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Scholarly discussion as engineering the meanings of a European cultural heritage

Tuuli Lähdesmäki

Abstract

The vague concept of a European cultural heritage is frequently referred to—but rarely explicitly defined—in a scholarly discussion. The use of the concept in academia constructs a European cultural heritage as a category in research and explicitly and implicitly produces its focuses and outlines. Thus, the use of the concept can be considered as scholarly engineering of a European cultural heritage. To be able to have a scholarly discussion about a European cultural heritage, the meanings and uses of the concept need to be clarified. This article examines the meanings and uses of the concept in recent scholarly articles published in various disciplines. In the study the concept analysis by Walker and Avant (2010) is applied and expanded with a discourse theoretical aspect: different recurring characteristics brought to the fore in the use of the concept are perceived as varying discourses on a European cultural heritage.

Keywords: European cultural heritage, concept, concept analysis, discourse, scholarly discussion

Introduction

During the past two decades, the trans-border dimensions of heritage have become topical in a new way in Europe as the idea and concept of a European cultural heritage have been more

and more frequently referred to in the political discourses of the EU and the Council of Europe (CofE) (Removed). Both have recently launched several cultural initiatives and projects which aim to foster the idea of a common European cultural heritage, history, and memory. Besides appearing in the political discourses and practices of European organizations, the concept of a European cultural heritage is often discussed in diverse examinations of the CofE and EU policies, the idea of Europe, European identity, and various cultural phenomena considered as European. The concept is not only used in research on cultural heritage as such, but also in studies of diverse topics in various scholarly fields ranging from political to educational science, and from geography to information science, etc.

A European cultural heritage is rarely explicitly defined in the political discourses. In the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, “the common heritage of Europe” is described as consisting of

all forms of cultural heritage in Europe which together constitute a shared source of remembrance, understanding, identity, cohesion and creativity, and the ideals, principles and values, derived from the experience gained through progress and past conflicts, which foster the development of a peaceful and stable society, founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law (CofE 2005: article 3).

In the political discourses, the idea of a common European cultural heritage often has its ideological basis in Europeanism (see McCormick, 2010) and transnationalism, which emphasize transcending the local, regional, and national interpretations of history, culture, and identity. The idea of a common European cultural heritage elevates the notions of

ownership and inheritance beyond local, regional, or national values and transforms heritage sites and objects into a source of a common European cultural identity and a “common good” symbolically belonging to all Europeans (Removed). The political documents of the CofE and the EU do not fix a European heritage to any particular cultural historic characteristics. As Claske Vos (2011: 226) states, the notion of a European cultural heritage is intentionally vaguely outlined, since explicit pronouncements on what makes heritage “European” might lead to various conflicts and problems regarding the ownership of heritage. Although international heritage organizations have introduced and adopted various conservation guidelines in the form of charters, recommendations, and resolutions, the finer terminology of heritage has not been streamlined or standardized, and thus no uniformity exists between discourses of diverse heritage agents and authorities (Ahmad, 2006).

Ulf Hannerz (2006: 79) has discussed the heritage strategies of UNESCO as “cultural engineering”. Kirstin Kuutma (2012: 21) uses the same expression in her theoretical discussion on heritage regimes. For her, engineering “signifies the making or achieving or getting something through contrivance, thus implying invention and formulation” (Kuutma, 2012: 21). The EU’s and the CofE’s heritage initiatives and their political discourses aim for engineering of heritage: creating the idea of a common European cultural heritage and utilizing it for various political, social, cultural, and economic purposes.

As in the political discourses, the concept of a European cultural heritage is usually vaguely defined in scholarly discussion, as well. The terminology and conceptualization of heritage has no uniformity in academia, either. However, the use of the concept in academia constructs a European cultural heritage as a category in research and explicitly and implicitly produces its focuses and outlines in scholarly discussions. The use of the concept in research

can be considered as scholarly engineering of heritage. This kind of engineering of the meanings of a European cultural heritage has not yet been further problematized or empirically analyzed, although scholars commonly emphasize the vagueness of the concept in the political discourses.

Concepts are essential to the production of scholarly knowledge and in forming theoretical paradigms. In addition, scholarly concepts are easily adopted from academic contexts in everyday public and political discussions. Vague, complex, or ambiguous concepts in particular are easily transformed into political tools. The use of ambiguous concepts involves the use of power: they are a means to give a certain kind of meaning to complex phenomena and legitimate and justify certain points of view, ideas, and ideologies connected to them. In conceptual discourse, such as in scholarly discussions, the use of power is typically implicit and hidden behind justifiable, fact-based, and objectivity-pursuing argumentation—i.e., features which make the scholarly discourse and its language use extremely powerful.

The tradition of cultural studies stems from critical understanding of language use and power relations included in it. Various scholars in cultural studies have been interested in the discursive construction of reality through a linguistic or broader semiotic means. These scholars have called into question a plain distinction between the concepts of language and their referents in the reality outside of language. On the other hand, the social constructionist orientation in cultural studies emphasizes how even the harshest realities of the everyday only exist through meanings that are given to them in social interaction (Alasuutari, 1995: 28–29). In cultural studies, the meaning-making processes have been approached, e.g., with the concept of articulation (Hall, 1980a; 1980b) in order to emphasize how meanings do not simply reside in any particular discourse or practice, but are always contested, negotiated, and

contingent on a specific context and function simultaneously at the epistemological, political, and strategic levels (Slack, 1996: 113). Critical investigation of language use in meaning-making processes, particularly language that is seemingly neutral and objective, such as that of academia, is a crucial aim in cultural studies. The focus of this article, a European cultural heritage, is a recurring scholarly concept which creates its object every time the concept is used. As an ambiguous and easily politicized concept, its use is intertwined with the workings of power.

To be able to have a scholarly discussion about a European cultural heritage, the meanings and uses of the concept need to be clarified. What do the scholars mean by a European cultural heritage? How and for what purposes is the concept being used in scholarly discussions? This article engages in a critical discussion on the concept of a European cultural heritage by analyzing the meanings and uses of the concept in recent scholarly articles published in various disciplines. The analysis obeys critical approaches of cultural studies by scrutinizing the constructive, discursive and performative nature of language in the meaning-making of reality. The article proceeds from a theoretical discussion on a European dimension of cultural heritage to a concept analysis of the empirical data. In the analysis Lorraine O. Walker's and Kay C. Avant's (2010) concept analysis model is applied and extended with a discourse analysis in order to identify how the meanings of the concept of a European cultural heritage are engineered in research. The analysis is followed by a problematization and a critical discussion on the feasibility of the concept.

Theorizing a European dimension of cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is an extremely ambivalent, ambiguous, and fluid concept. During the past century, its meanings have evolved from the idea of goods inherited from forefathers to a sense of cultural roots, identity, and belonging (cf. Lowenthal, 1998: 4). Simultaneously, the concept has faced a semantic change in heritage discourses—the idea of cultural heritage is no longer defined on the basis of its tangible material aspect (Vecco, 2010). Conceptual expansion of the idea of cultural heritage has not made the concept any less ambiguous; quite the opposite. As Laurajane Smith (2006) notes, in an epistemological sense all heritage is intangible due to its social values and impact. Kristin Kuutma (2012: 24) claims that the conceptual demarcation of heritage to tangible and intangible is in fact largely organizational and political: “it is the institutional distinction inside heritage industries that needs this division between tangible and intangible heritage”. Attempts to clarify the concept of heritage by categorizing it as cultural and natural heritage have also turned out to be problematic (Ahmad, 2006; Lowenthal, 2005). As David Lowenthal (2005: 81) argues: “no aspect of nature is unimpacted by human agency, no artefact devoid of environmental impress”. Tangible, intangible, cultural, and natural dimensions of heritage commingle.

Indeed, the conceptual difficulties of defining cultural heritage (cf. Edson, 2004) emanate from the relationality of the meanings of heritage and the intersectionality of diverse social and societal spheres in and through which the heritage is being produced. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998, 2004: 59) has described heritage as a mode of cultural production that stems from a metacultural relationship to heritage practices and is created through metacultural operations. For her, heritage is a new kind of metalevel relationship to that which becomes heritage: it points beyond itself to a culture it claims to represent.

How is the relationality and idea of heritage as a relationship intertwined with the territoriality of heritage? Although the geographies of heritage have increasingly raised scholarly interest, David Harvey (2014) argues that very few scholars have investigated the difference that scale creates to the meanings of heritage. According to him, the heritage-scale relationship can be an open, plural, and relational process detached from the physical distance, proximity, or essentialist claims to territorial hierarchy. Scale has a major impact on attempts to understand a European cultural heritage. In the political and scholarly use of the concept, the heritage-scale relationship is indeed open and relational. In the use of the concept, “European” may signify various values and meanings which are detached from the physical territory of Europe. The meanings of the European dimension of heritage are produced through various “metacultural” operations in which, e.g., political, social, societal, cultural, and scholarly discussions intertwine.

For several decades, scholars have argued whether a transnational European cultural heritage can exist, and if it can, what could be its common ground (e.g., Ashworth and Larkham, 1994). Critical scholars have asked what could be the European dimension of heritage that goes beyond the mere sum of national icons (e.g., Sassatelli 2006: 29), or they have questioned the possibility of common European commemoration and heritage practices due to the lack of a “European people” (e.g., Delanty, 2009: 37). The idea of a European cultural heritage faces the same problems as the ideas of a European identity and European (cultural) integration. As Cris Shore’s (2000) analysis of EU cultural politics has brought out, one of the major challenges of the European project is whether popular loyalty can be shifted from the national to the European level and from the nation-state to the supranational institutions of the EU. Indeed, the production of a common European cultural heritage and the search for common histories in Europe confront the complex relations of national interpretations of the

past. The heritage and histories some Europeans might consider common for the continent may be dissonant in one way or another to another group of Europeans. In addition, different nationalities may interpret “Europeanness” very differently (Jones and Subotic, 2011; Risse, 2003). For some nationalities a European identity is rather based on “civic” or political understanding, while some others emphasize the cultural notion of it (Bruter, 2005). Moreover, several surveys among Europeans have indicated that the definitions of national and European heritage vary considerably from one country to another (EC, 2007; Ipsos, 2007).

Gerard Delanty (2009: 36) notes how the debate regarding a European heritage is very much a question of identifying the cultural resources that might be relevant to the current challenges of European societies. Therefore, defining a transnational European heritage means taking a position on European history that reflects contemporary political views on Europe and its self-understanding. As Delanty points out, it is not possible to speak of a European cultural heritage without considering its political meaning. Similarly, the scholarly discussions on a European cultural heritage inevitable include a political dimension and taking a position in relation to the political understandings of Europe.

Data and Methods

Concepts are linguistic constructions in scientific knowledge used for structuring, clarifying, and making understandable diverse abstract and ambiguous phenomena. The use of concepts in research does not, however, only clarify the phenomena being discussed: through concepts scholars explicitly and implicitly create or “engineer” the meanings of phenomena. To

understand the engineering of the concept of a European cultural heritage, the concept was examined by applying a qualitative concept analysis developed by Walker and Avant (2010). Their method entails eight steps: (a) concept selection; (b) determination of the purpose of the concept analysis; (c) identification of all uses of the concept; (d) identification of recurring characteristics that function as defining attributes of the concept; (e) construction of a model case exemplifying a real-life use of the concept; (f) construction of additional cases such as related, borderline, and contrary cases; (g) identification of antecedents and consequences; and (h) identification of empirical referents that demonstrate the occurrence of the concept. The method has been developed for nursing research, but a large number of studies applying it in various disciplines (e.g., Broom, 2006; Fletcher, 1999; Hansen, 2006; Roberts and Cunningham, 1990; Sprott, 1994) indicates its broader applicability.

Walker's and Avant's analysis model has been criticized, e.g., by claiming that it simplifies the complexity of concepts and thus produces trivial results (cf. Brennan, 1997; Morse et al., 1996; Paley, 1996). Indeed, the method aims to define the 'correct' meanings of concepts and their 'right' uses, which in the case of fluid and abstract concepts might cement their applicability and decrease their capacity for creating understanding of transforming social and cultural phenomena. Therefore, the method has to be adjusted and broadened in order to perceive how different uses of concepts produce and engineer different meanings of the phenomena being discussed. Therefore, in the analysis in this article, Walker's and Avant's method is applied and expanded with a discourse theoretical aspect: different recurring characteristics brought to the fore in the use of the concept are perceived as varying discourses on a European cultural heritage.

The theoretical background of the analysis in the article arises from social constructionism, which emphasizes reality as constructions produced in language, interaction, and social practices. In social constructionism, language is not just an instrument in communication, but it is seen as producing, justifying, and changing actual practices (Gergen, 1999; Shotter, 1993). Discourse studies rely on the theoretical formulations of social constructionism. Although discourse studies include several different orientations, a common point of view in them emphasizes the constructed character of social entities, relations, and phenomena. In the analysis, some discourses are seen to produce one version of reality, while others produce another (Fairclough, 1992: 3–4). In the article, a discourse is defined as a particular way of representing reality. The representations expressed in scholarly discussions on a European cultural heritage construct the concept and the ideas, notions, and expectations related to it.

Although scholarly research represents an institutionalized discourse, ambiguous and fluid concepts may include a wide variety of contexts in which they are used and bring to the fore diverse understandings that are more or less theoretically rigorous (cf. Soini and Birkeland, 2014). To investigate the meanings and uses of the concept of a European cultural heritage in recent scholarly discussions, the research data were searched through the EBSCO Academic Search Elite (ASE)—a scholarly database characterized by extensive content, interdisciplinarity, and an emphasis on socio-cultural studies. In the data gathering, scholarly peer-reviewed English language articles published between 2009 and 2014 were searched with text search terms “European cultural heritage / Europe’s cultural heritage / cultural heritage of Europe”. With this framing, 178 articles were found and pre-examined with qualitative reading to delimit the data to articles including a deeper discussion on the topic of the research and/or in which the concept of a European cultural heritage was more frequently used. Very few articles among these 178 discussed a European cultural heritage more

thoroughly or sought to define it. By using the concept, however vague or modest the discussion might have been, the authors contributed to the scholarly discourse on a European cultural heritage (cf. Soini and Birkeland, 2014). The delimited data include 64 articles and three abstracts published in 62 scholarly journals representing various disciplines. Many of the texts in the data were more or less multi- or interdisciplinary. The most common scholarly fields in the data were: political science (identified as the main field in 8 articles), educational science (8), geography and environmental science (6), library and information science (6), history (5), study of literature (5), conservation science (4), and philosophy (4).

The analysis of the data proceeds from identification of the uses of the concept in diverse discourses in which certain kinds of characteristics of a European cultural heritage are being emphasized. This identification is based on a discursive analysis of the linguistic and semantic contexts wherein the concept occurred. Instead of constructing a model case of a “real life” use of the concept, the analysis is exemplified with quotations from the data. The quantitative occurrence of identified discourses in the data is demonstrated in a table. The analysis ends with identifying and exemplifying “borderline”, “related”, and “contrary” uses of the concept and discussing its antecedents and consequences.

Identification of recurring discourses on a European cultural heritage

As a result of the analysis, the scholarly discussions on a European cultural heritage were organized into seven discourses in which the concept was linguistically and semantically framed and made sense of in different ways. Following Walker’s and Avant’s (2010: 68) method, the discourse analysis focused on identifying all possible uses of the concept in a

scholarly context and recognizing the characteristic, typical, and recurring features of the concept in its use. The analysis proceeded by investigating: explicit and implicit definitions of the concept; agents, objects, and phenomena discussed with the concept; explicit and implicit aims for using the concept; spatial and scalar dimensions of the concept; conceptual linkages and co-concepts; and the disciplinary context of the concept use. The perceived discourses are closely linked and form a partly overlapping structure. Therefore, in the analysis the data was not categorized by locating each text in one particular discourse. Although most of the articles used primarily one of the perceived discourses in making sense of the concept, some of the articles used elements and features from two or more discourses. Quotations from the data are used to demonstrate the occurrence of the concept.

European historical values. The most common discourse in the data framed a European cultural heritage as particular shared and positively charged values, ideas, and ways of thinking handed down from Europe's past to its present day in a chain of transforming historical eras. The shared values and ideas in the discourse were commonly abstract and described in broad socio-cultural, societal, educational, or moral terms. The discourse, named in the analysis as the discourse on "European historical values", has its bases in understanding the concept of a European cultural heritage as "common interests, rules and values supplemented by a shared way of looking at the world" (Quayle, 2013: 107). In the discourse, the shared values, ideas, and ways of thinking are commonly described as stemming from "the common heritage of Rome, Athens and Jerusalem" (Petrov, 2013: 331) or "historical roots that can be traced back to the classical Antiquity, Christianity and the Enlightenment" (Ivic and Lakicevic, 2011: 401). The origin of a common European cultural heritage is typically territorially and temporally located in the classical civilizations, as Grace Davie does in a section of her article in which she discusses a European cultural heritage:

Both religious belief and its obverse unbelief are part of culture: they do not exist in a vacuum. In the European case, both have been formed by the Judaeo-Christian tradition which has been part of our heritage for two millennia and – whether we like it or not – has defined the categories in which we think. [--] That is not to say that the Judaeo-Christian tradition is the only formative factor to take into account in the evolution of Europe. Greek rationalism and Roman organisation are equally significant. (Davie 2013: 259–260.)

The discourse emphasizing a European cultural heritage as a legacy of shared historical values is common in the texts of various pro-European and pan-Europeanist thinkers, such as Paul Valéry and Dennis de Rougemont. In these texts, particular values and ideas are connected to particular historical civilizations and eras in Europe: a shared legacy is explained as descending, e.g., from Greek spirit, Hellenic rationality and beauty, and Roman law and administration.

The discourse on “European historical values” is highly intellectual—and at the same time extremely flexible and vague. It could be used in the data to promote various values and ideas by framing them as historical legacy stemming far from the past of the continent, as the following quotation demonstrates:

[archaeologist Salvatore] Settis writes that the study of Roman history not only helps us understand how empires work and why they fall but also explains the modern European commitment to cultural pluralism and diversity. After all, the Romans were the original multiculturalists, freely borrowing ideas and practices

from others, fusing these together with their own, and creating something new, which was then handed down to form part of modern Europe's common heritage. (Burton, 2013: 24.)

Appealing to the past is a seemingly neutral way to frame a European cultural heritage. However, such framing often includes implicit ideological and political aims or motives. The discourse, which suggests something as “our” legacy received from the past in the chain of historical eras, rhetorically obligates “us” to foster it and transfer it to the future—in order not to break the historical chain. In addition, the discourse constructs past civilizations and their intellectual and cultural climate as the predecessors of the whole of Europe and its citizens of today, and, thus, suggests a common ground for unity and shared identity in Europe.

European descent. The second common discourse in the data emphasizes a European cultural heritage as a cultural and ethnic inheritance which has its roots in Europe. The point of view in the articles which frame the concept as “European descent” is commonly produced from outside Europe when discussing or examining phenomena which take place in a non-European country but which are perceived as originating from Europe—without a more specific place of origin in Europe. The discourse is commonly used to contextualize the discussed topics or to indicate the connections of a non-European country to Europe, as the following quotation illustrates:

While European history remains strongly represented in the American academy, historians of Europe still feel the need to justify its study. There are, of course, excellent reasons for studying European history. For good or ill, Europe once ruled over much of the globe. Europe remains the source of our most important

political and other institutions. Europe's cultural heritage is our heritage, even as new influences shape our cultural world, too. (Epstein, 2013: 638.)

The discourse emphasizes the idea of different kinds of “belonging” to Europe through cultural or ethnic roots. Usually these roots are presented in positive terms—except when discussing the colonial past of Europe and its impacts on the colonized countries (e.g., Addo, 2011). The discourse on “European descent” not only focuses on representing tangible and intangible heritage, traditions, and various cultural features as a European cultural heritage, but also expands the concept to explain the ethnicity of people and their ethnic belonging to Europe. Thus, the concept could also be used for discussing the combined cultural and ethnic-genetic origin of people living outside of Europe (e.g., Reedy-Maschner, 2010; Tarver, 2011).

Agencies. The concept of a European cultural heritage was commonly used in the data when discussing the action of international or transnational organizations and “European cultural heritage and memory institutions” (Mitchell, 2013: 41). The recurring international organizations referred to in the data were: the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the CofE, UNESCO, and ICOMOS. The discourse focusing on agencies brought to the fore various initiatives, networks, projects, decision-makers, and people implementing concrete preservation and conservation work within these initiatives. The meanings of a European cultural heritage were not substantively framed in the discourse: the international and transnational agencies implementing their activities in Europe functioned as the determinant of the concept. A European cultural heritage is closely linked in the discourse to the idea of transnational collaboration and interaction at the political, administrative, and grass-root levels.

Constructed project. The discourse of agencies is related in the data to the understanding of a European cultural heritage as a particular project produced by European political organizations such as the EU and the CofE. While in the discourse of agencies the concept is simply framed by the action of the agents, the discourse on a “Constructed project” includes an emphasis on an intentional political construction of its contents: A European cultural heritage is perceived as a project in the making and as being intertwined with various other political attempts of these organizations, such as constructing a European identity, European citizenship, or joint European cultural policies. In the discourse, the ultimate goal of these attempts is to create for Europe a common cultural area and cultural unity (e.g., Stevenson et al., 2010), but also to unify the practices of heritage work, produce regional development, and enable economic regeneration (e.g., Vos, 2011). Some of the articles criticized these projects for their vague political rhetoric, as the following quotation exemplifies:

The European Union Culture Programme (2007–2013) sets as its objective “to contribute to the emergence of a European citizenship through the promotion of cultural co-operation in Europe, by bringing to the fore the cultural area Europeans have in common, with its shared cultural heritage and rich cultural diversity” (European Commission 2006, 4), but offers no specification of what comprises the shared cultural area and heritage, nor any limits that might be imposed on it by diversity. (Stevenson et al., 2010: 253.)

In the discourse, a European cultural heritage was also understood as a project through which European organizations influence the meanings of heritage at different scalarly levels by Europeanizing the local, regional, and national heritage. Heritage projects of the EU and the

CofE could be perceived as policy tools in producing a sense of belonging to the European community, as Claske Vos writes:

This renewed interpretation of Serbia within Europe has been stimulated by the involvement of the European Commission (Commission) and the Council of Europe (CoE) in the region. From the 1990s onwards, they have launched several programmes, not only economic, security oriented and legal, but also cultural and heritage-based. One example of such a programme is the Regional Programme for Natural and Cultural Heritage in South East Europe introduced in 2003. In the rhetoric used by the policy makers of the Commission and the CoE, the message is that heritage is regarded as an important instrument for promoting Serbia's European identity. It could create spaces in which European citizens can meet and experience a sense of belonging to the European community. Furthermore, it could lead to more regional cooperation and stability in this war-torn region in Europe. This European Heritage Project can therefore be seen as part of a more encompassing attempt to "Europeanize" the country and the region as a whole. (Vos, 2011: 222.)

Made in Europe. European cultural heritage is a concept which was often loosely used in the data simply in referring to various cultural products and objects which the authors did not clearly locate as a property or an asset of any particular European nation or having any other kind of scalar nature. The discussions on the contents of Europeana, in particular, followed this kind of use of the concept.

In addition, the concept could be loosely used as a rhetorical means to produce broader “European” significance to the national, regional, or local focus of the study. Following this kind of meaning-making of the concept, the authors could state, e.g., that “Flemish 15–17th century tapestries are among the most precious testimonies of European cultural heritage” (Vanden Berghe, 2012: 1349) and “Some of the most significant architectural works are monumental masonry constructions. Among these, the Cathedral of Syracuse can be viewed as a fundamental element in the cultural heritage of Europe” (Carpinteri et al., 2011: 243).

Environment, landscape, and translocal places. One of the minor discourses in the data framed the concept of a European cultural heritage by discussing it as a part of the environment and landscape. In this discourse, the ideas of cultural heritage and natural heritage were perceived as intertwined. As David G. Havlick (2014: 126) states in his discussion on the heritage value of cycling routes along the Iron Curtain: “the Iron Curtain now presents an important trans-European geography that blurs the boundaries not just of political ideologies, east and west, but also those of nature and culture”. The discourse includes a more or less critical standpoint on a “traditional” notion of heritage. Instead, the authors in the discourse aimed to broaden the understanding of heritage by approaching it as an embedded part of a landscape, an environment, or an ecosystem in Europe. As Ross Balzaretto (2011) claims, a vague concept of a European heritage commonly emphasizes aesthetic appreciation, which in the case of discussing a landscape ignores local and regional ecological specificities:

For the ECL [European Landscape Convention] in contrast, “a ‘Landscape’ means an area, *as perceived by people*, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (my emphasis) which is

“a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity”. Although there have been some academic defenders of this definition, it is clear that it irons out local and regional ecological specificity in favour of a vague European “heritage”, based on how landscape is perceived, namely an aesthetic appreciation. (Balzaretti, 2011: 347.)

Indeed, a European cultural heritage is discussed in the discourse by using alternative or more specific concepts, such as “European agricultural landscape”, “biodiversity”, “ecosystem” (Navarro and Pereira, 2012), and “historical ecology” (Balzaretti, 2011). In the discourse, a particular interest focuses on places. Various transcultural phenomena, traditions, and memories in Europe are perceived as materialized in particular places and physical environments of local communities. In the discourse, a European cultural heritage is thus also outlined as a translocal phenomenon: as cultural traits embedded in particular spatial localities and as shared between the communities living in these localities, regardless of whether these localities are physically located in the same region or country.

High culture. Surprisingly, a European cultural heritage was discussed as high culture only a few times in the data. This kind of framing of the concept brought to the fore well-known cultural-historical styles, heritage sites, monuments, museums, and works of art canonized in the narration of European or Western art and cultural history. The understanding of a European cultural heritage as high culture is extremely exclusive and intellectual. The limits and narrowness of the discourse were, however, taken to the fore in the articles. As Giacomo Tagiuri states, the high cultural understanding of a European cultural heritage turns it into a “testimony to a common European civilization”:

When British historian Tony Judt wrote that the only thing that truly united Europeans was their passion for football, he had in mind this broader idea of culture. There is also a narrower definition: what is sometimes called “high culture”. This refers to a set of artistic, philosophical, technological and scientific works and ideas that might be seen as forming a European cultural heritage, and are testimony to a common European civilisation: “the best that has been thought and said”, to use Matthew Arnold’s famous phrase, to which one has to add, by implication, “painted”, “played” and “built”. (Tagiuri, 2014: 157–158.)

Some of the discourses identified in the data were more commonly used in some scholarly fields than others. Table 1 demonstrates the frequencies of the discourses. Educational science was generally the most represented discipline in the data and it formed the majority of the texts in the discourse on “European historical values” and “Constructed project”. However, both discourses included texts from various other disciplines. In the discourse on “European descent”, the variety of scholarly fields was the most evenly spread between the disciplines of social sciences and humanities. The discourse on “Agencies” was typically used by the authors in library and information science and the discourse on “Made in Europe”, in conservation science. The geographers and scholars in environmental science unsurprisingly emphasized environmental and spatial points of view on the concept.

<Insert Table 1 here>

Discourses on a European cultural heritage in function

After identifying the discourses on a European cultural heritage, the analysis followed the phases (f), (g), and (h) in Walker's and Avant's concept analysis model. The data were re-read in order to identify commonly used terms and concepts related to the main concept of the study—a European cultural heritage. Walker and Avant (2010: 71) have defined a related case as reminding of the main concept and as being connected to it in some way but without including its critical attributes. The re-examination of the data brought to the fore how the concepts of culture and identity recurred in the data and were closely intertwined in making sense of the concept of a European cultural heritage. While in some articles the concept of culture was perceived as a broader concept than heritage, in some articles—particularly in the discourses on “European historical values”, “European descent”, and “Environment, landscape and translocal places”—heritage was given a broader meaning than culture. In these discourses, heritage embedded various social and societal values and ideas, ethnic and even genetic dimensions, and environmental qualities.

Identity was discussed in the data as a source and a foundation for creating cultural heritage but also as an effect produced by preservation, conservation, and fostering of a cultural heritage. Particularly the discourses on “European historical values”, “European descent”, and “Constructed project” connected the concept of cultural heritage and identity. While in the first two discourses identities were perceived as based on some essentialist qualities, the discourse on “Constructed project” perceived a European identity as a similar political project as a European cultural heritage. Indeed, studies on EU politics have brought out how the EU's heritage politics and identity politics merge: a European identity is being produced in and through the EU's heritage initiatives (Removed).

Walker and Avant (2010) define borderline cases as containing some of the critical attributes of the investigated concept but not all of them. The data included several articles in which a European cultural heritage was discussed in a narrower scalar frame by focusing on a transnational cultural phenomenon, such as “Mediterranean cultural landscape” (Dika et al., 2011) or the cultural heritage of transnational cultural areas in Europe, such as “Mediterranean area and beyond” (Lorenz and Kolb, 2009), or by emphasizing the significance of national heritage and cultural features by defining them as having importance on a European scale and as forming a part of a European cultural heritage. Thus, e.g., the Cyrillic alphabet could be perceived as a Bulgarian contribution to a European cultural heritage, as Ana Proykov writes:

After the accession the Cyrillic alphabet became the third official alphabet of the EU (after the Latin and Greek alphabets). The Cyrillic alphabet is a substantial part of the cultural heritage of Europe and represents a unique Bulgarian contribution to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Union. (Proykov 2009: 89.)

In Walker’s and Avant’s methodological matrix, outlining of contrary cases in the data brings to the fore what the examined concept is not about. In the analysis, outlining of contrary cases was conducted by identifying articles in which the authors criticized the concept of a European cultural heritage and the “traditional” or “narrow” points of view through which it was perceived, producing the understanding of diverse cultural and communal phenomena. Two articles brought out criticism toward the “Eurocentricism” of heritage. Willem J. H. Willems (2009: 655) suggests that Eurocentricism could be overcome by recognizing new

types of heritage such as “cultural achievement as expressed in landscape [--] or in industrial and technological monuments.” According to Vecco (2010: 324), “immateriality and orality can be interpreted as a step in the direction of overcoming a Eurocentric perspective of heritage”. In addition, the transnational European scale of cultural heritage was also criticized by emphasizing the significance of local and regional particularities in research (Balzaretti, 2011).

Walker’s and Avant’s method of analysis deepens the understanding of the contexts of concepts by identifying antecedent and consequences of its use. In the method, antecedents are understood as factors that occur prior to the occurrence of the concept, while consequences are perceived as occurring as a result of it (Walker and Avant, 2010: 72–73). The common and recurring use of the concept of a European cultural heritage in recent scholarly discussions has its social and societal background, e.g., in cultural pluralization and multi- and inter-culturalization of Europe, increased intra- and extra-European immigration, and complexification and diversification of individual and collective identities. In changing cultural and social conditions, scholarly discussions on scalarly broad and transborder cultural phenomena and interconnectedness of cultures and identities have become timely. The EU’s identity and cultural politics and policies have heightened interest in discussing cultural heritage at the European level. Discussions on a European cultural heritage presuppose, however, that some real or ‘imagined’ common elements, such as a shared past transcending local, regional, and national borders and the traits of the past in the present, are perceived in diversity and plurality.

The consequences of the use of the concept of a European cultural heritage stem from the meanings given to it in the scholarly discussions. These meanings are often value-loaded and

include both explicit and implicit ideological stands. On the one hand, the concept enables perception of the meanings of cultural and historical phenomena as multilayered, shared, and penetrating national borders in Europe instead of being restricted to local, regional, and national scales. The concept presents Europe as a particular cultural-historical area and produces interpretations of culture and history as elements that unite societies and people in Europe. In this sense, the use of the concept parallels the recent political attempts of the EU: the production of cultural integration and the creation of a common cultural identity in Europe (Removed). On the other hand, the concept generalizes and homogenizes the notions of the contents of a cultural heritage in Europe, thus simplifying the multilayeredness of its meanings. The emphasis on a shared heritage pushes to the background the differences and cultural and historical particularities beneath the European level.

Conclusions

This study of the concept of a European cultural heritage revealed its nature as a metacultural practice: its meanings and uses are produced through multilevel cultural, social, societal, political, and spatial relationships and operations. Scholarly discussions function as an essential mode of these relationships and operations in and through which the concept is in the making. The construction of a European cultural heritage through the use of the concept is, however, often unintentional and implicit. The scholarly texts that use the concept rarely focus on discussing a European cultural heritage as such. Indeed, the concept is commonly embedded in discussions on cultural, social, and political processes in general and in examination of various topics more or less closely related to the idea of heritage. The conducted analysis indicates how the concept is broadly used in various disciplines.

The idea of a shared European cultural heritage is often referred to in the EU's and the CoE's political discourse (Removed). This discourse is put into practice in various EU and CoE heritage initiatives and projects which label cultural objects and historical sites as having significance on a European scale. The political discourse and heritage initiatives of European organizations are commonly discussed in academia, as the analysis indicates. Although the discourse and the initiatives can be explicitly defined in the scholarly texts as a construction of a European cultural heritage, the repetitive linking of the concept to European organizations in these texts at the same time establishes them as European-level heritage agents and naturalizes their role as meaning-makers of heritage. In addition, scholarly discussions on European-level heritage agents naturalize the idea of a continental scale of cultural heritage.

The scholarly discussions can be perceived as engineering of the meanings of a European cultural heritage. The scholarly engineering of meanings also has political and societal significance, since political and societal discussions and decision-making are expected to be based on "facts", investigated information, and current views provided by experts. Scholarly discussions on a European cultural heritage represent this kind of expert discourse which inevitably influences the broader understanding of the contents and frames of the concept. However, this analysis brought out the ambiguous, flexible, and fluid nature of the concept in the scholarly context. As in the political discussions, the concept may have value-charged and ideological contents in scholarly texts. Without an accurate definition, the concept of a European cultural heritage remains vague and easily politicized, with only little analytical use in research.

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