when an attempt is being made to formulate universal principles. Nevertheless, some decision settings are closer to the ideal-typical setting of the

veil of ignorance than others. The principle of equal opportunity is one attempt to model the veil of ignorance. The organization of competitions endorses this principle so that pre-competition biases are eliminated or kept to a minimum. In such settings, fair and objective evaluations of performance can be made.

In the following study we analyze a European cultural competition with an eye to structured or persistent biases that both reflect and produce hegemony and cultural prominence. The study points out that in cases where evaluation is organized so as to be fair, non-random outcomes may indicate the existence of hegemony. Before delving into the analyses, however, we provide a brief introduction to the empirical setting.

4. The Eurovision Song Contest

The Eurovision Song Contest is an international contest of artistic prowess. Singers from Europe's non-communist nations perform as the contest is broadcast worldwide. The annual event is sponsored by the European Broadcasting Association (EBA) in a host country, which is usually the winner of the previous year. The contest is very popular; the EBA estimates that more than one billion people watch it on TV.

Each nation's broadcasting association independently decides on the procedure for selecting a song for entry. Usually there is a national contest, the winner of which is sent as that nation's representative. The chosen songs reflect the taste of the nation's mass entertainment industry or the elite's preferences, and usually merge universal pop culture with indigenous national and cultural components. Fringe artists are rarely selected.

Although the contesting songs hold center stage, they are merely one aspect of this popular event. Nationality, culture, and sexuality are also conspicuous features. The Eurovision Song Contest is probably so popular because it is a manifestation of national taste and cultural prowess, of beauty and glamour, and of language, ethnicity and sexuality.

The subjective factor of cultural evaluation is immanent in the contest and allows bias, cultural preferences, and political commitments to show up. A consistent evaluation of foreign songs can result from two dominant influences: cultural and political (Yair 1995). It can result from a cultural match between the evaluator and the evaluated. Enjoyment of songs is thus a function of the encounter between national and cultural tastes. In other cases, it might result from long-term commitments and mutual exchange relations that may be political in nature.

The organization of the contest

The European Broadcasting Association (EBA) has established two phases for the competition, both of which aim to promote unbiased evaluations. First, the EBA decided upon common rules for ranking the songs. Blinded to other nations' votes, and unable to vote for its own performer, each participating nation ranks 10 of the other contesting songs. Each nation has 16 representatives. These form a select group which is equally comprised of musical experts and laymen; men and women; younger than 21 years, and older, who meet only one hour prior to the contest. The only instruction to the



group is: evaluate the songs and rank them by your own preference.¹ The representatives are given no criteria for evaluating the songs. They receive booklets containing five possible evaluation slips for each song, graded from one to five. After each song is performed, every representative detaches an evaluation slip that reflects his or her personal preference. The administrator immediately collects the 16 slips and a notary signs on the sum total of the points. The notary is responsible for the fairness of the process, ruling out the possibility of fraud (the notary's documents are sent to the EBA's offices for safety).

Second, at the end of the performance of all the songs, each nation, in a live broadcast, reports its ranking of the 10 most preferred songs. All nations have 10 ranks to allocate: one to eight, ten and twelve points (to the best song). The sum of votes in this public process is the final judge of popularity; the song that receives the most points wins.

The organization of the voting process is meant to provide an equal opportunity for all contestants in the following respects: (a) the voting power is equal; i.e., the same number of votes for all nations, irrespective of their particular attributes (e.g., size, language, or economic power); (b) the decision of each nation is made prior to the public process of ranking, so at the time of ranking voters are blinded as to the unfolding outcome of the competition; (c) the order of the artists' performances and, consequently, the order of voting are determined by lottery.

These rules are meant to produce a situation which minimizes nations operating according to their own interests. As in other contests, fairness and equal opportunity to winning the Eurovision are the *raison d'être* of the event; the contest is supposed to be unprejudiced. There are no explicit expectations for one nation to favor the song of another. The decision of each country is supposed to be unrelated to national conflicts and to local coalitions. In our terms, the Eurovision Song Contest is intended to be held under a veil or ignorance.

The empirical rationale

The organization of the Eurovision Song Contest is meant to produce a meritocratic selection procedure that reflects the 'quality', or rather the popularity, of the participating songs. Our theoretical starting-point is that if the veil of ignorance truly operates, the ranking of songs will be randomly distributed among the participating nations. Consequently, there would be no persistent structure of bias. However, if a structure is found then doubt can be raised as to the fairness of the competition. In such a case, hegemony may be said to play out its influence over and beyond the veil of ignorance.

If the voting process is unbiased as the principles of contests demand, a loose and diffuse exchange network between nations will be evident. Yet, to the extent that a non-random structure emerges, it indicates bias in the contest; if cliques are persistently evident in the analysis, and some hierarchical configuration between the cliques is detected, the footprints of hegemony may be said to be apparent. We suggest that evidence of systemic bias may point to the underlying political and cultural structure of Europe. International relations, national rifts and cultural and regional differences may all be reflected in the results of the contest.

5. Method

This study elaborates on previous analyses of the data (Yair 1995) which found three blocs amongst the European nations: 'Western', 'Northern', and 'Mediterranean', with three residual nations. The former study focused only on the average number of points that nations reciprocated over the 18 years of the analysis. It ignored, however, the yearly allocation patterns among the blocs and did not detect the persistent structure of hegemonic relations in the Eurovision Song Contest. The current endeavor elaborates on the original study while taking the yearly voting patterns *between the blocs* as a main concern. It therefore addresses more accurately the pattern of hegemonic relations and its cultural precursors, thus attempting to advance from description to explanation.

The following analyses are based on the votes given in 18 years of the Eurovision Song Contest (1975–92). During this period, 24 nations took part in the contest, but not all participated simultaneously. Monaco, Malta and Iceland have not participated for many years, and therefore were omitted from the analyses. As a result, 21 nations form the matrix for the average and yearly analyses.

In order to study hegemonic relations in the contest we adopted a two-stage analysis framework. In the first stage we reanalyzed the average matrix across the 18 years in order to replicate the findings concerning the major blocs in Europe (see Yair 1995). Because of minor differences from the previous study (one nation less in the analysis) we report here on the bloc formation as found in the newly calculated average data.

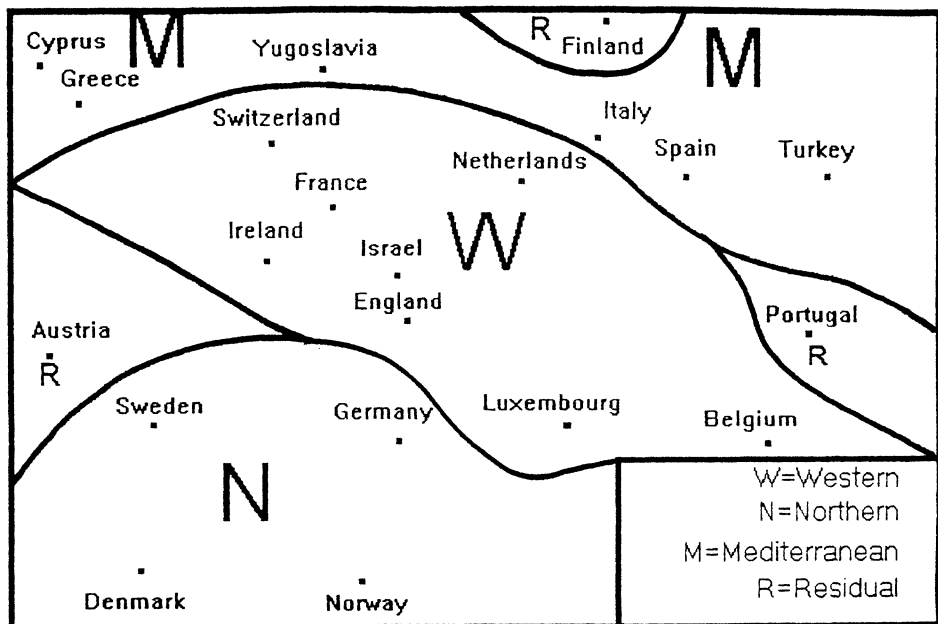


Figure 1. *Spatial configuration of Europe's nations into blocs in the Aggregate Matrix.*



In the second and major stage of the analysis we focused on the persistent structure of hegemonic relations between the identified European blocs. We analyzed the yearly matrices and assessed whether the basic structure of hegemony (extracted in the first stage) repeatedly recurs throughout the period of the study. In order to identify the similarity between the aggregate structure of hegemony and the individual yearly patterns, we used a block density analysis (Wasserman & Faust 1994).² Finally, in order to present the findings in density tables we used reduced graphs.

6. Results

We divide our exposition of the findings into two parts. The first is devoted to the analysis of the average matrix and to the extraction of the basic structure of hegemony. The second analyzes the persistent recurrence of this basic structure throughout the years. The latter more directly shows how this structure emerges and explains its relational workings.

Bloc formations in the contest

Figure 1 is based on a multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS) of the average asymmetric number of points exchanged among the contestants over the 18 years of this research. The MDS represents the proximity between the contestants in terms of their mutual support. Close proximity in Figure 1 means that contestants tend to reciprocate with each other more than with third parties, thus implying political or cultural affinity. For example, Cyprus allocated on average 9.75 points to Greece and was reciprocated with an average of 8.33 points. This extensive mutual support positioned Greece and Cyprus very close to each other. In contrast, distance marks a lack of support. Norway, for example, allocated on average 0.60 points to Turkey and received 0.80 in return. This kind of relationship implies a weak political or cultural affinity.

Overall, then, Figure 1 suggests that certain loyalties and exchange patterns underlie the voting outcomes of the contest. An analysis of the average matrix reveals a definite pattern of national support and preference. Figure 1 suggests that some nations are strengthened by their relational properties. Centrality in Figure 1 suggests universality; i.e., having non-negligible exchange relations with most of the other contestants.

The spatial configuration in Figure 1 represents bloc membership which is based on a cluster analysis of the average matrix (for detailed information see Yair 1995). The analysis depicts three meaningful blocs and a residual one. The 'Western' bloc consists of eight nations: England, Ireland, France, Israel, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, and The Netherlands. The 'Northern' bloc consists of four nations: Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Germany. The 'Mediterranean' bloc is diffusely composed of Cyprus, Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Italy, and Spain. Three other nations remain as isolates: Finland, Austria, and Portugal. These three nations occupy a structurally equivalent position (e.g., homogeneous) vis-à-vis all other contestants since (a) they do not reciprocate among themselves; and (b) they have a similar pattern of relations with others. These nations are more equivalent to each

other than the other nations are within their respective blocs. As a result of their unique relational patterns we combine and treat them as a 'residual' group.

To establish the robustness of the suggested blocs we used reliability measures that compute the extent to which actors jointly occupy the imputed bloc. Actors who jointly occupy a position under a strong criterion of structural equivalence have reliabilities of 1.0. On the other hand, low reliabilities indicate that actors are not structurally equivalent to other members of the bloc (Schott 1991: 144–147). The findings of this analysis are reported in Table 1.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that most actors are structurally equivalent within their blocs. Two anomalies are apparent. First, Belgium and Luxembourg have low reliabilities in their imputed Western bloc. This means that their position is less equivalent with the others in the bloc. Second, Italy appears to have a different position vis-à-vis the other contestants in the Mediterranean bloc. Careful observation of the original

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics of the nations in the Eurovision Song Contest (grouped by empirical bloc).*

Bloc	Nation	Rank*	Victories	Years†	Reliability‡
Western	England	1	2	76; 81	0.86
	Ireland	2	3	80; 87; 92	0.82
	France	3	1	77; 91	0.86
	Israel	4	2	78; 79	0.93
	Switzerland	6	1	88	0.90
	Netherlands	9	1	75	0.65
	Luxembourg	12	1	83	0.31
	Belgium	16	1	86	0.12
Northern	Germany	7	1	82	0.55
	Sweden	8	1	84; 91	0.81
	Denmark	13	0	–	0.88
	Norway	18	1	85	0.52
Mediterranean	Italy	5	1	90	–0.20
	Spain	10	0	–	0.25
	Yugoslavia	11	1	89	0.39
	Cyprus	14	0	–	0.68
	Greece	15	0	–	0.72
	Turkey	21	0	–	0.42
Residual	Austria	17	0	–	0.78
	Finland	19	0	–	0.96
	Portugal	20	0	–	0.94

* Rank is determined by the average number of points that each nation receives from other nations.

† Sweden and France received the same number of points in 1991.

‡ Reliability is the correlation between the distance to an actor and the mean distance to the other actors with whom he jointly occupies a position.



Table 2. *The average matrix of bloc ties.*

Density Table					Image Matrix				
	W	N	M	R		W	N	M	R
W	4.18	2.99	2.42	1.61	W	1	0	0	0
N	3.74	4.35	1.93	1.59	N	1	1	0	0
M	3.52	2.16	3.63	1.94	M	1	0	1	0
R	4.02	2.71	2.52	1.00	R	1	0	0	0

Average Density = 3.016

Note: Density is computed from the matrix's average number of points reciprocated.

data suggests that these anomalies result from asymmetrical relational patterns these actors have in the Eurovision support market; they give points to actors from the Western bloc but tend to receive points only from their own bloc members. This asymmetry results in non-equivalence. After shifting the bloc membership of these actors (e.g. Belgium to the Western bloc) we found the reported configuration to result in a more accurate representation of the exchange and support system in the contest.³

The spatial centrality of the nations in the Western bloc immediately suggests that they occupy a hegemonic position. This is further supported by the data in Table 1, which supplies the overall ranking of the 21 participants in terms of their popularity in the competition (given as the average number of votes received across years). England and Ireland share the most prominent position in the competition, whereas Turkey is positioned last. Germany and Italy occupy boundary positions: they allocate points towards Western nations but their support arrives from the Northern and the Mediterranean blocs, respectively. It is clear that nations in the Western bloc won most of the contests, with the nations in the Northern bloc coming in second. Overall, then, the pattern of clique formation and the descriptive data converge to show that nations in the Western bloc are the most prominent in the contest. However, without delving into the basic structure of hegemonic relations these data remain suggestive and descriptive. Therefore, we focus our analyses on between-bloc relations.

The basic structure of hegemony

The basic structure of hegemony is clearly portrayed by the average density matrix, the image matrix,⁴ and the reduced graph⁵ in Table 2. The directed reduced graph is based on the average number of points reciprocated within and between the four blocs. Arrows in the reduced graph signify the direction of support or preference. The findings show that: (a) the Western bloc

uniformly receives many points from itself as well as from each of the other three; (b) the three coherent blocs are self-sustaining as they internally reciprocate points; (c) within-bloc reciprocities are stronger than between-blocs; (d) besides the universal preference of the Western bloc there are no significant between-bloc commitments; i.e., nations in the Northern and Mediterranean blocs avoid allocating points to nations within the other bloc. This pattern suggests that nations in each bloc allocate points to their fellow nations within the bloc, and are similarly chosen by their bloc co-members.

The basic structure of hegemonic relations in the Eurovision Song Contest is very simple. All parties direct their support towards the Western bloc; otherwise, they avoid reciprocation. We posit that this configuration reflects a deep structure of between-bloc exchange relations. Nations from the Northern bloc tend to allocate few points to Mediterranean nations. The latter reciprocate in like manner. This mutual avoidance probably results from different cultural tastes and from lack of cultural contact with each other. Consequently, these actors tend to allocate their points to the most

Table 3. *Bloc descriptive statistics.*

Bloc	Description	Bloc size	Size (%)	Average prominence†
W	Western	8	38.1	0.768
N	Northern	4	19.0	0.596
M	Mediterranean	6	28.6	0.521
R	Residual	3	14.3	0.347
Total		21	100.0	

† Aggregate prominence ranges between 1 and 0; 1 = the most prominent nation in the network, 0 = the least prominent nation(s). The aggregate prominence reported here is the mean aggregate prominence for each bloc.

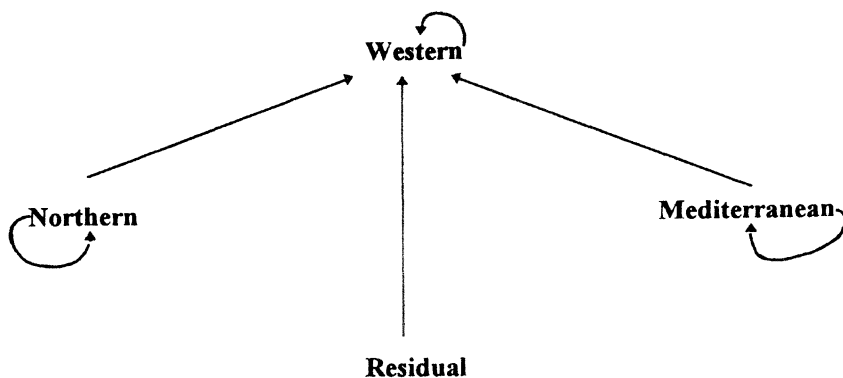


Figure 2. *The Basic Structure of Hegemony.*

familiar others, or in Bourdieu's terms, to the least unbearable (Bourdieu 1984). Thus, the advantage of the Western bloc seems to result at least partly from the antipathy between its rivals.

Overall, then, Table 2 indicates that the prominence of the Western bloc in part results from its unique location in the relational network of the Eurovision Song Contest. Nations in the Western bloc are 'universal' in that everybody favors them. They are hegemonic because (a) they favor themselves and (b) their competitors avoid each other. Simply put, the Western bloc occupies a strategic position in the Eurovision support system. The aggregate outcomes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics regarding the four aggregate blocs. The data show, indeed, that the aggregate prominence of the Western bloc (0.768) is higher than the prominence of the other blocs. It is also the largest bloc. The following section examines the possible precursors of these aggregate outcomes.

We draw attention to the relational backbone of hegemony and suggest that the Eurovision Song Contest is won by a coalition whose competitors have few relations with one another. Having strong dyadic reciprocal relations is not enough. As the findings suggest, it is best to have diverse relations with otherwise unconnected blocs. Indeed, this is the structural idea of a structural hole (Burt 1992). This idea is based on Simmel's formulation of the *tertius gaudens*, 'the third who benefits' (Simmel 1950:154–162). The idea is that the lack of relations between two actors can become a third party's resource. The data suggest that the Western bloc occupies a *tertius gaudens* position in relational terms. It derives its position from the patterns of between-bloc and within-bloc exchange relations.

The infrastructure of hegemony

Two interrelated conditions produce the structure of hegemony. The first is the organization of the voting process. The second is the empirical political and cultural bloc formation and size. The following analysis is based on the number of votes nations allocate, not the actual number of points. Consequently, we here analyze the existence of ties rather than their strengths.

As mentioned before, each contestant has 10 votes to allocate. The number of votes is fixed, and all participants have to allocate their 10 votes to other contestants. We suggest that the empirical four-bloc formation is advantageous to the Western bloc. The number of votes each nation allocates is variably greater than the size of the blocs, thus resulting in a differential surplus of votes (at the bloc level) which has to be 'exported' to other blocs. Since the nations are loyal to their bloc co-members more than to members of other blocs, we may see two consequences. First, nations of large blocs allocate most of their votes to members of their own bloc.⁶ For example, the Western bloc is comprised of eight members and it has 80 votes to allocate. From this sum the bloc can retain 56 votes. Assuming loyalty, then, the number of surplus votes the Western bloc must export numbers only 24. Calculating the figures for the other blocs suggests that the structured pool of surplus votes is roughly equal in size per bloc (West = 24; North = 28; Mediterranean = 30; Residual = 24). Nonetheless, the proportion of within-

bloc versus between-bloc allocation of votes is decisively different. The Western bloc has to export only 30 per cent of its voting reservoir whereas the Northern bloc must export 70 per cent, the Mediterranean 50 per cent, and the Residual 80 per cent.

In other words, because of its large size, the Western bloc has fewer votes that it has to allocate to external nations. The fact that the Northern bloc is comprised of four nations, each with 10 votes to allocate, constructs for each member a surplus of 7 votes. Most of these are allocated – given the competition and the cultural market – to the Western bloc. Likewise, Mediterranean bloc nations have a surplus of 5 votes, and again these are directed towards nations in the Western bloc. This is also true with regard to nations from the Residual group who have 8 votes to export; again, towards the Western bloc. The fact that these three less prominent blocs do not reciprocate, effectively determines the hegemonic position of the Western bloc.

Table 4. Density tables and reduced graphs in 18 years of the Eurovision Song Contest.

1975		1976		1977																																																													
Density Table	Reduced Graph	Density Table	Reduced Graph	Density Table	Reduced Graph																																																												
<table border="1"> <tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>M</th><th>R</th></tr> <tr><td>5.22</td><td>1.87</td><td>2.35</td><td>2.21</td></tr> <tr><td>4.22</td><td>3</td><td>2.12</td><td>2.83</td></tr> <tr><td>3.87</td><td>2.25</td><td>3.36</td><td>2.27</td></tr> <tr><td>4.29</td><td>2.33</td><td>2.94</td><td>0.66</td></tr> </table>	W	N	M	R	5.22	1.87	2.35	2.21	4.22	3	2.12	2.83	3.87	2.25	3.36	2.27	4.29	2.33	2.94	0.66		<table border="1"> <tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>M</th><th>R</th></tr> <tr><td>4.91</td><td>1.88</td><td>1.56</td><td>3.08</td></tr> <tr><td>4.19</td><td>3.92</td><td>1.46</td><td>2.67</td></tr> <tr><td>4.29</td><td>1.79</td><td>3.17</td><td>2.11</td></tr> <tr><td>5.21</td><td>1.75</td><td>1.61</td><td>2.17</td></tr> </table>	W	N	M	R	4.91	1.88	1.56	3.08	4.19	3.92	1.46	2.67	4.29	1.79	3.17	2.11	5.21	1.75	1.61	2.17		<table border="1"> <tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>M</th><th>R</th></tr> <tr><td>5.11</td><td>1.72</td><td>2.6</td><td>1.83</td></tr> <tr><td>4.31</td><td>3.00</td><td>2.21</td><td>4.42</td></tr> <tr><td>3.46</td><td>2.21</td><td>3.63</td><td>1.33</td></tr> <tr><td>4.29</td><td>1.58</td><td>2.56</td><td>1.17</td></tr> </table>	W	N	M	R	5.11	1.72	2.6	1.83	4.31	3.00	2.21	4.42	3.46	2.21	3.63	1.33	4.29	1.58	2.56	1.17	
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Although most nations tend to prefer their own bloc members, the allocation of surplus votes places the Western bloc in a position of prominence. The pool of surplus votes is directed to the Western bloc. The other three blocs generally avoid distributing their surplus votes amongst themselves, a situation which reflects the lack of relations between the three blocs. The *tertius gaudens* position of the Western bloc possibly reflects a cultural non-affinity between the other blocs, combined with a general liking of Western-type music.

The Western bloc's hegemony results from an implicit imposition of cultural values on the contest. In order to win the Eurovision Song Contest, nations have to perform 'Western style', they need to produce a show that outperforms the hegemonic taste. They can only win if they succeed in attracting the surplus votes to their own court. As our explanation suggests, non-Western nations can win mainly by breaking the hegemonic structure; i.e., by receiving points from alien cultures. Thus, to the extent that nations remain committed to local and primordial cultural tastes they reduce their chances of winning. More decisively, though, they *ipso facto* promote the prominence of the Western bloc.

The persistence of the hegemonic structure

It could be the case that the pattern of hegemonic structure reflects only the average matrix and that deviations from this pattern are common. In other words, it is possible that in individual years no such hegemonic structure will appear. In order to investigate the persistence of hegemonic relations we compared each individual year with the basic, average structure. The results are presented in Table 4, which provides both the density tables and the reduced graphs for the 18 years.

Table 4 shows that the same structure of hegemony recurs in 14 out of the 18 years. The structure is essentially the same from 1975 through 1983, and it again recurs in 1986, 1988, and from 1990 until 1992. In these years the Western bloc was the recipient of support from the other three blocs (as well as from itself). And throughout these years the competitors tended not to reciprocate among themselves. As a result, a configuration of hegemony was reproduced each year, and the Western bloc retained its prominent position in the support network.

Moreover, the longitudinal results suggest that Western bloc members are more loyal to their 'within-bloc' neighbors than are members of other blocs to theirs. Thus, the Western bloc tends to export fewer points than the other blocs. This 'political unity' further strengthens the prominence of the Western bloc. Its hegemony in part results, then, from the more diffuse alliance of the other blocs.

Only minor discrepancies from the overall pattern occurred during these years. On top of the basic hegemonic structure, other blocs also received ties (i.e., were collectively preferred). However, these minor changes did not alter the basic structure of Western hegemony. Despite the fact that in some years the winner did not belong to the Western bloc, this prominent bloc still retains its hegemonic position.

Let us take for example Germany's victory in 1982, and Italy's in 1990. In both years the basic structure of hegemony was sustained: the Western

bloc was consistently chosen by the other blocs. These findings lead us to conclude that the centrality and hegemony of the Western bloc is not an artifact of the average matrix. It results from the persistent structure of hegemony throughout the years.

Only in four years (1984, 1985, 1987, 1989) did significant alterations of the basic structure of hegemony appear. In 1984 and 1985 the Northern bloc, in addition to its internal support, also received votes from the Western and Residual blocs. Even in these two years, the Western bloc still received many votes. In 1987 the hegemonic pattern was more diffuse and the Northern bloc received most of the points. Even so, Ireland, the second prominent actor of the Western bloc, won the contest. Finally, in 1989 Yugoslavia won the contest. Nonetheless, the Northern bloc was the most dominant.

All in all, the longitudinal analysis suggests that despite minor discrepancies from the basic hegemonic relational pattern, the position of the Western bloc is sustained. The Northern bloc only rarely constitutes a real threat to the hegemonic position of the Western bloc. Even in years where non-hegemonic nations win the contest the Western bloc still remains the prominent actor. For the Western bloc to lose prominence, tremendous anomalies would have to appear in this international network. For that to happen, reciprocities would need to emerge between the three peripheral blocs. Only then would the hegemonic structure be transformed by counter-hegemonic relations.

7. Discussion

This study suggests that power and hegemony are an outcome of a multi-actor relational pattern where non-interaction is evident among several actors in the system. Our study has pointedly shown that Europe's four-bloc structure is hierarchical and hegemonic not because one bloc is decisively and qualitatively better. The persistent hegemonic position of the Western bloc results from its position as a *tertius gaudens*; where the lack of relations among the other three blocs *ipso facto* establishes the Western bloc's dominance.

Despite our structural emphasis, we suspect that cultural factors further contribute to the position of Western hegemony. Besides strategic relational positions with others (Yair 1995), some countries – such as England, Ireland, and France – seem to have a cultural advantage which is ingrained in the process of cultural evaluation. Western bloc countries such as Israel and The Netherlands, however, seem mainly to enjoy their structural position. Political and cultural loyalties (i.e. persistent relations) boost the prominence of these countries and therefore provide them with a competitive edge in the contest.

There is more to culture than that, though. We postulate that the veil of ignorance under which the contest is held legitimizes the contests' results, whilst concealing the deep structure of hegemony. The veil of ignorance produces a sense of basic fairness, of equality of opportunity, of no prejudgement. This study has shown, however, that the disjunction between the ideal portrayal of the Eurovision Song Contest and its outcomes is a sign of bias. A lack of randomness in the results suggests that some causal



processes operate to produce (and likewise predict) the prominent or popular actors. It is true that the voting procedures try to emulate the veil of ignorance. And equality, indeed, serves as the contest's basic rationale and justification. The organization of the contest is meant to minimize the operation of bias and to place all contestants on an equal footing. At the same time these democratic procedures construct a cultural 'cover story' wherein the chances for all participants are equal. The organization of the voting process constructs an organizational vocabulary that sets up expectations for fairness while providing foci and curtailing deviations from equality. The institutionalization of the contest makes the operation of hegemony invisible and the Western bloc's dominance both natural and unobtrusive.

While the veil of ignorance legitimizes and covers up the biased outcomes of the contest, at the same time it serves as a major rationale for the analysis. The empirical interaction patterns in the contest are major clues for a deeper understanding of Europe's structure. If the organization of the voting process in the contest had produced an outcome that was in accordance with its implicit ideological goals, then no structure could have been extracted. Equality of opportunity would have coincided with randomness in relational terms. The deviation from randomness, the emerging order out of the presumed chaos, is the major tool for understanding the processes and structures that produce hegemony and a select group of winners.

We have suggested that the organization of the voting in the contest may decisively affect its outcomes. The variable size of blocs and the high number of votes may partly reinforce the tendency towards hegemony. The fact that the peripheral blocs are relatively small means that they have to 'export' their surplus votes (i.e., those not allocated to within-bloc members). Peripheral blocs do not reciprocate between themselves, but allocate most of their votes to the Western bloc. However, the large size of the latter minimizes the surplus votes it needs to export in return, and consequently the Western bloc will rarely strongly reciprocate with external nations. If, however, the number of votes was smaller (for example, four instead of ten) it could change the results of both the contest and the derived structure. In this case, most of the votes might remain within-blocs, thus emphasizing bloc differentiation. Under these conditions the deep political and cultural commitments in Europe could well show up and the veil of ignorance would be proved to be unsuccessful, and the competitions biased. Under such conditions, the veil of ignorance could no longer legitimize the persistent status quo. Hegemony would surface to the disadvantage of the Western bloc.

Given the current organization of the contest, the Western bloc enjoys a persistent position of a *tertius gaudens* that results from the fact that (a) Western bloc nations favor themselves; (b) their competitors avoid each other. The Western bloc apparently longitudinally sustains its hegemonic position because of the size of the blocs and the persistence of between- and within-bloc exchange relations.

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We extend our thanks to Ronald Burt, David Krackhardt and Nissim Mizrahi for commenting on previous drafts of this study. Their comments helped us clarify some of the more interesting issues inherent in this study. We are also grateful to Itzhak Shimoni and Chanoch Chason from the Israeli Broadcasting Authority for enlightening us on the intricacies of the voting procedures. Reviewers of *Acta Sociologica* have contributed to the final version.

Notes

¹ This information was provided by the Head of Entertainment Department of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority. He has been responsible for organizing the IBA participation since 1974.

² We first calculated the mean density of the matrix, based upon the average number of points reciprocated across the 18 years.

³ In each case (i.e., Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy) we moved the respective nations to the Western bloc and examined the density tables to see what changes occur. We found that no significant changes occur in the overall pattern. Consequently, we decided to adhere to the cluster analysis results.

⁴ An image matrix is a binary reduction of a density matrix. The image is a more parsimonious way to present the ties between and within blocs. Each tie is coded as either present or absent between pairs of blocs; a tie is present in the image matrix between two blocs if the density of the ties between actors in one bloc to actors in the other is greater or equal to the density of the matrix as a whole. We used the average density as a cutoff rule to establish ties.

⁵ Reduced graphs represent image matrices.

⁶ The following computations are derived from this general equation: $(n \cdot 10) - [n(n - 1)]$; where n equals the number of nations in a bloc, and 10 is the number of votes.

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