

# EUROPE'S (UN)COMMON HERITAGE(S)

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*Although it draws on the past, the concept of heritage is rooted in the present and is used selectively for contemporary purposes. European institutions have reinforced the concept of a common European heritage, which is shared by all nation-states. In drawing on the discourse of heritage, there is an attempt to consolidate a narrative of European universal values. This paper critiques the vision of a common European heritage in the consolidation of European identity and assesses the idea of shared heritage as an instrument of social cohesion.*

Keywords: Europe, heritage, discourse, universality, language.

*Čeprav se sklicuje na preteklost, je koncept dediščina zakoreninjen v sedanjosti in selektivno rabljen za sodobne namene. Evropske ustanove krepijo koncept skupne evropske dediščine, skupne vsem državam/narodom. V diskurzu o dediščini gre za poskus, da bi utrdili pripoved o evropskih splošnih vrednotah. Članek kritizira vizijo skupne evropske dediščine v utrjevanju evropske identitete in si prizadeva za zamisel o skupni dediščini kot orodju družbene povezanosti. Ključne besede: Evropa, dediščina, diskurz, univerzalnost, jezik.*

Heritage has been defined as an elastic concept since it can be interpreted in many different ways (Nagata 2010).<sup>1</sup> This elasticity is also reflected in different interpretations of the term in various European languages. In the English language the concept has largely been associated with tangible items – reflecting the close association of heritage with the concept of historic monument in previous centuries (Choay 2001). There is also emphasis on material culture in France where *patrimoine culturel* is often linked with fine arts and architecture. This emphasis on material culture was adopted by the UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO 1972), which defined world cultural heritage in terms of monuments and groups of buildings and sites with “outstanding universal value”. Architectural works and groups of buildings could be classified as outstanding and universal in the context of history, art or science. Sites – whether “of man or the combined works of nature and man” – were considered universally valuable from the perspective of history, aesthetics, ethnology or anthropology (Nic Craith 2007).

The UNESCO (2003) *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* was the primary impetus for a more holistic approach towards heritage. That

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*Convention* drew attention to forms of intangible cultural heritage including oral traditions and expressions; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices; and traditional craftsmanship. This more holistic approach towards heritage is already prevalent in many European languages. The Finnish equivalent for cultural heritage, *kulttuuriperintö*, refers to both tangible and intangible aspects and monuments or museums do not necessarily spring to mind when one hears the term “heritage”. It seems that the meaning of the word in Slovenian, *dediščina*, is also wider than the English term, since it denotes social and other intangible as well as material aspects of heritage. It also denotes the concept of inheritance - as in Polish.

The Spanish word *patrimonio* corresponds to the English word “heritage”, but it is also used in ways that would not necessarily occur in the British context and can refer to personal wealth or to the total capital of a company. *Patrimonio nacional*, for example, is an economic term for the wealth of a country, the sum of its assets, but it can also refer in a cultural sense to the heritage of a nation. For this reason *patrimonio* tends to be accompanied by an adjective which specifies its meaning. This also occurs with the Italian *beni culturali* (heritage), where adjectives can refine the context considerably. *Beni ambientali* refers to coastlines, vegetation, quality of the soil, for instance. (The so-called *macchia mediterranea*, with its plants and shrubs, may be regarded as heritage.) Here the concept of *bene* refers to something that should be preserved in the interest of the community, something that society has a duty and a right to preserve (Nic Craith 2007).

In many European languages the term used to define heritage is directly associated with the idea of patrimonial inheritance. However there are shades of difference in the way that it is interpreted. The Polish word for heritage is *dziedzictwo*, which derives from the verb *dziedziczyć* (to inherit) and the noun *dziedzic* (heir), and refers to “what has been inherited” - that is left by the ancestors/former generations and is somehow valuable. In that context, individual buildings, monuments do not constitute “heritage”. Instead they are items of heritage, and can be regarded as specific elements of a broad collective inheritance. The Swedish word *arv* also implies something that is passed on; an inheritance from which one cannot distance oneself or escape from. This is a passive rather than an active form of inheritance. It is received rather than earned (Nic Craith 2007).

In some European languages (such as Dutch), there is more than one word for heritage. The French word *héritage* is generally usually for private inheritance only, whereas *patrimoine* can refer to both private inheritance and/or for public goods. Basically the term *patrimoine* can be used in the “bricks and mortar” context and can refer to objects of material culture. It incorporates anything which is passed down from one generation to another. The idea of transmission is central, and stems from the Latin radical *pater*. Inherent in this context is the notion of obligation – the duty of the present generation to protect and pass on their inheritance to the next.

The scenario is even more interesting in Scottish Gaelic where there are two terms to be considered: *dùthchas* and *oighreachd*. Macinnes (1996: 5) suggests that both words relate

to the relationship between Scottish clan leaders and their land in the seventeenth century. The difference relates to the manner in which the land had been inherited. While *dùthchas* refers to trusteeship of the territories in which the clan had settled; *oighreachd* refers to the legal title to the estates. Iain MacKinnon (2012) suggests that *dùthchas* could be regarded as “heritage from below” and reflects the relationship between chief and clan. In contrast *oighreachd* is “heritage from above” and reflects the relationship between a Scottish chief and the power of the Crown. The different perspectives on the land are explained in terms of colonisation. While the traditional view was that land was inherited via the clan historic line, the social and cultural transformations endured by native Scottish at the beginning of the seventeenth century led to a change in relationship with one’s inheritance.

Overall it would appear that the word heritage, as is commonly understood, may be relatively new and is strongly associated with the rise of nationalism in a European context. However the concept became tainted with right-wing politics and patriotic flag-waving and faded away for a time, but was subsequently reintroduced by cultural policy makers trying to deal effectively with past histories. “Cultural heritage” emerged as a modern concept, which focused on an active re-engagement with the past, on new modes of integration and identity politics at different levels and encouraging activities at grass root levels (Löfgren and Klekot 2012). Since the concept had strong economic potential, it was further revitalised by the market which addressed the question of how the past can be packaged, presented and consumed in novel ways.

## THE EUROCENTRIC VERSION OF HERITAGE

Many Europeans conceptualise their past in linear terms – reflecting a sense of time which observes progress in a linear fashion – “the end product of a progressive ascent through history” (Shore 2000: 57). The origins of the European continent are located in Classical Greek civilisation and Europeans perceive of themselves as the ultimate descendants and representatives of a prestigious civilisation that had progressed steadily over the centuries. During the Renaissance in particular, there was a renewed appreciation of this Greek (and Roman) antiquity. Artefacts such as architecture and books assumed a new symbolic significance as heritage (Esposito and Gaulis 2010a).

The French and industrial revolutions served as the catalysts for a fresh perspective on a sense of history. The emergence of national consciousness and the construction of national identities in Britain, France and Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, generated a renewed appreciation of the past as a political and cultural resource. Nationalism became the new meta-narrative, generating a sense of security and belonging to a particular territory and the elasticity of heritage made it a very easy tool to appropriate for nation-building. “It is within this context of the developing narrative of nationalism and of a universalising modernity that a new, more pointed, concern for what we now

identify as ‘heritage’ emerged” (Smith 2006: 18). However, the issue was complicated since “the discovery and propagation of a distinctive national heritage was a precondition for the creation of the nation-state, but conversely, the organization and instruments capable of sponsoring and supporting a national heritage require the existence of a nation state” (Graham et al 2000: 184). Museums emerged as repositories of state artefacts and the concept of the monument came to embody “a particular European vision of the world” (Smith 2006: 19). The monument had already become an important emblem of the historical and cultural continuity of nations such as France, Italy and England (Choay 2001).

There was also a strong interest in intangible heritage at this time. Language and folklore expressed the continuity of the national family (Ó Giolláin 2000). In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ethnologists and folklorists, such as Herder or the Grimm brothers, had emphasized the concept of language as a primary guarantor of belonging to a national family that had existed for centuries. Although there was hardly a single form of the “German” language during Herder’s lifetime, speaking German still gained prominence as a symbol of the German *Volk* (Nic Craith 2006). Ultimately however, the German language (as a symbol of the people) was competing against French-speaking which epitomised civilization, and the German language did not gain the same prominence as more tangible heritage artefacts in a European context.

The concept of “natural heritage” which also emerged during the Romantic Movement did capture the public imagination. “The idea of a ‘pristine wilderness’, and the nature/culture divide facilitated by Enlightenment philosophy, led to the concept of a natural landscape that needed to be protected from the depredations of human activities” (Smith 2006: 21). Ultimately this generated concern for appropriate conservation of landscape and the establishment of national parks in many regions.

The dissemination of the Eurocentric perspective on heritage beyond the continent is frequently explained in terms of the break-up of empires and colonial expansion. The initial phase is located in the emergence of new European nation-states such as Greece and the Balkans, which emerged with the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. These new states appreciated the significance of heritage as a useful tool of self-definition. The process of heritage selection allowed them to reflect a specific view of history “that was strategic for the construction of national identities” (Esposito and Gaulis 2010a). In this version of history Asian heritage was viewed and valued through the lens of European colonizers. More significantly, it was assumed that heritage was a singularly European concept since Asians and others lacked any empathy with the notion until they were “educated” by European colonial powers.

The dominance of European conceptions of heritage was consolidated within the context of international organizations which were established after the two World Wars. “European powers imposed their vision of heritage, set up an institutional framework and organised conservation practices in the colonies” (Esposito and Gaulis 2010b: 7). The internationalization of the heritage agenda in the late twentieth century reflected the political dominance

of Europeans in previous centuries. This “authorized heritage discourse” (Smith 2006) achieved dominance – not just in European charters and documents but also in UNESCO/ ICOMOS charters and conventions. The *World Heritage Convention* of 1972 is perceived as an important milestone in the internationalisation process, which established a given set of criteria - “a whole ‘package’ of thoughts, doctrines and categories” as particularly relevant. In consequence particular heritage notions were consolidated worldwide and especially the commitment to the idea of a universal heritage – or the common heritage of humanity. Dominant values were re-enforced through a series of further international conventions.

The dominance of this particular discourse of heritage might generate the impression that heritage was invented in Europe – a view that is strongly challenged by many academics (e.g. Harvey 2001). Moreover, this discourse could hardly be considered representative of the common people. Instead, it has been driven by the élite, the educated and the professionals. “It is as much a discourse of nationalism and patriotism as it is of certain class experiences and social and aesthetic value” (Smith 2006: 28). It is also a discourse that is increasingly challenged at international level but within Europe, the discourse of a pan-European heritage has constantly been reinforced by both the Council of Europe (CoE) and, to a lesser extent, by the European Union.

## THE DISCOURSE OF COMMON HERITAGE

Since its foundation in 1949, the CoE has had a long involvement with the discourse of heritage and has continually taken a leading role in facilitating discussion on and promoting heritage initiatives. The *European Cultural Convention* which was opened for signature in 1954 aimed for greater unity between members and the “safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage” (CoE 1954). The very first article urged each contracting party to “take appropriate measures to safeguard and to encourage the development of its national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe” (CoE 1954). Since that time, the CoE has engaged with built heritage in particular and from the 1970s onwards, it has also been responsible for numerous conventions on architectural heritage (see CoE 1969, 1985, 1992).

In 1987, the CoE launched the Cultural Routes programme. Its aim was to illustrate “by means of a journey through space and time, how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe contributes to a shared cultural heritage”. This common cultural heritage is not explicitly defined but the programme blurb suggests that it might be “the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity and identity, dialogue, mutual exchange and enrichment across boundaries and centuries” (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes). Subsequently the committee of ministers declared that “the identification of European values and a common European cultural heritage may be achieved via cultural routes” (Resolution CM/Res 2007).

In 1991 the CoE launched its European Heritage Days initiative; which has since become a joint initiative with the European Commission. There is still a heavy emphasis on tangible heritage and the stated intention is to put “new cultural assets on view” and to open “up historical buildings normally closed to the public” (European Heritage Days). The cultural events “highlight local skills and traditions, architecture and works of art” but the broader aim is “to bring citizens together in harmony even though there are differences in cultures and languages”.

In 1999, the Council launched a new campaign entitled “Europe: a Common Heritage” and linked this to “a deeper awareness of non material values embodied by the built and material heritage in order to promote a European culture based on dialogue, democracy and peace”. Here there is an implication that values such as democracy and dialogue were somehow embodied in the material heritage of the continent – a notion “that is problematic to say the least” (Bugge 2003: 72). Since that time, the European Heritage Days have a permanent slogan: “Europe, a common heritage”. That year also saw the establishment of a European Heritage Network (HEREIN) as a “permanent information system bringing together government departments responsible for cultural heritage under the umbrella of the Council of Europe”. This network focuses on architectural and archaeological heritage in the context of various conventions issued by the CoE, including the landscape convention of 2000.

More recently in 2005, members of the Council issued the Warsaw Declaration (CoE 2005). At this summit, heads of states and governments took the opportunity to renew “their commitment to the common values and principles which are rooted in Europe’s cultural, religious and humanistic heritage – a heritage both shared and rich in its diversity”. Article 6 committed them to “fostering European identity and unity, based on shared fundamental values, respect for our common heritage and cultural diversity”. Ultimately, members resolved to uphold a pan-European heritage “with the aim of building a Europe without dividing lines” (CoE 2005).

The European Commission has been more sluggish in relation to the promotion of “common European heritage” but even it has begun to realize that “common identity will necessitate common heritage” (Ashworth and Howard 1999: 4). At the Copenhagen European Summit of December 1973, the heads of states or governments issued a Declaration on European Identity. Defining European identity entailed “reviewing the common heritage, interests and special obligations of the Nine”. Interestingly they also noted the close ties between the EC and the US with whom they shared “share values and aspirations based on a common heritage (Declaration on European Identity Copenhagen).

Ten years later, the 1983 Solemn Declaration on European Union affirmed closer cooperation between member states “on cultural matters, in order to affirm the awareness of a common cultural heritage” as an element in the European identity. Regarding cultural cooperation, it proposed exploring “joint action to protect, promote and safeguard the cultural heritage” (European Communities 1983). A commitment to Europe’s cultural heritage (in the singular) has been maintained in all amended treaties and the much more recent Treaty of

Lisbon (2007) affirmed that “member states shall respect rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced” (EU 2007b).

In the intervening years, the EU has engaged with a number of initiatives designed to promote a common European heritage. Following the 2001 European Year of Languages, for example, the European Commission and the CoE designated 26<sup>th</sup> September as an annual European Day of Languages. This was done to mark the significance of linguistic diversity and lifelong language learning for Europe’s cultural heritage. In 2001, a joint Declaration issued by the CoE welcomed “progress made during the past decade in raising awareness about Europe’s rich linguistic heritage” (in the singular) (Council of Europe/ European Commission 2011).

In 2006, the idea of a European Heritage Label was launched; as a way to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens by improving knowledge of European history and the role and values of the EU. The general aspiration was to “strengthen Europeans’ sense of belonging to the EU and promote mutual understanding in Europe”. One of the principal aims of the Heritage label has been “to help people learn about our shared cultural heritage, the history of the EU, and the democratic values and human rights underpinning it” (European Heritage Days).

In November 2008, the European digital library *Europeana* opened its electronic shelves. This single, multilingual online portal ([www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu)) offers access to books stored by national libraries throughout the continent. It opens doors a wealth of digital works from cultural institutions including, manuscripts, maps, music and paintings. The intention of *Europeana* is to make Europe’s cultural and scientific heritage (in the singular) accessible to everybody.

There are many other examples of European Commission support over the years for the notion of a common cultural heritage. Much of this support has come through the Commission’s environmental research programmes. The Seventh Framework Programme has focused attention on the protection of tangible cultural heritage and the mechanisms by which cultural heritage can be damaged. The Heritage Portal supports tangible and intangible heritage throughout the continent. It suggests that “the cultural heritage of the European Union is crucial for establishing a shared European identification through progressive integration” and has partners from 14 European countries. Its work for the consolidation of a pan-European heritage is ongoing.

## SINGULARITY AND UNIVERSALITY

In all of these contexts, the term “heritage” is (more or less) consistently used in the singular. The use of heritage in the singular is not confined to formal documents but is also reflected in everyday use in different European languages. While it is possible to use to speak of *les patrimoines* in the plural in French, the singular *le patrimoine* is far more common. In Slovene the word for heritage is mostly used in singular, although there has been some use

of it in the plural to accentuate different kinds of regional and social heritages. A browse of a range of European languages, including Spanish and Polish, confirms the more regular use of the concept in the singular, while in some instances such as Swedish, the word *kulturarv* has the same form in the singular and plural. (This differs from the concept of traditions which is often used in the plural. In Finnish, for example, people sometimes use the word *perinne* (tradition) for *perintö* (heritage) and vice versa, as these sound alike, but while the term *perinne* can have a plural form (*perinteet*), *perintö* is always in the singular).

The use of the concept in the singular may reflect its link with the notion of a universal ideal. The idea of a singular, universal truth was heightened during the European Enlightenment when thinkers began seeking out the universal beyond the particular. The Enlightenment project brought the idea of a universal truth to the fore – the idea of a grounding universality (*Urgrund*), which was essentially the origin of the idea of human rights. All cultures have ideas of universals. In the Enlightenment era thinkers were looking for the universality that transcends particulars. This was a very Western European version of universalism.

Adèle Esposito and Inès Gaulis (2010a: 33) locate the roots of universalism in cultural heritage in the efforts of 17th and the 18th century European jurists, who endeavoured to protect heritage during and after armed conflict. They point to Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the Dutch jurist who established international law and set out a code of ethics for military leaders in their handling of cultural artefacts and properties. Abbé Gregoire (1750-1831) an influential figure during the French Revolution regarded such artefacts as common assets. Later in the 19th century, the German jurist and political philosopher, Francis Lieber set out the code for the government of armies which gave guidelines for the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflict. Universalism fostered the notion of heritage as the common property of mankind and the responsibility for its conservation needed to be shared through co-operation between European states. This act would limit the risks of war.

When UNESCO was established after the Second World War, the first Article of its Constitution noted the importance of ensuring “the conservation and protection of the world’s inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science” (UNESCO, 1945: Art. 1, paragraph 2.c). With the *World Heritage Convention* of 1972, the notion of universal value became strongly linked to a cultural heritage that had universal value and was commonly shared.

The notion of universality implies a universal appreciation of an inherent quality – something that is recognisable by all peoples and cultures worldwide. However values are relative and people from different cultural settings do not necessarily attach the same values to different aspects of heritage. For this reason some academics suggest that the *World Heritage Convention* is Eurocentric (Byrne 1991: 274; Cleere 2001: 101) – a factor which may explain the over-representation of European World Heritage sites on the World Heritage List (Cleere 1996; Labadi 2005).

Many of the European World Heritage sites place emphasis on the tangible aspects of culture – walled cities, monuments and cathedrals dominate world heritage sites. This



appreciation of stoneworks contrasts strongly with other regions of the world such as Asia, where the emphasis has been on intangible aspects of heritage. Values are subjective and located within particular places and timeframes. Cleere (2001: 24) suggests that indigenous societies in Australia or New Guinea might not necessarily appreciate the cultural values of the Romanesque Duomo of Modena (Italy). For their perspective, these might simply represent a “pile of stones without aesthetic or spiritual significance”. Likewise “the sacred nature of a grove in West Africa or a massive monolith such as ULURU can be appreciated by very few people from cultures that accord a special place to the Taj Mahal (India) or to the Statue of Liberty (USA)” (Cleere 2001: 24).

Whether a variety of voices is heard within this debate on universalism is unclear. History is multi-vocal, but as Foucault has argued, knowledge and truth as defined by human sciences, are also linked with issues of power (1980: 74) “Universalist and modern frameworks have therefore been criticised for creating ‘epistemological injustices’ through the marginalization of the voices, experiences and histories of minority groups such as women or indigenous people” (Labadi 2007: 153). However, also remembering Foucault, “the enforcement of power generates counter-powers” and the way we speak about and think about heritage is changing. And some academics, such as Ricoeur, would argue that “the kind of universality that Europe represents contains within itself a plurality of cultures, which have been merged and intertwined, and which provide a certain fragility, an ability to disclaim and interrogate itself” (Ricoeur 2004: 217). There is a tension about the whole notion of universality which reflects inconsistencies implicit in the notion of a pan-European.

## THE PROBLEM

Despite the constant affirmation of a common European heritage, it seems clear that the notion is sadly lacking in conceptual integrity and varies from intention to location to occasion. In one sense, this is not un-representative of the notion of heritage itself, which can also be very diverse. Moreover, it is an inevitable consequence of European history that has “had to weave several heritages – Jewish-Christian, Greek-Roman, then the Barbarian cultures which were encompassed within the Roman Empire” as well as “the heritage within Christianity of the Reformation, the Renaissance Enlightenment, and also the three nineteenth-century components of this heritage, nationalism, socialism and romanticism” (Ricoeur 2004: 216).

David Lowenthal (1995) offers a practical example of an attempt to arrive at a consensual definition of common European heritage. In September 1994, the CoE held a three day heritage conference which was attended by more than 150 delegates. While the concept of heritage may have emerged from classical, medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment roots, it was agreed that the appreciation and effectiveness of these concepts can “vary greatly with country and region, from large to small states, from north to south, and above all from east to west” (Lowenthal 1995: 378). There was some discussion on what aspects of

history might be regarded as common currency among different European regions. Most participants were satisfied with the common legacy of the Bronze Age, since these material artefacts are evident everywhere, but it proved very difficult to arrive at any consensus beyond that and “the shared European vision becomes problematic as we move forward in time”. Neither Roman nor Viking heritage were acceptable as common European heritage. Later periods of history also proved problematic (Lowenthal 1995: 378).

Perhaps the solution lies more with intangible than tangible heritage as it is less identifiable with a particular locale. One might argue for a common European heritage which is “based upon those ideas, aesthetic creations and activities that of their nature were continental rather than nation-bound”. These might include general artistic, philosophical, economic, social and religious themes. Ashworth and Howard argue that:

*architectural themes from the Gothic to the Post-modern, philosophical ideas from Classicism to Romanticism, political movements from the Crusades to Marxism, economic and social trends from liberal capitalism to lifestyle choices provide an almost infinite quarry of resource possibilities for the selection of heritage that disregards national boundaries.* (Ashworth and Howard 1999: 68)

However, even that might be difficult to sustain as one could counter that such themes are hardly specifically European. In that case, European institutions would be engaging with a form of appropriation from the larger scale (i.e. world heritage) to the smaller continental level (i.e. European) rather than from the national to the European.

A number of academic attempts have been made to define what it means by the notion of a pan-European heritage, which Kaschuba describes as “a bit of everything”. Perhaps half in jest, he suggests that this two-hundred-year-old debate about European heritage is “our tradition of literary egocentrism and of intellectual narcissism; our stubborn evocation of a European community of values – despite two World Wars and long Cold Wars – the Brussels pathos!” (Kaschuba 2008: 35).

The difficulties in defining heritage in a European context are hardly surprising and are an inevitable consequence of many tensions at geographical, spatial, ideological, transnational and other levels. In the first instance there is the debate regarding Europe itself and how the boundaries of the continent might be defined (Nic Craith 2006; Hann 2012). The geographical context also means that many countries are physically distant from one another and have experienced quite different histories and have different empathies. “When Ukraine experienced its ‘orange revolution’, those in Poland and the Baltic states felt directly involved. Spaniards, so much further away and more focused on north Africa, did not” (Grant 2007). (The politics of proximity emerges regularly in the annual Eurovision song contest where countries clearly have empathy with the music of their neighbours rather than with that of countries farther away).

Apart from the geographical context, there are issues concerning scale or spatial referentiality. How does one resolve ownership at national versus trans-national levels? This

applies both to material culture as well as to intangible heritage. For example does the Acropolis belong to Greece or to Europe or further afield? In most European nation-states, the dominant guardian of heritage still operates at the nation-state (Ashworth and Howard 1999: 71). All of these nations have worked hard to build distinct national memories, making it more difficult to construct shared myths about a common past (Garton Ash 2007). How are these national heritages reconciled with European initiatives or perhaps to use a less kind word “interference” – or even appropriation?

At a trans-national level, the continent has responded to this problem with the overarching principle of “unity in diversity”. This principle has proved extremely difficult to establish and has been interpreted both positively and negatively (Shore 2000: 54; Nic Craith 2008: 62–63). Moreover, tensions between unity and diversity could possibly be regarded as tensions between those who operate at different spatial levels. At national (and lower) levels, people may strive for national character and distinction. At a higher level, there is impetus for homogenisation and commonality.

There are also ideological tensions regarding Europe’s trans-national heritage. For some, the continent’s Christian heritage is a defining characteristic. Its legacy is both material and intangible and ranges from cathedrals, altar pieces and bibles, to conflicts, prayers and movements. Europe’s Christian heritage has emerged as a strong source of debate on more than one occasion. When the proposed new constitution was being introduced some ten years ago, delegates from several countries including Germany, Italy, Poland and Slovakia were keen to include a reference to Christianity in the document. In contrast other nations such as France, Spain and the Netherlands opposed any such initiative.

The debate on Europe’s Christian heritage re-emerged with the Berlin Declaration which was issued by the Council of the European Union in March 2007 (the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome). Poland threatened to veto this declaration because of the absence of a reference to Christianity from the text. Other organisations also objected to its proposed inclusion. Such ongoing debates are inevitably complex since Christianity on the continent was hardly ever homogeneous and frequently generated conflicts and crusades (Margry 2012). Moreover, for many centuries, Europe was the primary Jewish homeland (Nic Craith 2008: 60–62). It is now home to an increasing proportion of other faiths such as Islam (Marranci 2012).

The situation with regard to Europe’s linguistic diversity is possibly even more complex. On the one hand, the continent revels in its linguistic diversity and Europe’s languages are a crucial part of its cultural heritage (Nic Craith 2010, 2012). The European Treaty has been published in all of its official languages, and each text is regarded as an authentic original. On the other hand, this very linguistic diversity may also be a stumbling block in the development of the concept of a pan-European heritage. Given the 24 official languages in the Union, as well as its indigenous regional or minority languages, European citizens do not always communicate effectively with one another. The situation is further complicated by Europe’s contested languages, dialects and non-European languages.

A practical example of these translational difficulties emerged with the translation of the 2007 Berlin declaration. The English language version of the document boldly states that “We, the citizens of the European Union, have united for the better”. The equivalent version in German reads as follows: “*Wir Bürgerinnen und Bürger der Europäischen Union sind zu unserem Glück vereint*”. (In translation: “We, the citizens of the European Union, have united in our fortune (happiness or luck)”). Apparently the word *Glück* has been avoided in other language versions of the declaration. Some commentators have suggested that the inconsistency in translation is deliberate. Spongenberg (2007) reported that the word *Glück* “has disappeared from the Danish version” and been “replaced with ‘*vor felles bedste*’ meaning ‘for the best’”. Henning Kock, a Law Professor at Copenhagen University regards the “mis-translation” as intentional. “ ‘It would come as a big surprise to me if the translators are bad at German. So then it’s a political translation,’ he said about the Danish version” (Spongenberg 2007). His view is that the German word *Glück* could not be rendered appropriately into Danish. “ ‘Great gushing and emotional terms are something the Danes fear,’ he said, adding that ‘Danish pragmatism cannot handle that we are happy for the EU. But you cannot deny reality by turning around the words.’ ”

There is no doubt but that “Europe is an intricate, multicoloured patchwork” (Garton Ash 2007). Languages are commonly associated with particular places and perspectives. Garton Ash points to the example of the British who, when puzzled, might ask, “What on earth does that mean?”. In the same circumstances a German might query “*was im Himmel soll das bedeuten?*” meaning “What in heaven should that mean?”. Garton Ash regards these examples as “philosophical empiricism and idealism captured in one everyday phrase”. Such differences in expressions are a joy to explore and it is clear that the Europe’s linguistic heritage contains an abundance of linguistic nuances and shades of difference. However, such differences also generate huge opportunities for suspicion, mis-translations (either deliberate or un-intentional) and conflict. In these circumstances, the development of an agreed meaning on pan-European heritage becomes even more difficult to ascertain.

## CONCLUSION

All of this brings us back to the concept of Europe, which is still for many a “bureaucratic entity of regulation and intergovernmental agreement” rather than a cultural concept (Ashworth and Howard 1999: 65). If we are unclear about Europe conceptually, and if there are shades of difference in the interpretation of the concept “heritage” in different European languages, how can one feasibly define “the common cultural heritage of Europe”. If there is no singular European identity and the boundaries of the continent are itself contested, why do politicians and policy-makers consistently speak of the heritage of Europe as if there were only one? Why do we seek “an all-encompassing, monolithic ‘European heritage’” (Risse 2003: 88), when clearly have not defined or deliberated on what that might mean?

It is probable that the motivation is predominantly political, since a distinct cultural heritage offers “the ideological basis for constructions of cultural difference” (Kaschuba 2008: 36). The notion of a common cultural heritage serves to delineate a distinct “European, We” who enjoy a heritage that is separate from, and not enjoyed by “non-Europeans” or “outsiders”. As was the case with nationalism, heritage has once again been perceived as a tool for both integration and separation. Since the “politics of identity never works without a counterpart, without an Other”, heritage provides a mechanism for self-definition of Europeans – even if that definition is vague (Kaschuba 2008: 36–37).

Ethnologists, such as Orver Löfgren, have been uneasy with singular use of the word “heritage” which also suggests “unproblematized ownership” and raises many questions relating to power and control. (It is also linked to the ways in which nostalgia and old rhetoric about a national heritage has re-emerged and been used and abused among xenophobic movements on the extreme right all over the continent.) Who decides what is included and excluded, what versions of the past are remembered and which are forgotten? In reiterating and reinforcing the notion of a common European heritage, there is clearly an attempt to arrive at a trans-national hegemonic understanding of the concept, reflecting a common version of history (Löfgren and Klekot 2012). This mechanism for inclusion/exclusion has worked to the advantage of some peoples within the continent itself. “Thus, for Poles, Czechs, Hungarians or Romanians, arguing in favour of a common European heritage, and not least their own nation’s share in it, served as a means of challenging their exclusion from ‘Europe’ proper” (Bugge 2003: 70).

One must also acknowledge a moral dimension to the singular use of the term heritage, since it reinforces the notion of a commonly shared good in which all mankind shares, but such concepts of a common good are hardly intrinsically European. “The idea of human dignity is not a European monopoly, and the fact that human rights as an idea and a programme were first formulated in a European context makes them no more a European property than the Arabic origin of numerals makes them Arabic” (Bugge 2003: 73).

Given the difficulties in defining the concept, one might ask whether it has outlived its usefulness – and whether it is time to desist from speaking of heritage in the singular. In the first instance, one might note that the use of heritage in the plural – while sounding very awkward – has begun to emerge. Where it happens, it usually has a very deliberate function – as for example in the context of peace processes in Northern Ireland or South Africa. For many years, I was involved with the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages at the University of Ulster, located in Derry/Londonderry. In this instance, the use of heritage in the plural was designed to reflect recognition for different cultural heritages of Northern Ireland – a society which has been moving away from a singular British narrative towards a “two or more” shared traditions model of society (Nic Craith 2002, 2003).

The more widespread use of heritage in the plural may also to some extent reflect the decline of meta-narratives generally in a post-modern Europe and may even hint at some recognition that our European “universals” may not always have international appeal, empathy or appreciation. Post-universalism represents a challenge to epistemology

and the notion of a singular European heritage is becoming less relevant. Even the term “Outstanding Universal Value” may require some modification; to mean something that may have relevance in some territories but not others. The notion of a common European heritage is lacking in integrity and is an inevitable consequence of the failure to adequately define the notion of a singular European identity or even the continental boundaries. In such circumstances, the quest for a singular pan-European identity may be fruitless.

Maybe it's time to begin promoting the cultural heritages of a contested continent and think more explicitly about what we choose to remember and what we choose to discard when promoting those heritages. Maybe it is time to acknowledge that there is no one collective memory in which we all share and even recognise. Instead we have multiple heritages, multiple traditions and multiple memories at different geographical levels which sometime unite – and sadly sometimes divide us.

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## (NE)SKUPNA/E DEDIŠČINA/E EVROPE

*Dediščina je opredeljena kot gibek koncept, saj jo je mogoče interpretirati na raznotere načine (Nagata 2010). Gibkost odseva tudi v različnih interpretacijah izraza v različnih evropskih jezikih. V angleščini se koncept večinoma povezuje s snovnimi vidiki. Unescova Konvencija o varovanju nesnovne kulturne dediščine (2003) je bila močan vzvod za bolj holističen pogled na dediščino, ki že prevladuje v številnih evropskih jezikih.*

*Izviri evropske celine so postavljeni v klasično grško civilizacijo in Evropejci se razumejo kot zadnji potomci veličastne civilizacije, ki je v stoletjih nenehno napredovala. Razširitev evrocetričnega pogleda na dediščino čez meje celine se pogosto pojasnjuje s padci imperijev in kolonialno ekspanzijo. Prevlada evropskih razumevanj dediščine se je utrdila v mednarodnih ustanovah, ki so nastale po dveh svetovnih vojnah. Od nastanka v letu 1949 je Evropska skupnost vpletena v diskurz o dediščini in je stalno prevzemala vodilno vlogo v razpravah in promociji pobud v zvezi z njo. Evropska komisija je bila nekoliko medlejša glede promocije »skupne evropske dediščine«, je pa začela podpirati koncept skupne, univerzalne dediščine.*

*V vseh teh okvirih je izraz dediščina (bolj ali manj) dosledno rabljen v ednini. Raba koncepta v ednini lahko izraža zvezo s pomenom univerzalnega ideala. Pomen univerzalnosti implicira splošno vrednotenje inherentne značilnosti – nečesa, kar priznavajo vsi ljudje po vsem svetu. Zamisel o enkratni, univerzalni resnici je bila povzdignjena v evropskem razsvetljenstvu, ko so misleci začeli iskati univerzalno prek partikularnega. To je zelo zahodnoevropska različica univerzalizma. Vendar so vrednote relativne in ljudje iz različnih kulturnih okolij različnim vidikom dediščine neogibno ne pripisujejo enakih vrednosti.*

*Kljub nenehnemu uveljavljanju skupne evropske dediščine se zdi jasno, da pomenu žal umanjka konceptualna celovitost in da so pomeni različni glede na kraje in priložnosti. Težave pri opredelitvi dediščine v evropskem okviru sploh niso presenetljive in so neogibni nasledek številnih napetosti na zemljepisni, prostorski, nazorski, prevodni in drugih ravneh. Če upoštevamo defnitorne težave, se lahko vprašamo, ali je pomen izživel svojo uporabnost in ali je čas, da se odrečemo govoru o dediščini v ednini. Splošnejša raba dediščine v množini utegne do določene mere izraziti meta-pripovedi v postmoderni Evropi in lahko namigne na priznanje, da naše evropske »univerzalije« niso vedno deležne mednarodne privlačnosti, empatije ali pozitivnega vrednotenja. Morda je čas, da priznamo, da ni enega samega kolektivnega spomina, ki nam je vsem skupen ali priznan. Namesto tega imamo na različnih geografskih ravneh mnogovrstne dediščine, mnogovrstne tradicije in mnogovrstne spomine, ki nas včasih zbližujejo – in včasih tudi zelo ločujejo.*

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