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Culture for Europe:
Struggles for contemporary meanings and social
understandings of Europe through
cultural institutions, festivals, and art projects

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Abstract

This thesis investigates struggles for meanings and social understandings of Europe taking place through cultural institutions, festival sites, and art projects. I claim that culture is a social field where meanings of Europe are made. I argue that meanings of Europe that emerge in these cultural sites are not prior or given, but are a result of struggles between the actors involved. These meanings are to different degrees particular and autonomous, depending on the proximity of a given cultural site to the political structures of the state and the EU. This research identifies that actors who construct Europe's meaning do so according to common patterns. Europe's meanings evoke notions of unity – it is a symbol of coming together. At the same time, what different actors mean by Europe is an articulation of their particular circumstances and aspirations. There is not one Europe. This is confirmed by how Europe is understood by the immediate audiences of these cultural sites. It is perceived as relevant only when translated through familiar contexts – specific, local or national – and only then it is embraced.

The background of the analysis is the significance of aesthetic culture in modernity, its role in making the nation, and its social imagining. This thesis examines the ways in which culture today demonstrates a similar capacity in regard to Europe, albeit in a micro scale. The methods employed are discourse and audience reception analysis, as well as participant observation. The empirical investigation comprises of a microanalysis of sites of cultural production. The case studies selected for this analysis, drawing on studies of cultural nationalism, include an online cultural outlet, an independent film festival and a transnational cultural festival, as well as a series of state commissioned contemporary artworks, all of which claim to be European in one way or another.

Acknowledgements

It is often said that a PhD is a journey, of both professional and personal cultivation. In my experience it is difficult to ascertain which one is primary and which is secondary. I know, however, that personally I have been very lucky to have had the unquestioned support of my family throughout this time: my mother Maria, father Tomasz, grandparents Danuta and Marek, Jadwiga and Gustaw, as well as my father's wife Małgorzata, together with my brother Michał. All of whom I'm very thankful to for their encouragement and for coping with me when I was most difficult.

The thesis itself, however, is an outcome of a scholarly pursuit, which is as much individual as it is collaborative. Therefore, first I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my doctoral studies supervisors: Professors Damian Chalmers and Dr Jonathan White – for their patience, guidance, and insightful critique throughout the programme. Thanks to them I have been continuously aspiring to achieve academic rigour, establish genuine independence of thought process, and attain clarity of argumentation. I am forever thankful to them for helping me accomplish this personal and professional achievement that is a doctorate. Moreover, I would like to thank Professor Maurice Fraser and Dr Alain Pottage, who have been instrumental to the progression of my studies at the LSE.

However, my academic journey had begun much earlier at Eugene Lang College and the New School for Social Research. For this and many other reasons, I would like to express special and most sincere thanks to Professor Elżbieta Matynia for her academic mentorship and friendship, which have no equal. My sincere thanks go also to Professors Jeffrey Goldfarb and Andrew Arato, and Dean Robert Kostrzewa for their help and encouragement during my graduate studies at the NSSR. I have also been

blessed with the advice and support of Dr James Bjork of King College London; inspirations provided by Dr Tomasz Kitliński and Dr Paweł Leszkowicz; helpful feedback from Professor Hellen Wallace and Dr Abby Innes; as well as a one of kind insight into the studies of nationalism offered by Professor John Breuilly and Dr John Hutchinson from the LSE Government Department.

The metaphor of a journey is particularly apt in my case because I have been lucky to experience an amazing educational voyage from Warsaw, through New York, to London, with each city becoming forever present in my life, remaining a source of lasting inspirations, and blessing me with the people whom I met there. First, I want thank my dear Warsaw friends, with whom a share a difficult yet enduring love for my hometown and who have contributed to my personal and professional growth: Dorota Hemi for ensuring I'm properly brought up, Natalia Bugalska and Mateusz Hładki for great high school years at Bednarska (and after), Kacper Studencki for the refuge I always have at Kryniczna when it's most needed, and Natalia Romik for our multiple journeys with Warsaw always in the background. I am particularly grateful to Helena Chmielewska-Szlajfer and Aleksandra Przegalińska, with whom I had the pleasure to study at The New School and commiserate over our respective PhD journeys, for sharing their expertise on social science and on how to strike a balance between research and life, and for being the best of friends.

Following the journey metaphor, I would like to thank my New York family and friends who's support especially during my first years as a college student has been invaluable: Joanna and Jarosław Gołaszewscy for opening their home to me; Barbara Ross and Robert Tembeckjian for making me a part of their family every time I find myself in the city; my great friends since college Piotr Kuczyński, Sonia Sabrina Salas,

Mateusz Halawa, Anna Hsiao, and Joseph Hutchinson; as well as Professor Katarzyna Gruda and Krystyna Magdalena Ridely for their motherly care, be that in New York and Florida, or London and Warsaw. Furthermore, I would like to thank my friend Izabela Jurcewicz and her father Witold Jurcewicz for making my initial journey to the US possible.

Accordingly, I must express my gratitude to my most recent London friends who have most closely witnessed my struggles with the PhD and have always been here for me: Christopher Teano and David Kaskel for their generosity and trust; John Myers for his stoicism and wisdom; my dear friends Michał Rydzewski, Szymon Komasa, Margarita Markoviti, Mădălina Dobrescu, Łukasz Stańczuk, Paweł Mania, Irina Iordachescu, Tom Shaham, Andrés García von Wiese, and Paula Zoido-Oses for their advice, empathy, and amity; my great LSE colleagues Valentina Zigante, Marianna Chaves, Joseph Downing, Eva Heims, Lukas Obholzer, and Julian Hörner for their companionship and kindness; as well as all the 'dwellers' of the Jean Monnet Research Student Room at the European Institute. Here, I would also like to extend sincere thanks to the faculty and staff of the European Institute, especially Loukia Vassiliou and Elaine Hemmings who have been ever so kind and helpful to me, as well as Dr Sarabajaya Kumar and Dr Claire Gordon from the LSE Teaching and Learning Centre.

Finally and most importantly, I would like to express my insurmountable and everlasting gratitude to Monika and Wiktor Markowicz, and family. I would like to thank them for the faith they had in me from day one, their enduing support throughout the years, and their friendship, without which none of this would have been possible and for which I shall remain indebted to them forever. *Moniko, Witku, dziękuję.*

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Culture for Europe: An Introduction

Culture matters for Europe, because what takes place in the public sphere is where meaning is made in contemporary society. There is more to Europe than that which takes place in the political and economic fields. Meanings of Europe are made also through culture. This thesis identifies that there are a number of cultural sites across the continent that claim to be European or that explicitly speak of Europe. It finds that culture which is made 'for' Europe is a site where struggles over its contemporary meanings and social understandings take place. I, therefore, argue that meanings of Europe that emerge in culture are a result of very concrete symbolic struggles between the actors involved.

This research contends that particular meanings of Europe emerge through cultural sites, namely: a cultural institution, festivals, and art projects. It explores the ways in which social actors ascribe particular meanings to Europe and the wider social understandings that result in the process. These questions are important because culture is a sphere where meaning is made. It is exposed to economic dynamics and political influence. It is where the symbolic struggles take place, over ideas and values that are deemed important and that resonate throughout society. Cultural sites are then an important sphere where contemporary meanings of Europe are made.

This thesis introduces examples of cultural sites that embody seemingly different struggles over meanings – created by diverse actors, with different aims, and in particular contexts. What they have in common is the explicit reference to Europe they all make. From sharing cultural heritage online, through promoting independent filmmakers and activating grassroots civil society through culture, to decorating diplomatic events – this thesis shows that meanings of Europe are indeed constructed through cultural sites. What sets these cases apart is that they stand in varying proximity

to the nation as well as the main agenda-setting body of 'what is Europe' today, which is the European Union. Consequently, the analysis of the cases shows that, as one moves away from political institutions, meanings of Europe become more autonomous and particular. I argue that these meanings are an outcome of struggles that take place between the actors involved – artists and cultural professionals, cultural institutions and politicians, as well as the state, the European Union, and in each case the immediate audiences.

Hence, this thesis is neither a voice in the debate on the 'democratic deficit' of the European Union, or on the communicative capacities of a European public sphere, or on cultural production as direct derivative of Europe's political and economic integration or an ideological tool of the EU super-state in the making. Nor is it simply a taxonomy of national lenses though which Europe is seen today. This research goes beyond the practical and symbolic hegemony of the EU in defining Europe, while recognising its importance. It counters popular perceptions of Europe as given, bounded, singular, and obvious. It identifies a gap in the literature on social perceptions of Europe and investigates what meanings of Europe exist, outside the dominant narratives pursued by European and national institutions. It shows that meanings of Europe which can be found in culture are an effect of concrete struggles that take place in cultural sites – an interplay of interests and contexts of the actors involved.

I show that the constructed meanings of Europe depend on the relationships between various actors: institutions, political structures, and the audiences involved. In particular what matters is the proximity to the national state and the European Union. This thesis investigates activities from the aesthetic cultural sphere where the actors involved strive to answer the question 'what is Europe' by characterising their practices

as European, explicitly invoking Europe, or claiming to be European. However, in each case this happens from a different perspective, in different proximity to the nation and/or the EU and hence with different implications for Europe's meanings.

Accordingly, the first case study of Europeana – the European online library, museum and archive – is an example of a cultural institution situated most closely to the EU. It is shown how the cultural producers behind it construct the idea of 'common European cultural heritage' that is supposed to transcend the nation. Equally, it is demonstrated that through audience engagement Europeana promotes the idea of European unity as a civilizational necessity and a reckoning for the atrocities of war and authoritarianism. I show how Europeana evokes the dominant narratives of a post national, democratic, and pluralist Europe that can be aligned with the political understandings of European integration today, however with limited popular appeal.

The following case is an investigation of a pair of atypical cultural festivals that claim to be European – ÉCU and Transeuropa. Both are far removed from the structures of institutional Europe and even further from the national state, the former being a film festival and the latter a network of political advocacy through culture. Despite ascribing Europe with different meanings, they share a conviction of the particular utility of their self-proclaimed European allegiance. They see Europe as a means of articulating 'what could be possible', which necessarily results in a wide array of aspirations and ideas, and quite divergent understandings of Europe. For both festivals, however, the function of Europe is the same – a visibility tool and an expression of ideals.

The last case regards state-sponsored national art projects made 'for' Europe. The series of four contemporary artworks from Central Europe commissioned to celebrate their countries' EU Council Presidencies shows what meanings of Europe are

made vis-à-vis respective national self-understandings. Each artwork analysed here had a different take on Europe – benign, playfully critical, narrowly nationalist, and celebratory. However, each case illuminates that the cultural producers such as artists, commissioning bodies, politicians, as well as transnational publics understood Europe through the lens of their national subjectivity. In each case the 'European' was articulated through the 'national', by the producers and consumers of culture alike.

The first chapter of this thesis establishes the research question – what meanings of Europe emerge through cultural sites? It also explains in detail the argument that meanings of Europe which can be found in culture depend on the actors involved in their construction. In particular, the proximity of European and state institutionalism to these cultural sites influences the meaning-making process. What is Europe is structured through one's relationship to the EU, to the national state, and is an articulation of the particular and immediate contexts. Accordingly, the chapter brings forward a body of literature on the extra-political and extra-economic dimensions of Europe. It also establishes the general theoretical framework of the thesis by bringing together various pivotal sociological theorisations on the social function of cultural production. The chapter sets out the methods of investigation, including the analytical device of the cultural diamond, and explains the reasoning behind case selection by referencing studies of cultural nationalism regarding relevant cultural sites.

Chapters two, three, and four cover the outcomes of original research. Each contains a multifaceted investigation into an internally rich and diverse case of cultural production. The first is about a European cultural institution. The second case study is an analysis of European cultural festivals. The third case study is a comparison of

contemporary art projects commissioned to celebrate Europe. The final chapter returns to the overarching argument of the thesis about how meanings of Europe are constructed through culture. I outline ideal types of meaning-making patterns identified to be taking place throughout the case studies. I show that there are considerable commonalities in how different actors construct what they mean by Europe – they always reference unity yet approach it from very particular positions. I do so by reintroducing the categories of respective cultural spaces studied – a cultural institution, festivals, and public art. The chapter concludes with a section on how this research can inform further inquiries into the social dimension of Europe.

Chapter 1

Constructing Europe through culture

A genuine science of human practice cannot be content with merely superimposing a phenomenology on a social typology. It must also elucidate the perceptual and evaluative schemata that agents invest in their everyday life. – Pierre Bourdieu[1]

Introduction

This thesis investigates what contemporary meanings of Europe emerge through cultural sites. It examines a cultural institution (1), cultural festivals (2), and public art (3) that claim to be European, or explicitly reference Europe in one way or another. These case studies are as follows: a European digital library, museum and archive (1), a pair of European cultural festivals (2) and a series of contemporary art installations commissioned to celebrate Europe (3). All of which I subsume under the common denominator of European cultural sites – physical, virtual, or mediated spaces where aesthetics, cultural, practices and interactions take place under the banner of Europe.

The subsequent sections outline the general methodological supposition behind the research question- that culture can inform us on what meanings of Europe are constructed in society. This chapter illustrates how the research embarks on a quest to answer what actors behind cultural sites mean when they explicitly reference Europe, or

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) xiv, 332 p at 12.

claim to be European. What meanings of Europe are produced? What are the common patterns by which they are constructed? How are they communicated? What are the ways in which the immediate audiences in these cultural sites understand them?

In what follows, I outline the main argument: these are the actors involved in the process who construct the meanings of Europe made in cultural sites. In other words eanings of Europe emerge out of symbolic struggles between artists, curators, culture professionals, institutional structures of the state and the EU, as well as the immediate audiences. The 'who', the 'how', the 'where', and the 'when' of cultural production explain 'what is Europe'. In particular, the proximity of national or European institutionalism to each cultural site influences the meanings that emerge. The further cultural sites are from the structures of the national state and the EU, the more particular and autonomous meanings of Europe emerge. The struggles over meanings and social understandings of Europe that take place are expressions of the immediate and the local contexts relevant to the social actors involved.

Culture matters for how Europe is understood socially, because within culture, social self-understandings are conceptualised and popularised. Sites of cultural production are just one type of space where this happens. Subsequently, in this chapter, I show how recent scholarship has approached the question of Europe from a culturalist perspective with different focus on its political, economic and social modalities. I outline current debates on Europe's contemporary importance, dissect what's applicable to the research at hand, and show the limitations of previous scholarship. Afterwards, I explain the social function of cultural sites examined in the thesis. Here, I am specifically concerned with scholarship on the social significance of cultural production, especially in a historical perspective, and its meaning-making capacity as posed by sociological

scholarship. The section is concerned with the general supposition of the meaning-making capacity of culture that stems from the general constructionist philosophy of social sciences. In this regard, rather than quantifying how imposed categories of Europe are embraced by society, the thesis asks for how social actors themselves define Europe, and what understandings of Europe they provoke. I also reference key cultural sociology scholarship in regard to conducting research.

My methods of investigation derive from cultural sociology. The thesis employs discourse analysis, audience reception analysis and ethnomethodology in order to inquire into how objects and interactions become meaningful for society. In order to analyse the meaning making that takes place in these cultural sites, I employ the culture diamond perspective, which delineates the vectors of influence that take place between cultural objects, cultural producers, the audiences and the wider social world. This heuristic tool allows us to map what is being said about Europe, who says it, under what/whose influence, and with what results. In one equation, the diamond brings together the cultural sites, actors behind cultural production, the audiences, and the immediate contexts in which they operate.

Finally, I outline the reasoning behind case study selection and how the research question is specifically informed by studies of nationalism, especially those which identify culture as one of the driving forces of nation-building in modernity. While underlining the analytical apartness of the nation and Europe, I show how the focus of this thesis on cultural production in regard to Europe can draw on theorisations of 'what is a nation'- specifically cultural nationalism. I show that the chosen cultural sites that speak to Europe today are those where national self-understandings were and are constructed and communicated.

1.1   What meanings of Europe emerge in cultural sites?

The meaning-making power of culture is at the foundation of the research question. Coming from the tradition of social constructionism, cultural sites are seen as spaces where social self-understandings emerge (Day and Thompson 2004: 84-107). This conviction is evidenced by sociological theorisations of society, as well as by studies of modern nationalism and its cultural dimension. Craig Calhoun for example calls nationalism, first and foremost, a 'discursive formation', thereby underling the dynamic character of nation-making, its constructed nature, as well as its profound social significance and cultural embededness (1997). This thesis shows how contemporary struggles over meanings of Europe take place in a series of cultural sites that call themselves European, or explicitly speak of Europe. Meanings of Europe do not emerge ex nihilo, similarly they are neither a mere emanation of the political and economic structures, nor are they wholly super-imposed by elites. Instead, they emerge out of a unique nexus of social actors involved and their contexts. They are an outcome of symbolic struggles between artists, curators, culture professionals, institutional structures of the state and the EU, as well as the immediate audiences.

The immediacy of the national state and/or the European Union, as institutional entities, to each cultural site leverages the meanings that emerge. Meanings of Europe are more particular and autonomous the more independent the cultural sites are. The identified meanings of Europe are emanations of the specific and local symbolic struggles taking place in each cultural site. Even though what is found that a different Europe is made, there are common patterns by which actors construct meanings of Europe and how their understandings unfold among the immediate audiences. Europe is

always associated with notions of unity. And it is only embraced when articulated through the immediate and the particular.

The research shows how this is true in three different case studies of cultural sites (the significance of which will be explained in detail as the thesis unfolds). The first case study is Europeana – the European digital library, museum, and archive. By analysing the discourse that surfaces throughout the portal I show how it makes a connection between Europe and aesthetic cultural heritage. Europeana claims that exploring culture from a European perspective matters. The meanings of Europe produced there – Europe as a common aesthetic legacy, as cosmopolitan and as transcending divisions – are very much tied to the dominant narratives of unity and diversity pursued by the EU. As a cultural institution (albeit atypical and independent) Europeana stands 'close' to national cultural heritage institutions and the EU. It is found that the meanings of Europe it constructs reproduce the narrative of European integration. I juxtapose these findings with the results of an original Twitter survey of Europeana's users, which I designed to find out how they understand the idea of a cultural Europe pursued by the portal. The social understandings of Europe that arise amongst its audience reveal the elite quality of this cultural site. It attracts people who already share an interest in culture, Europe, and European integration.

In the second case study I show how and to what end film and cultural festivals claim to be European. Through participation, by close observation of their activities and their immediate audiences, I show that they make a connection between their European character and their sense of autonomy from the mainstream, or the explicit political agenda they're pursuing. Following the same analytical structure I show that while the meanings of Europe constructed by these festivals may represent their particular agenda

– signify aesthetics or political engagement – the function of Europe is common. Europe is treated as a symbol of coming together and of prestige seeking. It is meant to gather immediate audiences under its banner and bestow the festivals' missions (whatever they might be) with legitimacy. I also show how these understandings are shared by the specialised audiences these speak to.

The final case study is an investigation into contemporary art projects that have been commissioned to celebrate Europe by Central European member state governments which presided over the Council of the European Union (2008-11). I show how the varying critical capacity of this art, in how it elaborates on contemporary Europe, translates into its wider resonance. I also trace the social responses that the public presence of this art instigated, specifically the controversies around it as they surfaced in the media across Europe. Regardless of varying meanings of Europe that can be read from this art – naively celebratory, critically caricatural, narrowly national, or messianic – each highlighted how Europe is understood through the lens of one's nation. By analysing art's mediated public reception the research shows how Central European national subjectivities are indeed continuously (re)articulated vis-à-vis Europe.

All of the above serve as micro-examples of how meanings of Europe are constructed in the cultural field. It is shown that meanings of Europe are not prior or given, but that to different degrees they are particular and autonomous, because they emerge out of a nexus of the actors involved in each cultural site. By analysing what meanings of Europe emerge in culture, and with what degree of independence, this research contributes to the contemporary social science literature on 'what is Europe' outlined in the following section.

1.2   How have questions of Europe's meanings been studied before?

Answering the question of 'what is Europe' can hinge on different analytical perspectives. Prevailing popular perceptions of Europe today are linked to the political project of the EU and the economic network of dependency that came about with its formation. Academic approaches to contemporary Europe are often associated with modern historical transformations of the continent, from empire to the nation, and more recently from colonialism and totalitarianism to democracy. What also permeates these scholarly discussions about Europe is its quality as a philosophical and civilizational idea, itself predating most contemporary geopolitical arrangements (Delanty 1995, 2013). A great degree of scholarship traces continuities and ruptures between how Europe was once understood as an idea and what is still relevant about it today. Most of these attempts rely on a top-down structure of analysis. This research, on the other hand, is focused on the 'here and now' of Europe as found in culture.

It is concerned with what meanings of Europe emerge in culture. Hence, it is not an inquiry into how successfully institutional understandings of Europe are transmitted into larger society (Europeanization), ones coined in Brussels or member state capitals. In other words, it is not an analysis of how structural changes of economy or modes of political decision-making on the EU level impact how Europe is perceived. Equally, this thesis is not a historiography of Europe's meaning in philosophy, literature, or culture. All of the above matter and constitute the context of analysis. Naturally, the thesis pays attention to how existing narratives of Europe are reproduced in cultural sites, or how political and economic influence affects Europe's perceptions therein. It is then worthwhile to provide a brief overview of the literature that discusses what Europe is today, especially regarding its extra-political and economic dimensions.

The two most prevalent arguments at the intersection of European culture and society, are of the existence of a European identity and the social effects of European integration. The first question is often framed as a dichotomy between the nation and Europe, a new type of social identification, which may or may not surpass, or coincide with nationalism (Bruter 2005; Nelson et al. 1992; Smith 1992; Wagner et al. 2008). The second question is related to the literature from the political science and frequently strives to determine the degree of Europeanization of the cultural and social fields as the result of EU's model of European integration (Favell et al. 1999; Guiraudon and Favell 2011; Recchi and Favell 2009). These two categories of arguments (of European identity and of Europeanization) in no way exhaust the available extensive social scientific literature on what Europe is today. This pair illuminates the dominant types of questions asked (and answers sought) when Europe is investigated from the perspective of culture and society, just as in this thesis. A brief overview of the relevant literature concerned with these types of questions is aimed at showing the added value of this research in regard to the debate on 'what is Europe?'

This thesis does not strive to quantify what (concretely) is European identity, defined by strongly verbalised 'yes' or 'no' assertions, or measured by a strictly demarcated set of criteria –a direct derivative of European integration as pursued by the European Union (Bruter 2005; Fligstein 2008). It is also not a taxonomy of most prevalent symbolic depictions of Europe in current use commonly associated with social self-understandings (Fornäs 2012). The concept of identity, understood normatively as a codified register of social self-understandings, symbolic attachments and allegiances, is of limited explanatory value to this research. This is so because "self-categorization (*identification as*) reveals who or what an individual sees themselves .However, it tells

nothing about the meaning or intensity of that categorisation to the individual" (Cram 2012: 72). This thesis argues that there is not one Europe, and its meanings have to be traced to the social actors that choose to invoke it, similarly as "[t]here is no single imagining of the EU and no single understanding of what it means for an individual to identify with it" (78). Nevertheless, theorisations that ask of the possible meanings of identity associated with Europe, ones that seek to uncover the mechanisms that build its discursive substance, are relevant to this research.

The question of how one's European identity can be constructed in regard to cultural cultivation is posed by the 'hybridity' theory (Risse-Kappen, 2010). Risse discards the claims that European identity must be constructed *de novo* and argues that 'Europeanization of identities' means the extent to which references to Europe have been incorporated into national and other identity constructions (2010: 9). He claims that the growing European scope of reflection among national public spheres is accelerated by the development of a 'transnational community of communication', facilitated through media as outlets of cultural diffusion (2010: 11). Hence, cultural sites are where European, national, regional and group actors can engage in 'cross-border' deliberations on Europe. Such 'transnational discourses' can successfully build a European public sphere[2] as prerequisite of a hybrid European identity[3], asserts Risse (2010: 12). Empirically, this has been shown in respect to transnational mobility in the EU. Favell calls this a cultural Europeanization of citizenship. His ethnographic inquiry into the

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[2] It is argued that access to media content and transnational interaction through culture enables Europeanization of existing identities. Europe that is by and large a "historical, political, and cultural space rather than as a geographically bound entity" can hence mean more than one thing (2010: 50).

[3] These might be the hybrid membership encompassing multi-layered set of local, ethnic, and religious attachments along with European one (Martin conceptions Kohli, 'The Battlegrounds of European Identity', *European Societies,* 2/2 (2000), 113-37 at 124.).

lives of transnationally mobile individuals shows how they construct their identity beyond norms of nationhood, by transgressing political and cultural borders in the denationalizing space of the EU, "outside of the integratory paradigm of immigration" (2008: 137). The studied 'Eurostars' exemplify what can be classified as a certain kind of post-national belonging, such cosmopolitan identity is one of the "cultural payoff(s)" of supranationalisation of Europe (2008, 17).

On the other hand, Eder theorizes European identity not only as an addition to existing collective self-understandings, but also as rooted in memory, and hence having an important cultural dimension (2005). He claims that discussions about memories can establish social bonds on a European level; "collective memory is a consequential social fact: it can incite wars and trigger attempts at reconciliation" (205, 206). European identifications can be generated by mutual narration of past between Europeans, a process that chiefly takes place through cultural sites. Eder discards triumphalist narrations of European history and opts for sustained 'reflexive re-telling' of history from all angles. In this case, the affirmation of both positive and negative common pasts − cohesive and inclusive of all narrations − is intrinsically democratic and allows for active and voluntary formation of belonging (216, 217). Eder emphasizes the constructed nature of such social identities, their collective quality in terms of experience, as well as modes of diffusion through culture (as in the case of nationalism).

The question of culture in regard to European identity is also taken up by Delanty who conceptualises a new critical understanding of European heritage: one taking into account "conflicting interpretations of the world", one which revokes universalizing accounts of history and that is "anti-essentialistic" (2010: 3). Delanty explains that the "notion of a European cultural heritage should be best seen in terms of

a cultural model by which societies interpret themselves" (2010: 5). Culture is seen as a sphere of communication from which Europe takes its identity. This theorisation has less to do with personal or collective European identities (as seen above), but with the cultural identity of Europe. Delanty proposes that Europe's heritage must be gauged from a cosmopolitan perspective: as pluralist, putting in conversation conflicting idioms, highlighting otherness, and critically introspective of itself (2010: 17). This goes away from totalising narratives of Europe, and points to European heritage, also cultural, as source of Europe's meaning.

However, these are the dynamics of contemporary European integration that also receive scholarly scrutiny when it comes to the question of culture. The cultural policy of the European Union, the politics behind it, and its ideological dimension are given special attention (Patel 2013; Shore 2000). In respect to EU's institutional engagement in cultural maters, Sassatelli argues that the changing conceptualisations of culture by the European Commission as well as the corresponding shifts in cultural spending have led to a significantly elevated social awareness of the diversity of Europe's cultural heritage (2009). The success of the European Capital of Culture project (directly introduced by the Commission) for almost two decades now has been bringing Europeans together through culture, yearly celebrating the history of two different cultural urban settings, as well as providing an array of local responses to Europeanization 'from below'. Her contribution provides an analytical angle for tracing the impact of EU institutionalism on cultural production and the responses of independent cultural actors to the process of European integration. It also shows how EU funding has given both symbolic meaning and economic utility to the notion of European cultural heritage. The hitherto outlined body of literature on Europe at the

intersection of culture and society informs the research contained in this thesis on contemporary meanings and social undersigns of Europe. In what follows I outline sociological theorisations that highlight culture's meaning-making capacity.

1.3   Social function of cultural institutions, festivals, and art projects

Why exactly would one study culture in order to learn about meanings of Europe? The focus here is on aesthetic cultural forms that include fine, contemporary, visual, and performing arts that are often commonly categorised simply as 'culture'. Sociologists have analysed such somewhat narrowly defined culture as part of their general inquiries into the nature of society, and the dynamics of its change (Back 2012; Edles 2001; Spillman 2002). Aesthetic cultural forms have been known to both reflect and impact the social world, especially in the period classified as modernity (Swingewood 1998), it was then when *high* elite-driven culture gained unprecedented prominence in society (Sassoon 2006). This thesis investigates cultural sites such as institutions, festivals, and art projects that no longer fall along national lines and cannot be appropriated to one nation only. This culture is produced from a European perspective, it explicitly invokes Europe, assume a European character, some even claim to be European per se. In what follows, I outline mostly sociological theorisations on the social function of the said cultural sites. I reference relevant scholarship that evidences the significance of aesthetic culture in society, especially as a site where its various self-understandings come into being. Many of which also provide examples of how the study of albeit small scale instances of cultural production can inform us about processes taking place in society at large.

The subsequent sections address the critical debates on the social function of the cultural sites investigated in this thesis. They outline specific meaning-making capacities of concrete types of cultural sites, as well as frame general methodologies of how to conceive of the culture-society connection that are common across the sites outlined earlier in the chapter. Most works cited use the nation as the pivotal perspective from which describe cultural meaning-making. Others address how culture transgresses the nation, as well as highlight the class dimension of cultural production. What matters most is the applicability of the proposed methodologies of how to conceive of the culture-society connection in relation to the research question posed in this thesis.

1.3.1   Cultivation, the cultural canon, and elitism

The notion of cultivation is important for analysing culture, because as Simmel reminds us, culture is 'man-made' (Lawrence and Simmel 1976: 244). Cultivation is then a process of becoming something different than before. Distinctive modes of cultivation highlight both what is common and what sets groups apart. Hence, commonalities and distinctions of one's cultivation are a template for community formation, both on the social and political level. Cultivation entails absorption of cultural codes, texts and practices. It is when individuals acknowledge and recreate a culture, and think of it as significant and enriching, when cultivation occurs. In modern times, the most powerful agents of cultural cultivation have been cultural institutions.

It was in modernity that cultural collections began to be gathered and curated in pursuit of affirming the alleged 'greatness' of nations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; J. T. Leerssen 2006b). Such collections are still important today, holding the collective memory of what is thought to be 'best of us' as a nation, a community, an ethnic

group(Aronsson and Elgenius 2011). Among scholarship on cultural institutions, there are interdisciplinary accounts of the rise and current transformations of the modern museum that show its significance for producing and disseminating collective social self-understandings[4] (Bennett 1995; Duncan 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 1992). The subsequent accounts show how cultural heritage institutions (the museum in particular) brought into existence what is perceived today as one's national culture through the practice of categorisation and codification – building of the cultural canon. They also look into how museums contributed to the popular proliferation of the idea of the nation through different modes of spectatorship. Most importantly, it is shown how the institutions were built as part of projects of wide social cultivation.

In line with scholars of cultural nationalism, Hooper-Greenhill frames the museum as an intrinsically modern phenomenon (1992). During the rise of the modern state, the museum was erected to serve as the "nationalistic temple of culture"; whereas today it is the "educational role of a museum [that] is claimed as a major justification" in popular perceptions (p. 1-2). Hooper-Greenhill analyses the changing role of museums using Foucault's concept of *practice of classification*[5]. The museum is a constructed

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[4] I present here key comprehensive theoretical and empirical accounts of the origin and the changing role of modern museums. There is a great deal of literature that investigates museums as sites of community building: see Ivan Karp et al., *Museums and Communities : The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992) x, 614 p.. These and other accounts, for the most part, recognise that the power of cultural institutions lay in their ability to represent and reproduce social classifications. They have a special role in society since "[a]s repositories of knowledge, value, and taste, museums educate, refine, or produce social commitments beyond those that can be produced in ordinary educational and civic institutions" (1992, p.5).

[5] In *The Order of Things* Foucault focuses on practices of classification as a key tool of constructing what is to be perceived as 'objective truth'. Following that reasoning rationality cannot be judged as absolute, but shaped by culture, by the *episteme* – set of relations where knowledge is produced and rationality defined (i.e. modernity): Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things : An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*

taxonomy of cultural references, a system of knowledge that creates social inclusions and exclusions (which are not a given and can be questioned) (1992: 5). A critical examination of the museum as an institution entails challenging its supposed neutrality and objectivity, especially the choice of artefacts that it gathers[6]. Museums were and are 'disciplinary' institutions aimed at cultivating the citizen, by bringing her/him to a higher degree of utility for the nation (p. 168). However, curatorial work as such caters mainly to the capable elite[7]. Thus, until fairly recently, traditional museums were closed to those not possessing enough cultural capital, instead, offering an aesthetic experience and educational content only to those already possessing considerable cultural capital (p. 210).

Hooper-Greenhill recognizes a critical shift that occurred in the museum practice in late twentieth century. In recent decades, museums have been moving away from totalising national narratives[8], and including more diverse minority perspectives on the past and the present. The museums started to allow not only more equal (physical) access to their collections, but also knowledge in general (also through new technologies of display). Yet, neither the increasing, popular reception, nor the cosmopolitisation of

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(London: Tavistock, 1970) 387 p. in Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (Heritage; London ; New York: Routledge, 1992) ix, 232 p at 12..

[6] After Barthes (Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text* (Fontana Communications Series; London: Fontana, 1977) 220 p., 8 p. of plates.), the meaning of material things, artefacts, is seen here as problematic and not given (p. 6). Relativisation of the 'given', the 'obvious', the 'truth' presented by cultural institutions has to take into account different contexts and historical specificity (p. 9).

[7] For the most part it was not until the 1990s that major museums have started collecting personal stories and so-called popular history along artefacts (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p.206). At the same time the shift from a purely elite focus to visitor (user) focus in late XX in some cases turned the museum into a product, not only an educator but also an entertainer (p. 214).

[8] I refer to discourses of all-encompassing national homogeneity and alleged superiority, often involving orientalisation, especially vivid in museums: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

museums, makes them any less ideological (p. 214). Following Foucault, Hooper-Greenhill sees the content of cultural heritage institutions as subject to constant change of interpretation by different actors in society, especially ones holding power. Depending on the social, economic, and political context, new meaning of cultural artefacts can be constructed. Hence, the meaning-making function of the museum changes with time and depends on who controls it (p. 215).

In a similar vein, the museum, as an institution, has been argued to have to power to orchestrate a spectacle "calculated to embody and communicate specific cultural meanings and values" (Bennett 1995: 6). Bennett argues that a modern cultural institution became a new kind of space[9], a new form of display, where cultural objects were arranged in ways that constructed new meanings for the spectators, in accordance with current political pursuits of the bourgeoisie. In particular, his analysis shows how museums were intended to cultivate society, to define cultural taste, and to control physical spectatorship (p. 7). He too invokes Foucault's theorisation of the very anthropocentric quality of modernity, which necessitates seeing the museum not only as a construct, but also as an entity that constructs "man"[10]. The museum constructs gender, social, and racial categories, positioning "man" as an object of knowledge (Foucault 1970: 312) in (Bennett 1995: 7, 33). The development of the modern museum is the result of social change and the arrival of the public sphere within the framework of the bourgeois nation state. Such museums though ostensibly democratic, are, in reality

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[9] The modern museum is a "space of representation which, in providing a new context for display of the valued objects inherited from previous collections, allowed those objects to be harnessed to new social purposes" (p. 33).

[10] Bennett underlines the historicising aspect of the museum, the way in which it showcases a sequential progress of 'man and 'state' throughout 'history' (p. 76).

intrinsically hierarchical, exclusively serving the elite in building their self-understanding[11]. Taking after Bourdieu and his study of the art gallery as an instrument of social distinction, Bennett shows that, in most modern museums only the audience with sufficient cultural capital can "see" paintings and "see through" them for context and meaning (Bourdieu 1984) in (Bennett 1995: 35).

The modernist museology practice is a set of contradictions (Bennet 1995). There is an intrinsic dissonance between the universalising pursuits and the actual distinction-setting function of the modern museum. Despite being elitist it still pursues wide social cultivation aimed at the 'elevation' of the lower classes (p. 47). This is driven by two conflicting principles, one of 'public rights' and the other of 'representational adequacy' (p. 90). The former requires the museum to be available for all, as an educational institution would; the latter implies a more elitist idea of culture that necessitates distinction among the audiences (p. 91). In other words, while the museum is, in principle, for everyone[12], in reality, it uses a language (content and form) that is only understandable by those with enough cultural capital. The museum wants to

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[11] Bennett claims that "[i]n practice, museums, and especially art galleries, have often been effectively appropriated by social elites so that, rather than functioning as institutions of homogenization, as reforming thought had envisaged, they have continued to play a significant role in differentiating elite from popular social classes" (p. 28). Similar modern dynamic in relation to aesthetic culture in general is recognised by Sassoon in his account of the formation of the *Culture of the Europeans* (*The Culture of the Europeans : From 1800 to the Present* (London: HarperPress, 2006) xxviii, 1617 p.). In different ways both Bennett and Sassoon uncover the shortcoming of museums' alleged cosmopolitanism and show their class dimension and hegemonic practices - tension between their asserted popular aims and actual limited conscious audience.

[12] Bennett notes that "museums were also typically located at the centre of cities where they stood as embodiments, both material and symbolic, of a power to 'show and tell' which, in being deployed in a newly constituted open and public space, sought rhetorically to incorporate the people within the processes of the state" (p. 87).

create a sense of social cohesion and belonging to the modern nation while setting the bar very high to whom it actually speaks.

A similar tension between the aim of wide social cultivation and the elite quality of the modern cultural-heritage institution is observed by Duncan while analysing the museum as a ritual site (1995). Duncan claims that museums make meanings for the social world because they "offer up values and beliefs – about social, sexual and political identity – in the form of vivid and direct experience". The transformations of European museums "served the ideological needs of emerging bourgeois nation-states by providing them with a new kind of civic ritual" (Duncan 1995: 2). The original modern museum coincided with the changes in the mode of communication and the development of the public sphere in Europe of nineteenth century. It was then that museums became significant public actors, remaining to this day as "potent agents of ideology" (p. 3). Duncan references Bourdieu's *Distinction* to analyse the kind of stratification museums impose (1984). She underlines, however, that cultural institutions are "symbolic cultural objects" that are both "producers of ideology and products of social and political interests" (p. 5). Taking after Mary Douglas and other anthropological studies of rituals, Duncan sees museums as representing collective social imagination (historical and contemporary), and as having the ideological power to establish hegemony of values (p. 8). The modern museum rests equally in the monumental buildings and in the different curatorial arrangements within its midst. They constitute sites for the performance of the ritual, one that, in principle, is leading to cultivation through the aesthetic (Duncan 1995: 10-20). This essentially modernist quality of the museum as a concept clashes with its execution. It is erected in principle for the people, yet is actually elite driven. Still, the social function of the museum is to

negotiate current identities – in between the story of the past and the vision of the future. Exhibition sites are "a form of public space, they constitute an arena in which a community may test, examine, and imaginatively live both older truths and possibilities for new ones" (p. 133). Cultural institutions are "spaces in which communities can work out the values that identify them as communities", concludes Duncan (p. 134).

The museum can be treated as a key example of a modern cultural institution. The analyses of its making and its operations have shown that it has a significant social impact – a site where meaning is made and communicated. This is achieved mainly through the practice of classification of cultural artefacts – ascribing them with particular meaning, often representative of a political project. The function of the museum as a public institution is aimed at cultivation of society, and hence coercion into assuming a particular worldview of which aesthetic culture is but one part. Cultural institutions are part of a larger mechanism of production and dissemination of ideology, for the sake of social cohesion and/or control. They are anything but benign, but always as part of larger processes of facilitating marks of social unity and division alike, such as nation and class.

1.3.2   Critical outlooks and post-national narratives

Cultural institutions change constantly. The undergoing change of the modern museum is outlined by Piotrowski, who drawing on the seminal work of *New Museology* (Vergo 1989), shows how today the museum still lacks neutrality and has a tendency to

absolutize and objectify historical narratives and artistic value[14] (2011). Museums still actively constitute the canon, which is not given and objective, but rather is constructed along ideological lines and elite interests. Piotrowski claims that "museum practice" conceals political, ideological, and economic forces hidden underneath the "seemingly objective historical and artistic narrative" (p. 14). One can deconstruct the museum's discourse, through the analysis of its collections, curatorship, and modes of communication with the audience. Such ideological challenges are still facing national museums in Europe. On the example of the National Museum in Warsaw, Piotrowski describes his partially successful attempt (as director) to change the institution's martyrological and nationalist quality, by introducing exhibition themes that went beyond the traditionally understood cultural milieu of the Polish nation. By geographically diversifying the content of temporary exhibitions (themes from Ukraine and Estonia), the Museum, in a critical manner, wanted to show the "other Europe" in light of the cosmopolitan pursuits of European integration, its different degrees and aspects (2011: 73).

Such change of the contemporary museum is also confirmed by the EuNaMus project, which studies how cultural heritage institutions are still expressing national ideals and identities, and how such ideals and identities change in reference to Europe (Aronsson and Elgenius 2011). Aronsson and Elgenius identify that national museums are still important cultural forces in today's Europe and have an impact on the creation

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[14] Piotrowski emphasizes that "[museums] are constructs with clear political aims that conceal social hierarchies, practices of exclusion, and the policy of cultural and political hegemony of the 'Establishment', often of the market" ("Są konstrukcjami o wyraźnych celach politycznych, skrywającymi społeczne hierarchie i praktyki wykluczania, politykę kulturalnej i politycznej hegemonii establishmentu, często rynku.") Piotr Piotrowski, *Muzeum Krytyczne* (Wyd. 1. edn.; Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, 2011) 167 p. at 14..

and negotiation of meaning in society. The authors see national museums are a "part of a larger nexus of national symbolism" – manifestations of the 'national' through the intermediary of high culture (p. 13). Museums are still the "representation of the 'national' and of its imaginations,"[15] as they produce "images of nationhood or as a symbol of the same, constructed ultimately to justify the existence of nations and states" (p. 13). The general conclusions of the collaborative study, encompassing over 29 countries in Europe and their museums, confirm the instrumental role that museums play in providing culturally mediated understandings of the nation. In particular, national museums have been proven to "negotiate meanings of the past, present and future" alike (p. 13). The researchers claim that museums still classify what is meaningful to understand the nation, and increasingly Europe. Furthermore, what is identified is the intrinsic elite dimension of museums in Europe [16]. Lastly, the scholars show that despite the educational pursuits of museums, high culture today is not easily relatable to the wider audience. Both accounts confirm the enduring legacy of the modern cultural institution in today's museums and the struggles over symbolic representations that take place in them. All of the above literature underlines the social resonance of museums

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[15] "Along the lines of Anderson (1991) and in terms of *imagination*, national museums are uniquely placed to illuminate that which is actually imagined with reference to an emerging, re-emerging or fully formed nation. National museums and their making herby provide us with significant cues relating to the emerging expression of nations and they constitute strategic markers of nation- or state building" (Aronsson and Elgenius, 2011, p.10).

[16] "The initiation of national museums are typically led by various elites that, as a rule, lack access to a strong state in which civic groups would act as representative of the nation. Typically elites that have initiated many national museums in Europe include liberal aristocrats, academics, public officials more common in the early phases than later on, professional groups and capitalists" (Aronsson and Elgenius, 2011, p. 8).

and their powerful meaning-making capacity, whilst pointing to the possibility of reproduction non-hegemonic discourses.

1.3.3   Cultural public sphere and communication

The pivotal feature of cultural sites, explored in social thought, is how they become instances of the cultural public sphere, how they facilitate communication in society, as well as how they serve as forms of community building. The cultural festival is a site that best illuminates these capabilities true also of other cultural sites. A festival is a site (a particular place and time) where people come together driven by interest in some form of aesthetic culture. In other words, it is a site of social participation through culture. I refer here mainly to contemporary cultural festivals located in urban settings, gathering an informed public, communicating what is widely perceived as relevant cultural texts. These festivals grow out of the tradition of modernity - its specific congruence of state, society and culture - which manifested itself in the meaning-making dimension of cultural production (Swingewood 1998). It is since modern times that cultural texts, objects, institutions, and sites such as festivals became carriers of meaning that profoundly shaped modern society.

Festival sites are socially relevant because they can facilitate participation and interaction through culture[17]. More specifically, from the perspective of cultural

[17] A useful conceptual frame on how to study festivals, their relevance for the social world as part of an aesthetic public sphere, originates from the supposition that cultural production cannot be seen as a mere depiction of social reality, and that culture and the arts should be seen as autonomous social fields filled with their own discourses that impact the social world. Accordingly, "arts festivals negotiate and communicate collective identities" as well as are "instances of the cultural public sphere", the "latter

sociology[18], festivals are seen as informative of the social world they inhabit (Spillman 2002). Firstly, it is so because the participation they enable is a form of public sphere. Secondly, the interactions that take place between people at festival sites happen around cultural forms that represent certain ideals and values – they can serve as forms of community building. Outlined below are the theoretical approaches to studying public and interactive forms of cultural production such as festivals that guide the analysis in explaining, as follows: what kind of publics are gathered by European cultural festivals, what happens within these festivals, and what is their message to society at large (both anticipated and actual). In other words, the 'who' and 'how' of the festivals can help explain the 'what', which in this case are different meanings and understandings of Europe[19] that come into existence through these festivals.

The first major theoretical backdrop of how to conceive of cultural sites, in terms of how they facilitate social participation, is Habermas' idea of a cultural public sphere (as seen in Giorgi et al. (2011)). This idea derives from his work on the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in nineteenth century European coffee houses, literary salons and other cultural spaces, that Habermas sees as distinctive products of modernity

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concept is here used to refer to the articulation of politics and societal issues as contested domains through aesthetic modes of communication" (Giorgi and Sassatelli in Giorgi et al. 2011: 1).

[18] The idea of the social significance of aesthetic culture, especially its symbolic dimension, is fundamentally postulated by cultural sociology (Alexander 2003; Back 2012; Edles 2001; Schudson 2002). Whereas sociology of culture is more concerned with how culture is produced according to market dynamics (Peterson and Anand 2004), "[c]ultural sociology takes a more constructivist approach, being more interested in the symbolic domain of cultural practices and their discursive meanings – and hence also more fascinated by performance and visual arts, in addition to film and architecture (Alexander 2005; Alexander et al. 2006)." (Giorgi et al. 2011: 29).

[19] "The arts festival, including for visual arts the biennale, is an interesting examples of the contemporary transformation of public culture and is of great interest to cultural sociology" (Delanty in Giorgi et al. 2011: 190).

(1989b). In these sites, aesthetic culture evolved into a product, a topic of discussion, and a plain for communication, what occurred in result was a rational-critical debate among individuals who previously were without access to the public sphere (J. r. Habermas 1989b: 29).

Habermas argues, that "the same process that converted culture into a commodity" – the transformation of social interaction through discussion on things cultural – "established the public as in principle inclusive" (1989b: 37). The profoundly political and democratising influence of the bourgeois public sphere on modern society grew out of the immediacy of encounters in these cultural sites. Beginning in mid-nineteenth century coffee houses, literary salons, and other such clubs led to the shaping of informed and civic minded individuals. However, these micro and meso scale cultural encounters that facilitated deliberation on important public issues stand in contrast to the subsequent mass scale communication and cultural production that occurred with technological advancement and consolidation of state governance and institutionalism of late modernity. According to Habermas, the public sphere in the modern west underwent a transformation from these fairly indigenous and local cultural encounters that formed conscious citizens, to mass production of information and leisure content aimed at shaping individuals according to the wants and needs of the economic and political elites. This constituted the change from "culture debating" to "culture consuming" (J. r. Habermas 1989b: 159). Habermas shows how this shift from active civic debates going on in the literary public sphere, to passive reception of cultural texts and news, was detrimental to the civic-intellectual independence of the members of a modern society[20].

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[20] "The literary patterns that once had been stamped out of its material circulate today as the explicit production secrets of a patented culture industry whose products, spread publicly by the mass media, for

In the tradition of the *Frankfurt School*, Habermas attributes the demise of a cultural public sphere to the proliferation of 'culture industry'[21] that is seen as primarily facilitating passive culture consumption - unlike active debating in public cultural spaces, the leisure of culture consuming requires neither discussion, nor social communication (1989b: 162-3). The supposition that "[t]he world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only" indirectly suggests[22] that the interest of sociological analysis of the public sphere should be equally directed at more local, smaller and immediate cultural spaces such as for example festivals (171). If mass media culture is a culture of passive social integration, then sites of social interaction through culture (including festivals) can be much better equipped at facilitating rational-critical debate, which Habermas saw in the bourgeois public sphere.

The immediacy and equality that once existed in the nineteenth century literary salon or the coffee house is not as easily quantifiable. One can, however, analyse the *verity* of the micro and meso level public spheres that festivals create. Interactions, as well as communication are much more easily attainable through virtual media, but at the same time more superficial, as well as, arguably controlled by contemporary incarnations of 'culture industry'. However, a kind of a cultural public sphere is remerging today, facilitated by online interaction, which is then often actualised outside of the virtual world (Castells 2009). Contemporary cultural festivals enable participation and interaction alike, while communicating meaning into society. The cases under

their part bring forth in their consumers' consciousness the illusion of bourgeois privacy to begin with." (161)

[21] Theodor W. Adorno and J. M. Bernstein, *The Culture Industry : Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (Routledge Classics; London ; New York: Routledge, 2001) viii, 210 p.

[22] Reading this one should however be wary of the intellectual climate of late 1960s Germany when *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was written.

inquiry are spaces where 'culture debating' may take place, as it shall be evidenced later in the thesis.

Because festivals are sites of the cultural public sphere their latent social function (apart from enabling interaction) is their communicative capacity. Festivals are sties of social interaction where actors can construct and communicate socially relevant meanings. Following this reasoning, another important theoretical premise borrowed from Habermas is that festivals are vehicles of communicative action[23]. Communicative action supposes that transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge creates common understandings is society, embodied in identity formation, forms of solidarity, and all kinds of social belonging. The main theoretical supposition is that social communication is aimed at consensus – derived from individual and social rationality ingrained in language. The rational quality of communication is seen as striving at reaching mutual understanding in society, at least in principle.

Critics of Habermas question to what extent one can assume intrinsic rationality of language and discourse, as well as questioning whether such thing as a shared goal of reaching consensus between social actors actually exists. Even in the case of small scale cultural festival, relations between cultural producers and between members of the audience can be shaped by their social standing, as well as, outside forces and interests. These limits of the communicative action theory for the study of festivals are noted by English (2011), who juxtaposes this perspective with the one of Bourdieu, which presupposes that reproduction of social distinctions happens precisely through cultural

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[23] James English applies that notion to the study of festivals by showing that these are sites where consensus happens is reached through dialogue (English in Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty, *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (Routledge Advances in Sociology; London ; New York: Routledge, 2011) xi, 208 p. at 63.).

production (1984). From the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of fields, festivals can be seen as part of the cultural field where reproduction inequality takes place. The field of cultural production, including festivals, is a space of symbolic struggle that extends to the political and economic field (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993). The cultural field is very much a space where symbolic violence is exerted as means of achieving one's interest, as in the political and economic one. These power dimensions of communication have been notes as early as Gramsci in his theorisation of hegemony (1971), but also in Foucault's study of public control over the human body (1977, 1978). It is Bourdieu, however, who specifically locates social power relations being shaped within the field of cultural production. Different types of capital (social, cultural, and symbolic) determine not only what an individual takes out form participation in cultural spaces, but also whether or not one actually engages in them in the first place.

Social interaction within cultural settings is also governed by one's possession of different forms of capital and the structure of the field. Bourdieu's analytical outlook does not detract the significance of festivals as loci for social inquiry, but points to the power relations behind symbolic representations existing in culture. However, approaches of Habermas and Bourdieu do not have to be completely exclusionary, they both can show how in different ways, ideas and values that surface in cultural festivals become meaningful for society, by either providing a basis for informed dialogue or by conveying visible markers of social distinction. Accordingly, this thesis looks into what festivals communicate about Europe and how it is socially relevant, taking into account either their deliberative or distinction setting capacity: as manifested in types of participation, ways of interaction and forms of communication.

1.3.4 Sociality of immediate cultural interaction

This brings us to a more classically sociological way to think about sites of cultural interaction such as festivals. Sassatelli advocates the significance of a festival – as an emanation of a community and a force that tightens social bonds – according to the Durkheimian notion of 'collective effervescence' and Simmel's notion of 'sociability' (Giorgi et al. 2011). What Durkheim means by of 'collective effervescence[24]' is the power that face-to-face interaction in a group has in society (2005: 221). It allows for the transmission of collective symbols through the form of a sacred ritual that is usually a part of totemic event, especially in pre modern festival-like public spaces. The community building capacity of festivals may be connected to how they ignite 'collective effervescence', which in turn could arguably points to their wider social relevance[25]. Today, festivals (rather than possessing a collectivising capacity) build looser social bonds nevertheless the festival experience still can be claimed to possess a community building capacity. That's why out of the two approaches proposed by Sassatelli, it is the sociality of a festival that one should pay special attention to today.

In more general sociological terms Simmel shows that the very need for social participation and face-to-face interaction are manifestations of the quest people undertake in search of meaning (1997). He argues that "only through society is human life endowed with reality", and that there exist "innumerable forms of social life" that

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[24] 'Effervescent action' is then motivated by the group that is involved in ritual of a certain event, when "[g]roup life injects a vital significance into collective symbols" Durkheim in Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith, *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) xvi, 426 p. at 222..

[25] However "[c]ontemporary society is seen as not needing, wanting, or being able to reproduce the conditions for 'organic' festivals as codified social phenomena expressing and reinforcing a (well-defined) collective identity, as described by Durkheim" claims Sassatelli (2011: 15).

endow our existence with meaning (1997: 120). Festivals and other public and collective "associations are accompanied by a feeling for, by a satisfaction in, the very fact that one is associated with others and that the solitariness of the individual is resolved into togetherness, a union with others" (121). More specifically, the symbolic significance of such togetherness is that it is pure, without a clear objective – it is an essence of society. Whereas where clear goals for coming together exist, it is no longer 'sociability', it is an instrumental principle that drives participation in such instances. Hence, in an ideal-typical vain, Simmel differentiates between organisations and associations that have clear political and/or economic objectives from a cultural public sphere that originates from the 'artistic impulse' of 'man' and their need for pure togetherness. Also in that sense, 'sociability' is democratic, because it entails mutual enjoyment of interaction in a group regardless of social status – it is inclusive and reciprocal in the rules of the game – unlike modern life. Class and other differences are to be suspended in spaces of face-to-face verbal interaction, and in that sense, according to Simmel,"sociability is the abstraction of association", it is its higher form (1997: 124). The social significance of spaces where 'sociability' does occur is that they can be analysed as "a miniature picture of the social ideal that man might call the freedom of bondage" (Simmel et al. 1997: 128). Accordingly, 'sociability'[26], is the human drive for togetherness without prior concern, as well as the equality and egalitarianism of such interaction.

A festival is a 'sociable gathering', as far it is a space in society where interaction happens around aesthetic culture but without a particularistic aim, it is a

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[26] "Sociability would not hold for so many thoughtful men who feel in every moment the pressure of life, this emancipating and saving exhilaration if it were only a flight from life, the mere momentary lifting of its seriousness" (129).

'meeting point' where human sociation goes beyond the original theme of an event or gathering. For example, when writing about the Berlin Trade Exhibition of 1896, Simmel, sees "amusement" as the key sociable feature of the event – this was what drove the audience. He observes "a particular attraction of world fairs that they form a momentary centre of world civilisation, assembling the products of the entire world in a confined space as if in a single picture" (Simmel 1991: 120). He also recognises the categorising function of festivals, in how they amass what is perceived as relevant and worthy of attention. Furthermore, he takes notice of their implicit claim of representativeness of modern civilisation (and its culture), in how the collected cultural objects are displayed to the audience. This constitutes the very modern character of the cultural site which is a festival. Simmel sees a festival as an intrinsic product of modernity, and observes that "perhaps it has never been so apparent before how much the form of modern culture has permitted a concentration in one place, (…) how through its own production a city can represent itself as a copy and sample of the manufacturing forces of world culture" (121).

According to Simmel, a festival has two main social features, one is that it provides a space for sociability; the other is the concrete discourse which it communicates. Therefore, Simmel's work can serve as a complementary analytical approach, especially to the dismissive perspective of the Frankfurt school and the structuralist determinism of Bourdieu when it comes to studying cultural production. Simmel perceives 'festive sociability' as a part of the modern cultural public sphere. Even though, in modernity typical totemic festivals ceased to play a rudimentary religious-like role in sustaining community, this specific form of how people come together lived on and became a space for voluntary sociability around aesthetic culture.

Festivals seldom create and sustain community as they used to when they related closely to the religious sphere. In the context of modern division of labour and overall social fragmentation, festivals are sites where different social trends are signified, ideas and values received are shared, and boundaries of community arise. They originate thanks to the pure human drive towards 'sociality' carrying concrete messages about the society they exist in.

This classic sociological approach of Simmel to studying the community building capacity of culture can be useful in analysing contemporary festivals (as seen in Yúdice 2003). The excitement of the collective experience and its social significance, as well as, the discourse produced make cultural sites such as festivals worthy of analysis for how Europe's meaning is constructed in such settings and what social understandings arise therein.

1.3.5 Mirroring the social world and changing it

Cultural sites frequently become places where critical interventions into the public sphere take place – social actors use culture as means of alerting the public to what they perceive as important or even as means of changing social attitudes. This social function is true to many cultural sites (especially highly mediated ones), historically this has been very much true also of art, contemporary art in particular. Sociologists see art as an integral part of the social world (V. D. Alexander 2003; Duvignaud 1972; Harrington 2004; Hauser 1982; Inglis and Hughson 2005; Tanner 2003; Tomars 1940; Wolff 1993). Art is judged as important, because it is an "indicator or springboard for understanding extraaesthetic aspects of society" (Zolberg 1990: 9). It is an "object to be deconstructed to reveal aspects of social structure and process", it is a "way to understand broader

cultural meanings" and social processes. An artwork is a "synecdoche, representative of a total social experience" (80). Specifically the public presence of contemporary art can function as a critical intervention in the public sphere (Leszkowicz and Łakomski 2010; Piotrowski 2010; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991). The way in which an art work mirrors the social world is never objective or consensual – it functions as a site of struggle over shared meanings in society.

Classic sociology also notices art's social function. Taking after Durkheim, official or unofficial use of art in specific political and social contexts is claimed to build or uphold social solidarity (Inglis and Hughson 2005). Art is a social institution that legitimises constructions such as religion, national identity, and ethnicity – for the sake of cohesion. Using this theoretical paradigm one can explain how art has been used in the execution of essentialist and exclusionary discourses, especially in forging hegemonic regimes. As much as functionalist explanations of art's social dimension can inform its analysis, they alone do not provided nuanced tools to decipher the interests that drive the conscious use of art, or explain its meaning making capacity.

Marxist critiques of art seek to determine the ideology behind the field of artistic production. They emphasise the purposeful use of art for the imposition of values and ideas of the dominant strata onto the larger society. According to Gramsci and other theorists in this tradition, culture in general and art in particular, can be used for the sake of social control (1971). Class domination is established and validated through art that has no autonomy from the political and economic interests of the elite. Accordingly, in the age of mass media reproduction, these forms of power are perpetuated through what

Adorno coined as culture industry (2001)[27]. However, as much as this strand of critical theory sensitizes the researcher to identify hegemonic dimensions of art, it also does not provide analytical strategies for examining the reception of art on the social level. It overemphasizes the supposed determinism of culture and glances over how its meaning resonates on the social level. Accordingly, studying art would be incomplete without taking into account the sociology of Weber, and his emphasis on how culturally produced meaning can influence the social world (1946). He shows how culture can produce concrete ideas and values fundamental for social self-understandings. Therefore, analysing art has to take into account the impact it has on shared meanings in society.

At the same time, when studying art objects the question of its aesthetic properties seems intuitively important. Bourdieu argues that the perceived artistic aesthetic quality of art objects determines its social significance - it favours elite groups at the expense of society. The belief in the aesthetic value of high art is a structuring force in society that serves groups endowed with considerable cultural capital. Hence, art as a category is never neutral and both reflects and changes other social fields such as politics and economy (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu's method of studying art as another social field rejects the existence of independent 'pure' art and presupposes that it is dependent on the context of other social spheres. What constitutes art matters. It is important to account for what is considered to be art in the first place and how art objects operate in their immediate contexts – how they are created, displayed, and spectated. Most recognised art is created by the elite, and accordingly it is mostly

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[27] Adorno sees mass produced culture in opposition to 'true art' that remains a realm of pure values and high aesthetic standards.

appreciated by more cultivated strata of society and hence works as a symbol that reinforces social distinctions. It facilitates social relationships and marks forms of identity.

Bourdieu shows how art can be more than a reflection of society, how it can operate as a force shaping it – "reception of art itself is a plural phenomenon that makes for the continual re-creation of art works with each re-reading" (Zolberg 1990, 82). This is how power is reproduced through cultural sites. An artwork is not just created and read, it is reproduced continuously by everyone who gains material or symbolic profit from doing so (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore the continuous reproduction of art and its successive reception is more important than original creation. Artist's individual pursuits alone cannot be at the core of sociological study and neither can be aesthetic features of art. Bourdieu claims that "only by conceiving of creators as acting within a field which includes production and consumption can sociology of artistic creation have validity" (Bourdieu 1980 in Zolberg 1990, 125). Therefore, an analysis of the social significance of an art work it has to consider the totality of relations within the *field* between the artist, curators, cultural institutions, and wider society. However, following Bourdieu the analysis does put greater emphasis on the reception side of cultural production, namely how art is received in society and with what implications.

Sociological theorisations of the culture-society connection are crucial to analyse how meanings and social understandings of Europe come into being through different cultural sites. The above literature on the social function of culture is centred on specific sites. Many of the identified themes are however identifiable in multiple cultural sites. This is very much true of general processes of cultivation through culture that are

contingent on fostering distinction and commonality of judgement in society. Cultivation, of course, is not restricted to aesthetic culture, but happens in all domains of society, where tradition and custom are involved. This, thesis limits the scope of inquiry to aesthetic cultural sites. Hence, as outlined before, this research focuses on a cultural institution, a series of festival event, and public art projects. In what follows, I outline appropriate methods of empirical investigation into European cultural sites.

1.4   Methods of investigation and the cultural diamond analysis

This section outlines the broad suppositions of interpretive empirical investigation. It focuses on methods of study: the observational, conversational and, textual modes of interpretation of culturally produced meanings of Europe. It outlines the strategies of studying European cultural sites. The following methods are to enable an intersubjective understanding of cultural conceptualisations of the social world – the constructions of Europe's meanings through culture. The research is an interpretation of cases of collective sense making, their generalisation, where the researcher is crucial in "constructing and shaping the narrative that (re)presents social reality" (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: 80). It is s/he who is responsible for generating data and coming up with appropriate tools of investigation – methodological strategies of which this section addresses.

The inquiry comes from the premise of social research as 'constructive' of its object, where the empirical 'proof' is neither objective, nor even necessarily discoverable. Hence, what is attempted is a study of the cultural making of what is Europe, located between the structural frame of European integration, the historical narrative of European culture and national cultures – the activities of different social

actors in the field of cultural production. The premise of the investigation into seemingly distinct yet intertwined sites of cultural production is drawn on the recognition of the reoccurring pattern of codification of the culture as European, in reference to both historical cultural heritage of Europe and contemporary European social realities. It is a qualitative analysis of particular instances of cultural production that are perceived to be representative of an identifiable tendency – of social actors speaking of Europe through culture.

1.4.1 Cultural diamond diagram

In order to comprehensively study the social significance of culture that invokes Europe, I orientate my analysis according to the cultural diamond device (Griswold 1994, 2008, 2013). This rhombus-like diagram outlines four crucial elements that have to be analysed for a clearer understanding of culture and its meaning-making capacity. It differentiates cultural objects, creators, recipients, and the wider social world as four points indispensable for analysis. Griswold's cultural diamond is not restricted to aesthetic culture and can be applied to examples of what anthropologically is categorised as culture in the broadest sense (custom, religion, ethnicity, and way of life). However, for the purpose of coherence, I take from Griswold's figure what is applicable to the analysis of the narrow definition of culture as production of aesthetic forms (as established above). Below, I elaborate on how the device is applied for the analysis of cultural production in regard to Europe, and how it encompasses different branches of cultural sociology.

The cultural diamond helps to explain the 'role' culture plays in shaping the social world by bringing together different methodologies of social sciences; it also

provides an analytical strategy to study the connection between culture and the social world, in other words, how people in social contexts create meaning though culture (Griswold 1994: XIV, 12). It does so by combining into one perspective different sociological methodologies for the study of culture and society. The first major approach sees social forces as influencing culture - culture is an emanation of society (in the tradition of Durkheim). The second gives primacy to how cultural phenomena affect social processes - society is an emanation of its culture (in the tradition of Weber). Both of these sociological traditions see meaning as constitutive of social existence, the former claiming that culturally produced meaning reflects society as an entity, the latter that society is actively shaped by cultural meanings. The cultural diamond presupposes that the vectors of influence between culture and society are twofold - culture is both representative of society and remains under its influence – they are reflexive.

This type of approach to studying culture stems from the broad tradition of reflection theory and takes into account the classic functionalist, materialist, and interpretivist arguments about the relationship between the cultural and the social. It recognises that culture does emanate certain truths about society, but that it is an arena of conflicting political and economic influence, and likewise that to some degree it is capable of shaping society. This is relevant when approaching the question of understandings of Europe in society today. Cultural sites that directly address Europe or call themselves European can be seen as representing existing social sentiments - they show what people think about Europe. They can also envision the ideological capacity of using Europe as a symbol - a tool for gaining political and economic interest. Lastly, they can be seen as serving as a toolkit of available meanings of Europe for society - people can take their understandings of Europe from culture (Swidler 1986). Most

importantly, the cultural diamond shows that these processes are not unrelated and have to be analysed jointly. Hence, in our particular case the cultural diamond mandates analysing the discursive presence of Europe in culture for its meanings by looking at both how it represents and influences the social world. In what follows, when explaining each part of the cultural diamond, I go into more detail about these methodologies and how they inform the analysis.

The cultural object defined: Griswold encourages seeing the culture/society connection in terms of "cultural objects" located in a "cultural diamond" (1994: 11). The cultural object is the analytical anchor of the cultural diamond; it is the main point of this rhombus-like diagram, situated on the left-hand edge of its vertical axis. What is a cultural object, results from an analytical decision that we make as observers; it is not built into the properties of the object itself - it is the inductive point of departure and not objective reality. Hence, for the sake of study, the thesis differentiates a digital library, a series of commissioned contemporary art pieces, and a series of film and cultural festivals as cultural objects. Following the cultural diamond, these micro-level examples of cultural production are thought to be the "smaller parts of an interrelated, larger system" that shapes the meaning of Europe in the social world (Griswold 1994: 13). Historically, on that micro and meso level in society, such cultural sites have been demonstrated to possess shared significance for people who are both its producers and consumers. As shown elsewhere in the thesis, institutions of cultural retention, such as museums, galleries and libraries, and festival sites showcasing film or other more general events such as fairs, as well as less institutionalised collections of various art forms, have all been shown to both represent and shape modern societies (Bennett 1995; Duncan 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 1992). They have both signified social self-

understandings and likewise have helped to spread them (predominantly religious, ethnic and national identities that were structured this way).

I examine how cultural objects, as Griswold would have it, that explicitly reference Europe, become "endowed with significance" for the social world today (1994: 21). Following the cultural diamond outline, I trace the types of relationships/patterns that exist between cultural objects and the social world. I interpret what these cultural objects 'say' when they invoke Europe. I carry out an in-depth discourse analysis of the meaning of Europe that they present - how it relates to the established narratives of Europe and what new meanings are being constructed. From the perspective of functionalist methodology that presupposes that "society causes culture", I analyse whether these cultural objects are some sorts of collective representations (36). Can one find in them known historical and social narratives of Europe? In other words, are they relatable to the social world they inhabit? Do they, in any way, present a vision of Europe that is close to how people see it? These questions, however, cannot be fully answered on the basis of content reading of cultural objects alone. They have to be contextualised with the other 'edges' of the cultural diamond.

The next point of analysis is the cultural creators. It signifies artists, curators and other producers of culture, that according to the diamond have to be examined from the production of culture perspective (Peterson and Anand 2004). This perspective presupposes that the content of their work - the cultural object - is contingent on an elaborate network of dependencies that fill the cultural field. This is what Howard Becker called the *artworlds* (1982). Artists, curators, cultural subcontractors and other professionals do not work in a vacuum, neither a symbolic nor an economic one. What they produce is dependent on whom they do it for, with what money, to what end, and

with what pursuits. All these circumstances link cultural creators to the conditions of the social world they work in, and to the specific audiences they cater to. As pointed out above, we can observe that the end product - the cultural object - is dependent on who created it, and in what conditions. Such multi-layered analysis of the creators of culture is an integral part of the cultural diamond diagram.

The production of culture approach links directly to the cultural consumers. Immediate audiences of cultural objects - in our case museum 'users', festival goers, art critics and the media - are consumers of culture just as they would be consumers of any other product. They too are embedded in a web of symbolic and economic influence that affects how they participate in culture - how they understand it (Geertz 1973; Weber et al. 2001). It is however not enough to judge cultural receivers as passive parts of a production network. Audiences have agency in how they interpret cultural products (Swidler 1986), alongside the autonomy of the cultural object and the creator (as established above). Therefore, what I look into are the different (sometimes conflicting) interpretations of the cultural objects – how audiences respond to culture being produced from a European perspective. Griswold maintains that "cultural receivers are active meaning makers" that are "anchored in a particular context" (1994: 15). Hence, I gather the available responses of the immediate audiences of the cultural objects under inquiry and juxtapose them with their social contexts. In other words, I find out who actually participates in these cultural endeavours, what the nature of these audiences is, and what kind of meaning they attribute to the cultural objects under inquiry.

This brings us to the fourth point of the cultural diamond - the social world. As shown above, cultural objects are equally rooted in their social worlds as they are able to shape them. And so, if a cultural object claims to be European it does so thanks to the

existence of that symbolic reference in the social world - the fact that 'Europe' is an established category that possesses somewhat definable meaning (Gaxie et al. 2011). It is equally true that the particular way in which a cultural object defines its own meaning of Europe changes (to an extent) the wider social understandings of the concept. Depending on their resonance (wider popularity) cultural objects influence what society thinks or does. In other words, cultural objects can directly represent society but are also capable of changing it. Seldom, however, is this a clear-cut and direct process. It mostly happens through the mediation of what the cultural diamond categorises as creators and receivers.

Cultural objects are shaped by their creators, who draw meaning from their particular contexts (the social world). Moreover cultural objects gain additional meaning through consumption - receivers are informed by the social world they inhabit, as well as have autonomy to create meaning on their own. Griswold states explicitly that "a complete understanding of a given cultural object requires understanding all four points and six links" of the diamond (1994: 16). The relationships between all four points of the cultural diamond are reflexive, and so, one can differentiate six pairs of mutual influence. Therefore, at first the thesis investigates to what extent cultural objects produce meanings of Europe that derive from the notions of Europe that already operate in the social world. Secondly, it analyses how cultural objects are shaped by their creators. Thirdly, the research traces how meanings of cultural objects are dependent on their receivers - what immediate audiences take from them. Lastly, all this is juxtaposed with the current social context - to better inform us how Europe is understood through culture.

This constitutes the outline of the methods of analysis. It is not a description of a theory of cultural production, but rather a model of how the spheres of social life that we associate with the meaning-making capacity of culture are interrelated and should be studied. Griswold maintains that her diamond is "an accounting device intended to encourage a fuller understanding of any cultural object's relationship to the social world" (1994: 15). It outlines the crucial parts of the cultural and the social which require analysis in order to decipher the relationship between the two, and shows what set of linkages between the cultural object, creators, audiences and the social world have to be taken into account. In what follows, I present the reasoning behind case study selection to which the cultural diamond diagram will be applied to.

1.5   Cases: cultural institutions, festivals, and art projects

My choice of case studies is predominantly informed by studies of nationalism. The question of 'what is a nation' famously posed by Renan is subject to an extensive and ever-growing scientific literature (J. Hutchinson and Smith 1994: 15-46). I focus here on the theorisations of nationalism that point to the significance of culture for how the modern concept of a nation came into existence. Modern cultural sites have been among the crucial agents facilitating nationalism at its onset. The meaning-making capacity of culture in respect to nationalism relates to the argument that meanings of Europe are too made through culture. This thesis investigates cultural sites that were most successful in constructing and communication national self-understandings, but in relation to Europe today.

I am concerned with theories of nationalism that originate in the broadly understood modernist spectrum of the field, which judge the nation as it is today as an

intrinsically modern phenomenon – either a result of specific historical conditions or at least an emanation of contemporary society. These are theorisations that largely treat the nation as a subjective category, and discursive formation, with albeit concrete social existence. The nation is a product of society (it is secondary), it is an anthropologically cultural phenomenon. In part it is made in cultural sites, such as the ones examined in this thesis, and so is Europe – as it will be evidenced in the empirical part of the thesis. And while the modernist high culture of Europe had been largely trans-national (Sassoon 2006), it has been successfully 'claimed' by nations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), and used to reproduce markers of national self-understandings[28]. The ways in which meanings of 'what is a nation' were constructed and communicated through culture are a crucial backdrop of this research that drives the case selection. In what follows, I present examples of cultural sites that have been proven crucial in facilitating and mediating understandings of nationhood, including institutions of cultural retention, festival sites, as well as examples of contemporary art.

This correlation between culture and the rise of nationalism – a dynamic true specifically in the European realm – took place in virtually all modern states of the time. Joep Leerssen claims that such *cultural nationalism* was indeed Europe-wide, it was transnational, and its legacies linger on till today. Hence, cultural nationalism denotes the meaning making significance of cultural forms for building the nation that already in modernity was a transnational phenomenon taking similar form across the continent (2006a). It was a result of exchange of ideas and cultural forms in Europe; it was not

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[28] "Distinctive national self-understandings are produced and reproduced in literature, film, and political debate (...). These structure the ways in which people feel solidarity with each other (and distinction from others)." C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Cultures of Democracy', (19, 2007), 151-73 at 161.

insular even though it highlighted national particularity[29]. Leerssen claims that culture does not simply follow or reflect political ideas, but anticipates them (2006a: 562). Just as Gellner he claims that nationalism precedes nations (1983), and following Hutchinson he argues that it uses already existing cultural traits and traditions for the validation of the political idea of nationalism (1985). Processes of cultivation of culture exhibit an interest in "demotic, vernacular, non-classical culture", its classification and objectification for the national cause (2006a: 568). However, unlike Hroch he does not see this phenomenon as one that only originates a national movement (1985), but he locates cultural cultivation throughout the history of national projects. He invokes enduring examples of aesthetic culture such as "literature and learning, (…) novels, theatre and verse, (…) paintings, sculpture, antiques, monuments, architecture" that conceptualised, communicated and reinforced the national idea through the years (2006a: 569).

Cultural nationalism is a process of *salvaging* existing (vernacular) culture, *production* of a new one, but most importantly its *inventorisation* and *propagandist proclamation* in a national mode (2006a: 570). To put it simply, national culture has to be cultivated either by taking it from the past, creating something completely new, but in both cases categorising it as national and successfully propagating it amongst the public (J. T. Leerssen 2006b: 193-95). This process is not confined to a hermetic national realm and it is only presented as such according to national ideologies. In reality cultural

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[29]Leerssen writes about a "bewildering variety of practices and endeavors: the compiling of dictionaries and grammars, the erection of commemorative monuments, the establishment of newspapers and university chairs, the edition of ancient documents (legal, historical or literary), the writing of historical novels or patriotic verse, the composition of national music, the organization of sporting events and the opening of museums and reading rooms" as comprising cultivation of culture under nationalism ('Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture', *Nations and Nationalism,* 12/4 (559-78.).

nationalism is transnational, or rather *translocal*, both in terms of content and method (J. Leerssen 2011)[30]. Moreover, such cultivation of cultural nationalism is not confined to its early stages but it is a reoccurring phenomenon. It continuously recreates old and creates new cultural forms and ascribes them with a strictly national quality. In the dynamics of cultural nationalism what is important are the nationally defined cultural products, but likewise how these cultural forms are received and re-created in society, how their meaning is replicated or changed in popular reception[31].

1.5.1 The cultural institution: inventing & communicating the nation

The role of culture in constructing and communicating the idea of the nation has surfaced in a great deal of scholarship on nationalism, most notably in the modernist works of Anderson (1983), Hobsbawm (1983), and Gellner (1983), but also in other nuanced (ethnosymbolist) takes on subject by Hroch (1985), Hutchinson (1985; 1994), and Smith (1998). Not all of the above ascribe the same significance to culture in relation to nationalism, not all see the roots of national formation as following the same path. However, all recognise that the discourse of nationalism has been articulated

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[30] Leerssen extensively elaborates on examples of literature that anticipated subsequent nationalist developments, ones that almost outlined the discourses that were yet to come. His prime example is *das Deutschlandlied* (the infamous national anthem of the Third Reich), which encapsulated both fervently nationalist and exclusionary sentiments as well as more pluralist and democratic ones (the latter make the current national anthem of the Federal Republic) 'Viral Nationalism: Romantic Intellectuals on the Move in Nineteenth- Century Europe', *Nations and Nationalism,* 17/2 (2011), 257-71 at 266.. Hence, culture can be a precursor of political developments, not just its emanation.

[31] Cultural consumption is crucial for the recreation of the so-called everyday nationhood (Jon E Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, 'Everyday Nationhood', *Ethnicities,* 8/4 (2008), 536-63.).

through culture[32]. The consensus between these theorists is that they recognise the historical significance of cultural institutions in the development of nationalism, even if they judge it to be predominantly driven by different forces, or locate the notion of the nation itself as originating elsewhere.

Cultural institutions are an important part of what Leerssen calls national cultivation of culture (2006a). They have often been located in monumental buildings in city centres of the modern world and designated as repositories of registers of symbolic references for national self-understandings. Historically, after mass media outlets, such institutions were crucial for the proliferation of understandings of the nation in society. Studies of nationalism have recognised the museum, library, and gallery as both agents and parts of a larger cultural discourse facilitating national cohesion, perpetrated predominately by the elites. Some scholars see cultural institutions as tools of the elite for inventing the nation and imposing it onto the wider society. On the example of Central European nationalist movements, Hroch develops the argument that cultural nationalism comes before political nationalism (1985). Especially, the modern museum was not only one of the actors that constructed the national discourse, but also one that successfully communicated it to the society at large. It is, however, the role of the cultural institution in *inventing* the nation that will be addressed first.

Within the framework of "invented traditions", Hobsbawm attributes a lot of significance to the process of institutionalization in setting ground for national

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[32] The invoked theoretical approaches do not frame aesthetic culture as an intrinsic part of nationalism per se, but see it as being used and changed for the purpose of the national cause. It is however such role of culture as helping to grasp the notion of the nation by respective societies that is crucial in regard to cultural institutions. Leerssen locates the rise of cultural institutions as part of the "concern for the cultivation of the national culture in the set-up of the new state" ('Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture', (at 563.).

consolidation of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1983). Under the regime of nationalism, historical materials, including cultural artefacts, were ascribed great symbolic significance with regard to emerging political communities. These traditions were inscribed into society thanks to formal recognition, usage in public rituals, and the creation of institutions that kept and rekindled them (p. 6). According to Hobsbawm, the transformation of society in the industrial age necessitated coming up with new bonds of solidarity to ensure social cohesion in newly formed nation states (p. 263). Cultural artefacts, such as works of art, music, and literature, were tools of social engineering – representing certain beliefs, value systems and ways of belonging to a certain nation (p. 9). The embedding of cultural forms in state institutions was part of that process of *inventing* the nation and its traditions (p. 13). In time, forms of visual and mass culture were used in state-sponsored collective rituals to underline national unity (Schudson, 1994, p. 34). Accordingly, in recent decades, broadcasting[33] became a successful tool of national differentiation and still remains in most countries under strict state supervision[34] (p. 36).

Likewise Gellner identifies that "the establishment of pervasive high cultures, (…), has made it seem, (…), that nationality may be definable in terms of shared culture" (Gellner 1983: 54-55). He also sees nationality as a product of modernity and

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[33] "The mass media have often been seen as a powerful force for integration, both positively – assimilating different peoples to a common, civil culture – and negatively – stripping different peoples of their folk cultures and embracing them in an overbearing 'hegemonic' culture produced by elites at the society's centre" Michael Schudson, 'Culture and the Integration of National Societies', in Diana Crane (ed.), *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1994). (p. 40).

[34] Schudson claims that since modernity the nation state has proven to successfully employ culture to achieve social integration because it is capable of "providing common elements and clear boundaries to which meaning is attached and feeling invested" ibid.(p. 42).

the political practice of states. The doctrine of nationalism resulted in the convergence of political and ethnic boundaries, framing culture as the only real collective realm. In other words, there is in fact no such thing as actual cultural pluralism under the nation; the nation rather, was built, or *invented*, on the homogenisation of pre-existing traits, bits and pieces of ethnic (folk) culture, turning them all into a coherent register of symbolic references to the nation. Accordingly, in the heyday of the nation-state, these were cultural institutions that became the tools for "the general imposition of a high culture on society," says Gellner (p. 57). He points out the arbitrariness of ascribing symbolic meaning to particular cultural artefacts – historical practice of nationalism[35]. Museums, libraries, galleries, and other public cultural sites were the embodiments of the *invented* national cultures.

Cultural institutions were also important agents of communication of 'what is a nation'. The widespread social recognition of the concept is attributed to new modes of communication that allowed its horizontal spread. Anderson frames it as a process of collective *imagining* of the national common, dependent in part on available high culture and the institutions of its retention (1983). The modern museum was a carrier of a cultural idea of the nation, one successfully appropriated by society into its collective self-image. Hence, according to Anderson's analysis, a "cultural identity" is foundational of a "national identity" (Orchard 2002: 424). The logic of an "imagined

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[35] In national formation "a modern, streamlined, on-wheels high culture celebrates itself in song and dance, which it borrows (stylizing it in the process) from a folk culture which it fondly believes itself to be perpetuating" Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New Perspectives on the Past; Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) viii,150p.

community"[36] illuminates the role of culture in establishing social membership within the nation. It does so in particular regard to cultural institutions, which codify art collections and other objects as sets of symbols important to understand, and hence *imagine,* the nation.

In this process previously existing arrays of artefacts are categorised as belonging to the heritage of a given nation, upon which narratives of social togetherness are constructed. Museums and other cultural initiations create a seemingly neutral and allegedly objective national canon. Anderson calls the museum, in particular, an "institution of power", through which the state (especially the colonial one) exerted its domination and gained legitimacy (1983: 163-64). In his mind, "museums, and the museumizing imagination", were "profoundly political", with respect to turning cultural imagination into the utility of national cohesion (p. 178). However, this collective *imagining* function of the museum became available also to the technological advancement of discovery, preservation, and display methods in respect to culture. The impact of the museum was maximised by scientific progress, to which Anderson ascribes the larger phenomenon of "print capitalism" and its derivatives (p. 182). The institutionalisation of culture, coherent classification, and increased visibility of markers of cultural identity lead to the entrenchment of a national one. Common cultural understandings, and means of communication to spread them, were crucial to enable social integration – the nation state was the product of "print capitalism" and its

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[36] Coming from Anderson, Schudson claims that nationally defined societies are integrated by "common symbols, common culture, common education" (1994, p. 22). He underlines the centrality of the cultural mode of social integration in history – that fact that nation states must possess a cultural identity (p. 24).

derivatives (Schudson 1994: 27) – agents of collective imagining of national togetherness (1983, pp. 46-47).

1.5.2   Festival and the nation, festival and Europe

Festivals have been known to signify ideas and values that lie at the foundation of the modern nation. Together with museums, galleries, and libraries, festivals communicate the national idea (J. T. Leerssen 2006b; J. Leerssen 2006a). They can be compared to the role newspapers and books played in the facilitation of 'imagined communities' (B. R. O. G. Anderson 1983). However, the participatory and interactional quality of festivals – how they communicated what is a nation to society sets them apart from other types of cultural sites.

The modern festival derives in part from its religious predecessor. Also small scale urban festivals such as 'floral games' or 'choir contests' in modern times have been appropriated to serve the national cause and in time became part of cultural nationalism (J. Leerssen 2014). When it comes to mass festivals, it is predominately their scale and outright ideological content that links them to nationalism (Roche 2000, 2003). English notes that "modern festivals have tended to promote not just the interests of their host cities, but also, and often more importantly, those of their nation states, which rely on large-scale cultural spectacles to function as collective stagings of national unity and achievement" (English in Giorgi et al. 2011: 66). Similarly to public cultural institutions festivals were the signifiers of cultural particularity of a nation by showcasing what was categorised as 'it's part cultural heritage' (Bennett 1995). As the nation state and its structures solidified, festivals focused on their collectivising function increasing started to reproduce the triumphalist discourse of the nation, in most extreme

cases in service of imperialism and fascism (Berezin in Spillman 2002). Most commonly, they were 'performed' in order to achieve and solidify national allegiance through mass participation. English points out that "on the domestic front, it [a festival] helps to secure nationalist sentiment across lines of internal division, cementing the fragile bonds of 'imagined community'". Similarly in "the field of international relations" a festival "serves to project a depth and richness of national heritage together with the administrative competence of a properly modern state apparatus" (2011: 66). World fairs, the Olympics and other such festival-like events and competitions serve as representations of the nation to the outer world and signify its particularity through aesthetic culture (MacAloon 2008). When it comes to cultural festivals, this has been especially visible in film festivals, and other events that involve national competition (Valck 2007; Wong 2011).

Today, only very few of the grand traditional festivals that celebrated nation (for its own sake) are still relevant, however ones that involve multinational participation remain sites where prestige is wagered by those who compete and those who organise the event (Edensor 2002). Most of them are large-scale and widely broadcasted mega events that still reproduce the formula of affirming national particularity in one way or another. There exists, however a new 'breed' of festivals, ones that no longer uncritically celebrate the nation. 'Post-traditional' festivals are argued to be a form of cultural production with a more socially grounded meaning-making capacity than the ideologised, politicised, and homogenous top-down traditional festivals (Giorgi et al. 2011). Festivals today may encompass conflicting narratives and hypothetically bare more social authenticity - the significance of which will be discussed in the relevant chapter.

1.5.3   Art and the nation

Meanings of nationalism have been produced and reproduced in art throughout modernity. Art objects in particular have been known to play a role in constructing and/or diffusion national self-understandings. More recently art has been recognised for critiquing the previously established nationalist discourses and show other than dominant ways to understand the nation (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991; Zolberg 1990). Contemporary art in particular often voices counter-hegemonic ideas on the political and the national, and it often capable of exerting impact on society (Belting 2003; Piotrowski 2007, 2010). Artistic expression has also been proven to critically elaborate on various hegemonic ideologies and serve as heaven of freedom (Goldfarb 1980; Havel and Keane 1985; Matynia 2009). Taking into account the rich social relevance of art, this research traces the arguable similar capacities of art concerning creating and communicating meanings of Europe today.

The arts have been known to play an important role in facilitating the discourse of nationalism. Examples of how artworks contributed to nation-creation and national representation show the ways in which understandings of a community had been mediated though aesthetic culture both constructing and communicating ideas. Such properties can arguably be found in art that today no longer invokes the nation as point of reference, but Europe instead. Therefore, the relationship between art and nationalism serves as point of departure to studying art that addresses Europe, as well as validates the choice of public art sties as case studies.

Contemporary art as we know it today, with its critical angle and global scope is a historically recent phenomenon. The concept of modern art was established in art

history studies only around the 1930s, and it was not until the 1960s that art that articulated critical and global claims and known as contemporary art (Belting 2003; Piotrowski 2010). Direct comparisons therefore can only be made, if any, between today's contemporary art and artistic critiques of the nation in second half of twentieth century when contemporary art takes up its current form (Weibel et al. 2007; Weibel et al. 2011). However, the significance of art in modernity germane to conceptualising, spreading, and symbolising nationalism is a critical backdrop for analysing the meaning-making function of artistic cultural objects in relation to Europe today.

Historically art has been used for the creation and validation of national regimes, as shown by many scholars of the modernist tradition in nationalism studies. Art is part of the field of cultural production, which in general has been proven to be, one of the most significant spaces where the embedding of social understandings of nationhood have taken place. Understandings of what is a nation did not arise organically in the social world, but have been mediated via cultural objects by cultural producers responding to political developments, elite ideologies and economic transformations of western modernity. The arts have helped to construct (invent) and propagate (imagine) the nation. Artistic cultural objects provided the visual and material cues for the process of ritualization and formalization of symbols of nationhood in the wider social world. Often enough symbols were taken from past cultural forms, modified and then ascribed with new meaning relating to the nation (J. Hutchinson 1987). Sometimes through state or other patronage cultural producers created symbolic images of nationhood representing vested interests of the ruling that were aimed at forging social cohesion among the masses (J. T. Leerssen 2006b). Aesthetic culture and the arts contributed to

national formation by producing concrete understandings of a nation and embedding them through successful communication on the social level (Billig 1995).

Studies of nationalism show the various ways in which activities of cultural institutions, festivals, as well as artworks can construct and communicate national self-understandings. What a nation is can be either reproduced from existing cultural registers or invented anew. Such processes are continuous; they may or may not be politically motivated and/or elite driven. Yet, the nation is produced and reproduced through culture. The dynamics of cultural nationalism, as they originated in modern Europe, show the capacity of cultural production to both construct and communicate nationalist ideologies in close relationship with its social perceptions. Furthermore, the transnational quality of these processes points to the structural function the cultural field has with respect to meaning making. Therefore, at the empirical core of the thesis are the cultural sites where struggles over meanings and understandings of Europe are claimed to take place.

Chapter 2

Europe's culture online: the discourse & user practice of Europeana

Culture and politics, then, belong together because it is not knowledge or truth which is at stake, but rather judgement and decision, the judicious change of opinion about the sphere of public life and the common world, and the decision what manner of action is to be taken in, as well as to how it is to look henceforth, what kind of things are to appear in it. – Hannah Arendt[37]

Introduction

This chapter investigates what particular meanings of Europe are created through Europeana, which sets itself to be "Europe's multilingual digital library, museum and archive"[38]. I argue that by providing access to digitised cultural resources from across the continent and framing them as European, Europeana is trying to convey a message about the connection between Europe and culture[39]. Consequently, since Europeana's motto is *think culture*, I ask whether *thinking* culture can equal *thinking* Europe. The

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[37] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future. Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961) at 22.

[38] The caption introducing Europeana as seen on Pinterest (social website), followed by narrowing its geographical location to "Europe, The World" <http://pinterest.com/europeana/>.

[39] As of 2011 Europeana had begun an institutional relationship with the Harvard-based Digital Public Library of America Gautam S. Kumar and Julia L. Ryan, 'Digital Library Nearly Online', *The Harvard Crimson* (2011).. In 2012 Europeana expanded its collection by the content of the European Library – an online consortium of all state national libraries of the Council of Europe The European Library, 'Conference of European National Librarians ', .

chapter looks into how the European digital library constructs a cultural narrative of Europe as common. It also studies how the library's users understand this idea of Europe, delivered through an online medium. Therefore, apart from looking at the discourse of Europeana, I analyse the interactive practice of exploring <europeana.eu>. In particular, I analyse how the library's users interpret the connection between culture and Europe pursued by the portal. Hence, the research examines meanings of Europe and its social understandings constructed through this cultural site. Taking into account that Europeana is both a mass and social medium, I investigate the particular ways in which it diffuses cultural content and the kind of interactive user practice that results. Accordingly, the chapter shows how users understand these notions of Europe and to what degree they embrace them.

The central question of what meanings of Europe emerge in this cultural site is analysed in relation to the process of nation building along cultural lines[40]. Under the regime of the nation modern museums (and other similar institutions) became temples of national culture. They built collections of artefacts and claimed that they had crucial meaning for understanding the nation. Hence, the museum created the cultural canon of one's nation, making it available for all citizens to appropriate. Museums and other similar cultural institutions have been known to attempt wide social cultivation, in effect *teaching* the larger society about the cultural qualities that supposedly define its nation. The museum has been identified to construct 'what is a nation' through selection and classification of aesthetic culture. Likewise, it has been the medium of communicating

[40] Many scholars of modern European nationalism and well as social theorists point to the significance of state established institutions of culture and knowledge retention, such as museums, libraries, etc., in procuring and diffusion a set of cultural references tied to the idea of the nation, aimed at building an emotive national allegiance of societies (as elaborated in Chapter I).

these meanings of nationhood into society. Secondary to print and other forms of modern mass communication, the museum did play a significant role in both conceptualising and diffusing understandings of the nation. It allowed the nation to be both *invented* and *imagined* (as evidenced in the preceding chapter).

I see Europeana as the descendant of such institutions that have been important for building a national sense of particularity in the past. The online library represents the evolution that traditional institutions of culture retention[41] have undergone in the "digital age"[42]. Hence, I ask what is innovative about Europeana? Does it copy the ways of telling the story of the nation, but this time in regard to Europe? I analyse whether the ways in which Europeana constructs its idea of Europe resembles the processes known from the national example. Europeana understands Europe as an assemblage of nations that all contribute their cultural heritage to the grand narrative of 'common European cultural heritage' - a master collection of aesthetic culture of Europe envisioned to bring out things in common among its users. Europeana is built as a database of references to the digitised cultural content stored in respective national cultural institutions. However, unlike the modern institution, Europeana presents reverse subjectivity by effectively putting the user first. The format of digital exploration is somewhat ephemeral, but at the same time it is more interactive and provides a space for what I call 'personal curatorship'. In theory, this structure presupposes the lack of an explicit narrative about

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[41] The chapter often mentions memory institutions, cultural heritage institutions, and institutions of cultural retention – these are all synonyms for museums, galleries, libraries, archives, etc.

[42] The concept of the "digital age" is a murky one, nevertheless it encompasses the change that has undergone in social relationships since late twentieth century, especially in communication Maurice Lévy, Elisabeth Niggemann, and Jacques De Decker, 'The New Renaissance', (Brussels: European Commission, 2011).. Others, after Castells frame it as "network society" *The Rise of the Network Society* (Information Age; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 556..

Europe. Yet, Europeana does construct a cultural image of Europe today - as a web of artefacts encompassing the cosmopolitan riches of the continent from which individual users can draw. The chapter investigates this disjuncture between 'common European cultural heritage' and 'personal curatorship'.

First, I analyse the discourse that Europeana is pursuing in contrast to how national cultural institutions constructed the ideological bond between culture and the nation. Europeana is a metadata aggregator[43] of the digitised collections of the vast majority of Europe's most renowned cultural institutions. It claims that there is an inherent connection between the idea of Europe and the artefacts held in these institutions of cultural retention (i.e., museums, galleries, libraries), just as the modern museum claimed that its collections encompassed the culture of the nation. The millions of cultural objects accumulated through digitisation are said to encompass the outmost possible collection of what has been written, painted, recorded, and created in Europe throughout history. All this Europeana categorises as "common European cultural heritage" (Cousins 2011a, 2011b; Niggemann and Cousins 2011; Purday 2010; Purday and Keller 2011; Purday 2012). It gathers digitised literature, paintings, photographs, music, and film, claiming that they are crucial to understand what Europe is today. It

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[43] In its origin it was a platform of exchange of bibliographic information: in Jonathan Purday and Paul Keller, 'Europeana and the Public Domain Charter (Interview)', in Jaap Van De Geer (ed.), *"twill" This Week in Libraries* (2011).. Subsequently it turned into the European Digital Library. In terms of structure Europeana is a pan European services platform for cultural heritage institutions that associate themselves as European and/or claim to possess European content: in Cesare Concordia, ' Integration of Heterogeneous Metadata in Europeana. Presentation at the Lida 2009 Workshop.', (Institute of Information Science and Technology-CNR, 2009)..

also diffuses this cultural content online in anticipation of widening its outreach across Europe. In particular, the name Europeana itself stresses the uniquely European quality of the cultural collections it offers. Furthermore, its motto, *think culture*, assumes a bond between Europe and the aesthetic culture produced within its realm. This chapter traces how Europeana constructs the notion that culture is necessarily tied to the idea of Europe.

Next, I investigate the mode of online communication that Europeana undertakes in the *digital age*. The library provides access to over 20 million objects digitised as text, image, video, and sound. Europeana is a new medium of both mass and social communication because it both distributes knowledge and allows for the submission of user-generated content. This two-way vector of communication is investigated as to how it facilitates interaction and creates networks of users. I analyse what kind of interactive cultural practice happens through the usage of Europeana. In comparison to the physical practice of viewing museum collections, I investigate how Europeana's users explore cultural artefacts online. I ask why and how one uses Europeana. The chapter illustrates the degree to which its users share the connection between culture and Europe that Europeana creates. Users' reasons for exploring Europeana and the ways of doing so shed light on what is new about the impact of this digital medium.

Europeana fulfils the criteria for researching culturally mediated meanings and understandings of Europe. Among other existing online libraries, it is the prime case study because of the following features: it is an outlet of cultural diffusion – it

disseminates cultural objects[44] and allows independent consumption practices; it explicitly puts Europe on its agenda; it is the largest knowledge project of its kind; and, finally, it is co-financed by the European Union. Europeana presents itself as the online gateway for the cultural collections of Europe, which offers a unique space to explore Europe's cultural collections from across the continent and beyond[45]. It is indeed a gateway, a search engine, a point of access to the vast majority of Europe's most renowned cultural institutions and their digitised possessions. It is the access point to almost all such institutions that have been accumulating millions of cultural objects since their respective modern statehoods. Europeana is the first virtual platform that establishes an inter-institutional network beyond state lines. In a transnational fashion, it encompasses cultural forms gathered under the common denominator of being European.

The chapter establishes the dominant meanings of Europe that surface in the library's agenda and the understandings that come about through user experience. Europeana is identified as advocating the idea of "common European cultural heritage". Even though inexplicit, framing the digitised collections of Europe's cultural institutions in such a way is an identifiable curatorial practice (typical in modernity) that shapes the discourse of Europeana. The argument proposed is that through the discursive practice

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[44] I write about digitised objects, artefacts, as wells as content in general; all of which refer to inter alia: paintings, sculptures, etc. as well as books, documents, photographs, maps, etc. – contained in collections of cultural heritage institutions across Europe.

[45] As of 2011 Europeana began an institutional relationship with the Harvard-based Digital Public Library of America which is due to go live in 2013 Kumar and Ryan, 'Digital Library Nearly Online'.. In 2012 Europeana has expanded its collection by the content gathered in the European Library – an online consortium of almost all state national libraries of the members of the Council of Europe: The European Library, 'Conference of European National Librarians ', .

of constructing the idea of 'common European cultural heritage' Europeana wants to cultivate its users into acknowledging the link between culture and Europe – as did modern cultural institutions in regard to the nation. At the same time, Europeana has been creating a user-focused structure that enables personal exploration of its resources - across and beyond any narratives of commonality. The investigation of user practice shows that the library's use is indeed individualised, driven by specific interest in culture and technology, and/or dependent on prior exposure to aesthetic culture. The analysis also shows that Europeana's focus on high culture is exclusive and available only to a limited audience already interested in exploring cultural heritage online and possessing adequate dispositions. However, among such users, a considerable group does subscribe to the notion of defining Europe through culture. Nevertheless, it seems that only a particular elite shares this intrinsically European approach to culture pursued by Europeana. Lastly, though its discourse is seemingly benign, Europeana has structural and financial ties to the EU, proving to be somewhat ideologically loaded – a fact that does not go unnoticed in its popular reception.

2.1 The institution of cultural retention: cultivation, the elite, and the nation

The first defining aspect of Europeana is the fact that it is a cultural institution. This research investigates the different devices Europeana uses for disseminating culture – how they resemble and differ from the ones of traditional national institutions. Europeana relies primarily on the collections gathered by these institutions, which for most of their existence, were curated with ideological agendas of national homogenisation. The analysis of Europeana's novelty – vis-à-vis traditional memory institutions and their ways of constructing the nation – shows the ways in which it

constructs meanings of Europe. In particular, Europeana is innovative in two ways: it is virtual, and it encompasses "all" of European culture. Yet, just like the modern cultural institution, it too gathers and categorises aesthetic culture. The literature on cultural nationalism and the modern museum outlined in the previous chapter serves as context for the analysis of how Europeana constructs the link between an online collection of aesthetic culture and a particular idea of Europe, as well as how this connection is understood by Europeana's users.

Following the classics of historical and social thought, this chapter analyses what kind of Europe is invented and then imagined through this new digital medium. The analysis draws on theories that ascribe culture with an important role in conceiving the identity of the nation. These mostly modernist and cultural theories of nation formation respect the significance of *high* aesthetic culture and nation-specific institutions, sharing the symbolic meaning of nationhood. They show how the discourse of nationalism was, to a large extent, invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), using primary cultural vernaculars (Gellner and Smith 1996) , and how these ideas of nationhood became widespread thanks to cultural media, such as print, but also museums and other cultural institutions (B. R. O. G. Anderson 1983). Understandings of what is a nation were derived out of existing cultural rituals (D. J. S. Hutchinson 1985); and the said modern institutions (among other media) became the simulacra of nationalism (J. T. Leerssen 2006b). The modern print media and cultural institutions[46] were part of the technology

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[46] The modern museum has been framed as one of the key manifestations of what modernity is all about: JüRgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1987).

that enabled a remembrance of the invented national past, as well as an imagination of the equally constructed present.

Likewise, more recent scholarship specifically focused on modern (late nineteenth, early twentieth century) and contemporary institutions of cultural retention and their transformations. The previously cited works show how museums have been constructing the nation by making it the main point of reference in categorising culture (Hooper-Greenhill 1992). The studies of the museum also pay special attention to physical aspects as well as the ritual of spectatorship that enabled the spread of the national idea (Duncan 1995). On one hand, it is shown how this process of classification of culture along national lines was aimed at wide social cultivation. On the other, what is emphasized is the very elite character of cultural heritage institutions *hidden* behind the rhetoric of an educational role (Bennett 1995). The literature used here also shows the recent gradual change of museums – how they are becoming more critical to their past and the nation (Piotrowski 2011; Vergo 1989). It also illuminates the increasingly surfacing question of the significance of a European perspective for understanding the collections of national museums today (Aronsson and Elgenius 2011).

2.2   Online diffusion: mass and social communication

The second defining aspect of Europeana is the fact that it is a medium of communication. It is a virtual museum, library, archive that not only diffuses culture on a mass scale, but also one that enables interaction known from social media. Interactivity is central to Europeana and its premise of providing access to culture. Europeana praises itself with both opening Europe's cultural collections to the online world and also with the fact that individual users can share and reproduce such content, as well as submit

additional user-generated content. Hence, the investigation of Europeana takes into account the fact that it is a digital meta-data aggregator, which can be compared to existing mass media, as well as to new social media. It is, therefore, an online collection of nearly 20 million digitized cultural artefacts (text, image, sound, and video) from across Europe. Its advertised novelty is that it is not a conventional database, but rather an outlet that connects users with content stored in particular national and regional memory organisations. As mentioned before, Europeana is a platform diffusing content of European cultural intuitions, thus connecting the user to the institutional source of origin of a given cultural artefact. It is, however, not only a virtual representation of cultural institutions; it is also a medium of mass communication, exhibiting qualities of a medium of mass-self communication increasingly common in the 'digital age' (Castells 2009).

The type of information Europeana disseminates is not top-down and one-directional, as was in typical mass media (Jakubowicz 2011). In addition, Europeana does offer virtual exhibitions and collections of stories – it categorises culture, creating taxonomies of social history (Europeana 1914-1918, 1989, Judaica, Fashion). Primarily, however, Europeana is an open register of objects, an exploration of which is dependent on individual choice. It gives complete freedom of exploration, not concealing any content from its users. It allows non-structured usage, in that one is able to browse freely across collections, institutions, genres, languages, and data formats. Recently, Europeana has enabled participation in the creation of its collections through individual submissions of content; and projects that include user input and user interaction are now taking place. For example, *Europeana 1914-1918* and *Europeana 1989* are the two examples of Europeana's curatorship, which rely on user-generated content. Just like a social

website, Europeana encourages its users to take part in building the library's resources. Notably, Europeana is a traditional medium, in so far as it diffuses cultural content of institutions on a large scale, and a new social medium, since users play a key role in contributing to the library's content.

2.2.1 A medium of mass communication

Since Europeana is a medium of communication, albeit very particular, it is scrutinized from the perspective how media diffusion can produce meaning (1989, 2002). In general sociological terms, Schudson asserts that culture, in order to exert any influence on people, has to be reachable – it has to be communicated or diffused on a mass scale. However, in terms of media communication, the message itself is not enough: it is also the reception that matters when examining the efficacy of a media outlet. Accordingly, Schudson says that the "study of culture is the study of what meanings are available for use in a given society from the wider range of possible meanings; the study of culture is equally the study of what meanings people choose" (1989: 156). In other words, it is one thing to get meanings 'out there'; but another is the way in which the meanings actually become relevant. The latter is contingent on their reception, including the audience and the surrounding contexts[47]. Europeana signifies the technological progress and the growing availability of cultural diffusion anticipated by Schudson. In addition, Europeana is also an atypical medium providing access to culture, in so far as it has

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[47] Schudson underlines that one cannot judge the impact of culture without taking into consideration the social, political and economic contexts, etc. that are inseparable (p.153). Hence "resonance, then, is not a private relation between cultural individual and not even a social object and audience, but a public and cultural relation among object, tradition, and audience" (p. 170).

pluralistic sourcing and increasingly allows for bottom-up participation and interaction of users. Hence, in order to examine its impact, to put it in Schudson's terms, Europeana needs to be scrutinized in respect to its communication skills as well as its users' reception[48]. In other words, the analysis looks not only at how Europeana frames the culture it diffuses as European, but also at what particular users actually make of it.

Following Edles' guidelines to the sociological study of culture and media, Europeana is examined as an outlet that mediates cultural products (Edles 2001: 56-58). It is a digital medium that offers a codified set of cultural objects, which are claimed to be European; and through diffusion, it allows them to be shared by users. However, Europeana is not a typical mass medium (i.e., television, radio). It does not orchestrate and broadcast ritual events known especially from the history of the twentieth century. The message Europeana sends is more nuanced and arguably somewhat contradictory. It emphasizes the European quality of the cultural artefacts diffused, ascribing high value to the idea of "common European cultural heritage". At the same time, however, it underlines the diversity of sources and the freedom of individual exploration. Edles shows a similar split in regard to the methodology of cultural analysis. From a Marxian standpoint, all mediated content is elite driven, originating from the struggles for power, an emanation of class dynamics (Gramsci et al. 1971). As depicted by Adorno, "modern mass culture is the key agent of ideological hegemony in the twentieth century", and

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[48] Schudson cautions however that as "long as retrievability (and the evident capacity of the powerful to manipulate it), resonance, and institutional retention are central features of cultural effectiveness, culture will not act to fundamentally alter social direction, change minds, or overturn applecarts. Generally, culture acts as a reminder, a sign that makes us mindful - and mindful more of some things than of others." (p. 174).

Culture Industry represents neither popular interests nor democratic ones (Edles, 2001, p. 64).

Nevertheless, as emphasised by the scholars of the sociological *cultural turn,* the ultimate interpretation (understanding) of any cultural communication is left to the viewer (Swidler 1986). Today, mediated cultural content is also seen as a "cultural space", encompassing various important social issues, as Edles reminds us (2001, p. 62). Such content, moreover, can be seen as a register from which people construct their own understandings of society and reality in general (J. C. Alexander 1988). Mediated content does "help shape our view of the world" through indirect impact, as one of the process-building complex systems of meaning (Edles, 2001, pp. 68-69). New technologies, especially, challenge the direct ideological potency of media and culture industry in general, as the freedom of choice is much greater than ever before, thus giving considerably more agency to the individual members of the public, concludes Edles (p.71).

2.2.2   A social medium

The study of what meanings of Europe are produced through Europeana takes into account that it is a medium of mass-self communication (Valtysson 2011). Castells sees the evolving modes of communication as profoundly changing society, which is increasingly organized as a network (2009: 54-70). Communication is more and more individualised, and has an effect on how culture is diffused and consumed. It is especially noticeable in respect to the diversity of culture that is available online and that results in hybrid identities. Castells is convinced that how culture is diffused is important for its potency (2004). Hence, traditional top-down mass communication has less impact

than the new modes of mass self-communication, where the individual user both receives and produces content. Europeana, however, is only a mass-self communication outlet, in so much as it offers cultural content, engages users to reproduce it and submit one of their own. According to Castells digital communication generates vastly different meaning of culture, more direct than linear top-down mass media diffusion, and possibly capable of bridging "cultural divides" (2009: 56).

Europeana's innovativeness (mostly diversity of content and freedom of use) necessitates more individualised understandings of Europe than in the case of traditional *physical* institutions. It does not *hand-in* to its audience a rigid register of artefacts that are thought to be representative of European culture[49]. Europeana does not present a coherent narrative of European culture it invokes. Unlike memory institutions it does not put certain works on a pedestal of significance. On one hand, all of Europeana's content is framed as 'common European cultural heritage', on the other it has been designed for individual exploration (what I call 'personal curatorship'). Herein, lies the two-fold (somewhat dichotomous) way in which Europeana actually diffuses culture. These are users that have the freedom to decide themselves what content is meaningful to them (if any). As much as Europeana hints the link between cultural collections and Europe, the connection is to be made by the individual users. Consequently, the interactive practice

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[49] However, in the near future Europeana plans to follow the recommendations of the New Renaissance Report Lévy, Niggemann, and De Decker, 'The New Renaissance'., and compose an online exhibition comprising *Europe's Masterpieces* (by 2015/2016). It wants to gather the 100 most important cultural artefacts from each country. Europeana is negotiating the selection with chief national cultural institutions in the member states. It will give an idea of what is considered as masterpieces in each country, what has been digitised and ascribed with significance whilst at the same time belonging to Europe's heritage advocated by Europeana (Purday, 2012).

of exploring culture through Europeana can establish significant adherence to the idea of 'common European cultural heritage'. It can be regarded as a *thick* concept so long as the users voluntarily engage in the portal. This type of interactive practice that builds strong ties to an idea has been noticed in online participation for political causes and regarding social advocacy (Goldfarb 2006). In that sense 'personal curatorship' when carried out by the users can be more significant than somewhat passive spectatorship known from the modern museum.

While Europeana is the *monopolist* of European culture available online, the understandings of what is Europe from a cultural perspective can be really divergent due to its mass-self communicative dimension. In that respect, Europeana exhibits considerable cosmopolitan qualities, in so far as it provides space for very diverse understanding of Europe through culture (Beck and Grande 2007; Delanty 2010). This is also to a larger extent how Europeana sees itself; as an access point to an endless array of artefacts representing Europe's *journey* from a cultural perspective (Cousins, 2010). It wants to both highlight the common European character of its content and shies away from any further curatorship leaving it up for the users. Just as a traditional cultural institution exhibited a dissonance between its wide cultivation aspirations and its intrinsic elite quality, so does Europeana. It wants its users to appreciate the common European angle of the online museum, library, and archive. But at the same time it requires the audience to be fully capable of using it. Hence, exploring Europeana presupposes a considerable level of sophistication, in terms of both cultural sensibility and digital literacy. Below, I elaborate on the tensions that arise from pursuing the idea of 'common European cultural heritage' whilst advocating 'personal curatorship'.

2.3 Europeana

I examine Europeana for meanings of Europe it produces by looking at how it discursively builds the canon of European culture online. Similarly to what traditional culture heritage institutions have done in the past in reference to the nation, Europeana indirectly categorises what belongs to the register of European culture. I am specifically referring to the way in which Europeana is constructing the discourse of "common European cultural heritage". Europeana claims to be very different from any existing efforts of digitisation of culture because of this transnational and cross-continental scope. I examine how this constructed digital canon of "European cultural heritage" is presented (by Europeana) as pluralist, de-centred, and non-totalising. Europeana's Europe is cosmopolitan, one of cultural diversity, of cultivation and refinement that leads to mutual understanding. In the first and second section I show how Europeana 'invents' new cosmopolitan understandings of Europe in relation to the existing cultural collections contained in national institutions. I do so by examining Europeana's self-understanding (discourse) - its self-perception as stated on the portal, in publications, and conveyed by its officials in interviews.

At the same time, as mentioned before, the portal is thought to be user-focused when it comes to exploration of its content. It strives to allow for 'personal curatorship'. Even the few online exhibitions dedicated to particular moments in history of Europe are largely designed for individual consideration. Some even allow user-generated content to be submitted, making Europeana a social medium, as much as a mass medium (albeit atypical in both cases). Below, I show the different ways in which Europeana carries out its user-focused agenda: how it encourages users to explore and contribute content. The former aim has still minuscule results in comparison to other major online projects of

similar magnitude – few people actually use it. The latter has resulted in considerable turnout (in relation to its overall following). Europeana did successfully convince the public to contribute users-generated content in one specific case. Hence, the third section looks specifically into Europeana's "1914-1918" offspring and shows how it navigates between putting the user first and the pursuit of European commonality through a cultural collection devoted to World War One.

It's worth remembering that historically, in cultural institutions, there has been a visible disconnect between their *mission* of educating the *masses* (wide social cultivation) and the essentially elitist character of high culture they constructed for their own sake (as elaborated by Bennett). Europeana exhibits such dissonance as well, as evidenced by the series of interviews I carried out with Europeana's followers on Twitter (full elaboration of the study appears later in the chapter). The idea of 'common European cultural heritage' is difficult to convey through a portal designed for individual use. Europeana's users do not always combine their interest in culture with a curiosity towards Europe. Due to its digital and individualised form, European's users, even active ones, can use it very differently. Also, the appreciation of its European character is dependent on one's immediate social context, identity, and cultural capital. The research shows how the online library is a domain of a particular elite, similar to the bourgeois audiences of modern museums. At the same time, Europeana is not unimportant, as neither has been the museum in conveying understandings of the nation. There is a significant number of users that immediately *think* Europe when *thinking* culture. These people are drawn to Europeana thanks to prior interest in culture and often in Europe. In the last section I show how user engagement in the portal incites enthusiasm towards exploring culture on a European scale.

2.3.1 Constructing 'common European cultural heritage'

I argue that Europeana validates its mission by the discourse of 'common European cultural heritage' visible throughout <europeana.eu>. This notion of 'heritage' is also directly invoked in a great deal of secondary literature, both promotional and critical about Europeana (Ayris 2009, 2011; Davies 2008; Erway 2009; Hadro 2009; Kail 2011; Lori 2009; McKenna 2010; Purday 2010). Following Europeana, these accounts ascribe great worth to digitisation and dissemination of culture from Europe. Despite varying degrees of excitement towards the project Europeana's idea of 'common European cultural heritage' is replicated across the board. In other words, the idea of bringing online the digitised cultural artefacts from Europe is being widely justified by the concept of 'common heritage'. Similarly to traditional cultural institutions Europeana carries out a practice of categorisation in this regard. Albeit indirectly, the online library draws on an almost perennial idea of European culture, and claims it can be fit in one historical narrative - under the common denominator of 'common European cultural heritage'. This seemingly obvious and historically justifiable label is in fact a practice of creating the European cultural canon. This *practice of classification* is what Hooper-Greenhill and Bennett observed in the process of modern museum building (1994, 1992). Below, I am showing how this ideological practice of constructing 'common European cultural heritage' surfaces in European's publications and in interviews with its officials.

On an official level, this way of thinking about culture in Europe has been endorsed by European Commission's *New Renaissance* report, which is the main body funding Europeana (Lévy et al. 2011). The report recommends furthering the effort of digitisation and online diffusion of culture, and sees it as potentially democratising,

cultivating, educational, ad leading to increased interaction of European citizens (Reilly et al. 2012: 38-39). Dissemination of 'European culture' is presented here as having beneficial social, political, and economic effects – leading to overall cultivation of European citizens. *Comité des Sages* (an advisory board in cultural matters to the European Commission) sees the idea of diffusing 'common cultural heritage' online as one worth pursuing, and hence worth financing by the European Union. Its recommendation for national institutions to digitise their entire collections and submit them to Europeana, designates the portal as the largest register of European culture online to date. The notion of 'common European cultural heritage' is framed as a shared good that must be available to all people of Europe, and European is the cultural producer to do it.

This idea of Europeana as a gateway to 'all of European culture' permeates through the portal. Europeana is claimed to encompass the outmost register of "cultural heritage of Europe held in the museums, libraries, archives and audio visual collections" (Cousins 2011a: 69). Europeana is said to be going beyond particular national understandings of culture and presenting "a record of Europe's journey" of everything that "Europe has considered worthy of keeping, of understanding, of studying" (p. 73). It is seen as giving a new meaning to disseminating cultural artefacts by putting collections of various memory institutions in a common framework of reference above the nation. The idea of a single access point to what is framed as 'our' cultural heritage signifies the *invention* of new ways to understand European commonality through culture. Also the pursuit to strengthen a "shared European culture", to encourage "diversity" and improve "social inclusion", show how Europeana aims to cultivate its users (p. 75). Similarly to

traditional cultural institutions it pursues the connection between culture and a sense of 'civilizational distinctiveness' (Lawrence and Simmel 1976).

By the words of Europeana's director Jill Cousins, promotion of cultural literacy across Europe can be a "contribution to a European society" in social and economic terms[50] (p. 75). Again, the immediate online availability of cultural artefacts is seen as contributing to social cohesion and bringing forward "a collective, pan-European understanding" (p. 75). In other words, Europeana strives to transgress the existing national narratives pertaining to culture by putting them all together in one virtual 'place'. It constructs a cosmopolitan idea of Europe that is united through its culture - a new cultural canon of Europe available online. In the following section I show how at the same time, it is pursuing a user-focused agenda characterised by promoting individualised access. I argue that there is a disconnect between convening a sense of unity through culture and the actual type of exploration that happens on Europeana.

2.3.2 Individualized exploration – 'personal curatorship'

Europeana aggregates culture from hundreds of institutions and provides access to metadata in the single access point of <europeana.eu>. Therefore, when searching for

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[50] There is also a visible discourse of economic utility that accompanies the promotion of Europeana (Jonathan Purday, 'Inteview with Europeana's Head of Communications at the British Library ', in Roch Dunin-Wąsowicz (ed.), (London, 2012).). The idea that Europeana would not only be culturally enriching but also useful for certain sectors of economy has always existed. The European Commission has always underlined that Europeana has been established to inter alia provide resources for reuse in commercial sectors. Such motivation was explicitly inscribed in the Digital Agenda for Europe 2020 drawn up by DG Connect under the leadership of Neelie Kroes. It articulates how European cultural heritage online can incite digital creativity and innovation in different sectors of economy (tourism, education), growth generator – economic value (Lévy, Niggemann, and De Decker, 'The New Renaissance'.).

text, image, sound or video pertaining to a particular subject one browses through the catalogues of at least dozens of cultural institutions, regardless of origin, solely on the basis of subject matter. This is how Europeana is different from its national predecessors and any other existing cultural media to date. The user is not confined to browse only within national or regional narratives, within closed thematic categories, genres, formats or languages. The search mode gives access to all digitised cultural resources pertaining to one's query. The exploration can be refined by language, date, country, copyright, format and provider, whilst showing where given cultural artefacts surface across Europe. Europeana, therefore, allows locating particular examples of aesthetic culture across and within national and regional collections.

The idea of Europeana as medium offering individualised user practice is underlined by Anne Marie van Gerwen, its Marketing and Communications Manager. In an interview I conducted with her in August 2012, she stressed that Europeana itself does not contain any cultural content – it is only a catalogue of digitised collections. It "aggregates" cultural content and provides access to it through "metadata" that is "embeddable and searchable". Europeana positions itself as a gateway to "all of European culture" (as seen in (Cousins 2011b) & (Purday and Keller 2011) – yet it is "neutral", underlines Anne Marie van Gerwen. Europeana does not assume any curatorial prerogatives over the digitised content it diffuses. It leaves the judgement to the user. At the same time Europeana is concerned with supporting individual participation and exchange among its users. It emphasizes the individual quality of exploration of Europeana - the fact that it can be carried out in a cross-domain, -national, -language, -location, fashion. Hence for the purpose of the analysis, its user focus agenda is something what I call 'personal curatorship'.

Interestingly enough van Gerwen claims that Europeana's strategy is completely *neutral* regarding the cultural content it brings from memory institutions. Its practice, however, shows that it is somewhat otherwise. Europeana is building a new cultural canon of Europe online and does curate exhibits regarding the social history of Europe. Different exhibits are brought to life on Europeana mostly by clusters of memory institutions focused on a particular subject or topic in history. Examples of which are Europeana Judaica and Europeana Fashion. Europeana is not explicitly concerned with a somewhat more equal access of all national, ethnic and other cultural groups to diffuse cultural content via the portal. The inclusion of niche cultural voices came as an external initiative of interest groups that secured funding for digitisation on the level of the European Commission, explains van Gerwen. Europeana as such does not strive to create special catalogues of 'European cultural heritage' belonging to specific minorities in Europe. There is however enduring support for bringing personal stories behind specific historical events, which are thought of as crucial to 'understand' Europe. Therefore while claiming to be 'neutral' Europeana does coordinate thematic collections that are thought to be sufficiently European. On one hand it consciously pursues the idea of 'common European cultural heritage', on the other it distances itself from the thematised content it diffuses.

Likewise Jonathan Purday, Europeana's Head of Communications (interviewed in 2012), claims that when it comes to main strategy "Europeana has no 'brief'". The self-perception of Europeana is that it has no clear story to tell about Europe, whereas the national institution wanted to 'faithfully' represent a given nation. It relies on other people's materials for the story to be told, which is also contingent on what has been

digitized in each country by cultural institutions[51] underlines Purday. While pursuing the idea of "common European cultural heritage" Europeana does not orchestrate a "more equal narrative" by suggesting to institutions what should be digitised. Europeana claims that it does not actually alter content in any way. What is omitted, however, is the overall practice of categorisation regarding Europe's culture it undertakes.

Following Europeana's user-focused agenda, Purday emphasises that the "space of Europeana" is designed to encourage individual exploration. Its main pages are translated into 29 languages, in order to make cultural artefacts outside of one's language group as accessible as possible. Europeana wants to break with the structure of passive reception of culture. It encourages the reuse of data and digital objects. The most recent development in that direction is the Pinterest pilot program of Europeana, along the lines of user focused turn, which enables creating personalised virtual visual sheets using Europeana's content[52]. Specifically these technical adjustments enhancing personal use do indeed make it a social medium.

At the same time, Purday stresses that Europeana is a tool "to help us recognise the common European cultural heritage", to "discern a European identity" especially amongst the "clamour of national identity that is clustered upon Europeana". In that vein Europeana wants to bring online Europe's Masterpieces (by 2015/2016) – to gather the 100 most important cultural artefacts from each country on the portal (Lévy et al. 2011). Europeana is negotiating this with chief national cultural institutions in the member states. Purday admits that this project will bring national cultural narratives "at large"

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[51] The Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme of the European Commission issues calls for proposals from institutions that want to "feed" Europeana with content.

[52] http://pinterest.com/europeana/

into Europeana. It will give an idea of what is considered as masterpieces in each country, what has been digitised and ascribed with significance and/or international value whilst at the same time belonging to Europe's heritage.

In terms of thematic exhibits, Europeana played a crucial role in bringing forward the Great War Archive to a European level and engaging known memory institutions that dealt with the subject of WWI in their work. According to Purday Europeana was the only "pan European" body that could have enabled the promotion of the project. He emphasises that Europeana wanted "excite the public audience" in the heyday of the centenary of the war and is hoping for national governments' engagement as tribute to the fallen, and for the European Commission interest because of the European side of it. However, when considering future projects of that sort, Europeana, consciously omitted the case of the Second World War and went on to pursue the topic of the 1989 revolutions.

The above interviews with the cultural producers behind Europeana envisage the proliferation of the idea of 'common European cultural heritage'. It is confirmed that Europeana does want to be the catalogue of Europe's culture. At the same time it wants to be some sort of a social medium based on 'personal curatorship'. It wants to make people aware of Europe's culture but doesn't want to do it directly. Asserted above is also the alleged neutrality of Europeana, which somewhat contradicts most of its pursuits. The clearest and most repeated goal of Europeana is to make people aware of cultural diversity in Europe and to make it accessible for personal use. Yet, this practice of classification of what is European culture and the aim of spreading that knowledge to the users is not acknowledged. Below, the example of Europeana 1914-1918 shows in a micro scale how Europeana wants to cultivate the audience while focusing on the

individual experience of exploration. It also shows how a conscious project relating to WWI is posed as neutral and non-ideological yet intrinsically European.

2.3.3 Europeana 1914-1918: building the collection together with the user

Europeana 1914-1918 is a platform within Europeana to which one can submit artefacts relating to World War I along with a personal description attached explaining the story behind it[53]. It involves individual members of the public in building its collections according to the strategies outlined before. Cultural content pertaining to WWI is seen as neutral however. The emphasis is put on moments of individual suffering that are framed as common to all Europeans engaged in the conflict. The project is a deliberate look for common points in history - ones that can be collectively remembered on a European scale through a digital archive of remaining artefacts. Furthermore, Europeana 1914-1918 claims that it is the public can decide in what way it wishes to commemorate the shared tragedy of the First World War. Europeana gathers this user-generated content in two ways. First, are the collection days taking place in various locations across Europe in conjunction with local memory institutions, so far inter alia in: Sonderborg, Nova Gorcia, Dublin, Preston, Luxembourg, Amberg, Regensburg, Kiel, Dresden, Erfurt, Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, and Frankfurt. Second is the online software allowing online submission of digitised materials[54].

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[53] Europeana's most recent activity focusing on World War One in continuously updated on its blog, such as: http://blog.europeana.eu/2012/10/a-focus-on-world-war-one/

[54] Such practice has been known to result in subsequent interaction of the people involved in finding long lost relatives or people whose ancestors had common war experiences Europeana1914-1918.Eu, 'Otto & Bernard International Version', <http://vimeo.com/21385414>.

The idea of collecting personal memories of the war, or at least stories and artefacts remaining in the hands of the descendants of WWI participants, originated at Oxford University. Initially it was an online collection of poetry from the time of the war that was made available for teachers in the UK. In 2008 what followed was the Great War Archive. It was brought to life due to a realisation of the vividness of living memory of the Great War in Britain, say Alun Edwards, Project Manager for The First World War Poetry Digital Archive at Oxford University whom I interviewed in August 2012. Technological advances of digitisation allowed the archive to collect items form individual members of the public and put them up online. The first set of collection days showed an enduring public interest and memory of the war and considerably outgrew the anticipated turnout. Following such considerable public response and efficiency, the initiative began is collaboration with Europeana.

This was the "story element" behind the objects brought in to collection sites that Europeana became most interested in, underlines Alun Edwards. It is the human side of the memory of the war that became visible during the roadshows, and it was that almost "sentimental value" that determined the uniqueness of the both the initial Oxford led project and then Europeana 1914-1918. Europeana organised roadshows so far across the UK, Germany, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Ireland, and Denmark. Whereas the original First World War Digital Archive was interested mostly in collecting historical artefacts (political documentation, photographs, etc.), Europeana took it forward by extending its interest to family histories, personal accounts, third party accounts and impressions of the war all that "personalised" the history and the submitted objects, differentiates Edwards. He continues that the community collection idea is also very much tied to the

idea of cultural heritage. It is a historical approach to delineate somewhat pan European narratives of WWI on the basis of individual perspectives.

However, as Edwards explains, the experience of roadshows points to the diversity of perspectives on the war, in both political and social terms. Britain is a special case when it comes to the awareness of the First World War where it exists as common knowledge. It is in stark contradiction to Ireland where the political discourse framed the service of Irishmen in the British army as almost "shameful", asserts Edwards. Still the roadshows in Dublin were a tremendous success. The enthusiastic public response with some 600-700 mostly elderly people coming to share their family memories in the difficult setting of Ireland was a tremendous surprise to the crew. Every European country is different in that respect, says Edwards - dependent on the public discourse and the importance of WWI for national formation, especially in relation to latter developments such as WWII and communism. These historical and contemporary circumstances that nuance the vividness of WWI memory of respective European societies do not overshadow the overall public interest in the roadshows across Europe.

Alun Edwards points to these differences when it comes to both the type of personal stories communicated by the public and the type of artefacts brought in for digitisation. For example, in Germany only in one day there were more objects brought in than in the UK during the whole timespan of the project. This shows the difference of collective memory concerning the war in these two countries. In Britain this memory has been preserved and cultivated by public institutions for decades now, whereas in Germany entire archives pertaining to the war were kept in private homes all this time. Edwards mentions that especially in Germany this large collection of documents and other artefacts were preserved in places and by people "relatively untouched" by the

torments of history. On the other hand, in Luxembourg Edwards observed a vivid Franco-German split in the perspective on the war and German occupation. The materials collected clearly point to WWI as the moment in modern history as formative of Luxembourgish patriotism, visible in pamphlets and essays, as well as familial memories of starvation. These differences of collective memory are apparent. In Slovenia the tragic aspect of WWI has been completely overshadowed by WWII and subsequent communist rule. Still the roadshows in Ljubljana collected an equally great deal of artefacts and personal stories as in other countries.

As emphasised by Edwards, the original project was strictly scientific, whereas after Europeana "took over" it became more inclusive especially of personal histories attached to the objects that are digitised. Despite the possible sentimentalisation of individual stories, the inclusion of "living memory" into Europeana's collections took place. In March 2011 Europeana enabled online submissions of content. The virtual submissions are reviewed by historians and other experts from the field for authenticity and accuracy and then gathered in categories: Western Front, Eastern Front, Italian, Front, Home Front, Trench Life, Aerial Warfare, Naval Warfare, Prisoners of War, Propaganda, Remembrance, Women, Official Documents, Photographs, Postcards, Diaries, and Letters. This online exhibition presents a curious kind of curatorship - minimalist, descriptive and almost neutral. Such is the overall quality of the Europeana 1914-1918 project.

World War One as a historical event is important and recent enough for it to be materials on it. At the same time it is no longer a burning social and political issue in Europe and as a topic to explore it is left largely to historians such as Alun Edwards and his colleagues at the First World War Poetry Digital Archive at Oxford University. From

a historical perspective World War One in most of Europe has been overshadowed by the following tragic developments of the century, mostly WWII and communist dictatorships. Even though the year 1918 largely solidified the national breakdown of the continent as we know it today, the subject of the war as such has been moved to the realm of historical past. Arguably this foundational aspect of WWI and the lingering examples of familial and national memory, juxtaposed to its relatively low significance for the today's world is a somewhat neutral platform of deliberation about Europe's common past. World War One is important enough to be considered, and distant enough not to cause great public upheaval. It has had significant impact historically and still surfaces in the public space, yet its hard imagining that accusations of 'relativisation' of history could ever be made in relation to Europeana 1914-1918.

The project is part of Europeana's general take on "common cultural heritage". Europeana 1914-1918 publishes individualised familial narrations of the descendants of war participants from all sides of the front. It is an explicit curatorial practice that frames the gathered artefacts left behind by the War's participants as "common" to "us", as being part of Europe's "heritage". The inclusion of personal stories of the tragic war effort wants puts a "human face" on the grandiloquent and nationalist narratives of sacrifice. The nuanced categories of the objects gathered blur historical divisions. The project arguably looks into inducing a kind of remembering across the European public (Spohn and Eder 2005: 197). Europeana 1914-1918 does enable discussions about memories, which are arguably capable of establishing social bonds. According to Eder, mutual remembering allows to better understand the former other (p. 205). In the case of the Great War, these are memories from countries fighting for both the Entente and the Central Powers that are exhibited and put into conversation with each other. Hundreds of

stories published thus far exhibit what Eder would frame as "reflexive retelling" of history, both the good and the bad, inclusive of all narrations (pp. 216-217).

Europeana 1914-1918 is becoming a site of such conversation - mutual narration of past through distinctive experiences and understandings of Europe. On one hand, it is the location of particular stories within the common history of the war that is significant. On the other, the cathartic quality of recognition of mutual tragedy, delivered by the almost expiate character of the stories, puts overwhelming emphasis on the recklessness of conflict and invaluableness of human sacrifice. As underlined by the project developers (Europeana 1914-1918 2012), individual memories of the family members involved in the war are sought to contribute to a better understanding of the past, and make space for the co-existence of various divergent narratives. This new way of presenting the history of World War One through digitised objects and sometimes-anecdotal stories beside them is deliberately aimed at finding what's common in them. It is not a reinterpretation of facts, a rewrite of history, but rather a shift in subjective perceptions of the past that people see as significant. In such constellation the political aspect of the war can seem less important, and the shared experiences gain primacy. This curatorship of Europeana follows the idea of popularising the notion of 'common European cultural heritage'. Despite Europeana's asserted neutrality it does want to cultivate its users into *thinking* about Europe along cultural lines. At the same time 'personal curatorship' makes Europeana relatable to the interested, capable and actually narrow elite. In the subsequent section I investigate how individual users are responding to Europeana's message.

2.3.4 Its followers: culture enthusiasts, knowledge seekers and Euro-supporters

The overwhelming majority of people using Europeana are not affiliated with any cultural institution. It is a not a crowd driven by one of the thematic sections available on the portal. They are the *ordinary* users that are the Europeana's target for bringing 'common European cultural heritage' online. However, figuring out what is the resonance of Europeana and its message (as Schudson would have it) about the importance of culture for understanding Europe among *ordinary* user is not an easy task (1989). It is not the question of exactly how many people use it every day and how frequently they are doing it. These numbers are growing slowly but steadily, and Europeana itself keeps track of these dynamics better than anyone can and makes them publically available. The research is concerned with examining the understandings of Europe that emerge through the use of Europeana. It is the extent to which Europeana's users acknowledge its message of 'common cultural heritage' and what do they make of it. I examine the potency of Europeana to convey this idea linking culture to Europe by looking at the attitudes of its individual users. I also investigate their interactive practice in reference to the indented form of its use – 'personal curatorship'. I look at how the anticipated individualised mode of exploring cultural content of Europeana actually unfolds in practice in the micro online milieu of Twitter.

I have come up with three ideal types that are stylised representations of the major reasons why and how people use Europeana and what they think of it. These constructed examples show the degree to which people respond to the idea of 'common European cultural heritage' pursued by Europeana. They are variations of the link between culture and Europe, ranging from appreciation of culture as such, to seeing it from a particularly European perspective. The presented categories are inferred from the

most common ways in which the users approach the question of culture and Europe vis-à-vis Europeana. They also show the kind of interactive practice Europeana's user actually carry out: the different reasons for using it and various ways of doing so. The typology is not pre-established but is rather an outcome of close observation and selection of the most noticeable types of reasoning presented by the users. The types of Europeana's users show the most prevalent attitudes and describe in detail how the users themselves understand the connection between culture and Europe. The analysis of each type shows the most common ways of interactively exploring culture through Europeana and the resulting attitudes. The traits of these ideal types may cross over, and there are different variations within each of them. They do, however, explain the most pronounced ways in which people use and perceive Europeana and its discourse.

First group of Twitter users I identify exhibit a general interest in exploring culture, people whom I call *culture enthusiasts*. They see Europeana as another access point to culture, such as a museum, gallery, library, but this time in an innovative online form. They exhibit a general curiosity in "paintings", "literature", and "art". Second group has specific causes behind one's exploration of Europeana; these are mostly interest driven. These users are either *passionés* of certain historical periods, professionals in cultural fields, specialists in librarianship, developers and promoters of the Linked Open Data format, enthusiasts of digitisation, as well as students and scholars. I categorise them a *knowledge seekers*. Third category of responses conveys an explicit interest in the European aspect of <europeana.eu>. These users explained that they explore Europeana because it gives access to: "European cultural heritage", "European Art", "EU culture", "EU AV heritage", "DIGITAL EUROPE", "collections/exhibits across the EU". They express vivid interest in European issues

from the sphere of history and politics, as well as relate the European character of Europeana to their identity. Some even define themselves as "European" in direct connection to idea of "common cultural heritage" advocated by Europeana. I call them *Euro-supporters*.

In the analysis of the dispositions of Twitter followers towards Europeana I relate them to Gaxie's extensive typology of "attitudes towards Europe". These were developed during the course of a wide qualitative comparative study of perceptions of the "European construction" in 5 member states (Gaxie et al. 2011). Most relevant to the study of Europeana's users is Gaxie's delineation of the degree of "involvement" an individual has in European issues when expressing views on the "European construction" (2011: 51-84). Accordingly, the users that express only broad cultural curiosity (culture enthusiasts) toward Europeana exemplify an attitude of "remote evaluation" in regard to its European quality (2011: 57). They either disregard or have no vested interest in the link Europeana makes between culture and Europe. For them "common European cultural heritage" is first and foremost cultural. Following the same logic, users that have a degree of concrete professional/hobbyist interest in Europeana (knowledge seekers) show "limited involvement" (2011: 63). Their engagement with Europeana is determined by the qualification of some specific personal or professional experience that has led them to explore culture online from a European perspective. Finally, the users that express explicit reference to the European quality of culture in the online library (Euro-supporters) are driven by a degree of "synoptic involvement" (2011: 52). They seem to be very informed about what Europeana does and how it promotes the idea of "common European cultural heritage". Furthermore, they have personal experience of both cultural practices and European realities and often enough link the

two together. Some are also vividly enthusiastic about Europe as a political project and seek out projects like Europeana that they view as its endorsement. The outlined aspects of Gaxie's typology help to navigate the analysis amongst what attitudes are held by Europeana's Twitter followers. It is, however, mostly the degree to which they respond to its message of linking culture to Europe that the "types of attitudes towards Europe" help to explain.

2.3.4.1 Method and questions

Looking at why people use Europeana, for what purpose, how exactly, and with what effect, was crucial to answer the research questions. However, reaching online users is not easy, especially due to the seeming anonymity of the virtual world. There is no simple 'way-in' into the world of Europeana's users. I wanted to reach people who are more than one-time users of Europeana that are somewhat aware of its functions. Just as any other major online entity Europeana has a Twitter account, with 7000+ publicly visible followers. In July 2012 I started tweeting them. These people are *connected* to Europeana via this social medium. They follow its activities on the Twitter portal as encapsulated in the 140 characters of every tweet issued by the European digital library about itself, culture and digitisation in Europe. Europeana presents itself on its Twitter account as follows: "Europeana; *@EuropeanaEU*; Europeana is Europe's multilingual digital library, museum and archive. The Hague, The Netherlands · http://www.europeana.eu"[55]. It is therefore the official and legitimate offspring of the portal and its followers have all the information to link it to Europeana proper. It is

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[55] https://twitter.com/EuropeanaEU

justifiable to assume that the almost seven thousand people who follow it on Twitter have at least once used it or are aware of its activities. Hence, they constitute a viable pool of users that can be interviewed.

The kind of understandings of Europe that arise through the use of this online library can be found in how the users themselves invoke its European character. There are, nevertheless, limitations to the wider social resonance of these notions presented by this specific audience. In the grand scheme of thing this is an extremely minuscule number of people that explore culture online from a European perspective. It is also a very narrow sample of Europeana's users, due to the fact that its Twitter following is unimpressive in comparison to similar portals. Leaving these quantitative dilemmas aside, the people that follow Europeana on Twitter are for the most part its base target. They are interested in exploring cultural and/or educational content and are equipped to do it (materially and non-materially). Hence, they possess the necessary dispositions to consume Europeana's product - "common European cultural heritage" delivered online. Such observation is validated by the occupations they hold (librarian, student, researcher, professional, consultant, journalist) and by their expressed interests (in art, in design, in history, in music). These users represent a visible group of cultural consumers active in the virtual world. It is then a sample group that can show what understandings of Europe emerge through the use of Europeana. Its analysis can show how Europeana's agenda of linking culture to Europe takes place among its target users.

Following the guidelines of doing research via Twitter (Mollett et al. 2011), taking into account ethical considerations and the limits of outreach I started getting in touch with Europeana's followers. I managed to send exactly 1000 tweets to its most recent ones followers. I asked them "why are [they] interested in Europeana.eu, (how) do [they] use

it, and what [they] think is special about it?". I tweeted people who can be considered as legitimate users, ones that have a description of their interests and/or occupation on their account, most likely accompanied by a photo and with a somewhat considerable tweeting history. From these seemingly active users of Twitter and followers of @EuropeanaEU, about 11% responded to my inquiry. Thus far I received responses from exactly 110 users who were kind enough to answer my question. All but one (that doubted my credibility) were very positive and gave straightforward answers to the question posed.

Vast majority of the answers were contained in the 140-character message format and equally to the point. This is, however, another limitation of the study, which also reflects the nature of interactive cultural practices in general. The responses are for the most part not very elaborate and show the ever-accelerating speed of online communication. For example, when the users talk about the "Eu", due to the nature of a tweet, it might mean both Europe and the European Union and it is difficult to know the difference without further investigation. In cases where the conversation is prolonged this can be known, but often enough what is signalled is just such vague reference to the "Eu". At the same time Twitter and its user practice epitomise the way in which knowledge is shared in the *digital age*. It is a medium of both mass and social communication. What people tweet about is for the most part what they deem as relevant in general and important to them personally. Following Europeana on Twitter is a publically manifested sign of one's interests. Publically tweeting about what and how one uses it shows that these particular users do think it is important. Along these survey-like responses I managed to get directly in touch with some of @EuropeanaEU followers that tweeted me back. I engaged in a few more detailed private conversations

also via Twitter that revealed in more detail the specific ways of using Europeana. What emerges from a sample of more than a hundred (back and forth) tweets are three dominant themes of why people are interested in Europeana and how they use it. The types of attitudes are not solid but envision users' reasons for using Europeana and the degree of appreciation they have for it.

2.3.4.2 Followers and their tweets

Culture enthusiasts

Europeana's users that are general *culture enthusiasts* like @francesjkey explain that they are "really interested in history, culture, ephemera, nuggets of info and broad brushstrokes". They sometimes narrow it down as @LyricNervt does, who is specifically "interested in pictures and visual culture". It is, however, culture first that drives their interest in Europeana. More specifically they are excited by the diversity of cultural collections and view them as a "treasure for the world" (@g_toro). Furthermore, these users often see Europeana as the next generation of cultural institutions: museums, galleries, and libraries. Along the same lines they value it as a medium of communication – the ease of exploration it provides. Europeana is seen as "great platform, multilingual, an open door to cultural world" (@kerkeler). Sometimes they are spectators that follow Europeana's exhibitions where they "can find videos, photographs and information about historical events" (@JmzMary). For the most part they are cultivated spectators of the cultural world who are likely to consume aesthetic culture through different ways – who are familiar with traditional cultural institutions. It is their enduring interest in aesthetic culture that has brought them to Europeana. They do take note of its virtual form, the ease of access and the vastness of its resources. However, all

of that is said on a high level of generality and it is their enthusiasm towards culture that permeates most vividly. With respect to the European quality of Europeana their "remote involvement" is manifested by the lack of that reference in their responses. This type of attitude is focused on culture and Europe goes here largely unnoticed.

Knowledge seekers

The second group of users are *knowledge seekers* that for the most part equally value Europeana's culture content and its exceptional format. They appreciate the integration of museum, library, and archive content in one digital space. It is the novelty of Europeana as a single access point to a great array of cultural collections that brings their attention to it. @MrsSymbols finds it "convenient for viewing European artefacts; [as] it eliminates the inconvenience of geographical and online boundaries". For the most part these users admire the tremendous task of digitisation and aggregation of metadata in a way that allows cross -institutional, -linguistic, -thematic, search for cultural content. Hence @JenHoward is "especially interested in it as an example/model of a working large-scale digital library". Similarity, @Sophie_iMuseum is "running a WO1 memorial project and collecting&sharing people´s stories is important to create public support and awareness" as Europeana 1914-1918 does. Just like the previous type of *culture enthusiasts* they also express a general curiosity in things cultural and not necessarily European. Some of them explore Europeana in search of particular topics and out of interest in the particular form of online diffusion. For example @toshikimiyazaki is interested in Europeana because the site "employs Linked Open Data" which allows free circulation of knowledge online. Often enough these users are either culture professionals or work on online communication and digitisation. A significant portion of

these responders is comprised out of specialists in fields close to Europeana's activities. For professional reasons @llibreriamalda is "very interested about the digitisation and the future of the old book market" and @kittyswereld is a "Student Information Management with special interest in open data projects". @bvetruba who is a librarian sees Europeana as a "good way of discovering and promoting content digitized by libraries in Europe". All of the above have quite particular interests in Europeana, only sporadically connected to Europe. Some underline the utility of Europeana's collections, such as pictures, photographs, and maps to illustrate their professional and academic work. They exhibit "limited involvement" in so much as it is the proximity of the cultural and the digital quality of Europeana to their professional life that matters most.

Users who agreed to engage in private conversations about Europeana bring in similar reasons for using it. A few value it for directing their attention to cultural events of various kinds in Europe. They see Europeana as a rich resource of knowledge not often mentioned by mainstream media. On a level of somewhat abstract generality these people say how they use Europeana to discover "things, people, artists", to expand their "horizons". The largest pool of Europeana's followers on Twitter comprises precisely culture enthusiasts and/or knowledge seekers. These are not stable categories but they delineate the major reasons for exploring Europeana by the majority of its Twitter followership. The tweets show different cleavages of how people actually use Europeana. More specifically these conversations show that the connection between Europe and culture is not an explicit one. If anything, culture comes first and Europe is mentioned only occasionally as a geographical specification but rarely as a defining quality of culture. Furthermore, it is evident that Europeana's focus on high culture

makes it available only to a limited audience already interested in consuming culture or that deal with it professionally.

Euro-supporters

The subsequent group of users makes a direct connection between culture and Europe. I call them *Euro-supporters*. This link, however, is invoked in very different ways. Nevertheless, a good deal of users point to the connection between things cultural and things European that they draw from the portal. @ArtusManz is simply "interested in European arts, history and culture". Similarly @morphoer underlines that Europeana is "a real value for EU culture!". In this particular regard "EU" actually signifying Europe in general. Similarly @Bastet5588 has an appreciation for "european issues, culture and multimedia" (sic). Also @GerardoPrietoBl's interest in Europeana is driven by a curiosity in "European reality". For @JSanto4 the European digital library has opened his "eyes to European culture". Besides underlining the direct link between Europe and the cultural content of Europeana some accounts explicitly summon the idea of "common European cultural heritage". For example @maxgreco values Europeana's commitment to the "the idea of a somewhat cohesive portal for the extraordinary cultural european heritage" (sic). There are also some quite enthusiastic responses about the idea of bringing digitised cultural content online in a European scale. Such as @dalilatm's who asserts a "Full immersion in European culture.2Live it deeply" (sic). In more concrete and almost utilitarian terms a fraction of the groups sees Europeana as possibly serving a particular utility to them in relation to Europe. Accordingly @Sergiossc1 will be "looking for an occupation in the EU as Civil Servant" and somehow draws a connection between that pursuit and Europeana.

There are, however, some users who explicitly say that they are European and hence are interested in exploring culture from that perspective. @David_Mathieson says he is a "European and enjoy[s] reading about all things Europe". Also @CountessBezuhov almost proudly assets: "I am European". Furthermore, in terms of politics and identity in Europe I have identified tweets that were somewhat subversive. @ImEurotrash expresses his interest and endorsement for Europeana "partly because it's such a boo-word here", 'it' being Europe, and 'here' being London. The *Euro-supporters* show a personal attachment to Europe, validation for which they find in the link between culture and Europe pursued by Europeana. They are, however, in no way a homogenous group. Their tweets envision various cleavages of linking culture with Europe even in the context of Europeana. The all have a somewhat "synoptic involvement" in elaborating on the question of culture and Europe, but link it differently to personal attitudes, interests and identities.

A good few simply replicate the discourse of "common European cultural heritage" as seen on Europeana. They give *textbook* answers that justify well the importance of Europeana. They invoke relevant ways in which one can use it. Nevertheless, they do not offer much depth since they literally paraphrase the portal itself. In similar vein are the responses that frame the link between culture and Europe as historically normative, objective and given. These examples cannot be unrelated to the classificatory practice Europeana does in framing its collections as the canon of European culture. Its users in their tweets reproduce these categories. Among them there is a portion of the *Euro-supporters* that relate culture to Europe, as Europeana would have it - in a very informed manner. They do it mostly on the basis of their personal engagement with the portal or in projects of thematic proximity. These are users that

submitted content to the portal, or have used its resources to produce work in fields where there is a link between culture and Europe. They appreciate Europeana's European character because they helped build it or found it useful in validating other projects of similar symbolic value. They do not just take for granted the message of Europeana but have personally contributed to it. They drew something from its capacity to diffuse culture as a mass (social) medium on a European scale.

As seen above, relating Europeana personally happens also on a more abstract level in terms of one's immediate social identity. These few users assert directly that they indeed feel European and hence are interested in exploring culture form an intrinsically European perspective. Their responses show how this personal attachment to Europe can be validated by the link between culture and Europe pursued by Europeana. The conversations also show how this idea of going beyond traditional national classifications of culture is a very sophisticated and abstract one. Following Gaxie it is a group that manifests a very pronounced "synoptic" engagement in European issues. They see Europeana as part of a larger project of European integration in terms of the EU and as a cosmopolitan endeavour in general, important for all of Europe. However, it is only a handful of people that actually relate their experience of using Europeana to a social and cultural identity of being European. It is a minority within the elite of cultivated consumers of Europeana.

The identified responses show that Europeana is a field where different degrees of a certain kind of Euro-habitus are enacted (Trenz in Guiraudon and Favell 2011). The identified practices of using Europeana can be framed as a specific kind of Europeanized behaviour – exploring culture form a European perspective - contingent on social

standing and prior possession of cultural capital[56]. It has been proven that cultural Europeanization reaches mostly the upwardly mobile and socially capable (Favell 2008). Also, it could be argued that the high culture premise of Europeana limits its audience even further to the considerably Europeanized elite (Fligstein 2008), as found among the culture professional and consumers that follow it on Twitter. Furthermore, its content is already more relatable to those possessing necessary dispositions and cultural resources to go beyond narrowly national understandings of culture (Craig Calhoun 2003: 537). Despite its wide-reaching aspirations, just like the modern museum, Europeana caters to the needs of a certain social strata. It is a specific elite that appreciates its European dimension in light of the process of European integration and its cosmopolitan by-products of transnational mobility, de-nationalised education and membership in an informed public.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the meanings of Europe created by Europeana. It looked into how Europeana constructs a somewhat cosmopolitan notion of Europe as common through putting aesthetic culture in one online resource. I showed that the discourse of 'common European cultural heritage' that Europeana is pursuing promotes the notion

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[56] Because of the high cultural character of Europeana, its successful utilization depends on prior privilege of knowledge, skill and schooling (Bourdieu, et al., 1977). It remains an outlet of high culture requiring a considerable degree of cultural capital to successfully take advantage of its resources (Jenks, 1993). Europeana is most relatable to the socially capable, possessing formal education and whose social position endows them with privileged competence of knowledge perception (1993: 12). In that sense Europeana itself is a product of a specific cultural practice in which elevated cultural forms are ascribed with high value according to the standards of the elite (Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction : A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) xiu,613p.).

that the idea of Europe is necessarily tied to culture. The investigation showed that Europeana does procure a connection between culture and Europe similarly to how national cultural institutions constructed the ideological bond between culture and the idea of the nation. Through the study of the website, its publications, interviews with its staff, it has been confirmed that Europeana does carry out a curatorial practice by emphasizing the European character of its content. Though it is reluctant to put it in direct terms Europeana has an educational aim – it wants to cultivate its users into exploring culture from a European perspective. Unlike a modern institution, it presents its discourse as seemingly benign. However a closer investigation proves that it is somewhat ideologically tied to the EU.

It was also studied how this idea of a cultural Europe, delivered through an online medium, is understood by its users. It is noticeable that the novel mode of online communication does create a particular interactive cultural practice. The individual use of Europeana resembles a particular kind of social communication. The investigation of user practice shows that it is indeed individualised, driven by specific interest in technology and/or dependent on prior cultural curiosity. The analysis shows that Europeana's focus on what I call 'personal curatorship' results in its users being mostly prior cultural consumers and culture professional. Also the *de facto* high-culture focus of Europeana makes it exclusive and available only to a limited audience already interested in exploring cultural heritage and possessing adequate dispositions. It has been shown empirically that among the Twitter followers of Europeana the vast majority put culture as the defining feature of the portal along with its online form. Europeana's users are interested in culture *en masse*, in particular topics, but also in the virtual form of the library. However, among them a noticeable group does subscribe the notion of seeing

Europe through culture. This is a narrow group in general terms, but it does associate *thinking* culture with *thinking* Europe when using Europeana. The question for further research is what other spaces of cultural production make the same connection between culture and Europe as does Europeana.

Chapter 3

Festivals for Europe: prestige seekers & political activists

Sociability is spared the frictions with reality by its merely formal relation to it. Yet just because of this, it derives from reality, even to the mind of the more sensitive person, a significance and a symbolic playful richness of life that are the greater, the more perfect it is. – Georg Simmel[57]

Introduction

In this chapter I investigate cultural festivals for meanings and social understandings of Europe. I identify and compare festivals, which are purposefully called 'European' by the cultural producers behind them. It is evidences that while theses cultural spaces produce very different meanings of what is Europe, the function of the Europe 'banner' is aimed at gathering participation, achieving visibility, and a mean of projecting a voice of protest of sorts. For the cultural producers behind these festivals as well as for their audiences, there is not one Europe. It is rather an open register, a discursive vessel, which social actors infuse with subjective meaning. However, as it will be shown in both cases the 'Europe category' operates as a powerful tool to construct one's own social self-understandings today.

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[57] *Georg Simmel: Sociologist and European* (The Making of Sociology Series; Sunbury-on-Thames etc.: Nelson, 1976) xii, 275 p. at 81-82.

The subsequent research analyses how cultural festivals frame their European character – what do they really mean when they invoke Europe? At the same time the study is concerned with how immediate audiences of these festivals perceive that explicit European character. The former is aimed at revealing what meanings of Europe cultural festivals construct, and the latter at what understandings come about through them. Specifically, the chapter analyses examples of cultural festivals that induce engaged participation of their audiences. These festivals serve as micro examples of how meanings of Europe are constructed and communicated through cultural production. The first example of such festival is ÉCU - the European Independent Film Festival that has been taking place in Paris since 2006. Every year, it brings to the French capital the most cutting-edge 'indie' moviemakers from Europe and elsewhere. In between its main events that takes place every spring, the ÉCU travels across Europe and beyond to both show and collect what it considers to be 'best' independent cinema. It is a curious example of a transnational 'alternative' festival/network that takes the terms "European" and "Independent" as common denominators for the films it gathers. The second festival is Transeuropa, a transnational advocacy network and series of festival events scattered across Europe. Each time it takes place in around a dozen cities in different countries, not always in the capitals or popular tourist destinations, but in places where there is a social base for cultural activity outside what is perceived as the 'mainstream', but that have aspirations of European scale. In each location Transeuropa Festival gathers artists and activists in pursuit of elaborating on "Democracy, Equality and Culture beyond the Nation State" and links them in a European network. This seemingly odd pair of festivals is not compared directly. However, they are presented side by side, as both are

very atypical festivals that claim to provide alternative and critical takes on aesthetic culture and/or social issues, and do so deliberately from a European perspective.

Due to their specific discursive content, and format, I consider the pair of examined festivals to be examples of a post-traditional cultural space. Post-traditional festivals are claimed to have a critical capacity to elaborate on the social world they function though the aesthetic culture they present, especially in comparison to their traditional nationalist predecessors (Giorgi et al. 2011). However, not all contemporary festivals are post-traditional, and some have clearly not moved away from the formula of 'recreating the past in the now' for the sake of reinforcing social bonds along national lines. It is therefore crucial to establish the qualifiers of a post-traditional festival. Fabiani claims that the critical quality of post-traditional festivals can be recognised in the types of interventions into the public sphere they undertake (after McGuigan 2005). Such festivals "presuppose a committed and vigilant audience and they allow a fair space for critical discussion, not only about cultural tastes, but also about political issues"; recently this has been especially visible in theatre, cinema and contemporary art (Fabiani in Giorgi et al. 2011: 92). At the same time not every post-traditional festival that no longer invokes directly the nation is critical by definition. It is the active participatory format of a festival that enables its discursive quality, especially in comparison to the widespread passive forms of cultural consumption prevalent nowadays. It is so because, in a festival the audience is always a necessary participating actor[58] that not only

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[58] According to Regev "festivals serve the quest of certain collective and individual actors – especially educated upper middle classes, professionals in cultural sectors and related class segments – for status and self-identification as equal participants in what they perceive as the innovative frontiers of world culture": Regev in Giorgi, Sassatelli, and Delanty, *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* at 108.

consumes cultural connect and the meaning it transmits, but takes part in its interpretation. Fabiani asserts that such critical post-traditional festivals that engage an active audience have the capacity to move beyond the nation and "develop a post-national form of cultural citizenship", as an alternative form of community (93).

Following that trait, the research is concerned with whether festivals that invoke Europe are indeed post-traditional and critical, and whether these qualities have something to do with how they signify and produce understandings of Europe. At the same time, the supposed cosmopolitan quality of post-traditional festivals is important to investigate. It is particularity significant since contemporary festivals are seen as taking place in "a world no longer exclusively organised according to national cultures and canons", and even more significantly if that is "probably most evident in the European[59] context" (Giorgi and Sassatelli 2011: 3). This is noteworthy since the immediate context of the festivals under inquiry is precisely European and no longer only national, and so are their explicit pursuits and/or characteristics. The tradition of cosmopolitan festivals themes in Europe are claimed to be growing out of the modernist[60] culture that laid the foundations for a proto-cosmopolitan European civil society (Delanty and Rumford 2005; Delanty 2010). Therefore, if Europe is indeed a special place for post-traditional and critical festivals to undertake cosmopolitan themes, then this is a remarkably relevant angle when observing contemporary festivals that reference Europe directly. Accordingly, Delanty sees festival, ones concerned with both popular and high culture, as spaces that combine "sociability, aesthetics and politics, and express the

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[59] The so-called 'festivalisation' of European public culture: Roche in ibid., at 124.

[60] Modernist 'high' culture in Europe has been very much a transnational phenomenon, that constituted a diverging trajectory from the nation-focused cultural production for the masses: Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans : From 1800 to the Present*.

communicative notion of culture" (191). In agreement with Habermas, he sees the cosmopolitan quality of arts festivals in how they constitute cosmopolitan forms of public culture through communicative action, but also in light of Simmel's work - the sociability they induce that matters for their immediate social resonance. Furthermore, in reference to how to ascertain their cosmopolitan qualities he outlines the following prerequisites:

"A critical cosmopolitan approach with respect to cultural phenomenon concerns (1) the identification of openness to the world, (2) self-transformation in light if the encounter with the Other, (3) the exploration of otherness within the self, (4) critical responses to globality and (5) critical space between globality and locality." (Delanty in Giorgi et al. 2011: 196)

These five qualifiers of the cosmopolitanism[61] of a cultural festival are very much in congruence with the scholarship on festivals mentioned above - how festivals increasingly go beyond their traditional form, how they offer critical reflections on the social world, and engage their audiences in these discussions[62]. In other words, if a festival is post-traditional, critical and engages cultural creators and consumers beyond its immediate cultural milieu it can be argued to constitute a cosmopolitan form of public culture. This is important for analysing how through festivals meanings of Europe

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[61] Calhoun locates cosmopolitanisms as always operating in a particular culture whilst going beyond it; cosmopolitan practices necessitate "participation in specific cultural tradition and cultural relations that partially transcend and partially incorporate others" in ''Belonging'in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary', *Ethnicities,* 3/4 (2003), 531-68 at 541.

[62] In recognition of the social participatory aspect of festivals, the culture they showcase is seen here as performance, after Bourdieu, "whereby individuals are endowed with symbolic authority to perform public acts" (2011: 192). Delanty relates this to Alexander, who "stresses the objective domain of the cultural order of society on the one side and, on the other, individual actors who position themselves with respect to symbolic structures of meaning" (in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast, *Social Performance : Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

emerge, which is the main aim of this chapter, because the idea of Europe has been argued by many to be a cosmopolitan one (from abbé de Saint-Pierre and Kant to Habermas and Delanty). The immediate context of these Europe-focused festivals is the current political European construction (inter alia the EU), which also has been ascribed with cosmopolitan qualities (Beck and Grande 2007; Guiraudon and Favell 2011).

Therefore the analysis is concerned with whether these explicitly European cultural festivals are open to the outside world, whether they are reflexive upon interaction with outsiders, mindful of minority voices within then, perceptive of the increasing uniformity of cultural production, and aware of the particular and the general contexts that surround them? Consequently, I ask what meanings of Europe surface in these festivals.

3.1 Festival as a cultural object in a cultural diamond

The main features of cultural festivals – interaction and communication – can inform the researcher on the social world they inhabit. The classic understanding of the social significance of a festival derives from its pre-modern function of community building; its religious or folk charter and the otherworldly experience it provided made it a successful tool of social cohesion (Durkheim and Swain 1976). The modern festival has retained many such functions (Simmel et al. 1997), and depending on the theoretical perspective, it either serves as a form of social communication through culture (J. r. Habermas 1989b), or class structuration along cultural tastes (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993). This duality fits into the analytical suppositions of the cultural diamond, which presuppose that the influence a cultural object exerts on the social world is never one-dimensional and seldom direct.

In this chapter, I examine arts festivals as cultural objects where struggles over meanings and social understandings of Europe take place. Following the tool of the cultural diamond, I examine how arts festivals (as cultural objects) produce socially relevant meaning through interaction with its other edges: cultural creators, cultural receivers, and the wider social world (Griswold 1994, 2008). As other cultural objects, a festival is informed by its immediate social context – it is a cultural emanation of society of some sort. At the same time, a festival is also a product of concrete cultural creators (artists, curators, cultural entrepreneurs) who are entangled in political and economic relations of everyday life – it is an arena is competing interests. Finally, a festival communicates ideas and values to society, which through the intermediary of its immediate audiences can become widely embraced. All of the above interrelationships between a festival, its creators, its audiences and their social contexts have to be taken into account in order to analyse the social function of a festival.

As shown above, mapped onto the cultural diamond are the sociological perspectives on the social significance of spaces of cultural production, which in this particular case are arts and cultural festivals. Following these general sociological methodologies to study the meaning of aesthetic culture, and the work that has been done on festivals, I investigate how social understandings of Europe can come about through a festival as part of its function as an outlet of the public sphere, or its community building capacity. Accordingly, I seek whether what happens in the festivals under inquiry resembles communicative action – whether they work as a site for discussions on Europe. At the same time, I examine to what extent they reproduce social distinction along the lines of their European affiliation – how Europe becomes an in/out category. Finally, I trace any signs of community formation in these festivals around the

notions of Europe – whether participation in a European festival becomes a marker of belonging in relation to Europe.

3.2   ÉCU - The European Independent Film Festival

3.2.1   Defining European independent film and the filmmakers

The European Independent Film Festival has been taking place in Paris annually since 2006. In merely 8 years, it has grown from a quite minuscule and niche project to a fairly significant event of the 'indie' cinema scene with constantly growing aspirations (as of 2013). ÉCU is fairly recognisable amongst a multitude of film festivals mainly due to its very specific focus, namely the discovery and promotion of independent filmmakers predominantly from Europe, and for a European audience. This premise, however, does not limit the festival to movies 'made in Europe'. In fact, the competition categories in terms of origin are divided between the "EU" and "non-EU"[63] productions, and in consequence the former are presented as 'domicile' and the latter as 'foreign'. Apart from collecting and showcasing the "best and brightest" talents of the independent film scene every spring in Paris, throughout the year the ÉCU travels across Europe and beyond in cooperation with local cultural and film festivals - from Barcelona, Spain and Kielce, Poland to Beirut, Lebanon and Beijing, China[64] (Hiller 2013). After its 2013 edition, ÉCU also launched *EuroIFC - European Independent Film Channel[65]*, an online

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[63] As stated in the official 2013 ÉCU festival program.

[64] ÉCU-on-the-Road: http://www.ecufilmfestival.com/?p=22089&lang=en

[65] Press release: "Europe's outstanding independent cinema event, ÉCU - The European Independent Film Festival, officially launched the EuroIFC - European Independent Film Channel. (…) EuroIFC embraces the passion of today's cream-of-the-crop independent filmmakers and offers our audience a fantastic cinematic experience."

platform for free and legal movie streaming. Between all its events it has generated a social media footprint of over 2 million 'consumers' (Hiller, 2013), and has become a particular space of cultural production that claims a distinctly European character. Hence, this section of the chapter addresses the question of meaning of this European facet of ÉCU - what does it mean when this festival claims to be European? It analyses the social understandings of Europe found in this festival. The general methodological supposition is that such a form of cultural production that explicitly invokes Europe does this on the basis of existing notions of Europe, and at the same time, publically communicates its own specific understandings of Europe, in a reflexive relationship with its audience.

The primary quality of the ÉCU, which has to be considered when embarking on the analysis of the meaning of Europe it conveys, is its discourse – most notably its name. In French 'écu' means a 'shield', a 'coat of arms', or a 'Crown' and historically has been equated with various pre-modern French coins, especially the thirteenth century 'écu d'or' which under different variations existed until the Revolution of 1789 (Dunin-Wąsowicz 2009). The name ECU re-emerges in 1978 as the day-to-day reference to the acronym signifying the European Currency Unit – electronic unit of account of the European Communities, and later the European Union. It was the virtual European currency until 1999 when it was replaced by the *euro*. This is merely the first stem of the full name of the festival, and it already carries references to both France (where the festival originated and where its main event takes place) and to Europe, specifically the European Union. ÉCU might not be a household name but it is a recognisable sign for many and a vivid historical reference to the European construction as it evolved in the past half-century. Put together with the second part of the festival's

name – "European Independent Film Festival" – the choice of the former part becomes clearer. Here the terms "European" and "Independent" are equally important signifiers that are deliberately put together following the historical 'nickname' that also bears a European reference. However, as it will be shown subsequently, the "European" and the "Independent" qualities of the ÉCU are mutually intertwined and mean more than just a geographic scope and a genre of contemporary cinema.

As mentioned before the ÉCU takes place in Paris every spring, but throughout the year it travels around Europe and beyond. In 2012 alone ÉCU 'on-the-road' visited 20 countries and presented there their official selection. In cooperation with 60+ associate festivals, the ÉCU has either participated in their events or organised its own special screenings, i.e. in Georgia, Jordan, and China. Despite mere promotion through such travels, the ÉCU established a transnational network of filmmakers and audiences interested in independent European cinema. It is hence unsurprising that like many recent contemporary cultural festivals, it goes beyond the nation as the common denominator of the content it gathers, the filmmakers it works with, as well as the audiences it wants to reach. It searches for spectators among Parisians, Europeans and audiences in affiliated outposts elsewhere. Beyond the given and explicit European scope of the ÉCU, it aspires to be transnational. In that sense, apart from its European design and content, it fulfils the requirements of a post-traditional festival, as posed by Giorgi (2011). However, as much as the explicitly European reference and transnational connections of ÉCU make it a festival of a novel kind, the meaning of its European allegiance is inherently connected to the type of cinema it strives to promote, as evidenced below.

3.2.2   European film & festival: a symbolic legacy of cultural production

It can be claimed that ÉCU endeavours to symbolically capitalise on a very specific cultural discourse of the properties and value of European film, as well as on the established role of European film festivals as cultural producers of the prestige and market niche of European cinema, on the continent and beyond. Since mid-twentieth century European cinema evolved from signifying solely national particularity to representing more universally relatable subjects, yet still in relation to specifically very national contexts. Today, most European films are aimed at reaching wide audiences throughout the continent and, especially in contrast to Hollywood productions, they are characterised by a common aesthetic of *Eurochic*[66]. Elsaesser associates this contemporary shared European character to an increasing post-national quality of some European films - no longer putting hermetic national qualifiers as most important components of a cinematic narrative. European movies still present mostly nation-specific stories, albeit often simplified for a wider international audience, but the *Eurochic* aesthetic (seeming sophistication, refinement, artistry) of these cultural objects defines what is symbolically perceived as European film nowadays. It is this very much popularly recognised appeal of European cinema that ÉCU is subscribing to by emphasizing its European character. European film is not just any film, it is seen as *chic*, as inherently artistically valuable, and hence possesses high symbolic capital in the eyes of the informed public, as well as being well regarded on a more popular level.

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[66] "Style and subject matter ensure that the films travel more easily across national boundaries, and by appealing to universalized Eurochic values of erotic sophistication, adult emotion and sexual passion, they even have a chance to enter the American market." Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema : Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam ; [Great Britain] : Amsterdam University Press, 2005) at 83.

Historically, the specificity of European film as a cultural object developed in a reflexive relationship with the special and almost formative role of a European film festival as a cultural creator[67]. Elsaesser writes that "[f]estivals have always been recognised as integral to European cinema" and that particularly "[t]he annual international film festival is a very European institution" (Elsaesser 2005: 83, 84). Just like European film, European film festivals "were, initially, highly political and nationalist affairs" (89), it has not been until the 1960s that the European festival circuit became a venue of increasingly 'post-national' cinema (as defined above). Since then festivals remained powerful culture-creating sites, where aesthetic tastes become validated and promoted. The power of the cultural creators behind them has only solidified, due to their proliferation and competition, resulting in maintaining the special character of European cinema, especially in opposition to Hollywood - "the international film festival circuit has a quintessentially European connotation while the Academy Awards (Oscar night) represent the ultimate manifestation of Hollywood" (Valck 2007: 15). In that sense "[f]ilm festivals are on the one hand typically postmodern phenomena, in their auto-reflexive and self-referential dimensions, but also quite rich in mythic resonance with their performative tautologies" (Elsaesser 103). Festivals are very much markers of existing cultural distinction, as well as aspire to continuously set these standards. The historical particularity of European film was partially made by the European festival network, a successful supporter and promoter of European

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[67] Today the network of European films festivals is perceived to be a "key force and power grid in the film business, with wide-reaching consequences for the respective functioning of the other elements (authorship, production, exhibition, cultural prestige and recognition) pertaining to the cinema and to film culture." Ibid.

cinematography[68]. Today too these are very much European film festivals that shape European film and stimulate public acclaim for such cultural products. Conscious of the rhetorical force of festivals as cultural creators, ÉCU openly strives to achieve such potency respecting independent cinema, and explicitly follows notable examples from elsewhere.

3.2.3   Following Sundance - ÉCU vs. traditional film festivals

ÉCU's aspiration to set the tone in the world of independent movie making is manifested in the type of films it admits to its competitions and how it categories them. As stated by Scott Hiller, the festival's director and founder, whom I interviewed in Paris in April 2013, the festival wants to be a space for the "best and brightest" independent European filmmakers that otherwise do not have suitable outlets to show their work, especially due to the commercialised nature of the film industry. In that sense the ÉCU is very much a filmmakers festival, following the example set by Sundance in Salt Lake City, Utah in the USA. Sundance is a very particular festival in how, according to Dayan, it exemplifies what is a dual event: first it is an embodied happening, displaying a collection of films and providing interaction for the participants; second is the exchange of cultural texts both before and after the event that matters most for the meaning-making power of a film festival (Bondebjerg 2000). Sundance is intrinsically performative, claims Dayan, in so much as there exists a multiplicity of participants that actively make the festival happen outside of its main event (Bondebjerg 2000). Over the years it open formula has attracted a wide range of independent American filmmakers,

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[68] "Europe is the cradle of the film festival phenomenon." Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals : From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007) at 14.

most of whom would have been or were indeed rejected by Hollywood. However, it was the novelty of artistic diversity, often politically and socially engaged character for the films, and the overall the seeming non-conformity of Sundance as a cultural producer that has earned it a considerable rhetoric force not only amongst 'indie' moviemakers but throughout American cinematography. The spatial and temporal aspects of the festival matter equally to its discursive agenda (Valck 2007: 18). In ÉCU festival event is also key, for how it the meanings of Europe they claim to be representing actually are negotiated between cultural producers and consumers in a space of interaction which is the space of the festival[69].

Just as Sundance does in the USA, ÉCU wants to "open" the difficult cinematographic industry for niche independent films, in order to "share people's stories via Europe" (2013). However, the festival's reference to Europe in its name does not mean just the European Union - insists its director Scott Hiller - as for example the ÉCU nickname (linking it to the predecessor of the *euro*) might imply. And it is this lack of clear allegiance of ÉCU to the current European construction that is also one of the major reasons why it does not benefit from any financial support from EU funds, laments Hiller. This is so because there is a "lack of understanding" on how to support independent cinema in Europe, and the appropriate national and EU funding schemes focus too much on cultural institutions and not enough on the actual creators, which in this particular regard niche filmmakers (2013). Different types of EU support are mostly given to already established film festivals that feature fairly known artists and reproduce

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[69] Valck claims that the spectacle is key for conveying a message: "film festivals are temporary events of short duration, where films are shown in an atmosphere of heightened expectation and festivity" ibid., at 21.

the industry. In response to this *status quo*, according to Hiller, the need to help 'indie' cinematography is the main goal of the festival.

However, the category of independence, which is put in the spotlight here, itself, can be problematic. Especially since, as pointed by Elsaesser, in general it "says little about how such film are produced and financed, but acts as the ante-chamber of reclassification and exchange, as well as the place holder for filmmakers not yet confirmed as auteurs" (2005: 92). This both isn't and is the case of ÉCU. First, it isn't because indeed all of the movies in the selection are independent in much as they are not produced by any major film production companies, are not significantly financed by public film institutions (which are plentiful in EU member states), nor are they overwhelmingly sponsored by corporate donors. It is difficult to preclude that any degree of such support had at all been involved in the production of these films, however it is certain that they neither enjoyed the public or private support that would have given them wide industry exposure and allowed the possibility of public acclaim through established channels. Hence, neither of these movies had been given access to the major European 'festival network' (as defined in Valck (2007)). Second, however, the way in which ÉCU emphasizes its 'indie' character has a lot to do with the aspirational quality of that term, as it has been used in the cinematic industry before. In the case of ÉCU, the supposition seems to be that the allure of 'independence' amongst film spectators mutually reinforces the *Eurochic* quality of the festival (Elsaesser 2005).

By the looks of the recent entries to the festival, it is indeed a project mostly devoted to fairly young filmmakers outside of the industry circuit. Consequently, the majority of films at ÉCU are either short études or documentaries. There is an especially unprecedented concentration of productions that touch upon relevant and contentious

social and political issues that feature remarkably in-depth critical elaboration. The content of the films ranges greatly, from classic 'stories' to complete 'abstraction', and none of these movies has a strictly 'European focus' - these are not films 'about Europe'. For these mostly beginning filmmakers what matters is the meaning of the selection they are chosen into and that the prize they are given is claimed to matter in a European scale of cultural creators. People are interested in participating in the ÉCU because they want to be recognised on what is perceived as a European scale, by what is perceived as the European scene of independent filmmaking. At the same time ÉCU is space where 'sociability' in Simmel's sense takes place. Independent filmmakers come there a form a community not only due to shared interest but through immediate interaction.

This wish is also expressed by the organisers, the dozens of volunteers, and the associate festivals – to both create a network and single out the best 'indie' moviemakers in Europe every year. In opposition to the well-known 'conventional' film events in Europe it is completely non-profit – as underlined by Hiller – and provides a space for filmmakers who are denied inclusion into the venues of the established industry (2013). Hence, the ÉCU positions itself both in opposition to major film festivals, and expresses an aspiration of being recognised as Sundance was in the USA. The vehicle for that is, according to Hiller, to award prizes for best European independent films in a given year in the following categories[70]: European Documentary, European Dramatic Feature,

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[70] The ÉCU also awards films in a few corresponding non-European categories, however, the emphasis is put on the best European 'indie' movies.

European Dramatic Short, European Experimental Film, and Student Film[71]. By establishing such classifications and giving awards for "best European 'indie' movies" the ÉCU makes a discursive connection between Europe as platform of recognition and the success of the awarded films. The meaning of Europe in the ÉCU has two pronounced variations. Firstly, the festival is a space of opposition to the commercialised industry, which in Europe celebrates 'itself' in Cannes, Venice, and Karlovy Vary. ÉCU also consistently disassociates itself from what it sees as the mainstream industry and from national and European agencies that fund culture. Secondly, the fact that the ÉCU gives an award for "best European" independent film directing, acting, editing is perceived as a powerful symbol that gives credibility to these filmmakers. Therefore, on one hand the European aspect of the ÉCU is a sign of protest of the 'indie' filmmaking community, on the other it expresses their aspiration for recognition as artists and/or producers of culture. The former is visible in the discourse of the ÉCU as such: its name, the categories it establishes, and its transnational aspirations. The latter is evidenced by the multitude of cooperating niche partners (predominantly) in Europe and most importantly by the beginning filmmakers that flock to Paris to show their work at the ÉCU.

It has been established that as a festival ÉCU facilitates participation of independent filmmakers, and that it enables interaction between them and a cinematic audience in Paris and in cooperating festivals elsewhere. Most importantly however, it has been shown that ÉCU communicates the terms 'European' and 'independent' as its

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[71] Curiously enough 'European' here actually does refer explicitly to EU. Presumably a Serbian or Ukrainian film would be ineligible for any of these prizes. This seems rather striking and interesting given the denial of investment in any explicit EU project.

pivotal characteristics. Conscious of the historical significance of the established European festival network, and the fairly recent success of niche Sundance, ÉCU aspires to being cultural creator in its own filed. The role of every film festival in building its own importance is largely self-referential (Elsaesser 96, 97). Hence, if one analyses ÉCU as an example of a cultural public sphere in Europe, it is most definitely a site of distinction setting, rather than anything else. ÉCU is also a counter festival, counter to its established predecessors, national film industries and even European cinematic schemes, and in that sense it builds its significance through opposition. Following Dayan's idea of monstration, which is a spectacle that demands attention, it is clear that ÉCU is striving to be recognised (Daniel. Dayan 2009: 25). At the same time, as explained by Dayan, monstration is a field in its own right (in Bourdieu's sense), as hence a site of symbolic struggle (2009: 28). This holds true for how ÉCU constructs and promotes its own understandings of what is the importance of independent cinema and its recognition in a European scale.

Furthermore, as a cultural creator, what ÉCU wants to achieve is very much in line with what Dayan writes on the relationship between media and audiences, spectators, or publics – it is a quest for visibility (D. Dayan 2013). ÉCU claims it is an outlet of the public sphere that provides a space to cultural produces who have been "deprived", who's lack of access to mass communication (or the mainstream festival circuit) has made them marginalised. Dayan claims that this "paradigm of visibility" treats anonymity as stigma – visibility until recently enjoyed only by a privileged few, today minorities and other interest groups increasingly strive for it and see it as a gateway to acquiring different forms of capital, both material and symbolic (139). Accordingly, those who seek to be recognised are "visibility seekers" and this is very

much true of artists, including filmmakers. However, "those who try to gain access to the right of conferring visibility (…) [are] visibility entrepreneurs" (149). ÉCU then is a visibility entrepreneur of sorts when it comes to European independent cinema. What ÉCU strives for – recognition of independent filmmakers[72] – highlights the performative dimension of media exposure, noted by Dayan. Namely, that what is enacted, dominates, or at least exists. Hence the quest for visibility is a quest for inclusion into a performance. The European characteristic is key to achieve it. In the case of ÉCU, which is a cultural producer, it is the making of one's own performance – the festival – that is envisioned to bestow visibility in a European scale onto the filmmakers that are (or claim to be) independent.

3.3   Transeuropa

Transeuropa Festival (TEF) is in all possible ways an atypical example of a cultural event that claims to be European. It is nevertheless very much a series of sociable encounters carried out in a cultural milieu and approached from an explicitly European perspective, and hence fulfils the prerequisites for a case study in this chapter (as outlined before). Transeuropa has been taking place every year across Europe since 2011, every time simultaneously in over a dozen cities, and has always been brought about by hundreds of volunteers. TEF claims to promote "Democracy, Equality and Culture Beyond the Nation State" and to provide a space to "IMAGINE, DEMAND and

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[72] Declaratively so – it is, however, difficult to assess whether the aims of the festival (those organizing it and invested in its success) are necessarily the same as those of the independent filmmakers who participate.

ENACT an alternative Europe"[73]. It is hence very different from the ÉCU not only in form (a multi-city cultural event vs a film festival) but also in how it constructs its own meaning of Europe, and uses culture to purse its agenda. This section, therefore, is concerned with showing how Transeuropa Festival creates a site for political activism where meanings of Europe emerge. It shows that the cultural festival is a space for voicing and discussing burning social issues (often in a dissenting manner) of European scale and significance, but informed by local contexts. Hence the European quality of this festival is more than a tool of aggregation of local political activists, it is more than a slogan to which people are thought to be more likely to respond. Transeuropa does all of the above, but at the same time creates a space, in the form of a cultural event, for a critical outlook on Europe-wide issues by artists, activists and the audiences engaged in its making. In that sense, Transeuropa is equally as cultural as it is political, and therein lays its meaning-making function, that manifests itself in the resonance it has among its participants.

Transeuropa's general slogans that put "culture and Europe" side by side with demands for "democracy, equality and political alternatives", signify the particular scope of the festival, which combines display/presentation of cultural artefacts (as any cultural festival would) with a certain kind of civic and political activism. During the festival period, spanning in each location usually about 2 weeks, the crew of Transeuropa organizes a series of exhibitions, screenings, performances, as well as debates and lectures that gather mostly local publics of medium and large metropolises

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[73] As seen on http://www.presseurop.eu/pl (October 2013): „Transeuropa Festival 2013 jest festiwalem, podczas którego uczestnicy WYMYŚLAJĄ, DOMAGAJĄ SIĘ i TWORZĄ alternatywną Europę. Impreza potrwa od piątku 4 października do niedzieli 27 października w Warszawie i Lublinie, a także w 11 innych miastach europejskich."

where it takes place. As of 2013, Transeuropa happened, as the organizers like to point out, concurrently in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Belgrade, Berlin, Bologna, Bratislava, Cluj-Napoca, London, Lublin, Paris, Prague, Sofia, and Warsaw. It opened at the same hour in every city through a synchronous staging of a live performance in prominent public spaces of each city (such as Westminster Square in London). It, however, closed with a politically focused and somewhat academic final festival forum located in Berlin.

The choice to start the festival in all locations simultaneously symbolically underlines the transnational scope of the event. At the same time choice of Berlin as the location for the closing event shows the outmost attention that Transeuropa's activists pay to political and social temporality. Consequently, the following sections of this chapter address the enduring focus of the festival on aesthetic culture as vehicle of social communication that is directly linked to its political and social activism. They also show how the insistence on the transnational and European symbolic aspect of the festival is aimed at facilitating deliberation on Europe's problems from a European perspective but taking into account local contexts. The meaning of the explicit reference to Europe is, as in previous cases, a vehicle of attracting attention, of subsuming cultural consumers under a common denominator of Europe, but the open and deliberative format of the festival allows its participants to shape and express their own ways of how they understand Europe.

In what follows, I analyse the available textual materials produced by Transeuropa (from 2011 onwards when the festival matured to its current form) and its umbrella organisation, the European Alternatives, for the meaning of Europe in them. I also analyse secondary resources about its discourse and its activities mainly from the media. I juxtapose this with the results of my participant observation in the making of

the 2012 London edition of the festival and my participation in the 2013 UK event, as well as with the interviews I carried out with the organizers from circa dozen locations. Accordingly, I examine the discourse of the connection between culture and Europe that is being made by the makers of Transeuropa, as well as the meaning-making function of the festival sites, in how they are spaces where struggles over understandings of Europe take place. I also show what resonates most with the direct audiences of Transeuropa, how its events become a space where deliberation on European politics and society though culture happens, and how these interactions provide new ways of thinking about Europe. These mixed methods of textual analysis, ethnomethodology, as well as direct interviews with the activists involved in Transeuropa, comprise the investigation for the meanings of Europe in the festival. The analysis is carried out along the lines of the cultural diamond diagram, inasmuch as it delineates the actors involved in the making of Transeuropa and the communicative and sociable function of the festival.

Following the same analytical framework as in previous cases, Transeuropa as an event is classified as the cultural object under inquiry. I therefore analyse a selection of the most notable[74] examples of its content and describe in detail: the exhibitions, performances, screening and debates – in which content I trace the discursive presence of Europe, how it is defined, addressed and questioned. I also bring in insight from primary ethnography at the festival events to show how the sociality of the event made possible its communicative capacities. Accordingly, I outline the other 'edges' of the cultural diamond that guides the examination of the social resonance of this festival. I pay special attention to the investigation into the cultural producers of Transeuropa. I show what the organizers of festival think of it: for that purpose I interviewed some of

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[74] Presented and promoted as such by Transeuropa itself.

the people involved in the making of the festival, the artists and other activists that took part in its various editions, at least one from each city. This in-depth analysis of who actually makes Transeuropa shows how the collaboration between the transnational network of activists (European Alternatives) and local members of civil society and various artists gave rise to a festival event where display of aesthetic culture meets deliberations on Europe.

For Transeuropa, invoking Europe is both means to an end, and an end itself, which is to provoke critical deliberation on the current state and the future of Europe. At the same time, the research shows that the audience of Transeuropa is mostly limited to the very people who make it, that it indeed is a community of European activists, critical artists, and other civic minded individuals, which does not however crossover to the mainstream, except for occasional media exposure. The mutual relationships between all of the above are analysed in the wider social context, the economic crisis and the changing dynamic of European integration. What becomes clear is that despite growing discontent with the current European construction, on both the member state and EU level, these activists and artists raise critiques and seek answers from a European perspective. The evolving focus of the festival from addressing a fairly disconnected array of socially contentious issues to an attempt to conceive of solutions for the future Europe (all through the intermediary of aesthetic culture) shows that invoking Europe does not just serve as an abstract point of departure for discussion, but is understood as a mutual goal by the members of these networks of engaged actors.

3.3.1   Cultural object defined: what has been shown and said at the festival

Transeuropa (TEF) is a cultural festival, in so far as it is a physical space where different genres of aesthetic cultural production are being displayed and spectated. At the same time it is also a space for exchange of ideas and options – hence it is a space for political and social activism for both the organizers and the audiences. Additionally, as stressed by its organisers, it is the "one and only" festival that happens concurrently across Europe in various locations. It is therefore not only transnational in its discursive agenda (as elaborated below), but also its physical spatiality follows suit. This transnational format, in principle, allows for an interaction between the activists and participants further diversifying and enhancing the exchange of ideas and opinions that takes place. Throughout the years TEF has been simultaneously happening in 12-14 cities, including such major and not so major metropolitan areas centres as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Belgrade, Berlin, Bologna, Bratislava, Cluj-Napoca, London, Lublin, Paris, Prague, Rome, Sofia, and Warsaw. Lasting usually around two weeks Transeuropa comprises an eclectic array of festival-like events, such as public debates, lectures, congresses, art installations and exhibitions, film screenings, living libraries and various other performances. This heterogeneity of form corresponds with the multiple local variations of the festival, all under the primary goal of mobilising a European civil society through culture. It is a cultural festival, which transnational form and focus on Europe is aimed at providing a space for the interaction of artists, activist and their audiences alike. The following section sets out exactly how this happens by bringing in notable examples of TEF events that have happened over the past few years.

3.3.1.1 Beginnings & Transeuropa proper 2011-2013

The somewhat humble beginnings of TEF date back to 2007 when it originated as the London Festival of Europe. The choice of London was motivated by the opportunities given by London. The founders of the festival saw it as "the European city, the archetype – embedded in the European economy, vibrant and dynamic,"; they also saw it as a place that can offer a "different way of looking at Europe than other capitals" (Milanese & Pruvot, 2014). The proper Transeuropa Festival in its current form, encompassing circa dozen cities around Europe, began in 2011 when it received its transnational character. From the very beginning the combination of a 'transnationalism' and 'culture' were the pivotal characteristics of the festival, in terms of form and content alike. The unity of the two has been the main goal of the event since culture is seen by these cultural producers as the tool of communication between different social actors involved in the making and in reception of the festival's political content.

The festival's transnational character, in terms of form, is evidenced in how its events happening in multiple cities at once are connected thematically, and hence approach a similar array of topics from different regional and local perspectives. These happenings are also spread out across two given festival weeks - on different days in different cities - to allow maximum cross-fertilisation of ideas between the events via either the travelling publics and/or social media. When it comes to form, the festival commences at once in all cities simultaneously (events such as Transnational Walk, AIRTIME – elaborated subsequently), and the grand finale of each edition takes place in one designated location with a grand forum. On the other hand, the transnational character of the festival's content rests on its many, sometimes quite robust, discursive suppositions. TEF claims that solving Europe's problems cannot happen by acting in one

country only, that deliberation on Europe's problems must happen not only in the centre but also in the periphery. TEF also questions the legitimacy and the contemporary adequacy of the nation as the social unit through which social change can happen. Furthermore, its idea of Europe is one built on an intercultural dialogue, within its borders, but also with the outside world (TEF, 2011: 12).

When it comes to the cultural dimension of TEF, form and content go hand in hand, in so much as it is a proper festival space where the display of different forms of aesthetic culture takes place and where audience interaction plays a key role in the reception of the cultural texts presented and in the further social resonance of the event. TEF is therefore as much a cultural festival as it is a series of political lectures, debates, and discussions. The cultural aspect of the festival is, therefore, strictly correlated with its aspiration to conceptualise and communicate ideas and opinions on European issues of the day into the wider society. Culture is perceived here as a tool of expression of new ideas ('incubator of change') that can be communicated, shared and understood through mutual aesthetic imaginaries. The cultural aspect of TEF is hence inextricably linked to its transnational architecture and the message it tries to pursue.

Below I present an overview of the kind of events that took place throughout the TEF locations in the years 2011-13. They show the transnational architecture of the festival – how similar topics were congruently explored in different places in Europe, such as migration, minority rights, and the recent economic downturn. These themes prevalent in all festival locations prompted various reflections on the current problems in Europe and their possible remedies. Most importantly however, the subsequent examples illustrate how culture is used to purse different types of political and social activism,

with special emphasis on the event in Lublin, Poland and London. The choice of Lublin as the prime example of the 2011 and subsequently London of the 2012 is deliberate in so far as they both sit on the symbolic fringes of today's Europe for very different reasons. Lublin is a particular place because while being on the very edge of today's EU and remaining somewhat parochial, it sees itself as a city of outmost importance for European culture and history. 2011 was the first time that it hosted such cultural event as TEF with interesting results for the festival, as well as for the city that highlight the social resonance of Transeuropa's political activism through culture. London, on the other hand, in the social imaginary of most people within the EU is gradually drifting away from the centre of European politics, while at the same time remaining the most transnational and diverse European capital. This coupling of two atypical peripheries, in analysing the properties of the festival, servers to better understand the politics at the core of the Transeuropa festival (that will be further explored in regard to the cultural producers in the subsequent sections).

Accordingly, the Lublin 2011 edition took on three distinct issues to address at the festival, and these were "migration, Roma and traveller rights" – in light of the on-going racial discrimination of the European Roma and Sinti (especially in France, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Romania), "media freedom", and a call for a "more just economy for after the crisis" in respect to the 2008 and on-going economic meltdown[75]. While adhering to the general themes of the festival, a more regional

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[75] Interestingly, that year TEF in the United Kingdom focused much more on the relationship between Britain and the European Union. In Cardiff a 'transnational poetry competition' coincided with events co-organized by the European Commission Representation in Wales and the British Council. Edinburgh witnessed a debate on the "Scottish way to Europe?" between European Commission representatives, members of the European Movement International, and the Scottish National Party.

context was the point of departure for the Lublin edition where an exhibit "Love is Love, Art as LGBT Activism: from Britain to Belarus" was shown alongside events that celebrated the Jewish heritage of the city, and gave viability to its contemporary minorities – Roma, Ukrainians, Chechens. The exhibit, which was the main event of the Lublin edition, curated by Dr Paweł Leszkowicz of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, was probably the pivotal event of the festival. It took place[76] in the city-owned Labirynt Gallery, and at the same time was an example of how visual culture can be a form of outright political activism. The still controversial LGBT theme of the exhibition did not go unnoticed in a conservative and somewhat provincial city like Lublin. The exhibition comprised artworks from Poland, Belarus, Croatia, but also Italy and Britain. They portrayed different forms of discrimination against LGBT people, and the differences visible from country to country. This comparison signalled that the EU, despite being the "best" place for non-heterosexual people in terms of legal protection, regionally, differs vastly when it comes to the cultural factors of discrimination. It also highlighted that just outside of Europe's political borders homophobia in full swing and it is officially sanctioned. The *Love Is Love* exhibit presented anti-discriminatory campaigns by Campaign Against Homophobia and the Greens from Poland, Lori from Croatia, Arcigay from Italy and Stonewall and A Day In Hand fro the UK, side by side video-art from Belarus and Croatia about the tremendous struggles of the LGBT community for their rights in these countries. These representations put together were a juxtaposition of the different stages of *gay rights* development across Europe, from the

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[76] Other venues included Tektura (a space for creative initiates) and the Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre. Many events took place with the support of Poland's Campaign Against Homophobia, Amnesty International Polska, the Krytyka Polityczna journal/publishing house, UN Social Programme Spółdzielnia, the Green Party, Homo Faber human rights collective, and Lublin 9-L'Étrangère.

most open and liberal, through moderate, to the least. Social campaign posters and video art were put side by side in tone display to provoke discussions on the state of LGBT across Europe. And so they did.

The *Love Is Love* exhibit received a lot of attention from major Polish media; minor right-wing extremist media outlets also noticed its LGBT character. In this sense Transeuropa in Lublin tackled a relevant and socially contentious public topic – in the city, in Poland, and in the region. On the one hand, one could see huge interest from the public in all of the *Gender* themed events of the festival[77]. They included another exhibit at the Labirynt Gallery curated by Magda Linkowska called *The Madonnas* presenting what one could call feminist art by the artist Katarzyna Hołda and a performance piece of Szymon Pietrasiewicz and Piotr Sałata in front of a pseudo-medical Catholic centre for gay reparative therapy. On the other hand, these and other 'gay-themed events' mobilised a strong opposition throughout conservative media and the Lublin Catholic University. At the same time, the festival's focus on LGBT rights and issues was not the only theme that stirred up controversy. These were equally the events devoted to the exploration of the city's multicultural past that were both widely attended by some and contested by others. Lublin, as immortalised in the prose of Isaac Bashevis Singer was a hub of Jewish culture in Poland before the Holocaust. Hence, many debates and literary events that took place during TEF were devoted to the subject of the city's Jewish past. This multicultural past was juxtaposed with the contemporary role of the city as borderland of the EU and home to many Ukrainian and Belarusian migrants, as well as

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[77] The guests included Poland's first transgender MP Anna Grodzka (elected later that year).

Chechen refuges. In accordance with the main theme of TEF the contemporary problems of migration were discussed but were approached from a local perspective.

Lublin also hosted such prominent speakers as Julia Kristeva (in whose native Sofia at that time "The elusive frontiers of Europe" exhibit was shown highlighting the political and cultural elasticity of seemingly solid borders). However, the introspection into the Lublin edition of the 2011 Transeuropa festival reveals the utility of culture in providing space for deliberation on important and contentious social issues. This was especially the case for the visual art presented. Its social function manifested itself in communicating topics into wider society through direct spectatorship and media attention. The 2011 Lublin TEF also showed how Europe-wide issues encompassing many countries can be informed by local contexts. Both LGBT rights and migration received critical elaboration from a wider transnational perspective, informed however by the particular context of the Lublin setting.

The role of the festival in giving space for the expression of the unvoiced and providing visibility to the unseen was evidenced in the making of the 2012 London edition. I witnessed the process of organising the festival from the very beginning. In early spring the London office of the European Alternatives hosted an open to the public community consultation meeting at the Rich Mix cinema in Shoreditch. It gathered mostly local community organizers and students, predominantly different Europeans living in London, who were invited to take active part in organising different activities of the upcoming TEF in London and 13 other cities that year. And indeed, I, along with over a dozen other people who have not met before, were allowed not only to take part in the festival but to actively shape it within the next two coming months.

In 2012 the three overarching themes of the festival were set to be similar to those of 2011, but with an even more political edge, catalysed by the intensification of the European fiscal crisis and its very visible social repercussions across the continent. Hence TEF 2012 explored "alternatives to austerity measures", novel forms of "political mobilization and their potential for rethinking democracy", as well as the issues of migration. More than ever before it was clear how the surrounding political and economic context influenced the choice of events that were held during TEF. In London alone there were two major conference events held at the city's prime research universities: "The UK in Europe's Economy and Europe's Economy in the World" at the London School of Economics and Political Science (19 May 2012), and "Precariousness: From a Social Condition to a State of Mind" at the University College London (20 May 2012). The first one addressed current economic difficulties by departing from the 'local' British context by asking whether the present crisis was caused by 'bad' management and greed, or whether there had been something intrinsically flawed about the architecture of the global financial system thus far. By looking at Britain as a place where mostly national solutions of austerity were enacted as a remedy to the global economic troubles, the debates focused on the likelihood of any European solutions to come, that at that time were in a standstill. The TEF provocatively asked whether expecting the EU to act both as an economic agent and as a general *force majeur* in international relations was *Waiting for Godot?* Here too another 'local' context of the Balkans was explored along with its potential European future. In light of the above also the age-old question of EU's democratic deficit was also asked.

The next day at UCL in a less academic fashion "precarity" as a contemporary social and economic problem was discussed. The theme of the event followed Zygmunt

Bauman's critique of this post-modern social condition, but unlike the day before the event took a more festival-like format. First a documentary film was shown; it was an independent project shot in Brixton on the meanings of "precariousness" among young people. Then a series of open to the public workshops took place, led by different activists groups: the *Radical Future* group investigated possible forms of transnational solidarity among today's youth, *Social Spaces* explored possibilities of community organising, *Precarious Workers Brigade* elaborated on precarity in culture and education, *Visual Camp* proposed possible solutions coming from the intersection of new design and policy. All of that ended with a public forum on the EU's role in tackling the hardship of young people across the continent in the times of crisis. These two major London based event, showed a tremendous capacity of a cultural festival to engage its audience in strictly political debates. It nevertheless showed how in 2012 the current political turmoil in Europe almost completely overshadowed the other aspects of TEF, how this context set that tone for the whole event. And whilst the 2012 edition had a festival-like format, the prominence of the politically driven pursuits of the European Alternatives network heavily influenced the festival's content, albeit with a prominent audience input.

The examples of Lublin and London reinforce the discursive aims of the festival of moving away from the atomising discourse of multiculturalism and of searching for a "transeuropean perspective" that can "open new possibilities for thinking of a cosmopolitan form of political belonging" and "transnational forms of mobilisation" (TF, 2011). They show how this richly textured and political charged program was successfully delivered through aesthetic cultural forms such as art exhibits, performances, literary projects, all in a framework of an interactive arts festival. In 2012,

however, as has been just shown, the festival became even more political, which somewhat took away from its cultural focus. On the other hand, the latest 2013 edition somewhat returned to the initial equilibrium between its cultural character and its political pursuits, a notion that has been highlighted by the 2013 coordinators, with whom I got in touch. In what follows I turn to the cultural producers of TEF to better understand the discursive pursuits of the festival and well as its social significance.

3.3.2   Cultural producers: European Alternatives activists & local coordinators

This section looks into the cultural producers of the festival, in order to better understand the communicative aspect of Transeuropa. At this point, it is crucial to identify that the main agent behind TEF is the European Alternatives[78] network. It is an organisation that is a bottom-up democratically governed network of volunteers located in over a dozen cities across Europe, predominantly in the locations where the festival takes place. The European Alternatives present themselves as "unique in being at once a breeding ground for new ideas and proposals for politics and culture at a European level, and in being a political and cultural actor with a truly transeuropean activity, staff and support base" (TF, 2011: 11). The format of the organisation is collaborative and participatory; what they want to communicate, their goals, are a result of negotiated priorities of each local part of the network. This process reflects the main philosophy of EA, which is to conceive of 'transnational' solutions for 'transnational' problems in a spirit of solidarity across Europe.

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[78] Financing: European Commission "Europe for Citizens" Program, Allianz Kulturstiftung, ERSTE Stiftung, regional and municipal bodies.

As evidenced by the format of the festival described above, the means of achieving that transnational dialogue are intrinsically cultural. This is also visible in the general standpoint of the festival that goes against an ethnic and narrowly national understanding of culture (and its alleged essentialist qualities). In this spirit, the European Alternatives pledge to uphold the cause of celebrating cultural diversity as a means of executing their agenda for a transnational democracy in Europe. In the matter of the festival, they claim that the local and regional contexts can be best accessed and understood by the wider public through the cultural forms delivered by a festival. It is this cultural exchange of local and particular perspectives, their equal access to a public sphere, which permits a productive and very much needed inclusion of previously marginalised groups. It does seem that apart from their rather robust visions for European democracy, this is precisely what the European Alternatives are achieving by organising the Transeuropa Festival. They are giving visibility to the underprivileged and the discriminated of Europe. Their cultural events provide a space for free and uninhibited expression of often-obscure groups in society who have frequently been consciously denied their self-expression elsewhere in the public sphere[79].

This was very much highlighted by how the cultural producers of TEF have been coming together in creating the festival. One needn't be a prior member of the European Alternatives network in order to get involved in the making of the festival in its early stages. Understandably, its founders and the full-time organizers of each edition where the ones who set up the main themes of the festival, yet throughout the festival sites

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[79] More on that can be found at http://www.euroalter.com/mission/ & http://www.wedowhatwesee.org/tag/transeuropa/

'open calls' were set up for any possible local collaborators to join and influence the content of their local TEF edition. This inclusive makeup of the EA networks and the formula of putting together TEF signal that there is a profound community-building dimension to the type of cultural production they undertake. This participatory architecture is confirmed by my interviews with the coordinators of the events on the ground who, in association with the activists of the European Alternatives, built the festival on the local end of the endeavour.

Apart from the significance of the European Alternatives activists who are the driving force behind the festival over the years these are their local collaborators who matter equally. The EA, however, are responsible for building that transnational community (network) of local activists in the first place. Together with the EA the local organisers take part in consultations about the programme of the whole festival, propose themes and bring up issues to be taken up. Most importantly, however, they are responsible for the execution of this programme on the local level, by inviting artists, scholars, and community activists to take part in the festival. They are making the transnational themes locally relevant by relating them to what's important for the immediate audiences of the festival. Thus, they are also pivotal in facilitating the ground for sociability at their specific locations – the extent to which a community of producers and spectators is a result of the festival event.

In order to better understand these cultural producers, the role they play in the making of the festival and its wider social impact, I asked them first and foremost about how they themselves came across TEF in the first place, and about the precise nature of their involvement in the festival. In term so the festival itself, I asked about the significance of the cultural dimension of the festival, as well as about its political quality

- extent to which the cultural venue made space for discussions on social and political issues of the day. Second, I inquired into the way their festival site was connected to others (the extent of the transnational connectivity that is asserted). Lastly, I asked how they understand the significance of Europe in TEF, and the impact it might have had on the people it reaches and the places where it happens. These questions are congruent with the themes explored in regard to the meanings of Europe found in Transeuropa's discourse and in the festival sites themselves where informed deliberation happens. I managed to get in touch with the co-presidents and founders of the EA, the activists and associated local collaborators from the core, as well as from the periphery of the festival. Accordingly I interviewed people involved in the making of the 2011-13 editions in Paris, Berlin, and Bologna as well as in Lublin, London, Sofia and Cluj-Napoca.

3.3.2.1   Activists: initial engagement & network building

As emphasised by Niccolò Milanese and Ségolène Pruvot, the founders and co-presidents of the EA (whom I interviewed in London in January 2014), the idea for the festival grew from "a certain frustration with how the EU was built and developed". The reasoning behind this contestation of the current European construction was a "coming back to the cultural ideal of the idea of Europe". Their aim was a reintegration of the cultural and artistic input into the public discussion on Europe outside of the strictly economistic paradigm. At the same time the restoration of a cultural optic when looking at Europe was done with full awareness of its political subjectivity and political opportunity vis-à-vis the European Union. The festival had been envisioned to discover what people think are the political subjects that should be pursed in regard to Europe: such as the emergence of a collective identity, the complex history of Europe, the

European demos, and legitimacy of EU political institutions. However, the cultural dimension of the festival is very much connected to the significance of the audience. The anticipation behind this cultural/political formula was that it should be a space where "the people are the spectacle", underline Mr Milanese and Ms Pruvot.

Indeed the conscious choice of the cultural perspective when talking about politics was a reaction to the prevalent "technical or economistic" paradigms relating to Europe. The festival looks for the "cultural resonance of Europe" alongside the institutional and economic one. The aim to "recover Europe's cultural embeddedness" is realised by how the festivals creates and recreates "a European culture of interaction", how it facilities a micro civil society on a European scale. If the first premise of the festival is that culture is the best avenue of alternative political solutions on the level of ideas, the second is significance of audience in that process. If the festival discursively frames "Europe as a space where one can engage and act" it is the engagement of the artists, activists and the public that is key to achieving this goal. Hence, from the beginning local civil society groups have been invited to work together to articulate their ideas. The "creation of a temporarily transnational space" during the festival was predicated on the formula of inviting various activists, scholars and artists to open spaces in European cities where interaction with local publics could happen. The founders emphasize that the current form of the festival is "a result of practice rather than agenda", practice which from the beginning posed "a challenge for artists to be political" and a "challenge for political actors" to respond to these alternatives ideas. It has also been "a challenge for grassroots organisations sceptical of Europe" that had to face the realities of political action. Mr Milanese and Ms Pruvot see, of course, the limits to the formal of the festival in communicating alternative political solutions for Europe

though culture. They especially notice the exhaustion of this open deliberative process, which seldom guarantees reaching the same level of excellence of proposals. Nevertheless, it really is about the engagement of local audiences and making people realise similar discussion are happening elsewhere in Europe as well.

It is especially the way in which the local activists/organisers became engaged in TEF in the first place that is important to understand the collaborative nature and the network structure of the festival. The festival does pursue a few common themes that link all the events in all localities. However, as the experiences of individual interviewees show, the structure of the festival is very much decentred and relies on local input, and hence has primarily a local relevance. In other words, TEF has certain big ideas to communicate about Europe during the festival period, ones that are a result of a collaborative and deliberative process between the EA and its local collaborators taking place beforehand; however, in the end the 'message' delivered by TEF depends on its immediate audiences (as elaborated in the following section). This long-term collaborative dimension of TEF is highlighted by all one of the local organizers I interviewed.

One of the organisers of the 2011 Lublin edition, to whom I spoke in January 2013, was Dr Paweł Leszkowicz who curated the *Love Is Love* exhibit but also co-organised most of the events that year together with Dr Tomasz Kitliński of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Their mutual association with the European Alternatives network dates back to 2007, when they attended the TEF's predecessor that was the London Festival of Europe. They were invited there by the EA to speak at a

conference at the Courtland Institute of Art devoted to artistic activism[80]. The EA specifically invited scholars/activists involved in the LGBTI rights struggle in Central and Easter Europe (one who particularly dealt with visual culture). The involvement of Leszkowicz and Kitliński shows how the EA were actively searching for activists who were engaged in human rights struggles in CEE and that used culture to achieve their goals.

Dr Leszkowicz highlights that before the festival happened in Poland, "the most important aspect of the EA was the network they created". As part of their activity and in preparation for the festival the EA invited young activists and scholars from all around Europe for open "brainstorming" sessions about important issues in Europe. Quite importantly they also provided financing for the participants, some coming from much poorer countries like Poland and Romania, "especially a few years ago". Dr Leszkowicz underlines that these spaces of exchange of ideas, facilitated by EA prior to the festival, successfully enabled activists to meet and discuss what the agenda of the network itself and the festival should be. These interactions also resulted in free and unrestricted cross-fertilisation of ideas between activists. To put it simply "afterwards people kept in touch and did things in collaboration, both within and outside of the festival", says Leszkowicz. These meetings enabled secondary artistic and curatorship networks that then contributed to the making of the festival in respective locations. The EA "were able to find sensible people on the ground who took off with the festival". Furthermore, the open and democratic structure of the EA allowed these activists to

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[80] The conference presentation addresses the reluctance of public cultural institutions in furthering the cause of equality in CEE, and the unexpected support of pirate benefactors that filled that void: Looking East. Contemporary Art from Eastern Europe, conference: London Festival of Europe, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.2007

pursue their goals under the umbrella of the festival. The lack of "bureaucratic nonsense" and the independence of the activists involved allowed fruitful collaboration within the festival setting, uniting the overarching transnational themes with local issues. The initial involvement in the festival of other local coordinators was oftentimes facilitated in an academic setting where the EA network was also present. Daphne Buellesbach from Berlin first encountered the European Alternatives when studying at Kings College London. In 2011, she went to one of the meetings in London when the Transeuropa network was founded "in order to make [the festival] more transnational". In the end, Ms Buellesbach started her work as a volunteer in Berlin, but she really experienced the making of the network prior to her first festival. She went to a lot of preparatory meetings organised around Europe by the EA, just as other local coordinators did. She underlines that in preparation for the 2011 edition alone the EA had nearly monthly meetings in different places in Europe, to plan the festival and other activities. At the same time, Ms Buellesbach notes, the local crew in Berlin met every two weeks immediately prior to the festival. In her experience, the making of the festival relied on the transnational network across sites and close socialization and coordination locally.

Grassroots activism was also how Mr Noel Hatch came in contact with European Alternatives in London. In 2007 he co-organised a mini festival called "Love difference" about Central-Eastern European migrants in the UK that also used "creative methods to explore social issues". He, however, became especially involved with Transeuropa when in 2010 when the EA established the network of creative people and campaigners. As he puts it "the challenge was to come up with a festival in 10 different cities 9 months later". Hence, in order to identify important issues that could be explored as main

themes relevant to all different locations, they held monthly meetings in all the locations prior to the 2011 edition, where through brainstorming they developed "3-4 big themes" and conceptualised different "cultural activities to communicate them with". Likewise, during the festival itself activists moved around both within and across locations: in 2011 alone the TEF had "250 micro activities around 10 cities, 8 activities a day in each city", according to Mr Hatch. The aim of these diverse cultural activities was to "discover roots and creative spaces in those cities". However, moving people around involves considerable funds, and some people are simply unable to travel. Hence events like AIRTIME (elaborated below), which allow people to take part in an activity that connects them to other cities across Europe, serve the same purpose. They are aimed at discovering different cultures through collaboration, Mr Hatch explains. He also describes how the festival sees online interaction as increasingly important, though as secondary to 'real public' spaces.

Other local coordinators had similar trajectories of engagement and experiences in the making of the festival of other local coordinators. Mariya Ivancheva's engagement started with her involvement in the European Volunteer Service in Sofia; in 2011 she became a local coordinator for TEF in the city. Another interviewee[81] from neighbouring Romania (Cluj-Napoca) started their relationship with the festival "attending an advocacy course organized by EA", and since then has been responsible for co-organising various stages of the festival in Romania. Their engagement was motivated by the fact that "the festival theme concerns the people, the communities with [their] real issues while trying to find solutions to them". Also a local coordinator from Italy (Bologna) underlines their prior experience of work in international organisations active

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[81] The subsequent interviewees in question prefer to remain anonymous for personal reasons.

on the European stage, and hence their eagerness to engage in the EA – a network "politically committed to advocate European citizens' rights, especially those ones regarding young generations". They were in charge of supporting the event organisation and raise media interest around the festival activities in their city. They underline that "most of our events were conceived among a group of international young people who periodically met up to plan the festival, creating a common structure for the festival. So before and during the festival I had the chance to travel across Europe where the local groups were active". All of these accounts highlight the activists' prior engagement in either political or cultural advocacy. They all also show the transnational mode of interaction in preparation and during the festival, as well as intensive local sociality surrounding the festival.

3.3.2.2   Congruence of culture and politics: festival as space for deliberation

In terms of the concurrent cultural and political aspect of the festival - or rather how the cultural setting serves as a catalyst for political action - most of the interviewed organisers find them mutually reinforcing. In popular view, the formula of a cultural festival is seldom associated with political activism, hence a far greater number people come to a cultural festival than would have attended a strictly political event. However, when it comes to Transeuropa, the political quality of some of the cultural happenings had a lot to do with the local significance of the issues discussed. The presentation of political problems via cultural means, supported by local and immediate rootedness of the issues on the festival's agenda, is how the festival becomes a space for deliberation.

This is confirmed by Mariya Ivancheva from Sofia, who explains that "in Bulgaria festivals are seen as depoliticised", because of their cultural quality. At the

same time, the TEF organisers on the ground like her are more interested in politics than just in culture. However, in Sofia it was "culture [that] mobilised people to come" to the festival. She underlines that as a "sociologist/anthropologist" she herself focused primarily on local matters. But she was also convinced by the framework of the festival, which took a "European" perspective, affirmative and critical alike, "to tackle the Bulgarian issues". What Ms Ivancheva found especially valuable was how the festival managed to introduce difficult topics to the Bulgarian audience that have not been raised before in the public sphere with sufficient exposure. For example TEF in Sofia devoted a lot of attention to Roma rights in a new critical way, by breaking with the discourse of integration, and introducing the question of emancipation.

Also in neighbouring Romania the Cluj's festival focus on "real issues of the present days [had made] it successful" according to one of my interlocutors. They go on to explain that "the debates [were] really needed with the aim of identifying the common problems and alternatives or solution to them". It has been precisely the intersection of the "artistic and festive" side of the festival that included "performances like theatre, movies, visual arts works, [and] music" with deliberation on current "social contexts and politics" which made it accessible and attractive for the local audience.

A similar dynamic was reported in Lublin where, as Dr Leszkowicz admits, he was able to "to push the agenda of Queer rights" in the festival somewhat independently from the main themes. However, the exhibit he curated on LGBTI rights in CEE coincided with other events very much linked to the main themes of the festival explored elsewhere. Locally in Lublin, the Transeuropa Festival was first and foremost a cultural and socially engaging event for the city. The format of a cultural festival was hence used as an avenue for giving visibility to and facilitating deliberation on important social

issues already present in the public sphere. However, in Dr Leszkowicz's words, the festival "wasn't too radical politically": it reached out to people who were already engaged in controversial issues in the region, but it was not revolutionary in any way. It was rather an exercise in LGBT mainstreaming, enabling visibility of Europe-wide issues in a local context. Consequently, in Lublin, the festival had a tremendous social impact; both the gay and the Jewish themes drew media attention to the event, as well as activating the local right wing against it (as described before). However, the curator added, by making a link between the city's forgotten heritage, contemporary migration and current LGBT issues, it did "mainstream" these controversial issues in the region (especially ones related to queerness).

Not all festival sites witnessed comparably pivotal significance of local issues. However, all saw the connection between cultural happenings and political agenda as the main vehicles of audience engagement. For example in Berlin, there were fewer local issues explored, but culture being a strong element in the slogan of the festival also had an important role in furthering its agenda. Ms Buellesbach, who was the local coordinator there, admits that in the end the European Alternatives (and the Transeuropa Festival) is a somewhat "political organisation that tries to reach audiences that would not normally go to political events", hence the mixing of formats and approaches in trying to reach new and different audiences in each country. Additionally because "culture conveys political messages" it was used as a means of expressing the overarching goals of the festival and of the network. And since EA's "goal is a European common public space", increasing participation is one of the key features of the festival. Bringing people together happens best through culture, notes Ms Buellesbach. At the same time, the festival is a "condensed" event, a time in the year when everything the

EA do is showcased. It is a venue for discussion with wider audiences on the goals of the European Alternatives network, emphasizes Ms Buellesbach.

What the local organizers seem to convey is a notion that, according to common knowledge, festivals are specifically and exclusively cultural. Transeuroepa is necessarily different since it uses the cultural sphere as a space where artists, activists as well as their audiences can discuss issues put forward by the European Alternatives network. However, in the words of one of the London coordinators, Noel Hatch: in TEF "the cultural and the political become one", in so far as cultural happenings are not just a pretext for political talk but a vehicle for deliberation. Mr Hatch notices that oftentimes when one talks about Europe and culture "people want to think about single European culture". For them, as organizers, however, it is not a cause for a utopian single culture they want to pursue. Rather they want to make people aware of the "horizontal linkages between different local cultures" (also below the national level). The focus on local cultures is really important in so far as "different people in different cities doing similar thing [may] share similar values", problems and aspirations. The festival is precisely a platform to envisage these linkages.

3.3.2.3   The significance of Europe in Transeuropa

Finally, the meaning of the explicit European focus of the festival needs to be examined – as explained by the cultural producers in question. To some of them quite simply, TEF is "European because it takes place in more than 13 cities across Europe with the same objective of making a better life for all citizens" (Anonymous). The geographic dimension is seen as relevant also on a symbolic level, in so far as it reinforces the unity of overarching themes across locations. The context of the European Union is noted as

important in so much as it gives a prospect of actual change that could happen with its help. Following this reasoning, as explained in more detail by the local coordinators, the pan European themes are important in so far as they address local issues. For these activists it is the work on the ground that they carry out after the festival that matters. "Europe is significant as long as [one's] actions and voices [are] meaningful and have impact", says one of my interviewees (who chooses not to be named). Europe is understood as a symbolic aggregate for people to come together with the same problems and concerns. It is, however, only important as long as it is followed by concrete, rather than abstract, ponderings on the significance of this unity.

This is how the interviewee from Sofia portrays how she perceives the significance of Europe in the festival: it is "European in terms of geography", and its "European framework is connected to the EU" as such. In Ms Ivancheva's opinion the event is aimed at inducing change at EU level politics, its activities are meant to flag to the European Parliament certain progressive causes that are important for pockets of civil society in Europe. At the same time, when invoking Europe, what often happens is an unconscious "reproduction of European discrepancies, hierarchies, [and] divisions" that exist within the contemporary European construction. The organizers attempt to bridge these gaps, but it sometimes is difficult to explain why issues important in the periphery (such as Bulgaria) should be discussed in a European perspective, as Ms Ivancheva diagnoses. Hence, the tension between the sweeping European and transnational architecture of the festival and the local issues does exist. This tension can, however be productive. In Bulgaria the prominence of EU-related issues has helped to bring people together, to generate interest in the festival. Furthermore the connections

made with other people in Europe have also proven useful in the aftermath of the event, according to Ms Ivancheva.

Europe mattered in a similar way in another fairly provincial setting, that of Lublin. The festival took place there even though the financing was miniscule, and the organizers on the ground had to seek support from the Marie Curie Fund, as well as from the Lublin municipality. For example, the Labirynt Gallery where the main event took place is city-owned and was "given to the festival for free". Dr Leszkowicz explains that the authorities of Lublin supported the festival, mainly because they were persuaded by the symbolic prestige of the European aspect of the endeavour. Also the fact that it had been co-financed by the EU, and that it took place transnationally mattered a lot to the Lublin city hall. The yearning of Lublin's city officials for recognition 'paid off' insomuch as people from other TEF sites came to visit the city during the festival. My interlocutor underlines that the festival was European in the sense that it gathered people from Europe and around European issues. Throughout the event there was an underlying sentiment that many people equated its European aspect with the EU. And there is no denying that the money from the EU (though very limited) factored into this too, according to Dr Leszkowicz. The European aspect also meant that it approached local issues, such as LBGT rights, from a European perspective, which resulted in quite considerable tensions on the ground (as elaborated before).

Europe mattered equally in the very central locations of the festival. It was however mediated by corresponding particular contexts. The festival coordinator in Berlin explains that they had to "redefine Europe" because otherwise it would not have generated any interest or appeal. When Europe is not in crisis it is not on the popular "agenda". It was especially the case in 2012 when the economic perspective

overshadowed most public discussions on Europe but the Berlin crew decided to talk about something else, to tackle other European issues. "If everyone talks about the euro, let's talk about culture", says Ms Buellesbach. This did not mean that the political issues disappeared from the agenda, but that the festival was aimed at countering dominant narratives. This sentiment, of being enthusiastic towards Europe yet critical of its current state – constructive and "critically pro-European" – has had a vivid political objective. Hence, one of the aspirations of the organizers behind the 2012 and 2013 Berlin edition of Transeuropa was to be deliberately "political ahead of the elections to the European Parliament". Ms Buellesbach explains that "Europe for us is a Europe that puts more importance on its peoples and on the struggles that happen very locally" and hence they want the festival they organise to be a platform to show these struggles are European and should be addressed as such.

The significance of Europe in the festival is related to the type of indirect campaigning it does for the EU to enact the changes it preaches. At the same time, as posed by Noel Hatch from London, the place of Europe in the festival is also very much to "recover the sense that Europe is not just the EU as an institution, Europe is the citizens that live in it. The festival is organised by these Europeans. It is intrinsically European". According to Mr Hatch the festival is less concerned about discussions on Europe as a construct, and rather focuses on the practice side. Building on small-scale transnational networks of artists and activists it offers the view of the kind of "Europe they want to live in (…) the glimpses of the Europe they want to see". TEF very much looks into the institutions of Europe that existed there before, for support[82] and for

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[82] Mr Hatch explains that when the European Alternatives started almost 70% of the funding came from the EU: the rest came from private cultural foundations. Now, since the Europe for Citizens Programme

execution of their proposals. But it sees itself as one of the originating points for an infrastructure for multiple "transnational European civil societies". In order to gain traction outside of the festival, from 2011 onwards European Alternatives started to operate like a cooperative to continue their activities post-festival, and to distribute funding across its locations where they are most needed. This micro transnational civil society during the festival has its aftermath in professional cooperation happening transnationally outside of the main events, Mr Hatch emphasizes. And it is this transnational aspect that is truly European, Mr Hatch concludes, because it disallows self-containment in the localities, and because it maintains a European perspective.

Throughout the locations of Transeuropa the local coordinators emphasize the significance of Europe as a common point of reference for local issues. The festival is said to "stimulate a European debate around issues that normally are debated just on the national level". At the same time, according to one of the coordinators from Bologna the festival is "a peculiar social environment, a laboratory where everybody can measure the size of his/her own stereotypes" towards different cultures. They emphasize that as a space TEF provides an opportunity to distance oneself from purely national perspectives, and, without neglecting these contexts, free oneself from the framework of thinking they impose. The festival is a micro space of a transnational European civil society "because it involves people equally distributed from all around Europe, but its declared aim is to shape a common claim toward European institutions and national government" (Anonymous). As previously mentioned by other local coordinators

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has been decreased, the European alternatives had to focus more on fundraising. Funds are being gathered though membership donations and private foundation sponsorship.

"Europe is not a concept" to be investigated on a theoretical level "it is suggested as a method, a way of tackling problems, a more effective political device" than the nation (Anonymous). According to the same coordinator the weakness of this somewhat grandiose goal is that it involves people already convinced about Europe – it preaches to the choir. TEF is then a network of the conscious and capable elite, which until 2013 did not directly put forward any propositions to the EU. This, however, changed with the Citizens Manifesto, which not only was put forward to the European Parliament, but itself was a result of a consultation process involving the audiences of the festival.

3.3.3 The politically conscious and engaged audience of the festival

The three main features of Transeuropa crucial for the analysis of the understandings of Europe that come about through its activities, are the execution of its transnational architecture, the concurrence of culture and politics in its program, and the extent to which it is a space for informed deliberation. Previously, it has been shown what kind of meanings of Europe the festival as such communicates – what is the discourse it tries to convey. It has also been shown how cultural producers behind it understand the place of Europe in the festival. This section is a continuation of this analysis, and embarks on the examination of the types of spectatorship that happened during TEF – the significance of the audiences. In other words, it is an investigation of how the festival fulfilled its promise and managed to engage its immediate audiences in the deliberative process on "common" European issues. The section looks first into the 'symbolic rituals' taking place in the beginning of each festival that are aimed at physically involving the audience of each festival location and 'virtually' connecting it to all other sites. What is analysed is the real and imagined sociability taking place in each festival space and

between all the spaces during the 'ritual events' taking place in the beginning of each festival. Subsequently, I analyse the more quantifiable outcome of the audience input into the festival. The local community consultations that have taken place prior to and during the 2013 edition resulted in drafting of the *Citizens Manifesto for European Democracy, Solidarity and Equality.* The document, which has been presented to the European Parliament in 2014, was pieced together by all local organisers with respective audience input. The examination of the process of its coming into being, of the issues it tackles and of the level of engagement on the 'ground' it generated, is a good illustration of the key features of the festival discussed above that uncover the meanings people involved in the endeavour ascribe to Europe. I also juxtapose these more or less measurable results of TEF with the limited media attention it has been given. It is shown that it was not until the presentation of the strictly political *Citizens Manifesto* that the festival and the activities of the EA network were recognised on a transnational scale (besides local controversies outlined before).

3.3.3.1   The symbolic ritual events and their sociability

In the years 2011 and 2012 the festival happened in the spring and commenced around Europe Day (9 May). The festival opened concurrently in all cities with the *Transnational Walk*, an event of primarily symbolic value - it metaphorically underlined the European character of the whole event. The goal of this exercise was to make clear to the festival audiences that it was a single festival happening all over Europe and not 12-14 different ones. Apart from being a symbolically transnational happening, of quasi-ritual quality, it was also very much a truly festival-like event. The *Transnational Walk*

was an urban carnival in which audience participation was key to its success[83]. This common opening moment was no ordinary walk (such as a protest or manifestation). In all participating cities it was focused on the multicultural character of each city. It was carefully planned out by the festival organisers in order to encompass the highest diversity of spaces visited, which in various ways corresponded to the other cities were where the walk also happened. The walk was 'interrupted' with frequent stops during which reference was made to links to another city. It was also 'infused' with stories and anecdotes about that other city that was told by an actor, playing a person supposedly native to that location.

This ritual was enacted in various locations of each walk. The event in each city 'made' as may links as possible to the other cities where the walk was happening. This carnivalesque cultural aspect of the festival reinforced its discursive aim. Telling the stories from other cities was aimed at emphasising the transnational character of the festival by engaging the audience in reflecting on the historical links between the festival locations – or showing their intertwined pasts and current connections. What the interviewees have described, and what I deciphered from my own participation in the event, is that the walk was indeed a sociable event that facilitated personal interaction between the members of the audience. This was a truly cultural festival-like prelude to the more politically charged content that came later, though underpinned with the discourse of European commonality and transnationalism. Nevertheless, what mattered most in the walk was the immediate sociability that laid ground for later more informed interaction concerning the political themes of the festival.

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[83] In 2012 the Berlin walk gathered such a crowd that its introspective function was difficult to execute: it nevertheless was a great success, emphasizes Ms Buellesbach.

Similar was the function of the AIRTIME event, which replaced the *Transnational Walk* as the symbolic ritual commencing each edition of the festival. The AIRTIME event was a public performance piece simultaneously staged in central urban spaces of the 2013 festival locations and broadcast online. In October 2013 it happened exactly at the same time in 10 festival sites and showcased different performance pieces by artists individually commissioned by Transeuropa in each city. Each site had a different choreography, but the narrative was the same even though it was spoken in different languages. The recording of this narrative was available to be downloaded prior to the event, so that everyone present at the site of the performance could listen to it from their own personal digital device in the language of their choosing. It was also a participatory event in which anyone could take part, even passers-by that were not 'prepared. Visually the performances could be classified as something between contemporary dance, a pantomime, and conceptual theatre. Both the actors and the regular participants in each city were enacting the same motions whilst listening to the same track. The story told during the event, consequently, reflected this transnational architecture of the performance. At first, the narrator in the recording signalled that other people were doing the exact same thing and listening to the exact words in various European cities. Subsequent narrators emphasized the symbolic importance of "movement" in which the participants were taking place, and the existence of a "temporary autonomous zone" among the participants (Hakim 2003). They quite explicitly elaborated on the constructed nature and temporality of national borders, called for voices and acts of protest against inequality and injustice, and advocated for more solidarity in Europe.

The performance piece subsequently explored different scientific and philosophical concepts in relation to the natural world and to society. The narrative warned of earth's geological changes and the idea of a cooperative society. It was clear that on a discursive level, the goal of the performance was to "open a common space in Europe, at least for a moment" (as judged by Ms Buellesbach). Similar to the *Transnational Walk,* besides being a cultural event that carried the discourse of a transnational Europe, the AIRTIME event was a deeply sociable festival event. During the performance the members of the audience were encouraged to interact with one another, even to hold hands at some point. During these carnivalesque moments the narrators pointed participants attention to different current affairs that corresponded to the general themes signalled previously. They mentioned the recent Greek riots, Turkish protests, Spanish anti-eviction protests, and briefly referenced almost a 100 locations around the world where protests and contestation movements took place at that given moment. In the end the theme of the AIRTIME event was precisely the need for protest and contestation, the usual inefficacy of such movements, and new ways of conceptualising resistance and solidarity to achieve change. What permeated throughout the happening was the significance of both the actual and imagined mutuality of the experience in each location, throughout the festival locations, and in symbolic solidarity with protest movements around the world. This was the symbolic prelude to the 2013 Transeuropa festival, the ritual uniting the audience. The subsequent section analyses the quantifiable results of audience engagement in the festival – the Citizens Manifesto drafted under the leadership of the European Alternatives network.

3.3.3.2 Citizens Manifesto for European Democracy, Solidarity and Equality

"We, the people of Europe, by birth, by choice or by permanent circumstances, believe that the European Union and its Member States have failed to guarantee the welfare of their citizens and to live up to the global and local challenges that have shaken Europe in the last five years of crisis.
We believe Europe has a common future, but we feel that we are losing control of our destiny. Rather than relying on fractured national sovereignties, we want to be empowered to act at a transnational level. Europe can play a strong role as a space for democracy, solidarity and equality, but this require rapid and radical changes to the current political framework and priorities of the European Union." (Citizens Manifesto 2013: 8).

The opening paragraphs of the Manifesto are an important reminder of the general discourse on Europe promoted by the European Alternatives network that to different extents is reproduced throughout the festival. It is, however, not a totalising ideological directive since, as has been elaborated before, the meanings ascribed to Europe in the festival are very much context dependent. The Manifesto, however, is said to be a result of three year-long and Europe-wide consultations, where local issues and local understandings of European issues were given a space to be voiced and in the long run put together into one document. It is the nature of these consultations, happening also in the festival settings, which can tell us more about how the festival is engaging its audiences, how it indeed was a space of deliberation from which the reoccurring themes of "collaboration, contestation, critique" in regard to Europe originate.

The Manifesto is different from the previous programme proclamations issued by the European Alternatives about the Transeuropa festival, or from all the locally produced documents regarding the mission and the written results of each festival edition, because it is said to have been extensively discussed, deliberated on, argued about, between the organisers, artists and activists, as well as the audiences. The process of its making, as well as its key arguments, shed light on the understandings of Europe that were coined through audience engagement in the Transeuropa festival in years

2011-2013. It shows how an original civil society organisation such as the EA used a cultural festival for public outreach in pursuit of representativeness and legitimacy for their agenda.

The Manifesto is intrinsically political, in so far as its authors explicitly reference the 2014 European Parliament elections as a possible turning point for EU politics. The Manifesto is presented as a voice in the wider debate on the future of the current European construction that is aimed at reaching EP candidates before the 2014 election. Its most general premise is that because current discussions on pan European issues are still mostly carried out from narrowly national perspectives, this inhibits reaching consensus and implementing any effective solutions for such grave matters as youth unemployment, discrimination, and the wider economic crisis. Hence the solution is to conceptualise European remedies for the problems faced by all Europeans to some extent. The economic postulates of the Manifesto include: introduction of "EU regulations on internships"; standardisation of "minimum wages across the EU"; introduction of programmes against youth unemployment across Europe; widening the access to education; tackling unemployment and ensuring equal pension rights on EU level; introduction of an "unconditional basic income at EU level". The document also advocates a vast array of social securities to be granted to all Europeans, such as basic social rights to housing and food, and frames water as common good rather than commodity. The Manifesto advocates a ban on bank bail-outs, and proposes annulment of sovereign debts accumulated as a result of the crisis. It criticises "tax competition" among EU countries and suggests the introduction of an "EU financial transition tax", while suggesting more economic cooperation within the EU. The document outlines also justice-related postulates, such as confiscation of criminally acquired assets and

proposes solutions to the eradication of transnational crime. It also speaks directly to political architecture of the European Union, calling for "a European political government", advocating for more power to the European Parliament, proposing transnational EP lists, and granting EU denizens the right to vote in EP elections - extension of EU citizenship rights to third country nationals residing in the EU permanently.

All of the above postulates are directed at achieving more European-wide democracy, rather than singular national democracies. Furthermore, the Manifesto takes up the issue of media concentration, the need for more media literacy in society, as well as ensuring media freedom and pluralism. Its ecological propositions push for more renewable energy, ban on food chemicals, and against hydraulic fracking. Furthermore, migrant's rights are vividly addressed and such measures as a "common European asylum system" are proposed along with measures for Roma rights protection and emancipation policies. Another pronounced area of concern for the Manifesto are women's rights, which include recognition of unpaid care work by women, equalisation of reproductive rights across the EU, protection from violence against women, and eradication of the gender pay gap. Finally, the Manifesto takes a firm stance on the need for prosecution of LGBT hate crimes across Europe, LGBT asylum rights, flexible gender recognition for transsexual persons, Europe wide recognition of same sex marriage and civil partnerships, and LGBT parental rights.

In general terms the Manifesto calls not only for a more effective way of dealing with all these issues supposedly concerning all Europeans but also presses for more accountability above the nation state; in other words it expects more democratic responsibility from the EU. As part of its broad prescriptions for combating the

democratic deficit of the EU it also proposes different mechanisms of direct democracy that would bring the decision-making process closer to the people. Throughout the Manifesto these are the grievances and problems of the "people of Europe" that are ascribed pivotal importance, rather than interests of the member states of the EU as such. One of the main concrete postulates of the document is a better execution of the existing rights deriving from EU citizenship, strengthening it, as well as extending its protections, for example to non-member-state nationals permanently residing in the EU. These propositions are built around the main political themes that have been explored throughout the festival regarding migration to and within Europe and migrant protection, minority rights such as issues surrounding LGBT and Roma discrimination, as well as women's rights. The entire manifesto is a call for a more open, inclusive and very much social Europe. Its propositions, within the outlined macro themes, are hence intrinsically political and represent the views and values of the micro civil society network established by the European Alternatives and cultivated through the Transeuropa festival.

As emphasised in the Manifesto, the document is a result of Europe-wide consultations that started in 2011 with six countries, and by 2013 extended to 10 countries and a dozen locations. The primary method to gather and discuss issues of concern voiced by the members of the public was the deliberative device called the World Café. It consisted of a series of round tables, 15 seats each, where multiple rounds of 45-minute sessions were carried out. The moderators of these World Cafés were chosen from European Alternatives crew, festival coordinators as well as their local associates to ensure local validity of issues discussed. Dozens of citizen-led proposals were also gathered during the multiple festival events happening during the first full-

fledged edition of the festival in 2011. Later that year six transnational forums with participants from all locations took place to process the gathered data. The year 2012 commenced with a transnational forum in Rome organised by the European Alternatives where over 700 delegates from 40 different civil society organisations discussed various "fundamental rights" in Europe.

It was there where the idea of the Citizens Pact for European Democracy was conceptualised. This reformulation of previously gathered proposals into possible policies was followed by an even wider public outreach[84]. A series of "Mani(fest)" consultations took place in public spaces of the cities where the EA and the Transeuropa festival were already present. These were to an extent festival-like events, which consisted of setting up stands in important public spaces where the proposals where displayed and approaching passers-by to engage in discussions about their validity. People were also encouraged to vote on these proposals, both in these spaces and online. Consequently, in 2013 more than 20 consultation events entitled "People Power Participation" took place around Europe. These discussion fora happened before or during the Transeuropa festival and concluded in October 2013 with a final forum in Berlin gathering all the consultation organisers. The result of this forum was the Citizens Manifesto.

As revealed by the founders of the European Alternatives network and the Transeuropa festival the idea of a Manifesto came about only in 2013. Prior to that the series of events that happened were either a part of the building of the network or a part

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[84] "European Citizens Initiative (ECI), which allows at least one million citizens from at least 7 member states to present a legislative proposal directly at the European commission by collecting signatures online and offline." http://www.euroalter.com/2012/next-steps-after-the-rome-forum/

of each festival edition, as one of the interviewed London coordinators points out (Hatch, 2014). The Manifesto is a result of the realisation that came about with the momentum in which the network and the festival developed in 2013. While searching for "alternative political solutions for Europe" by organising large transnational events such as the Transeuropa festival, the EA realised that the advent of the 2014 European elections was the best time to publicise their work. This move to gather, consult and draft the main postulates advocated by the EA for some time came also from the conviction that the process through which they came about gives them more legitimacy.

Hence, the Manifesto is presented as an emanation of the wants and needs of a nascent European civil society. It is claimed to be rooted in the knowhow of the local advocacy groups associated with the European Alternatives, the community activists, scholars and artists (at any given point in connection with the network). The Manifesto is most of all a result of a deliberative process that has been happening in the cultural setting of the Transeuropa festival events since 2011. The 2013 edition of Transeuropa was a culmination of that process with an explicit political aim on the horizon (that until 2015 will put the festival on hold) of directing all the efforts of the network to grassroots work around the 2014 European elections.

Traneuropa festival is a cultural event that uses different aesthetic forms as means of facilitating public discussions of Europe. It is an emanation of the European Alternatives - a network of activists convinced about the need for pan European solutions to burning social problems prevalent throughout the continent. The festival serves also as an aggregate for old members to exchange ideas, to engage new collaborators, and to further the agenda of the network to pockets of public opinion in Europe. However, the

reflexive nature of the festival makes it a very local-specific event, where particular issues take centre stage in each location. At the same time, through the means of the festival, these local issues travel to other locations and also oftentimes become appropriated into the agenda of the larger European Alternatives network. The festival is a space of deliberation on political issues largely through the intermediary of culture and thanks to the specific sociability it allows to happen among its organisers, the artists and activists involved and the audiences. The results of this intellectual cross-fertilisation between the various festival locations and the subsequent exchanges facilitated by the network is a formation of a transnational micro civil society organisation that sees Europe as both as a means to an end and a goal on its own merit. This is also why the postulates voiced throughout the festival are directed directly at the European Union, which is seen as the only body remotely capable of executing the ideas that surface in the festival. Even though the EU is seen as the only big ally of the network and one of its main supporters, the ideal of Europe conceptualised thought the festival and advocated by the EA go way beyond any plausible political developments of the near future. The Transeuropa festival is indeed a vital part of this certain type of political and civic advocacy pursued by the European Alternatives. The festival serves as a space where somewhat robust ideas of Europe are equally elaborated, reconceptualised, and promoted.

3.4   Conclusion

This chapter investigated contemporary European cultural festivals for the meanings of Europe that come about through them. It outlined a methodological framework on how to study the significance of cultural festivals in society – their communicative and community-building capacity. The chapter brought together theorisations on the importance of modern festivals with respect to the nation, and applied such perspectives to examining contemporary Europe-focused festivals. It also drew on the scholarship on post-traditional and critical festivals and their capacity to create forms of cosmopolitan public culture.

The example of ÉCU - The European Independent Film Festival shows how a festival can use Europe as a label in pursuit of wider recognisability that is seemingly superficial. However, upon closer examination it is evidenced that the European signifier is used to reinforce the critique of the perceived status quo of the mainstream film industry. Being both a European and an independent film festival, ÉCU expresses its aspiration for recognition and at the same time creates space for independent filmmakers to gain visibility. Anent Transeuropa the research demonstrates how this cultural festival becomes a space for deliberation on important political and social issues thanks to its European allegiance. This festival is a site where different actors address questions of European scale, as well as local significance. Europe here, however, is not just an aggregative tool but a cosmopolitan idea that is the driving force for political activism taking place in the festival. Hence, the chapter provides an analysis of how these two European cultural festivals construct very different meanings of Europe, but how the social function of such allegiance is similar.

Chapter 4

Critiquing Europe: government commissioned art & its (trans)national publics

...the density of Central Europe anticipates the destiny of Europe in general, and its culture assumes an enormous relevance. – Milan Kundera[85]

Introduction

This chapter investigates contemporary art and its public reception for meanings and social understandings of Europe. In order to do so, it looks into artworks that were commissioned to 'celebrate' Europe. More specifically, I analyse installations unveiled to inaugurate consecutive European Union Council Presidencies by Central European member states (2008-2011). I identify what visions of Europe were presented by different pieces of contemporary art: from Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. I argue that the commissioned artworks are an expression of specific national perspectives on Europe, and that their transnational reception shows how particular national subjectivities are continuously reconstructed vis-à-vis Europe today.

Here I draw on art history literature that shows how contemporary art has moved away from modernist aestheticism to often politicised content; how it is capable of social engagement, of voicing dissenting worldviews, of introducing antagonistic

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[85] Milan Kundera, 'The Tragedy of Central Europe', (31, 1984), 33.

perspectives[86] in the public sphere (Mouffe 1993). Furthermore, scholars of contemporary art maintain that unlike some aesthetic cultural spheres, it remains in opposition to hegemonic political forces, and in tension with the patronage provided by state and market. Since this chapter investigates how culturally produced meanings of Europe resound socially, it also draws on the sociological studies that tell us that the primary audiences for most contemporary art (visitors to exhibition spaces, galleries and museums) are endowed with considerable capacities of comprehension (Bourdieu et al. 1990). In other words, the chapter takes into account the literature that claims that the elaborate structure and multiple symbolisms of art makes it easily relatable only to a limited audience. In particular, the research is focused on media reception of the artworks under inquiry as a 'way in' to its social resonance.

The examples of contemporary art under inquiry are analysed in reference to how, historically, art negotiated understandings of the nation. The key analytical backdrop is the significance of the arts in constructing and mediating nationalism and hence contributing to modern nation building. Accordingly, artistic critiques of nationalism in late twentieth century are treated as the founding framework of the role of contemporary art in society today. The former are examples are of how art conceptualised ideas of nationhood in modernity and the latter of how it articulated insightful critiques of the social world in more recent times. In the past, as shown by historical examples, art has been proven to facilitate the rise of nationalism, and then

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[86] Often enough rather than seeking reconciliation, artists want to shock and induce their critical reflections on society. However art's meaning arises in relationship with the audience. Accordingly, Mouffe claims that the role of art in society cannot be subsumed into the framework of deliberative democracy where the goal of participation in the public sphere is the achievement of some kind of social consensus (Habermas). Contemporary art, if engaged, introduces provocative ideas that are often aimed at prompting reflection and/or critique of social reality.

criticise it. I relate specific examples of how art mediated questions of nationhood in modern western societies, during transition into democracy in Central-Eastern Europe (Piotrowski 2010), and in the current contemporary artworks commissioned 'for' Europe.

The chapter presents evidence that even though this art is commissioned to celebrate Europe on an official level of EU bureaucracy, it does not offer a single concept of Europe; it is rather a space where different narratives of nationhood and of Europe meet in a dialectic relationship with the audience. Furthermore, the analysis notes that what is also particular about these examples of art is that their reception transgresses borders. On the basis of media coverage analysis, it is empirically identifiable that the controversies that arose around these installations were Europe-wide and/r state-wide. Furthermore, it is shown that art has to be controversial enough to be reproduced in the mass media and achieve a meaning-making effect. The truly critical pieces from the selection have indeed gained wide recognition though reproduction in both established and tabloid media and prompted public discussions on the meaning of the nation and Europe. Consequently, there is an identifiable binary of responses to art's elaboration on Europe. On one hand, it reveals that Europe is understood as an ideal one should aspire to, especially in terms of democratic values, pluralism and human rights. On the other, this idea of Europe is highly provocative to others and contested. This general twofold pattern of responsiveness to understandings of Europe conveyed by art falls alongside the more general cleavages of attitudes towards European integration as evidenced elsewhere (Gaxie et al. 2011).

4.1   Contemporary art & Central-Eastern Europe

Contemporary art as we understand it today, in its artistic and social dimension, is a somewhat recent phenomenon, one that nevertheless grows out of the historical modern nexus of culture and nation. Most notably Hans Belting makes a powerful case for considering the transnational perspective and cosmopolitan quality of contemporary art and its message going beyond narrow national understandings (2009). From the standpoint of art history he considers contemporary art as a social phenomenon endowed with considerable communicative power on a global scale. Belting makes the case that today's contemporary art is indeed global art, because it speaks to multiple contexts and issues irrespectively of origin (2009). He does not however mean world art, which is a modernist term that assumes particular ethno-cultural quality of a work of art in opposition to modernisation. The idea of a binary between modern art and world art is a result of the modernist discourse with its emphasis on progress[87]. This way of understanding art, and of examining it, is however no longer valid, claims Belting. Due to a nexus of political and economic circumstances, the year 1989 "challenged the conduit of any Eurocentric view of 'art'" (Belting 2009: 38-39). By that Belting means a narrowly defined milieu of Western Europe and the United States as the *centre* of the modern world. Contemporary art cannot be anymore confined to the limited discourse of

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[87] Belting claims that the purely aesthetic focus of modern art and its supposed applicability to all social contexts – for example the thought universalism of Abstract Expressionism - actually conceals the hegemony of the west in terms of cultural production (Belting in Peter Weibel et al., *Contemporary Art and the Museum : A Global Perspective* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz : Distributed in the U.S.A/North America, D.A.P., Distributed Art Publishers, 2007) 254 p. at 16-38.). According to this discourse *modern art* is supposed to embody progress of artistic forms into a universal pure form, and *world art* represents the vernacular and ethnic particularity of the non-developed world. Such is the practice of *orientalisation* in art history, which sets cultural divisions between the centre and the periphery.

modernity. Following the globalisation of other social fields it too became global. At the same time Belting notes the inner contradiction of global art. As much as it is increasingly transnational and global, it speaks through the lens of the particular and the local. It is glocal. Art is not removed from reality, it does not claim to be universal, but it is created from the perspective of local identities (national, ethnic, and religious). Hence, it becomes contentious and problematic for the ones responsible for governance – public authorities and all kinds of other regimes. Belting claims that art "with its critical message and public visibility, bears the potential of conflicts with state control in censoring artists" (Belting 2009: 38-39). In that sense global contemporary art is intrinsically critical in respect to the national and the political and comes in conflict with the structures of state and power.

Contemporary art does not only operate as a critique of the state or authority, but also raises general issues of social inclusion and exclusion such as the already mentioned *modern – world* art binary. Belting notes that globalism (in contradiction to universalism) in art cherishes what he calls "the symbolic capital of difference" (2009: 44). Furthermore, this increasing locality of art makes it impossible to write art history in a linear fashion that reflects the supposed progression of history. Contemporary art is global and localised at the same time, and so should be its analysis that takes into account both the particular and the wider context of the artwork. Belting shows how a historical genealogy of art is no longer viable to discern its meaning; it is the current context[88] of art that matters most[89]. Belting's insistence on the global and local

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[88] "Efforts to globalise art history often borrow the current discourse of cultural theory where post-colonial debates of identity and migration are prevalent" notes Hans Belting, *The Global Art World : Audiences, Markets, and Museums*, eds Andrea Buddensieg and Emanoel Arau\Jo (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009) at 47.

dimension of art points to cosmopolitanism as a qualifying character of contemporary art. Only such art is capable of undertaking a "critical analysis of today's most debated (or neglected) issues" (2009: 55). The critical message of contemporary art is possible precisely thanks to its simultaneous global scope and local significance that is no longer contained in a civilizational master narrative of modernity.

The global outlook and critical edge of contemporary art is a recent development, yet it is one that has been especially noticeable and socially resonant in Central-Eastern Europe as it was shedding the yoke of communism and transitioning into democracy. Through the second half of twentieth century in various ways artistic expression undermined the authoritarian cultural hegemony of the ruling nomenklatura in the former Eastern bloc. And after 1989 contemporary art continued to critically elaborate on social reality, this time most often in reaction to the re-emergence of xenophobic nationalism. Piotr Piotrowski shows an array of renowned and contentious contemporary art projects from Central-Eastern Europe that critically elaborated on questions of memory, nationalism and social reality in the region as it underwent regime transformation into democracy[90] (2010). In *Agorafilia* he shows how art produces new understandings of the national and the political in the context of new democratic standards after communism. Art in Central-Eastern Europe was and is in conflict with dominant ideologies of the state and market. Piotrowski rebukes the seeming

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[89] More on this in Peter Weibel et al., *Global Studies : Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture* (1., neue Ausg. edn., A Zkm Book; Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011) 445 p.

[90] Piotrowski points to the different between deliberative democracy that strives at a consensus (Habermas) and antagonistic pluralism Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (Phronesis; London ; New York: Verso, 1993) vii, 156 p, Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London ; New York: Verso, 2000) xii, 143 p., where the public sphere is a place of a never-ending conflict that is vital for the existence of democracy. He sees critical art as part of the latter.

'powerlessness' of art and shows how its meaning-making 'power' had tangible political results both under communism and after (Havel and Keane 1985). Yet, art of young democracies of Central-Eastern Europe is subject to a neoliberal free-market understanding of supposed utility of culture. Most importantly it is also faced with the hegemony of conservative discourses both inherited from communism and new ones from the political right wing. Therefore, in accordance with Belting, Piotrowski claims that art after 1989 can no longer be autonomous and abstract in a modernist fashion, but rather postmodern and intrinsically political[91].

An important dimension in analysing this art's political properties, which is highlighted by Piotrowski, is its critical quality. After Edward Said[92], he elaborates on the opposition that exists in art history in interpretation of the symbolic meaning as well as social relevance of art. According to the modernist discourse anything Western has universal qualities (in reality an expression of cultural imperialism), while the rest of the world and its art is essentialised according to supposed ethnic qualities (Piotrowski 2010: 21). This constitutes what Piotrowski calls vertical art history. It is an analysis of art following the world-system metaphor and a hierarchical discourse – the vertical dynamic of cultural flows from the centre to the periphery (Piotrowski 2010: 25, 26). The second perspective is a horizontal one – where each artwork is analysed as speaking to larger issues through the intermediary of its immediate contexts. This way of thinking about art goes against the universalist discourse of modernism. Also Hans Belting in

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[91] He focuses on examples where art questions the hegemony of the post-communist *consensus* of capitalism and conservatism and fight for social change Piotr Piotrowski, *Agorafilia : Sztuka I Demokracja W Postkomunistycznej Europie* (Wyd. 1. edn.; Pozna*n: Dom Wydawniczy "Rebis", 2010) 299 p. at 112-13.

[92] Orientalisation as elaborated by: Said, *Orientalism*.

"Art History after Modernism" notices the existence of two voices in history of European art, the political (Central-Eastern) and largely depoliticised (western) one (2003). He claims that Central-Eastern European artists have always viewed themselves as European, yet after 1989 the social significance of their art, its specific overt politicisation, which came about under communism, became more apparent in opposition to the rest of Europe. Hence, artistic critiques of nationalism in Central Europe can be analysed only according to the specific historical and political context of the region after 1989, following the horizontal art history paradigm.

If modernist art exhibited a tension between the national and the international due to its focus on aestheticism and universalist aspirations, contemporary art can be labelled as postmodern, as much as it is multicultural in terms of content, where the question of identity determines its meaning and social function. Unlike modernist art that wants to be international (supposedly all-encompassing and all-applicable) irrespectively of time, space and identity, contemporary art is transnational – takes into account particularity within a larger scope of reference (Piotrowski 2010: 37). Piotrowski claims that in art history a transnational perspective, rather than an international one, allows us to contextualise the west and its culture through a national scope, 'provincialize'[93] it, in geographical and historical terms. He sees 1989 as a contribution to problematizing art again in terms of the national and many different non-normative identities (Piotrowski 2010: 78).

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[93] Piotrowski presents horizontal art history as a strategy to *provincialize* Europe, after Chakrabarty (50). However he notes that post-colonial studies themselves were often not a universal criticism of the tools of western hegemony, but an affirmation of particular identities – hence their inapplicability to study Central-Eastern Europe (44).

What happened after 1989 in art history was the widening of the geopolitical and geocultural context of Europe. This specific cosmopolitanisation of art in the former East meant going against the modernist fetish of 'neutral' culture deprived of particularities. Piotrowski's analysis shows how contemporary art more than any other form of expression broke established norms and taboos. He sees contemporary art in Central Europe as going deeper into the analysis of social reality than most cultural forms, and as undermining the status quo of national homogeneity. This historically and politically contingent social significance of contemporary art in Central Europe goes hand in hand with the more general modernist social relevance of art in Europe (as outlined before).

If in Europe art has been important for signifying and developing social understandings of nation, Central Europe is an amplified case. It is a place where, beyond modern artistic affirmation of the nation, critiques of authoritarianism and overt nationalism from the artistic field also became remarkably socially relevant. It is not to say that socially engaged and critical art is solely a Central European domain; it does exist elsewhere in the west especially as a domain for minority recognition struggle. Yet the specific post-communist, neo-liberal capitalist, and re-nationalising context of artistic production in Central-Eastern Europe made art especially socially relevant. Central Europe's contemporary art's meaning-making capacity, its ability to represent and construct social self-understandings, especially against dictatorship and then against narrow-minded nationalism, necessitates analysing Central Europe art as its own microcosm. Nevertheless, as shown before, the field of cultural production in this part of Europe also grows out of Europe-wide transnational cultural nationalism. However, due to the post-WWII bipolar world order the trajectory of artistic production in the region

gained it own particularity, which matters even a quarter century after the decomposition of communism. Today's social relevance of art in Central Europe is rooted both in its modernist national heritage and its more recent democratic and critical legacy. The field of artistic production in Central Europe, therefore, constitutes an especially symbolically textured space for analysis of cultural objects that explicitly elaborate on Europe of today. What contemporary art from Central Europe has to say about Europe today is relevant precisely due to its recent critical legacy and exceptional social resonance, as well as to the larger historical context of cultural nationalism it grows out of.

4.2   Contemporary art in Europe today

This part of the chapter investigates in detail particular cases of contemporary art commissioned to "celebrate" Europe. These are art installations that were specially made to celebrate recent Presidencies of the Council of the European Union[94] of Central European member states (2008-2011). They are regarded as key examples of contemporary art objects that took Europe on their agenda – forms of public art that explicitly related to Europe. Their discursive attachment to Europe is contingent on the fact that they were commissioned by member state governments in order to embellish their respective EU Presidencies. Just as national regimes have done in the past – art was bespoke to provide an aesthetic reference or representation of power, governance, and political ideas. These artworks were put on public display in Brussels and their images

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[94] The leadership of the Council of the European Union, comprising heads of the member states, changes every six months. This was the first time when the country from a recent enlargement (2004 & 2007) took the administrative and representational challenge of coordinating the works of the Council and symbolically presiding over the European Union.

travelled to the wider audience across Europe to do the same. Hence, in accordance with the literature in the previous sections, I analyse the meaning-making capacity of this art. I look for any resemblance to how art mediated understandings of the modern nation. I do so especially following the context of Central European art in late twentieth century (Garton Ash 1986). Following the cultural diamond diagram I examine the properties of the artworks themselves. I look into the pursuits of the artists, curators and commissioning actors – the particular officials of member state governments. Subsequently I analyse responses of the audience via media responses. These are treated as representations of the discussions on Europe that were initiated by these artworks – in relation to the wider social context of today's Europe, its economic and political reality, as well as its powerful institutional and bureaucratic dimensions.

The art installations commissioned to celebrate consecutive EU Council Presidencies from Central European countries were to ornament their debuts as rotary leaders of European governance. These countries, which entered the EU after 2004, were making their first appearance in coordinating the political schedule of the Europe construction, whilst having the opportunity to showcase art that symbolically related to their effort, to their nation and to Europe. Most of them belong to core Central Europe – a historically, geographically, culturally, and as of recently politically defined entity (in opposition to the post-communist tag of Eastern Block[95]). The focus on Central European member states is important since, the tradition of critical contemporary art, that engages discursively its audiences, is historically rooted in the region and still much more prevalent there than in the rest of Europe (Belting 2003). It also narrows down the

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[95] The controversial Central Europe vs. Eastern Europe distinction - a rather stark and putative one – is revealed in the 'Bulgarian affair' around Entropa, as elaborated later in the chapter.

case selection to actors that only recently have had to position themselves towards Europe understood as a contemporary political, economic and social construction.

For the same reason the eyes of the European public were focused on how these countries would perform, present themselves and manage the challenge of presiding over the EU. Accordingly, all of the artworks under inquiry were commissioned by member state governments in anticipation of being showcased in Brussels as a spectacle for Europe to see. Hence, the analysis is focused on what happens when art is commissioned by a national member state government on occasion of its symbolic and bureaucratic leadership of Europe, and more so what happens when this art is aimed at being spectated in a European scale. It is observed that on a discursive level such art says as much about these countries as about their ideas of Europe – it is a reflection of national subjectivity vis-à-vis Europe. This national perspective on Europe is analysed employing the production of culture perspective - the choice of the artists, the extent of governmental curatorship, and the value ascribed to showing oneself to Europe. On the other hand, how this art engages audiences, is analysed by tracing the specific discourse of Europe it introduces and the audience reception that follows.

The analysis focuses on whether or not certain kind of transnational discussions on the art and its message took place – as a measure of art's social resonance. From Slovenia in 2008, Czech Republic in 2009, to Hungary and Poland in 2011 – with varying degree of detail – the analysis shows what art had to 'say' about Europe and how it represented particular national subjectivities in relation to Europe. The research confirms that art's discursive facets were more widely received by the public when critical and controversial. If its character was benign, it was met with little reaction, but when it was antagonistic - be that inwardly nationalist or progressively cosmopolitan - it

managed to engage the public and result in an array of responses across Europe and across member states, as evidenced by media attention.

Accordingly, what follows is the analysis of the whole art world of cultural production, namely in what conditions and by what means cultural creators (artists, curators) developed their products, how artistic projects were displayed and promoted. This constitutes the full chain of artistic creation − the artists, curators, critics, cultural organisations, media, as well as the specialised audiences. Taking after the formulation of Becker, an art world is considered to be a distinct social system where the meaning and value of art is produced (Becker 1982; Spillman 2002). To put it simply, art is created not just by individual people (artists), but as a social entity it is developed in complex networks that involve curators, critics, merchants and specialised publics. Becker acknowledges tangible artistic objects that need to be described (formal analysis), but what is equally important is how they communicate publicly. The supposition is that all art is communication and always has an audience of one form or another. Hence, the expressive form of art is not purely aesthetic but through interpretation (defined by psychical and social context) it receives particular meaning. In order to trace that meaning, according to Becker, what has to be studied are "patterns of collective activity" that constitute art worlds, ones that determine "both the production and consumption of art works" (Spillman 2002: 178). Art is not only created[96], but most

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[96] From the perspective of cultural studies, works of arts are seen as 'texts' that are embodiments of meaning. This meaning envisioned by the author/artist is encoded in the artwork. Hence, it is the role of the analysis to decode it. As much as it might be true that concrete messages are encrypted in art, they do not translate readily into exact social understandings: Stuart Hall, *Policing the Crisis : Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Critical Social Studies; London: Macmillan, 1993) xii, 425 p, Stuart Hall, *Culture, Media, Language : Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, ed. University of Birmingham. Centre

importantly it is spectated[97], talked about and therefore becomes socially relevant. Following this public role of art, the consumption of culture side of the cultural diamond, calls us to decipher the meanings attributed to works of art when they reach society. Art is analysed as received by limited audiences rooted in particular social contexts that translate it meanings to the rest of society. In accordance with the cultural diamond diagram, the relationship between art and society is seen as nuanced by modes of consumption that are rooted in economic constraints, political, and historical contexts.

4.2.1   Slovenia & the family of European nations

The first member state to take the helm of the EU from the 'other side' of the Cold War divide was the Republic of Slovenia. The country is not core Central Europe. Its recent Yugoslav history puts it at the margins of the current geo-political Central European formations such as the Visegrád Group, yet its Austro-Hungarian past, inclusion into the project of Mitteleuropa, and the overall cultural specificity of this part of the Western Balkans allows classifying Slovenia as Central Europe for the purpose of the analysis. It is also true that the former Yugoslavia as such, to a degree comparable with Central Europe, witnessed engaged contemporary art intervening in the public domain both before the war of 1991 and after (Piotrowski 2005, 2010).

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for Contemporary Cultural Studies. (London: Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1980) 311p.

[97] Fiske's active audience approach, the analysis takes in account publics' autonomy in creating meaning on the basis of cultural products they are exposed to *Reading the Popular* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989a) 228p, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989b) 206p, *Reading Television* (New Accents; London: Routledge, 1989) 223p (pbk)..

In 2008 on the occasion of their country's Presidency of the Council of the European Union Slovenian officials unveiled a 4x1-meter 2-ton marble stone in front of the headquarters of the Council in Brussels. Slovenian government representatives explicitly referred to the piece as "a monument to Slovenia's first EU Presidency" (Jazbec 2008). The cultural object as such – the marble monument – depicted a phrase from the country's national anthem – "God's blessings on all nations". The caption was inscribed on the surface of the stone in all official languages of the European Union (then 23). According to the official Presidency publications, this fragment of Slovene national poem was chosen by the artist behind the structure, who interpreted it as a call for the "unity among all nations"[98]. Again, in the words of the Presidency the monument was intended to have a particular meaning and mission of symbolically grounding Slovenia in Europe, of connecting the discourse of Slovenian nationhood with the idea of European integration. The artwork was envisioned to be (although phrased somewhat awkwardly) "a statue with a symbolic meaning" for Europe – meaning that it reflected the particular Slovenian take on Europe as a family of nations. This somewhat crude obelisk, apart from a common caption in many languages, bears also a metal plate with a "contour line of Slovenia, outlined with LEDs which gently pulsate in the Slovenian national colours, creating an abstract and somewhat surrealist context" (Programme of Cultural Events, p. 21). Whatever the anticipated surrealism might entail, one clearly sees that the depiction of national references – the country contour and anthem quote – is presented in the company of 'all' other European nations.

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[98] *Programme of Cultural Events* "Slovenian Culture before an EU Audience": http://www.eu2008.si/includes/Downloads/misc/publikacije/KULTweb.pdf

Figure 1 - Boris Podrecca, A lasting souvenir of Slovenia's EU Presidency[99]

On the discourse level, what permeates through these phrases is the assertion of the significance, of the outmost value, of one's nationhood, however, within a larger European family of equal nations. This very modernist emphasis on national sovereignty is no surprise knowing the recent history of Slovenian independence (since 1991). At the same time European integration is positioned here as one of the safeguards of Slovenian national particularity. As if mindful of the changing challenges standing today before (nation) states, European integration is aspired to as a new geopolitical and cultural equilibrium for the nations of Europe. This discursive pattern of a Europe of nations is not uncommon in a conservative philosophical thought on the idea of Europe (Scruton 2012). Equally, the way Europe is invoked here, brings to mind theorisations of the EU as a new optimal world system allowing nationally defined cultural identity to flourish

[99] "A lasting souvenir of Slovenia's EU Presidency in front of Justus Lipsius" 23.06.2008, UKOM/Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia, (http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/June/0623SPBR_Monolit.html)

(Kaldor 2004). It is, however, a somewhat specifically Central European understanding of the utility of the contemporary political idea of Europe. Countries of the region, after coming out of authoritarianism, mindful of their tumultuous and largely non-sovereign history, sought EU accessions as the guarantor of newly found independence. Here specifically the political and economic unity of the EU is presented as a stable foundation for the relatively novel national statehood of Slovenia. It is also framed as a geo-political ideal and standard one can aspire to.

The cultural creators behind the artwork – the Slovenia's government officials – have issued a *Programme of Cultural Events* that elaborates in more detail on the installation mounted in front of the Justus Lipsius building as well as on the accompanying cultural events of the Presidency. The art piece in Brussels together with an array of events presenting Slovenia's "cultural heritage" is aimed to "promote" the country which "is presenting itself to the EU audience for the fi[r]st time" (2008, 8). It is explicitly stated that art exhibits and other cultural happenings are seen as a vehicle of presentation and promotion of the country in front of a European audience. However, this cultural pageant is not framed as a European debut, but rather as a comeback of a country that has "been always a part of the European cultural tradition and art" (2008, 8). This comeback follows the civilizational and cultural seclusion of Slovenia (within communist Yugoslavia) from the rest of continent. To signify this symbolic re-inclusion into Europe Slovenian officials extensively showcased what they perceived as the canonical national art around the EU (and beyond). The whole cultural program had an explicit aim of merging "tradition and contemporary art" – the marble monument in Brussels belonging to the latter category – that clearly reflected the aspirations of the Slovenian government towards Europe. It is a Europe of nations. Hence, the program of

events is argued to facilitate an "intercultural dialogue in the areas of culture" on a European level (2008, 24). The authors of the document and the curators of events make a claim that national cultures belong to a wider European family of cultures. The understanding of diversity in Europe is explicitly linked to variations of national cultural particularity. Both in civilizational and political terms aesthetic culture is presented as a vehicle of self-understanding for the nation. There is also a clear cultural connection being made between the nation and Europe. Specifically it is claimed that modern "art shaped the self-image of Slovenes as confident Europeans" (2008, 28). This connection between the nation and Europe, as understood by the Slovenian Presidency, is especially embodied in the stone carved out by the artist Boris Podrecca.

Nonetheless, neither the cultural program of the Slovenian presidency nor the piece of contemporary art it erected gained significant public attention. There is no evidence of the public responses to such nation-focused understandings of Europe, as presented by the Slovenians. It can be argued that the piece of art in Brussels had little symbolic meaning due to its rather benign character, compared to later cases. Its traditionally celebratory and rather mundane form did not provide the public anything to be interested in. It specifically lacked any critical outlook on Europe, which made it unseen to the wide public despite its discursive potency that showed the aspiration for a certain kind of national Europe.

4.2.2 *Entropa* the artwork - a Czech spectacle for Europe

The subsequent Central European member state to hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union was the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic can be indeed categorised as core Central Europe, not only due to its geographical location and

historical development as a nation but most of all to the very precise self-understandings as Central European on cultural grounds[100]. The Czechs share this specific identity with Poles, Hungarians, and of course with Slovaks, with whom they shared almost a century of statehood. It is equally a geo-political category as a cultural one, in opposition to the post-communist mark of Eastern Europe and a part of a civilizational narrative of the distinctive character of the region and its essentially European allegiance. It can however be evinced that the geo-political developments of modernity took similar shape across the region and more recently that transition into democracy happened along the same lines of peaceful negotiation between the opposition and the authoritarian authorities. Lastly, in all of these countries one can witness a remarkable role of politically engaged artists and public art in both undermining communism and critically elaborating on newly found political independence, the challenges of democracy and the changing meaning of nationhood. This regional particularity justifies the comparison of how contemporary art from these countries was commissioned to 'celebrate' Europe.

In January 2009 the Czech government commenced its symbolic leadership of Europe by unveiling an unusually provocative and attention-grabbing artwork in the atrium of the Justus Lipsius building in Brussels. The cultural object under inquiry constituted a larger-than-life installation measuring 256 square meters, which was

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[100] The insistence on belonging to Central Europe was most notably invoked by Milan Kundera ('The Tragedy of Central Europe'.). In 1984 he saw Central Europe (especially Poland, former Czechoslovakia, and Hungary) as being abducted by the East/West cold war ideological divide and forcibly pushed into the political and cultural realm of the so-called Eastern Block. He lamented over the break of cultural and social ties between the "imprisoned" nations of Central Europe and democratic Western Europe. He highlighted that before the termination of that interaction after 1945, the close ties between Western and Central Europe had a decisive role in the formation of the latter into a culturally distinct region in terms of political, artistic and civic culture.

mounted in the courtyard of the building just above its main entrance. The artwork –
Entropa – resembles a giant pre-assembled air-fix model kit containing then *all* 27
countries of the European Union. Apart from the spatial disarray of EU member states,
each country is decorated with, or simply made out of, hyperbolised stereotypes (of their
alleged national character). Accordingly, the subtitle of Entropa is: "Stereotypes are
barriers to be demolished"[101].

Starting with the upper right corner, the country caricatures are as follows:
Sweden[102] is contained in an IKEA box filled with Grippen fighter-jets that were sold to
the Czech army; Cyprus is cut in half; France is covered by a *"Grève !"* sign signifying
it is permanently on strike; Luxembourg is a lump of (allegedly post-WWII) gold ON
SALE for the highest bidder; Poland[103] is a potato filed on top of which a group of
Catholic monks erect the LGBT rainbow flag (in the fashion of Raising the Flag on Iwo
Jima); Slovenia prides itself with "first tourists" being there as early as "1213"; Bulgaria
is comprised out of a network of Turkish squat toilets with blinking pipelines; Estonia is
crushed by heavy tools in the form of a hammer and a sickle; Portugal[104] is a cutting
board with lumps of meat shaped as its three biggest former colonies – Angola, Brazil,

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[101] This theme is in congruence with the official motto of the Czech Presidency of "Europe without barriers", they both appear on the official press release from 12 January 2009 of the Government of the Czech Republic (http://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/entropa:-stereotypes-are-barriers-to-be-demolished-51807/).

[102] Catalogue entry excerpt by Sonja Aaberg: "Sweden is environment-friendly, politically correct and open to foreign nationals and sexual revolution. (…) I respond critically to this European hypocrisy with an IKEA flat pack in the shape of the Swedish kingdom, which conceals an inconvenient truth".

[103] Catalogue entry excerpt by Leszek Hirszenberg: "A surreal vision of the interconnection of that which cannot be interconnected".

[104] Catalogue entry excerpt by Carla de Miranda: "What were the experiences of the colonized and the colonizers"?

and Mozambique; Denmark is built entirely out of LEGO blocks (allegedly depicting the infamous Muhammad cartoon from *Jyllands-Posten*); Lithuania[105] has three Manneken-Pis-like figures urinating into the East; Ireland is a furry bagpipe with a bald patch in the place of Northern Ireland; Spain is a massive concrete ditch with a mixer stuck in it; Austria is a green pasture with four massive nuclear power plant chimneys in the middle; Greece is burnt to the ground by fire; Hungary is an Atom structure made out of sausages and watermelons; Slovakia is a Hungarian sausage wrapped by a string of its neighbours flag; Italy[106] is a football field of masturbating men - North playing against the South; microscopic Malta is home to an ancient elephant seen though a magnifying glass; the infamously flat Latvia is a big mountain range; Romania[107] in a theme-park-like Dracula's castle; Belgium is a half-eaten box of chocolates; the Czech Republic is a mirror screen with electronic text shown that contains the infamously Euro-sceptic quotes of its former president Václav Klaus; Germany is a network of *Autobahns* forming what could be seen as a swastika or the number '18' used in the neo-Nazi symbolic; Finland is a wooden deck with a man hunting exotic wild animals; the Netherlands are covered by the sea with only minarets sticking out of the water; and the United Kingdom is simply absent leaving a void space.

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[105] Catalogue entry excerpt by Vilma Stasiulyte: "I have adapted this symbol to the situation in my own country. The project can be viewed as an alternative monument to Lithuanian independence and as an outlet for the wrongs of the past".

[106] Catalogue entry excerpt by Francesco Zampedroni "It is a Freudian-kitschy private vision of contemporary Italy, floundering between meaningless traditions and pointless entertainment; it appears to be an auto-erotic system of sensational spectacle with no climax in sight".

[107] Catalogue entry excerpt by Matei Tiron: "Welcome to Dracula Land. We are an endless periphery, a place from where artists make their way to European exhibitions by coach. We are a country that is too poor to support its own culture, but too rich to receive the aid channeled by developed countries into developing countries" (sic!).

These somewhat unpleasant depictions of some countries were not the end of the provocative aspects of the piece. In the official booklet explaining the installation in detail, published by the Presidency office (mentioned in the footnotes), *Entropa* is presented as a collaborative work under the leadership of one of Czech Republic's most renowned contemporary artists, David Černý. The publication outlines the details of each part of the puzzle and explains the choice of stereotypes featured (Černý et al. 2009). It also contains information about each artist commissioned to critically elaborate on her country, including a short bibliography, list of most renowned works, sometimes a website address and other such details.

The artwork had been unveiled in Brussels by Alexandr Vondra, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic for EU Affairs, and Milena Vicenová, the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the European Union. According to Mr Vondra it was to show the cultural diversity of Europe in one common space as well as point to democratic freedom of expression, against prejudice, through ridicule. The idea of the Czech government behind *Entropa* was one of a transnational and intercultural dialogue though art. It implicitly invoked the motto of the EU – *unity in diversity* – and it that sense was thought to be a normative celebration of this discourse, notwithstanding the somewhat controversial form. Nevertheless, it was immediately coined as a metaphor of the European construction in the making, which is yet to be put together to form a complete whole[108].

Entropa was presented as a collaboration of 27 artists, portraying each EU member state, through a stereotypical lens. However, as voices of discontent against

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[108] Some see it quite narrowly as an allegory of the incompatibility of European countries due to persisting nationalism: Johan Fornäs, *Signifying Europe* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012) xi, 339 p., 32 p. of plates.

some caricatures coming from some Brussels' officials and national politicians became louder, and were echoed in the media, it quickly turned out that none of these artists were anywhere to be found. A quick journalistic investigation revealed none of them actually ever existed and that *Entropa* was conceived and made in its entirety by Černý and his collaborators Tomáš Pospiszyl, Krištof Kintera, and Libor Svoboda. Soon enough *Entropa* was recognised by the media as a hoax and a wicked joke pushing Europe's sense of humour to its limits. The Czech Presidency, who had defended the merits of caricatural but nevertheless collaborative work of 27 European artists, was forced to express regret over the misleading authorship of the piece[109]. The controversial artist David Černý himself was pressured to assure the European public about the playfulness of his intentions (on which I elaborate below). The final addition to the installation came after diplomatic interventions of the enraged officials in Sofia (I investigate the scandal in detail later in the chapter). The Bulgarian part (Turkish squat-toilet) was veiled with a black cloth, thus concluding the purely physical form of the spectacle of *Entropa*.

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[109] As part of distancing itself from *Entropa* the Czech Presidency took down the official booklet "Stereotypes are barriers to be demolished" from its website (http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=8282&down=yes - object not found). However, the piece remained in the Justus Lipsius building until mid-May of 2009 (instead of end of June), which was a result of the collapse of the ruling coalition in Prague rather than the dismay with the installation.

Figure 2 - David Černý, Entropa[110]

    Entropa was readily chastised as a swindle, yet from the perspective of art history the idea of false authorship is very much a vital part of an artistic project that goes beyond the mere object. By inventing 26 different European artists, with elaborate alter egos existing in the form of artistic statements, biographies and websites, Černý pointed to the superficiality of what many consider to be public art (McLane 2012). He undermined the belief in the verity of artistic statements for understanding art's message. The public meaning of *Entropa* was independent of the fictitious artists; their non-existence didn't matter for how they resonated socially. Following Ranciere, the artist was dead, and the artwork lived a life of its own in the responses it generated. Furthermore, *Entropa* criticised political mentorship over art – the bureaucratic fashion

[110] Entropa installation, David Černý, Justus Lipsius Plaza, Brussels, Belgium; photo credit Marek Blahuš, 5 January 2015 via Flickr, Creative Commons Attribution.

in which it was commissioned and the subsequent unwillingness to take responsibility for the outcome of the controversy (McLane 2012: 3).

The properties of the cultural object that is the artwork are inherently political with the subversive caricatures of EU countries being essential to exercise its critical public function. Hence, it succeeded into catalysing public engagement (mostly through media coverage) and opening a discussion over stereotypes in a transnational European public space. According to McLane, "*Entropa* represented a test of Europe's readiness for the awkwardness inherent in managing a diverse society that upholds political and artistic freedom on behalf of its citizens" (2012: 8). Černý used the public venue of the Council of the European Union to speak out against national egocentrism by demonstrating its traumas and complexes. From the perspective of art history *Entropa* is the kind of public art that exposes conflict rather than resolves it – its offensiveness is part of its brilliance, of its provocative nature (it is an antagonist intervention into the public sphere, as Mouffe[111] would have it). However, according to McLane "the gambit of Černý's provocation – figuratively dismantling the EU and erecting polemical barriers drawn from cultural stereotypes as a ploy to encourage more meaningful conference between the member states – went unchecked" (2012: 9). This might have been the case in the initial stages of the controversy. However, if one looks at the cross-European discussions on stereotypes that unfolded after, one can see how they went beyond superficial critiques, both in particular member states and transnationally across all of Europe[112] - on which I elaborate below.

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[111] More on the concepts of *artistic activism* and *agonistic spaces* in Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*.

[112] One case is Bulgaria, on which I elaborate below. The other is Poland, where the ridicule of its infamously homophobic former leaders was largely received as a good *Czech* joke *based in truth*

Entropa, as cultural object scrutinised from the perspective of art history theory, is a curious spectacle of the quotidian (stereotypes) and of the political (EU Presidency) in regard to the changing symbolic order in Europe (Zigelyte 2012). It is theatrically critical in how it shows identity struggles in an integrating Europe and it does so through falsification and performance, where "one's national identity is exposed to international ridicule" (Zigelyte 2012: 63). Falsification happens in the spectacle perpetrated by David Černý - the multi-layered mystification of the artwork, the artists, and their discourses. Its social reception is the theatre where different national and transnational actors come together to negotiate its meaning (as posed by Zigelyte[113]). However, *Entropa* as a work of art was not just the physical installation in Brussels, but the whole entourage of invented artists, their statements featured in the booklet, their websites, as well as the reaction of EU officials, national politicians, and European citizens *en masse*. From the perspective of art history, the logic of deception it employed can be seen as its crucial component. It was the hoax of *Entropa* that allowed it to be a truly critical and engaged work of public art. It was the falsification of national stereotypes and artistic personas (that supposedly have perpetrated them) that managed to catalyse heated reactions across Europe and instigate a truly transnational dispute. The elaborate structure of *Entropa* included the 27-part physical installation in Brussels and the larger mystification of its authorship with forged publications, identities, and artistic platforms. Such am explicitly political and socially engaged quality constitutes public art.

(http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/polska-to-zakonnicy-z-gejowskim-sztandarem,82361.html#). At the same time the piece with Poland was exhibited a year later in the *Ars Homo Erotica* exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw, coinciding with Euro Pride 2010.

[113] Lina Zigelyte, 'Gazing at Fiction in Brussels: Europe as Forgery in David Cerny's Entropa', *European Review,* 20/1 (2012), 54.

Accordingly, the following section goes on to investigate what David Černý actually had in mind when creating the piece and what kind of reactions this spectacle actually generated.

4.2.2.1 David Černý - the critical artist

In order to further inquire into the critical pursuits of the artwork, the agenda of David Černý himself is explored. In a fashion known from notable examples of contemporary art, in *Entropa* the *artist is present[114]*, despite the seeming absence of fictitious artists. Černý, however, as a cultural producer, was instrumental throughout the process of production and consumption of the cultural object. He was responsible for conceptualising the project, performing the hoax and then explaining its merits. As shown before, from the perspective of an art historical analysis, *Entropa* is a provocative spectacle that employs necessary mystification to convey its message. Černý has explained his idea for the artwork by calling it a 'purifying self-irony' of Europe (BBC Monitoring European 2009b).

The controversial quality of Černý's work could not have come as a surprise knowing his artistic legacy[115]. More than once before his critical elaboration on the

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[114] *Marina Abramović : The Artist Is Present* (2010) (Museum of Modern Art,) 224 p. : ill. (some col.) ; 31 cm. + 1 sound disc (digital ; 4 3/4 in.).

[115] One of his most notable projects was the *Pink Tank* (1991). Under the newly found democratic order it was his first intervention into the public sphere in a democratic fashion. The tank was a monument (remnant of World War II) and a symbol of Soviet 'liberation', yet it stayed untouched after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Černý painted it pink, a color that has nothing to do with the military, he also attached the middle finger on its top. Anticipated as a test of the early stages of transformation the piece caused public uproar and showed the underlying tensions of the divided Czechoslovak society. As much as a portion of society appreciated the playfulness of the project, it was also accused of vandalism and

social world caused public uproar and wide controversy - during regime transformation in Czechoslovakia and in the democratic Czech Republic. Černý had an established record of provocation he could not breach; he had to prove his politicised legacy and produced a hoax of epic proportions in the middle of European politics (McLane 2012: 4, 6). Hence, the style and the idea behind *Entropa* very much corresponds to Černý's politicised aesthetics and the type of critical public engagement he had been undertaking throughout his career. Even his website[116], which explains *Entropa* in detail, at first lets the user believe that *Entropa* was (albeit controversial) a collaborative work aimed at ridiculing stereotypes. The opening paragraphs of his artistic statement uphold the initial official reasoning behind the piece (represent the platform of the Czech Presidency) as well as the "self-reflection" and "critical thinking" of different European artists about their national stereotypes. The statement (which was also in the official booklet of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs) describes Europe as one – historically, cultural, politically – and presents a caricature of the EU puzzle in the process of being put together. The parody and self-criticism are considered as "hallmarks of European thinking". Only after comes the explanation of the actual doings of Černý and his idea behind *Entropa* – the initial mystification is still there, again proving it to be an integral

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desecration. It showed how slow the changes in the collective mentality were, and how a symbol of Soviet domination was still perceived as something sacred and belonging to the national symbolic register [115]. The ideological discourse of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic lingered in the minds of a significant portion of society. In 2006 David Černý produced another very controversial piece in the *Shadows of Humour* exhibit shown in Wrocław and then Bielsko-Biała in southern Poland. The *Shark* depicts naked and bound Saddam Hussein contained in a large fish tank (before his execution). It was a parody of Damien Hirst's *Shark* (1991) shown in the Saatchi Gallery in London (Piotrowski 2010: 275). Černý's *Shark* was shown still before the execution of the dictator on 30 December 2006, yet is caused such controversy that the mayor of Bielsko removed it and had to be shown elsewhere (Cieszyn).

[116] David Černý, 'Entropa', (2009).

part of the project. In the following paragraph all is revealed. *Entropa* is called a mystification and it is presented as Černý's dystopic degenerated vision of Europe. The text explains the liberties taken by Černý in compiling the installation and his entourage in secrecy from the Czech Presidency. *Entropa* is called a "politically incorrect satire" that was meant to provoke the European audience as a whole and test its capacity for self-ridicule. The text also emphasizes the particular aspects of his artistic gaze. Satirising of each European country is done from the Czech perspective – a glocal one (after Belting), cosmopolitan in its European perspective, and informed by the local Czech context. It also underscores that "grotesque hyperbole" and "mystification" are an integral part of Czech culture and the mentality[117] of its society, as well as of established approaches in contemporary art. On his website Černý claims his move was very provocative, since it parodies each country and itself as a piece of public art - all in pursuit of distance and irony in seeing oneself.

After the true identity of Entropa was revealed Černý spoke about the work and defended its merits on more than one occasion[118]. Right after the scandal erupted he assured the public opinion that it was not his intention to offend anyone in particular (Walker 2009a), but that he upholds his premise of wanting to incite a playful yet critical reflection on stereotypes in Europe. In an interview with *Lidové noviny* on 15 January 2009 he admits that is was not the supposed lack of funds and time that prevented him

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[117] The playful nature of Czech public life and its manifestations in art are colorfully examined in: Mariusz Szczygieł, *Gottland* (Wyd. 1. edn., Reportaż; Wołowiec: Wydawn. Czarne, 2006) 237 p, Mariusz Szczygieł, *ZróB Sobie Raj* (Wyd. 1. edn., Sulina; Wołowiec: Wydawn. Czarne, 2010) 289 p.

[118] During a press conference at the European Council one of his collaborators Tomaš Pospiszyl said that "the medium of *Entropa* is not fibre glass, but mystification; the genre of this work is satire" of both politically correct celebratory art and controversial public art. He also stressed that *Entropa* envisaged the "overall complexity of Europe" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T84mAlJzsek).

from employing 26 different artists from across the EU, but that he realised it would be much more fun this way (BBC Monitoring European 2009b). Černý explains this playful assertion by saying that he wanted to test Europe's sense of humour, "perhaps prematurely", and strongly believes in the cathartic power of *Entropa*. At the same time he added that if anyone was to be insulted, it should the current President of the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus, whose infamously Euro-sceptic and sometimes embarrassing quotes were displayed on *Entropa* (AFP 2009).

In March 2009, in a public debate, Černý elaborated on the whole controversy with continued fervency. He actually wished depictions of some countries could have been more provocative, but was content with how art has proven its capacity to "inspire political debate and action" (British Council 2009). These statements show the general critical attitude of Černý towards the concept of national pride, the current state of the European construction and the political apathy of some contemporary art. His interventionist convictions, manifested in the attempt to revive the political function of art, necessitated instigation of public unrest. The contentious, provocative and borderline offensive nature of his work made it very much an exercise in antagonistic pluralism. As will be shown below, the deliberate intention behind the mystification and the blasphemy to sharpen its critical edge turned *Entropa* into a symbol of antagonist exchange within a transnational European public sphere.

4.2.2.2   A Europe-wide 'provincial' controversy

Entropa was provocative in how it ridiculed national pride and hyperbolised stereotypes; most importantly its reception took place on a European scale. *Entropa* had the aim of facilitating a discussion on prejudice and national phobias. The exchange of otherwise

vicious biases, their display out in the open, was meant to antagonise the public opinion at first and then lead to a purifying experience. As shown above, Černý's aim of a discursive catharsis used Europe and its enduring nationalisms as means of provocation. Below, I show the different kinds of reception *Entropa* received, as they surfaced in the media across Europe. I claim that the different ways in which immediate audiences appreciated *Entropa* show how social understandings of Europe are constructed vis-à-vis the nation.

After it was revealed that Černý had deceived the Czech government, the reactions varied from disbelief to dismay. What Černý did went completely contrary to expectations, not only of Czech officials, but also of the media, who expected art that would depict Europe in a postcard-like fashion, known from 'celebratory' art. The array of media responses especially highlights transnational quality of responses to *Entropa*. In January 2009 *The International Herald Tribune* noticed quite bluntly that there is "something seriously weird" (sic!) about *Entropa*. It went on to explain to its readers that the piece "was meant to symbolise the glory of a unified Europe by reflecting something special about each country in the European Union" (Lyall 2009b). This reflects the general sentiment across the media at the time, from liberal and conservative newspapers to tabloids – expectation of an uncritical celebration of European integration and the shock in the face of something completely opposite. It is a "hoax" announced *The Times*, which continued to explain how the piece contained nothing else but "vulgar national stereotypes" (David Charter 2009a). *Česká tisková kancelář*[119] reported a "scandal" of European proportions that might jeopardise the image of the Presidency - other major European press agencies (APF, dpa, PAP, Associated Press, ITAR-TASS)

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[119] Czech News Agency

and news outlets follow (BBC Monitoring European 2009c). *Radio Free Europe* reported an "embarrassing start to the Czech Republic's EU Presidency" (Heil 2011). Černý was even said to have taken a "jab at the continent itself" (Atlas Obscura 2011). At least in the beginning the idea of mystification was unknown or incomprehensible to the public and hence sensationalist uproar about the supposed offensiveness of the artwork was in full swing.

As interest in *Entropa* grew, so did understanding of it, which triggered both further negative, as well as positive reactions. Before *Entropa* the Czech Republic, assuming the Presidency of the EU, was portrayed in the media as a country led by a (global warming denying) Euro-sceptic president that was bound to divide the EU, but the artwork managed to overshadow the discussion. The interest in the symbolic dimension overshadowed the degree of administrative efficiency and political skill of the Czech Presidency. *The Financial Times* wrote in somewhat nuanced fashion that it was a "collective sense of humour failure of epic propositions", alluding to the reactions rather than the piece itself (2009). *The Daily Mail* predictably informed readers about "Britain entirely wiped off the face of Europe" (Walker 2009a). However, with unusual moderation it noted how the lack of the UK in *Entropa* signified British distance[120] from Europe. It cited Lorraine Mullally from *Open Europe* who called *Entropa* "harmless fun" and praised the Czech sense of humour. Also in Britain, *The Guardian* followed, calling *Entropa* "audacious" in the way it offended virtually every country and noting its name, which signifies disorder. It called *Entropa* a "state of the art insult-spewing

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[120] Laurie Waller analyses UK's absence as symptomatic of its stance on the EU, neither for nor against, but simply as an allegory of its removal from European issues all together. She blames the tabloid media, and lack of real space in the public sphere to discuss European issues and UK's place in the EU Laurie Waller, 'Avoiding Entropa', *Renewal : a Journal of Labour Politics,* 17/2 (2009), 21.

technology" that was brave enough to go against the expectations of the political establishment and succeeded in doing so (Hyde 2009).

Also Czech officials defended *Entropa's* controversial quality. Jan Vytopil responsible for the cultural events during the Czech Presidency emphasized the ground-breaking and provocative capacity of the installation. So did Deputy Prime Minister Vondra, who claimed that "*Entropa* will be the sole thing that people will remember in connection with the Czech presidency even in several years", to also immediately add that "it is art, nothing more, nothing less" (BBC Monitoring European 2009a). Permanent Representative Milena Vicenová defended *Entropa* as an expression of freedom of speech (whilst mentioning that it has been 20 years since the fall of the *Iron Curtain*). It seems that the Czech Presidency wanted to achieve the impossible. It wanted to assure people of *Entropa's* insignificance and appease voices of protest, and at the same time defended it on the grounds of artistic freedom. As mentioned above, in the end Prague gave in, and the most controversial Bulgarian part of the installation was covered (during nightfall) with a black veil. The Turkish squat-toilet became unseen, yet still very much visible and the controversy only intensified, especially in Bulgaria.
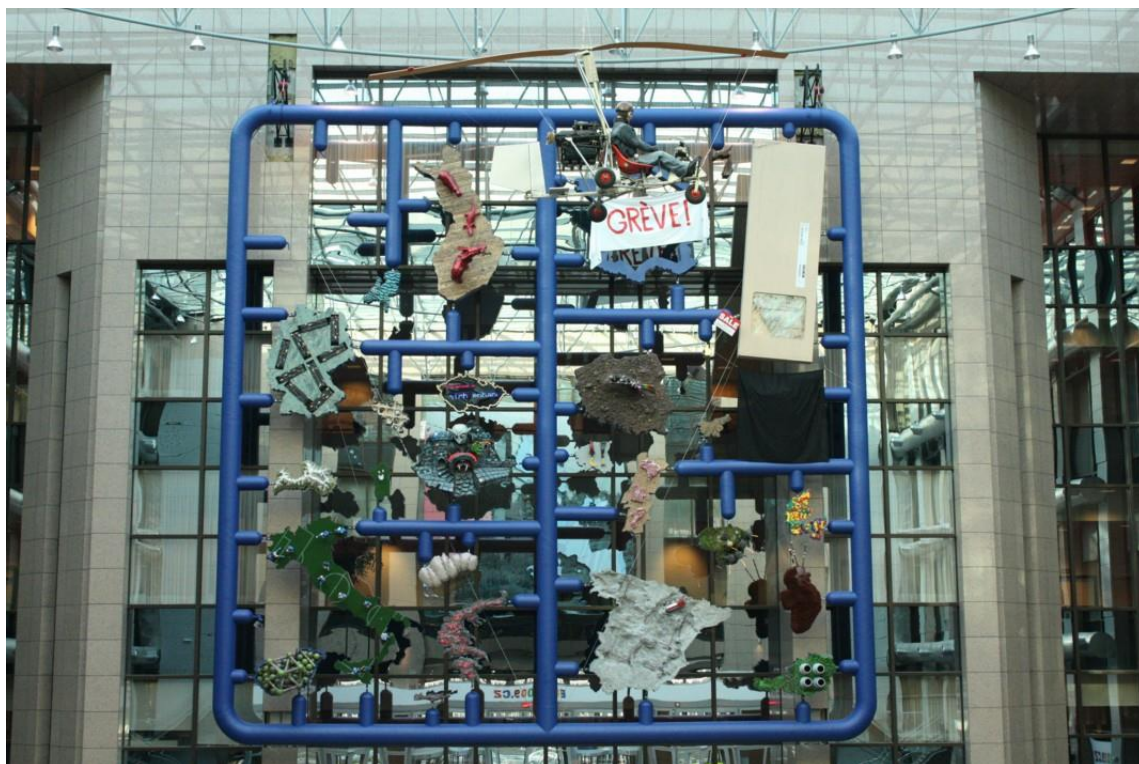
Figure 3 – David Černý Entropa II (with veiled Bulgaria)[121]

The Bulgarian affair is a particular example how *Entropa* resonated transnationally across Europe as a piece of public art, how its critical and provocative content managed to ignite fervently negative reactions from state officials in Sofia, and how Bulgaria's sense of nationhood is reinvented vis-à-vis Europe today. The provoking depiction of Bulgaria as a squat-toilet*[122]* magnified different attitudes towards the installation across

[121] Entropa II, (with veiled Bulgaria), David Černý, Justus Lipsius Plaza, Brussels, Belgium; photo credit Daniel Antal, 5 January 2015 via Flickr, Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike.

[122] It wasn't just the physical depiction of the country's contour in form of a toilet that was seen as belligerent. The fictitious artist Elena Jelebova, who supposedly created the Bulgarian entry, explained her intention as an attempt to "cope with false patriotism and find relief from the destitution of Bulgarian material and spiritual life". Černý's Bulgarian alter ego wanted "to cause a scandal" and saw her work as "a punk gesture, intentionally primitive and vulgar, faecally pubertal" (Černý et al. 2009: 6). Again this proves that deceit, provocation, and antagonism were the intentions behind *Entropa* all along – they were integral parts of the work.

Europe and in Bulgaria vis-à-vis Europe. After *Entropa* was presented in Brussels and its images were reproduced across European media, the official structures of the Bulgarian state responded accordingly to what they thought was "a humiliation for the Bulgarian nation an offence to national dignity", in the words of the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the European Union (Jamie 2009). Sofia sent diplomatic notes to the government of Mirek Topolánek and to the Czech President Václav Klaus. This pressure resulted in veiling of the Bulgarian piece of *Entropa* and at the same time drawing even more attention to its content. What followed were some other semi-official responses from Bulgaria, directed mainly at Europe. A former Bulgarian centrist MPs Tosho Peykov together with the *13 Centuries of Bulgaria*[123] foundation staged a counter exhibition in March 2009 in the buildings of the European Parliament in Brussels.

These attempts[124] at restoring Bulgaria's good name did find appeal in conservative circles. The ultra-conservative *Nova Zora* daily (*The New Dawn*) cheered these efforts to defend Bulgaria's dignity in Europe. It scolded the supporters of Černý in the country and accused them of lacking patriotism (Nova Zora 2009). These rather personal attacks on cultural professionals and intellectuals in Bulgaria who sympathised

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[123] The exhibit was framed as the "most obvious" artistic response to *Entropa* since "majority of Bulgarians" found Entropa "unacceptable" (Mediapool.bg 2009). The Bulgaria in full glory exhibition was meant to wash away the "stain" of Entropa and contained pieces from the Bulgarian national artistic canon.

[124] Another response was a rather poor remake of *Entropa* featuring supposedly more equal distribution of offensive depiction of other countries Petko Stoyanov, 'Entropa - Petko Stoyanov - Is Europe Really Able to Laugh at Itself?', (2012, 2009), Project of Petko Stoyanov against "Entropa" of David Cerny, Aglika Georgieva, 'Авторът На Римейка На „Ентропа" Петко Стоянов: Обиждат Ни, Защото Виждат Как Се Псуваме Помежду Си (the Author of the Remake of "Entropa" Petko Stoyanov: Insult Us Because They See How Swearing Each Other)', *Новинар (Novinar)* (Sofia, Bulgaria, 2009). This project criticized Černý's work for being allegedly "ill-considered and conservative, but also philistinian and bourgeois" (sic!).

with *Entropa* were also profoundly Euro-sceptic and chastised the artwork as the new "cultural standard of Europe" at Bulgaria's expense. On the other side of the spectrum were voices such as that of Sofia City Art Gallery curator; Maria Vassileva spoke out against the censorship inherent in the state's reactions and playfully argued that "art will always outwit politicians and it happened" (Vassileva 2009). She argued that it was Bulgaria that made *Entropa* famous and that the country's political establishment hit rock bottom in its hyperbolised grievances (while other countries reacted in more civilised ways). Vassileva praised the artistic merits of the installation as a spectacle for Europe that was meant to facilitate a conversation, one that thanks to the heated reactions never really took place. She claimed that this political satire shocked Bulgarian politicians because it "showed the truth – the entropy of the state". She continued to say that contemporary art is meant to be critical and independent of the state, unlike the situation during 45 years of communism in Bulgaria. If the Bulgarian state wanted to a postcard-like depiction of the country, it simply wouldn't have been accurate, she concluded.

In similar vein Dessy Gavrilova wrote for *Open Democracy* on how Bulgarians have forgotten about the critical capacity of art. She described the protest note of the Bulgarian representative to the EU as "small-minded and disproportionate" - a reaction that reveals the "mind set of Bulgarian institutions", the "complexes of its media", its "latent nationalism", "lack of a sense of humour", and "profound ignorance about contemporary art" (Gavrilova 2009). Paradoxically, Gavrilova sees the success of *Entropa* in its ability to ignite such disproportioned reaction of Bulgaria. The uproar was counterproductive to those who condemned *Entropa*; their fervent protests catalysed the discussion about the artwork and its critique of stereotypes. She underlines that the most

prominent cultural figures and institutions in Bulgaria "laughed at the "Turkish toilet" metaphor (while only wondering why the toilet was depicted as so clean…) and congratulated the non-existent Bulgarian artist Elena Jelebova for her daring work" (Gavrilova 2009). After the Bulgarian piece had been veiled European public opinion visibly sided with *Entropa's* advocates in Bulgaria[125]. Voices from abroad such Slavenka Drakulić's came to aid *Entropa*. The famous Croatian writer, known for her colourful prose on the otherwise grey reality of real socialism, scolded the Bulgarian officials for not realising that art should be shielded from political pressure. From an also post-communist perspective she reminded Bulgaria that art can no longer serve as propaganda "regardless of how tasteless or offensive a particular work might be" (Drakulić 2009). She praised Černý for staging an "admirable coup" (hence the title of her article in *The Guardian*: *Gran coup de toilette*). In her view the nationalist and authoritarian sentiments in Bulgaria were a Cold War legacy. Drakulić's take on *Entropa* encapsulates the positive voices that appreciated the provocative hyperboles of national stereotypes as means of overcoming them.

Bulgaria's internal split over its European image illustrates the symbolic divide over *Entropa* and over the understandings of Europe that it represented and constructed. The dispute over *Entropa* as a piece of contemporary art took place on an unprecedentedly transnational scale. First the media reported about the controversy in general, then Bulgaria entered the stage and reignited the debate around its national pride. Europe deliberated on the place of stereotypes and nationalism in the process of

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[125] After being covered, quite playfully, the country was said to be "depicted as a Turkish toilet wearing a Burqa" Novinite.Com, 'Bulgaria Covered with Black Cloth on Czech Insulting Art Piece "Entropa"', *Sofia News Agency*, 2009.

EU integration, on the public role of art, and on the limits of artistic provocation. *Entropa* was a spectacle that suggested a provocative and critical understanding of Europe as a space where stereotypes can be obliterated if ridiculed. On the other hand, many opposing views were voiced in regard to the nation and its place in Europe. In that sense *Entropa* succeeded in provoking public reflections on Europe today.

4.2.3 The Hungarian national cause - in spite of Europe?

In January 2011, Hungary[126] commenced its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Like the Czech Republic, Hungary belongs to core Central Europe, both in terms of historical developments, current geo-politics, as well as a considerable cultural self-understanding[127]. As before an artwork was commissioned to decorate the atrium of the Justus Lipsius building in commemoration of the symbolic Hungarian leadership of Europe. And, as before, it became widely known for its controversial message. This time, however, the discursive content of the art installation did not directly reference Europe, but rather reflected a narrowly national understanding of Hungary's place in Europe through history. It was the excessive focus on the particularistic national perspective of the bearer of the Presidency on Europe that took the public by surprise.

According to the official press release of the Presidency (<eu2011.hu>) the artwork – the cultural object under inquiry – consisted of an assemblage of historical events and artefacts constituting Hungarian cultural heritage in the form of a carpet. This football field-size art installation was aimed at showing the richness of Hungarian culture over the ages and its contribution to Europe. It showed a linear narrative of the

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[126] Back then still the Republic of Hungary, before its constitutional reform of 2012.

[127] Krzysztof Varga, *Gulasz Z Turula* (Wyd. 1. edn.; Wolowiec: Wydawnictwo "Czarne", 2008).

development of nationally defined *Magyar* statehood and identity, while highlighting the role of the 'ambassadors' of Hungary to the rest of the world, such as Liszt and others. According to the Presidency, the message of the carpet was claimed to be not only historical, but also forward-looking where "Hungary is seen as a country of potential, and Europe as the continent of potential"[128]. However, this very nation-focused presentation of the country to Europe was met with unsympathetic reactions from the European public, which saw it not only as a national celebration, but also as a tool of imposing symbolic hegemony over its historical neighbours.

Figure 4 - Lívia Pápai, The Cultural History of Hungary in a Carpet[129]

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[128] http://www.eu2011.hu/

[129] "The Cultural History of Hungary in a Carpet", Department for EU Presidency Communications of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, Article date: 2011, January 13 - 3:08pm Last modified date: 2011, January 13 - 3:14pm – (http://www.eu2011.hu/news/cultural-history-hungary-carpet#sthash.jGjY7RAs.dpuf)

"Hungary's cultural history carpet", besides being an unexciting textbook-like display of artefacts deemed to best symbolise the Hungarian nation, embarked on a very particular historiographical quest. While showing off the best and the brightest of Hungarian culture the carpet included the map of Hungary in the year 1848. It was then, during the *Spring of the Nations*, when Hungary rose against Austria and its empire, and for a brief moment controlled a vast territory comprising today's Slovakia, as well as significant chunks of Romania (Transylvania), Ukraine, Serbia, and even Croatia and Slovenia. Such depiction of Hungary constituted a 15 m² centrepiece of the 202 m² artwork shown in the heart of Europe, literally at the centre of EU politics in Brussels. Naturally, such a heavily nationalist vision of the country (in the heyday of its alleged imperial greatness) could not have gone unnoticed. For around a month after its unveiling in Brussels *the Carpet saga* (as it was coined by the Financial Times) echoed throughout Europe, mostly in Vienna, Bratislava, Bucharest, Ljubljana, Zagreb, and of course in Budapest.

The upheaval was not a result by any factual inaccuracy of the map - in 1848 the kingdom of Hungary did include all of these lands. But the very curatorial choice to put the depiction of this moment in history as the centrepiece of the art installation celebrating the Hungarian Presidency had a tremendous symbolic effect. Some saw it just as an affirmation of a romantic modernist national idea; however, the majority of the media in Europe saw it as intrinsically nationalist and paired it with the intensifying revisionist rhetoric of the right-wing Orbán government in Budapest. The Hungarian Presidency administration defended the artist behind the carpet and pointed out that the historical moment featured on the map depicted proto-democratic movements in Europe against the imperial breakdown of Europe in mid ninetieth century. One state official

called it "an expression of democratic ideas"[130]. However, historically the Hungarian revolutionaries fighting for national self-determination were not only going against the imperial hegemon of Austria, but were also successfully suppressing the national cause of Slovaks, Romanians, and Croats. It was therefore peculiar that a map of Hungary that appropriated vast chunks of its neighbours' territories was chosen to be part of a composition celebrating the rotating EU Presidency.

To better understand the controversy, one has to take into account the prominence of Hungarian minorities in these lands until today and the controversial attempts of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to extend Hungarian citizenship and voting rights to these populations. The upheaval over the carpet of "cultural history" and its alleged revisionist aspirations was mostly noticeable amongst Hungary's geographical neighbours. Yet, in time, the controversy gained transnational recognition, especially due to the various heated responses it generated including modifications to the piece itself. The first alteration was made by the liberal MP Alojz Hlina[131] of the Slovakian *Národná rada* (Parliament) who covered up the map with signs urging Europe to stop the historical falsity. His stunt was widely televised and got him arrested for 5 hours by the Belgian police. Soon after, however, the Hungarian Presidency itself covered up the carpet, which began a new chapter of the "saga" - a chapter about the politics of the unseen.

According to various sources within the Presidency *the Carpet* was covered for three different reasons. First, it was meant to ensure it remained intact despirte the heavy

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[130] http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/2011/02/latest-on-the-hungarian-media-law-and-the-carpet/#

[131] Obyčajní Ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti (Ordinary People and Independent Personalitie)s
http://www.alojzhlina.sk/cms/index.php/the-news/70-video-z-bruselu
http://www.sme.sk/c/5725451/hlinu-zadrzala-belgicka-policia.html

traffic of people and equipment traffic during the upcoming EU summit. The second reason was that Fidesz (ruling Hungarian party) politicians themselves disliked the idea of a carpet "since it allowed important national symbols to be trampled on"[132]. The third reported reason was that ""presidency decoration" [was] no longer allowed at the Justus Lipsius building during EU summits"[133]. The FT, in rather humorous fashion described the step as the "Great Carpet Cover-up". None of the reasons seems wholly probable, but the 'veiling' of the carpet showed that the European resonance of the controversy was noticed by Budapest. In the eyes of the public, the depiction of *Greater Hungary* was not a critical take on European integration likw the Czech *Entropa*, but rather an undercover irredentist sentiment coming from positions of ethno-cultural and historicised national nostalgia. The upheaval was caused by the "fervently nationalist"[134] quality of the artwork that in no way could be reconciled with the somewhat post-national aspirations of the EU (whatever they might be). It was especially the way in which this artwork reemphasised national borders that to different degrees have been abolished within the EU, which surfaced in various commentaries about the carpet. Hungary's carpet pointed to the moment in modern history where it exerted most might over its neighbours and when Europe was heading towards the heyday of nationalism. However, the real effect of this somewhat propagandist depiction was a transnational upheaval, which signified that Europe can no longer be only understood through a national lens.

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[132] http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/2011/02/eu-summit-hungarian-carpet-cover-up/

[133] http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/2011/02/one-last-note-on-the-hungarian-carpet-for-now/#

[134]http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2011/01/15/the-hungarian-carpet-scandal-in-brussels-bad-luck-or-something-else/

4.2.4   A Polish Rainbow for Europe

Directly after Hungary the Presidency of the Council of the European Union was taken over by the Republic of Poland – yet another specifically Central European country. The Rainbow had its official unveiling in 2011, when the Presidency of the Council of the European Union was taken over by Poland from Hungary. The atrium of the Justus Lipsius building which traditionally hosted government commission art was decorated only with an ornamental artwork – an interactive light installation of Polish interior design. But Brussels itself became a space of a robust cultural program including many pieces of contemporary art erected in public spaces. Most notable was the Rainbow, which was mounted in the esplanade of the European Parliament on *Place du Luxembourg*.

The Rainbow was a piece of conceptual contemporary art of impressive proportions – a 10m high, 26m wide, 8 ton steel arch, - covered with over 16000 artificial flowers of different colours so as to form a rainbow. It stood in front of the main entrance to the European Parliament until the end of 2011 as the dominant part of the *Fossils and Gardens* exhibit. In the words of the curators of the Presidency exhibit, the display was aimed to show Polish artistic projects that represent "separate narratives which all ultimately relate to the notion of a united Europe and draw on common traditions" (Szewczyk 2011). The exhibit, of which the Rainbow was part, was envisioned to show Poland and the Poles from a self-critical and humorous angle in relation to the ideals of a united Europe. The display in Brussels ended with the Polish Presidency, but the life of the Rainbow as a piece of public art continued.

It is important to be aware of the idea behind the installation and the process of its production, which is an integral part of discursive content. The cultural creator behind

the piece – the artist – Jultia Wójcik originally named the installation *Flower Power*, as an allegory of the multiple culturally embedded symbolisms of flowers and a rainbow in Europe and in Poland. These are inter alia: prosperity, cooperation, felicity, hope, peace, tolerance, and LGBTI rights. The very process of artistic production was done according to these ideals. Wójcik manufactured the Rainbow by establishing the *Council of Artistic Craftsmanship,* comprised of volunteers; it engaged people of different vocations, social standing, and nationality. She began its construction within the framework of a collaborative project open to the public[135]. Following the cooperativist execution of the project, Wójcik took the Rainbow to Wilamowice[136] on the outskirts of Oświęcim[137] to finish its assemblage with youth from the area, as well as from Germany, Austria, and the Baltic States. Wójcik's artistic vision of the Rainbow as a forward-looking symbol of peace and tolerance from Poland to Europe became phase one of the project (unofficially so) until it stood in Brussels (Wójcik 2011). It was not until it became part of the landscape of Warsaw that it generated conflicting reactions, which revealed its full discursive potency. It became a living part of the public sphere, a piece of public art that sparked controversy and generated noticeable support from civil society.

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[135] The 'Sopot Makes Art for The City of Brussels' project gathered volunteers from the Baltic maritime resort.

[136] It is a site of a tint ethnic (Flemish) minority community, originating in the 13th century, and speaking the endangered Germanic language of Wymysorys.

[137] In close proximity to the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau: Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945).

Figure 5 – Julita Wójcik, Tęcza (Flower Power)[138]

4.2.4.1   A European Rainbow in Warsaw

After finishing its display in Brussels the Rainbow had to be refurbished, and the missing flowers replaced. To assemble it, in similar vein as before, Wójcik organised a collective charitable action at Zachęta (National Art Gallery in Warsaw) that involved over 1000 people weaving the plastic flowers for the Rainbow. Subsequently, with the support of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the installation was erected on one of the busiest junctions in the centre of Warsaw – St. Saviour's Square[139]. In June 2012 the

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[138] Rainbow in Warsaw 2014, *„Tęcza" po rekonstrukcji (widok w kierunku ul. Nowowiejskiej, maj 2014)*, photo credit Adrian Grycuk, 5 January 2015 via Wikipedia, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Poland.

[139] It is one of the liveliest social hotspots of the city; it takes its name from the Church of the Holiest Saviour located on its southern end. As an urban space the square encapsulates the tumultuous history of

Rainbow was mounted in the very centre of the circular piazza and on this occasion the artist expressed the on-going aspirations for the project. "The Rainbow is here for your freedom and ours", said Wójcik, paraphrasing a historical Polish proverb from the 1831 insurgency against Tsarist Russia (Wójcik 2012c). Her gesture was related to the rather violent clashes on Poland's Independence Day on 11 November 2011 between extreme right-wing nationalists and the more liberal demonstrators that preceded the arrival of the Rainbow to Warsaw. The artwork, with all its symbolism, was envisioned as a sign of covenant. After all, it was mounted there after coming from Brussels to signify that 'tolerance opens people to one another', claimed Wójcik, in the heyday of the Warsaw Pride Parade, but also Euro 2012 football championships and Corpus Christi (Wójcik 2012a). Though it might seem symbolically quite eclectic, Wójcik emphasised that among the diverse meanings of a rainbow it was tolerance, unity, and communitarianism that spoke most strongly to her (Wójcik 2012b). However, it was only when the Rainbow became reified in Warsaw that it became visible how differently it can be understood by the public.

The Polish press reported that the Rainbow was commonly liked for adding a considerable splash of colour to the somewhat grim landscape of the city. But there is also a material aspect to the Rainbow; it stands in a gentrified and hip area and hence embodies the very real *wants and needs* of the public for pleasant urban surroundings. This social aspiration is perceived as an integral part of the civilizational change post 1989, and is still an on-going process. The physical presence of the Rainbow in the Warsaw agora is also a very prominent symbol of a specifically European civilizational

the city, partially destroyed in WWII, and rebuilt according to very different architectural styles it is Warsaw with all its complexities in a nutshell.

aspiration of the Polish mainstream. However, at the same time its visibility gives rise to dissenting views from the side-lines of political and social life that see it as a provocation.

4.2.4.2 Queering of the Rainbow: between the public, the artist, and the hooligans

As mentioned above, according to Wójcik the installation was supposed to discursively link the events of 2012 Warsaw Pride, Euro 2012, and Corpus Christi. However, it was only the resemblance to LGBTI imagery that gained prominence in the eyes of public. It is unsurprising that the connection, proposed by the artist, between an LGBT community event, a highly masculinised sport, and a Catholic holiday, was problematic for the conservative public opinion. Furthermore, Wójcik's elaborate idea behind the Rainbow was only known to the rather limited elite that passes their time in St. Saviour's square. On the other hand, the 'gayness' of the rainbow was more evident and contentious – especially taking into account the still fairly early stages of gay rights development in Poland (on an EU scale). Over the months the installation became strongly equated with the *gay* flag due to the prominence of LGBT rights issues in Polish political life. In some, it provoked ridicule, in others, anger. Despite the overwhelming European civilizational aspiration of the Polish society, for a vocal few LGBT and women's rights are unpleasant Euro-impositions that come in the same package[140]. Indeed this *gay* Rainbow came from Brussels to Warsaw. Consequently, on 11 November 2012, on the occasion of Independence Day, the tension reached its peak and right-wing hooligans purposefully set the installation on fire.

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[140] Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, '10 Lat Czlonkostwa Polski W Unii Europejskiej', *Komunikat nr: 4991,* (2014).

After the act of vandalism happened media commentaries decried how the ugliness of Polish social reality crept into the hip fairy-tale of growing cosmopolitanism and European landscape of the city. The Rainbow was brutalised and hence gained authenticity in showing real social cleavages. But the assault on the Rainbow reinforced the positive attitudes it generated in the first place – a symbol of freedom and tolerance. Its devastation was followed by a public outcry and collective support to rebuild it. Julita Wójcik's project from the beginning had a communal and cooperativist dimension, its reconstruction (following the same pattern as before) engaged the civil society that previously embraced it as part of the city's landscape. People who got together through social media, as well as the official owner of the structure, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, postulated even to make it a permanent monument as other such installations have become before (Staszyc 2012). The reconstructed Rainbow caught fire again on New Year's Eve 2012 due to no one's fault, yet subsequently two partially successful attempts at burning it to the ground were undertaken. Again the Adam Mickiewicz Institute together with Wójcik announced it was going to be rebuilt and put there to last with the help of city authorities. On the wave of support, the cause of the Rainbow received critical acclaim and support from the leading Polish weekly *Polityka*. Wójcik herself was awarded the prestigious Paszport POLITYKI - prize (chosen by the readers) for her artistic contribution to the public sphere and social engagement through art (Wójcik 2013b).

As an artist Wójcik has been known to take ordinary objects or actions and together with the help of the public turn these otherwise mundane entities into art – always indirectly expressing a critique of the social and political world. This time, however, controversy and public engagement reached their peak, in a both positive and

negative way. Still, this is very much in accordance with Wójcik's general artistic strategy: use the popular aesthetic to convey a critical message, cause social tension, intrigue and force a definite attitude towards the artwork (Wójcik 2013a)**.** Consequently, in 2011 by erecting the Rainbow in Brussels Wójcik "wanted to pay tribute to the virtues of tolerance, openness, and optimism within the European Union" (Wójcik 2006-2013)**.** Transplanting it to Warsaw showed the deeper differences within the Polish public sphere concerning the ideas it wanted to represent and the implicit meanings it carried. Wójcik's belief in the uniting power of diverse symbolisms of a rainbow might seem a bit naïve. However, by introducing such a theme the artist provoked the question of whether a mutual understanding and appreciation of symbolisms in society is at all possible. She also showed that the meaning of a rainbow is contingent on what people actually think of current political and social issues. Hence, a seemingly bening symbol can be antagonising. By doing so she provoked a series of events that offer a micro look into the diverse meanings of a rainbow, which illuminated values that are perceived as national and European in Poland.

The developments in Warsaw after the Rainbow had come from Brussels show how a piece of critical contemporary art instigated a discussion on tolerance, freedom and cooperation that for the most part are perceived as part of a European modernisation of Poland. On the one hand, one can identify a vocal group with its cosmopolitan and somewhat occidental yearnings for the European values represented by the Rainbow – among them the visual aspect of public urban spaces. These are people somewhat concerned with politics and culture; they are informed members of the public opinion; they claim to know Europe and want similar developments in Poland – they aspire to Europe. As it turned out, however, these sentiments are not shared by everyone. The

scepticism about the *wind* of social change that is supposedly blowing from the west, embodied by the Rainbow, exists and can take violent form if provoked by such symbol. This is a clash of worldviews on the values attributed to the Rainbow. But it is not a new discussion, and it relates to the broader civilizational change happening in Poland in relation to what are perceived as national and European values. The collective support behind this artistic project shows the perseverance of civil society in defending its understanding of tolerance and diversity in the public sphere. In this sense, it sheds light on what set of ideals are associated with Europe: freedom, tolerance, cooperation, which can be either seen as goals to aspire to, or threats provoking the defence of the imagined national cohesion.

4.2.4.3   The Rainbow keeps burning: polarisation of the publics

In 2013 the Rainbow witnessed an almost farcical repetition of history. Yet again on the occasion of the Polish Independence Day, celebrated on 11 November, different marches and rallies took the streets of Warsaw. Many of these involved obscure radical and even extreme right wing movements that together comprised the Independence March (*Marsz Niepodległości*). Warsaw again witnessed localised riot-like events instigated by the supporters of this radical and extreme right-wing march. Some of these constituted casual clashes with the police, a serious attack on a squatting dwelling in central Warsaw, as well as an assault on a newly rebuilt Rainbow in St. Saviour's square.

The artwork was yet again set on fire. The burning of the Rainbow – the fifth altogether – constituted an almost iconoclastic ritual carried out by its violent opponents, who since 2012 have been rallying against the Rainbow, including radical right fringe party politicians in the Polish parliament, as well as by the marginal yet growing

extreme right wing groups organised around the quasi-political National Movement (*Ruch Narodowy*). It is difficult to judge whether the Rainbow became an immediate target of attack as a part of a deliberate plan of a specific group or was just targeted as an act of political motivated hooliganism. Nevertheless, the obviousness of the Rainbow as a symbol of liberalism and LGBTI rights, associated with Europe, evidences how this ideological opposition was successfully communicated to and embraced by the mob that rioted on Independence Day.

In 2013 the diverse reactions of the public again gave the best insight into the meanings ascribed to the Rainbow. Yet again one could witness a radical polarisation of opinions alongside the civilizational divided discussed earlier. On the one hand, some right-wing pundits expressed approval of the burning on the artwork. Satisfaction over the vandalism was also tweeted by a MP, from the oppositional nationalistically conservative Law & Justice party, that by all standards constituted an example of blatant hate speech. Such expressions of true political extremism were also somewhat supported by other conservative voices, which condemned the act of violence but remained critical of the Rainbow as such. Another negligible right-wing party (PJN) proposed to rebuild the Rainbow in Polish national colours (white & red), rather than as it was before. The whole array of rather illiberal reactions to the burning of the Rainbow was connected to a conservative political agenda, yet again evidencing the instrumental construction of the symbolic conflict around the Rainbow.

It was, however, the reaction of the public opinion in support of the installation that really indicated the extent of its social significance. In the following days after the burning people (including celebrities) came to assemble real cut flowers into the burnt metal arch where the plastic flowers used to be. The culmination of this public

performance took place on 15 November when a *kiss-in* protest (both gay and straight) under the remnants of the Rainbow was organised via social media. Over 2000 people gathered under the structure (which I witnessed personally) weaved even more flowers into the arch and carried out a peaceful demonstration of support for the Rainbow and against violence. The legal owner of the artwork – the Adam Mickiewicz Institute – immediately condemned the vandalism and pledged to reconstruct the installation. Surprisingly, even the mayor of the capital, known for her conservative convictions, promised that the city would rebuild the Rainbow and would continue to do so as many times as necessary.

On the wave of this overwhelming support the understandably disenchanted artist re-entered into the public discussion (Wójcik 2014c). This time Jultia Wójcik explicitly highlighted the LGBT symbolism of the Rainbow – as if in dialogue with its critics and supporters alike – whilst expressing a hope that it could indeed in the end become a symbol of reconciliation (Wójcik 2014b). As before, the reconstruction of the Rainbow took place in a cooperativist fashion – volunteers where weaving plastic flowers in the National Gallery of Art in Warsaw with the artist in mid April 2014 (Wójcik 2014a). By May 1st – the day marking a decade since Poland's accession to the European Union – a new Rainbow was mounted on St. Saviour's square. The choice of this date was no coincidence – the authorities of Warsaw highlighted the significance of this date. Symbolically this reincarnation of the Rainbow made a full-cycle. From being a symbol of a united Europe on the occasion of the 2011 Polish Presidency of the EU, through its tumultuous 'gay' presence in Warsaw, yet again it is meant to signify Europe.

The discussion over the Rainbow is in no way over, and its future – it is commissioned to remain on St. Saviour's square until 2015 – is in no way certain. It is, however, significant how it keeps on igniting the imagination of the public. It is a topic of political jokes and cartoons, academic discussions, as well as political platforms on the eve of the 2014 European Parliament election. In light of it all a comprehensive opinion poll commissioned by the largest Polish liberal daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* reveals the surprisingly high levels of support for the Rainbow among Warsaw's population (Siek 2014). A high 61% of the respondents sees the Rainbow as a positive addition to the city's landscape despite the issues surrounding its presence (Pacewicz 2014); as a symbol it is overwhelmingly associated with felicity (74%) and tolerance (63%). Also a staggering 71% expresses support for its rebuilding, on St. Saviour's square or elsewhere in the city. Almost half of the respondents recognise its LGBT symbolism, and over a third associates it with Poland's presence in the European Union. The exact numbers are not of utmost importance, especially since there is no comparable data from before 2014. However, taking into account the nationwide research on the declining, yet still considerable levels of homophobia in Poland, Warsaw appears to be a liberal exception in an otherwise moderately conservative land. This points back to the civilizational and somewhat cosmopolitan aspiration vested in the Rainbow by its supporters. Just as in the case of the adversaries of the Rainbow, for them too it is a symbol of a political and social orientation. Furthermore, it is a symbol that actively structures public sentiments anent LGBT rights, the nation, and Europe.

In terms of its initial discourse the Rainbow can be related to what is perceived by Brussels as European values. As with many cultural sites in Europe nowadays, it

reproduces the discourse of European integration of 'unity in diversity' promoted by EU institutions. It does so, however, by relating it to current issues of concern in Poland. The cultural object, its discursive content, is very much influenced by the social space of today's political Europe, as well as specifically Polish social and political reality. This artwork is very much glocal (Belting 2003), in how it necessarily departs from a particular social and cultural context but relates to larger issues applicable elsewhere as it aspires to function as public art (LGBT rights). It is an example of contemporary art that becomes the locus of symbolic conflict – a case of particularly socially resonant public art.

The discursive content of cultural objects is usually directly connected to the pursuits of cultural creators. In the case of the Rainbow the vision of the artist and her subsequent activity in explaining and promoting the art, as well as the intentions and impact of the commissioning bodies – the Polish government and Warsaw City Hall – have been clearly evidenced. Even though the role of the artist after she released her work into the world diminished greatly, in today's digital age the artist's worldviews easily travelled to the audience for her art. Furthermore, when it comes to the Rainbow it indeed mattered that Wójcik strived to produce public art and anticipated engaging the public. She has been vocal about how she envisioned her work engaging the public and was herself a contributor to the discussions her art had begun throughout its public existence. She was both quite eager to 'explain' the merits of her work to the public and became an important agent influencing public reception of the art, especially via media coverage.

The artist is the most obvious cultural creator of this artwork, yet in the process of cultural production also the commissioning bodies had an impact on the art and its

reception. In the case of the Rainbow after it had moved to Warsaw, following its repeated vandalisations, the responsibility for the installation was assumed by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the city of Warsaw, whose officials promised to restore it to its former glory. Some even considered making it a permanent public landmark. The involvement of various cultural creators in the public life of this artwork is necessarily connected to the official setting in which it first appeared (Brussels), the expectations vested, and the symbolic prestige at stake. This is also evidenced by the reiteration of its symbolic European dimension by unveiling its latest incarnation on 1 May 2014, marking a decade from the largest EU enlargement to date.

As shown above, the media, by providing continuous interest in the Rainbow, were important for the involvement of cultural creators in the process who had to respond to that attention. Both traditional and digital media had a similar effect on the audience; the social resonance of this art would not have been so extensive without it being reported on so widely. The proliferation of images of the Rainbow, of its burning, of official reactions, and of unofficial commentaries, happened mostly via media outlets (especially outside of Warsaw). Yet the media were responsible for assuming a somewhat transnationally European perspective, in so far as they were concerned with how Poland's European image would be affected by the vandalisation of the artwork and the extent to which the European values connected to LGBT rights, symbolised by the Rainbow, were embraced in Polish society.

Throughout its existence the Rainbow has been saturated with various symbolisms: pro-LGBT, anti-national and pro-European, among many. On one side of the symbolic conflict the meanings the public appropriated to the Rainbow signify the aspirational quality of the idea of Europe in Poland as part of the civilizational change

post 1989 and post 2004. The assault it experienced revealed that social change and embracing of what is perceived as European values have been reduced to LGBT rights. The Rainbow was made provocative by those who sought to politically profit from the controversy. At the same time, the continuous engagement and responsiveness of civil society in defence of the Rainbow revealed the strength of the liberal civilizational aspirations the artwork came to represent. Respective audiences *took* from the artwork what they thought was most important, and to different degrees related the meaning of the art to their specific contexts. The public reception of the meanings ascribed to the Rainbow shows that opposition to LGBT symbolism was connected to a critique of Europe – an opposition very much rooted in a traditionally conservative understanding of the national community. It also showed that Europe is a positive point of reference not only in terms of economic integration, but also as symbol of civilizational progress – especially embraced by the cosmopolitan elite of Warsaw and public authorities. Undeniably, the Rainbow generated discussions on values associated with the symbol as such. The divergent understandings of what it can represent highlight the existing social cleavages concerning LGBT rights, the nation and Europe. Furthermore, the artwork has had an undeniable role in shaping social sentiments on these issues. It is an example of public contemporary art that is tremendously socially resonant. In Warsaw, the Rainbow keeps on burning.

4.3   Discussion

This section compares and contrasts how the studied cases of contemporary art produced particular meanings of Europe and allowed for the construction of its social understandings vis-à-vis the nation. Following the cultural diamond diagram, it is first

shown how the discursive content of cultural objects under inquiry determined their resonance. Cultural objects, in this case contemporary art installations, which were contentious and/or critical in content and in form had a better chance to serve the role of public art, were more widely spoken about, and generated more reactions from the public. Then, I compare the impact of cultural creators on the artworks, their content as well as the ways in which they were spectated. When artists publically explained their inspirations behind their artworks and the envisioned impact of that art, it generated more interest, from the media, and consequently from the public. The activity of the artist as an advocate for their work and their creative vision mattered for the media and the audience. When artists explained their work it also intensified its controversy.

Equally, the role of the commissioning actors in influencing content and spectatorship is key here. The officials from each Presidency conceived a different role for the artworks they commissioned; likewise their responses to controversy varied greatly. Some apologised for the artist and/or intervened by altering the content of the art installations. Lastly, analysis is focused on the regularities in the audiences' responses to this art in regard to the wider social context in which they were situated. I show how the media had an instrumental role is facilitating a transnational reception of this art across Europe. I claim it was the critical quality of art that made it socially resonant because it allowed the public to relate to its discursive content, in either positive or negative ways. The specificity of the immediate national and the current European context allowed this art to reveal how national subjectivity has been changing vis-à-vis Europe and consequently how social understandings of Europe come about in the process.

4.3.1   Cultural object defined: the physical properties & discursive content

The cultural objects under inquiry – contemporary art installations – were ordered and produced with a specific aim, which was to celebrate individual member state Presidencies of the Council of the European Union. The rotating Presidency is part of the intergovernmental makeup of the European Union; every 6 months a different country assumes the leadership of the Union mainly in terms of coordinating top-level meetings and other strategic policy and administrative issues. However, this role is also endowed with considerable international prestige. Especially for the newer member states, it is an occasion to acquire symbolic capital in proving themselves as good 'managers' of the European construction. A significant part of running the Presidency 'show' has to do with representation and symbolic politics in Europe. An unwritten tradition had it that a decoration of the headcounters of the Council of the European Union would be arranged by each country assuming the Presidency. However, no one really paid that much attention to the art installations mounted in Brussels until lately. This changed profoundly when Central European member states took the stage post-2004. This might be attributed to the special attention given by new member states governments' to the cultural program of their Presidencies, but also (as emphasised earlier) to the special public role of contemporary art in the region (Piotrowski 2005). Each of the pieces commissioned by Central European member state governments was different, yet each was textually rich and carried important symbolic references about the nation and/or Europe.

For the purpose of comparison, the analysis is focused on how the discursive content of these artworks related to Europe, in other words – in what way did it 'celebrate' a country's symbolic leadership of the EU? There is a clear duality between

how the four cultural objects analysed here intended to commemorate this occasion. On the one hand, the artworks commissioned by Slovenia and Hungary assumed a national perspective on Europe, be that by replicating one's national anthem in all EU languages (Slovenia), or showing one's contributions to European cultural heritage (Hungary). On the other hand, the installations from the Czech Republic and Poland presented much more unconventional and abstract perspectives on how to conceive of Europe today. The Czech artwork presented an array of fictitious national stereotypes aimed at igniting public upheaval, whereas the Polish piece chose to symbolically associate what is most commonly perceived as European democratic values with a rainbow. Here, the difference between the two sets of countries lies in the point of departure, either from one's own national back-ground, or from a more abstract or non-national stance.

At the same time, the difference between these two sets of contemporary art pieces is not whether they explicitly reference Europe, or refuse to signify the nation at all, but whether their content is in any way critical, whether it assumes a point of view on Europe beyond a hegemonic national perspective. This difference relates also to how these artworks replicate expectations of the bureaucratic structures they were commissioned for. In that sense the Slovenian and Hungarian entries directly represented national narratives of their governments, ones that can be traced back almost directly to modern cultural nationalism (J. T. Leerssen 2006b; J. Leerssen 2006a). The Polish entry somewhat related to what is perceived by Brussels as 'European values' but chose to merge it with socially hot topics such as EURO2012 and LGBT rights in Poland. It responded to the discourse of European integration of 'unity in diversity' promoted by EU institutions by relating it to current issues of concern in Poland. The cultural object, its discursive content, is very much influenced by the social space of

today's political Europe as well as Polish social reality. Hence the reference to the national and the particular exists, yet it is not all-encompassing as in the Slovenian and Hungarian cases. The Polish artwork is very much *glocal* (after Belting) in how it necessarily departs from a particular social and cultural context but relates to larger issues applicable elsewhere as it aspires to function as public art (LGBT rights).

Most controversial and most critical was the Czech installation that ridiculed both nationalism and an un-reflexive celebration of Europe. It was deliberately antagonistic and aimed at provoking the national publics and Europe *en masse* alike. A vivid reference to the nation very much exists in *Entropa* but it is one that actually undermines the supposed foundational significance of nationality in today's Europe. At the same time, most of the artworks above (except Slovenia) were controversial enough to antagonise the public sphere, and hence to become objects around which heated exchanges of views and opinions took place. In the case of the Czech piece a divisive controversy was deliberately intended, but equally Hungary's and Poland's art became loci of symbolic conflict – examples of socially resonant public art.

4.3.2   Cultural creators: artists & Central European member state governments

According to the cultural diamond the discursive content of cultural objects is directly connected to the pursuits of cultural creators. In this case, the visions of artists and their subsequent activity in explaining and promoting the art, as well as the intentions and impact of the commissioning bodies – member state governments – on the artists, on the art itself and on the public are taken into consideration. Even though the role of the artist after she 'release' her work into the world diminishes greatly, in the age of mass digital reproduction artists' worldviews can easily travel to the audience for their art. With

respect to the analysed artworks, it matters whether their creators indeed strived to produce public art, whether they anticipated engaging the public. Here again we can identify a similar pair of differences between the artworks. There is little public knowledge about the pursuits of the Slovenian sculptor Boris Podrecca or the Hungarian textile artist Lívia Pápai. Conversely, both David Černý and Julita Wójcik were vocal about how they envisioned their work to engage the public and were themselves contributors to the discussions their art had begun. They were both quite eager to 'explain' the merits of their work to the public and became important agents influencing public reception of the art via media coverage.

The artists are the most obvious cultural creators of an artwork, yet according to the cultural diamond within the process of cultural production curators and commissioning bodies are also known to have an impact on the art and its reception. All four artworks were commissioned by member state governments that wanted to show themselves to Europe. Hence, they are rooted in the bureaucratic field of European politics where a dominant discourse of 'unity in diversity' regarding European integration is perceived as given (Sassatelli 2009). It is therefore particularly significant what member-state governments expected from the artwork and how they reacted to controversy which arose after its unveiling. It is uncertain to what extent the Slovenian and Hungarian governments influenced the creative process of their installations; however, both artworks represent a very cohesive idea of a Europe of nations (one that is embraced by conservative political forces across the continent). In the case of the Czech Republic and Poland it is certain that the process of artistic production was in no significant way influenced by state bureaucracies. However, this pairing of countries no

longer holds when it comes to reactions to the controversy that arose after these pieces of art were brought to light.

The Czech Republic and Hungary stand out, as countries that, in the face of a Europe-wide upheaval, decided to cover some (the former) or most (the latter) of their installations. In both cases the artworks were subject to deliberate and politically motived curatorial interventions from state bureaucracies. In both cases the symbolisms conveyed by the art catalysed a controversy that was perceived as threatening. However, in consequence, the alterations done to them drew even more public interest in the art. In the Polish case, after repeated vandalisations the responsibility for the installation was assumed by the city of Warsaw, whose officials promised to restore it to its former glory and make it a permanent public landmark. The involvement of various cultural creators in the public life of these artworks is necessarily connected to the official setting in which all of them first appeared, the expectations vested, and the prestige and symbolic politics at stake.

4.3.3   Cultural consumers: transnational publics vis-à-vis Europe

As mentioned above, the media, by providing continuous interest in the artworks, were important for the involvement of cultural creators in the process of cultural production who had to respond to that attention. Both traditional and digital media has a similar effect on the audience - for this art would not have resonated without it being reported on so extensively. The proliferation of images of the artworks, of official reactions and of unofficial commentaries, happened mostly via national media outlets, yet the undivided attention they give to what was shown in Brussels resulted in a truly transnational reception. That holds true especially into the Czech and the Hungarian

case, where media reported on how the artworks portrayed Europe, as well as individual countries. They presented multiple national perspectives on the art and sought to report on how Europe as a whole responded to the controversy.

In Poland media attention had a much more local dimension, yet here too the transnationally European perspective was present, in so much as in the beginning the media were concerned with how Poland's European image would be affected by the vandalisation of the artwork and the extent to which the 'European values' symbolised by the rainbow were embraced in Polish society. In all cases where the artwork was perceived as contentious it became highly reproduced in the media. The wider audience was only informed in detail when the content of art was antagonistic. It confirms the supposition that a critical discursive quality is necessary for successful public art to resonate in a social space – in this particular case via media exposure. Such critical public art can be subsumed under the antagonistic theory of the public sphere, where conflict is its necessary condition.

Audience reception of each artwork necessarily had its national dimension. Yet in all of the three most prominent[141] cases – the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland – the discussions took both the nation and Europe as equal points of reference. The Czech art, as envisioned by the artist David Černý, was a false mirror for nations to seem themselves in. The spectacle had tremendous resonance because it offered a distorted vision of the familiar – a stereotype of national particularity. *Entropa* was transnational not only in its design interplay of 27 countries but also in how its impact unfolded from

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[141] On the other hand, the Slovenian monument had little impact on the public due to its somewhat benign character. Its content promoted the idea of Europe of nations, this message, however, did not get across mostly because of the celebratory approach it took that had little rhetorical force.

one national audience in Europe to another. It also provoked discussions on the existence of cross-national stereotypes and on the relationship between the nation and Europe – it was both criticized and defended across the continent and beyond. The artwork's critique of nationalism was a provocation to those who see today's Europe as a threat to the nation. On the other hand, voices of praise of *Entropa* came from the public across Europe. They supported its aim of dismantling symbolic borders in Europe and had no issue with the fact this was done in a provocative manner. *Entropa's* Europe was perceived as standing in direct opposition to parochial and petty nationalism that manifested itself in defence of national dignity allegedly targeted by the artwork. It is fair to say that *Entropa's* supporters aspired to a Europe were national serotypes would be no more than a joke, as seen in the installation.

On the other hand, Hungary's cultural carpet and the heavily nationalist discourse it presented was widely perceived as anti-European. The emphasis on historical national hegemony became contested by those who think Europe should be going beyond national perspectives. However, at the same time, Hungary's artwork enraged those countries whose perceived national interests it targeted. That too was, nevertheless, framed as not in accordance with European ideals. Finally, the Polish *Rainbow* was saturated with symbolisms that became initially perceived as European when it moved from Brussels to Warsaw. The meanings the public at first appropriated to *The Rainbow* showed the aspirational quality of the idea of Europe in Poland as part of the civilizational change post 1989 and 2004. The assault it experienced revealed that these 'European values' were reduced to one's stance on LGBT rights – hence becoming highly provocative. At the same time, the continuous engagement and quick

responsiveness of civil society in defence of *the Rainbow* revealed the strength of the civilizational aspirations the artwork came to represent.

In all of the above cases the audiences 'took' from the artworks what they thought was most important, and to different degrees related what the art had to say about Europe to specific national contexts. The reception of these artworks showed vibrant opposition to the idea of Europe as going beyond the nation or simply as liberal, oppositions that are very much rooted in these traditionally national understandings of community. It also showed that Europe can be a positive point of reference not only in terms of integration, but also as a symbol of civilizational progress that one's own country aspires to achieve. Undeniably, these artworks generated discussions on values associated with Europe and the nation, even if highlighting polar oppositions. The divergent understandings of Europe that arose from their reception represent the existing cleavages in respect to questions of the nation and nationalism, equality, and minority rights, all framed vis-à-vis Europe. Each artwork generated understandings of Europe either in favour or in opposition. It was not necessarily a liberal-illiberal divide, but it showed how certain sets of social sentiments are equated with the idea of Europe or against it. However, it became evident that contemporary art when critical can become socially resonant, and become symbols around which new ways to conceive of Europe vis-à-vis the nation can arise.

Chapter 5

Struggles for contemporary meanings and social understandings of Europe

through cultural institutions, festivals, and art projects

[T]he idea of Europe is bound to those European minds which converge in it, (...). It is not enough that the idea of Europe cannot die: we also want it to live. And it is more manly to confess that it will not do so in the foreseeable future. – Georg Simmel[142]

Introduction

This chapter embarks on the synthesis of findings of this thesis. It reiterates the initial research question and the overarching argument on the basis of empirical evidence exemplified in the previous chapters. It offers a common perspective on struggles for Europe's meanings that take place in different cultural sites by illuminating common patterns that govern their construction – the degree to which they are particular and autonomous. These patterns are explained by pointing to specific examples of how they work in practice by reintroducing case study examples. Finally, in light of the analysis the chapter sketches out avenues of possible future research in regard to the subject matter.

The inquiry pursued in this thesis originated from a set of general scientifically validated observations about the nature of social life when it comes to the aesthetic

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[142] Lawrence and Simmel, *Georg Simmel: Sociologist and European* at 269-70.

cultural domain. Namely, that culture matters. Cultural sites such as institutions, festivals, and art projects are an integral part of the process by which society ascribes meaning to different aspects of social life. They are spaces where meaning-making struggles take place. It is precisely this capacity of aesthetic culture to produce and reproduce social perceptions of the nation, which is argued to constitute one of the key dynamics responsible for the rise of nationalism in modernity. Such cultural structuring of nationalism is still an on-going process today. Yet in contemporary Europe, the fairly recent historical developments of European integration have resulted in the entering of Europe as a popular social category that is reproduced through culture more than ever before, apart from its strictly political and economic dimensions. In social perceptions Europe is more than just a geographic term, a political project, or a civilizational idea. Its meanings are dependent on a variety of immediate contexts, because Europe today operates as a "structural reality", as coined by Delanty (2013). What this implies is that meanings of Europe are not only delivered top-down, positive and negative alike, and coined only in Brussels and in EU member state capitals. Social actors endow Europe with their own meanings, which are grounded in particular social experiences. The examined cultural sites are exactly where struggles for contemporary meanings and social understandings of Europe take place.

At the centre of this thesis are particular examples of aesthetic cultural production – identified as sites where affirmation, elaboration, and critique of how Europe is understood by particular actors take place. These three distinctive sites of cultural production – cultural institutions, events, and public art projects – serve as micro cases to show the patterns by which Europe is ascribed with different meanings, and equally importantly what struggles over understandings of Europe take place as a result.

These sites serve as ideal types that explain how meanings of Europe that emerge in culture can be autonomous and particular. Whilst, the way in which Europe has been understood historically, and what of that holds true today, is the subject of a broad literature, this research shows that meanings of Europe are an outcome of concrete struggles between the actors behind cultural institutions, festivals, and art projects. To do so these actors utilise a wide array of symbolic resources. As shown, the further from the intuitional state and Europe, the more particular and autonomous these choices are. Nevertheless, they are inextricably related to existing narratives of 'what is Europe'. These micro findings relate to the big picture of how Europe is understood in society, by categorising the patterns that govern processes of meaning construction[143]. The cases at hand are very different, in each of them the studied actors operate within particular fields; they are motivated by different networks of dependency, draw on different narratives of Europe, and relate them to different particular and immediate contexts. Yet, what the research shows, is that for all of them Europe is important and has a specific function.

The wider implications of the research stem precisely out of recognition of the common patterns: construction of Europe's meanings vis-à-vis notions of unity, and as idealisations of reality; as well as the indispensability of immediate, particular, and national contexts for how Europe is understood in society. Even though the cases are

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[143] Across the diversity of the studied cases, the research uncovered commonalities that can be claimed as generally true to all European cultural sites under inquiry. What is common to institutions, festivals, and art projects is the way in which Europe is 'used' and how its presence is 'doing' similar things. In other words, one can identify common patterns in the process by which Europe is ascribed with certain meanings, and by which it is understood by their immediate audiences. These patterns can be claimed to be broadly true throughout cases, even if at times they entail inner contradictions (as it becomes clear upon closer elaboration).

limited to aesthetic cultural production, the said patterns can potentially be applicable to other examples of social practices and interactions where Europe is invoked. After synthesizing the patterns on a somewhat theoretical level, the chapter goes into analysing each of the studied cultural sites to illuminate them further. It shows which dominant narratives of Europe are reproduced in these cultural sites – concepts from history, politics, and philosophy that are noticeable in the discourses communicated. It is also shown that alongside these board narratives of Europe, its social understandings are mediated through a multiplicity of current political and social contexts rooted in the respective national imaginaries and the immediacy of local circumstances. Struggles over understandings of Europe are context dependent and inseparable of the 'here and now' of the actors on the ground.

Finally, the chapter addresses the need of new perspectives in the study of contemporary meanings and social understandings of Europe as the ones analysed in this research. It argues that apart from the contemporary omnipresence of the European Union, it is the local or national immediacy of Europe that is pivotal for how it is understood in society. Social understandings of Europe are necessarily juxtaposed to multiple readily relatable local and/or national imaginaries and to the multiple existing concepts of Europe as such, and are coined in relation to them jointly. The challenge for future research is to analyse Europe's symbolic power – the meanings social actors ascribe to it and how it is understood in society – by considering its current institutionalism as only one component of its significance.

5.1 The meaning-making process and its patterns

The following sections elaborate on the identified patterns of meaning-making across the studied cases. These patterns are not codified or objective scripts that were uncovered, but an analytical framing of the similarities between the dynamics of meaning-making identified in each case. Hence out of the diversity of the cases, in this section I concentrate on what's common to all the cases of cultural production – how Europe is put forward as the key characteristic. In this respect, the evidence from this sample of micro cases can inform other investigations of social life where Europe is invoked, and can shed light on the ways in which it exists as an important reference for contemporary social self-understandings. The proposed ways of looking at how actors construct what they mean by Europe are argued to be a useful explanatory tool applicable elsewhere where Europe has a prominent discursive presence.

The first pattern is tied to the production side of culture (as shown by the cultural diamond). It explains that throughout the studied cases Europe's meanings constructed by different actors necessarily signify notions of unity and idealisations of reality (mostly past or future). Europe's meanings signify coming together for a common purpose (or ideal), whilst at the same time are an articulation of specific goals and aspirations. In other words, invoking Europe always entails indicating some kind of togetherness, aggregation, and unity. As much as Europe is a common denominator for coming together, it also usually signifies an agenda of some kind. However, the further from the institutions of the state and the EU, the more particular and autonomous these meanings become. Hence, they are coined in tension between seemingly universalising unity of Europe and its particular articulations stemming from the subjectivity of the very actors that produce them.

The second pattern is connected to the consumption side of cultural production, (again following the cultural diamond). As much as the previous pattern highlights the tension between Europe as an instance of the universal drawn from historical narratives in a relationship with particular agendas of individual actors in the field of cultural production – this pattern shows that social understandings of Europe are developed strictly in relation to the specific realities in which they exist. The immediate, the particular, and the national settings serve as the vernaculars for the translation of Europe's meanings. In other words, socially Europe is seldom conceived in abstract terms (and when presented as so it has little appeal[144]). In popular understandings its meanings are constructed with respect to familiar contexts, such as nationality, locality, gender, and class. It is fundamentally through these contexts that these notions receive validity in the eyes of the public. The immediate, and largely local or national, perspectives are of key importance to getting across whatever notions Europe cultural producers might want them to signify. The particular and the national give Europe social relevance.

In order to better explain the said patterns, I go into detail on what are the strategies by which actors 'use' Europe. I show how Europe is a potent discursive vessel, a tool of communication, a selling strategy, an agenda-setting instrument, and the

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[144] This is most evident in the case of Europeana - the European digital library, museum, and archive (Chapter II). In its onset the portal shied away from any particular national or groups references – it constructed its discourse of Europe as post-national, as transcending the nation. It claimed to encompass all cultural heritage collections under the common denominator of 'European cultural heritage'. The research evidences that such framing of its activities speaks to a very limited audience, and that these were only the history-specific projects of Europeana (concerning WWI and 1989) that more successfully communicated to the publics the mission of the portal to collect and disseminate 'European cultural heritage'. Equally, 'benign' discourses of somewhat abstract European unity such as the one reproduced in the Slovenian monument (Chapter III), went completely unnoticed in the eyes of the public.

likes. Such use of Europe, as symbol or label, is potentially not only true to cultural settings. Elsewhere in society where different actors invoke Europe one can potentially locate its meanings being constructed according to such patterns. As evidenced by the research, Europe in the abstract, even if highly contentious, has not only little appeal but also generates hardly any interest. It can only 'move', generate interests, or induce reactions when it speaks to, or rather through, the immediate and the familiar contexts – local, national, and identity laden. Social understandings of Europe are structured when 'translated' through such 'vernaculars'.

In the elaboration of the meaning-making patterns I reintroduce the culture diamond analysis, which served as an explanatory tool for empirical investigation in preceding chapters. As elaborated before, it is a diagram that distinguishes four actors/spheres crucial for the analysis of cultural spaces: cultural object, cultural creators, cultural recipients, and the wider social world, in which all of former are embedded in. The cultural diamond allows for clear recognition of precisely who takes part in the meaning-making process, of the interrelations between all the actors/factors, and of the relevant contexts that surround them. Thanks to the usage of the diamond diagram, what becomes more visible is the production and consumption side of what happens in cultural sites – what is communicated and how it is understood. Analysing cultural sites according to the diamond shows how different actors conceptualise what they mean when they invoke Europe, and in turn how its social understandings are formed. It also shows that meanings of Europe that emerge in these cultural sites are particular and autonomous depending on their proximity of these sites to the national state and the EU.

5.2   Meanings of Europe between unity & particularity

According to Lacroix and Nicolaïdis "the productive tension between particularity and universalism seem to remain the hallmark of [European] intellectualism" when it comes to how one can position grand debates on 'what is Europe' today (2010: 19-20). Something similar can be said about the first meaning-making pattern pertaining to Europe. It too accommodates notions of unity and particular worldviews of social actors alike. The former often being largely a reproduction of various existing narratives of Europe; the latter comprising mainly particular worldviews and idealisations of reality. According to the cultural diamond the meaning-making function of culture arises out of the multiple intersections of different actors and contexts. This can be fairly clearly recognised when examining the cultural sites studied in the thesis. What can be 'read' from the cultural objects on a formal level, is that they were necessarily influenced by what the different actors behind them have to say about what Europe means to them. Often enough the reasons behind why an institution, festival, or art project claims to be European cannot be easily deciphered from the object alone. These are the actors responsible for their creation and their activities that to a large extent determine their end meaning. All of this is an ongoing process in which cultural producers such as artists, curators, and culture professionals are vital agents of meaning-making. Accordingly, what actors want to convey about Europe, how they construct its meanings, is undetachable from the register of meanings of Europe that exist in the wider social context. The significance of Europe's political contemporaneity is to a large extent a *force majeure* in setting the tone for Europe's meaning in cultural production. This is precisely what this first pattern highlights, that Europe is always conceived and presented in regard to notions of unity, togetherness, and integration; whilst that at the

same time, to different degrees, it signifies very specific worldviews of cultural producers.

The described meaning-making patterns in the studied cultural sites are necessarily tied to the specific political, social, and economic context of today's Europe. When cultural producers construct what they mean by Europe, they often (though at times inexplicitly) relate to European integration, its historical and contemporary dimensions, as well as the EU as such (especially its intuitionalism) – some to a degree even reproduce the EU's discourse[145]. Various modalities of the EU's Europe find their emanation in how Europe is portrayed in cultural sites. Conditional on the relation of cultural producers to the EU, their dependency on it, or opposition to it, the meanings of Europe they produce can be autonomous and particular. The inescapable recognition is, however, that regardless of the cultural site, the EU matters. It is almost always subject to either praise (often indirect) or criticism. Contemporary European integration, with all its faults and shortcomings, is the major context-setting force here. At the same time, cultural producers draw also heavily on different narratives of Europe, its philosophical and civilizational legacies. Europe as a symbol of the aesthetic, and of refinement, permeates most strongly there, and it has hardly anything to do with the EU.

Another angle to ascertain the significance of the EU for how cultural producers construct meanings of Europe is the idea of Europeanization of cultural sites. This a term often used in political science to describe mostly institutional, or other structural, adjustment of national of systems to a European 'norm'. Europeanization also affects

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[145] The European Union is an unavoidable context even for cultural producers and audiences that distance themselves from it, rarely does anyone also replicate the discourse of European integration verbatim, rather as it serves as one of the references for signifying the notion of unity that is ubiquitous associated with Europe in the cultural swites under inquiry.

individuals, especially ones taking advantage of the freedoms and opportunities provided by European integration, who are of a certain social standing (Andreotti and Le Gales 2011: 93). It is true that the cultural producers behind the case studies in question are mostly transnationally mobile individuals living in EU's most transient metropolitan areas (they actively utilise their European citizenship). Favell calls such people 'Eurostars'[146], individuals who construct their civic identity beyond norms of nationhood, by transgressing political and cultural borders in the denationalizing space of the EU (2008). It is difficult to examine whether mobility of cultural producers, and the often-transnational settings where they operate, has direct leverage on the meanings of Europe they construct. Nevertheless, it is true that the existence of many of these cultural sites is possible thanks to the freedoms facilitated by European integration. This is just one of the many factors that reinforces the pivotal context of European integration for the construction of the meaning of Europe in cultural sites.

The controversies around the EU nowadays reinforce the described pattern of how cultural producers tie meanings of Europe to notions of unity, while articulating their particular worldviews. Very few cultural producers that describe themselves as European would be explicitly anti-EU. Yet, different degrees of critique towards the current European construction have been identified by the research. For example, these are especially contemporary artists that engage in often fervent criticism of Europe's politics, and do it frequently through provocative measures. Some artists evaluate Europe from intrinsically critical perspectives, others align themselves with their

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[146] Today many European nationals live in multinational 'eurocities', who by the virtue of their mobility construct their identity "outside of the integratory paradigm of immigration" (Favell, 2008: 137). Eurostars' identity is one of the "cultural payoff(s)" of supranationalisation of Europe, claims Favell (2008, 17).

national 'traditional' cultural registers, very few actually blatantly reproduce what the EU has to say about itself in their work. All of them articulate their commentaries on Europe in direct relation to the EU and its presence in society. The festival producers, for example, try to strike a balance between constructive critiques of the EU and a recognition of the benefits of a uniting Europe. This is so because they often rely on public support, but also because for many cultural producers connected to festivals it is the narrowly national state that remains the most significant symbolic opponent. In the studied festival spaces a dynamic tension between the appreciation of post-national solutions and protest against neo-liberal polices of the EU is especially visible.

Europe might have many meanings, however, taking a position on the EU is almost a given in the cultural domain. Almost all cultural sites reflect this, and most of the cultural producers admit to relating their activities to the EU (even if 'off the record'). European integration is an intrinsically political project. Consequently, cultural producers have a hard time escaping from taking a position on it, even if some try to do so. The context of today's European construction is ever powerful. Some see it as alleviation force for rampant nationalism in many states – a progressive civilizational force[147]. Others see it as a guarantor of newly found independence, or an umbrella of values and interdependence for fragile statehood[148]. It is at the same time a source of

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[147] This is especially of the cultural producers behind Transeuropa.

[148] Europe as means of affirming fragile and changing national subjectivity is the case in many member states that transitioned to democracy (identifiable especially in the case of Slovenian and Polish artwork), but also in other post authoritarian regimes, as well as where national identity is in constant flux, as shown by Justine Lacroix and Kalypso NicolaïDis, *European Stories : Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) xx, 409 p..

many timely grievances[149]. Quite a few see it as a source of austerity and point out the deficiencies in its democratic credentials[150]. These seemingly oppositional views are not in fact that dichotomous. And as evidenced by the research what one means by Europe is always a mix between reproduced notions of unity and one's particular worldviews. This, however, is only half of the identified meaning-making dynamic.

5.3 Understandings of Europe through the particular, the immediate & the national

It is no novelty that "each national debate in Europe about Europe puts schools of thought against schools of thought, ideology against ideology, national trope against national trope" (Lacroix and Nicolaïdis 2010: 1). The nation has been one of the strongest social constructions that have arrived with modernity and remains so in today's Europe (as elaborated in Chapter I). People necessarily understand Europe through national lenses. However, neither does the perseverance of the nation invalidate the fact that understandings of Europe in society are changing, nor is it the only perspective through which Europe is conceived. The second pattern identifiable throughout the cases shows exactly that. It is linked to the production side of the cultural diamond, namely it relates mostly to the reception side of cultural production. How people understand

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[149] Increasingly the question of Europe, its associated civilizational dimension, becomes part of many symbolic conflicts in society. Particularly these are the greatly diverging public responses to European contemporary art installations that illuminate – they were readily connected to the problems of the 'here and now', in both national and European scale.

[150] Question of austerity, and the perceived abandoning of the European social model, is one of the key point on the agenda of Transeuropa festival, it is also very much echoed by the local coordinators in the field who contest the neoliberal economic model.

Europe's meaning put forward in cultural sites is contingent on the immediate social contexts that surround them, the nation being first among many.

Europe's meanings are constructed in relation to familiar contexts because they are an expression of particular worldviews. It is fundamentally through these contexts, such as the nation, local identity, gender, and class, that Europe is understood socially. When audiences perceive Europe as important, as worthy of their attention, it is never conceived in abstract terms – they do not uncritically reproduce *Euro newspeak*. As evidenced by the research, only relatability to particular contexts gives Europe its relevance in the eyes of the public. In each cultural site these contexts serve as the vernaculars used for the translation of the meanings of Europe. The immediate, and local or national perspectives are of key importance whatever notions Europe might set to signify. They fill the 'vessel' of Europe with significance.

Sociologically, this pattern of how Europe's meaning is understood in society stems from the theorisations regarding the significance of context for meaning-making in society. It therefore relates to its role as outlined in the culture diamond diagram. The formal properties of a cultural object, the actions of cultural producers, and the spectatorship of the audiences are all rooted in and mediated by their immediate surroundings. As outlined above contemporary processes of European integration are an unavoidable point of reference for cultural producers who construct what they mean by Europe by reproducing available discourses. EU's Europe also finds its emanation in the cultural sites studied. The EU is an important prism for how the audiences understand the meanings of Europe constructed through them. However profound the EU is when it comes to the audiences, the gravity of the immediate, the particular, the local and national is much more significant. In other words, translation of meanings of Europe put

forward by cultural producers into its social understandings only happens through specific contexts.

There are infinite numbers of particular contexts through which even rather abstracts notions of Europe can be understood socially – race, class, religion, occupation, political allegiance, and whole array of other collective identities. These were extensively described in the empirical elaboration of the cases in the preceding chapters. They will also be discussed subsequently in the analysis of the social function of each cultural site in more detail. However, for the purpose of dissecting the discussed meaning-making patterns, their reliance on the immediate context, it will be shown how the national frame has been identified to be of key importance. Though it is not the only perspective through which audiences relate to culturally produced meanings of Europe, the nation remains one of the primary contexts to understand 'what is Europe' on the social level.

The pivotal significance of the nation for understanding what Europe is among cultural consumers is not necessarily an expression of a nationalist standpoint as it might be seemingly perceived. The focus on the significance of nation as one of the most characteristic modern forms of social organisation, with all its repercussions, has been exhibited by most eminent social scientists who see the 'birth' of the nation with modernity. These 'modernist' scholars of nationalism identify the nation as historically specific and function specific. Most notably Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Anderson see it (accordingly) as a result of (1) structural changes, (2) an ideological formation in pursuit of power, and (3) a collective psychological trait deriving from modern forms of communication. The seeming resilience of the nation until today should not, however, invalidate the inquiry into the changing realities and meanings of Europe. Especially

since, as Król claims, the invention of the ideological doctrine of nationalism and the following form of social organisation (nation) is an indigenously European phenomenon (2012: 52). Nationalism stands however in direct opposition to the preceding legacies of European universalism, be that religious or political. The concept and the social reality of the nation disallows return to true universal European unity (Król 2012: 68). Today, Europe is nationalism. It is at the heart of its politics and society (sometimes with calamitous results). But it is only the understanding of such state of affairs, of centrality of the nation to Europe, which can allow a sound understanding of it present perturbations (Król 2012: 155).

There is also a historical embeddedness of the nation in cultural production, which has been subject to elaboration in the literature overview preceding the empirical part of the thesis. All of the studied cultural sites, at one point or another, have been overtaken or even built by national ideological regimes. To different degrees they were responsible for nation building as such. Today, many cultural sites assume various degrees of critical qualities, they no longer serves as deliberate tools of building and sustaining national homogeneity. Some even engage in critical elaboration of their own role in perpetrating hegemonic national discourses, as well as become vocal actors in the public sphere regarding the nation. The intertwinement of the nation and modernity resulted, however, in a lingering attachment to the nation as the main point of reference for social organisation and symbolic politics of all sorts in most western societies. Today, even if cultural sites claim to be European, to speak of Europe, the meanings of Europe they communicate are necessarily put next to the dominant master narrative of the nation, especially in how it is perceived by the public.

In few of the examined cultural sites one can observe a visible dichotomy when the communicated meanings of Europe are very abstract – high discursive sophistication or little immediate applicability[151]. Such messages are larger lost on the audiences at large, and speak only to a very narrow elite with prior interest in and knowledge of Europe. It is only when cultural sites assume a national (or other particular) dimension, in a dialectical relationship with Europe, that the meanings of Europe they communicate become more widely embraced (interest in their activities surges). This does not necessary mean praising the nation, or its positive cultivation. On the contrary, these cultural sites might be considerably anti-nationalist. However, the significance of the nation is so rooted in the 'structural reality' of society, that Europe as a 'structural reality' itself can only work in tandem with the former, to paraphrase Delanty.

One cannot analyse what people understand by Europe in detachment of their immediate contexts, one of which remains the ideology and the perceived reality of the nation. Some claim that the fallacy of a denationalised Europe is not only utopian, but also hegemonic in its own way[152]. While remaining within the realms of the modernist school of thought, which sees the nation as a social construct resulting from specific worldly conditions, the significance of this category of social self-understanding is still objectively valid. In analysing the meanings of Europe one ought to take into account the existing social perceptions of the nation, the symbolic politics behind it that intersect

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[151] The discourse of 'European cultural heritage' pursued by Euroepana, as well as the notions of aesthetic sophistication of Europe in regard to cinema hinted by ECU, are taken up by limited and specialized audiences (often the inner circle in each field).

[152] This is one of the accusations made against the EU by its most fervent critics. Namely, that it wishes to eradicate or replace the more or less objectively existing nations with a new regime that serves the purposes of its ruling class, as shown by Cris Shore, *Building Europe : The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000) 258p.

with questions of religion, class, race, and sexuality. The examination of European cultural sites shows that the latter categories are also important 'hinges' on which understandings of Europe can rest on, as much as the nation is. In each instance Europe is a potential platform of articulation of particular interests that can be used against hegemonic practices and discourses.

Construction of Europe's meanings and the process by which its understandings are formed, are governed by their utility for the social actors involved. There is a function to the usage of Europe, of invoking its unity, of framing it as an articulation of one's worldview, and of relating it to particular contexts that remain largely particular and national. Various actors, among them cultural producers, recognise the capacity of Europe to communicate what they deem as important and worthy of attention. They capitalise on the ever-presence of Europe in today's society due to European integration, both by praising and criticising it. They also make their meanings of Europe context-specific, because these are the particular and largely national perspectives that allow for relevant social understandings of Europe to arise. This is the significance of the second pattern, which has been identified as taking place mostly in the consumption side of culture. Europe, therefore, is not a singular entity, or a rigid set of values or ideals, as the common notion would have it. I does not always relate to the master narrative of Judeo-Christian values, the modernist tradition of European culture, or contemporary reality of European integration. These are merely registers of available meanings of Europe from which actors (cultural producers and consumers alike) construct their meanings and understandings of Europe. This does not mean they are unimportant. Identifying important narratives from which ideas of Europe can be drawn is very relevant. But counter to popular views Europe can mean many different things, and almost echoing

Swidler, it is safe to say that one builds one's understandings of Europe from the 'toolkit' of its available meanings (1986). The subsequent elaboration on ideal typical cultural sites explains in more detail the social function of Europe by looking at the meaning-making patterns in practice.

5.4   European cultural sites

At this point it is useful to reiterate that the research contained in this thesis is carried out from the general supposition of social constructionism in so much as it is believed that continuous meaning-making processes are foundational for the existence of social self-understandings (Day and Thompson 2004; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). Following this understanding of society, the analysis is narrowed down to one of its emanations, which are various forms of aesthetic culture that include fine, visual, and performing arts that are often commonly labelled as 'cultural production' or simply as 'culture' (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993; Brain 1994; Jenks 1993). These cultural sites resonate in society in different ways, some due to their public sphere function (J. Habermas 1989a; J. Habermas et al. 2004); others are places where direct social interaction takes place (Simmel et al. 1997). They are where meaning is constructed and communicated into society.

This thesis focuses on three such distinct cultural sites. It identifies a cultural institution, cultural festivals, and public art projects as sites where meaning is made. I show how in these largely transnational[153] sites struggles over 'what is Europe' take

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[153] Innerarity warns that a "contraposition between homogenous national spaces that are bursting with solidarity and heterogeneous transnational spaces that are incapable of solidarity does not correspond to the reality of the nation states, either form the point of view of their historical construction or their current

place. This section examines exactly what meanings of Europe emerge in these cultural sites in respect to the meaning –making patterns described in the preceding sections. According to the cultural diamond, it is shown exactly is 'said' about Europe, to whom, and most importantly with what results. The question here is also of the social resonance of each cultural site. It is not so much an attempt to objectively quantify their impact, but to analyse their subjective relevance for the actors involved. The analysis focuses on the meanings put forward in these sites and their reception.

First, I show how cultural producers construct and communicate meanings of Europe. The actors behind cultural institutions, festivals, and art project draw on available symbolic resources, such as the existing narratives of Europe (as elaborated in the previous sections). They utilise historical and contemporary notions associated with Europe in very different ways. The further away from the institutions of the state and the EU, the more particular and antonymous the meanings of Europe are. Artists, curators, and culture professionals reproduce existing narratives of Europe within their respective fields of cultural production. Struggles over the meanings of Europe, however, are inextricably linked to the immediate contexts of the audiences: their national imaginaries, class and social standing, religiosity, and minority rights, etc. This is due to Europeanization of various aspects of social life (Delanty 2013). Claiming to be European is connected to an array of very concrete social realities. These are the social experiences of Europe embedded in particular local and national contexts that inform the

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expression of solidarity" (Innerarity 2014: 3). He also talks about a new transnational demos for Europe, a reflexive community built on contemporary practice, rather than assumed prior homogeneity. His account, however, is limited to the EU only. Daniel Innerarity, 'Does Europe Need a Demos to Be Truly Democratic?', *LEQS – 'Europe in Question' discussion paper,* No. 77 (July 2014 2014).

process of Europe's meaning-making in the cultural sites studied. Struggles over understandings of Europe in cultural sites are a dialectic between the meanings constructed by producers and the experiences of Europe of the audiences which are very much context specific and rooted in local or national milieus, which are variable and dynamic.

5.4.1   A cultural institution

The first cultural site examined is a cultural institution. Europeana – the European digital museum, library, and archive – is a particular[154] case of cultural production carried out from an intrinsically European perspective and ascribed with an essentially European character. For the creators of this cultural institution Europe is first and foremost and aggregative tool – it brings together digitised cultural collections from across the continent in one access source. On the discourse level the emphasis on Europe's unity is emanated by notions of common history (however not a single history). It's either framed as shared past one would want to move away from – in the case of WWI; or as common experiences of struggle for freedom against authoritarianism – in the case of democratic transition of 89'. For Europeana, Europe is a-national; it is a modernist instance of the universal. However, as demonstrated by the research, such meanings of Europe are only embraced by a limited and capable elite – interested in contemporary issues pertaining to Europe and culture. On the reception side, wider audiences relate to

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[154] The reasons for emblematic character of Europeana is described in the relevant chapter, but its uniqueness rests mainly on the strength of its discourse – it sees itself as intrinsically European – a new quality in cultural production.

Europeana's idea of Europe through the intermediary of collective historical memory, rooted in the respective national imaginaries.

At this point it is worthy to reiterate the significance of cultural institutions for society. One of the most important historic legacies of modern cultural institutions is their impact on shared meanings. Public cultural institutions are a product of modernity and were intertwined with the process of coming into being of the nation as a social entity – they are a part of the process of its invention (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Cultural institutions still play such role today; they mediate the ever-changing meanings of the nation and nationhood. Especially in Europe modern cultural institutions are actors of enduring significance when it comes to reproducing nationalism. They too, however, are subject to change. More and more cultural institutions modify the ways in which they narrate their national stories (Aronsson and Elgenius 2011). Recently, many major public galleries and museums of pivotal significance have been undergoing profound changes in regard to their meaning-making functions. Less and less do they present coherent and unquestionable narratives of national formation: from the nascence of nationhood till today (as the nationalist ideologues would have it). It has been observed that museums become 'critical', self-critical, and critical to the narratives of the nation they have been telling for years (Piotrowski 2011). By doing so they are ahead of the curve of changing national self-understandings. They are often, in fact, active agents of change when it comes to social perceptions of the nation. Some precursor institutions become self-critical largely within their respective national frameworks, other become Europeanised and reshape the national canons of art taking into account contemporary dynamics of European integration (Kaiser in Chenal 2012: 75-83).

This research has, however, identified a strictly European cultural institution, albeit of a very particular kind. Namely, it is *virtual* and has only an online existence. It also disassociates itself from any national allegiances. Consequently, Europeana can be claimed to represent an original ideal type of sorts. The explicit mission of this virtual museum, library, and archive at once is the preservation and dissemination of 'common European cultural heritage'. By putting one common European 'stamp' on culture Europeana clearly reproduces established narratives of Europe pertaining to its unifying function and supposedly superseding the nation. However, as it is shown the reproduction of these somewhat abstract meanings of Europe has little to no appeal among the public (as found also in the original Twitter survey). At the same time, in public perceptions, Europeana's aspirations to be European are necessarily mediated by national and other particular imaginaries. It is evidenced that Europe in Europeana, framed as remembering and overcoming social traumas, seen from local and national perspectives, told by individual members of the public indeed, has indeed meaning for its audiences. This in turn has influence on the practices of this institution when it comes to promoting its European character. In the few years of its existence, Europeana has shifted its focus from mere aggregation of content under the label of Europe, to a multiplicity of particular projects, most important two of which rely on public participation and relate to pivotal historical turning points of twentieth century European history.

5.4.1.1   Post-national Europe & the idea of the common

The case of Europeana is of course somewhat atypical due to its primarily virtual existence. However, in the digital age the impact of a cultural institution existing chiefly

in the Internet cannot be seen as detracting from its potential social significance. It is also, so far, the only major cultural institution, which claims a specifically and strictly European character. Necessarily, such cultural institution is constructing its own meanings of Europe, by reproducing existing narratives according to its mission and agenda. This is precisely what has been observed – Europeana constructs its own discourse about the connection between Europe and culture. In doing so it draws on different narratives of 'European nationalism' and of European integration alike. Furthermore, its idea of a shared European cultural register draws on the cosmopolitan discourses of Europe.

European nationalism is an analytical concept, which identifies different ideas regarding Europe's unity present mostly in philosophical and cultural, but also political, discourses of modernity (Pagden 2002). These multiple narratives of European nationalism can be further divided into antinational and pro-national ones. The latter can be seen as closely linked to the idea of national self-determination as it was emanated in the so-called Wilsonian moment in Europe (Manela 2009), and the former as deriving from the philosophical tradition of Enlightenment (Kant 2007; Saint-Pierre and Goyard-Fabre 1986). D'Appollonia locates notions of antinational European nationalism in the tradition of the Enlightenment and its cosmopolitan discourses of humanistic universalism (2002: 174). Different emanations of antinational European nationalism included also the pan-Europeanism of the interwar period (Coudenhove-Kalergi 1952). And it was especially then when its advocates sought to envision the development of European unity according to the same dynamics as the nation did, and eventually replacing it. The same set of common denominators was to constitute Europe as did the nation, such as: a bounded territory, a shared memory, and a set of cultural values, as

well as an individual and shared identity (Smith 1992). The concept of antinational European nationalism is then point of reference to those who would like to see Europe as heading towards a uniform collective cultural identity, or those who point to the lack of such identity nowadays.

The notion of pro-national European nationalism too derives from a sense of cosmopolitanism (d'Appolonia 2002: 180), yet it decouples nation and state proclaiming national affirmation possible outside of the 'bordered power container' (Giddens 1985: 120). This supposition, allows for a bottom-up construction of European unity, where this unity serves the interests of different national and local groups. As mentioned before, historically, this notion has very much been linked to the contestation of the Concert of Europe (Jastrzębowski and Ramotowska 1985), and had its peak in the post WWI proliferation of nationalism in Europe. Pro-national European nationalism has been closely linked to the development of the nation state following ideas of self-determination, especially against then contemporary hegemonic empires of the continent. This notion of Europe as a space of national freedom is an enduring set of narratives with contemporary repercussions.

The way in which Europeana coins its own meanings of Europe can be related to this analytical distinction between different narratives of Europe. On one hand, Europeana frames its *raison d'être* as deriving from the alleged unique character of aesthetic and intellectual expression of Europe – the existence of an objective common European cultural canon. Everything that has ever been created, judged as cultural, and deemed worthy of preservation is ascribed with significance due to its supposed European origin and character. The idea that digitised collections are in fact cultural heritage, and one that it is somehow shared, is very much a universalizing discourse of

Europe. It is one that echoes anti-national European nationalism. It is almost a Europe for Europe's sake type of rhetoric – where European unity is an end in itself. Even though it is done somewhat inexplicitly, the millions of digitised artefacts in the portal's collection are claimed to be part of a European cultural master narrative that has its realisation also in the very project of Europeana. Yet, the motives for digitalisation and dissemination of the content of a vast array of Europe's national institutions of cultural retention are framed as benign and seemingly apolitical. In its assertions, Europeana is not to represent anyone's interests, except the one of a post-national Europe. Europe's unity through culture is presented as unquestionable and almost naturally deriving from the universality of modern culture above national divisions (Sassoon, 2009). In the official discourse of the portal Europe is pristine, it only signifies unity, and entails no contradictions.

On the other hand, the idea of 'common cultural heritage' pursued by Europeana is a replication of the very political discourse of European integration. The phrase itself appears in the Maastricht Treaty from the year 1992 that established the European Union (TEU, art. 151, 1992). Europeana enjoys structural independence from the EU despite being financed by the Commission and distances itself from any political allegiance. Still, it frames its activities in what one might call politically post-national terms (transcending the nation) and it does reproduce EU's discourse of European unity. Europeana is very much rooted in European institutionalism and is a product of its cultural agenda (Shore 2000). It draws on the narratives of Europe procured by the EU, and hence formulates its own version of 'unity in diversity', as many Europeanized cultural initiatives do (Sassatelli, 2013).

European integration as a discourse is often historicised, extrapolated into the past - the very concrete, economic, political, and social processes of today are claimed to be part of larger historical trajectories of achieving European unity. These discursive constructs are aimed at legitimising the current European construction on a symbolic level. There should be no surprise that such attempts at cultivation were and are undertaken on the part of the European Union – that there have been attempts to forge a cultural narrative of European integration. Sassatelli traces these academic and institutional debates on European cultural identity and identifies such attempts to construct a teleological understanding of European historical continuity[155]. In elaborating on the cultural discourses of Europeanization Sassatelli advocates moving away from the distinction between political and cultural identity of today and analyses existing "discourses on European cultural identity and the recent histories and practices of European integration" jointly (Sassatelli: 2009, 25).

The discourse of European integration has changed substantially over the years, from the federalist concept of *unity,* based on 'European spirit', Hellenic rationality and beauty, Roman law in institutions, and Judeo-Christian ethics, to the neofunctionalist concept of *diversity* that framed cultural identity as based on plurality. It however disregarded the modern European cultural continuum (Sassoon 2006). Sassatelli claims that with the withdrawal for the discourse on identity in the official text of the Maastricht Treaty (Council of the European Communities 1992), and the introduction of European citizenship and the cultural competence, at least institutionally the EU merges the collective-corporatist identity of unity (70s) and the individual-liberal identity of

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[155] The idea that contemporary political and economic European integration was an 'end of history' of sorts was especially prevalent when the European Communities were being replaced by the EU proper.

diversity (80s). Today's official discourse of European integration operates within the known framework of *unity in diversity,* where today's Europe is framed as a result of a long tradition of cultural cross-influences, which are continuous, successive, and embedded (Sassatelli: 2009, 27). The change of this discourse illuminates how different narratives of European unity can be used in pursuit of political objectives. It also shows how the changing reality of European integration reflects back on its discourse and how such narratives are not static entities but are contingent on social reality.

The reproduction of the 'unity in diversity' in Europeana is evidenced by the insistence of the portal on the plurality of its sources – digitalised content aggregation from cultural heritage institutions around Europe is framed as self-explanatory, as if following the logic of European integration. The 'diversity' of Europe's cultural riches is portrayed as 'united' by Europeana. The notion that the portal is some sort of culmination of European integration, at least with respect to culture, is inescapable. Culture is understood there as part of a larger trajectory leading up to today's European unity. This a very modernist understanding of culture, because it presupposes that at least this area of social life is indisputably common to all Europeans and predestined to transcend perceived national divisions – it is universalising. However, though there is an overwhelming emphasis on the symbolically unifying character of 'European cultural heritage', since its launch Europeana has slightly pluralised its once coherent discourse of unity. It has introduced projects that open Europe to various and often contradictory interpretations rooted in collective memory.

Most notably, Europeana 1914-1918 and Europeana 1989 stand out among its many subsidiary projects as initiatives that even though are focused on 'unity', on bringing the portal's users together, necessarily accommodate variable and contradictory

understandings of Europe. These two initiatives were undertaken to infuse the portal with its own original content (not taken from national cultural institutions), brought by individual members of the public who either were witnesses of these European world historical events or immediate descendants of people who were. The discursive supposition behind these endeavours is pretty clear and follows the notion of Europe as a uniting umbrella of shared social experiences. The collective historical memory of either WWI or democratic revolutions of 1989, are presented as a mutually experienced European past and important historical caesuras for the continent. Additionally, Europeana emphasises that these are personal accounts of these events that it gathers, and hence are claimed to be more plural, nuanced and more 'real' than official narratives.

When it comes to Europeana 1914-1918, World War I is seen as a collective European trauma – the reworking of which can increase the awareness of common suffering by all Europeans implicated in the conflict (Spohn and Eder 2005). Accordingly, Europeana 1989 'commemorates' the dismantling of communism in Central-Eastern Europe, an event that is framed as a historical and civilizational development advancing European unity. Both projects, however, are given national frames of reference by which publics from the relevant countries can submit their own stories relating to these historical happenings (along with digitised materials from the period). Both put emphasis on the shared experiences across Europe, either the tragedy of war or the experience of democratisation. However, in each case it is the diversity of personal, local, and national experiences that form the mosaic of these historical junctures in a European perspective. This is the inexplicit pro-national dimension of Europeana as such, which below its sweeping assertions of 'common European cultural

heritage' introduces schemes that allow the public to understand Europe's historical heritage from very particular and still very national perspectives, and often contradictory ones.

5.4.1.2 Pluralised audience reception rooted in collective memory

Upon the analysis of the reception of Europeana, it is visible that the somewhat cosmopolitan and universalist discourse of European unity through culture it communicates is largely lost on the public. However, the mentioned two very concrete, historically relevant, locally and nationally nuanced projects had considerable following in their own right. As evidenced by the original audience reception survey carried out via Twitter (outlined earlier in the thesis), the idea of 'European cultural heritage' is picked up by a rather elite audience, one with prior exposure to high culture, knowledge of Europe, and often specific interest in the cultural sector and/or European integration. Europe as an instance of the universal, as largely presented by Europeana, requires a considerably 'fertile soil' of audience reception. Emphasis on European unity that incorporates and cherishes diversity is a somewhat abstract notion for many. It is also very complex and not easily discernible by wide audiences. Europeana therefore caters to members of an audience immersed in the field of cultural production, as well as the field of contemporary European politics. Even though the portal is not strictly linked to EU institutions, it reproduces their discourse and speaks to the publics that share, if not necessarily similar convictions, then definitely a considerable cultural capital of a very Europeanized kind (Trenz in Guiraudon and Favell 2011: 202).

Conversely, Europeana's 1914-1918 and 1989 projects facilitate direct interaction through culture in both virtual and physical spaces, where audiences from outside of the field of contemporary European politics take part. Members of the public

motivated by their own life experiences (or of their immediate ancestors) have contributed to Europeana's collections by submitting stories or digitised artefacts from the relevant period. Necessarily, their accounts of either World War I or 1989 are rarely focused on the 'commonality' of these events for Europe. This is the curatorial practice of European. The stories and things brought by the members of the audience are particular accounts of collective historical memory, and hence are necessarily mediated by very the immediate and national perspectives. The European dimension of both matters, however it does specifically so because it is translated through the known and familiar imaginaries. The European frame set out by Europeana for these projects is very relevant, because it positions WWI as a shared European hecatomb and 1989 as common European effort of democratisation. It projects the relevance of the European perspective on the personal stories gathered. As it turns out this is quite complimentary with how audiences participate in both of these historical memory projects.

The trauma of human sacrifice in WWI is a rather distant social memory among Europeans. Hence, the focus of Europeana 1914-1918 on personal stories and their similarity in different national contexts of the war is not tremendously controversial. Individual accounts of the war can be detached from strong historical grievances. The materials submitted to Europeana stress such individual rather than political dimension. Their reading shows that public interest in WWI is overwhelmingly historical rather than geo-political. Consequently, the type of collective memory of the war represented by these audiences is less about national struggle, but about the stories told by their parents and grandparents. Europeana puts special emphasis on stories where national boundaries or allegiances were transgressed. For example an instance in which a German solider was rescued by a British one. However, what permeates most strongly from the content

provided by these active audiences of Europeana 1914-1918, is the importance of the immediate and familial aspect of war, and the realisation of its universality.

Similarly, though there is no common memory of processes of democratisation of 1989 and the legacy of post-communist transition is often contested in the region, the victory of democracy at that very moment is questioned by very few. Poland saw Round Table talks and subsequent peaceful elections on June 4th 1989, whilst Romania witnessed a brutal coup at the end of the year. However, as in Poland, also in Hungary, East Germany, and in Czechoslovakia the revolutions were nonviolent and an emanation of the brewing democratic yearnings of these societies. Democratisation of Central-Eastern Europe had also impact on the rest of the continent, especially the future of European integration. In that sense 1989 is a shared European experience, especially in the region where it happened. 25 years after democratisation, the events are very much ingrained in collective memory of most CEE societies. The enthusiasm with which members of the public contribute to Europeana 1989 attests to that.

As mentioned before, in both cases the envisioned European commonality of historical memory and experience of members of the public was infused with relevance thanks to the importance of local and national contexts. Understandings of Europe, of its shared 'common cultural heritage' as Europeana would have it, were best communicated by the portal when relating to very concrete issues from history that still are deemed relevant in society. In this way the audiences of Europeana changed this cultural site, by altering its practice and in consequence its discourse. The 1989 project was taken on by Europeana only after the success of the 1914-1918 initiative was apparent, which initially was not given priority among other thematic themes existing in Europeana.

The portal still is predominately concerned with digitisation, aggregation, and diffusion of cultural artefacts from across Europe, but its investment in the 1989 project, despite its uncertain financial future, points to the reformulation of its agenda – a change of emphasis of sorts. Europeana did not abandon its mission of promoting 'common European cultural heritage', but it has put greater stress on the immediate and national relatability of its resources. It still is a specifically European cultural institution; it distances itself from exemplifying a concrete vision of Europe, yet it has one – emanated by the idea of 'common cultural heritage'. At the same time this very discourse is somewhat fluid. This is evidenced by the evolving practice of Europeana and the different ways in which it promotes the idea of 'common European cultural heritage' – intertwined in specific and national imaginaries, and located in the collective memory of such events as WWI and the Revolutions of 1989. Consequently, it is visible that on part of Europeana, the constructed meaning of Europe is very much focused on the idea of unity – how Europe can allow for complementarity of different national idioms. It is largely due to the hermetic nature of this discourse, yet one can observe attempts to pluralise it. Audience's understandings of Europe happen exactly thanks to the 'translation' of its meanings through particular historical events and the national perspectives associated with them.

5.4.2   A festival

The second type of cultural site studied is a festival. Here the research outlines two very different cultural festivals that explicitly brand themselves as European. The choice does not serve the purpose of direct comparison, rather the coupling of the two illuminates that seemingly analogous European cultural endeavours can be similar when it comes to

their social function, rather than discursive pursuits. The first festival is one devoted to film, ÉCU – The European Independent Film Festival taking place in Paris since 2006. It is a 'filmmakers' festival and is dedicated to the 'indie' movie scene, the diversity of which is collected under the common umbrella of Europe. According to ÉCU, Europe is meant to gather the filmmakers, endow them with prestige and recognition – it is also understood as such by the festival's participants. The second festival or rather a series of festival events is Transeuropa. Since 2010 it has been taking place in 10-14 cities across Europe with the pursuit of deliberating through culture on Europe and its problems 'above the nation state'. Transeuropa is platform of political advocacy through aesthetic cultural practices. Europe is very much a unifying symbol for different local activists to come together and articulate their goals, often on regional or national level. However, for many in Transeuropa, Europe is not only a means to an end, but an end in itself. It is a cosmopolitan ideal to be achieved both through local and national, as well as pan European efforts. Hence, both festivals 'use' Europe to gather participants and attract audiences. Even though, the particular and immediate goals of the social actors involved are strikingly different, and so are their understandings of Europe.

Arts or cultural festivals have been occupying the minds of social scientists since Simmel (1991). Due to the immediacy and intensity of interaction they facilitate they constitute a curious example of 'heightened' social activity. They take place in a particular time and space; they focus on a specific subject, and most importantly facilitate interaction between the members of an audience. Festivals can be seen as examples of most reflexive sites of cultural production because their existence relies on active participation. By drawing on modes of enactment of religious rituals, festivals are public performances that constitute a somewhat concentrated social reality. It is due to

that intensification of social interaction that their publics too take part in the meaning-making function of festivals. Hence, it is particularly interesting what meanings and social understandings of Europe are coined through festival sites when these endeavours claim an explicitly European character. As in the other examples of European cultural sites, the meanings constructed and communicated do not arise ex nihilo, but draw on pre-existing narratives of Europe. In the case of festivals it becomes, however, very clear how different ideas of Europe are strongly connected to the interests of actors involved (the producers and the audiences alike). Furthermore, in the case of festivals, the particular and local perspectives through which understandings of Europe are coined are readily recognisable. In festivals what social actors mean when invoking Europe can be located somewhere on the axis between notions of unity and contestation. Equally, how Europe is understood is necessarily mediated by particular and immediate contexts of the audiences.

5.4.2.1   A different kind of festival

Contemporary western world, and especially Europe is witnessing a proliferation of different kinds of festivals, most of which are concerned with cultural production – film, music, literature, and all kinds of artistic themes are their explicit focus. There is however a new breed among festivals that exemplifies a different kind of audience engagement – where sociability is key to the meanings that are produced through them. In other words, there are an increasing number of festivals where not just somewhat passive participation takes place but where more active audience input is pivotal. These are neither small local and regional festivals – such as 'floral games' or 'choir contests' observed by Leerssen, which largely constituted an emanation of modernist cultural

nationalism (2014). Nor are these big mega events of worldly magnitude, observed first by Simmel, which came along with the development of the transnational dimension of western modernity (World Fairs, Olympics). Such festivals of course still exist, in the case of the former they are mostly rituals linked to national celebrations and religious holidays, the latter are typically products of multinational sports and culture industry (MacAloon 2008; Roche 2000).

The fairly new type of festival is claimed to be one of a post-traditional kind, the particulars of which have been discussed in detail earlier in the thesis (Giorgi, Sassatelli, & Delanty, 2011). However, what is most important about post-traditional festivals is that some of them can be claimed to be 'critical', in so far as their themes are not totalising or do not require naïve celebration of a given motif or theme[156]. They are neither almost spiritual and religious-like events where one ought to rigidly follow a fixed script of interaction. Nor are they mass attended mega-events where the magic of the crowd necessitates uniform interaction. Some of them can be judged even as 'self-critical' where the themes explored are subject to open critique from all participants (contributors and audiences). Post-traditional festivals are sites where the meaning-making function of culture is most evident. It is because this is where the meanings communicated through aesthetic culture are heightened by immediate social interaction.

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[156] As noted in the preceding chapters, these new 'critical' qualities have been identified amongst contemporary cultural institutions, as seen in Piotrowski, *Muzeum Krytyczne*, Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, 'A European Project; Making National Museums in Europe – a Comparative Approach', in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius (eds.), *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen* (EuNaMus Report No. 1; Bologna 2011), 1-21, Odile Snelders Bas European Cultural Foundation Chenal, *Remappings : The Making of European Narratives : How Narratives Emerge, Unfold and Impact across Europe Today, and How They Contribute to Redrawing Our Maps of Europe* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2012).

It is not another instance of cultural production where only its creators, and other actors behind these endeavours, vest certain cultural artefacts and practices with meaning and importance, as it has been and is the case in many traditional festivals. True sociability of these post-traditional sites enables reflexive engagement of the audiences in discussing and elaborating on the content of such festivals. The analysed contemporary 'European' festivals are precisely of such post-traditional kind.

ÉCU - The European Independent Film Festival and Transeuropa festival are a somewhat odd pair of cultural endeavours, yet both of them apart from claiming to be European share to different degrees this post-traditional character. In these festivals, however, particular meaning-making patterns take place, which were introduced earlier in the chapter. The cultural professional and activists behind both these festivals reproduce certain narratives of Europe that serve to validate their agenda – they communicate often very different meanings of Europe that are thought important and useful to them. Ultimately, however, in both cases Europe serves the same function, by relating to particular and local contexts, it induces audience engagement.

5.4.2.2 Modernist aesthetics of film production

When it comes to the ÉCU the situation is somewhat straightforward. Europe there is presented as an aggregate, a common denominator for filmmakers to come together and carve out a space for to display and promote their work in the field of international movie production. It signifies unity of this subset of industry. This coming together of independent filmmakers under the banner of Europe stands in opposition to the tycoons of European cinematography. In the end, however, Europe is understood in a very

modernist fashion. It is a signifier of a historically and geographically specific aesthetic that transgresses divisions – it is a symbol of the universality of culture.

By coining the festival as European, the organisers of the festival draw on the symbolic legacies of European film as a distinct aesthetic form characterised by sophistication and standing in opposition to the 'culture industry' of American movies. Europe signifies high aestheticism, even if on a somewhat abstract level. The link between the festival's European dimension and aesthetics is important due to the fact that this is 'indie' cinema that ÉCU is concerned with. Art house cinema is still largely attributed to European cinema. For ÉCU Europe is the symbolic aggregate for all the non-mainstream film producers that feel left out and operate on the fringes of European cinematic industry (represented by the major traditional film festival). It has been explicitly said by the organizers that they want to serve as a counterpoint to Cannes, Venice, Berlinale, Karloy Váry, and so on. Hence the unity of independent filmmakers under the banner of Europe is positioned in opposition to mainstream industry, particularly in Europe. The function of Europe for ÉCU is to bestow symbolic prestige on its participants and against 'big festivals', which is inextricably linked with the particularity of this cultural site.

The festival is predominantly a meeting place for people who share similar interests. It is where interaction of independent filmmakers and specialised audiences takes place. As it has been relentlessly emphasised by ÉCU this is very much a filmmakers' festival and these are the independent cinematographers that are both the participants and the audiences of the festival. This somewhat hermetic character of the ÉCU reinforces the leverage the particularity of being a filmmaker has on how Europe is understood. Their particular and almost vocational context is key for what they take

from ÉCU. They see Europe as a tool that helps them articulate their aspirations in the field of film production. Hence, the way in which the European character of the festival is understood is clearly dependent on the particular interests of the main subjects of the festival. The European character underlines the artistic merit of the event and is invoked in pursuit of wider recognisability. Furthermore, the European and independent qualities are intertwined with the critical aspect of the festival that sees itself as standing against big film industry on both sides of the Atlantic and providing a space for 'indie' filmmakers under the umbrella of Europe.

ÉCU portrays 'their' Europe as an aggregate for independent cinematic expression; however it does not directly relate this to the nation. The festival is claimed to be 'very non-ideological'. The organisers of ÉCU, distance themselves from the European Union and any other political affiliations. For them the term European is a geographically and culturally sanctioned label of prestige that is aimed at gathering increased audience following and media attention. As shown above the use of Europe as the idea of the aesthetic stands in opposition to big politics. The only agenda of ÉCU is limited to the field of film production, to unite independent filmmakers, to protest against the mainstream monopoly, and hence to endow independent cinematographers with recognition. In all of which activities the label of Europe is being used.

5.4.2.3   Local activists across Europe

Transeuropa witnesses similar dynamics, in terms of the pivotal significance of the interaction between its local coordinators, the artists, and activists it invites to the festival, and the respective audiences on site. The meanings of Europe communicated in the festival are much more diverse, and rooted in very different prior narratives, than in

ÉCU, yet the pattern by which they arise is comparable. Transeuropa constructs its discourse of what Europe is and ought to be according to the agenda of the social actors behind it. The banner of Europe servers as an aggregate to connect all the festival's participants, audiences, as well as the various sites where it takes place – it is a means to an end. But a somewhat abstract 'Europe' is also framed as a goal they all aspire to – an end in itself – a higher civilizational paradigm. This is a goal of seeing issues from a European perspective and building Europe in opposition to its current failings. Transeuropa focuses on the things the EU and its member states are unsuccessful at. At the same time in each festival site Europe is understood differently, through the immediate and particular perspectives of the social actors on site. Transeuropa's Europe is deliberately provincialized in order to relate to very concrete issues and problems of each locality or group, that nevertheless are not unfamiliar elsewhere in Europe. Transeuropa is ambiguous because it assumes a European civilizational perspective; its practise, however, is rooted in the diversity and particularity of each locality.

As it has been described in detail earlier in the thesis, the festival uses different aesthetic forms as means of facilitating public discussions of Europe. Quite importantly, the festival is an emanation of the European Alternatives – a network of activists campaigning for pan European solutions to social problems prevalent throughout the continent. Therefore, there are very concrete social actors behind Transeuropa, who are convinced of importance of Europe as a civilizational idea, as well as, an empirical reality. The festival serves as an aggregate for the members of the European Alternatives network to exchange ideas, to engage new collaborators, and to further their agenda in association with pockets of civil society in Europe. However, the reflexive nature of the festival makes it a very local-specific event, where particular issues take centre stage in

each location. At the same time, through the means of the festival, these local issues travel to other locations and also oftentimes become appropriated into the agenda of the larger European Alternatives network.

As evidenced by original ethnography, the festival is a site of deliberation on political issues largely through the intermediary of culture. It is so thanks to this specific sociability among its organisers, the artists, and activists involved, as well as the audiences. The results of this intellectual cross-fertilisation between the various festival locations and the subsequent exchanges facilitated by the network is a formation of a transnational micro civil society organisation that sees Europe as both as a means to an end and a goal on its own merit. The Transeuropa festival is indeed a vital part of a certain type of political and civic advocacy pursued by the European Alternatives. The festival serves as a space where somewhat robust ideas of Europe are equally conceptualised, elaborated, and critiqued.

Necessarily, Transeuropa reproduces largely anti-national narratives of Europe and for the most part advocates the overcoming of the nation state. The official mottos, as well as, the main curatorial frames of the festival put emphasis on Europe's unity. Europe is a structural reality, as Delanty would have it (2013), hence national only solutions to social issues on the continent no longer suffice, claim the cultural producers behind the festival. Europe's unity, connectedness, and heritage, are *a priori* convictions. Hence, the opposition set out by Transeuropa is against the failings of current political architecture of European integration as well as ethno-nationalist Euro-scepticism. At the same time the postulates for 'more Europe' voiced throughout the festival are directed at the European Union, which is seen as the only body remotely capable of executing the ideas that surface in the festival, while at same time being

vehemently critical of the current affairs in the European Union and European politics in general. Even though the EU is seen as the only big ally of the network and one of its main supporters, the ideal of Europe conceptualised thought the festival and advocated by the EA goes way beyond any plausible political developments of the near future. The cultural festival is an imagined space of Europe where progressive social actors invent and re-invent their own ideas of Europe drawing on its civilizational and largely anti-national narratives.

However, as in the other cultural sites studied, on the part of the local activists, artists, and the audiences, understandings of Europe identifiable in the festival are even further decentred. Here again Europe is understood as a platform to articulate the immediate points of concern of specific communities, be that localities or minority groups, which are voiced also from national perspectives. These are not expressions of nationalist claims, but rather provincializing perspectives that underline the need for different solutions in different social (and national) contexts. For most of them, at the same time, Europe is associated with a set of standards to be replicated universally (democracy, pluralism, minority rights, etc.). It is an imagined community of values of sorts – meaningful in local contexts. That is perhaps the biggest difference of Transeuropa, which apart from an assumption of prior European commonality and the aggregating power of its banner, a European perspective on social and political issues of the day is seen as part of the solution. This notion is not universally shared by all it participants to the same degree, most of whom see their local and particular issues as most dear to them. But as shown by the research, all of them agree that Europe is precisely the right angle from which their problems should be addressed.

5.4.3 Public art

The subsequent cultural sites examined are a series of contemporary art projects commissioned to celebrate Europe. The artistic field has been ascribed by scholars with a considerable social function – ability to represent and shape shared meanings in society. On one hand, art is the "aesthetic springboard for understandings the extra-aesthetic features of society" (Zolberg 1990). On the other, art objects are not only a 'reflection' of society but social actors of sorts. An artwork is not just created and read, it is reproduced continuously be everyone who gins material or symbolic profit from doing so (Bourdieu et al. 1977). Especially in Central Europe immediately prior and post 1989 the artistic field has been proven to both signify and influence public sentiments regarding important social issues, including changing meanings of nationhood (Piotrowski, 2010). The last case of European cultural sites discussed comprises exactly a series of pieces of contemporary artwork commissioned to celebrate consecutive EU Council Presidencies by Central European members, which after 2004 had their debuts as leaders of European governance. The chosen cases are hence no ordinary ones, but examples of art that were meant to represent the nation and Europe and the nation vis-à-vis Europe.

Due to their specific EU-related setting, these projects necessarily tackle the subject of European integration. In one way or another they relate themselves to the discourse of 'unity in diversity' either through direct replication (Slovenia), deliberate derision (Czech Rep.), outright questioning (Hungary), particular reformulation (Poland). Because each piece was specially made for a Central European member state government, each is a particular articulation of one's perceived national subjectivity vis-à-vis Europe. Each is, to an extent, an emanation of how the leadership of a given state

(by what and how art was commissioned) and how a given society (how this art was received) would like to see itself. The former is confined mainly to the production side of culture – commissioning of the art, curatorial practices, and the role of the artist. The latter is the domain of cultural consumption whereby the pieces of art became public and exposed to different observers and resulted in often contradictory understandings. This artistic articulation of the collective self that is each installation is, of course, source to a variety of meanings of Europe. They are greatly dependent on national imaginers held by commissioning bodies, by the artists, and by the politicians involved. The dynamics of their public reception are even more rooted in the particular and predominantly national contexts. Each art piece not only 'represents' a given nation, but its European relevance is also understood from various national perspectives. Europe's meanings in their multiple nation-specific varieties, are exacerbated by the controversies surrounding public reception of each of the artworks investigated. The analysis reveals that social understandings of Europe are coined far from abstract notions but are inextricably linked to national collective self-understandings, as well as, current politics on both European and national level.

5.4.3.1   EU integration discourse

One might think that examples of art shown in Brussels are bound to somewhat naively reproduce the discourse of European integration. This is, however, only the case of the 2008 artwork presented by the Slovenian presidency. A benign monument mounted in the EU capital uncritically reproduces a variant of the 'unity in diversity' discourse putting emphasis on the pro-national idea of European unity. This artwork not only

aligns itself closely with the cultural agenda of today's European Union[157] but also speaks to the understandings of Europe held by the governing elite of such countries as Slovenia – newly independent small states that cherish their sovereignty above all. For such states Europe is very much a civilizational, economic, and security umbrella that is thought to reinforce their independence, after decades of foreign control.

The Slovenian art piece explicitly calls for 'freedom for all nations' in all official EU languages. It literally translates this specific pro-national understanding of Europe into local vernaculars. However, due to its fairly benign character it provoked very little public response. The artwork had very little immediate applicability, rather it merged a fairly abstract discourse of European integration with an equally pompous narrative of Slovenian independence. One might say that in this case only one half of the cultural diamond applies – the production side. One can only analyse the formal properties of the artwork as an emanation of the nexus of its producers. Only the first meaning-making pattern is observable here. There is no relevant data on its public reception. This somewhat odd example of a cultural site validates one of the underlining arguments contained in the thesis, which states that abstract notions of Europe have little public resonance (also found in Europeana). The Slovenian monument is such example when the discursive vessel of Europe hardly filled with concrete and particular meaning, and hence does not contribute to the formation of its social understandings.

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[157] Inclusion of the 'unity in diversity' in various different EU funded cultural projects.

5.4.3.2   Europe of nationalism

On the other hand, other art projects, each in their own way, took a critical stance on Europe through a particular national perspective, and in result became loci of social contestation. It was through their public spectatorship that Central European national subjectivities were being deliberated on in relation to Europe. In each case the national perspective proved to be fundamental for how Europe was understood by the publics. Most evidently, this was the case of the 2011 Hungarian 'carpet of cultural history' which official aspiration was to show Hungary's contribution to European culture. This discursive construct of Hungary's role in Europe drew on the narrative of pro-national European nationalism. However, what the piece actually presented was an intrinsically singular nationalist take on the country's history and its relationship with Europe. The 'carpet' was an image of nineteenth century imperial grandeur rather than a take on today's Europe. This corresponded with the neo-nationalist rhetoric of the then current Orbán government. There was a quite visible correlation between how the artist Livia Papai reproduced a hermetically national discourse in her installation and the sentiments expressed by Hungarian leadership.

It is impossible to determine the degree of actual leverage the commissioning body of the Hungarian Presidency had on the artist, but their ideological proximity is striking. From the perspective of the diamond, it also shows how an artwork can be an exact articulation of a political ideology. This naturally was met with a vocal response of Hungary's liberal public and the country's neighbours offended by the territorial claim of the Hungarian state depicted on the carpet. In public conversations ignited by the piece, understandings of Europe were constructed through opposition to what was perceived as narrow ethno-nationalism. The artwork was claimed to be an example of

how one should not 'celebrate' Europe – by focusing on a singular (hegemonic) national history. Amid criticism the Hungarian Presidency decided to silently cover up the carpet, proving that for many Europe is highly provocative and stands in conflict with enduring nationalist discourses. Ultimately understandings of Europe expressed by the audiences were voiced from specific national standpoints. The critique of Hungary's vision of Europe came from equally national but cosmopolitan understandings of Europe.

5.4.3.3   A critical intervention: provincialising Europe

Public upheaval was also achieved by the 2009 Czech installation entitled Entropa, which itself was a deliberate artistic provocation and an intervention into the public sphere intentionally aimed at igniting controversy. Rather than reproducing any established narratives of Europe, this artwork was a derision of EU's 'unity in diversity' discourse, but it was also a mockery of the ambitions of the Czech government to 'preside' over the Council of the European Union. The hoax instigated by the artist – invention of 26 fake artistic personas that supposedly produced 26 stereotypical depictions of their 'own' countries was aimed at just that. It was a derision of both EU's integratory efforts and the Czech political elite. As revealed by the artist David Černý, the idea of a deliberate hoax, of ridicule as means of coping with an important political and civilizational question, which is representative of Czech society and the somewhat peculiar character of its public culture. The Czech government was also aware that the art work was meant to depict stereotypes, however not that they would all be created by Černý himself. In this way the art work was indeed an articulation of *Czechia* and her vision of Europe.

In terms of public reception Entropa was met with an array of responses, the most vocal of which saw it as grossly offensive. This test through which the artist put

EU governments and member states publics had been chiefly failed on part of the former. The latter responded by conscious discussions of the place of political ridicule in the public sphere and on the existing mutual national stereotypes in Europe. Entropa pointed to the deficiencies of European unity as a project, but for the most part these were the harsh (borderline offensive) depictions of specific countries that caused most uproar. Even if some countries were not particularly 'offended' by the piece, ridicule at expense of nationalism was perceived as a dangerous game, especially by EU officials. These were, however, the national perspectives that made the piece meaningful in the eyes of the public, how one's nation was portrayed vis-à-vis others in the big European picture.

5.4.3.4   Universal symbolism and particular conflicts

Contrarily, the 2011 piece from Poland had seemingly a very neutral and benign discursive aspiration that somewhat followed the narrative of European integration and served the ideological goals of the aspirational Polish EU Council Presidency. It was to signify felicity, hope, and togetherness. The artist Julita Wójcik explicitly mentioned both its biblical and LGBT reference. The Rainbow was almost messianic, it wanted to please all, bridge the unbridgeable, and signify a glorious future. In that sense it related to a longstanding Polish cultural tradition (mainly literary) of seeing Poland as guardian of values and martyr for freedom. It was an artistic take on the Polish collective self, the historical memory of the nation and its self-image – from a very progressive perspective. The artwork has had that very function whilst standing in Brussels. However, when it moved to Warsaw after the end of the presidency it too became a locus of a burning symbolic conflict.

In Poland, the meanings proposed by the artist and ascribed to the Rainbow by the Polish government (felicity, hope, cooperation) were largely disregarded by the public as the piece began to embody the social divide over LGBT rights. Since 2012 the installation, which was mounted in a prominent public square in the Polish capital, was deliberately vandalised by incineration on six different occasions. The hooligans responsible for the attacks on the Rainbow were rallied by the radical right, who ironically enough *queered* it more than anyone else. It became a target of a politically motivated ideological crusade. What was more surprising, however, was the supportive response of the liberal civil society in defence of the Rainbow and of the rather conservative Warsaw City Hall in favour of the piece. Throughout the multiple public debates about the installation it has been vested with various meanings – symbol of the Covenant, of the cooperative movement, of European integration – yet each time it was the LGBT imagery that took centre stage. From the liberal flanks the Rainbow is seen as a symbol of civilizational aspiration, from the conservative – a European imposition of moral turpitude. The Rainbow, still standing in Warsaw, is both a representation of the social divide and an actor shaping social attitudes towards the LGBT community and European values they became to embody.

Overall, the discursive presence of Europe in all of the discussed examples of contemporary art highlights different areas of social *dissensus* whilst being a relevant reference for national self-understandings in Central Europe. As evidenced, the discursive content of the art puts emphasis on Europe's unity that is always paired with some sort of articulation of national particularity. Europe functions as vessel of meaning, filled by various actors behind cultural sites – the member state governments, the artists,

and politicians. Ultimately, however, these are the immediate, particular, and largely national frames that determine how Europe's meanings in art are understood socially. The aftermath of each installation, the reactions to its public presence, illuminate just that. They exemplify how national subjectivities change in relation to Europe, on account of governments and publics alike.

5.5 New perspectives on Europe

The research presented in this thesis has evidenced that struggles over meanings and social understandings of Europe in cultural sites can be better explained by analysing them in terms of specific patterns. The first pattern of meaning-making entails placing Europe between existing notions of unity and articulation of one's subjective worldviews (often entailing idealisations of reality). The second shows that social understandings of Europe cannot be detached from particular and local specificity of each audience, where national perspectives are still ever-present; Europe is translated through immediate contexts. What is in common to both these patterns is the contextual significance of European integration and the EU as such. When it comes to the production side, cultural producers utilise many different narratives of Europe in their work, but it is the European integration discourse that very much sets the tone for how to conceive of Europe today. Hardly ever is it replicated directly, but rather reproduced reflecting one's particular agenda. For many cultural producers the EU is an important point of symbolic reference, a source of structural or financial support, but also a target of critique. Also the consumption side of the spectrum, namely the way in which audiences understand Europe, albeit through particular and national lenses, is influenced by contemporary dynamics of European integration. It is no secret that what people

mean by Europe and how they understand it today cannot escape the context of the current European construction. However, the research also shows that for many social actors engaged in cultural production Europe can mean many more things, grandiose and quotidian alike. This thesis can inform future research in this regard. Namely, to think of ways to study Europe's meaning in society, taking the EU into account, but not allowing it to overshadow the analysis.

In the crisis ridden years 'Europe' in the media had been presented almost exclusively through the prism of the European Union. By and large the two have been equated with one another in the popular discourse, by both the supporters and opponents of European integration. After 2008 the mediated presence of perturbations of the euro have, on one hand, considerably Europeanized the public opinion in terms of its awareness of 'things European' (Risse-Kappen 2010). On the other, the uneven architecture of the European Monetary Union and its repercussions on only some member states have put into doubt the logic of European integration for many observers (Wielgosz 2013). The influence the EU has on how people understand Europe today is recognised in the analysis of the empirical findings in this thesis. It has also been identified that the proximity of EU has leverage on the meanings of Europe that emerge in cultural sites. Actors in these sites either reproduce its ideological agenda or construct meanings of Europe more independently. The thesis shows that the context of the EU is unavoidable nowadays, it is almost ubiquitous, and depending on how immediate, it is very influential. It is equally important when cultural producers take EU's money, take advantage of its benefits (free movement), or celebrate its political agenda. However, what one means by Europe can be justifiably constructed in opposition to the EU, its perceived bureaucracy, its seeming neoliberalism, or conversely its supposed social

progressivism and anti-national dimensions. This has been observed in the studied cultural sites - construction of Europe's meaning often entails contestation. The further from its structures the more particular and autonomous the meanings of Europe are. At the same time, being sceptical or against the European Union does not invalidate positive attitudes towards Europe in principle.

5.5.1   Transnational Europe & benign Europeanism

Crisis ridden European Union had become a symbol of austerity and largely nationalist squabble for many commentators of public life (P. Anderson 2012). However, there had been far fewer propositions of how European integration can be salvaged outside that institutional paradigm. In a micro scale, as seen in the thesis, such voices had been raised by cultural producers by constructing meanings of Europe in opposition to the EU[158]. Even if the EU as we know it today may be 'doomed' the integration of Europe could continue (Zielonka 2014). Europe's economic and political ties, as well as 'cultural empathy' can be fostered below the current supranational institutional and intra-governmental levels of the EU. Zielonka calls this a 'neo-medieval' return to the subnational and transitional networks of interaction and dependency, which is to assure the sustainment of Europe's diversity and pluralism. This vision of a European 'polyphony'[159] of plurality and hybridity is especially relevant regarding the cultural sphere. Transeuropa festival can be seen as such network - a potential example of

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[158] This is especially the case when it comes to the festivals, as seen in the relevant chapter.

[159] Zielonka, however, doesn't go into too much detail about how exactly these non-national and non-EU (or post-EU even) networks would work, or more importantly, how they would prevent disintegration or compartmentalisation of Europe. Jan Zielonka, *Is the Eu Doomed?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014).

Europe's 'neo-medieval' integration. The identified patterns by which social actors behind Transeuropa construct meanings of Europe, and how these play out with their respective audiences, offers a glimpse of a plural European civil society of a different kind. It also evidences that as much as the structural context of the European Union is pivotal nowadays, it does not necessarily have to remain so indefinitely.

The political advocacy of Transeuropa through culture is contingent on the EU today, but on a conceptual level Europe here signifies an opposition to nationalism, and all its shortcoming and faults, in the first place. For majority of activists behind Transeuropa, Europe is a cosmopolitan civilizational paradigm, through which they articulate very particular and local issues that have been neglected on the national level. Issues such as LGBT and women's rights, youth precarity, displacement and discrimination of Roma people, inclusiveness of the public sphere, are addressed in Transeuropa. None are sought to be remedied by one magical solution throughout Europe, but all are claimed to have been unsuccessfully tackled by the nation state. This prototype of a transnational European civil society can be seen as standing at the base of the 'neo-medieval' dimension of European integration, where actors come together driven by common problems and pursuits that are not dealt with on the nation level or the EU one. Many local activists claim that their problems cannot be solved by anyone but themselves. The festival is a platform for public articulation and exchange of ideas, formulation of common strategies, and its participants do not seek refuge in the EU as such. Many are very critical of the EU and the current neoliberal mode of integration it executes.

Europe, nevertheless, remains relevant for the members of this transnational network, which one can see as component of the 'European polyphony' ideal type. As

elaborated before, in Transeuropa, Europe is unity (of problems, goals, aspirations, remedies), and it is an articulation of particular grievances of the actors involved (against nationalism, neo-liberal economics, and sometimes the EU as such). However, criticism of the EU comes from an open and inclusive understanding of Europe[160]. These are particular social issues, metropolitan politics, regional interests that matter most, not 'national interests' bargained in the European Council. The exhaustion of EU institutionalism does not necessarily have to mean a reversal to the singular nation state. For such no longer exists in practice. The example of Transeuropa shows how this can be true, albeit in a micro scale. Whether European integration 'after the EU' can be then strengthened by the example of such endeavours as Transeuropa, remains unclear. However, for many actors that invoke Europe the EU might be increasingly less and less seen as a remedy for their grievances, as much as the nation never had been. This phenomenon can of course be juxtaposed to different kinds of nationalist ideological revival, but the increasing transnational connectivity and dependency in different spheres of social life can also underwrite the 'neo-medieval' thesis of European integration.

Propositions of completely decoupling meanings of Europe from the EU are difficult because they are fairly abstract. Today, the concurrence of how Europe is understood in society with contemporary European integration is vividly observable. Even many scholars consciously use these terms interchangeably (Giddens 2013; Lacroix and Nicolaïdis 2010). In this regard, one has to agree with Giddens in particular that the arrival of the EU, and its continuous transformation is of 'world historical importance', breathes a breath of political and social significance into the meaning of

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[160] This emphasis on plurality is also part of the 'neo-medieval' thesis framed by Zielonka.

Europe that is historically incomparable (2013: 5). As evidenced by this research what people conceive by Europe is indeed always juxtaposed to the EU. At the same time, insistence on an 'EU-centred' perspective can overshadow what meanings social actors on the 'ground' ascribe to Europe. In the context of economic and political turbulence it can disallow thinking of Europe 'outside of the box' (that is the EU). This can be especially problematic for enthusiasts and supporters of Europe that do not see the contemporary status quo as contributing to the cause, or even see it as a hindrance[161]. The analytical task is to best grasp the current and future significance of the European Union to shape meanings and understandings of Europe, whilst recognising the plausibility of provincialized particular and autonomous visions of Europe, in contrast to the concentric circles of the EU world system.

How to do the former is the preoccupation of Giddens, who claims that due to contemporary integration "Europe has become a community of fate" (2013: 41). However, it is precisely the lack of a 'community of fate' that was evidenced by how the EU unsuccessfully has been tackling the euro crisis, claims Anderson (2012). This dispute cannot be settled right now, especially not here. However, Giddens claims that European unity in the age of 'super-diversity' is a prerequisite to sustain the civilizational achievements of Europe and its values post WWII. Even though the existence of such constructs as the European Social Model has been put into doubt by the critics of EU's neoliberal foundations, the focus on Europe's diversity as facilitated and managed by the EU is a compelling perspective. Among many important policy

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[161] This is best exemplified by such pro-European voices that speak of a 'United Europe of States' rather than a European federation (Simon Glendinning, 'A United States of Europe', *Eutopia: Ideas for Europe Magazine,* (2014).).

areas, the EU may in the future be also able to tackle issues such as migration without resorting to measures of 'fortress Europe', which are in place at the moment. Giddens recognizes that the current positive effects of EU and the ones that are to come if it successfully overcomes its inertia, are largely perceived as instrumental for most. He sees utility in European integration and seeks for ways to improve it. There is however, very little space for emotive 'enthusiasm' in such understanding of Europe, and perhaps rightly so.

Anthony D. Smith has famously questioned Europe's potency to 'move' people, to persuade them to offer sacrifice for its cause (1992). However, perhaps no one needs to 'die' for Europe, to deem it important, for it to be a relevant concept of social self-understanding. Also, arguably, the tragically fallen hundreds of *Maidan* protesters in Kiev, Ukraine in early 2014 can be seen as first martyrs of aspiration to a European way of life[162]. Yet, until then it had been commonly said that only fervent nationalist are enthusiastic about Europe, in how they loath it[163]. This is also how the eminent Czech playwright and president Václav Havel framed his 'Europeanism' – as taken for granted yet objectively valid (Giddens 2013: 148). Havel's formation to become a 'conscious Europeanism' underwent in direct correlation with the EU[164]. Havel's perception of Europe can be understood in term of the inexplicit, of the everyday, of the 'benign'. It shows how meanings of Europe can be shaped by a variety of social experiences, below the institutional level of politics and economy. As much as Giddens' claim for the

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[162] Ukraine's president Petro Poroshenko reiterated that "his nation was paying a high price, "for our European identity and our independence." (http://blogs.wsj.com/brussels/2014/12/17/ukraine-president-tells-poles-he-wants-eu-nato-membership/)

[163] As poignantly evidenced by the reception of artworks analyzed in the empirical part of the thesis.

[164] As it did for many Central European political leaders post 1989.

enduring relevance of EU's civilizational mission can be debatable, especially since it doesn't show how it could accommodate emerging multiple Europe networks. The idea of Europe's utility and everydayness is worth exploring[165]. The coincidence with Billig's banal nationalism is purposeful here (1995). Cram has introduced the use of the concept of 'banal Europeanism' in order to analyse how Europe can be ordinary, contingent, and contextual (2012: 79, 83). However, she uses it only in relation to the EU and its social impact.

The propositions of this chapter are to inquire not only into how EU's Europeanisation changes society, but how Europe's discursive presence is articulated in everyday society. The notion of 'benign Europeanism' can be useful analytical tool to identify and name social expressions of Europe, outside of the EU, such as the ones in this research. In the light of the current turbulence of the EU, different yet relevant ways of conceiving of 'what is Europe' are much needed.

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[165] The notion of Europe as benign is connected to the solidity of national identities in Europe. Judt points out that Europeans (much more than Americans), are capable "to disassociate themselves quite actively and radically from any more abstract identification with nation or state – without losing any sense of their identity" (2012, p. 302). Europe of the 'everyday' can hence compliment or exist alongside these entrenched identities, rather than compete with them. (Tony Judt and Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012) xvii, 414 p. at 302.)

Conclusion

In order to reemphasize the findings of this thesis, I would like to briefly elaborate on the motives behind the choice of the research question and the area of inquiry. As in the case of any sociological investigation, the reasons for this pursuit are a mixture of personal experiences, subjective perceptions, as well as careful observations of the social world – all open to subsequent scientific scrutiny. In this case too, prior to the methodological gauging of the research question concerning meanings of Europe, came individual observations, intuition, an objection to popular perceptions on the subject matter, and a realisation of the insufficiency of existing scholarship.

In the spirit of scientific reflexivity, it is pivotal to reveal that my initial curiosity had been ignited by personal experience of the symbolic power of Europe. Coming of age in the heyday of Poland's accession to the European Union triggered my enduring interest in all matters European. It is an interest which I have been cultivating even after having observed the last decade of European integration from different perspectives (be that of the USA or the UK). Yet, the relevance of my initial Central European outlook has remained in place to a great degree. I have decided to study what meanings of Europe emerge in society, because I witnessed first-hand such process of meaning making in Poland of 2003 and 2004. Since then I have broadened the scope of my observations to a transnational level, and I aspired to gauge the dynamics of Europe's meaning making by choosing aesthetic cultural sites as the research area. Therefore, it is my contention that Europe's meanings emerge in society and that the cultural field is one of the spheres which best illustrates these processes, as evidenced in this thesis.

Another motivation behind this research is an objection to the simplistic dichotomy regarding popular understandings of Europe observable in the public sphere. On the one hand, one can identify a great deal of uncritical reproduction of the European integration discourse. Many still perceive the EU as a teleological culmination of the European civilisation, and thereby effectively deny social actors the agency of meaning making. On the other hand, amid the current crisis of capitalism and its institutions, Europe is solely equated with the EU. It is thought to be all about 'big politics' and 'big business'. Europe is criticised for being intrinsically neo-liberal and implicitly post-colonial. This 'malevolent' Europe is argued to be at the same time stagnant and secondary, because the EU is claimed to be exceptionally bureaucratic and a mere derivative of the nation state in its political pursuits.

Such contrasting perceptions of Europe are also the most highly mediated ones, and are often presented as representative of the public. Within this framework, one can observe an almost irreconcilable clash between the defendants of Europe and its opponents (many of whom want to do away with Europe altogether). As much as the balance between the two standpoints is highly volatile and varies profoundly from country to country, this dichotomy remains the main axis of the popular and mediated debates on Europe. As evidenced by this thesis, meanings of Europe that emerge in society are indeed structured in relation to the EU, but the further they are from their institutional structures (and those of the national state) the more they become particular and autonomous. In other words, the observed struggles for meanings and social understandings of Europe transgress the widely meditated dichotomy with respect to public perceptions of Europe mentioned above.

The final motivation to study meanings of Europe in cultural sites has been an outcome of an opposition to common perceptions of culture with respect to Europe, as well as a realisation of a gap in the literature. There is no such thing as 'European culture', it is said. The only true repository of culture is the nation and social self-understandings are national only, one often hears. This, of course, is restricted to the domain of individual perceptions or politically motivated standpoints. A great degree of literature addresses the cultural history of Europe, European modernity, and the historical contingency of the nation. Yet, with notable exceptions there is little scholarship on how Europe is understood through culture today. Questions pertaining to Europe are mainly sought after with respect to the political and economic fields. Cultural theorisations of Europe, instead, are often tied to EU institutionalism. This thesis contends that Europe's meanings emerge also through cultural sites where social self-understandings were known to come about in the past. It maintains that contemporary meanings and social understandings of Europe are also a product of culture.

Ultimately this thesis shows that meanings of Europe are structured beyond the political and economic fields and that how Europe is understood in society is an outcome of very specific struggles over meanings taking place between social actors. It demonstrates that meanings of Europe that emerge in culture are more particular and autonomous the further the mentioned struggles take place away from national and EU institutionalism. This is evidenced by an inquiry into three distinct cultural sites: a cultural institution, cultural festivals, and public art. Consequently, this research maintains that culture matters for society, in line with the broader literature on the subject.

Whether one chooses to see the studied European cultural sites as an expression of a cultural public sphere or spaces of immediate social interaction, meanings of Europe do emerge there. This thesis shows that the struggles for meanings and social understandings of Europe are highly reflexive. They come about through the nexus of cultural objects, cultural producers, immediate audiences, and corresponding social contexts. Meanings of Europe do not emerge ex nihilo. Processes of meaning making are very much ignited by existing powerful ideas and narratives of Europe and structured vis-à-vis the EU and the national state. However, meanings of Europe are not directly replicated, but contextually reproduced by particular social actors. It is also through these particular and immediate contexts that the audiences of each cultural site embrace Europe.

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