



## A Geography of Coloniality: Re-narrating European Integration

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Although the interlinkages of European integration and colonialism have been increasingly acknowledged in academic circles (e.g. Ahmed 2000; Bhabra 2009; Hansen and Jonsson 2015; Kinnvall 2016), colonialism continues to be a difficult topic in many forums in and around Europe. In the general narratives on Europe, “colonialism has been framed as the past property of individual nation states to be displaced by a new narrative of European integration free from the stain of colonialism” (Bhabra 2014, 155; see also Passerini 2012). This shifting of responsibility to the EU’s member states has been coupled with academic attempts to frame postcoloniality as an issue of the formerly colonized regions and thereby firmly outside of the European polity (for critiques, see e.g. Bhabra 2016; Goldberg 2006; Passerini 2012). This chapter, however, seeks to look beyond former imperial states and colonies to imagine what kind of a role the European Union (EU), as a transnational

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European institution, could have in contributing to dismantling colonial legacies, especially in the realm of European cultural heritage.

It is true that Europe itself is not postcolonial in the same sense that the formerly colonized regions are. As the centre of the former European empires, its position is quite different. This, however, does not mean that Europe, nor the EU are somehow free or detached from the effects of colonialism. As Ahmed has stated, “the colonial project was not external to the constitution of the modernity of European nations” (2000, 10). Indeed, colonialism and the connected processes of slavery (e.g. Gikandi 2011) and racialization (e.g. Goldberg 1993, 2002, 2006) came to define European modernity and also had implications for the development of its political systems, especially in the former imperial states (e.g. Tully 2002). The influence of these processes is not, however, limited to the former imperial states. Through their entanglement with ideas of modernity, the effects of colonialism can be perceived to have wider effect across a wide variety of European states. This colonial foundation is not only embedded in structures of rule and power, but it also has vast cultural influence (e.g. Said 1993 on cultural imperialism) and is deeply infiltrated in Europe’s cultural archive (e.g. Wekker 2016; Milica and Van Huis in this volume). Cultural heritage, especially when combined with its ability to create narratives, is an important part of this cultural archive.

To analyze the remnants of colonialism in the context of European cultural heritage, the relationship between modernity and “coloniality” is central. The idea of coloniality stems from the Latin American decolonial school (e.g. Quijano 2007; de Sousa Santos et al. 2007; Mignolo and Escobar 2010). Although drawing from different epistemologies and canons of knowledge, postcolonial and decolonial thinking have many connections and overlaps, and this study draws on both traditions. The decolonial school’s emphasis on understanding colonialism and modernity as deeply entwined processes, however, has many advantages for the study of heritage, a concept which itself is a product of European modernity too. In reference to this connection between modernity and coloniality, Mignolo has noted that they “go hand in hand, and you cannot have modernity without coloniality; the unfinished project of modernity carries over its shoulders the unfinished project of coloniality” (2006, 312). Through acknowledging modernity/coloniality as two aspects of the same process, we can move beyond merely analyzing postcolonial heritage (or heritage directly connected to colonialism), towards analyzing the traces of coloniality within the larger

context of all European heritage. Additionally, the broader approach that coloniality enables through its linkage to modernity allows us to shift our focus from the former imperial states to the broader context of the contemporary EU.

As a concept, coloniality “refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 247). According to Grossfoguel (2004, 320), this coloniality is a manifestation of the long history of European colonialism and is deeply embedded in the modern capitalist world system. Though there are significant differences between the national and regional experiences of this coloniality, coloniality’s effects can be detected in almost every sphere of our lives. Although mindful of this diversity, the aim of this chapter is not to analyze or map these different overlapping experiences of coloniality. Rather, this chapter aims to unearth the coloniality that exists beyond these diversities—a deeper level of coloniality embedded into the European project of the European Union.

Many contemporary narratives of modern Europe are still inherently products of the same cultural processes, power relations, and discourses of Western hegemony that were used to legitimate colonial rule. Despite the end of formal colonialism and the disenfranchisement of official colonial and racial discourse, some traces of these ideas are still embedded in contemporary understandings of Europe and of the rest of the world. It is exactly this, Eurocentric understanding of Europe and the ways it manifests through cultural heritage that this chapter seeks to engage. I argue that this coloniality of the European project is deeply embedded in Eurocentric and Western notions of European heritage, not only influencing the ways Europe deals with its many “external” others, but also distorting the internal dynamics of the European Union. As a result, like much of the rest of the world, Europe is posited inside a geography of coloniality—a spatial narrative of the expansion of Eurocentric notions of Europeaness.

This chapter sets out from the understanding, that “colonialism never left Europe unaffected and is still part of European reality” (Kinvall 2016, 153). Accordingly, Europe is analyzed as a profoundly postcolonial space as well as a construct heavily influenced by coloniality. I approach this coloniality and its relationship to the idea of Europe through one cultural construct that heavily draws on the cultural archive mentioned above: the idea of European cultural heritage. I especially

focus on the ways this idea is promoted in the European Union's heritage actions. Empirically, this chapter focuses on the European Heritage Label (EHL)—an EU cultural heritage action that seeks to nominate European heritage sites that represent the history of European integration and common European values.

More specifically, this chapter seeks to analyze the following: how the “European significance” of the EHL sites is narrated in the selection process; how notions of Eurocentrism are integrated into these narratives of Europe; and, finally, what kind of a spatial dynamic these narratives produce as a side-product of the process narrating European heritage. The analysis especially draws on the interconnection of European values and European integration, arguing that, in the context of the EHL, integration is intricately linked to spreading common values which itself is further entangled with the ideas of “European significance”.

Although I especially focus on the EU's cultural heritage initiatives, I acknowledge that there is significant overlap between notions of Europe and notions of the EU. As I argue more extensively below, the political entity of the EU seeks to connect itself with wider cultural notions of Europe by promoting the idea of European cultural heritage, which to some extent blurs the limits of these two entities.

### THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL AND AUTHORIZED HERITAGE DISCOURSE

The European Heritage Label (EHL) was first launched as an intergovernmental cultural scheme in 2006. In 2011, the EHL was reinstated as a European Union action—one of the flagship initiatives of the EU. Along with the renewal of the program, the grounds for granting the label were also renewed. The new criteria placed more emphasis on the European dimension of the sites—as opposed to the more national or regional interpretations that were possible during the intergovernmental phase (see EC 2010). The newly founded European Panel of Experts (see EC 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) was put in charge of the evaluation of the sites, and the final decision-making power was given to the European Commission.

My primary data consists of different official documentation produced by the European Parliament, European Commission, and the actors coordinating the European Heritage Label. These consist of documents related to the founding of the Label as well as documents related to the

selections of the sites.<sup>1</sup> In the panel reports, all applications are evaluated based on three criteria: the European significance, the proposed project to communicate this significance, and the management capacity of the site. My analysis focuses on the period between 2011 and 2016, when a total of 29 sites in 16 member states had been awarded the label. During that period, an additional 10 sites were evaluated as meeting the criterion of European significance, but not nominated for the actual Label due to deficiencies elsewhere in the application. Although the analysis takes into account all the successful and unsuccessful candidate sites (64 sites in total), the analysis is especially focused on the 39 sites (see Appendix 1) evaluated as meeting the criterion of European significance.

My analysis especially focuses on how the sites' "European significance"—a term used in the EHL documents—is narrated in the panel reports. These narratives of European significance are understood as tools to create, promote, and sustain the sites' perceived—yet fuzzy and ambiguous—ideas of "Europeanness". Although they summarize, re-articulate and reference the original applications, the short descriptions in the panel reports are analyzed as a representation of the applicant sites that has been produced by the European Panel of Experts. The methodology for the analysis is made up of a thematic close reading of the documents that uses postcolonialism as a reading strategy (Ashcroft et al. 2002). By highlighting dissonances, this chapter seeks to re-evaluate the ways we interpret European pasts. Postcolonial approaches can

<sup>1</sup>These documents include Decision No 1194/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (EP 2011). This is the official founding decision passed by both the European Parliament and Commission. Secondly, the Commission Staff Working Document SEC (2010) 197 (EC 2010), Impact Assessment—Accompanying document to the Proposal for Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Union actions for the European Heritage Label. The Impact Assessment is a comprehensive compilation of documents that was produced as a Commission staff working document to support the founding process of the EHL as an EU action. In addition to the actual Impact Assessment, the document includes several annexes, including the meeting summaries of several public consultations. Additionally, the data comprises of four reports produced by the European Panel of Experts. These reports include the European Heritage Label Panel Reports from 2013, 2014, and 2015, as well as the first Panel Report on Monitoring, published in 2016. All documents have been published by the European Commission. These reports make reference to the original applications of the candidate sites, but mainly consist of the European Panel of Experts' evaluations and commentaries. Finally, as supplementary data I will use the information on the EHL website ([https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/heritage-label\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/heritage-label_en)).

offer tools for this process that can tackle issues even beyond analyzing Europe's colonial past. For, as Bhambra (2014, 117) has claimed, “[p]ostcolonial and decolonial arguments have been explicit in their challenge to the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe”. By bringing European heritage and the coloniality of Europe closer together, this postcolonial approach can allow us to make hidden power hierarchies, exclusions, and biases more visible. As such, it can be used to challenge “the universals of European narratives constructed, as they are, on the basis of marginalizing and silencing other experiences and voices” (Bhambra 2009, 81).

Before going into the analysis, I want to reflect on the relationship between this data and the idea of an “authorized heritage discourse” (AHD) proposed by Laurajane Smith (2006; cf. inclusive heritage discourse e.g. Kisić 2017). This approach, along with a larger discursive turn in critical heritage studies, sees heritage as a process of knowledge production. As has been noted by Smith, “[t]here is, really, no such *thing* as heritage” (2006, 11, emphasis added). A specific site, historical phenomenon, tradition, or value is not automatically heritage through some im- or explicit link to the past; rather heritage is a social construct. Objects, places, and landscapes become heritage only through the meanings attached to them in a process of labeling, defining, and ordering. As a result, heritage is “a set of values and meanings” (Smith 2006, 11) as well as a cultural practice seeking to control and regulate these values (ibid.). As a social construct, the meanings we assign to heritage can be altered, reinterpreted, or contested, which makes heritage not only open to change, but also a potential tool for change. However, as Smith criticizes, different kinds of heritage experts hold a predominant role in this process of defining heritage and selecting heritage sites. The resulting authorized heritage discourses that rely on expert opinion are problematic, as they tend to not only distance the public and the visitors from the knowledge production around meanings attached to heritage, but also to exclude or disenfranchise specific historical, cultural, and social experiences. As such, these AHDs also diminish or disguise the transformative potential that heritage could possess as a future-oriented idea (e.g. Harrison 2013, Lähdesmäki 2017).

In terms of the role given to expert opinions, the EHL can be considered as a super-AHD due to its three-layer system of expert evaluation—first at the site, then at the national level, and lastly at the European level. This also leads us to the potential fracture point between the many

narratives of the EHL and the authorized heritage discourses of the EU. The sites, after having received the label, have the potential to challenge the narrative created by the coordinating actors of the EHL and, in many cases, they actually also seek to do this. There is a constant negotiation between the official narrative envisioned in the EU documents and the many narrative strategies used by the sites themselves (on the intergovernmental phase, also see Lähdesmäki 2014). The narratives of European significance that are used as grounds for nomination as an EHL site represent only one aspect of the overall narratives offered by the sites and not always the one most actively communicated to the public.

It would be tempting to label the narrative analyzed here as an authorized heritage discourse of the European Union (EU-AHD). The narrative created through the official documents of the EHL especially reveals the agency of the European Panel of Experts. Through its connections to wider EU policy discourses, however, it is also embedded in the wider political project of the EU and reflects the values and understandings of this wider political construct. As such, it is not a narrative describing European history nor the totality of European heritage, but a politically motivated narrative that the EU in the context of the EHL has produced of itself. As such, there are many grounds for conceptualizing the official narrative and discursive practices of the official documents of the EHL as an authorized heritage discourse of the EU (EU-AHD). However, it also needs to be remembered that in addition to being challenged by the actors within the EHL, this authorized heritage discourse is also challenged by actors both in- and outside the institutional frame of the EU. The European Parliament's own history project, the recently opened House of European History (HEH) is one such attempt. Although engaging with the conceptual frame of history rather than that of heritage, the HEH does offer an alternative interpretation of the story and values of Europe.

With these limitations in mind, this chapter uses the term EU-AHD as a shorthand for the official narrative and/or discursive practices of the official documents of European Heritage Label. What must be emphasized is that the data used for analysis do not represent the totality of what could be the EU-AHD, nor is it able to discuss the narratives the EHL sites themselves choose to use in their everyday practices. It is thus not able to bring forth the agency of the sites themselves. What is analyzed here instead is very much an authorized heritage discourse in the making (see also Kaasik-Krogerus in this volume).

## MODERNITY/COLONIALITY AND LINGERING EUROCENTRISM

The importance of ideas associated with modernity should not be understated when debating European cultural heritage and the values that this heritage embodies. For, as noted by Delanty (2017, 54), “[m]odernity is the constitutive matrix that gave to Europe a direction and meaning”. Despite this long and entangled connection between the ideas of Europe and modernity, Europe can no longer be considered as “the vanguard of modernity” (Passerini 2012, 123–124; see also 2002). However, as Passerini continues, even though this identification no longer carries the same meanings, ideas of modernity have continued to maintain a strong Eurocentric tone (*ibid.*). It is this enduring nature of Eurocentrism that reminds us that modernity should not be reduced to European Enlightenment (see also Chakrabarty 2000), as the connections between modernity and colonialism, and the implications they have for the ideas of Europe, are far deeper. Enrique Dussel (2000)—a central thinker among the decolonial school—has criticized the Eurocentric understanding of modernity “for it indicates intra-European phenomena as the starting point of modernity and explains its later development without making recourse to anything outside of Europe” (*ibid.*, 471; see also Dainotto 2007). This disregards the very material impact the colonies had in the creation of European modernity (e.g. Fanon 1963, 81), and also hides the many historical and cultural entanglements between Europe and the regions European imperial states controlled overseas.

Coloniality as the entwined counterpart of modernity especially manifests in Eurocentrism. According to Quijano (2000, 549), Eurocentrism “does not involve all of the knowledge of history of all of Europe [...] It is instead a specific rationality or perspective of knowledge that was made globally hegemonic, colonizing and overcoming other previous or different conceptual formations and their respective concrete knowledges, as much in Europe as in the rest of the world”. The central factor of Eurocentrism is the tendency to position specific cultures and forms of knowledge in hierarchical positions. Though these hierarchies played a central role in legitimating colonialism (e.g. Tully 2002), they are not only limited to historical relations, as similar hierarchies can also be found in early documents related to European integration. In her analysis of the Declaration on European Identity (1973) signed by the nine Western European states that formed the European Economic Community (EEC) at the time, Luisa Passerini (2012) commented on

the fundamental hierarchies that the document created in terms of the relations between the EEC and the external states. These hierarchies prioritized Western connections over relationships with Eastern Europe, but also posited former European colonies in a subordinate position. The document can be seen as profoundly influenced by the Cold War and the long colonial histories of many of the signatories. Passerini's analysis shows how deeply Western norms were embedded in the EEC documents, which also form the foundation for the European Union. As the rest of this chapter will show, tendencies towards similar hierarchies, both between Europe and its former colonies, as well as between Western and Eastern Europe, can also be identified in the EU-AHD.

A second key aspect of Eurocentrism (and one directly related to the cultural hierarchies) is the incentive for "spreading" culture with little consideration for other pre-existing cultures and forms of knowledge production. In the founding documents of the EHL, the spread of Eurocentric ideals is evident especially in the Impact Assessment (EC 2010), in which the EHL is aligned with core European values and the promotion of a preconceived and unproblematized joint European heritage. It is important to note that the document is convinced the EHL would have only positive impacts, mainly in terms of social/societal challenges. Any concerns that the promotion of European heritage would downplay or silence other heritages are not actively discussed. As the Impact Assessment states:

European common values are at the core of the EHL and one of the foundation stones for the initiative concerns the building of a shared European identity based on democratic values and human rights. It should therefore be noted that the label is likely to have positive impacts (and certainly no negative ones) and thereby make a contribution to the objectives of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. (EC 2010, 26)

Within this framework, the spread of central ideals and values is narrated as a positive and desirable development, or as progress, with very limited room for alternative interpretations, criticism, or any acknowledgement of the domination, abuse, and control that might have been associated with it. It presumes that, since these values are depicted as positive, benign, or even universal, anything that is associated with these values is thought to have positive implications. Additionally, as it fails to acknowledge "European domination over much of the world through

colonialism, dispossession, appropriation, and enslavement as significant to that history” (Bhambra and Narayan 2017, 2), it also fails to create space for discussing or dismantling the baggage left by this difficult history. Furthermore, it posits European heritage at the top of a hierarchical system through which Europeanness becomes measurable by the level of adaptation to these values and cultural norms. In the empirical section below, it will become clear that this incentive for spreading a preconceived, yet fuzzy idea of Europe is entangled in the ways integration and expansion are narrated in the EU-AHD.

### NARRATING EUROPEAN SIGNIFICANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL

The EHL website declares that the “European Heritage sites are milestones in the creation of today’s Europe. Spanning from the dawn of civilization to the Europe we see today, these sites celebrate and symbolize European ideals, values, history and integration”. Already from this basic definition, it is evident that through the EHL sites, the EU-AHD seeks to create a progressive, continuous narrative of Europe, spanning from the first steps of what is termed as “European civilization” to the contemporary European Union. Through this narrative, the EU-AHD not only seeks to take credit for a number of European historical developments, but also posits EU as the final state of this continuous process of European integration. This is a problematic foundation for any type of conceptualization for European memory. Although some EHL sites also represent ruptures or difficult periods of European history, the overall narrative remains one of continuity. Passerini (2011, 48) has strongly criticized this “illusion of continuity” and rather advocates for the acknowledgement of “radical discontinuity”. By acknowledging important ruptures and discontinuities, Passerini argues, we can “conceptualize the kind of European memory that might allow for a break with Eurocentrism and hierarchies between European countries and regions” (ibid.). Acknowledgement of this type of ruptures has become more commonplace in the general narratives of Europe (e.g. Delanty 2010), but these discontinuities are not given adequate space and importance in the EU-AHD. Rather, the implied continuity increasingly blurs the separation between cultural and geographical understandings of Europe and the political entity of the EU. This is hardly representative of the reality of European history and downplays the interpretations that emphasize

the plurality of Europe and the plurality of European heritage (see for example Hall 1999; Delanty 2017). It also stands in stark contrast with the rhetoric of diversity that dominates both the founding decision of the EHL (EP 2011), as well as the wider EU policy discourses (e.g. Lähdesmäki 2012; Kraus and Sciortino 2014).

### *The Idea of “European Values”*

As the idea of “European values” is a central aspect of the EHL, it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that “values” are also given a central position when narrating “European significance” in the EU-AHD. These European values are only defined in the EHL documents in terms of abstract references to “values” or by listing typical value mantras of freedom, democracy, human rights, diversity, tolerance, and solidarity. When we look at the way specific sites are narrated, peace and democracy seem to hold a central position. Sites directly related to peace, for example, are the Peace Palace in Hague (Netherlands), the Sites of the Peace of Westphalia (Germany), and several sites related to the First and Second World Wars (see Mäkinen in this volume). In the narrative sites related to democracy and the development of the rule of law include sites like the Archive of the Crown of Aragon (Spain) and the 3 May 1791 Constitution (Poland). References to human rights (e.g. the Charter of Law of Abolition of the Death Penalty 1867, Portugal, and Franja Partisan Hospital, Slovenia), the Enlightenment (e.g. Residencia de Estudiantes, Spain), and solidarity (e.g. European Solidarity Center, Poland) are also prominent.

Despite the ample references to “values”, this linking is only rarely done directly. Rather, any references to values are often vague and abstract. Grand, abstract phrases like being a “symbol of the pursuit of democracy” (EC 2014, 12), being “central to strengthening of human rights and to the defense of democratic values and the rule of law” (EC 2015, 14), the fostering of “religious toleration and cultural diversity as well as democratic values” (EC 2014, 8), “highlighting the Enlightenment values” (EC 2014, 10), or being a “beacon of progressive ideas” (EC 2015, 10) were common in Panel reports’ descriptions of the EHL sites. Interestingly, a resistance to values that are seen to counter these European values, especially those of democracy and peace, can also be seen as markers of European significance, as evidenced by several sites nominated through their role in the resistance of either communism,

Nazism, or other forms of authoritarian rule. The reports' emphasis on abstract references could be a result of the explicit focus on the sites' symbolic importance that can be derived from the founding decision of the EHL (EP 2011). However, there seems to be only limited discussion on what these values in fact mean or how they should be applied when defining the European significance of the potential EHL sites. As a result of their constant repetition, the connection between the values and Europe seems to hold a normative position in the EU-AHD, yet this connection goes largely unattested. Furthermore, there is clearly an attempt to make these values more concrete by adding a material aspect through connecting abstract European values to specific heritage sites.

This normative position of "values", however, is not unproblematic. The connection between Europe and/or EU and these values has been questioned on numerous accounts. Chakrabarty (2000) and Sen (1999), for example, have challenged the idea of Europe as the home of democracy by highlighting democratic practices in different parts of Africa and India that predate Greek democracy. On the other hand, Bhambra (2009) has highlighted the discrepancies in the idea of the EU as an institution of peace in her analysis of the decolonization-related wars of former European empires during the formative years of the founding of the EU. In terms of human rights, both Delanty and Rumford (2005) and Suárez-Krabbe (2013) have questioned the implicit equality and inclusiveness of human rights and democracy by making the deeper linkages between these values and European racism visible. Finally, El-Tayeb (2011) has sought to highlight the investment in "whiteness as a norm against which ethnicization is read as a tool of differentiation between insiders and outsiders" (*ibid.*, xiv). The relevance of these values is also questioned by many contemporary political and social phenomena, such as the continued structural racism, the discourses around the "immigration crisis", as well as the rise of the right-wing populist parties across Europe. All these processes seem to fundamentally challenge the connection between ideas of Europe and the values it seeks to represent.

Furthermore, as noted by Passerini (2012) the references to these values in official statements are not a particularly European phenomenon, but rather one that is repeated in the official narratives of almost all contemporary political entities. The prominent role of these values in the EHL should thus not be seen as indicative of the connection between these values and Europe *per se*, but rather as being due to the repetition of a typical global political rhetoric. Passerini identifies

the reliance on these abstract value mantras as a “constant characteristic of Eurocentrism” (ibid., 124) and further points out that “definitions of identity based on such conceptions run the risk of reproducing rhetorical formulae which are either empty or suspect” (ibid.). She has also shown how the disproportionate emphasis on Christianity and the Enlightenment in the narratives of European value mantras makes it possible “to exclude the Judaic and Islamic worlds from this [European] cultural community” (ibid., 136), thus further narrowing the legitimate basis on which to build forms of European identification. The entangled nature of heritage and identities (e.g. Graham and Howard 2008) is also reflected in the founding decision of the EHL, which posits the promotion of belonging as the primary aim of the EHL. These problematic linkages between values and identities force us to reconsider the type of identities that can be built on conceptualizations of heritage focused primarily on abstract values.

### *Narrating Integration*

I will now discuss the EU-AHD in the context of the relationship between “European significance” and integration. The narrative of integration promoted by the EU-AHD starts from the EHL-nominated site called the Heart of Ancient Athens, which represents “a rich historical landscape where events fundamental to the formation of essential aspects of European culture and identity took place” (EC 2014, 5). Next, the Archeological site of Carnuntum in Austria, which represents: “The Roman Empire [which] is considered by some ‘as a predecessor of Europe’” (EC 2013, 7). Following the temporal foundation of Europeanness through the Ancient Greeks and Romans, many following sites are represented as sites of early integration. This includes sites that were historical centres of power which then “integrated” new areas under their influence, both in the political (for example The Union of Lublin, Poland, and the Imperial Palace in Vienna, Austria) and the cultural sense (for example the Abbey of Cluny, France). There are also sites that represent integration through submission to foreign political rule (for example the Great Guild Hall in Tallinn or Carnuntum, Austria).

This overall narrative could be criticized for many of its aspects, but a central flaw is the fact that it sidesteps crucial questions of power. More precisely, it fails to contemplate who is being integrated into what and under what conditions. Contributing to these power relations, the

promotion of common values is identified as a tool to legitimate integration. This is not only the case in the EU-AHD, as the below quote from the founding decision of the EHL appears in numerous EU declarations and decisions starting from the Maastricht Treaty.

For citizens to give their full support to European integration, greater emphasis should be placed on their common values, history and culture as key elements of their membership of a society founded on the principles of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, cultural and linguistic diversity, tolerance and solidarity. (EP 2011, 1, preamble)

Instead of focusing on aspects of concrete integration, these attempts to narrate integration by focusing on abstract symbols of either European integration or European values are common. This tendency to focus on the internal symbolic value of the site is based largely on the way the EHL has been designed. The EHL is primarily interested in nominating heritage sites which can claim some role in the founding of the European Union or in the wider European project. As such, the sites should not only communicate “about the sites but also about the European project” (EC 2010, 46; see also Mäkinen in this volume). The notions of “European integration” and “European values” are used repeatedly to connect the sites’ narratives to the broader European project. However, integration is often narrated in relation to the spread of “common European values” such as peace, democracy, or human rights, making it difficult, if not impossible, to always distinguish between European values and European integration, as adaptation to European values is treated as a sign of integration, and integration is understood to imply adaptation to European values.

In the official documents, these symbolic meanings attached to the sites were also identified as a way to ensure the sustainability and lasting significance of the EHL. According to the Impact Assessment, “the EHL would be awarded mainly on the basis of the symbolic value of sites and that this symbolic would not diminish over time” (EC 2010, 12–13). The monitoring report already departed from this view significantly in 2016, however, stating that it is up to the monitoring panel to determine “whether the European significance was fully understood, well-articulated and conveyed by the sites” (EC 2016, 8). This evinces the regulatory tendencies of authorized heritage discourses. The lasting symbolic meaning of the nominated EHL sites was quickly transformed into an aspect that needed

to be managed, presented, and in some cases improved. For some sites, this meant that the narratives of their European significance were in need of revision to better align them with the core messages of the EU-AHD.

The Great Guild Hall in Tallinn (see also Kaasik-Krogerus in this volume) is an interesting example of this aspect. The panel reports position the site in two roles: as representative of the influence of the Hanseatic merchants in Estonia and the Baltic region at large, and of Estonia as a state emerging from the history of communist rule to re-enter the European polity:

The Great Guild of Tallinn merchants was the important organization in the city for centuries. The Hanseatic League reveals the intriguing story of European “integration” in medieval times. [...] The recent history of Estonia creates an opportunity to present the narrative of Estonia and Estonian people within the context of European history and integration; the Panel encourages all efforts towards such contextualisation. (EC 2013, 6)

The exhibitions in the Great Guild Hall—part of the Estonian History Museum—broaden that scope, however. Although the Great Guild Hall has space allotted to its history and the Hanseatic merchants, the permanent exhibition, “Spirit of Survival”, depicts the 11.000 years of Estonian resistance and survival under the German and Russian attempts to rule them. The dissonance between the narrower role posited in the EU-AHD and the broader interpretation presented by the Great Guild Hall was not lost on the European Panel of Experts. The idea that what was thought to be “early integration” would be narrated as hostile foreign rule was not appreciated. In fact, the first ever monitoring report on the nominated EHL sites comments;

The Panel recommends that within the framework of the European Heritage Label, the story of Tallinn’s role in the Hanseatic League – an example of early medieval North European trade and defense organization – be better articulated in the narrative offered by the museum. [...] The Panel recommends that during the 2017–2020 period the museum team looks into ways to better articulate and emphasise the European significance of the Great Guild Hall in the site’s narrative. (EC 2016, 15)

In light of the often cited rhetoric of “contributing to the flowering of culture of the Member States” (EP 2011, 1, preamble), noted also in the preamble of the Founding Decision of the EHL, the attempts to repress

the Estonian interpretation of their history as one of survival when faced with foreign domination is questionable. The case of the Great Guild Hall reveals the problematic power hierarchies embedded at the core of attempting to build a joint European heritage as well as the equally problematic regulatory tendencies of the EU-AHD.

### *Spreading Europeanness Beyond Europe*

In addition to narrating integration within Europe, the idea of spreading European values is tightly intertwined with colonialism on a more global scale. Although there are no sites within the EHL framework that engage with colonialism directly, the sites related to the conquest of the Americas (and the onset of European imperialism) allow us to approach the topic in the context of EHL. Examples of these sites are the Sagres Promontory in Portugal and the Cape Finisterre in Spain.<sup>2</sup> In the EU-AHD, Sagres Promontory is described as one of the central harbors of the “Age of Discoveries”, whereas Cape Finisterre, a harbor further north on the Atlantic coast, is identified as “the Westernmost point of civilized territory in Europe” and “the End of the Known World” (EC 2014, 26). I do not want to claim that the importance of these sites or their “European significance” would in itself be problematic. On the contrary, these sites have been fundamental in shaping not only European history and realities, but they have also been instrumental in a global sense through their role in the establishment of the nearly global colonial system. Crucial here are the narratives that are produced about these sites and the ways these narratives are able to connect the historical reality of these sites with contemporary European processes. In critical heritage studies, understandings of heritage have been shifted from being associated with the past towards notions that emphasizes contemporary and future motivations (see for example Harrison 2013; Lähdesmäki 2017; Macdonald 2013; Smith 2006). If we accept this basic principle, sites such as the Sagres Promontory could be powerful avenues to start sustained critical discussions of Europe’s colonial past and slavery, as well as their connection to contemporary European racism (e.g.

<sup>2</sup>Please note that although the application of Cape Finisterre was not nominated for the EHL, the European Panel did note that the site met the requirements for “European significance”. The application was rejected based on deficiencies in the proposed project and the organizational capacity of the site.

Grosfoguel 2004; Goldberg 2006; El-Tayeb 2011) and wider European identity politics. Based on my analysis, however, this potential is not for the time being acknowledged nor made use of in the official discourses that characterize the EU-AHD. Quite to the contrary, the EU-AHD proudly paints Sagres Promontory as a prime example of the expansionist Eurocentric cultural heritage.

[Sagres Promontory] became the privileged scenario for the accomplishments of the Age of Discoveries in the fifteenth century, a key historical moment that marked the expansion of European culture, science and commerce both towards the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, setting European civilisation on its path to the global projection that came to define the modern world. [...] Sagres Promontory is a rich cultural landscape testifying to the remote origins of European civilisation and its universal expansion in the Age of Discoveries through science, commerce and exploration. (EC 2015, 8)

That quote is a powerful example of the type of Eurocentric rhetoric being used and it exemplifies the ways cultural hierarchies and the tendency towards expansion is embedded at the heart of the EU-AHD. In addition to the Eurocentric tone, it is impossible not to note that there are no direct references to imperialism or colonialism, let alone to any negative effects thereof, in the overall description of these sites. Passerini (2012, 133) has linked the silence over European colonialism to the need for a positive European identity. This has led to a “tendency to privilege a Eurocentric perspective” as well to a “reluctance to approach colonialism as a European rather than a national experience” (ibid., see also Bhambra 2014). However, it should be questioned to what extent colonialism was merely a national experience limited to the former European empires. The many cultural, political, and economic connections and structures of rule that existed during European colonialism were not limited to those between imperial states and their colonies. Many smaller European states also actively participated, for example through trade, military, or missionary work within the ruling, exploitation, and subordination of the colonies. Moreover, those same smaller states were also deeply influenced by the racist colonial discourses of the time that were used to legitimate European rule in the colonies. Approaching colonialism through the prism of imperial states alone is therefore too narrow (cf. Bhambra 2014; Passerini 2012) and will, in Catarina Kinnvall’s words, only “feed the illusion that Europe

can be disconnected from its imperial past” (2016, 153). I believe there is a need to also engage with colonialism on a European level, and cultural heritage actions such as the EHL could provide space for these engagements.

Before the EHL can form a sustainable platform to discuss the coloniality of European heritage, it needs to broaden the narratives it offers and especially challenge their embedded Eurocentrism (see also Suárez-Krabbe 2014). Once more, I return to Passerini (2011), who, in connection to her critique of the tendencies to highlight the continuity of European history, also critiques the idea of an essential “European Spirit” as proposed by Zygmunt Bauman: “if anything of the sort has ever existed, our memory must see it for what it was, a drive towards capitalism and imperialism, while the passion for discovery must be remembered as a passion for conquest and exploitation” (ibid., 49). Although we cannot expect these narratives of “conquest and exploitation” to become the primary narrative of European cultural heritage, there is an urgent need to challenge and replace Eurocentric narratives with narratives that offer a more balanced and less biased narrative of Europe. Breaking the cultural hierarchies between (Western) Europe and its Others and challenging notions of continuity are central steps in this process. In addition to sites connected to colonialism, sites located in Eastern Europe could be important actors in this process. Otherwise, there is a significant risk that the idea of European heritage proposed by the EU-AHD, instead of contributing to the promotion of belonging and multicultural dialogue (the two main aims of the EHL initiative), will continue to the exclude a number of Europeans from being considered as equal members of the wider European community.

## A GEOGRAPHY OF COLONIALITY

We have already examined the many entanglements of Eurocentrism and the idea of European cultural heritage in the EU-AHD. In this final part, I want to both summarize some of what has been discussed so far and take one final step forward in the analysis. As we have seen, there have been many ways the “European significance” of the EHL sites has been narrated in the EU-AHD. There is an explicit focus on the symbolic importance of these sites, and using this narrative is a common aspect of almost all the EHL sites analyzed here. When it comes to the ways European values and integration are narrated in the EU-AHD, however,

we are faced with crucial questions of power. For once we let go of the normative notion that integration is inherently good, integration can also be conceptualized through expansion or even further through domination and submission. I have argued above that there is a dynamic of spreading “Europeanness” embedded in the EU-AHD that is reminiscent of Eurocentric notions of European excellence. In the internal dynamic of Europe, however, this spread or expansion is hidden under neutral terms of integration, much as the sites that were complicit in the onset of European colonialism are narrated through the more neutral rhetoric of discoveries and trade. When integration is removed from its normative basis, it can be analyzed through three components: spread of values, resistance of non-European values, and submission. When these three aspects are placed in a spatial context (see Fig. 7.1), a broader underlying structure starts to emerge. This structure has been conceptualized here as a geography of coloniality.

Like the sites’ symbolic importance, ideas of expansion or spreading “Europeanness” are similarly central and typical ways to narrate the EHL sites in the EU-AHD, and this type of narratives is spread quite evenly across Europe. The narratives dealing with resistance and submission, however, appear to be disproportionately located in Eastern parts of Europe. As is evident on the map, there is also more overlap of narratives in the sites located in Eastern and Central Europe. Although many of these sites are narrated through their symbolic importance as well as through narratives of spreading of values, the overall European significance of these sites is complemented and strengthened by narratives of resistance to values seen as contradictory to European values, as well as by narratives that emphasize the process of becoming European through interaction with other European powers (i.e. submission).

In terms of resistance, there is a tendency in the EU-AHD to describe sites as having a symbolic importance in the fight against values/ideologies that are seen as somehow countering or opposing “European values”. These especially include sites related to the two World Wars and the Holocaust, as well as sites connected to a broader resistance of communism, fascism, and other forms of authoritarian rule. Yet although there are several sites that engage with human rights (for example the Peace Palace, The Netherlands, or the Charter of Law of Abolition of the Death Penalty 1867, Portugal), this resistance of countering or contrasting values is not extended towards, for example, resistance to racism or discrimination. Instead, this resistance is reserved for fighting



**Fig. 7.1** Spatial dispersion of different narrative dynamics among the 39 sites that have either received the EHL (29) or were evaluated as meeting the criterion of European significance (10) between 2011 and 2016 (At the moment, the EHL is not open to countries who are not EU members. Additionally, some member states are currently not involved in the initiative, which explains the apparent “emptiness” in, for example, Northern Europe)

the authoritarian regimes of the World War II—or the “new forms of the Other [that] were found inside, in Europe’s own history” (Passerini 2012, 121). This notion of resistance of values and ideals that are seen threatening those of Europe substantially participates in the creation and management of the discursive borders of Europe within the EU-AHD.

In terms of submission, the Great Guild Hall that was discussed earlier is perhaps the strongest example. Additionally, there are also several sites related to the adaptation of Western European technology in the industrialization of the region (for example the Hlubina Mine and Vitkovice

Ironworks, Czech Republic, and the Industrialisation in Upper Silesia, Poland), as well as sites like the Kaunas of 1919–1940, which is narrated through the modernization (and westernization) of the city in line with “European interwar modernism”. This took place during the 21 years Kaunas acted as the temporary capital of independent Lithuania, more precisely during the years between the rule of the Russian Empire and the occupation by the Soviet Union. Interestingly, the case of Kaunas plays into both submission, but also implies that its Europeanness relies on its ability to escape the influences of both Russian and Soviet rule. Although not representations of violence, these sites bring out a narrative of showcasing external influences in the region. With a few notable exceptions, especially the sites related to the development of parliamentarianism and democracy in Poland, and the sites related to the resistance of communism, the EU-AHD deposits Eastern European heritage as being European to the extent it is in relationship with a preconceived Western notion of Europe. As was already noted above, this process of being or becoming European is not stable but rather subject to monitoring and improvement. This becoming is akin to the idea of “waiting room of history” coined by Chakrabarty (2000; see also Mälksoo 2009), a state of constant liminality.

The way the narratives of both resistance and submission are expressed bring out the effects of coloniality. Although in the case of Eastern Europe, we must acknowledge that the form the modernity/coloniality relationship takes in this internal dynamic is of a very different nature than in the relationship between Europe and its former colonies. Instead of violence and direct dominance, the coloniality of the East–West division in the EU-AHD rather takes a conceptual or cultural form. As such a conceptual and value-based form of dominance, its effects in the real world are harder to determine. Despite the long history of European wars, this internal dynamic is largely lacking the history of direct rule, physical violence, and appropriation that is descriptive of the relationships between the European Empires and their colonies. In this sense, Eastern Europe is in fact in many cases more affected by the actions of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and the remaining effects of Soviet colonialization in the region (e.g. Annus 2018; Tlostanova 2018). Additionally, although the processes of racialization in Europe have become increasingly versatile, this internal dynamic between Western and Eastern Europe misses the crucial racial aspect that characterizes the more global dynamics of coloniality. Though these aspects make

the coloniality in Eastern Europe much more ambiguous, its many dimensions have been actively engaged by academics from a wide variety of fields (e.g. Kuus 2004; Mälksoo 2009; Imre 2014; Mayblin et al. 2016). These critical tones should also be better reflected in the idea of European heritage that is being created through the heritage actions of the EU. For, as Delanty states, “Europe is now ‘post-Western’ in the sense that it is not reducible to the category of the West and [...] can no longer be defined exclusively in terms of the historical experience of its founding Western European nations” (2017, 21; see also 2003). In light of the analysis in this chapter, the EU-AHD seems to still privilege the Western European experience when defining European heritage, leaving Eastern European experiences in a liminal position. Unless these implicit biases are taken seriously, and effort is taken to balance the narratives used within the EU-AHD, there is a risk of producing tensions and conflicts that challenge not only ideas of joint European heritage, but also European identity politics at large.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The EHL initiative is still in its early stages, and the number of selected sites is still relatively small. It is likely that in a few years the initiative will look significantly different. The first monitoring panel report on the EHL sites states that by “presenting their narrative in a historical and wider European context, the sites invite us and our leadership to visit them, to reflect on these problems and on our values, which in turn will, hopefully, contribute to better informed decisions for our society” (EC 2016, 5). In contrast with this optimistic tone, the chapter’s analysis has shown that on the institutional level of the EHL, at least for the time being, there are several causes for concern behind this optimistic mission. Pakier and Stråth (2010) have noted the tendency to find common ground on the “positive sides of an argued European heritage” (ibid., 2), whereas the difficult history of violence, catastrophes, and atrocities is often only discussed in national terms. Yet this reliance on the good hides the darker side of European history (e.g. Mazower 1998)—what MacDonald (2009) has called “difficult heritage” (cf. Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996)—and clouds the role that the European Union could have in dismantling this historical baggage. The Holocaust has constituted Europe’s ultimate difficult past, but Goldberg (2006) has argued that it is precisely this reliance on the Holocaust as the European symbol of racialized violence that

makes discussions on colonialism and contemporary racism so difficult in Europe. There are increasing academic calls to also engage with Europe's dark heritage beyond the Holocaust, especially concerning slavery (for example Chalcraft and Delanty 2015), the war and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslav region (e.g. Kisić 2017), and colonialism (for example Delanty 2017). This chapter joins those calls.

In their book *EURAFRICA: The Untold history of European Integration and Colonialism* (2015; see also Hansen and Jonsson 2011), Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson intricately analyze the entanglement of the impulses behind European integration and the desire to continue to colonize the African continent both during and after the two World Wars. According to their analysis, European integration was never simply motivated by peace and economic cooperation in Europe, but always to a certain degree by the need to cooperate in order to continue to control European colonies, especially in Africa. At the time of the founding of the EEC in 1957, France, Belgium, and Italy all still had significant colonies in Africa. Controlling the resources of the European colonies in Africa was identified as one of the crucial components for the rebuilding of post-war Europe. Given these colonial motivations that were entangled with the early impulses for European integration, the continued Eurocentrism and entrenched coloniality of the EU-AHD and the ways it relates to integration do not come as a surprise. As my analysis has shown, the Eurocentric understandings of Europeanness embedded in the EU-AHD posit European cultural heritage as a process of mapping and displaying the spread of a hierarchical Eurocentric value system—or as a manifestation of the geography of coloniality. It displays the spread of, and integration into, Europeanness through positing certain regions in a position of becoming. For them, becoming European is a matter of relation, adaptation, and submission. Furthermore, their Europeanness is suspect to monitoring, development, and re-articulation. As we saw above through the example of the Great Guild Hall in Tallinn, the site's peripheral narrative of suffering and resistance seems to counter the underlying narrative of benign modernity that underpins the EU-AHD. As a result, the coloniality of the Estonian experience seems to have limited legitimacy in the European authorized heritage discourse and the spread of this narrative thus is subjected to regulation.

Similar to the discourse of integration that seeks to downplay or hide the resistance and submission that this integration also entails for those being integrated, the discourse of “Age of Discoveries” expands

these processes to a global scale. The discourse of the “discoveries” that seems to be hardwired into the EU-AHD not only conceals the true nature of European colonialism, but also enforces a view that Europe should be celebrated for its role in manufacturing a new modern world. Furthermore, it fails to make use of the potential for social change that is embedded in critical engagement with the sites related to Europe’s colonial past. It is worth remembering that European history is “not simply about past events, because the past of Europe continues to haunt its present in quite powerful ways” (Yegenoglu 2017, 18). The history of European colonialism lives on in capitalism and European racism, as well as in the exclusionary narratives of Europeanness and in Eurocentrism at large. It prevails in the disconnect between colonialism and the “immigration crisis”, which is not so much a crisis of immigration, but a crisis of postcolonial Europe coming to grips with its colonial past. The migrants dying at Europe’s borders are powerful examples of the extent to which the EU is ignoring the fundamental dissonance between its values and its actions. Through critical engagement with Europe’s colonial past, actions like the EHL could fundamentally contribute to opening up space for solidarity. Many of the EHL sites themselves have engaged in this process, but this should also be reflected in the narratives produced around the EHL on the institutional level in the EU-AHD.

I noted earlier that acknowledging the ruptures and discontinuities in Europe’s past and memory would be an important avenue to challenge the Eurocentrism of the EU-AHD. Another approach would be to focus on entanglements between Europe and its Others (e.g. Said 2003; Hall 1999; Delanty 2017). Through emphasizing entanglements and ruptures, the narratives of Europe could be opened up to create space to the silenced or hidden aspects of our past. This, however, would also require breaking away from old power hierarchies that prioritize a Eurocentric understanding of the world. Through approaches like these we can attempt to form paths towards more equal and inclusive narratives of Europeanness that are not only diverse in rhetoric, but also in practice.

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APPENDIX 1:  
LIST OF EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL SITES 2011–2016

- Abbey of Cluny, France
- Archaeological Park Carnuntum, Austria
- Archive of the Crown of Aragon, Barcelona, Spain
- Camp Westerbork, The Netherlands
- Charter of Law of Abolition of the Death Penalty, Lisbon, Portugal
- European District of Strasbourg, France
- Franja Partisan Hospital, Slovenia
- General Library of the University of Coimbra, Portugal
- Great Guild Hall, Tallinn, Estonia
- Hambach Castle, Germany
- Historic Ensemble of the University of Tartu, Estonia
- Kaunas of 1919–1940, Lithuania
- Krapina Neanderthal Site, Croatia
- Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest, Hungary
- Mundaneum, Mons, Belgium
- Museo Casa Alcide De Gasperi, Pieve Tesino, Italy
- Münster and Osnabrück—Sites of the Peace of Westphalia, Germany
- Olomouc Premyslid Castle and Archdiocesan Museum, Czech Republic
- Pan-European Picnic Memorial Park, Sopron, Hungary
- Peace Palace, The Hague, The Netherlands
- Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid, Spain
- Robert Schuman's House, Scy-Chazelles, France
- Sagres Promontory, Portugal
- The Heart of Ancient Athens, Greece
- The historic Gdańsk Shipyard, Poland
- The Imperial Palace, Vienna, Austria
- The May 3, 1791 Constitution, Warsaw, Poland
- Union of Lublin, Poland
- World War I Eastern Front Cemetery No. 123, Łużna—Pustki, Poland

### The additional sites meeting the criterion of “European Significance”

- Archeological site of Movemvassia, Greece
- Cape Finisterre, Spain
- Congress Hall of Vienna, Austria
- Coudenberg, Former Palace of Brussels, Belgium
- Hlubina Mine and Vitkovice Ironworks, Czech Republic
- Industrialisation in Upper Silesia, Poland
- Royal Palace of Visegrád, Hungary
- Schengen, France
- Troyes, France
- Zlín city conservation zone, Czech Republic

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