REVIEW ESSAY

UNDERSTANDING BIG BROTHER: AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT RESEARCH

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Jonathan Bignell: *Big Brother: Reality TV in the Twenty-first Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, 200 pp, £ 50.00 (£ 16.99 pbk), ISBN: 1403916845.

Annette Hill: *Reality TV: Audiences and popular factual television*. London: Routledge, 2005, 240 pp, $ 29.95, ISBN: 041526152X.

Toni Johnson-Woods: *Big Bother: Why Did that Reality Show Become Such a Phenomenon*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2002, 256 pp, $19.95, ISBN: 0702233153.

Richard Kilborn: *Staging the Real. Factual TV Programming in the Age of Big Brother*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, 224 pp, $74.95 ($24.95 pbk), ISBN: 0719056810.

Ernest Mathijs and Janet Jones (eds.): *Big Brother International. Formats, Critics and Publics*. London: Wallflower Press, 2005, 256 pp, $69.50 ($24.50 pbk), ISBN: 1904764193.

Lothar Mikos, Patricia Feise, Katja Herzog, Elizabeth Prommer, and Verena Veihl: *Im Auge der Kamera. Das Fernsehereignis Big Brother*. Berlin: VISTAS Verlag, 2000, 228 pp. € 17.00, ISBN: 3891582773.

Frank Weber (ed): *Inszenierte Banalität zur Prime Time*. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2000, 396 pp, € 20.99, ISBN: 382585096x.

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Introduction

In the autumn of 2005, Slovakia, Serbia and Finland were the last countries in Europe to air the Big Brother project, with other countries still in the line up for their first run (see appendix One). Since its debut in the Netherlands in 1999, the multimedia reality format has been adopted in more than 40 countries, almost all of which ordered second, and many of them third runs. In the UK, by the end of 2005, the sixth Big Brother final was being aired, and after a period of absence in the Netherlands, BB was revived in the autumn of 2005, still drawing some one million viewers for its final show.

Big Brother has been hugely successful in terms of ratings, Internet use, mobile communication and spin offs. Yet, it is not only an interesting case because of its immense audience appeal. Big Brother has also transformed the channels that adopted it into significantly bigger players in the market, increasing their audience shares and advertising revenue. It has modified television culture by moving its focus from scripted to unscripted genres, and has changed the television industry and its business models by bringing in new actors such as Internet and mobile companies. It has even been suggested that Big Brother may have changed culture itself by making the performance of authenticity a paradoxical, yet key ingredient of human interaction (e.g. Andrejevic 2004).

Apart from tremendous public debate in all the countries that adopted Big Brother (see Biltereyst 2004; Meers and Van Bauwel 2004; Scannel 2002) the format also sparked immediate academic interest. Both German and Dutch scholars can claim to have produced the first academic publications, ranging from cultural reflection (Beunders 2000), debate and analysis (Meijer and Reesink 2000) to empirical research (Mikos, et al. 2000). After that came a variety of books, articles and conferences. A Media Studies Department in the UK received a call one day asking whether it was possible to do Big Brother studies there?[1] In this review, we will discuss a selection of these publications in detail, particularly with respect to the cultural meanings of Big Brother. Due to our own language constraints, this selection is based on Dutch, English, Finnish and German sources, limiting the outcomes of our review mainly to the Northern European context (although Mathijs and Jones (2004) do include chapters about France, Italy, Turkey, Latin America and South Africa in their collection). It is important to point out the situatedness of our review, because the Big Brother format has been strategically adapted to national television cultures in order to comply with the conventions and patterns of expectations among audiences. As Andrejevic (2004, 12) notes, Big Brother "fits well with the dictates of global media production insofar as it combines a local cast and local viewer participation with a customised transnational format. What is exported is not the content itself but a recipe for creating a local version of an internationally successful TV show". As a result, in our review of Big Brother publications we searched for global regularities, while at the same time pointing out local specificities. The latter is in fact a mission impossible. As Van Zoonen and Carter (2004) have estimated, 27 national adaptations at that point in time, each of them with second and even third runs, have produced approximately 7000 TV and internet hours, covering more than 700 housemates. Toni Johnson-Woods' (2002) book about Big Brother is a brave attempt, without much academic pretension, to cover this wealth of material, by listing national varieties among stakeholders, production routines, particular BB

events and audience reactions. The book is helpful as a collection of worldwide anecdotes and facts, but is less convincing as an answer to its question: why Big Brother became such a phenomenon.

Understanding Big Brother as a cultural phenomenon is not only Johnson-Woods' purpose, but also that of the majority of other authors on this topic. Mathijs and Jones (2004, 2) argue that while BB initially provoked work that was judgmental and that warned against the celebration of everyday life, it was followed by work that looked at BB as a cultural phenomenon. However, our review of BB studies shows instead that such a disapproving perspective on BB is almost absent in academic work. Weber's (2000) German collection is an exception, but the criticism found there is – as we will show – hardly different from the arguments already well known from press, television and other fora of public debate. In fact, the main BB opponents in those debates, for instance, the Prime Minister of the German "land" Rheinland-Pfalz, who tried to ban BB from German television, get to repeat their arguments in separate chapters in Weber's volume. The majority of Big Brother studies, however, either take its cultural significance or its audience success as a starting point. Together the *critical*, *cultural* and *audience* studies of Big Brother that we discuss here, neatly overlap with Meers and Bauwel's (2004) mapping of the Big Brother debates into a critical, culturalist or pluralist perspective. Only a few odd publications, such as Fredberg's and Ollilla's (2005) analysis of BB as an effective cross-marketing and customer service instrument, do not fit that tripartition.

Criticising Big Brother

Critical perspectives on Big Brother are informed, according to Meers and Bauwel (2005, 77), by a general understanding of television as mass or low culture and a specific critique of the homogenisation, standardisation and escapism that supposedly go hand in hand with commercial television. One recognises both the conservative criticism on popular culture (e.g. Scruton 1998) and the legacy of the Frankfurter Schule in these views. However, with the Frankfurters having gone out of fashion in academic media studies (e.g. Jensen 1990), it is not surprising that one mainly finds these assessments among the political and cultural elite, press and TV-journalists and other professionals. From Johnson-Wood's (2002) inventory it becomes clear that critical vilifications were part of almost every local reception of BB. Van Zoonen (2001) typifies the Dutch debate as such; Mikos (2000) refers in that manner to the German discussions; Jost (2004) to debates in France; Andacht (2004) to those in Latin America, etc. Most scholars point out, in contrast, that the disapproval of these groups is an exemplary case of elite moral panic rather than a valid cultural critique.

In a brief but informative piece, Biltereyst (2004) shows how the Big Brother debates contained all the features of a moral panic, with experts and moral guardians of various kinds denouncing the program, mass media stirring up the debate, and regulators calling for action and intervention. Their aim was also clearly, as Biltereyst explains, to define quality standards and cultural norms. Yet the more important observation of Biltereyst is that the BB panics were never unanimous and consensual. Each criticism of, for instance, voyeurism and exploitation, was countered by arguments about identification and voluntary participation. Therefore, Biltereyst says, the controversy as much as the panic were typical for the public

debates and contributed to BB's success. It is important to note, however, that when Big Brother was announced in the Netherlands the social and moral uproar was such that the producer (Endemol) itself began to fear the show would never make it to air. The German media authority tried to ban it, as did many other national regulatory agencies (Bazalgette 2005). One can recognise only with the benefit of hindsight that the controversies were a key element of BB's success, producing, as a number of authors have noticed, "a public culture of TV-talk" (e.g. Bignell 2005) that has now been turned into a key marketing strategy of contemporary television makers: "And in this strategy, intellectuals and public opinion makers from all sorts of origins and ideological factions may be welcome: both public denouncement and praise create a web of attention and discursive spectacle. It is a strategy whereby societal debate ultimately becomes a key for commercial success" (Biltereyst 2004, 14). As a result, there seems to be no valid role in public debate anymore for the academic, cultural or political observers trying to engage a critical reflection on BB; whatever can be said or done will become part of BB's marketing steamroller. The last Dutch series of BB is a case in point. While the show had obviously worn out its audience and media appeal in the Netherlands, the new commercial channel, Talpa, revived it in the autumn of 2005 to introduce the channel to a wider audience.[2] Talpa and Endemol announced that they were looking for a pregnant contender who would want to give birth during the show. The announcement, made during the slow news season in the summer, predictably caused a heated public debate, with the media and regulating agencies obediently taking up their pre-ordained positions as moral critics. As a result, the show again became the talk of the nation before its first airing. The Dutch government helped to maintain the focus on BB when it called upon labour legislation to prevent the newborn baby from being filmed continuously.

Cultural Perspectives on Big Brother: Framing and Explaining

With public debate and criticism having become such an integral part of BB's marketing strategies, it is quite a relief that the authors discussed here, with the exception of Weber and his authors (2000), have not fallen in the trap of easily exploited criticism and managed to carve out a position that is outside of and not conducive to the BB project. In fact, some of these authors have exploited the show for their own benefit, by taking up *Big Brother* in their titles while focusing in fact on the much wider phenomenon of reality television and using Big Brother merely as one example among many others (in particular Bignell 2005 and Kilborn 2003). Understandably, academic writing and publishing are not outside of marketing concerns but for those looking for an understanding of *Big Brother in particular*, these books are disappointing in their generality.

The complexity of understanding BB as a cultural phenomenon is already evident from the variety of labels and histories used to locate it as a genre. Terms used interchangeably in the various books are "game-doc," "reality show," "reality gameshow," "reality game-doc," "performative reality," "factual entertainment," "popular factual television," "event-TV," or "reality soap." Apparently, it is problematic to pin down BB as part of an existing genre, and most authors emphasise that BB is a unique combination of genres and media, the first successful example

of generic and technological convergence, producing an entertainment hybrid that extends beyond a mere television experience.

Yet this apparent uniqueness does have its predecessors, and one of the consistent features of the BB literature is an attempt to connect the project to its television and cultural antecedents. These exercises reveal a problematic, parochial tendency in Anglo-American BB analyses: Bignell (2005), Kilborn (2003) and Hill (2005), all three British authors, articulate BB with the British tradition of documentary making and the docu-soap on television, while Andrejevic, a US author, connects it to the webcam and surveillance culture that pervades everyday lives in the US. The overall validity of such comparisons is questionable, as these authors completely overlook the particular origins of Big Brother as a *Dutch* television format, originating from a Dutch TV-producer with its own successful portfolio of unscripted entertainment. The Dutch/Flemish and German works (Mathijs and Jones 2004; Meijer and Reesink 2000; Mikos et al. 2000) are more to the point in this respect and have shown how BB is not only a product of the individual creativity and perseverance of John de Mol and his team (see Bazalgette 2005) but also of Endemol's programming strengths and Dutch culture in general. Before Big Brother, Endemol had already built itself a reputation in continental Europe with popular formats that film ordinary people put in the middle of special events such as public marriage proposals and vows, or public displays of love and regret. As a result, continental authors on BB tend to describe the show as a follow up to this kind of emotional entertainment, rather than a successor to documentary, webcam or surveillance (e.g. Reesink 2000). In a somewhat wilder speculation on the particularly *Dutch* origins of Big Brother, it has been said that the show connects easily with a Dutch tradition of keeping the curtains opened in the evening, inviting by-passers to look in and conveying that one has nothing to hide. In addition, because of its focus on ordinary people doing ordinary things in an ordinary setting, the show has also been said to represent the Dutch preference for domesticity and to encapsulate the Dutch common saying *Doe maar gewoon, dan doe je gek genoeg* (untranslatable, but approximately: "just act normal, that's mad enough"; Van Ginneken 2000). Yet it would be just as parochial to claim these particularly Dutch origins as defining features of BB's cultural relevance. Moreover, its Dutch roots hardly explain the popularity of the BB project across the globe. The strength of the format seems to lie in its generic hybridity, enabling it to speak to different national television histories and cultures.

On top of its potential for specific national appeal, one can read from the various studies reviewed here that Big Brother may also have addressed a postmodern *Zeitgeist* that extends beyond national borders. Four themes stand out in the various studies: technological convergence, the performance of self, the merger of public and private and the longing for community. Kilborn (2003, 81) points out that BB was the first programme to capitalise fully on the convergence of technologies, "which allowed viewers to tune into the programme at any hour of the day or night – whether it be via website, chat lines, video- and audio-streaming, or simply by downloading the *Big Brother* ring-tones onto one's mobile phone." According to Kilborn, this made BB into an ongoing media-event and complied particularly well with the way young affluent audiences use media. Andrejevic (2004) similarly identifies the technological innovations of Big Brother and connects these to the wider cultural "work of being watched". He suggests that surveillance culture, both

in the streets and on television, has made the experience of being watched into a cultural mindset that invites a continuous reflection on the performance of self and of authenticity, especially for the younger generations. The paradox of performing authenticity is a second recurring theme in the literature, and is captured by Mikos et al. (2000) in labelling BB as performative reality. A third theme, brought up by Bignell (2005) and Van Zoonen (2001), among others, concerns the way Big Brother traverses the modern public–private distinction by projecting private lives and behaviours in the domestic setting of the BB house into the centre of public view and debate. While that observation is uncontroversial, the appeal of this deconstruction is appreciated differently: while some perspectives, especially those in public debate, denounce the voyeurism it allegedly invites (Weber 2000), others emphasise how this offers audiences (young ones in particular) the frames of reference and sites of identification that have disappeared from their everyday lives in the aftermath of postmodern individualisation and fragmentation. The latter view ties in with the fourth recurring observation in the literature, namely that the BB experience has been able to produce new bonds between otherwise disconnected people. Such processes of community building have been most easily identified in the case of *Big Brother South Africa* which has been claimed to be the first show integrating the various races of South Africa (in Pitout 2004) although the winners of the first two series were both white men. More striking in this respect was *Big Brother Africa,* a pan-continental version of the show that featured contestants from a range of African countries. According to Bignell (2005, 36), "it seems likely that for Africans the appeal of … Big Brother in particular, was that it represented an African-originated programme whose focus (unlike the international news agenda's usual representations of the continent) was not on wars and natural disasters." Observations of BB's potential to produce temporary articulations of social cohesion have been less explicit in the writings about industrialised countries, although there too, all final shows – especially those of the first runs – turned into record breaking national television events, comparable to and in some cases surmounting the mania evolving around sports and soccer events (cf. Johnson-Woods 2002).

Technological convergence, the performance of self, public–private disjuncture and community building are clear and interesting themes in cultural approaches to BB. They lack empirical substantiation, however, and when one takes empirical audience studies about BB into account, some of these themes lose their relevance and another theme – authenticity – becomes prominent.

Audience Studies of Big Brother

Audience studies of Big Brother, such as those of Hill (2005), Jones (2003; 2004) and Mikos et al. (2000) take a bottom-up approach to Big Brother, balancing cultural theory with actual audience experience and pleasure. Mikos and his colleagues (2000) published the first study on BB viewers as part of their broader analysis of the "Big Brother Television Experience" (*Das Fernsehereignis Big Brother*) in Germany. They provide a combination of outlooks on Big Brother Germany and theorise BB in the context of reflexive modernity; they conduct an extensive textual reading of the programme, as well as assessing the public debate surrounding it. Their audience research is based on a variety of quantitative audience data consisting of rating figures as well as several surveys. They constructed socio-demographic

profiles of the regular viewers and examined the voting and Internet use, but also surveyed the reasons people gave for not watching the show. In addition, a net-based qualitative questionnaire for the fans was set up, as well as two focus group interviews; one with a group of 15-year-olds, one with older fans. The results provide evidence for the assumption discussed earlier, that the convergence of technologies appeals to younger audiences in particular: two thirds of the users of the BB website in Germany were under 30 years old. On the other hand, however, Mikos' data contradicts the idea that the interactive elements in BB are conducive to its success. The German respondents barely mentioned these as a core experience. The key finding of Mikos and his co-authors (2000), is that the viewers' fascination emerges from the interest in the simulated everyday life occurrences in the BB house, but even more from witnessing the oscillation of the imposed and the spontaneous scenes, as well as discovering and assessing the 'authentic' versus 'artificial' behaviour of the participants. The viewers apparently enjoy taking up an expert position, judging how real the BB shows and its contestants are, but simultaneously imagining what their own reaction in similar circumstances would have been. The German data thus suggest that an important part of BB's appeal is the discussion of authenticity and the self. These discussions are part of a viewer orientation that Mikos et al (2000, 181) call "simultaneously distanced and involved," and which is very similar to the kind of audience investments that have been found among fans of soap operas (e.g. Katz and Liebes 1990). In contrast to the cultural approaches discussed above, which put Big Brother in the category of documentary and reality television, the experience of the German respondents in Mikos' research put the format firmly and squarely in the genre of soap opera.

Mikos' main findings about audience discussions of realness and authenticity have been replicated in Hill's (2002; 2004; 2005) research about audiences of popular factual television. Her research design included a background study on production procedures, and quantitative and qualitative studies of audiences. A national survey, conducted in 2000, included not only questions pertaining to the forms of reality TV and the multi-media aspects, but also mapped audiences' attitudes "towards issues of privacy, information, and entertainment" (Hill 2005, 194) and towards BB. In addition, Hill conducted 12 semi-structured focus groups and in-depth theme interviews with ten families. While the survey allowed Hill to construct viewer profiles of the Big Brother audiences and assess the importance of various elements of the "BB Experience" (the preference for watching the programme, choosing the winner, talking about it, visiting the Internet site, etc.; Hill 2004; 2005), her key results emerge from the qualitative interviews. Audiences appear highly media-literate and able to recognise the constructed reality in the program. Like Mikos et al, Hill found that at the core of viewers' interest is the desire, as well as the empowering pleasure, to assess and make sense of the ambiguous relationship between the authentic and the performed. Discussing an excerpt from a focus group interview with teenage girls about Big Brother, Hill (2005, 74) concludes: "There is a natural movement back and forth in their talk of how viewers judge the sincerity of ordinary people in reality game shows. I would argue it is in the act of trying to judge the scene change from performing the self to true self that audiences draw on their own understanding of social behaviour on their everyday lives." Hill's multi-method study exemplifies a thorough empirical analysis and illuminates

also many other aspects of the viewing experiences of popular factual television, such as the idea of learning and the discussions of ethics that BB has evoked. Her work gives voice to "active audiences" and highlights the diversity of pleasures of the BB viewing.

Both Mikos and Hill treat BB very much as a television experience and more or less neglect the multimedia and interactive nature of the format. The latter has been specifically researched by Jones (2003; 2005). She conducted a self-reporting questionnaire on Big Brother UK's website in 2000, 2001 and 2002 that inquired about views on the participants of the show, but also about the preferences and reasons for using different Big Brother platforms. Amongst the respondents of the web–based survey of 2002, a slight majority still favoured the daily reality show, for its "very high mediation" and visual input, including the traditional televisual characteristics of storytelling through editing, voiceovers, music, etc. Unsurprisingly, the viewing of the real-time web stream was valued for opposite reasons, that is, for high temporality and ability to interact. Although Jones (2005, 228-9) concludes that BB remains very much a television experience, even for these online respondents, her data also suggests that the judgment of reality and authenticity is enhanced by offering different choices to the viewer, and that "[t]he codes of realism associated with levels of mediation, timeliness and interactivity all combine to enable viewers to interpret and control the viewing experience." The enhancement of the BB experience through the use of the Internet is confirmed by Roscoe (2005) who also conducted an Internet-based survey on the site of the Australian Big Brother in 2002. She found that the web is no replacement for television, but rather draws audiences to the TV programme and other platforms.

The audience studies on Big Brother thus modify the cultural understandings of the show: technological convergence, while definitely a factor in audience appeal, does not seem to be a defining one. BB's deconstruction of public and private also emerges less prominently from the audience studies than from the cultural approaches. The performance of self, however, a dominant theme in cultural studies of BB, is also crucial to understanding BB's audience appeal, especially in the form of assessing authenticity and realness.

Discussion

The studies we reviewed have revealed how the show originated at the cross roads of technological developments and exploited the spreading convergence of technologies. They also suggest that Big Brother managed to appease some of the predicaments of postmodernity, by making private lives a matter of collective discussion rather than of individual struggle, and by confirming that the self is a continuous project to work on. The latter seems to be the key to understanding audience investments in Big Brother scenes; the show evokes a pleasurable exercise in assessing its realness and the authenticity of its housemates, and more generally what it means to be "true to oneself," one of the core values of hyper individualised western societies. Do these elements provide a sufficient understanding of Big Brother? Again, it is necessary to stress that the audience research we discussed comes from England and Germany, both developed, postmodern, individualised societies in which the obsession with authenticity and the self builds on and is replicated in other media genres (talkshows, women's magazines, or make-over

programs). Andacht (2004), reviewing Latin American research about Big Brother, reports similar results. These conditions, however, are less likely to be the dominant ones for the impact of Big Brother in underdeveloped societies with stronger communal structures and with institutionalised social divisions. Big Brother Pan Africa and Big Brother South Africa have both been analysed as exercises in nation or even continent building, and "an education in cross-national tolerance" (Pitout 2004, 178). Big Brother Middle East coming from Bahrain and cancelled under pressure from the government, provoked, in its few days of existence, a heated public clash about the desires and values of younger generations and those of conservative Islam. These differences in reception point out that very different social contexts can still produce the same successful media product. Big Brother, for sure, is not the only genre that has succeeded in this respect, *Who wants to be a millionaire*, *Survivor* and *Pop Idol* are only a few of other titles that have recently been successful as cross-national formats that build on a convergence of technologies for audiences to access them, and on the structural input of particular local elements that anchor them in the context of reception (cf. Bazalgette 2005). Their success has paved the way for new strategies of TV-exports based on the production of formats that can be adjusted to local cultures of reception.

As a body of work, the studies discussed here inevitably show deficiencies and omissions. Regrettably, some of the work we encountered was simply not very good and contained quick and dirty research and/or factual errors. In these cases, which we chose not to elaborate, it seemed that the desire to ride on the wave of Big Brother mania lured scholars, editors and publishers into lowering standard academic norms. Another reason may be a lack of funding for more thorough analyses of BB. This would also explain the prominence of cultural analyses of Big Brother which are relatively cheap, and the absence of systematic empirical comparative work, which is prohibitively expensive. For a global phenomenon like Big Brother, with its particular national transformations, this is obviously a missed opportunity.[3] With the exception of the Mathijs and Jones (2005) volume (which includes research from different countries but is not comparative), the work reviewed here is mono-national and in some respects single-minded, as we pointed out earlier when discussing the Anglo-American perspectives on BB's generic roots. Another obvious problem in the current work is the relative scarcity of gender analyses. While there are some chapters in the edited volumes (Chandler and Griffiths 2005; Buikema 2000), there is little work that explains why BB is a hit with young female audiences (especially the later runs), why men win more often than women (but see Van Zoonen and Carter, 2004 for a first exploration), why it is that female candidates in particular seem to provoke many more negative and aggressive reactions on websites, chat lines and blogs than male housemates, and more generally whether and how BB ties in with a feminisation of culture (e.g. Douglas 1977). A similar point can be made about ethnicity; why the numbers and success of ethnic candidates have been so few is a largely unasked and unanswered question and it is unclear whether BBs appeal extends to audiences from various ethnic groups. The monolithic make-up of the housemates - young, attractive, heterosexual men and women of the dominant ethnic groups in their countries - may suggest that BB presents a much desired confirmation of mainstream authenticity, rather than an exploration and appreciation of cultural diversity. But that is one of the unanswered questions that cries out for more analysis and research.

APPENDIX ONE

National Adoptions of Big Brother

Figures in columns represent year of first adoption and numbers of series produced. For instance, Big Brother Colombia started in 2003 and only ran once, Big Brother US started in 2000 and will go for its seventh run in the upcoming season.

AFRICA	03-1	NETHERLANDS	99-5
ARGENTINA	01-3	NIGERIA	*
AUSTRALIA	01-6	NORWAY	01-3
BELGIUM	00-5	PACIFIC	05-1
BRAZIL	02-6	PHILIPPINES (PINOY)	05-3
BULGARIA	04-2	POLAND	01-3
CANADA	03-2	PORTUGAL	00-4
CENTRAL AMERICA	*	ROMANIA	03-2
CZECH REPUBLIC	04-2	RUSSIA	03-?
COLOMBIA	03-1	SCANDINAVIA	05-2
CROATIE	04-3	SERBIA	05-1
DENMARK	01-3	SLOVAKIA	05-1
ECUADOR	03-2	SOUTH AFRICA	01-2
FINLAND	05-1	SPAIN	00-7
FRANCE	01-2	SWEDEN	00-4
GERMANY	00-6	SWITZERLAND	00-2
GREECE	01-4	THAILAND	05-2
HUNGARY	02-2	TURKEY	01-5
INDIA	*	UNITED KINGDOM	00-7
ITALY	00-6	UNITED STATES	00-7
MEXICO	02-3	VENEZUELA	*
MIDDLE EAST**	04-1	* To be launched ** Cancelled after 10 days	

Sources: Bazalgette, 2005; Johnson-Woods, 2002, Wikipedia.

Notes:

1. Personal communication to Liesbet van Zoonen at the 2001 Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Conference, Loughborough.

2. Talpa was set up by John de Mol, the original producer of BB and former owner of production company Endemol which built its fame and capital on BB.

3. A critical comment we extend to our own research practice for that matter.

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